

# Full Circle

by Alan Simpson

In 2003 when we recorded the monumental inscriptions at St Mary's Church, Wheatley, we came across the ornate headstone shown overleaf. The inscription had been carved in relief in the deeply recessed ribbons seen at the bottom of the stone. Unfortunately the recesses had trapped rainwater and the result had been to erode the stone so badly that little remained readable beyond the bottom two lines which read:

**Also of Annie wife of the above  
who died Nov. 4.1935.  
in her 89th year.**

The dates and the burial register allowed us to tentatively identify her as Annie ROLFE, buried 11 November 1935, but that was as far as we could get.

Fast forward to 2014 and we have started transcribing the monuments at St John the Evangelist, Hailey. As always we like to discover a little of the history of the churches where we record and one of the first facts to come to light was that by 1866, the original church was said to be *'ugly, ill-pewed and very dilapidated'*. So it was decided to pull this building down and build a new church on a larger site nearby. The incumbent at the time was a Revd. George Crabb ROLFE and in the best traditions of ecclesiastical nepotism the architect of the new church was to be his

son Clapton Crabb ROLFE. ROLFE's plans were initially rejected by the diocesan architect as being *'needlessly eccentric'* but eventually a compromise was reached and the present church was built.

Anxious to learn more about this architect with 'needlessly eccentric' tastes, we looked him up on the internet and in a Wikipedia article at: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clapton_Crabb_Rolfe)

**Clapton\_Crabb\_Rolfe** we discovered, amongst other things., that he died in 1907 and that *'Both he and Annie (his wife) are buried in the parish churchyard of St Mary's, Wheatley'*. Given his date of death we are now able to go back to the Wheatley burial register and confirm that a Clapton Crabb ROLFE was indeed buried there (see bottom of page).

So we have discovered who was commemorated on the lost inscription. Since both his brother and his son also trained as architects, we may perhaps have a clue as to who designed this unique headstone. Eccentric perhaps, but not surely not needlessly so?

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*The eroded grave stone at St Mary's Church,  
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