

MEMORIAL 38 + 90 (fragment of 38)

EDMOND/ (COFFIN) 179?

THOMAS/ (COFFIN) 1803

MARTHA/ (HI)S WIFE 1826

There were many families in Exeter with the surname Coffin. This appears to be the lineage of just one family although in the 2014 transcriptions of the stones in the Dissenters graveyard all that is visible on stone 38 and 90 are three names; Edmond, Thomas, and Martha.

In the 1894 and 1984 transcription there are some legible dates and words which help us further. We know from the Dissenters Account book¹ that a Mr Coffin paid £1.1.0d on 31 March 1827 for a headstone to be placed at Mrs Coffin's cave. This stone we assume corresponds to that entry.

The Edmond/Edmund on this marker is a bit of a mystery; assuming it marks the death of one Edmond Coffin or could it be his wife? None of the Burial registers show an Edmond Coffin being buried in the 1790's. However, we do know from the Account book that a Mrs S Coffin was buried in the latter quarter of 1798 and a cave was opened for her. This was possibly Sarah (née Langdon) the wife of Edmund Coffin a carpenter and wood carver who died in 1815.²

The words 'opening a cave' imply that a cave was already built and indeed in 1785 there is a record for 'Making a cave for A. C.' This was an Ann Coffin and the subsequent four Coffin burial records are all 'opening a cave'. Are there indeed five people in this cave?

There are various instances of an Edmund Coffin taking on apprentices in Exeter, for example, on 16 August 1742 Edmund Coffin of the City of Exon, Carpenter, took on Richard son of Joan Finnemore. In 1756, he took on Joseph Langdon and in 1759 he took on Philologus Handley.³ In 1765 it was noted that 'At Edmund Coffin's, statuary, and ornamental carver in wood and stone, without Southgate, Exeter, is manufactured and sold, all sizes of the best plate glass' Printed by R.Trewman, behind the Guildhall.⁴

But these facts may be related to the Edmund Coffin buried in 1767 and father of the Edmund who died in 1815.

The Thomas Coffin referred to in the stone (and brother to Edmund) was born to Edmund & Mary Coffin in 1732 and baptised on 11 July 1732 at Bow Presbyterian Meeting.⁵

¹ Report and Account Book of Dissenters Burial Ground 1748-1832 (DRO3693D/0/B/1) www.swheritage.org.uk

² In his wil.....

³ UK, Register of Duties Paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1800; accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁴ Exeter working Papers in Book History (www.bookhistory.blogspot.co.uk)

⁵ England and Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1970; accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

On 9 February 1761 we see Thomas Coffin, joiner, as an apprentice of Edmund Coffin his father as a Freeman of Exeter.⁶

Thomas married Martha Merivale on 4 June 1771 at St. Petrocks, Exeter.⁷ Martha was from Middleton Cheney in Northamptonshire and a second cousin of John Merivale of Exeter.⁸

Thomas became a builder and in 1797 built Barton Place in Exeter for John Merivale.⁹

It appears Thomas Coffin was also a Steward of the Dissenters burying ground as on 20th January 1804 a note in the burying ground register shows that “Mr Gideon Ware was appointed steward of the Dissenting Burying ground vacant by the death of Mr Thomas Coffin”.¹⁰

In the burial register Thomas Coffin was buried on 25 December 1803 aged 71, Martha Coffin of Trinity, Exeter was buried on 13 November 1826 aged 85. They noted she was the wife of the late Thomas Coffin of Exeter a builder, 10/- was paid for this.¹¹

⁶ Devon, England, Extracted Church of England Parish Records; accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁷ England, Select Marriages, 1538-1973; accessed via Ancestry.co.uk

⁸ ‘Family Memorials’ compiled by Anna W. Merivale, printed for Private Circulation, Exeter, Thomas Upward, 1884. Accessed via www.archive.org

⁹ As note 5 above

¹⁰ Report and Account Book of Dissenters Burial Ground 1748-1832 (DRO3693D/0/B/1)

www.swheritage.org.uk

¹¹ As note 2 above