

III.

CHURCHYARD MONUMENTS AT NEWBATTLE. BY REV. J. C. CARRICK,
B.D., MINISTER OF NEWBATTLE; WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
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The parish of Newbattle has no fewer than five separate places of burial.¹ The ancient chapel of Bryans, which has entirely disappeared, stood on the hillside above the Esk valley. A stone holy-water basin was quite recently recovered from amid the farm buildings which cover the site of the ancient place of worship. The churchyard can still be traced by the large and aged trees surrounding the site. The byre of Bryans farm is paved mainly with the old tombstones, which have their inscribed faces turned downwards.

In the flower garden of Newbattle Abbey, and around the walls and vicinity of the house, skeletons of monks with fragments of their white habits have frequently been found, laid to rest under the shadow of St Mary's pile, as the ecclesiastical dignitaries found their final repose beside the altar. Inside the abbey were the grave and monument of Mary de Couci, Queen of Alexander II. The abbey was, in its palmy days, not only the favourite resort of Scottish royalty but also a specially desired resting-place for royal and noble dust.

Father Hay (Dipl. Col. III. 34. 1. 10), quoting an older authority; says : "In the midst of the church was seen the Tomb of the queen of Alexander, of marble, supported on six lions of marble. A human figure was placed reclining on the tomb, surrounded with an iron grating."

Only about a hundred yards from the original site of the abbey, now marked out in the gravel, the abbey church was rebuilt; and it was in this second church that Leighton preached. The church was in 1727

¹ A sixth burial-ground is said to have existed near Westhouses, in the upper part of the parish, and several old people have asserted that it was the place of interment for the village of Westhouses, once a large township with a school, immediately below the "Roman Camp."

removed once more to its present position and rebuilt, about a hundred yards towards the south, so that in a triangular space, with each side about a hundred yards in length, the church has stood successively at each point of the triangle. The only remaining portion of Leighton's church is a small vault, probably constructed of the stones left over after the second rebuilding of the abbey stones into the present edifice.

The Marquis of Argyle (eighth earl and first marquis), who was beheaded with the maiden at the Cross of Edinburgh, on May 27th 1661, is closely associated with the Lothian family, which, like the house of Argyle, was warmly attached to the reformed and covenanting cause. His second daughter, Lady Jean, became the wife of the first Marquis of Lothian. After Argyle's execution, his head was exposed on the west side of the Tolbooth. His body was carried first to St Magdalene's Chapel in the Cowgate, and thence to Newbattle, where it rested for a few days in the old church. The head remained on the Tolbooth spike for a fortnight, when Charles II. having given a warrant for its removal, the body was brought from Newbattle, and they were together laid in the family sepulchre of St Mund at Kilmun.

This vault or "Isle" (as a marble slab on the outside door describes it) became the place of sepulture for the Lothian family all through the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth century. Possibly the vault may have existed beneath the church as a family burying-place for the house of Lothian. On the front of the vault there have within the last few years been erected two white marble slabs built into an ornamental wall-door with the names of the various members of the house interred within. Around this vault the trees are particularly fine.

The latest of Newbattle burying-places is the new family cemetery of the house of Lothian, laid out beside the river Esk and near the great gate where, beside an uncle and aunt, the late beloved and distinguished Marquess of Lothian sleeps. A fine celtic cross has been raised over the grave of one whom this Society will never forget.

The following inscriptions are on the tablets of what used to be called the "Lothian Isle":—

"The front of this isle was enlarged by Gen. Lord Mark Kerr A.D. 1888. Jean, Marchioness of Lothian, built this isle in the year of our Lord 1705. (I. Tablet.) Mark Kerr of Newbattle (the last abbot) died August 26, 1584. Lady Helen Leslie, wife of Mark Kerr, d. Oct. 26, 1594. Mark Kerr, 1 Earl of Lothian, d. 1609. Lady Anne Kerr, Countess of Lothian, d. Mar. 26, 1667. William, 3 Earl of Lothian, d. Oct. 1675. Robert, 1 Marquess of Lothian, d. 16 Feb. 1703. Lady Jean Campbell, wife of the 1st Marquess, d. 31 July 1712. Lady Jean Campbell, wife of 2nd Marquess, d. Dec. 27, 1787. William Henry, 3 Marquess, d. 28 July 1767. William, 4 Marquess of Lothian, d. April 12, 1775. (II. Tablet.) Lady Caroline D'Arcy, wife of 4 Marquess, d. Oct. 1778. William, 6 Marquess d. 2 April 1824. Lady Henrietta Hobart, wife of 6 Marquess, d. 1805. Lady Jean Kerr, Lady Cranston, d. of 2 Marquess of Lothian. Mistress Jean Cranston, d. of Jean, Lady Cranston. Lord Robert Kerr, son of 3 Marquess of Lothian, killed at Culloden, April 16, 1746. Col. Lord Robert Kerr, son of 5 Marquess of Lothian, d. 1843. Lady Robert Kerr, d. 1859. Four children of Lord and Lady Robert Kerr."

The present churchyard of the parish is one of the most picturesque in all Scotland, surrounded as it is with magnificent trees, and laid out and kept with the most devoted care, a wonderful contrast to its condition in older days when the grass was allowed to grow knee-deep and the sacrilegious sheep dined off its rank growth. Sir Walter Scott, when residing at Lasswade, used frequently to visit this ideal resting-place for "Old Mortality." Newbattle churchyard was a hunting-ground with the Edinburgh Resurrectionists. Only within recent years has the old resurrection-house been swept away. The only specimen of the class now surviving in the district is that in Dalkeith churchyard,—a very complete specimen of the kind, with its round red-sandstone tower, battlemented top, and narrow port-holes round and round. The Newbattle house was built against the east wall, half way down, and was roofed.

At the bottom of many of the old graves the heavy irons are still come upon which were used to bind the coffins down to the earth and thus assist in baulking the body-stealer. Traditions are still numerous of fights with the body-snatchers, and it is certain that at least one death resulted from these contests.

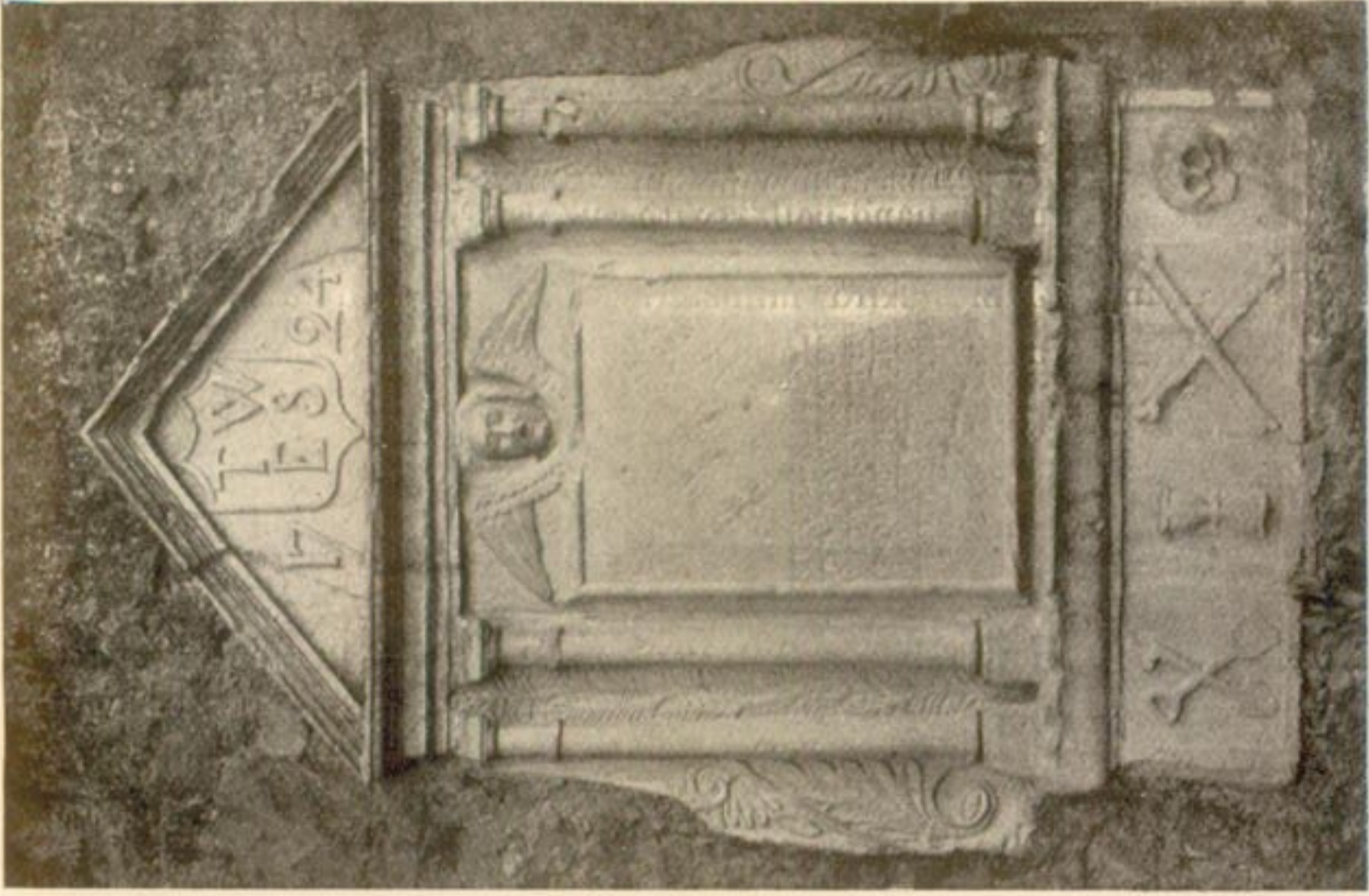


Fig. 2.

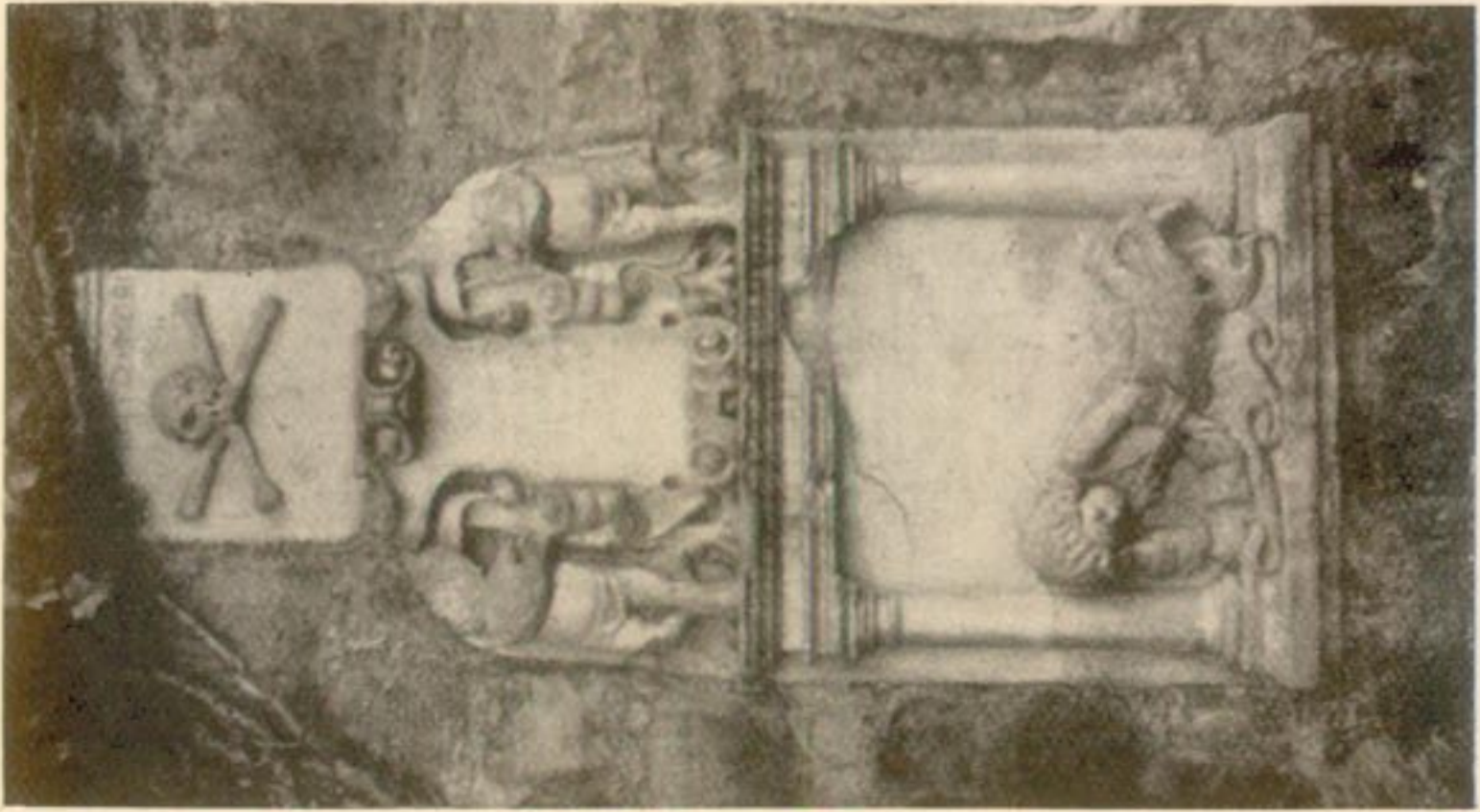


Fig. 1.

Among the many relics connected with the ecclesiastical establishment of Newbattle—Leighton's library, communion plate,¹ hour glass, etc.—there is the "funeral hand-bell," with "(1616 $\frac{M}{I. A}$)" as an inscription signifying "James Aird, minister." The bell, which is of coarse construction, has an iron handle in the shape of a leg-bone. Before a funeral took place the sexton paraded the parish, ringing his tocsin, and announcing all particulars of hour, place, etc. The old funeral road from Dalhousie to the churchyard (though now closed to the public) can still be easily traced, and with its magnificent avenue of tall trees on each side forms what is known as the "Kirk-brae," one of the most charming and admired pieces of scenery in all Midlothian. Some of the old funeral palls are still in existence, of rich, heavy black velvet with woollen fringes, often referred to in the session-records as "mort-cloths,"—used to cover the coffin, which was carried to the grave in any sort of conveyance.

Beginning with the tombstones at the east corner of the churchyard, beside the present grave-digger's tool-house, there is a group of monuments to the Watsons of Crosslea which is worthy of notice, the most interesting of them (fig. 1) to "George Watson, son of Robert Watson tenant in Westhouses, who died 20th January 1708, aged twenty-two years." The usual skull and cross-bones adorn the memorial and the inscription "memento mori"; but in addition there is a reclining figure of a youth reading a book, evidently referring to the studious habits of this young man cut off in his prime. Another (fig. 2) of date 1724, has hour-glass, cross-spades and bones and skull; while the stone, dated 1623, with the initials "T.W. : M.P. R.W. : DM." is similarly adorned.

A little further up the same eastern wall there are several monuments with the inevitable pillars and cross-bones, followed by a curious rude stone, with the earliest date of all in the churchyard, which bears the inscription,—“Here lyes John Duncan weaver in Newbattle who departed this life in 1607 aged 82,”—with the letters "T.B x I.D" and the weaver's shuttle and stretchers (fig. 3). Beside it is a stone (fig. 4) with

¹ See the description of the communion cups in the *Proceedings*, vol. xx. p. 425.

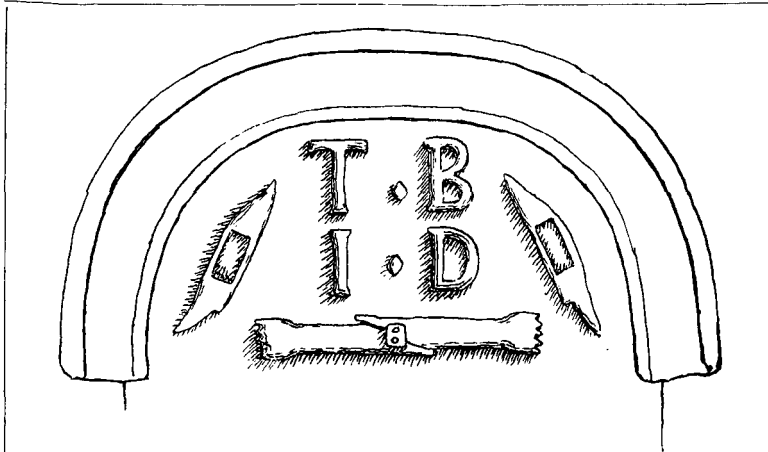


Fig. 3.

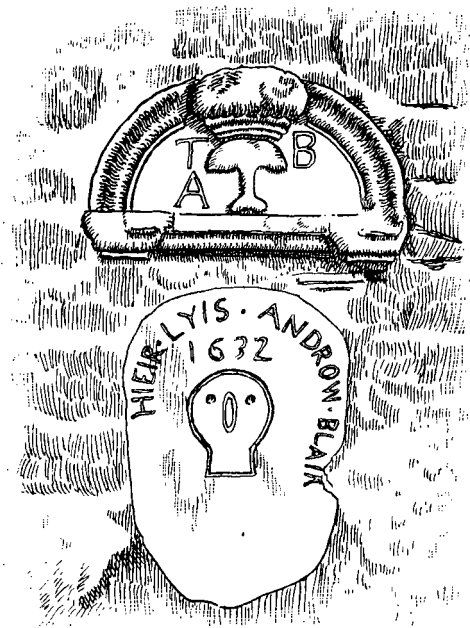


Fig. 4.

a face very rudely carved,—little else than a face-curve and holes and eyes and the inscription,—“Here lyis Andrew Blair 1632.”

On the upper part of the east wall there is a pillared monument (fig. 5)



Fig. 5.

with skull above and the letters “T.C : E W” and the inscription,—
 “Here lyeth James Chirnsyde sone to Jas. Chirnsyd Bailie in Newbatell
 who departed this life the 4th Nov. 1682 of age 12 years.”

On this Chirnsyde tomb there is a verse of reflection :—

“ In this frail life how soon cut of are wee
 All that on earth do live must surely die.
 Mount up O soul to that seraphick sphaere
 Eternal life if thou wolds have a share.
 Sure God doth for the blisid it prepare,
 Caelestial joy that can compare with the
 Here nothing is but grif and vanitie.
 Invieous death that could not hurt the soulle
 Ripened for glory though the grave did moulle
 Natour and strength, yea youth thou soon can kill
 So here thou did accomplish divine will,
 Yet where are nou thy furious darts, thy sting,—
 Death cannot stop the soul from taking wing
 Eternally with God above to sing.”

Elaborate scrolls flank this youth's monument, and cross-spades, cross-bones and an hour-glass occupy a panel at the foot.

On the south wall is a rather stately pillared monument of seventeenth century date, with an effective diamond ornament along the base and the inscription—

“ Heir godliness vith verteu in ane tombe
 Mare and Martha are interred in this tombe,”

referring either to two sisters or one excellent woman who combined the virtues of both the sisters of Bethany.

A pillared square monument comes next it, with the inscription “1629 TH × HL.” Beside it, wreathed in summer with the sweetest of “Gloire-de-Dijon” roses, is the grave of John William Turner, first professor of Surgery in Edinburgh University, who died in 1835, and of his relative Dr Aitchison, whose researches in Afghanistan thirty years ago rendered him famous, his fine botanical and zoological collections having their home in the South Kensington Museum.

The old escutcheoned stone next it (fig. 6) is remarkably interesting for its carving and symbolism—a child's tomb of 260 years ago. Above is an elaborate coat of arms, surmounted by a man with a club, while the sentences and symbols of death are carefully worked out, including “hodie mihi, cras tibi,” “memento mori,” and skull, hour-glass, cross-

bones, etc. On the top of the pillars there is a human head, an axe on one side, and a skull on the other. The inscription reads—"Here lyeth Frances Murray, one of the House of Black Baronnie who deceast the 14th Feb. 1641 aet. suae 8." She was the child of Sir Archibald Murray of Blackbarony in Peeblesshire—a progenitor of Lord Elibank. Andrew

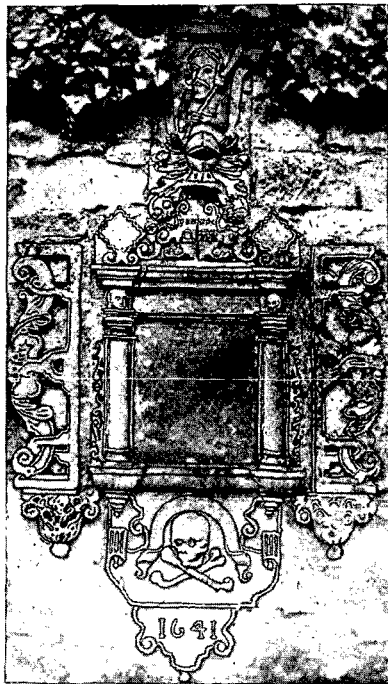


Fig. 6.

Murray of Blackbarony appears in charters in 1552, and his ancestors had been seated at Blackbarony for five generations previously. His son Sir John Murray was brother of Sir Gideon Murray, Lord High Treasurer of Scotland and a Lord of Session (father of Patrick, first Lord Elibank) and of Sir William Murray of Clermont, Fife. Sir John Murray's son and heir, Archibald Murray of Blackbarony, was made a baronet of Nova

Scotia in 1628, in James VI.'s reign. He married a daughter of Dundas of Arniston, and this child of eight was buried in Newbattle churchyard owing to her maternal connection with the parish, which includes a considerable portion of the Arniston estate.

A curious flat-faced obelisk built into the wall records a life spent amid a sea of troubles:—

“Anne uxor Samuel Elliot obiit Sept, 20th 1772 act. 73.

Afflictions sore
 Long time I bore
 Much tears I spent in vain
 Till God did please
 By death to ease
 And ridd me of my pain.

Here lyes the remains of Samuel Elliot Sergnt who died Nov. 14 1777 aged 90 years: also Anne second wife of Samuel Elliot who died April 14 1786 aged 60 years.”

The most interesting historical monument in Newbattle churchyard is unfortunately also the most scanty and diminished. It is to the memory of the Rev. William Creech, the father of William Creech, Provost of Edinburgh, the great bookseller, who was one of the best of Robert Burns' friends, and who himself published the Ayrshire ploughman's second edition of “Songs and Poems.” The only memorial left is a portion of a stone built into the southern wall, surmounted by a flower-ornament, and an open book on which is inscribed the text from Job xix. 25, with the inscription—“M.S.D. Gulielmi Creech ecclesiae apud Newbattle fidelissimi . . . pietate, prudentia, ma——hominem or——” The stone is almost entirely broken, and the small remaining fragment has been in recent years built into the churchyard wall. The Rev. William Creech entered the incumbency in 1739, succeeding the Rev. Andrew Mitchell, and died 21st August 1745, the year of the battle of Prestonpans. A new stone has just been erected to the memory of father and son, and a memorial brass placed in the church.

One of the finest, probably the finest of all the monuments is associated with the name of Welsh,—connected both with John Knox the Rêformer

and also with Thomas Carlyle. It is in the south-east corner of the churchyard, and is an elaborate table with ornamentation of bones and skulls and faces. The monument (fig. 7), from an architectural point of view, is a very interesting one, and was an object of much interest to the late Marquess of Lothian. From the 4 mark, shown in fig. 7, the monument is probably to a merchant, but the inscription is illegible.

Of the other monuments little need be said. That on the south wall, next Creech's tomb, of date 1634, with its skull and cross-bones to "Carles Campbell of Neubatell": the Aitchison monument, recently

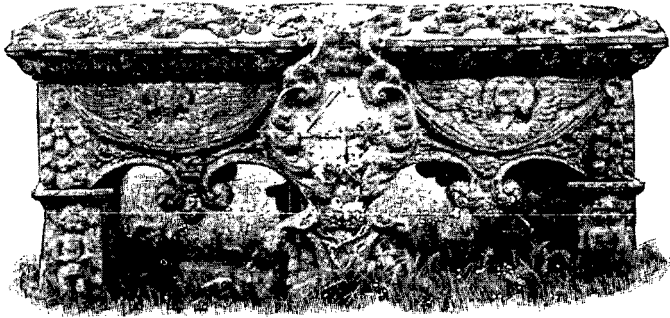


Fig. 7.

restored, of date 1728, with the usual insignia, are interesting: the Thomson tomb (1739), with the same insignia and scroll commemorating "John Thomson portioner in Newbattle 1739": that to Nicoll Simpson, 1662, beside it—all these have their family interest, but little beyond it.

In the centre of the churchyard there are several old stones to miners, weavers, etc. A spirit of economy seems to have taken hold of two colliers of Langlaw in the parish, for one family takes one side of the stone and the other the reverse. "Here lyeth Robert Allan son to John Allan Coalzier at Longlau died Nov. 29th 1752. 'Jesus said, "suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom

of heaven.” On the other side (fig. 8)—“Here lyeth William Douglas Coalzier at Longlau, husband to Margaret Patterson and two children who died 1741.” The insignia of the pick, mash and wedge are over both inscriptions. Another monument is to “Jenot Bounkyll spouse of Robert Graham, weaver in Easthouses who lived together 57 years

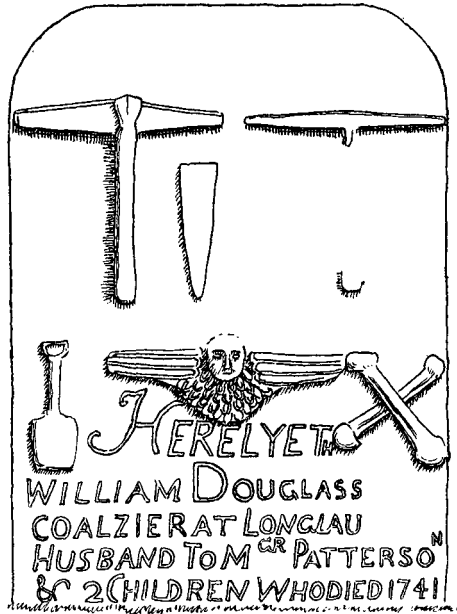


Fig. 8.

and departed 23rd June 1798 aged 77.” The Crooke’s monument of 1663 is also interesting.

The stone of a smith (fig. 9) 1741, is remarkable for the high relief of the carving. The crowned hammer is flanked by two human heads with curly hair, and by two hour-glasses, and skulls surmount the pillars at the sides.

The similitude of the insignia on the 17th and 18th century stones makes it unnecessary to pursue the subject further—some



Fig. 9.

having the crown and hammer, others the emblems of a weaver's, a brewer's, a farmer's or a miner's life, while most have only the symbols of our frail mortality.