

JAMES STEPHENS died 16th July 1849 aged 71
ANN STEPHENS died 20th December 1830 aged 52
JOHN STEPHENS died 6th March 1831 aged 20
ALFRED STEPHENS died 1819 an infant
ANN GULLY STEPHENS died March 1838 age 1
CHARLES HILL died September 1848 aged 10 months

Memorial 51

James Stephens was born in Crediton, the son of James Stephens and Dorothy, née Emes. He was baptised at the parish church on 5th November 1777.¹ He was a monumental mason and statue maker.



In Pigot's Directory of 1822/3 he was listed at 112, Fore Street, Exeter.

He married Ann Bowring, the daughter of John Bowring and his wife Ann, née Bown, at St Edmund's Church, Exeter on 22nd December 1805.² They had at least seven children – Laura Grierson, born 1807, James born 1809, Ann Bowring born 1810, John Bowring born 1813, Edward Bowring born 1816, Alfred born 1818 and Eliza Dorothy born in 1821.³

James and Ann are recorded on the monument, as are two of their sons, John and Alfred, and two of their grandchildren. In the burial registers John is shown as buried in March 1832, aged 18. The stone was erected later so may be wrong. Alfred died in infancy.⁴

Ann Gully Stephens, who died aged 1 in 1838, was the daughter of James junior, who had married Ann Gully on 3rd December 1832 at St David's church,

¹ England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

² St. Edmund's records, accessed via 'Find my Past'

³ Exeter Bow Meeting (Presbyterian), 1687-1823, England and Wales, Non-conformist and non-parochial Registers, 1567-1970, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁴ Exeter Georges Meeting (Presbyterian), 1824-1837, England and Wales, non-conformist and non-parochial Registers, 1567-1970, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk.

The register also records Alfred as Alford at his christening.

Exeter.⁵ James was originally a monumental mason like his father, but later became a builder. By 1881 he was living in St Thomas aged 72, described as a Master Builder.⁶ His wife Ann had died, but his daughter Jane and a grandson were still living with him. One of his sons, John Gully Stephens, was living at 116, Fore Street, Exeter and running a very large building business, employing no less than 83 men and 5 apprentices. He was married with two daughters.⁷

Charles Henry Hill, who died in 1848 aged 10 months, was the son of Charles Hill, organist at Georges Meeting House and his wife Eliza Dorothy, née Stephens. They were married at Georges Meeting House in Exeter in 1845.⁸

Although he is not buried here, the most famous member of this family was Edward Bowring Stephens, the third son of James and Ann. He followed the family tradition of making statues and was considered to be one of the finest sculptors of his time.

He started his artistic training as the pupil of John Gendall, a draughtsman and landscape painter in Exeter. In 1835, aged 20, he went to London to study under the sculptor Edward Hodges Baily. In 1836 he enrolled at the Royal Academy. His progress was exceptional. In 1837 he was awarded a silver medal by the Society of Arts for his work, and in 1838 he exhibited at the Royal Academy. He then went to Rome and spent three years there. When he returned he was awarded a gold medal by the Royal Academy for his piece entitled "*The Battle of the Centaurs and the Lapithae*". He produced sculptures and busts of many famous people, and groups of classical subjects. In 1851 two group sculptures he had made for a summer pavilion at Buckingham Palace, "*Satan Vanquished*" and "*Satan Tempting Eve*" were exhibited at the Great Exhibition. He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1864.⁹

He had married Jane Harris Emes at Crediton in 1845.¹⁰ She was the daughter of James Emes, a serge maker, and perhaps related to his grandmother Dorothy. Edward, having originally trained as painter, later painted his wife with their daughter, Jane Helen Mary. He was also involved with the setting up of a School of Art in Exeter at about the same time. This was in Queen Street, in part of the building that later became the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. John Gendall, Edward's first teacher, became one of the museum's first curators.

Numerous examples of Edward Bowring Stephen's work can be seen in Exeter. Northernhay Gardens is the site of his marble statues of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet, M P (1861) and John Dinham (1865), while "*The Deerstalker*" (1875), one of his most highly regarded pieces, and a statue of William Courtney, 11th Earl of Devon (1880) are both in bronze. Hugh, 2nd Lord Fortescue (1863), a marble statue, is in the Castle Yard. At the Royal Albert Museum there is a statue of Prince Albert in marble (1868), and two of the figures on the west front of the cathedral are his work – William the Conqueror

⁵ England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁶ 1881 census, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁷ as above # 6

⁸ England and Wales, Civil registration Marriages Index, 1837-1915, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Volumes 1-20, 22 and www.exetermemories.co.uk

¹⁰ as above # 8

and St James the Less (both 1865). A bust of Sir John Bowring (1870) is at the Devon and Exeter Institution. His work can also be seen elsewhere in Devon, in London, particularly at Burlington House, Liverpool, Oxford, Brighton and elsewhere.

Edward Bowring Stephens died in London in 1882.¹¹

B G Coe September 2014

Revised by A Amosford, July 2017.

¹¹ England and Wales, Civil Registration, Death Index, 1837-1915, accessed via Ancestry.co.uk