William & Mary (Windridge) Wallis

of Caldecote & Nuneaton in Warwickshire, England.
Written May, 2013 by Donald R. Simpson.

William Wallis and Mary Windridge were married in Aug., 1830 in Nuneaton, England. They lived most of their lives in and near Nuneaton, a small market town in northeastern Warwickshire near the line with Leicestershire. Most of their children were born there and were christened in the Parish Church of St. Lawrence or in nearby Caldecote. One exception was their son, William, who was born in Ireland and christened at the Drumachose Parish Church in County Derry.

1. William Wallis.

William was born about 1810 [*age 31 on census of 1841; age 40 on census of 1851*] probably in the village of Brandon in Warwickshire. Brandon was in the Parish of Wolston where in 1815 John & Elizabeth Wallis of Brandon had their three sons all christened at the same time. Those three were William, John & Thomas Wallis, of whom William & John were later resident in Nuneaton and Thomas in Coventry, Nuneaton & elsewhere.

William was listed with several occupations but in the latter part of his life he seems to have been a groom or farrier, both terms referring to the care and keeping of horses. In a time long before automobiles, horses were the principal means of travel, other than on foot, consequently their care and training was important. He also apparently worked as a male servant including as a coachman for the owner of Caldecote Manor, an estate near Nuneaton. The owner of Caldecote when he began working there was a Mr. Dempster Hemming about whom there is more below.



Figure 1: St. Nicolas Parish Church, Nuneaton.

2. Mary (Windridge) Wallis.

Mary was born in 1805 in the rural Parish of Sutton Cheney in Leicestershire. Her parents were John & Mary (Martin) Windridge of Sutton Cheney. Mary was married to

William Wallis in 1830 at St. Nicolas Church, the parish church of Nuneaton. Six of their nine children were christened at St. Nicholas Church, probably in the baptismal font seen here in figure 2. The photo of church and font were made on May 6 during my research trip of spring, 2011.

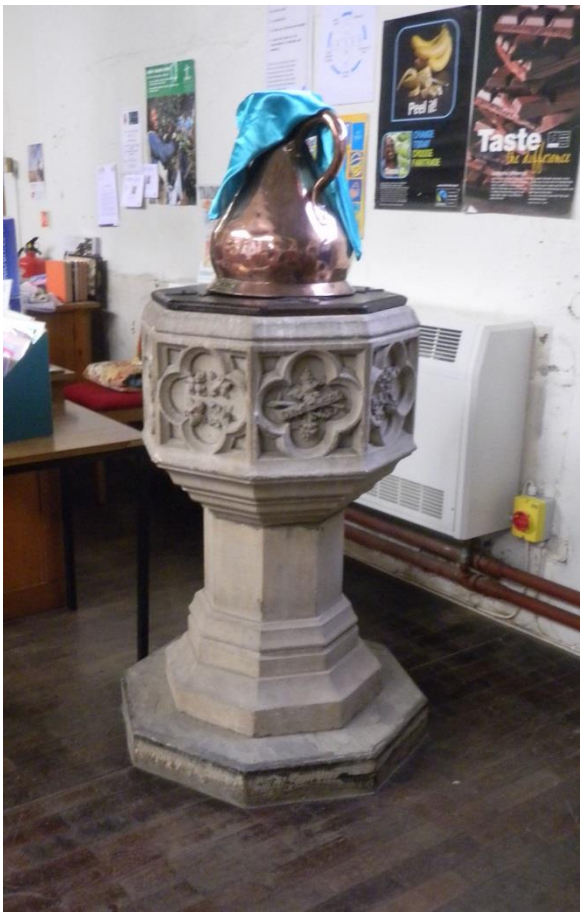


Figure 2: Baptismal Font at St. Nicolas Church.

William & Mary were living in Nuneaton at the censuses of 1841 & 1851 but have not been found on any later censuses. If they died in Nuneaton then they were probably buried in St. Nicolas churchyard but we have no record of such burials.

3. The Children.

The known children of William & Mary were John, Eleanor, Eliza, William, Mary, Thomas, Emma, Sarah, & James. They were all born between 1830 & 1847, Eleanor & Eliza while they were living in the nearby Parish of Caldecote, William while they were on a trip to northern Ireland, and the rest of the children in Nuneaton.

4. Mr. Hemming and Mr. Hansom.

The holder of Caldecote Hall at the time that William Wallis worked there in the 1830's was Dempster Heming, the son of George & Amicia (Bracebridge) Heming. Dempster was born about 1778, probably in an adjacent parish, either Weddington or Nuneaton, and died in 1874 at Dover on the coast of Kent. In his early life he had gone to India where was a lawyer at the British Courts in Calcutta. After returning to England he had acquired the Manor of Caldecote which he purchased in about 1829 and held it until about 1841.

While living at Caldecote Mr. Hemming had hired Mr. Joseph Hansom of Birmingham to manage his business affairs. Mr. Hansom moved to Caldecote & lived at the manor house beginning about 1834 at which time William Wallis was the Coachman there. While at Caldecote, Mr. Hansom was involved in inventing (with Mr. Hemming's financial backing) a horse drawn cab that would be more efficient than the Hackney Cab then in widespread use. The new Hansom Cab was

very successful and became the most commonly used cab in London and other British cities and was even used in New York City. Since William Wallis was then employed at coachman at Caldecote it is possible he may have helped in testing the new Hansom Cab.

Anyone familiar with the stories of the fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, created by Arthur Conan Doyle, will remember his frequent use of the Hansom Cab in London.

5. The Wallis family trip to Ireland.

William & Mary's son, William, Jr., was listed on the censuses of 1841, 1861, 1871, 1881, & 1901 as born in Ireland. The 1881 census actually lists his birthplace as County Derry Ireland. Christening records of the Anglican Church Parish of Drumachose in County Derry include that on 16 Jan., 1836, of "William, [*son of*] William Wallace [*read Wallis*] & Mary, Coachman at Roe Park." By Dec., 1837 they were back in Nuneaton where their daughter Mary was christened.

This suggests he may have been working as coachman for the owner of the Manor of Roe Park at the time they were there. If so that employment must have ended soon thereafter since the christening of daughter Mary in Dec., 1838, gives his occupation as "victualler" and residence as Bond End in Nuneaton. I had earlier thought that they had gone to Ireland in the employ of Mr. Hemming but there is not good evidence to know if that was so or not.