

IV.

NOTICE OF AN EFFIGY OF A COVENANTING MINISTER, AND OTHER
TOMBS, IN MORTON CHURCHYARD. BY REV. J. K. HEWISON,
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In the old churchyard of Morton, Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, lies an effigy within a few feet of the southern wall of the burial-place of the ancient family of Douglas, who formerly held Morton Castle and Fingland, in Dalry. It remains in the ground allotted of old to the Milligans, a family well known in Nithsdale and Galloway, where their name is preserved in connection with many farms, such as Milliganstoun (Dunscore), Strathmilligan, Crossmilligan, Cormilligan, Foremilligan, and others. The family never figured prominently among the more powerful clans of the South, such as the Douglasses, Kirkpatrick's, Griersons, Menzieses, Gordons, Dalrymples, and Cunninghams; but representatives seemed to have been widely spread and comfortably settled in the 17th century. In old registers the name appears as Omulligan, Amulliekyn, and, dropping the Irish distinction, Mulligan, Muliken, and Milligan.

In the neighbouring churchyard of Dalgarnock two rough memorial

slabs retain the memory of "JOHN MVLIGAN 1640" and "JAMES MVLIGAN 1650," while another has in cursive lettering the inscription, "Here lyeth John Muliken gent in Dalgarnock who died in 1694 aged 51." A person of this latter name is included among the fugitives and rebels denounced in 1684, viz., "John Mulliken in Barscob," while beside his name is that of "James Mulliken in Knocknoon,"—both in Galloway, however.

The effigy (fig. 1) lies adjacent to a well-carved slab bearing this inscription:—

"This burial place belongs to John Milligan in bwrn who departed this life May 5 1684 likways to Alexander Milligan sum tmis in bwrn his son who departed this life the 5 of Dec. 1696 his age being 46. Erected by Hendreta Blekie his relict and John Milligan their Soon. Anno 1697."

Burn, a large farm in Morton parish, was formerly subdivided into several holdings and shielings, one of which was Whitefold, and another Lurgfoot or Blairfoot, the residence of Daniel Macmichael, the Covenanter martyred at Dalveen in 1685. The effigy is carved out of a thin slab of red freestone from the sandstone beds of Gatelawbridge, and probably out of the quarry which "Old Mortality"—Robert Paterson—leased, and which is situated one mile south-east of the graveyard. The slab measures 6 feet 1 inch in length, 1 foot 10 inches in breadth at the shoulder of the figure, 12½ inches in breadth at the foot, and varies in thickness from 3 to 3½ inches. The effigy itself measures 5 feet 8½ inches in length. It is broken in halves at the knee, as represented in the illustration. It is well executed in bold high relief, but the head appears lop-sided.



Fig. 1. Effigy in Morton Churchyard.

The dress is that of a Roundhead or Covenanter preacher, as worn in the last quarter of the 17th century,—consisting of a close-buttoned surtout dropping to the knees, and with sleeves terminating in pendulous cuffs, knee-breeches, long stockings gartered, and high-heeled shoes with buckles or more probably large ribbon knots. Prominent are the Geneva bands, which are 7 inches long and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad. The right-hand corner of the slab is broken, so that only a few letters are decipherable around the head, viz., “John Millig(an),” “Jean (Nil).” This inscription, incised in cursive characters, is of a late date, and has all the characteristics of “Old Mortality’s” own cutting.

The Milligans were well known for their covenanting tendencies. Several of them appear in the lists of the suspects and persons fined during the persecutions of Charles II. In the “Proclamation with List of Fugitives” promulgated on 5th May 1684, in connection with Dumfries are noted the following tenants resident in the neighbourhood of Morton:—

“Thomas Mulligen at the Mill of Closeburn.
William Mulligan in Floors (Keir).
John Mulligen in Maloford (Penpont).
Robert Mulligan son to James Mulligen in Beuchan (Keir).
William Milligan in Morton Mains.”

Morton Mains farm adjoins the farm of Burn.

In the Record of Baptisms for Morton Parish appears the following entry:—“John Milligan and Jean Smith in Blairfoot had sone baptised called Gilbert before many witnesses Dec. 30. 1688.” This is evidently the John of Burn who is mentioned with his mother on the Burn tombstone, and who afterwards became the parish teacher. The woman’s name on the effigy may read either (S)mit(h) or Mill(igan). The weathering on the stone permits of an elastic reading.

However, so far as I have been able to discover, no preacher of the name of John Milligan held a benefice in the covenanting period, or is mentioned in the diaries of that time. But in the Session Record of the parish we find that in 1714 John Milligan in Whitefold (that is the Burn of the above-described tombstone) was appointed schoolmaster

of Morton, at the annual salary of £40 Scots, with school, proclamation, and baptism fees. John, unfortunately, was a weak vessel, and after a public exhibition of repentance for the sin of inebriety, had to quit his office. The appointment points to the possession of some scholarship on the part of the teacher, who probably was one of those preachers who studied abroad and was licensed to preach. His want of patronage in the anti-covenanting atmosphere of Queensberry is easily accounted for.

When "Old Mortality" arrived in Nithsdale, about the year 1738, or earlier, there were four kinds of sepulchral memorials in churchyards, viz., unlettered stones, rudely lettered slabs, ornamental slabs resting on supports, and very finely executed slabs with bold raised lettering. The last two kinds indicated persons of position and substance, and were few. Among the rudely lettered slabs were those marking the graves of Covenanters, and these "Old Mortality" recut deeper. I am of opinion that the most of the existing Covenanter memorials are the work of "Old Mortality" in entirety. The raised Gothic and Roman lettering went out in favour of incised lettering—"Old Mortality's" letters measuring about two inches high on Covenanters' stones; but he favoured the cursive form in the Nithsdale and Galloway churchyards. At first, the upright stones were diminutive. They rarely want the favourite symbols, which "Old Mortality" delighted to execute, viz., winged angel-heads, skulls, sandglasses, mirrors, implements of trade, and the unfailing "memento mori." In Nithsdale he entirely superseded the rather grotesquely floriated shrouds bearing angelic figures which were the high art of Barrie his predecessor, by correct geometric designs, flowers, and leaves, which afterwards his sons and assistants executed with no mean beauty and refinement. In Closeburn churchyard (about two miles from Gatelawbridge), where there is a fine example of this later work (M'Turk of Stromilligan's, 1775), will be found a Covenanter's tombstone, which we may safely assume "Old Mortality" recut and afterwards inscribed. The tradition is that the original stone was broken by the heirs of the persecutor, who had to replace it. The inscription runs thus:—"Here lyeth the corps of Iohn Mathison (registered fugitive in Shankerton 1684) who was banished to foreign lands for adhering to the Covenanted vor(k) of Reformation of which

John Kilpatrick in Bridgeburghhead had on chief hand. He returned from thence and lived many years. He dyd in 1716 aged 69." The old high lettering appears ancient. But beneath this, in "Old Mortality's" cursive lettering, is another inscription memorialising William Mathison, John's son, who died in 1775. It is this cursive lettering found on the Gatelawbridge slabs, between the years 1738 and 1800, which is worthy of note. There are scores of the contemporaries and near neighbours of "Old Mortality" in Nithsdale, similarly memorialised as regards style of stone, symbols, and inscriptions. On the slabs are curious coincidences of ideas, words, bad spelling, forms of lettering which leave no doubt that Robert Paterson and his Highland assistant Sandy Rae were the sculptors of these stones. And what is more curious, the want of variety in the Covenanters' stones themselves offers a reason for concluding that these stones are worthless as contemporary historical memorials.

To return to the effigy: "Old Mortality" delighted in figure cutting, but in a covenanting district, had little encouragement for such "idolatry."

In Dalgarnock churchyard there is a small figure of James Gilchrist, teacher in Glencairn, who died in 1758, which is evidently one of Paterson's products; another figure is that of John Nivison (1739); another, that of Robert Miller, who died in 1732. These figures have characteristics like those of the Milligan effigy. Similarly, in Durrisdeer, on the memorial erected after 1729 for the grandchildren of the minister of Morton, there is a figure with bands, with cuffs on the jacket, and long stockings. The tombstone of the Rev. Thomas Tod (1742) there has a hand with cuffs holding the Bible. In Glencairn, Andrew Hislop's tombstone (1745) has a square held by a hand girt with a cuff. All these Gatelawbridge stones have cursive lettering as well, and may be accepted as "Old Mortality's" work.

There is a stone in Durrisdeer still older than these, erected by the master of works at Drumlanrig in 1685, William Lukup, which displays a mason with bands, in his right hand a mallet, in his left a chisel, his coat having cuffs, and his feet standing on a skull. It was in John Lukup the Covenanter's house in Edinburgh, where, in 1688, Renwick

was apprehended, and there may have been some direct interest for "Old Mortality" in this particular stone, which is either the model for his work, or was executed by himself.

From many stones, cut out of Gatelawbridge, contemporaneously with Robert Paterson's lease of it, I would conclude that he was commissioned to execute the effigy of John Milligan, who, for ought I know, may have really repented of the *faux pas* which exposed him in Morton Church, and become worthy of this work by the Cameronian sculptor, "Old Mortality."
