

Scottish external funerary metal plates

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ABSTRACT

Small external funerary metal plates made before the middle of the 19th century are given little attention or ignored in most studies of British gravemarkers. These hand-engraved artefacts are relatively common in Gloucestershire, Cumbria and, to a lesser extent, in Yorkshire. Although usually referred to as brasses, most of them are made from bronze alloy and exhibit both affinities with and differences from interior small brass memorials. They are uncommon elsewhere in England and are extremely rare in Scotland. This paper describes the nine Scottish plates so far found in Scotland, all but one in the far south of the country, together with details of the gravestones on which they are mounted. Special consideration is given to the lettering of the inscriptions as a possible indicator of their provenance. The reasons for the rarity of these artefacts in Scotland are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The gravemarkers in several thousand graveyards and other burial grounds in Europe and North America have been surveyed and photographed in the pursuit of the author's research activities in inscriptional palaeography (Thomson 2001; 2002; 2005; 2006a; 2006c; 2007; 2008a; 2009). In the course of these studies, it was noted that the gravestones in many graveyards in England have small inscribed metal plates fixed to headstones and graveslabs. In some sites, similar plates are also fixed to exterior church walls. The almost total lack of any mention of post-Reformation external funerary metal plates in the literature on gravemarkers in Britain is surprising. Burgess (1963) makes limited reference to external brasses, restricting his comments to an endnote. Mytum (2004) ignores them completely. Even Lees (1993; 1998), who brings attention to them in her Gloucestershire works, makes only passing comment in her more comprehensive volume (Lees 2000). Mytum

(2000) does not facilitate appropriate recording of these artefacts although he does allow for the recording of brass markers (but not those attached to gravestones) and makes only very brief mention of brass plates in his text. Willsher and Willsher and Hunter make no mention of them whatsoever in their extensive publications (see Willsher & Hunter 1978 and Willsher 2005 for their most important publications). Several published records on monumental inscriptions either do not distinguish them from gravestones, or ignore them completely. All this is very surprising when, as memorial artefacts, they are as much part of funerary and commemorative culture as any headstone, ledger or mural monument. The Monumental Brass Society has published inventories that include these plates in England (Lack, Stuchfield & Whittemore 1992–2005), although many still have to be recorded. D'Elboux (1946–9) details their history.

The distribution of these artefacts in Britain is extremely patchy and many have been lost, stolen or destroyed leaving evidence of their

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former location as indents. The value of the metal from which they are made has made them candidates for recycling, either legally or illegally through theft, as is the case with monumental brasses. The largest accumulations of external metal plates are in Gloucestershire, just spreading into west Oxfordshire, and Cumbria in the ancient counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland. They are also found in significant numbers in Yorkshire. Elsewhere in England their occurrence is rare and their distribution sporadic. External metal plates occur much more frequently on vertical headstones in Cumbria and Yorkshire than in Gloucestershire where they are fixed, almost invariably, on graveslabs, table tombs, chest tombs or, less commonly, on exterior church walls. Small external funerary metal plates dated 1850 or earlier appear to be absent from Wales and Ireland and outwith Great Britain they appear to be extremely rare but include a few from the mid-19th century in Brittany and one in St Paul's Churchyard, Halifax, Nova Scotia (Thomson unpublished). However, others that now have been mounted within churches may have been external in the past, or coffin plates as in the case of those in the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam.

Although the plates are invariably referred to as brasses, they were usually made from an alloy more akin to bronze, with varying proportions of the constituent elements (Cameron 1946). A few were made from ferrous alloys and other metals. Their shape is usually rectangular, although there are also oval, shield and other irregular forms. The majority of external metal plates are very small and usually unfigured, other than occasionally incorporating restrained iconography or decoration and, more rarely, heraldry, a feature that distinguishes them from archetypal medieval and later monumental brasses. Consequently, the engraved lettering on them is the dominant and most important attribute. The author has made an extensive study of lettering on both external and interior

small memorial plates based on an analysis of 209 sites in 13 counties in England, Wales and Scotland, discussing its place and significance in the broader context of material culture (Thomson 2008b).

Many, if not most, were not made locally and were imported from major centres such as London and Birmingham (Bertram 1996). There were exceptions. Lack et al report that many external brasses in the Cotswolds were made in Cirencester, King's Stanley, Minchinhampton, Stroud and, according to local tradition, in Bristol. A few in Gloucestershire are signed. The high proportion of imports means that any stylistic trends in lettering style or other aspects of the design are due more to client preference and instruction rather than local craft traditions. Bertram recognised that geographic trends in the design of monumental brasses were blurred for the same reason. This is in stark contrast with the very subtle local differences that can be detected in lettering on gravestones that reflect cultural diversity (Thomson 2006b).

The standard of engraving on many external brasses, although it varies considerably, often does not compare well with that on other artefacts or on many small interior brasses (see Dalglish & Fotheringham (2008) for examples in silver). There are some notable exceptions in Gloucestershire, especially at Minchinhampton and Painswick. Many metal utilitarian and commemorative items were engraved with lettering in the 17th, 18th and 19th century in Scotland. Most that have survived in private and public collections are of silver or gold and are usually artefacts of some historical or artistic significance. The engravers who were employed to cut the inscriptions on these objects would have been amongst the most highly skilled. It is possible that small funerary metal plates were sometimes considered to be of much less importance and it appears that engravers of lesser skill were often given the task. Local craftsmen would have cut the lettering on

plates that were not purchased elsewhere, just as was the case with stonemasons and gravestones. In spite of the differential in craftsmanship, the style and interpretation of lettering on small funerary metal plates has much in common with that on other artefacts of similar materials. The quality of engraving on interior small brasses is often superior to that on external plates, the difference being most apparent before 1700. Gawthorpe (1922), in his discourse on the methods of engraving brasses, suggests that engravers from the 15th century onwards did not plan the layout of lettering in advance resulting in the haphazard arrangement of inscriptions. However, these appear to have been planned much more carefully than inscriptions on contemporary gravestones. The emergence of small external plates in England at the beginning of the 17th century coincides with the beginning of the decline in the numbers and quality of figured ecclesiastical brasses and their virtual demise by 1700.

Cutting techniques in metal and stone are similar, though not identical. However, the influence of material on gravestone inscriptions was far greater than that on brasses and other metal plates. Soft stones, such as sandstone and grainy limestones, are not well suited to detail such as fine lines and crisp serifs. Conversely, the most delicate lines can be cut in slate. However, in spite of these material differences, there is some correspondence between the lettering on metal and stone. Clearly the size of incised and engraved lettering is significantly different. On gravestones, it is rare to find lettering with an x-height (the height of the lowercase x) of less than 2 or 3cms, whereas on metal plates it can be as little as 5mm or less. In spite of this, the evolution and development of lettering style followed similar patterns from the 17th to the 19th century. There are also significant differences. The roman form used on gravestones up to the middle of the 18th century is very much a 'classical' style, with

proportions, stroke weights and serifs derived from Classical and Renaissance models. The engraved roman letterforms on metal artefacts in the 17th and early 18th centuries, including brass and bronze funerary plates, are much akin to those used subsequently on gravestones in the late 18th and 19th century, typographically classed as 'modern', with marked contrast between the thick and thin lines and bracketed, fine serifs. These forms are misleadingly called 'English letter' by Bartram (1978) and 'English vernacular' by Mosley (1963) and Gray (1986). Corrections made by adding missed letters or completing misjudged lines with small characters above the word are much rarer on metal plates than on gravestones, possibly because the text was planned more carefully in advance. On gravestones, ligatures were frequently used in inscriptions in roman capitals. More than 65 letter combinations have been recorded (Thomson unpublished). Ligatures are rare and may be absent altogether on external metal plates, other than AE in Latin inscriptions. Even this ligature is not common. They are also relatively rare on post-16th-century interior brasses but do occur throughout England.

In some respects, a distinction between small external and interior metal plates is artificial. The material used for interior small funerary plates is usually brass, not bronze alloy. However, these artefacts, whether they are inside the church building or external to it, can be considered expressions of the same engraving tradition. Interior small brasses are relatively numerous throughout much of England and Wales but, in common with external metal plates, are rare in Scotland. Monumental brasses are also much less common in Scotland than in England.

Inscribed inlays in stone different from the main structure of the memorial, usually marble or alabaster, were used from the 17th century and possibly before. From the 19th century onwards, other materials were used for these inlays, including slate. Although their design

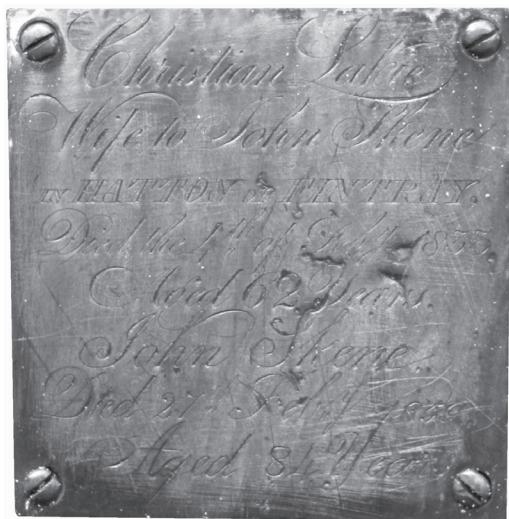
belongs to a different class of artefact from that of small metal plates, they overlap chronologically and can be superficially similar, especially those made from slate. Some have been erroneously reported a 'metal plaques', as in the case of the Kirkpatrick Irongray memorial described later in this paper.

When the author's study of small external metal plates of the post-Reformation to 1850 period was made, only one had been located in Scotland, at Castleton Churchyard, Roxburghshire dated 1788. Since then, eight others have been found and these are reported in this paper. Most later Scottish external plates of the late 19th century onwards were, and still are industrially produced, rather than hand-crafted. It is possible that more of these 18th- and early 19th-century artefacts will be found but they must be considered rare in Scotland.

THE MEMORIAL PLATES

Nine Scottish small memorial metal plates have been found in the counties of Aberdeenshire (1),

Dumfriesshire (1), East Lothian (3), Lanarkshire (2), Roxburghshire (1) and Wigtownshire (1). With the exception of the plate at Hatton of Fintray, Aberdeenshire, all the metal plates are in sites located in the far south of Scotland. Two, at Hatton of Fintray and New Abbey, are attached to slim granite pillars, six are fixed on headstones, and one (Spott) on a ledger. The gravemarker on which the Castleton plate is mounted may have



ILLUS 1 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Hatton of Fintray, Aberdeenshire



ILLUS 2 Granite pillar with small funerary metal plate, Hatton of Fintray, Aberdeenshire

been a ledger, reused as an upright headstone. The two adjacent plates at Dunsyre were made from an unidentified ferrous metal, the others from bronze alloy.

PLATE 1 (illus 1, 2)

Hatton of Fintray, Aberdeenshire (NGR: NJ 840 165)

The small bronze alloy plate in the graveyard at Hatton of Fintray, that lies between Aberdeen and Inverurie, measures 108mm × 112mm and is fixed to a granite pillar 270mm × 830mm × 120mm. The plate sits in an 18.5cms wide tapering recess.

top of the pillar is chamfered. The inscription is in script capitals and lowercase with the exception of the third line that is in ornamented roman capitals. The entry for John Skene has been added at a later date, the engraving of the letters being of a poorer quality than the earlier entry. The inscription reads:

Christian Lakie/ Wife to John Skene/ IN HATTON
OF FINTRAY/ Died the 4th of Feb^y. 1833/ Aged
62 years./ John Skene,/ Died 27th Feb^y. 1859/
Aged 84 Years.

The pillar is not inscribed. Spiers (1985), in her monumental inscriptions, entry number 107, does not note that the memorial is a metal plate.



ILLUS 3 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, New Abbey, Dumfriesshire



ILLUS 4 Granite pillar with small funerary metal plate, New Abbey, Dumfriesshire



ILLUS 5 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Dunbar, East Lothian

PLATE 2 (illus 3, 4)

New Abbey, Dumfriesshire (NGR: NX 964 663)

The bronze alloy plate in the graveyard next to Sweetheart Abbey measures 250mm × 450mm and is mounted in a recess on a tall granite pillar 290mm × 1930mm × 150mm. The first and last lines of the inscription are in gothic capitals and lowercase, the second and third in roman capitals, the fourth in roman capitals and lowercase and the fifth in script capitals and lowercase. It reads:

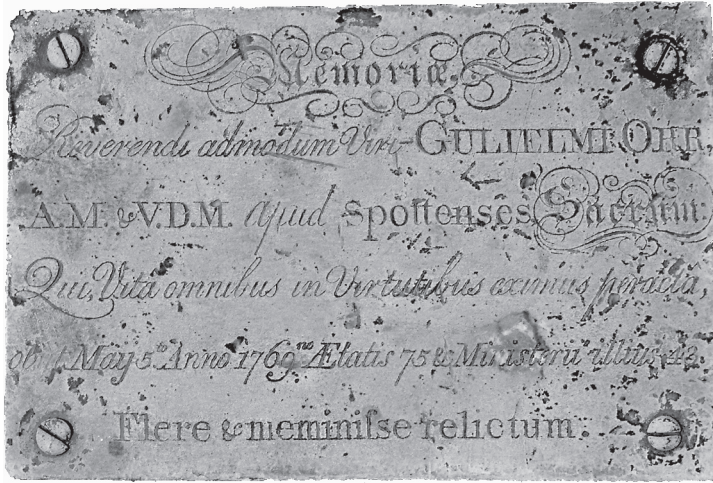
In memory/ OF/ JOHN SEATON,/ Late Joiner in
New Abbey./ Who Died 4th Feb. 1825./ Aged 45
Years.

The inscription in roman capitals and lowercase on the adjacent sandstone headstone reads:

In memory of/ John Seaton in Newabbay/ He died
24th March 1773 aged 57/ Also Lucy Card his
Spouse/ She died 17th Nov. 1781 aged 64/ Also
Robert Seaton their/ Son, Joiner in Newabbey/
Who died March 2nd 1802, aged/ 55 years. Also
Agnes Craik his/ spouse who died March 7th



ILLUS 6 Sandstone gravemarker with small funerary metal plate, Dunbar, East Lothian



ILLUS 7 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Spott, East Lothian

IN MEMORY OF JEAN SMITH/ DAUGHTER TO THOM^S &/ MARGARET SMITH WHO/ DIED APRIL 8TH 1799/ AGED 62 YEARS.

PLATE 4 (illus 7, 8)

Spott, East Lothian (NGR: NT 673 756)

One of the two funerary metal plates at Spott is possibly unique in Scotland, being mounted

1823/ aged 69 years. Also William/Seaton their son, Student/ Of Divinity who died Sept^r 1ST/ 1810 aged 28 years. ALSO JEAN/ SEATON their daughter, who/ Died Oct^r 9TH 1842 aged 49.

The pillar is not inscribed. Mitchell (1998) records the monumental inscription for the metal plate under number 348 and the headstone under 349.

PLATE 3 (illus 5, 6)

Dunbar, East Lothian (NGR: NT 685 782)

A damaged bronze alloy plate is loosely attached to a broken headstone in Dunbar Parish churchyard and measures 183mm × 102mm. The inscription is in roman capitals throughout. The pediment of the headstone is missing. The remaining part of the stone measures 620mm × 700mm × 130mm from the ground to the damaged top. It is made from soft, pale pink sandstone and any inscription that may have been cut on the stone has been obliterated through alveolar erosion. The inscription on the plate reads:



ILLUS 8 Ledger with small funerary metal plate, Spott, East Lothian

not on a headstone but on a ledger measuring 900mm × 1850mm × 95mm, with a 90mm surrounding recessed edge. It is cut from pale grey sandstone. The ledger is not inscribed. The bronze alloy plate measures 170mm × 110mm. The Latin inscription is in a mix of gothic capitals and lowercase, roman capitals and roman capitals and lowercase. It reads:

Memoriae/ Reverendi admodum Veri-GULIELMI
 ORR,/ A.M. & V.D.M. Apud Spottenses Sacrum:/
 Qui Vita omnibus in Virtu[ti]bus eximus perdita,/
 obiit May 5 Anno 1769 Aetatis 75 & Ministeru
 illius 43./ Flere & meminisse relictum.

The transcription in the monumental inscriptions by Mitchell and Mitchell (2004), with additional information on William Brown, is given under entry number 48:

Revd Wm ORR AM VDM min here d 5.5.1769 75
 & 43y a minister, by widow



ILLUS 9 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Spott, East Lothian

PLATE 5 (illus 9, 10)

The second Spott bronze alloy plate is mounted on a headstone made from pale grey sandstone, measuring 920mm × 1315mm × 75mm. The plate measures 248mm × 118mm. The words ‘In Memory’ are in gothic capitals and lowercase, the third line is in italic capitals and lowercase



ILLUS 10 Sandstone gravemarker with small funerary metal plate, Spott, East Lothian

and the rest of the inscription in roman capitals and lowercase. It reads:

In Memory of/ JANET LIDDELL spouse to
 FRANCIS IRVINE/ who died 17th April 1813
 Aged 45 Years/ she was a valuable Wife a loving
 Mother/ and amiable friend.

Mitchell and Mitchell record the plate and headstone under entry number 7. The inscription on the headstone in alternating lines of roman capitals, roman capitals and lowercase and italic capitals and lowercase reads

MEMENTO MORI/ SACRED TO THE
 MEMORY OF/ FRANCIS IRVINE/ *Late*
Tenant in MOUNTALBON/ BERWICK Shire/
 Who died Sep^r 1st 1834 Aged 69 Years/ *And of*
their Son/ GEORGE IRVINE/ Who died
Jan^y 3rd 1816 Aged 11 Years/ Also their Son/
 ADAM IRVINE/ Who died Sep^r 29th 1820 Aged
 13 Years



ILLUS 11 Small inscribed funerary metal plates, Dunsyre, Lanarkshire

48/ AND MARION BROWN
HIS WIFE WHO DIED 14/
JULY 1768 AGED 47:

The lower plate reads:

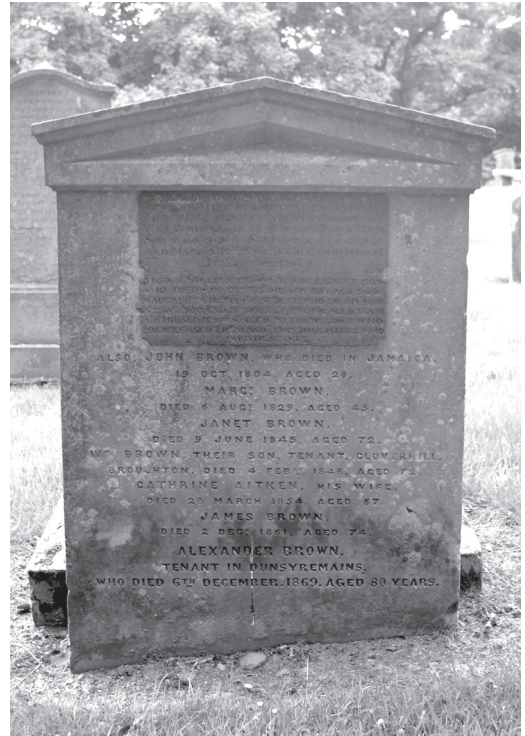
ALSO of WILLIAM BROWN
THEIR ELDEST SON/ WHO
DIED ON 21ST FEBRUARY
1816 AGED 66/ MARGARET
GIBSON HIS SPOUSE
WHO DIED 14 APRIL/1823
AGED 70 AND OF ROBERT
BROWN AGED 36 AND/
ARCHIBALD BROWN AGED
20 THEIR SONS WHO/
PREDECEASED THEM AND
TWO DAUGHTERS WHO/
DIED IN INFANCY

PLATES 6 and 7 (illus 11, 12)

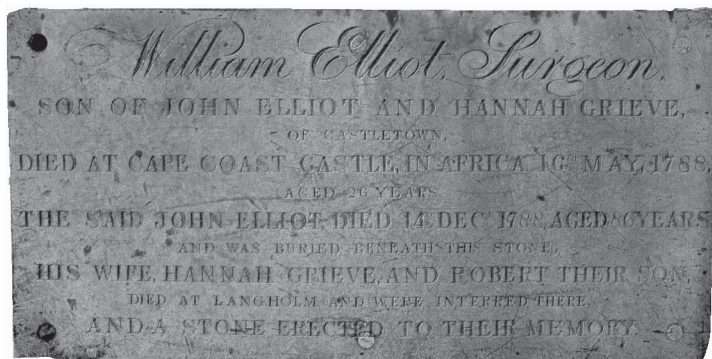
Dunsyre, Lanarkshire (NGR: NT 072 481)

There are two memorial metal plates in the Dunsyre churchyard, both made from a partly-corroded ferrous metal. They are mounted one above the other on a headstone made from fine-grained, pink sandstone measuring 830mm x 1220mm x 155mm. The lower plate has lettering cut in a style to match that on the upper plate. The overall size of the two plates is 503mm x 310mm, with the upper plate measuring 160mm high and the lower one 153mm. Both have concave, rounded corners. The inscriptions on both plates are almost entirely in roman capitals with the year dates italicised on the upper plate. The entry for Mary Brown on the upper plate has been added at a later date than the first entry. The numeral 4 and capital W differ significantly. The inscription on the upper metal plate reads:

IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM BROWN
WHO CAME TO/ DUNSYRE MILL IN THE
YEAR 1706 AND DIED/ ABOUT 1744 AND
MARGARET PENNYCOOK HIS/ WIFE WHO
DIED IN 1722; WILLIAM BROWN THEIR/
SON WHO DIED 23, SEPTEMBER 1763 AGED



ILLUS 12 Sandstone gravemarker with small funerary metal plates, Dunsyre, Lanarkshire



ILLUS 13 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Castleton, Roxburghshire

The inscription on the headstone is entirely in sans serif capitals.

ALSO. JOHN BROWN. WHO DIED IN JAMAICA, / 19 OCT. 1804, AGED 28. / MARG T. BROWN. / DIED 6 AUG^F. 1829. AGED 45. / JANET BROWN. / DIED 9 JUNE 1845. AGED 72. / M^M BROWN. THEIR SON. TENANT CLOVERHILL. / BROUGHTON. DIED 4 FEB^R^Y 1846. AGED 72. / CATHERINE AITKEN, HIS WIFE, / DIED 28 MARCH 1854, AGED 67. / JAMES BROWN. / DIED 2 DEC^R. 1861, AGED 74. / ALEXANDER BROWN. / TENANT IN DUNSYREMAINS. / WHO DIED 6TH. DECEMBER. 1869. AGED 80 YEARS.

In the monumental inscriptions by Scott (1997), entry number 46, no mention is made of the memorial being a metal plate.

PLATE 8 (illus 13, 14)

Castleton (Castletown), Roxburghshire (NGR: NY 508 897)

The Castleton plate measures 300mm x 150mm and is made from bronze alloy. It is attached to a vertical headstone cut from coarse grey sandstone measuring 820mm x 950mm x 80mm that possibly was formerly a ledger. The first line of the inscription is in script capitals and lowercase,

the remainder in roman capitals, with alternating small capitals. It reads:

William Elliot, Surgeon/ SON OF JOHN ELLIOT AND HANNAH GRIEVE, / OF CASTLETOWN, / DIED CAPE COAST CASTLE, IN AFRICA 10TH MAY, 1788, / AGED 26 YEARS, / THE SAID JOHN ELLIOT, DIED 17TH DEC^R. 1788, AGED 86 YEARS / AND WAS BURIED BENEATH THIS STONE, / HIS WIFE, HANNAH GRIEVE, AND ROBERT THEIR SON, / DIED AT LANGHOLM AND WERE INTERRED THERE, / AND A STONE ERECTED IN THEIR MEMORY.

The inscription on the headstone in cursive capitals and lowercase reads:

Heir lyes William Elliot Mercha^{NT}/ In Casteltoun son to Robert Elliot there/ Who died decm^r 3 1741 aged 33 y^{rs}/ Also Jean Ruan wife to y^e sd Robert/



ILLUS 14 Sandstone gravemarker with small funerary metal plate, Castleton, Roxburghshire

who died decm^r 26 1743 aged 73/ Also the sd Robert he died Jan th[e] 6 1737/ Aged 91

The monumental inscription entry is published as number 149 in Gilchrist (1972) but no mention is made that the part of the memorial is a metal plate. The memorial at Langholm Old graveyard referred to on the plate is made from red sandstone. It has formally been a headstone but is now built into the north wall of the graveyard. The inscription on the stone in roman capitals and lowercase reads:

In Memory of/ John Anderson Desended of/ The Andersons of Crawmill/ In the Shire of Twee[d] dal^r/ He died at Newcastle 27th/ July 1748 Aged 28 Years/ Margaret Grieve his spouse/ who died 24 Jan. 1798 aged 77 years/ Also ther children

Interre^d/ here –/ William died Sept^r 7, 1740 Aged 5/ James died 18 Dec^r: 1753 Aged 12/ John died 5 Feb^r: 1767 Aged 18/ Also Janet died 29 Oct^r 1790/ Aged 44 Years/ Likewise Hannah Grieve relict of the/ late John Elliot farmer in Castletown/ who died 18 Sept^r 1819 Aged 96

The monumental inscription in Gilchrist (1969) can be found as entry number 105.

PLATE 9 (illus 15, 16)

Portpatrick, Wigtownshire (NGR: NX 000 541)

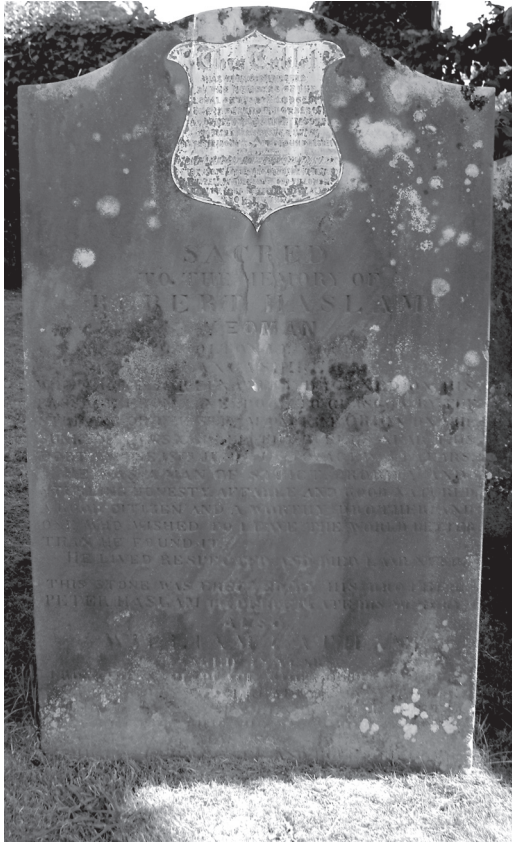
The undated bronze alloy plate in the old graveyard of Portpatrick is in the shape of a shield and measures 378mm × 427mm. It

is mounted on a large, red sandstone headstone measuring 1025mm × 1690mm × 130mm. The lettering style and form of the memorial suggests that it is contemporary with the inscription on the headstone, c 1850. The first line of the inscription is in gothic capitals and lowercase. The tenth line is in italic capitals and the rest in condensed sans serif. It reads:

This Tablet/ HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTED/ BY THE MEMBERS OF THE/ LOYAL ORTHODOX LODGE OF/ THE INDEPENDENT ORDER OF/ ODD-FELLOWS BOLTON MOORS/ OF THE MANCHESTER UNITY/ IN TESTEMONY OF THEIR PROFOUND REGRET/ FOR THE LOSS OF/ W^M LATHAM & ROB^T HASLAM TREASURER/ OF THE ABOVE LODGE WHO ARE



ILLUS 15 Small inscribed funerary metal plate, Portpatrick, Wigtownshire



ILLUS 16 Sandstone gravemarker with small funerary metal plate, Portpatrick, Wigtownshire

HERE INTERRED/ THEIR ZEAL IN THE
CAUSE OF ODD-FELLOWSHIP/ WILL BE
LONG REMEMBERED BY ALL/ WHO KNEW
THEM.

The inscription on the headstone is in roman capitals throughout except that the word 'YEOMAN' and 'ALSO' are in sans serif lettering. It reads

Sacred/ to the memory of/ Robert HASLAM/
yeoman/ of Bolton-le-Moor,/ Lancashire/
who was unfortunately drowned on his/
passage from Liverpool to Glasgow by the
striking of the/ Steam Packet ORION on the/
sunken rocks called The BUSHES near this/
port on the 18th June 1850 aged 35 years./

He was a man of strict probity/ and sterling honesty affable and good-natured,/ a good citizen and a worthy brother, and/one who wished to leave the world a better/ place than he found it./He lived respected and died lamented./ This stone is erected by his brother Peter/HASLAM to perpetuate his memory./ Also/ William LATHAM/ aged 4(8) years/ [from the same place who lost his life in the aforesaid dreadful catastrophe. His genius and inflexible integrity procured for him the approbation and affection of all who knew him. He has left a wife and four children to deplore his unhappy fate.]

The inscription on the headstone is very badly weathered and illegible in places, especially in the lower section and this has been recorded here from the monumental inscriptions by the Dumfries and Galloway Family History Society (1995), entry number 28, in which the plate is erroneously described as a lead shield.

THE KIRKPATRICK IRONGRAY 'METAL' PLATE

Mitchell (1998), entry number 252, records a 'fine calligraphy brass inlay' at Kirkpatrick Irongray in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright (NGR: NX 915 795). This plaque, measuring 20cms x 23cms with an estimate thickness of less than 5mm, is mounted on a headstone made from red sandstone measuring 80cms x 54cms x 12cms and bears the following inscription:

In Memory of/ John Anderson, in Bush of Killy=
lour; who died 12th of Oc'. 1764,/ Aged 53 years.
ALSO/ Samuel Anderson his Grand/ Son, who
died 11th May 1774,/ Aged 3 months-and 12
days.

The plaque is made from slate and not brass or bronze alloy.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The design of the Scottish external funerary metal plates is little different from that in

England and, indeed, some or all of them may well have been made south of the border. The Portpatrick plate was erected by members of an organisation in Manchester. It would be reasonable to assume that they had it made there rather than in south-west Scotland where there is no record of a suitable industrial source. With only nine plates extant, definitive conclusions on their provenance cannot be reached from statistical comparisons with such a small sample. The frequencies of the use of some lettering styles on the Scottish plates are closer to those in the north of England than in the south. However, over the same period, the frequencies of mixed styles and gothic lettering are closer to those in Gloucestershire, while the frequencies of roman capitals, roman capitals and lowercase, italic capitals, italic capitals and lowercase and script/cursive are closer to those in the north of England (Cumbria and Yorkshire) (table 1). Ornamented styles are much more common in Gloucestershire than anywhere else, including Scotland. Inscriptions in roman capitals with script are particularly

characteristic of Cumbrian metal plates. Although the Castleton and Hatton of Fintray plates have this lettering combination, it is slim evidence to suggest that they were sourced in the north of England. The Scottish plates may well have been made in different places in Scotland and/or England. Compared with pooled samples from all English sites, the only significant differences between the inscriptions from Scotland and England are the greater frequency of roman capitals (0.78 in Scotland, 0.54 in England), the lower frequency of roman capitals and lowercase (0.33 in Scotland, 0.69 in England) and the more frequent use of gothic on Scottish plates (0.44 in Scotland, 0.21 in England).

It is worth noting that all but one of the Scottish memorial plates are mounted on headstones, a practice that was the norm in Cumbria but was much less usual in Gloucestershire.

As is the case with external funerary metal plates, interior small brasses are rarely reported in genealogical surveys or studies of monumental brasses, the exception being the county studies

TABLE 1

Frequencies of letterform attributes on small brass plates in Scotland compared with samples from two English regions. Gloucestershire data include one site from west Oxfordshire. The north of England data comprise pooled sites from Cumbria and Yorkshire

	<i>Scotland</i> <i>n = 9</i>	<i>North of England</i> <i>n = 256</i>	<i>Gloucestershire</i> <i>n = 447</i>
Mixed	0.78	0.57	0.86
Roman capitals	0.89	0.65	0.44
Roman capitals and lowercase	0.33	0.45	0.82
Italic capitals	0.33	0.22	0.17
Italic capitals and lowercase	0.11	0.12	0.32
Gothic	0.44	0.18	0.32
Script/cursive	0.44	0.33	0.25
Ornamented	0	0.03	0.37
Sans serif	0.11	0.01	0.01

of the Monumental Brass Society, already cited. Even these are not comprehensive in this respect. Consequently, our knowledge of the occurrence of interior small brass plates is limited, especially in Scotland, although we can be certain that those of the pre-Victorian period are neither common nor widespread. Small interior brasses of the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries are not uncommon but they belong to a very different cultural and artistic tradition.

When early interior small funerary metal plates do occur, it is almost impossible to determine whether or not they were external plates that have been brought into the church building for safety. Those that are made from brass almost certainly will have always been interior memorials. The possibility that small bronze funerary plates in churches were once external should not be dismissed without evidence. There is an exceptional collection of five small funerary metal plates in the old St Fillan's Church in Aberdour, Fife. They date from 1748 to 1816. The oldest is a remarkable bronze plate commemorating Agatha Hallyburton, with a Latin inscription in relief roman capitals. The two memorials to James Douglas and Charles Douglas, dated 1768 and 1774 respectively, are of a metal alloy, probably bronze. The inscription is in roman and italic capitals and both have heraldic decoration. A much later bronze or brass plate commemorates Mary Hallyburton who died in 1816. The engraved inscription is a complex mixture of script capitals and lowercase, roman capitals, roman capitals and lowercase and italic capitals. The corners of the plate are notched making it a similar shape to those at Dunsyre. The newest plate dated 1823 is bronze and commemorates Katherine Morton. The engraved lettering is in roman capitals, script capitals and lowercase and gothic capitals. These apparently were coffin or depositum plates, removed during the restoration of the church about 1925 (anon 1925). The collection of interior brass plates

in St Giles' Church, Wrexham, and some other small interior brass plates in English churches may also have had a similar origin. The practice of removing depositum plates as mementos became common in the late 1800s (Litten 1991). An even more notable collection of 58 small metal plates is mounted on the wall of a side chapel in the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Five of them are uninscribed brass crosses and 53 have short inscriptions. All were removed from coffins in 1979, during the first restoration of 1955–80. Sixteen of the plates are brass, 40 are made from copper and two from bronze. They range in date from 1772 to 1862. Some are undated and may be earlier. In addition to the crosses, the shapes vary greatly and include rectangular (one with flanged corners), oval/ovoid, elongated hexagonal and shield forms. Some of the rectangular plates have notched corners similar to those at Dunsyre. The two bronze plates are very badly corroded.

It is difficult to explain why the practice of erecting external commemorative small metal plates was so uncommon in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th century and apparently absent in the 17th century. Similarly, it is surprising that they are so rare in some parts of England and not found at all in Wales. There were brass and bronze founders in Scotland at that time, especially in the urban centres. Bremner (1869) reports that there were upwards of 800 non-ferrous alloy workers in Edinburgh, around 1000 in Glasgow and about 2,500 throughout Scotland by the mid-19th century. Engraving on metal was a widespread craft throughout much of the country. The engraving of metal plates as an alternative to letter cutting in stone in areas where the matrix is more prone to weathering can explain their use in some instances but not all. Small funerary metal plates are commonest in the Cotswolds and Cumbria, areas where memorials were sometimes cut from limestone. Most limestones are very prone to erosion by wind, water and acid rain.

However, many are found on headstones and ledgers in these areas and elsewhere, made from hard materials such as granite and fine-grained, hard sandstone. If the plate was an addition to an existing gravestone, the reason for the choice of a commemorative metal plate could have been economic and practical, but this would not be the case when a new headstone or ledger was part of the memorial. The principal motivation that led to the use of these small commemorative metal plates was probably a complex combination factors, the main one being cultural and the continuation of a local tradition, while practicality and economics could also have played their part.

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