

Illustrated Talk by Stephen Gray:

*“James Haliburton - Zealous investigator in Egypt  
of its Geology and Antiquities”*

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2022

4 p.m. Burton Room, Royal Victoria Hotel

Of the twelve children of James and Elizabeth Burton, ten survived infancy: William Ford, Eliza, James, Jane, Septimus, Octavia, Henry, Decimus, Alfred, Jessy (Jessica) – a remarkable family. One of the most remarkable is the second son, James (1786-1862), the subject of Stephen Gray’s talk.

James went up to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1805 to read Mathematics. He was also admitted soon afterwards at the Middle Temple, as “2nd son of James, of Quarry Hill, Tonbridge, Kent”. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography records that “According to Tavel [his tutor] he was not a good pupil, having a dilatory nature.” We have little supporting evidence for this, but he was certainly unconventional—perhaps even licentious—but no more so than other figures of the era. His achievements as an Egyptologist, however, particularly his work in the Valley of the Kings, are of note.



Left: A lithographic portrait of James in the National Portrait Gallery, aged about 30, before he went to Egypt

Centre: A graphito he made in the Valley of the Kings in 1825 at the start of his Egyptological investigations

Right: James in later life from a negative in the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

James is said to have been fond of drink and women and to have bought a Cretan ‘slave’ girl, whom he eventually married. She may have been a translator of Greek and Turkish. On returning to England with her he also brought a menagerie. It included a giraffe, which got as far as Calais, where it slipped on an icy surface and died. He reverted to the original family surname, Haliburton, in 1838.

Admission: Non-members £5.00 - Members £2.50