

## STEPHENSON, THOMAS ALAN (1898 - 1961), zoologist

**Name:** Thomas Alan Stephenson  
**Date of birth:** 1898  
**Date of death:** 1961  
**Spouse:** Anne Stephenson (née Wood)  
**Parent:** Margaret Ellen Stephenson (née Fletcher)  
**Parent:** Thomas Stephenson  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** zoologist  
**Area of activity:** Nature and Agriculture; Science and Mathematics  
**Author:** Mary Auronwy James

Born 19 January 1898 at Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, son of Thomas Stephenson, D.D., minister (Meth.) and his wife Margaret Ellen (née Fletcher). He was educated at Clapham; Wrexham; and Kingswood School, Bath, 1909-13. In 1915 he was admitted to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (where the family lived 1914-19) but was unable to take up his place because of ill-health. [Professor Herbert John Fleure](#) taught him privately, appointed him demonstrator, and obtained for him the sea anemones collected by the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910 which were the subject of his first paper, published in 1916. Though holding no initial degree he was allowed to submit published papers for the degrees of M.Sc. and D.Sc. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1951. In 1922 he was appointed lecturer in zoology at University College, London, and he collaborated with his father during 1920-24 in the publication of articles on British orchids in *Journ. of Botany*. He was in charge of the reef section of the Great Barrier Reef Expedition of 1928-29 (*Reports*, vol. 3) and he made a major contribution to the understanding of the growth of reef-building corals. In 1930 he was appointed Professor of zoology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he organised an extended survey of the distribution of marine plants and animals along the 1800-mile coast. In 1941 he became Professor of zoology at Aberystwyth and made pioneer studies of the coast of north America in 1947, 1948 and 1952. He was a fine lecturer and his study of design and colour in nature together with his own artistic talent is evident in his illustrations to his two volumes, *The British sea anemones* (1928, 1935), and *Seashore life and pattern* (1944).

In 1922 he married Anne Wood of Somerset and Barry who became a close collaborator in his research. He died 3 April 1961.

### Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

### Sources

*Who was who?*

*Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 8, 1962, 137-46

see *ibid.*, 147-8 for a bibliography of his published papers

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Thomas Alan Stephenson](#)

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