

II.

THE CHURCHYARDS OF PRESTONPANS. BY ALAN REID, F.S.A. SCOT. (WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES MOFFAT.)

The Parish Churchyard.—In the year 1595 the celebrated Mr John Davidson was appointed minister of “South Preston, including ye Pannis east and west.” Fifty years before that, Hertford had destroyed the church of Preston, along with Preston Tower, and here arises a difficulty which has never been satisfactorily solved.

The question is—Which church did Hertford destroy? for the fact that Davidson was appointed to *South Preston*, which was near the Tower, surely infers that there was a church there; and there is evidence of various kinds that another church stood within the west churchyard, in the seaward portion of the town.

The fact seems to be that Hertford destroyed two churches; for it is only reasonable to conclude that the monks of Holyrood—who shared the emoluments of the district along with their brethren of Newbattle—had a chapel near their Grange at South Preston, even as the monks of Newbattle had a chapel near their Salt Pans beside the sea.

There are distinct traces of ecclesiastical buildings in the walls of the

lane leading to the ancient Dovecot at the picturesque house of Northfield ; and the sundial beside the old Cross of Preston, on the adjacent lands of the Grange, is unmistakably the inverted portion of a church pillar. The Rev. Dr Struthers, in the Statistical Account of his parish,



Fig. 1. Prestonpans Parish Church. (Showing the Prestongrange Aisle.)

states clearly that the ruins of a chapel were to be seen in the West Churchyard at the end of the seventeenth century. The West Churchyard remains, with its wealth of interesting old tombstones, but without a trace of the chapel mentioned by Dr Struthers. There is no churchyard at South Preston, a quarter of a mile distant ; but traces of church

buildings are there. It is fairly deducible, therefore, both from fact and record, that there must have been *two* churches at Preston when Lord Hertford made his memorable visit.

There is significance, also, in the fact that Davidson rejected the proposal made by Kerr of Newbattle that the new church of Preston should be built on the lands of Prestongrange. That plan did not suit the ideas of the new minister, who, through other influence, got his church built near the Pans, where the majority of his people resided. He died in 1604; and two years later his *quoad sacra* charge was legally disjoined from Tranent, and erected into the parish of Salt Preston, or Prestonpans. Davidson's old manse remains, a good example of late sixteenth-century domestic building; but the present plain if comfortable church dates only from the close of the eighteenth century. Presumably the tower belonged to the original structure, which occupied the same site, and was a comparatively small edifice.

The graves of several ministers of the parish show an interesting group of liberally inscribed memorials. Among these the table stone over the tomb of the Rev. William Carlyle, father of "Jupiter" Carlyle, is noteworthy, but the symbolism calls for no special remark. That applies also to the tablets of the Prestongrange aisle, where lies William Grant, that Lord Prestongrange who acted as Crown Prosecutor in the trials following the Rebellion of 1745.

The oldest date observable appears on a somewhat elaborate monument (fig. 2) built in the south wall of the church, near the Prestongrange aisle. But the date is misleading; for, though it commemorates "John Henderson, son of Sir Alexander, who died in Anno 1540," the memorial very evidently belongs to the late seventeenth century, if not to the early part of the eighteenth century. The inscription is nearly obliterated, but the symbolical upper portion is remarkably well preserved. From the scrolled shield in the centre of the design, radiate spears with and without banners; a cannon, a speaking-trumpet, an anchor, and a trident testifying to the naval calling of the deceased. The shield, of very unusual shape, shows the Henderson arms; the

crest being a right hand holding a star. On a label underneath appears the motto—"Sola Virtus Nobilitat," the whole forming a design strikingly effective, and even attractive.

A group of interesting relics (fig. 3) was built into the southern boundary wall of the churchyard, as if to mark the situation of the original



Fig. 2. The Henderson Memorial.

entrance to the ground. The central stone is merely the pediment portion of an early eighteenth-century memorial. The cherubs and shield appear on both of its faces, as is shown in fig. 1, where the sides of the old gateway are also traceable. The fragment is surmounted by an ornamental vase, which, though in keeping with the general design, is stunted in effect through the absence of its basal members.

The stone on the left has a scrolled pediment of the usual type;

but under it there is a secondary pediment of interlaced Jacobean work that may be termed unique. Its introduction has contracted the panel usually reserved for symbolism, but the artificer has managed to crowd into it a pair of scales and the initials N.M. The panel beneath is flanked by flat pilasters with floral decorations; the centre showing

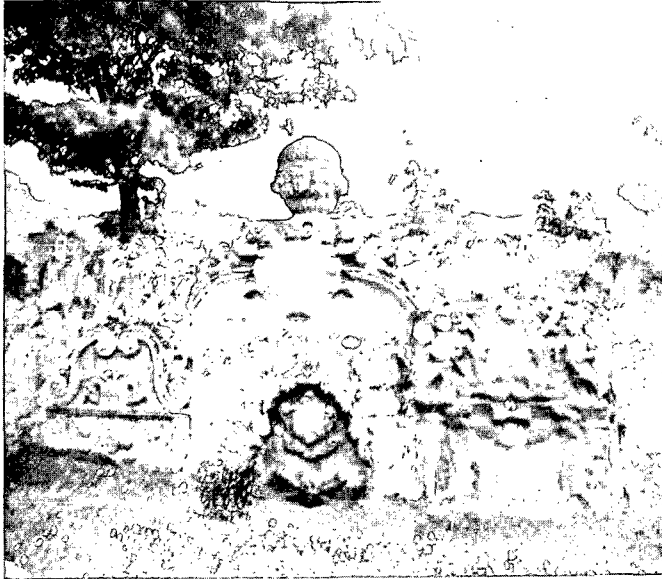


Fig. 3. A group of Old Memorials.

cross-bones and a skull, over which is the *Memento mori* legend. A couple of excellently disposed winged cherubs complete the design.

The lower, central stone shows a design deeply recessed under a floriated pediment. An ornamental shield displays a spade crossing an arrow—a fresh and interesting emblem—a *fleur-de-lis* appearing on the upper portion of the surrounding scroll. Under the shield a skull and cross-bones are effectively grouped; the *Memento mori* legend appears

over the skull, the initial letters C.K. being neatly incised at the sides of the panel.

The stone on the right of the group is much worn, but has been of excellent design. A floriated shield is supported by a couple of winged cherubs with trumpets, a winged cherub-head appearing as a crest



Fig. 4. From the Gable of the Gatehouse. (24 inches by 18 inches.)

over the obliterated escutcheon. An hour-glass is set in the drapery of the worn under panel, and the pilasters show traces of Jacobean ornamentation.

Built into the gable of the gatehouse is an interesting stone of small dimensions (fig. 4), bearing the clearly incised date "30 of Maie 1634." The boldly relieved design shows cross-bones, skull, the *Memento mori* scroll, and a couple of wings supporting an hour-glass. The panel is

enclosed by a bead with double plinths, this ornament taking a scrolled form in the pediment. As is shown by the nature of its lower portion, this monument had originally been earth-bound, and owes its prominent and peculiar position to a commendable desire for the preservation of such relics of the past. That grateful policy is very evident here ;

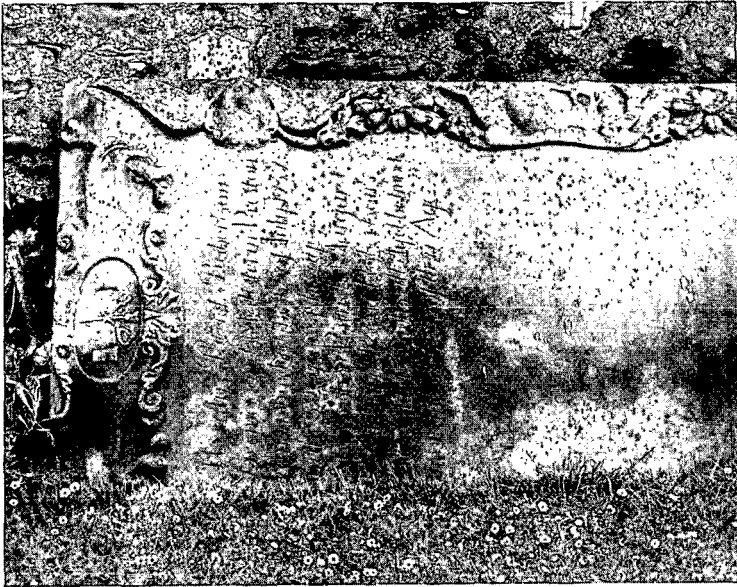


Fig. 5. A representative Table Stone.

and strikingly so in the West Churchyard, where the entire length of the southern wall is covered with the graven records of the vanished years.

Built into the north and east walls of the same structure are the end supports of a very old table stone. These show good design of the scroll type, one having single bones and a grotesque head, the other a death's head and torches, among their more obvious adorn-

ments. Other interesting fragments stand near, all much worn; but across the path, eastwards, lies an old table stone whose symbolism is still fresh and clear. It bears a couple of death's heads with cross-bones, a couple of hour-glasses, an anchor, a quadrant, and other emblems, showing the deceased to have been a seaman. The style of the symbolism is that of the middle of the eighteenth century; but the name of "Charles Hepburn, late potter in Prestonpans, who died 20th July 1828," has replaced that of the "ancient mariner" whose insignia are thus misappropriated.

The memorial of Patrick Robertson, brewer and maltster in Prestonpans, who died in 1757, may be taken as representative of the table stones common to the churchyard. This (fig. 5) is a large stone, measuring 7 feet 4 inches \times 3 feet 9 inches; and is now leaning upon the east wall, which also bears the monuments still to be noticed. It shows very fine ornamentation, disposed artistically all round a broad splay. Fruit and flowers form festoons, to which death's heads and winged cherubs act as supporters, the whole being knit by scrolls inscribed with the *Memento mori* and *Vive memor Lethe* legends. The upper-end panel is richly decorated; single bones sustaining a drapery, the oval centre showing crossed shovels and a broom, a couple of sheaves acting as supporters.

There is a touch of pathos and romance in the inscription incised upon the draped central panel of the elegant memorial erected to the memory of a victim in the fray at Preston. Its record runs:—"Here lyeth the remains of John Stuart of Phisgul, a Galloway gentleman and Cap. in Lessel's Reg^t, a man of true bravery who died honourably in defence of his King and country, and of civil and religious liberty, being barbarously murder'd by four Highlanders near the end of the Battle fought in the field of Preston on the 21st Sept' 1745." The monument (fig. 6) is surmounted by an elaborately foliated, crested shield, which shows the Stuart bearings, and the device of a buckle, prominent also in the crest. The pilasters are richly graven, and show skulls, cross-bones, scythes, and darts, all united by ribbons, which

depend from a ring, and end in elaborate tassels. Underneath the inscription is a finely arranged group of weapons, appearing as if radiating from a skull, and including a drum, two cannons, a gun, a



Fig. 6. A Reminiscence of the '45. (7 feet, to top of escutcheon, by 4 feet.)

pistol, a spear pennon, a Lochaber axe swords curved and straight, and a spear. The draperied ground of the inscription is pierced by the sword points, an effective idea; and the whole is admirably buttressed, pedimented, moulded, and worked.

Last, but not least, among these ancient memorials of the East, or Parish Churchyard of Prestonpans, is the Hepburn stone (fig. 7), a mural monument of elegant design and striking appearance. As far as can be traced, it seems to have been surmounted by one of the cherub-flanked

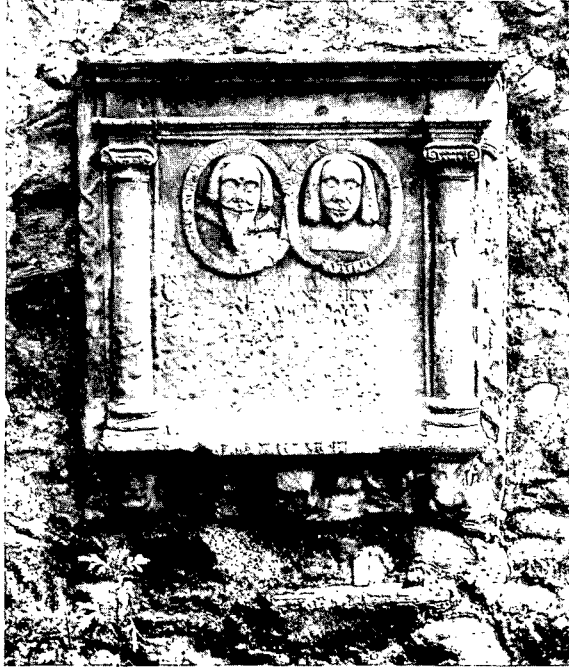


Fig. 7. The Hepburn Stone. (3 feet 2 inches high by 3 feet 5 inches wide.)

pediments common to both of the churchyards; but this and other portions of the memorial are quite illegible. Interest centres mainly in a couple of portrait panels which represent two brothers named Hepburn, whose history cannot be traced further than in the record graven around their effigies:—"George Hepburn, his age ninety-six. He died Feb. 25, 1671. John Hepburn, his age eighty-eight. He died Jan. 24,

1670." The worn panel underneath shows portions of the common rhyme :—

"If thou listeth passing by
You'll know who in this tomb doth ly," etc.

✓ The *Memento mori* legend, with a skull and cross-bones, appears on and under the lower member of the panel ; and grotesque heads support a couple of flanking Ionic pillars. Outside the pillars is a floriated border, and over them a deeply moulded cornice. In its prime this must have been a work of great elegance of style and execution. It might be useful in suggestion even now, as it is valuable in its indication of seventeenth-century native art and contemporary costume.

THE WEST CHURCHYARD.

This ancient burial-ground lies close to the highway of the western part of Prestonpans, and is over a quarter of a mile distant from the Parish Churchyard. As has been indicated, it is historically interesting as the site of a pre-Reformation chapel whose destruction is attributed to Hertford ; but in its magnificent display of seventeenth and eighteenth-century tombstones the West Churchyard of Prestonpans has even stronger claims on our attention.

Here is one of a large number of complete stones and fragments, not *in situ*, but built into the south wall of the churchyard. These varied, elaborate, undated relics form one of the most remarkable groups of grave-stones anywhere to be seen. This small stone (fig. 8) has at one time been erect. It is charming in the clearness of its sculpture, and very pleasing both in design and execution. Within a cusped and moulded panel it bears an anchor, the initials IR. IC., and an elegantly displayed shield. The dexter side of the shield shows what may well be the three wolves' heads of the Robertson arms, a cross crosslet fitchy appearing in the centre of the charge. The sinister side is more elaborate, and shows, presumably, the Craig arms. The animal head is borne on a fess, on which a couple of crescents are also shown, the fields being studded with ermine markings. There is no date, unfortunately, on the exposed

side of the stone, which measures 22 inches by 17 inches, and has had but 6 inches of earth-hold.

The neighbouring monuments are also attractive, but they did not prove good subjects for the art of the camera. One shows a curious design, resembling the canopy of a bed, or the configuration of a bell-

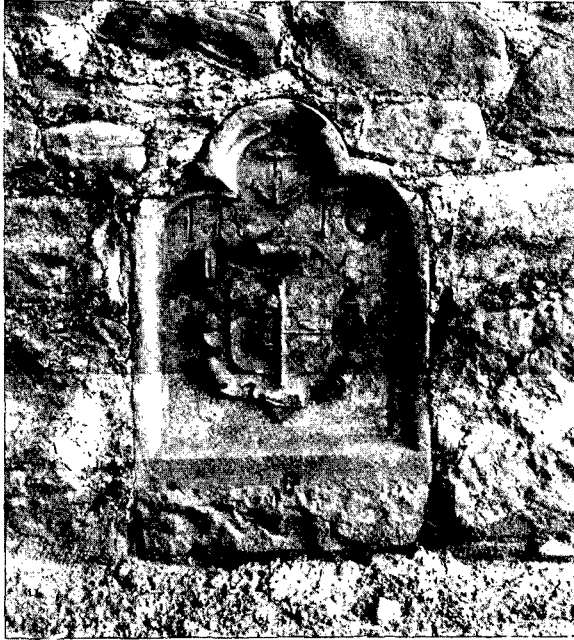


Fig. 8. An Armorial Design.

shaped tent, a bit of symbolism not inappropriate to the passing of mortal life. The others are pedimented stones of a more usual type, with Ionic pilasters, and the persistent skull, cross-bones, and cherub devices.

The remarkable fragment (fig. 9) is evidently designed to represent the faith which is held as an anchor of the soul. A person, apparently *in extremis*, is lying on a bed, a seated female nursing or fondling the

invalid. A chubby cherub figure holds in the right hand an anchor, the rope of which, passing behind the body, appears in the left hand. The unique design is framed in graceful scroll work, but there is no indication anywhere of its period or purpose. The modern panel which appears beneath may, however, suggest a date; though there is not,

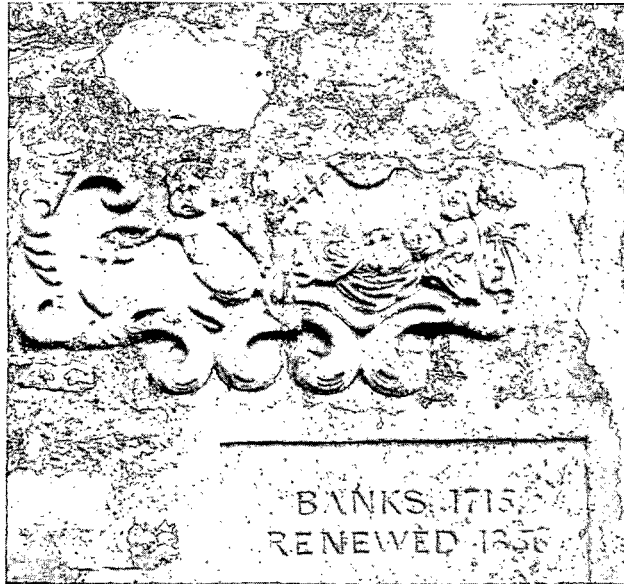


Fig. 9. The Anchor of the Soul.

necessarily, any connection between the fragmentary relics that cover this riven old wall.

The three castles appearing on the shield shown in the fine fragment (fig. 10) are seen on several of the monuments in the West Churchyard. As the more modern stones commemorate certain burgesses of Prestonpans, it may be taken for granted that the castles simply represent Preston Tower, and that here we have what may not inaptly be termed the

Prestonpans Arms. Associated with the compass and square, the towers may suggest an alternative reading, which would be Masonic in character; but they appear alone in one case, thus strongly suggesting the more local application.¹ Elegant foliation is disposed round the shield, which



Fig. 10. The Prestonpans Arms.

is surmounted by a winged cherub. Over this stone there is a beautiful example of the winged cherub, designed on a liberal scale, and executed in a manner suggestive of careful ornithological study. Not only is the feathering of the wings refined and natural, their attachment to the cherubic body is original, and far from orthodox. It need scarcely be

¹ The towers appear also on a sundial in the village.

said that this fragment has no connection with the lower stone. Indeed, these careful preservers of Prestonpans relics were not finical in the discharge of their meritorious resolves.

The central portion of the wall is occupied by a series of monuments



Fig. 11. A Figure Group.

which bear an aspect of singular reserve and dignity. Prominent among them is the representation of a matronly figure holding a child by the hand (fig. 11), and standing in a niche formed by a canopy, which is supported by a couple of sturdy Ionic pillars. The disposition of the emblems of mortality is also remarkable. They appear as cross-bones,

skull, and sand-glass, on the left side of the figure, and on the same panel ; and it is also noteworthy that the glass shows a torch, or flame, burning over its upper portion. The elaborate pediment is flanked by a couple of winged cherubs who support a scrolled shield, their feet being placed on a device of scrolls, fruit and flowers. This interesting



Fig. 12. Tragedy or Affection ?

stone measures 57 inches by 36 inches, and bears traces of having been at one time sunk pretty deeply in the ground.

Amid the somewhat battered, but boldly relieved, scroll work of the fragment (fig. 12), appears the figure of a woman, rather masculine in cast, holding under each arm a little child. Her sleeves are rolled to the elbows, and the design seems to suggest something of a nature more

tragic than affectionate. Apparently this has formed the pediment of a memorial which, if animated throughout with the vigour shown in this portion, must have been a picturesque object in this old cemetery.

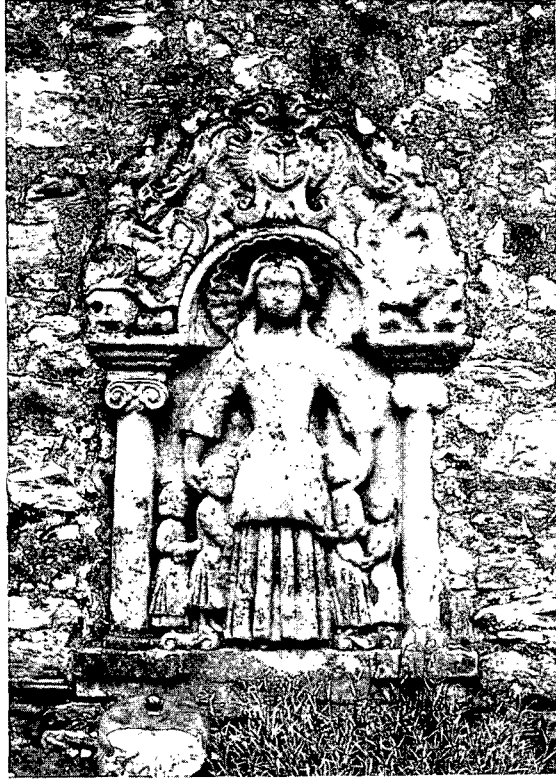


Fig. 13. Mother and Children. (56 inches by 36 inches.)

Much more modern in effect is the fragment appearing over the figured stone. The rosette is beautifully worked, however; and the touch of classic ornamentation given to the cross-bones is unique.

It is evident that we owe the next example (fig. 13) to the same

source that inspired the monument shown in fig. 11. Here, however, the matron has been more richly dowered than her neighbour; and there is something very touching in the attitude she adopts towards her loving progeny. And may not the scalloped nimbus be suggestive of the saintliness of motherhood, even as the anchor symbolises the hope that the severed ties of earth shall yet be knit in heaven? The introduction of the mortal emblems among the cherubs of the pediment is also instructive. If we read this aright, we see here the triumph of immortality over death and the grave; and, view it as we may, we have in this fine monument an object of such artistic and antiquarian interest as to make us deeply grateful for its condition and preservation.

A great variety of fragments are built into the wall near this point, but their symbolism follows the designs already described, and need not be detailed. There is, however, a touch of originality on one of the stones, which is worthy of a passing reference. It shows the anchor and quadrant pertaining to the seafaring life; but *spades* also form part of the design, suggesting, it may be, that the deceased had some connection with the dual occupation of sailing and mining, or sailing and agriculture.

Our survey of the southern wall yields another example (fig. 14) of the smaller erect stones once numerous in this cemetery. This specimen measures 28 inches by 18 inches over its graven portion, and shows some originality in details, with much vigour of relief and execution. The panel moulding, which springs from a splayed base, merges in a couple of volutes, between which a conventional rose ornament is effectively displayed. The panel design shows the tools of a mason—square, compass, mull, and chisel; the letters W.L. denoting the name of the person so commemorated. The oblong block, following the initials, also bears its share in the story of this memorial. Without a doubt, it was intended to bear the initials of W. L.'s partner in life; she who, in all probability, erected the stone in her husband's honour, and was treated less kindly by those she left behind.

One of the few remaining Table Stones is worthy of note and record.

This stone (fig. 15) is now dismantled, and lies against the eastern wall of the ground. It is inscribed :—"Here lyes Robert Peden Shipmaster in Prestonpans Husband was to Agnes Blaikie who Died the 15 day of March 1699," etc. The ornamentation is carved on a very broad splay, and

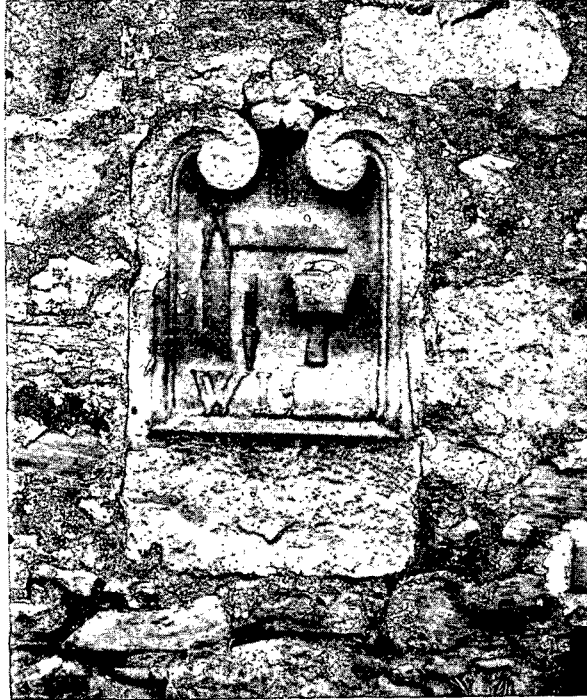


Fig. 14. A Mason's Memorial.

shows grotesque heads mingling with the scroll work of the design. The *Memento mori* scroll surmounts a skull and parallel bones on the bottom end splay, the upper end splay being relieved by a scrolled panel bearing incised initials. An anchor, a sounding lead, a quadrant, and compasses, complete the symbolism of this well-preserved and interesting tombstone.

The western wall bears the remarkable group of monuments shown in the photograph (fig. 16) by Mr Blanc. The elaborate set of fragments on the left are suggestive of four different tombstones, their quaint appearance being the result of that zealous, if untutored care which has repeatedly come under observation. The upper portion shows an elaborate pediment, over whose moulded cornices cherubs are supporting a shield which displays a high-decked, three-masted vessel in full sail.

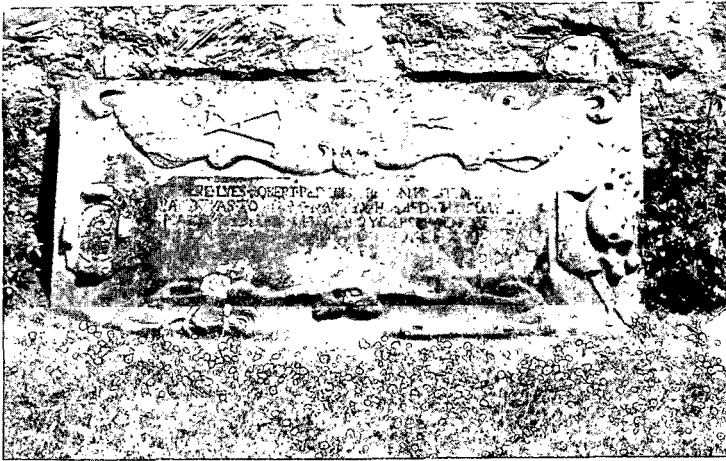


Fig. 15. A dismantled Table Stone.

Grotesque faces peer from the floriation, the design and workmanship attaining a high degree of merit. The central portion is more common in character, but is also meritorious in its execution. The usual emblems of mortality are grouped with those of the secular calling, crossed spades and crossed picks indicating, it may be, the work of a miner. All that can be said of the under slabs is that they bear inscriptions which now are undecipherable.

The small stone in the centre of the group measures 26 inches by 19 inches, and is beautiful in its chaste simplicity. The initial letters, B B

and M L, with the date 1653, are quite legible. The device shows a tressured shield; the Brown arms, a chevron between three *fleurs-de-lis*, appearing on the dexter side, a saltire with a rose completing the bearings.

The larger stone, on the right, is much worn, but bears many traces of its original elegance and fine proportions. Thoroughly Jacobean in

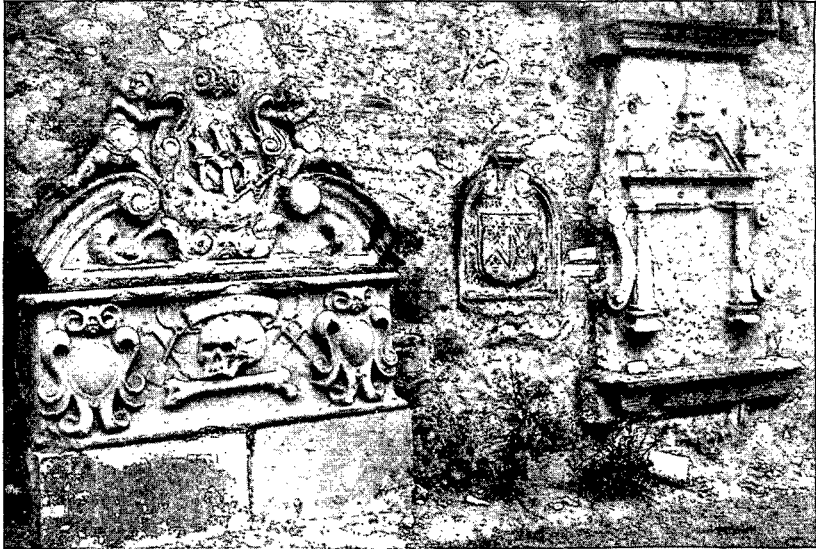


Fig. 16. A remarkable Mural Group.
(Photograph by Hippolyte J. Blanc, R.S.A., F.S.A. Scot.)

feeling, and displaying arms on a shield now undecipherable, this, in its prime, must have been the most imposing monument in this churchyard. There is no date or inscription visible, and the only trace of symbolism remaining is the death-head and cross-bones device which appears beneath the heavy moulded base.

Those familiar with Monteith's *Theatre of Mortality* may recollect a

re remarkable epitaph which that authority (p. 263, Macvean's edition) attributes to the West Churchyard of Tranent. On account of its character, this uncouth rhyme has been circulated very freely, and many have visited the ground in order to make direct acquaintance with it. But it is nowhere to be seen ; and it is vain to surmise on which of the worn old monuments it was graven. As given by Monteith, it has a flavour all its own, and is worthy of reproduction among these notes of the quaint sculptures which may have been its contemporaries :—

“ William Matthison here lies
 Whose age was forty one.
 February seventeenth he dies
 Went Isbell Mitchell from
 Who was his married wife
 The fourth part of his life
 The soul it cannot die
 Tho the body be turned to clay
 Yet meet again they must
 At the last day
 Trumpets shall sound archangels cry
 Come forth Isbell Mitchell
 And meet William Matthison in the sky.”