

**WILLIAM GIFFORD** died 1757

Memorial 1

**HONOR GIFFORD** died 1759

**GEORGE GIFFORD** died ??

**HONOR FRYER** died 1757

**WILLIAM GIFFORD** died September 1788

**HENRY GIFFORD** died 1794 (in Martinique)

**SAMUEL GIFFORD** died 1797 (in Bermuda)

The first William Gifford on the memorial was a member of the Gifford family of grocers in Exeter. He was apprenticed to Anthony Viccary, another grocer, and became a freeman of Exeter on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1719. He is also listed in the 1723 Oath Rolls as a grocer. He married Honor Hutchings at Moretonhampstead parish church on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1723. They had had at least five children –Ann, William born 1728, John born 1729 (See his family on Memorial 45), George born 1735, Honor born in 1737 and Samuel born 1740, all baptised at one of the Protestant meeting houses in Exeter.

The date of George Gifford's death is not visible on the memorial.

Ann, their daughter, married John Fryer, who had been apprenticed as a grocer to her father, at Lympstone parish church on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1752. John became a freeman of Exeter in 1754. No baptism records have been found for any children, which suggest that they were baptised at a meeting house where the baptism records have not survived. The Honor Fryer who was buried here in 1757 was the daughter of John and Ann. They also had a son, William, who became a freeman of Exeter in 1790, by succession to his father, John Fryer, grocer, which suggests that John had recently died. William Fryer was listed as a gentleman, and was of St Edmund's parish.

William, the eldest son of William and Honor Gifford, was described as a doctor of medicine when he became a freeman of the city in 1761, by succession from his father, after he had died in 1757. When he died in 1788 he was a resident of St Olave's parish, where he lived in Friernhay, and his will also described him as a doctor.

His two sons, Henry and Samuel, are also commemorated on this memorial, but are not buried in the vault because both died abroad.

Henry had been left money in William's will to purchase a commission in the rank of Ensign, which would have made him an officer, either in the navy, or an infantry regiment of the army. He died in Martinique in 1794, aged just 27, perhaps during or after the Battle of Martinique in the French Revolutionary

wars. Although few soldiers were killed in the actual fighting, very large numbers died of yellow fever later.

The British captured Martinique, which had been an important French colony, and occupied it for eight years. Trade with the West Indies represented about a fifth of British sea-going trade at that time, and there were concerns that the French revolutionary policy of freeing slaves would undermine the economic basis of the area. Slavery was still legal in British colonies until 1834.

Sadly, Samuel died in Bermuda in 1797 aged only 20. Again, we do not know what his status was. He may have been in the navy, or working there in another capacity, or had gone there for trading purposes.

Britain had a naval base in Bermuda at the time, where the issue of slaves was also relevant, because slaves were employed in the naval dockyard with their masters. However, the slaves were actually paid for the work, and could therefore save up money to eventually buy their release, although in practice many just ran away.

Many non-conformists were very active in campaigning against slavery, so it is interesting that the two Gifford sons were working in areas of the world where the whole economy was still reliant on slavery.

In his will William left money land and property to his two sons, his daughters, Matilda Gifford and Charlotte Gifford and to Martha Whitelock, the mother of all of four of his children though they were never married.

Matilda and Charlotte both married Exeter in 1794, Charlotte on 10<sup>th</sup> February to Lewis Kelly, at St Leonards church, and Matilda to John Hucks on 30<sup>th</sup> October at St Edmunds church.

Sources:

Coats, A (2009) Bermuda Naval Base: Management, Artisans and their Enslaved Workers 1795 – 1797.

H J K Jenkins - Martinique: The British Occupation 1794 – 1802, in History Today, Volume 31, Issue 11.

Rowe, M M & Jackson, A M (1973) Exeter Freemen 1266 – 1967.

B G Coe August 2014

(This was amended by Y Hensman in March 2016)