

The Hudson family at Oakwood

by Peter Oldfield

Some time ago I was contacted by James Hudson from New Zealand. He is descended from the Hudson family who in the 1800's had strong links with the Oakwood area and Roundhay St John. I asked and was given permission to write this short history of the Hudson family at Oakwood which I first published in 2006 on my original Roundhay St John website (now defunct).

The Hudsons, whose motto is 'Pax In Bello' - Peace in [the midst of] War, can trace their lineage back to Sir William Hudson who from 1506 to 1532 was Vicar of Tickhill (then Tekehill) near Doncaster.

The story of the Hudsons at Oakwood begins with Edward Hudson (1777 - 1862) who was born at Howden. He is buried in the Crypt at Roundhay St John and commemorated inside the church on a brass plaque fixed to the North Wall.



Edward Hudson (1777 - 1862)

Edward made a substantial fortune from his seed business in Leeds although in the 1841 Census¹ he is also described as an Oil Merchant. Edward bought the 'King's Mill' at Swinegate in Leeds from Edward Ferrers in 1815 for the sum of £31,000. The ownership of this mill conferred on the owner the mediaeval title of 'Soke' or 'Soake' of Leeds, entitling him to 1/16th of all wheat and 1/32nd of all malt milled in the Leeds area. Certain groups of people were exempt from this tax, primarily descendants of the Knights Templar e.g. at Temple Newsam, as a sign of exemption, a cross was to be prominently displayed on the building. This evidently very unpopular tax was challenged in the courts and eventually withdrawn by Act of Parliament in 1839. Edward was awarded compensation of £13,000 funded in four annual payments by 'assessment' on the inhabitants of Leeds, which was unlikely to have improved his popularity.

Edward married Georgina Thomas (daughter of Faithful Thomas, Governor of Carlisle Prison) in 1803. They lived at Ladywell House, more recently known as Newton House formerly situated on land now known as Newton Court. It is not known when Georgina died or is buried but Circa 1835 Edward married again, to Susannah Watson who died aged 81 in 1871 and is buried in the Crypt at Roundhay St John.

Of Edward's and Georgina's five children, two have stronger links to Roundhay St John. Robert (1804 - 1863) is buried in the Crypt and commemorated inside the church on a huge North Wall memorial. Henry (1811 – 1891) is buried in the South Graveyard and commemorated in the South Sanctuary window.

Robert was a JP. He was a Church Warden at Roundhay St John from 1844 to 1862 and treasurer of the Alms Houses for the same period.

In 1833 he married Elizabeth Hirst (1811 - 1889) who is also buried in the Crypt and commemorated on Robert's memorial. They lived at 'The Acacias', more recently known as Oakwood Hall which was situated next to Ladywell House.

In the 1861 census Robert's occupation was described as 'Seed crusher employing 77 hands and Colliery owner employing 419 hands'.

Ernest, the last of their ten children, was born in 1858 when his mother must have been aged 47.



Robert Hudson (1804 - 1863)

According to the 1841 Census, Henry then aged 30 was still living with his parents. However, within five years he had married Margaret Ann Harland (1821 - 1860) who is commemorated with the middle North Transept window at Roundhay St John. Henry was a Woollen Merchant by trade and, like his father, a JP. In the 1871 Census Henry was recorded as living at Oakwood House off Horse Shoe Lane, now called Sabourn Court on Oakwood Lane.

Two of Henry's ten children also have inscriptions at Roundhay St John. Edwin, Lieutenant Royal Engineers, who died in 1870 age 21 is mentioned in the same inscription as his mother. Arthur (1854 - 1887) is buried in the South Churchyard.

To bring the story up-to-date

James from New Zealand is a direct descendant of Ernest. Unlike his father and grandfather, Ernest did not add to the family fortune and was described as a 'Gentleman of Means', later shooting with the then King (probably Edward VII) at Sandringham. Ernest's story almost didn't get any further as he narrowly avoided being on the train that was destroyed in the Tay Bridge Disaster of 28th December 1878.

Although Ernest's son Lionel owned the first Rolls Royce in Darlington, his generation marked the end of the 'landed gentry' as death duties took 60% of their wealth.

Lionel's son Robert (James' father) had the distinction of serving aboard HMS Exeter during the hunt for the German battleship Bismarck in May 1941.

Note

¹ Kindly transcribed by Neville Hurworth