

Memorial 32

WILLIAM SHEPHERD died February 1850

This footstone with just the initials W.S and the date 1850 on it may be the memorial to William Shepherd, aged 53, of St David's parish, since he is the only person recorded as buried in the Dissenters' Graveyard that year with those initials. He was a shoemaker.



William Shepherd was born on 27th May 1796, the fourth child and second son of John Shepherd and his wife Sarah, of Crediton, baptised on 20th June at the Bowden Hill Presbyterian church, Crediton.¹ John Shepherd was recorded as a sergemaker in the 1783 Crediton Borough List of Freeholders.² He had married Sarah Ward on 26th July 1789 at Crediton parish church.³

William Shepherd married Ann Rowdon on 6th April 1822 at Crediton parish church.⁴ She also came from a dissenting family; she was baptised on 26th January 1794 at Bowden Hill Presbyterian Church and was the daughter of Philip and Betty Rowdon.⁵ Ann's sister Elizabeth had married William's elder brother John, who

was also a shoemaker, in 1815.⁶

William and Ann's marriage was to be tragically short; Ann died just four months after the wedding and was buried at Crediton parish church on 16th August 1822 aged 28.⁷

William then moved to Exeter where he married Martha Williams on 11th May 1823 at St Mary Arches church.⁸ He was described as "of Crediton" in the parish register, while Martha was of St Mary Arches parish. The 1841 census⁹ shows William Shepherd, aged 45, cordwainer (shoemaker), born in Devon, living in Northernhay Street, St David's parish, with Martha, aged 45, who was also born in Devon. Ages on the 1841 census were usually rounded down, to five year intervals. No records of any children have been found. William was listed as a shoemaker of Northernhay St in both Robson's 1839 and Pigot's 1844 Directories for Exeter.¹⁰

¹ England and Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; Devon: Crediton Bowder Hill (Presbyterian) TNA/RG/4/843 accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk June 2017

² Devon Freeholders 1711-1799. website: Friends of Devon's Archives accessed June 2017

³ Devon Marriages accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk June 2017

⁴ As note 3

⁵ England and Wales Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms; Devon: Crediton Bowder Hill (Presbyterian) TNA/RG/4/843 accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk June 2017

⁶ As notes 3 and 5

⁷ Devon Burials accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk June 2017

⁸ Devon Marriages accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk June 2017

⁹ 1841 England Census: Class HO107; Piece 265; Book 9; Civil Parish St David; County Devon; Enumeration District 9; Folio 17; Page 29. accessed at www.ancestry.co.uk June 2017

¹⁰ Robson's 1839 Devonshire Directory. Pigot & Co's Directory of Devonshire 1844 – both accessed at www.ancestry.co.uk June 2017

William died on 16th February 1850 and was buried at the Dissenter's Graveyard on 21st February, aged 53.¹¹

In 1851, after William had died, Martha was living at 20 Northernhay, possibly the same property, listed as a widow and an annuitant, aged 62¹². Martha Shepherd of St David's parish, widow, died on 7th September 1852 and was buried at the Dissenter's Graveyard on 10th September, listed in the register as aged 70.¹³

Discrepancies in age in records may be errors, but are often explained by some economy with the truth if there was a large difference in the ages of husband and wife. They frequently adjusted their ages to make them appear closer. In this case, Martha's age seems to have been reduced on both censuses, if it was correct in the burial record.

Beryl G. Coe June 2014

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¹¹ George's Meeting Burial Register 1837-1882 DRO3693D/R1 Southwest Heritage Trust

¹² 1851 England Census: Class: *HO107*; Piece: *1869*; Folio: *100*; Page: 27. accessed at www.ancestry.co.uk June 2017

¹³ As note 11