

## Memorials in Holy Cross Church: the Edmondes family

If you sit in the choir stalls of Holy Cross Church, just underneath the tower on the south side, you cannot help being distracted from time to time by the large number of memorials on the north wall devoted to the Edmondes family.

This family played a large part in the affairs of Cowbridge from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards. Their family seat had by then become Old Hall, and it was a Thomas Edmondes who built the magnificent garden front to the building about 1750 – an ornate Classical building of which sadly only the lower part of the facade now remains.

Some will have heard me tell of my excitement at reading an article in a magazine about 'The Archdeacon's Diaries', an article which alluded to the fifty-eight annual diaries of a clergyman who had been brought up in the town of C . . . and who had married a C . . . K . . . of N . . . C . . . I had sat in those pews often enough to know that Archdeacon Frederic Edmondes had married Constance Knight of Nottage Court, and so I realised that it was to this member of Edmondes family that the article referred. After a long search I was eventually fortunate enough to discover the diaries, and an interesting picture of life in the Vale in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the early part of the twentieth century, they proved to be. There is a wall memorial to Frederic William Edmondes, who became Archdeacon of Llandaff (and who refused the offer of becoming bishop).

His father was Revd Thomas Edmondes, Vicar of Llanblethian and Cowbridge for 48 years, and who, as vicar, lived first at St Quintins House in Llanblethian and then at Old Hall shortly after his father, another Thomas, known as "The Major", died in 1845.

The plaque to Major Thomas Edmondes is a sad one. Here are commemorated four of his ten children; two died before reaching the age of six months, Mary died at the age of 30 and John was drowned when skating on a pond at Hensol when he was only 16. The *Cambrian* newspaper recorded his death as follows: "John Edmondes, the eldest son of Thomas Edmondes, Esq., of Cowbridge, together with Alexander Jaffrey, a gentleman residing at Cowbridge of polished manners and scientific interests, were on Saturday last in an instant plunged into eternity. They were skating on the large piece of water at Hensol Castle and the ice gave way where there was a depth of 11 ft. The bodies of these unfortunate gentlemen were found on Sunday, their hats frozen on the surface of the water, pointing out the spot where this truly lamentable accident occurred."

Another daughter, Caroline, was married to General Sir Henry Drury Harness (hence the two plaques bearing that name) but also, sadly, died at the age of 30. William, who is not commemorated here, died in his office in Church Street at the age of 46. There were, however, three long-living children: Louisa, Charlotte and Thomas. Louisa went to keep house for General Harness in Woolwich when her sister died, but when the general went to serve in India, his children came to Cowbridge to stay with both 'Aunt Lou' and 'Aunt Cha'. Towards the end of their lives Charlotte and Louisa lived together in East Villa in Eastgate.

It is interesting to note, from the wall plaques, the inter-connections of some of the Cowbridge families. Mary Charlotte Harness, one of the children of the general who came to Cowbridge to stay with their aunts, married Hugo Harper, the Headmaster of the Grammar School. He had succeeded Dr Williams to that post, and Dr Williams was the father of Thomas Edmondes's wife . . . but the Williams family require an article all to themselves!