

Gaddesby Church and the Cheney Monument

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Approaching, and then entering St Luke's Church at Gaddesby for the first time is an experience for the senses, with so much to see. As far as the chancel is concerned, a relatively late addition of 1898 dominates the scene - mounted on a pedestal is the sculpture of a soldier on a dying horse. This is Joseph Gott's 'Cheney Monument'. The story of the monument is however imperfectly known, as records are sparse and incomplete. The most comprehensive source to date is Terry Cavanagh in the authoritative work *Public sculpture of Leicestershire and Rutland*. (1) This article attempts to develop what is known so far, and includes a new and likely explanation of the way in which the sculptor and the patron of the monument were brought together.

*The Battle of Waterloo
18th June 1815*

Nothing, except a battle lost, can be half so melancholy as a battle won. (The Duke of Wellington, despatch from the field of battle.)

We know the Cheney monument commemorates heroic actions which took place during the Battle of Waterloo. The battle was fought thirteen kilometres south of Brussels, and is when British and Allied armies finally defeated Napoleon.

On the night of 17th June 1815, the Royal Scots Greys, a

cavalry regiment to which Captain, by now brevit Major, Edward Cheney was attached, spent the night in a hollow by the road among green barley. Little lifted their spirits as a steady rain fell upon them. Next morning, as the rain still streamed down, they ate a makeshift breakfast of oats and water, becoming aware as they did so, that the conflict had commenced. Frustratingly for the Greys, they had been held back, and as the French advanced, Lord Uxbridge ordered a cavalry attack, but again, the Greys were kept in reserve.

However, the Greys commander, Colonel Hamilton, noticed that a section of the Allies' infantry line was starting to weaken and fall back in disorder. He took the initiative and ordered a walking (rather than riding) advance, partly because of the rough ground, but also to minimise casualties amongst the British and Allied foot soldiers. Having walked through the 92nd Highlanders, the Greys were then able to attack the French infantry. As the battle continued, Colonel Hamilton rode on, but was soon killed on the battlefield. Without their commander, the Greys fragmented into small isolated groups, with many being picked off by the French cavalry.

Casualties were terrible. When they went into battle, the number of the Greys was 391. At the end of the day, they had 104 dead and 97 wounded. Of the 416 horses they had at the beginning of the day, 228 were dead.



The Cheney monument in the chancel at Gaddesby Church.

The Hero and the Sculpture

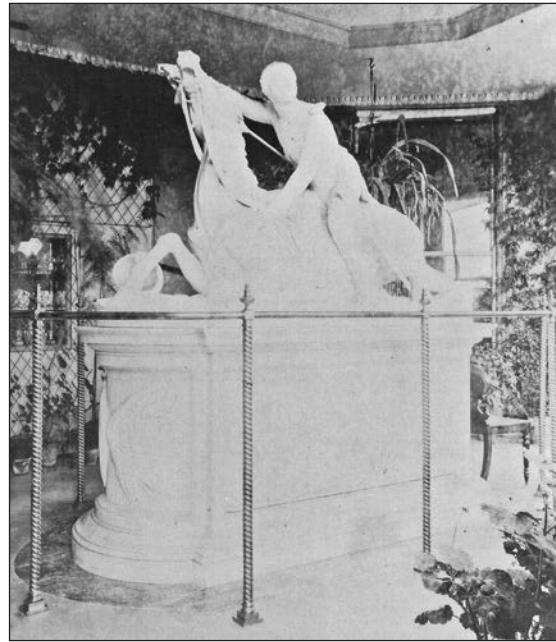
Cheney, who had been at the heart of the fighting throughout the day, emerged unscathed. His exposure to the intensity of the fighting is borne out in that during the battle, four of his horses had been killed and a fifth wounded. Following the attrition of the day, he found himself acting commanding officer of the regiment. In recognition of his services, only four days later, on 22nd June 1815, the Prince Regent, on the recommendation of the Duke of Wellington, made the newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Cheney, a Companion of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath.

The top equestrian section of the Cheney monument shows Cheney astride Tannar, the fourth of the five horses which he rode at Waterloo. A detailed description of the monument is provided by Cavanagh - Tannar is depicted as having sunk to the ground, a bullet wound explicitly carved in bold relief on its chest. Cheney leans forward, his left hand still gripping the horse's reins, his right hand thrust out ahead of him, the index finger pointing forward, while he nonetheless manages to keep a grip on his sword, which is now reversed and pointing backwards past his right side. He is bareheaded, his shako, with broken strap having fallen to the ground by the horse's hoof. The base around the collapsed horse is a mass of flattened barley. The front of the base of the top part of the sculpture is inscribed: EDWARD H. CHENEY, COLONEL IN THE ARMY, LATE SCOTS GREYS, and the rear of the base (now against the chancel wall) records "TANNAR", ONE OF FOUR HORSES KILLED UNDER HIM, JUNE 18TH 1815. The front of the base of the sculpture is signed J.GOTT FT. (2)

This unusual church monument does not appear to have been originally made for Gaddesby church. It was initially delivered to Gaddesby Hall where the Cheney family lived, where it was placed in the orangery in a position so it could be walked around. An enclosure with brass railings was constructed around it, the gates of the current chancel screen in St Luke's are from this enclosure. (3)

At some point the monument was moved from Gaddesby Hall across to St Luke's church. This was almost certainly in 1898, when the Cheney family left the hall and it was cleared for letting. (4) To move the memorial across to the church, it had to be dismantled into its components. These were then hauled on oak rollers from the Hall, by horse, and taken into the church through the north door and across the nave. The monument was placed in the chancel, rather than in the nave or aisles, the explanation for this being that the Cheneys owned the manorial rights and were rectors of the chancel and sanctuary. (5) According to oral tradition, the removal of the monument to the church was carried out by local labour, and it is a tribute to them to have executed this unique challenge of unfamiliarity, bulk, weight, distance and

level changes, so apparently well, with no catastrophic damage during the move. (6)



A rare image of the Cheney monument at Gaddesby Hall.

An examination of the sculpture today reveals some relatively minor damage which may date from the move, the most noticeable of which, is a hairline crack across the horse's rump. Also, on the left side, part of the lower sling adjacent to the colonel's scabbard is missing. The left ear of the nearest horse at the right of the relief is partly lost, while the left foot of the horse's rider has been broken off and is glued back on, the glue now being discoloured. Looking at the standing French infantryman, second from the left, the right ear and part of the rifle mechanism are slightly chipped; the nose and upper lip of the half-lying French infantryman are also slightly chipped. Further inadvertent damage has occurred over the years, the horse's teeth having become discoloured by an apple being regularly pressed into its mouth during harvest festivals. (7)

The pedestal and a second heroic incident

Looking at the panel on the front of the sculpture's pedestal something unexpected is found. Although the Cheney monument is dedicated to one man, it unexpectedly portrays another heroic incident of that day, and is in fact shared by two soldiers, one who is named on it and one who is not. This further battle scene shown in relief on the pedestal depicts the wresting of the Standard [French Eagle] from the enemy by a soldier who we know from other sources to be Sergeant Charles Ewart (1769-1846), also of the Scots Greys. Carved in relief at the semi-circular ends of the pedestal, are crossed standards, at the left end are the Royal Scots Greys' regimental standards, and at the right, two depictions of the French eagle standard as captured by Ewart. (8) Although of the same regiment, Ewart's and

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Cheney's actions were carried out independently from each other, with Ewart belonging to Captain Vernor's 'F' Troop. (9) In large letters on the rear panel of the pedestal (now against the wall), is the word WATERLOO.

By capturing a French Standard with an overwhelming feat of arms, Sergeant Ewart became a hero overnight. He was given the Freedom of the city of Irvine, Ayrshire, and feted wherever he went. In 1821, he retired from the army with a £100 a year pension, married a Stockport girl and they moved to Salford. He passed his retirement by teaching swordsmanship. On his death, he was buried in a churchyard in Salford, his grave eventually becoming neglected and overgrown. In 1938, he was exhumed and reburied at Edinburgh Castle.

Unfortunately there are no known surviving Cheney estate documents, nor any other documents relating to the monument which may help explain how these two heroes came to be commemorated together at Gaddesby. Instead, the most likely answer at present appears to be provided by family history research, although it remains baffling and odd as to why there is no mention of Sergeant Ewart's name on the pedestal panels.

Who was Colonel Edward Hawkins Cheney?

Edward Hawkins Cheney (1778-1848) was the son of Robert Cheney (1737-1809) and his second wife, Bridget Leacroft. The future Colonel grew up at Langley Hall, Meynell Langley in Derbyshire. In 1812 he married Eliza Ayre whose family had owned the Gaddesby Hall estate since the early eighteenth century. Eliza was the younger of two sisters – her elder sister, Mary never marrying. Colonel Cheney died at Gaddesby Hall in 1848. The Cheneys were also Lords of the Manor of Monyash in Derbyshire, and many of the family were buried there, but Colonel Edward Hawkins Cheney chose to lie with his wife and her family at Ashby Folville. Later, on Mary's death in 1856, the Gaddesby estate passed to the Colonel and Eliza Cheney's only son, Edward Henshaw Cheney. (10)

Joseph Gott (1786-1860) and the Gott Family

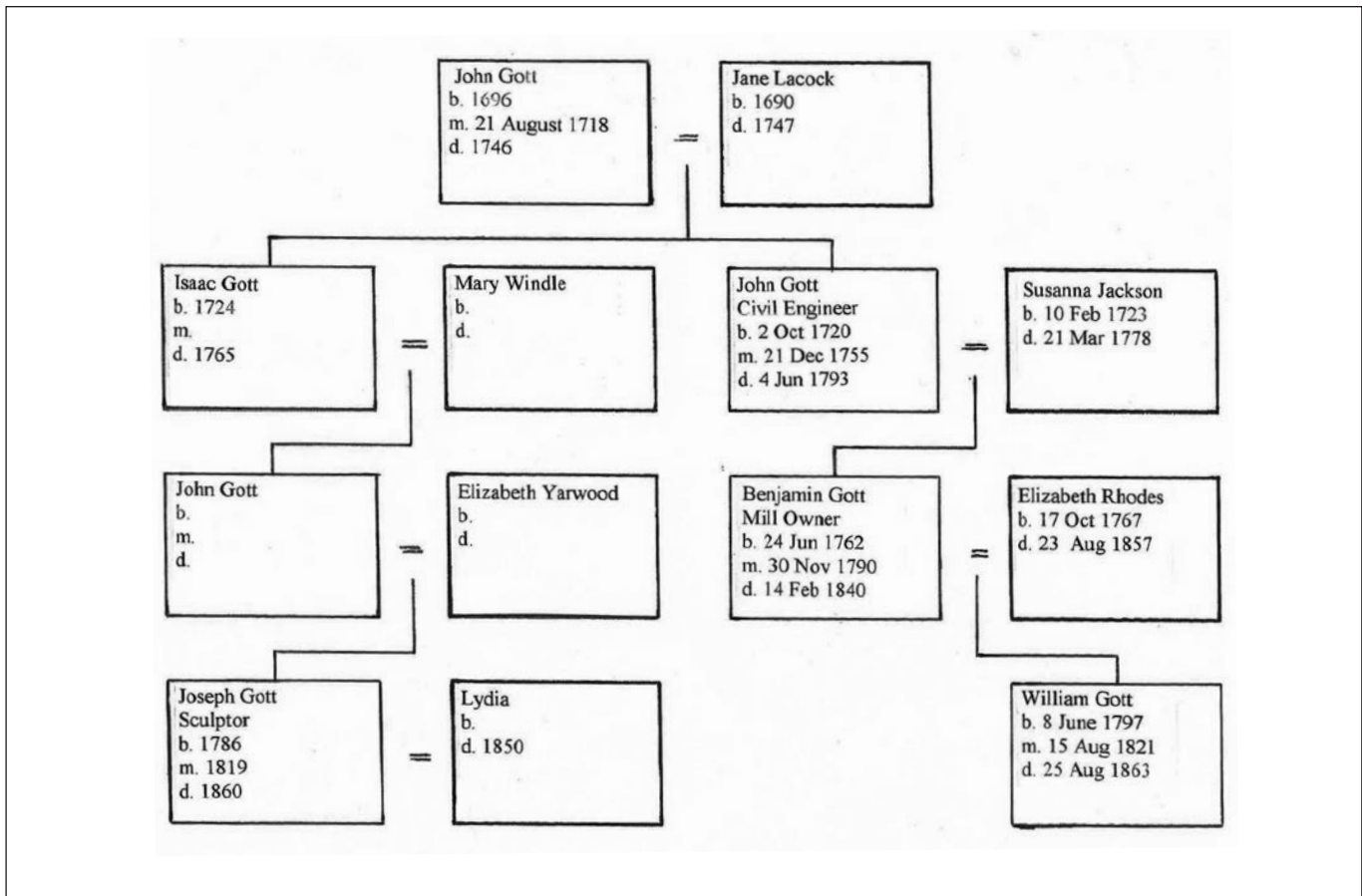
The sculptor of the Cheney monument, Joseph Gott, was born in 1786, the son of John Gott of 31 Ogle Street, Marylebone, London. John's grandfather, Isaac Gott (died 1765) was a native of Calverley, and Isaac's elder brother was John Gott of Woodhall (1720-93), a civil engineer. John's son, Benjamin Gott (1762-1840), became a leading Yorkshire woollen manufacturer and Joseph's principal patron. From 1798-1802, Joseph was in London, apprenticed to the leading English sculptor, John Flaxman (1755-1826). Over the years, Gott produced work that often gained attention and awards. He married in 1819 and by 1821 he

had two children. They decided to emigrate to the small community of British artists in Rome, where Gott was to remain for the rest of his life. His moving to Rome was supported with a pension from Sir Thomas Lawrence FRS (1769-1830), who had become wealthy producing portraits of the great people of his time. Lawrence also provided Gott with a letter of introduction to Antonio Canova (1757-1822). Although living in Rome, Joseph regularly visited England to discuss new work. In time, his commissions improved, and his standard of living along with them. Commissions were given to him by many clients, and from 1825 for the next 13 years he earned a good living from his work. By this time, due to the advent of steam power, and cheaper sea transport both for travel and transport, imported goods could be readily moved from abroad to Britain by ship, and then by canal, and later by railway within the country. This allowed a sculptor to live in Rome, where living was not only more congenial, but cheaper, and good marble was readily available. However, in 1838 a serious cholera outbreak scared away visitors to Rome. Not only that, but Gott's sculptures were beginning to receive the occasional hostile review, and from that time he lived a more constrained life, getting work where he could. It is believed that the Cheney monument is dated to 1848 (the time of the Colonel's death), and was one of Gott's last large-scale works.

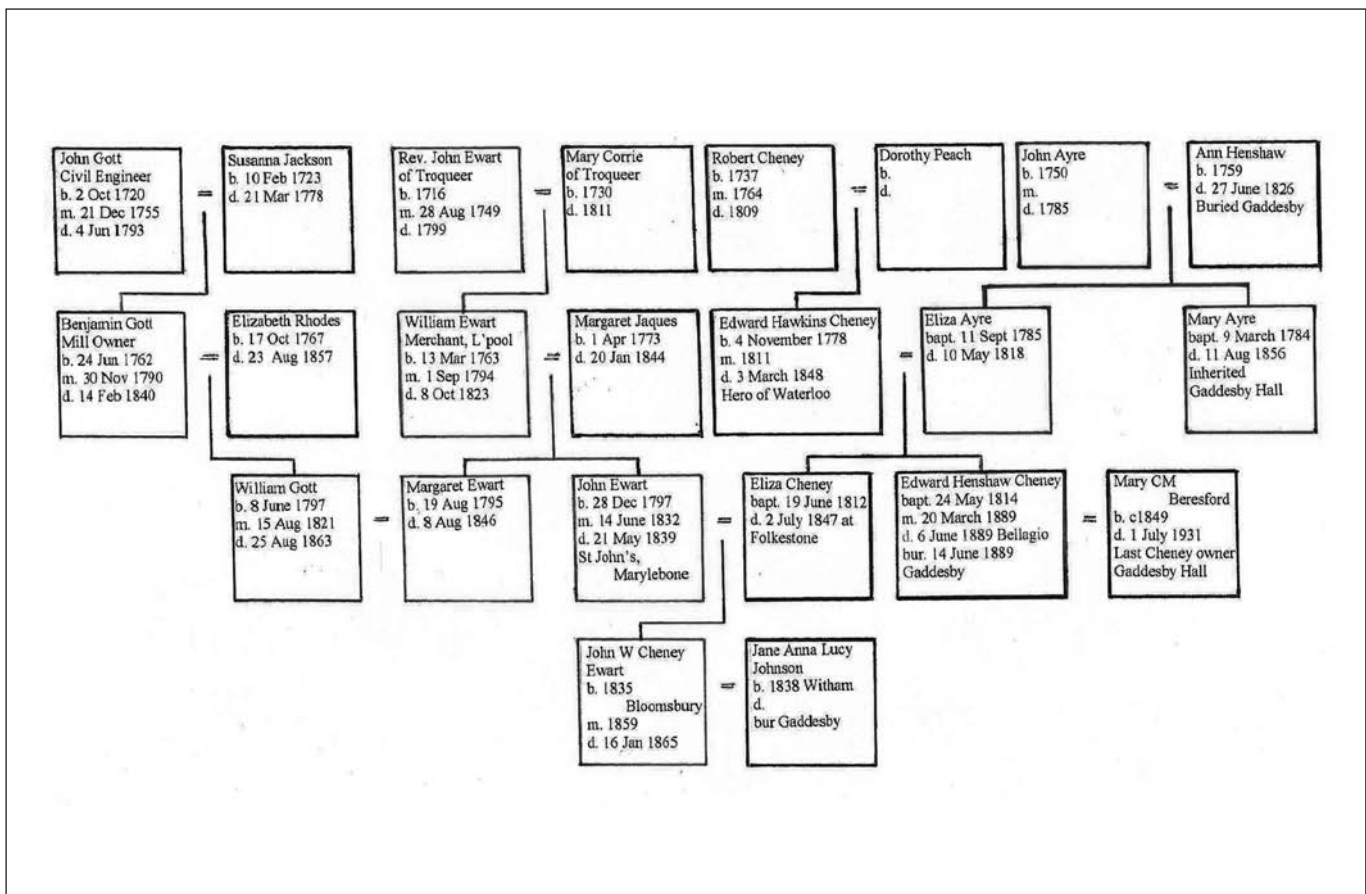


Finely carved detail on the Cheney monument - horse's head with reins (top), and barley field below the horse (bottom).

ANCESTRY OF JOSEPH GOTT, SCULPTOR, AND BENJAMIN GOTT, MILL OWNER



FAMILY RELATIONSHIP OF AYRE, CHENEY, EWART AND GOTT



*Leicestershire Historian 2012**The commissioning of the Cheney monument*

There is no known documentation, nor any additional references related to the commissioning, purchase or creation of the Cheney Monument, other than Gott's name carved on the base of the statue. The accepted view is that Gott was chosen as sculptor for the Cheney monument, largely as a result of a suggestion from the watercolourist Thomas Hartley Cromek (1809-1873) whose patrons included the hero's two half-brothers, both of whom were distinguished art collectors. Cromek had been trained in Wakefield, and worked in Leeds between 1825 and 1830. He was in Rome from 1830 to 1849 where it is said, he frequently visited the studio of sculptor Joseph Gott, this providing the connection to the Cheney monument commission. (11)

There are however difficulties with this view, and an alternative explanation proposed here is that the choice of Gott came about through family links, although not necessarily the most obvious ones, as the commissioning of works by Gott and sculptor John Gibson (1790-1866), by different family members shows. (12)

Sometime after the Colonel's half-brother, Robert Cheney died in 1819, his widow, Harriet (nee Carr) and family, including Robert Henry (died 1866), and Edward Cheney (died 1884), moved to Badger Hall in Shropshire. When the Cheney family at Badger Hall cast around for someone to execute the memorials to Harriet Cheney (died 1848) and Harriet Pigot (died 1853), their choice was British sculptor John Gibson. (13) Therefore it seems plausible to suggest that, even if the Cheney monument may have been commissioned first, it would be odd if the Shropshire Cheneys, (or Cromek, if he was involved), would suggest any other sculptor than Gibson to the Cheney family at Gaddesby for the statue to Colonel Cheney. The fact it was Gott, perhaps indicates that links between the branches of the Cheneys were not close enough for them to have passed on a sculptor's name, and that the commissioning of Gott was made through other wider family connections as follows.

Family history research has revealed how the three major family groups involved in the commissioning of the Cheney monument – the Cheneys, Gotts and Ewarts - came together by marriage. The heads of these families were very different in origins. One was Colonel Cheney who could hold his head high in any company, who lived at Gaddesby Hall and was as we have seen, a hero of Waterloo. Two were self-made men - Benjamin Gott, the aforementioned son of a civil engineer, was a mill owner and manufacturer and extremely successful, to the degree that he owned what was then the biggest textile factory in the world. The third, William Ewart had come to Liverpool as a teenager, from a

poor but genteel family in the Scottish Lowlands, to be apprenticed to a trader and importer. William had become hugely successful and rich as an importer, ship owner and trader - a giant among the merchants of Liverpool, being particularly enmeshed in the Anglo-Scottish community, and who was also honoured by being asked to be godfather to the future Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone. During 1827, both Benjamin Gott and the family of the late William Ewart decided to commission funerary monuments. Casting around, they chose Benjamin Gott's distant relative, Joseph as the sculptor. Further commissions came from these families for Joseph. (14)

The answer to 'who commissioned the Cheney monument?', appears to lie in the generation of Edward Henshaw Cheney (1814-1889), the hero's son, as it is here where the closest inter-family contacts can be seen. Edward Henshaw's sister, Eliza Cheney (1812-1847), married John Ewart (1797-1839) in 1832, and she and doubtless her unmarried brother (Edward Henshaw), would have been welcomed at Ewart family gatherings, either in Liverpool or London. At these gatherings, as they were all of similar age, Eliza may have introduced Edward Henshaw to her sister-in-law, Margaret Gott, nee Ewart (1795-1846), and her husband, William Gott (1797-1863). William Gott's grandfather and sculptor Joseph Gott's grandfather were brothers. William Gott and his father Benjamin had been patrons of artists and composers for some time. (15) It is also possible that the commission for the Cheney work may have been linked to the passing, or imminent passing, of a generation and with it, memories of an heroic time. It is most probable that the Cheney monument was initiated by Colonel Cheney's surviving son Edward Henshaw soon after his father's death in March 1848, and this would also bring the Gaddesby dating evidence into alignment with the dating view held by the art experts. William Gott seems the most likely person to have suggested his kinsman Joseph Gott as sculptor to Edward Henshaw. (16)

Family connections also help explain the links with Sergeant Charles Ewart, the hero of the Cheney monument pedestal, and it seems reasonable to propose that William Gott, who having married a Ewart, suggested the panel scene in tribute to his wife's family, and as a way of linking the two families together in a memorial. It is also likely that William, a wealthy art collector and patron of the arts, may also have contributed towards the cost of the pedestal.

Why Sergeant Ewart's name is not actually mentioned on the monument which records not only Colonel Cheney's name but also that of his horse, remains a mystery, and whilst there is a commemorative wall tablet for Eliza Ewart, nee Cheney (1812-47) in Gaddesby's Chancel, which also mentions her husband John Ewart (1797-1839); nowhere is there a statement linking either to Sergeant Ewart's family.

The only place where this is a written assertion is in A. K. Baker's book on the Cheney's. (17) Consequently, unless one already knows the heroic act depicted on the main panel of the pedestal, little sense can be made of what is seen, and the hero remains anonymous to the onlooker.



Sergeant Ewart (mounted) is depicted capturing the French Eagle.

Interestingly, looking further at the monument, a clear horizontal division can be seen between the equine sculpture and the pedestal below. The top part of the monument is pure Cheney, whilst the bottom part could be considered pure Ewart. Even the marble used above and below the dividing line is different, raising further questions that remain to be answered, including: was the Cheney Monument commissioned as two separate monuments, possibly one before the other, and which came together as 'one' later, and was the pedestal also by Gott, or could it have been by another sculptor such as Gibson? At present we can only speculate.

For some reason, the Cheney Monument was never fully finished. Looking around the horse and rider, there are features to protect delicate items whilst in transit, for example the reins on the left of the horse are stayed back to the horse's neck. Also a small bridge piece remains on one of the fingers on the right hand. There are other 'temporary' supports to be seen as you look around man and horse. Other unanswered questions include: what did the right hand of the Waterloo hero originally point to? Was it a wall plaque, as there is now in St Luke's chancel? One legend associated with the horse revolves around its tongue, or more accurately, its apparent absence. It is said that when the absence of the tongue was pointed out to Gott, he killed himself. There is however, unlikely to be any truth in this. When a horse is wounded, it can swallow its tongue (18), and in fact the sculptor lived another 12 years after 1848.

A final thought – although it almost certainly cannot be established, one further consideration is that the sculpture may not have been intended to have the pedestal we now

see. It could originally have been for Colonel Cheney's burial place at Ashby Folville, perhaps sitting on a suitable masonry plinth. If so, either a change of heart, or a refusal from the intended church, may have led to its installation initially at Gaddesby Hall and then in Gaddesby church. This would also fit in with the above suggestion that the Cheney monument was in fact made in two parts.

References and Notes:

1. Terry Cavanagh, Alison Yarrington, *Public Sculpture of Leicestershire and Rutland*, (Liverpool University Press, 2000).
 2. Ibid.
 3. Interview 12th January 2012 with Jean Hill who has been involved with St Luke's Church, Gaddesby for over 50 years.
 4. Cavanagh comments that some historians date the move later, to 1917. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit., p.53.
 5. Interview with Jean Hill, 12th January 2012, op.cit.
 6. Ibid. Also interview with Eileen Whait, 10th May 2012. The cost of the works is believed to have been 6s.8d.
 7. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit.
 8. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit., p.52.
 9. Charles Dalton (F.R.G.S.), *The Waterloo Roll Call*, (1904).
 10. A. K. Baker, *A Gaddesby Connection*, (The Author, 1995).
 11. Joseph Gott, 1786-1860, Sculptor, 1972 Exhibition Catalogue.
 12. Unless one accepts an alternative theory proposed by R. Gunnis that Colonel Cheney himself commissioned the work while still alive. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit., p.52-3.
 13. As well as Gott, there was another British sculptor in Rome, John Gibson (1790-1866), whose reputation and patronage was very strong at this time. Gibson had joined Canova in his Rome workshop in 1817, whilst Gott arrived five years later. Gott appears to have worked in Gibson's shadow, and even now, on the internet, alongside the illustration of Gott's noteworthy statue of William Ewart, the Liverpool Gallery patronisingly describes the sculptor as 'Yorkshire's Gibson'.
 14. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit.
 15. Leeds University, Brotherton Library, Gott Papers, MS193-4.
 16. Cavanagh considered the possibility of Edward Henshaw Cheney commissioning the monument when he inherited the Gaddesby Hall estate in 1856, but suggesting this as problematic since Gott would have been over 70 years of age by this time, and unlikely that he would have taken on 'such a grandiose scheme' as the Cheney monument. Cavanagh, Yarrington, (2000), op.cit., p.53. However, this becomes less problematic if Edward Henshaw commissioned the statue on his father's death some 8 years earlier.
 17. A. K. Baker, (1995), op.cit.
 18. Interview with Jean Hill, 12th January 2012, op.cit.
- Additional sources include:
- Ernest D. Smith, *The Parish Church of St Luke Gaddesby*, (W. H. Lead, 1968).
- Christie's International Magazine*, November-December 1987.