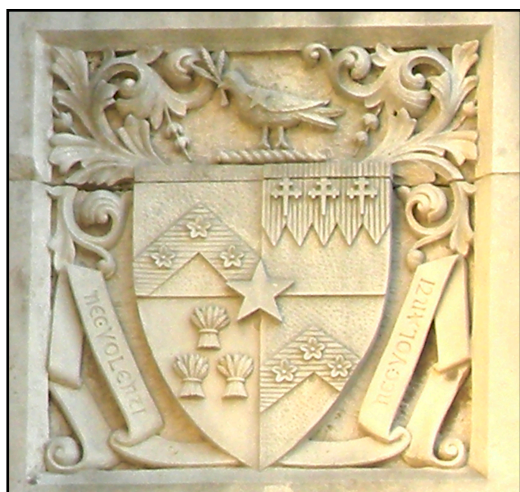


# ROEBUCK CASTLE

The Most Heraldic House in Dublin? *Work in Progress*



**Westby Coat of Arms (Roebuck Castle)**  
*Quarterly 1 and 4, argent, on a chevron azure, three cinquefoils pierced of the first; 2 Argent, on a chief indented gules, three cross crosslets fitchée of the field; 3 Or, three garbs vert; over all in the centre of the shield a mullet gules for difference. Crest - upon a wreath of the colours, a martlet sable, holding in the beak a stalk of wheat proper, with three ears or, charged on the breast with a mullet gold. Motto: Nec volenti nec volanti- neither to me wishing or flying.*



**Garde Coat of Arms (Roebuck Castle)**  
*Az. on a chev. ar. three birds vert membered gu. on a chief or, three griffins segreant sa. Crest: A. demi griffin ramp. sa. Motto: Toujours fidele.*

Roebuck Castle stands on the grounds of University College Dublin, where it is occupied by the university's Department of Criminal Law. It wasn't always so. Roebuck once stood in its own extensive grounds, the clue to which is an avenue of tall evergreens in a nearby housing estate. An enormous spreading walnut tree stands close to the castle on the green opposite the front door. Already several hundred years old when Lewis remarked on it in his 1837 guide, it was said to have grown out of an old stone wall, whose fragments were still visible in the tree at that time. <sup>1</sup>There is no trace of the stone flags in the tree today.

A manor house stood here from early times and was associated with the old Norman Barnwall family. But the house's present Neo-Gothic structure was dreamt up by one of its more recent occupants, Edward Percival Westby (1828-1893), Justice of the Peace and Sheriff for County Clare. Westby must have been a great lover of heraldry. On the castle's gate lodge alone, there are no less than four stone coats of arms carved into the exterior walls. The outside of the main house bears at least three heraldic coats not to mention several beautiful carved Westby monograms. Although much of the interior of the building has been adapted for its present use, the chivalric theme is

<sup>1</sup> *Lewis Topographical Dictionary*, page 1200. 1837.

mirrored here too in details on the large fireplace in the front entrance. A carving over a marble fireplace upstairs also incorporates elements of the Westby crest with the motif of a martlet .

What motivated this architectural expression ? Why would a comparatively minor member of the gentry like Edward Percival Westby feel the need to adorn his house with so many heraldic symbols. Certainly it enhances the Neo-Gothic/ Romanesque style of the building and its battlemented gables. This style was created in 1879 when Westby commissioned the building to be remodeled from the old castle. (The architect for the project could not be identified but the building shows influences from the works of the popular Woodward and Deane.) Or was there a more personal reason for Westby's chivalric obsessions, perhaps rooted somewhere in the family's history or more particularly in its struggle to have its coat of arms recognised. ?



*Acanthus leaf detail carved into the base of the pillar flanking the porch door at Roebuck Castle.*

Maybe a clue can be found in the catalogue of the personal library of Edward Percival Westby, which is available in the National Library , Dublin. Although history, poetry and religious books predominate, there is a substantial collection of books devoted to heraldry and peerage. Among the seven books listed are the *Grammar of Heraldry*, *Porny's Heraldry* and *Stow's Heraldry*, in addition to several publications by Sir Bernard Burke. <sup>2</sup> M.A. Porny was an Eighteenth Century master of French at Eton whose early book on heraldry came out for the first time in the 1760s.

It would appear that arms were officially granted to the Westby family in 1860 by the then Ulster King of Arms, Sir Bernard Burke. <sup>3</sup> This event coincided with the death of the family patriarch and Edward's father, Nicholas Westby (1786-1860) . The records for this grant indicate that it was based on "tradition" and "family belief" that the Westbys in Ireland were a branch of the Old Lancashire House of Westby of Rawcliffe<sup>4</sup> . The new arms drawn in the grant were therefore identical to the Rawcliffe arms. However, the lineage of the Westbys in Ireland is frequently mentioned as being open to speculation due, it was said, to the destruction of the parish registers of

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<sup>2</sup> NLI, Library Catalogue of Edward Westby Esq., MS 19,755.

<sup>3</sup> NLI, Genealogical Office, MS 108, page 328-29. Confirmation of Grant of Arms to Westby. (MF P8291)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Ennis <sup>5</sup>, where most of its early members lived.

In England , the Rawcliffe Westbys were staunch Catholics and supporters of the Stuarts. They suffered confiscation of much of their lands in north Lancashire in 1653 due to their religious and political affiliations. Much of their estates were purchased back for them in subsequent years and kept in the name of Protestant allies. According to Bernard Burke, it was presumed that the first Westby in Ireland, Thomas, was a son by the second marriage of Major George Westby of Rawcliffe. He was said to have settled originally in Clonmel.

Documents in the Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street, from 1713, established the existence of a clerk in holy orders at Clonmel called the Reverend Thomas Westby <sup>6</sup> . This individual must surely have been a relative of the Thomas mentioned in Burke's history. The deeds related to quite modest land holdings at Powerstowne, Clonmel .They also indicated that Thomas Westby had associations on several occasions with merchants, Richard and Charles Bolton of Clonmel.

Separate deeds from the same era also mentioned an extended Westby family group consisting of a Nicholas, James , William and Edward Westby together with an individual with a potentially give-away name called Humberston Westby. (Humberston is a large village near Cleethorpes in Lincolnshire. Might it suggests links with that area? ).William was identified as a son of Nicholas of Ennis, Edward was a son of Humberston of Strokestown and Nicholas was a son of James Westby of Dublin. <sup>7</sup> They were all associated with various properties in these three locations: Ennis, Dublin and Strokestown. However no evidence came to light associating these Westbys (denoted as the Ennis Westbys) with the Rev. Thomas Westby of Clonmel. Indeed there was a notable absence of this popular Rawcliffe Westby first name, namely Thomas, in the Ennis Westby family tree, inspite of it being cited by Burke as the christian name of the founder in Ireland . This, together with a total absence of evidence linking the Ennis Westbys to the Clonmel area, might make blood ties between the two families open to question.



*Westby crest and motto adorn the exterior wall of Roebuck Castle in Clonskeagh.*

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<sup>5</sup> John Burke , *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* , Vol. 3, pages 117-8.

<sup>6</sup> Registry of Deeds , Henrietta Street Dublin, 1713, book 13, page 93, deed no. 5313.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 1713, book 31, page 57, deed no. 18174.

The Ennis Westbys were first mentioned in the State Papers for Ireland in 1648, when an Edward Westby was listed as a marshal in the royalist regiment of Sir Arthur Loftus during a campaign against the endlessly side-switching Earl of Inchiquin in Clare. The royalist stance of this Edward Westby would certainly be consistent with the politics of the Rawcliffe family. But although the campaign was Clare-based, Sir Arthur Loftus was associated with Rathfarnham Castle in addition to being mayor of Kildare. It is likely, therefore, that his regiment was mustered in Leinster and so Edward Westby may well have been recruited in this province rather than in the western counties.

By the 1690s a Nicholas Westby, said to be a son of the founder in Ireland, Thomas of Clonmel,<sup>8</sup> had been appointed Collector of Customs for Clare, and was one of a three-man syndicate who bought the confiscated estate of Viscount Clare.<sup>9</sup> Advantageous marriages increased the size of the Westby holdings. By the 1870s the family was in possession of over 25,000 acres in the West Clare area.



*Detail of upstairs fireplace in Roebuck Castle incorporating Westby heraldic crest*

Strangely, the adherence of the Rawcliffe Westbys in England to the Catholic faith wasn't mirrored by their "descendants" in Ireland, if indeed they were their descendants. Edward P. Westby was a staunch evangelical Protestant and refused to allow the building of a Catholic church at his lands in Kilbaha in the 1850s.<sup>10</sup> He served for many years as church warden at his local Taney Church in Dundrum, Dublin. Although his main holdings and affairs centered in West Clare, Westby chose to live in Dublin from the 1850s onwards and didn't appear to have a permanent home in Clare at all. Although he was listed in directories as having an address at Doon, Clare, his brother-in-law seemed to be a permanent resident there. Apart from his Dublin residence, Westby had a property at Yorkgate, Regent's Park, London.

<sup>8</sup> John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland, Enjoying Territorial Possessions Or High Official Rank*, Vol. 3. 1836. Page 117-8.

<sup>9</sup> NUI Galway, *landedestates.nuigalway.ie*, accessed July 10 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Moriarty, "The Little Ark, Moneen, Co. Clare", [http://www.messenger.ie/December\\_2010/Cathedrals\\_and\\_Churches\\_in\\_Ireland\\_\(9\)\\_ia.aspx](http://www.messenger.ie/December_2010/Cathedrals_and_Churches_in_Ireland_(9)_ia.aspx), accessed August 2nd 2012.

Roebuck Castle was purchased for £8,000 in 1856 from Catherine Burgh Crofton and her daughter, Frances.<sup>11</sup> It was a large sum given that it came with only forty-two acres. (Most of its lands had been annexed in the 1820s). Westby's second wife was Susan Garde, daughter of solicitor, John Davis Garde of nearby Mount Dillon House, which is now a Carmelite monastery. And it is the Garde family coat of arms which makes up the second main heraldic theme on the walls of the castle. The marriage took place in 1864, a year after the death of Westby's first wife, Mary Blackburne, of Rathfarnham Castle.

Documents in the Registry of Deeds indicate that the purchase appeared to have been financed by the trustees of the Westby estates, which included landlord, Crofton Vandeleur of Kilrush House County Clare, and Westby's land agent and brother-in-law, Marcus Keane.<sup>12</sup> Keane, a much-hated figure in County Clare, was the victim of a well-publicized body-snatching case in 1884. Were the many coats of arms on Roebuck Castle an attempt to silence any potential doubters regarding the true pedigree of the Westby family in Ireland? Perhaps so. ....

To be continued



*Edward Percival Westby's monogram in a spandrel on the wall overlooking the Gothic porch of Roebuck Castle*

Thank you to the Department of Criminal law , University College Dublin, for access to the interior of Roebuck Castle for the purpose of this article.

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<sup>11</sup> Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street, Index book 314( 1850-59) , deed no. 1856-7-4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.