

THE STORY OF WEEDON CHAPEL STAINED GLASS WINDOW

by Ralph Followell



The Rolls family was at the centre of the rebuilding of the Weedon Chapel and its magnificent stained glass window.

William and Maria Rolls

William Rolls and his wife Maria lived in the early part of the 19th century at Weedon Hill Farm. They had 9 children, some of whom were born in Weedon.

Their eldest son William Rolls and his wife Elizabeth

Their eldest child, named William, married Elizabeth Battams in 1840. Chapel House, the home of Charles Seamons, was at that time a farmstead and was split into two with the newlyweds living in one part. William still worked for his father at Weedon Hill Farm, but in 1850 became a grocer. There were three grocers in Weedon at that time but within a few years there was only William.

In 1851, the farmstead was pulled down and a new Chapel House erected.

In 1854, the old Chapel burned down, and a new Chapel was built by Charles Seamons. But the Chapel was not then as it is now – it was converted and extended later.

William died in 1860 and Elizabeth in 1871. Elizabeth Rolls was the first person to be buried in Weedon.

The land of the churchyard was owned by Charles's brother William, who lived at Penwick Furlong. Reputedly, he harvested a row of potatoes to allow the burial. The stone was erected much later and serves as memorial also to William, who is buried in Hardwick.

Edmund Rolls

Edmund Rolls was William and Elizabeth's eldest son and later became the grocer and preacher. A memorial plaque to him is displayed in the Chapel.

The window is in memory of Elizabeth, William's sister

William's younger sister was also an Elizabeth: Elizabeth Ann. She married John Gardiner in 1848 and had two children – Jessie born in 1850 and Thomas in 1851 in Lambeth.

Elizabeth died in the cholera epidemic in 1854 and the window is in her memory.

The family of Edmund Rolls

Edmund's seventh son was also an Edmund, known as Ted. Ted was Joan Rolls's father.

His eighth son was Joseph Thomas Seamons Rolls, known as Thomas, who was 27 years of age when he took on the conversion of the Chapel. I have copies of the letters he received, but sadly not of those that he sent.

Thomas Hales (originally Rolls) and his daughter Edith

Thomas died during the rebuilding, and it was taken over by his daughter Edith. She was actually not his daughter, but the daughter of his wife Martha, who had been married to Henry Hales. Thomas married Martha in 1878 after the death of Henry and assumed Henry's surname.

Why? The Hales family had a successful business going back some years and it paid Thomas to keep the name, as it helped in the business of gold and silver lace making for theatrical work. Thomas was at some time the manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

The installation of the window in 1913

In May 1913, the window was ready and installed, but the renovation of the rest of the building was not completed until September 1913, when Miss Hales unveiled the window.

The service was taken by Edmund's son and Thomas's brother Rev William Rolls. The window cost £110, the pulpit cost £50 and the organ £158.

I don't know when the rest of the building was converted but photos show it as it was in 1913.