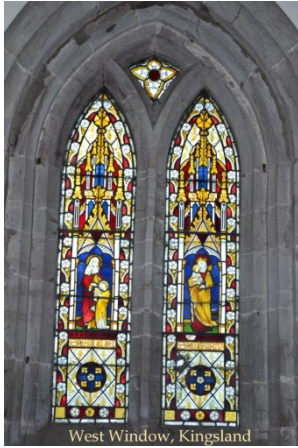


## THE WEST WINDOW.

My title refers to the stained glass memorial window in the tower of your lovely church.



Because it is, in effect, hidden from the rest of the church by the vestry door, the window is not very noticeable to visitors, although I'm sure that most long standing parishioners will probably be aware of its existence. However, the church has a book mark for sale showing a detail of the window, which may have raised awareness of how beautiful it is and perhaps will make people go to look for it.

The window carries no dedication, so, on the face of it, it is a bit of a mystery as to who would have placed it there and also, of course, when it might have been dedicated. Furthermore, why was it given to the church? The purpose of this piece, then, is to shed a little light on the mystery.

I have been researching my family history for over twenty years but it is only in the latter part of that time that I unearthed my connection to the Russell family, working backwards from my maternal grandmother. You may wonder why it took me so long to discover my Russells, but that would take a lot of time to explain, boring you to death in the process, so I'll spare you that and move on.

First of all, some background information, the relevance of which will become clear very soon.

My earliest knowledge of my Russell family goes back into the seventeenth century when John Russell had a child baptised in Tenbury Parish Church, in 1682 and was the first of five generations to live there. There were several drapers in the family, but an Edward Russell, born in Tenbury, in 1810, bucked the trend and became a farmer and, later, an auctioneer in Leominster. Originally he lived at "Roseland" in Leominster but when he died, in 1876, he was living at the "Showers", in Kingsland.

Edward's son, also Edward, born in 1839, and one of eight children, carried on the family business in Leominster, living in Cholstrey, but whether at the farm or the Manor is not clear. He married twice, first, in Leominster, in 1863, to Anne Carwardine, born in Leominster, in 1837, but Anne died in 1867, aged only twenty-nine, two years after losing Edward junior, their only child, aged only eleven months.

His second marriage, a rather quick affair, took place in November 1868, in Ludlow. The bride in this case was Elizabeth Evans, born in Ludlow, but, sadly, she, too died two years later, also aged twenty nine. However, she in turn, bore Edward a son, also Edward, in August 1869. I won't trouble you with any further family history, as it is going beyond the scope of this piece, but will get down to the matter which prompted me to write it, namely, the window in the tower.

Having obtained all the information I have just set out, I came to St Michaels a little while ago, intent on finding any Russell gravestones which might exist. I have found, over the years, that searching for gravestones can be a laborious process, generally



involving getting one's feet wet in neglected, overgrown areas of cemeteries or churchyards. On this occasion, however, to my surprise, I found a group of five gravestones, in what is a Russell burial plot, right outside the church tower and below the window in question.

Four of the stones are identical in design. These are arranged in a group of three in a row, and one on its own, to their right, as you look from the main path, but there is also a small one dedicated to Francis Henry Russell who died in 1966 aged almost ninety.

It is the large stone on its own which gives us the clue we are looking for. On one side is a memorial to Edward's first wife, Anne, but on the other is inscribed *'Also Elizabeth, second wife of Edward Russell of Cholstrey died December 7<sup>th</sup> 1870 aged 29 years. Also Edward who died September 6<sup>th</sup> 1881 aged 42'*

Beneath the names is inscribed *"in affectionate remembrance of whom the memorial window in the tower was consecrated"* so you would be forgiven for assuming that the window was dedicated to the memory of both Elizabeth and Edward, but you'd be wrong.

There is a mention of the window in the description of Kingsland in Littlebury's Directory of Herefordshire, for 1876/7, held in Hereford Record Office, so it must have been installed some time between Elizabeth's death in 1870, and 1876, when the directory was prepared. Therefore, as Edward, lived until 1881, it must have been commissioned by him *in affectionate remembrance* of Elizabeth. So, now we know. Case closed.

I am well aware that it is very easy to bore people with details of one's family history but I hope that this has been of interest to you.

Bryan Roberts April 2012

Note: Edward Russell farmed at the Showers and was instrumental in founding the auctioneers which grew to become Russell, Baldwin and Bright, now Brightwells. The Russell family plot at the base of the Church tower is a short and direct walk from Showers Farm where the Russells lived.

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