

JONATHAN HARMER'S TERRACOTTAS

By G. L. REMNANT

In the course of the survey of exterior churchyard memorials being carried out by the Sussex Archaeological Society, it was noticed that some examples of these pottery tombstone ornaments, encountered at random, were falling into decay. It was decided, therefore, to proceed at once with a special survey of as many of them as could be traced, not only to record them photographically, but also to bring up to date and enlarge upon the previous rather scanty descriptions.

Jonathan Harmer senior, a stonemason of Heathfield,¹ had two sons, Jonathan, born in 1762, and John, and four daughters. When he died at the beginning of 1800 he bequeathed by his Will to his sons 'all such Portland and other stone, together with my working tools and utensils belonging to the Trade of a Stone Mason and Bricklayer, and Land Surveying Books.'²

Jonathan junior sailed for New York in 1796, to join his brother John, who had been there for about two years, and remained with him till the end of 1799, then returning to Heathfield in May, 1800, soon after his father's death. Whilst in America he wrote home a series of letters³ of great interest, the text of which is still available. He took over the family business, but specialised in terracotta bas-reliefs to ornament his tombstones. In the ledger of Parsons and May, stonemasons, of Lewes, now C. F. Bridgeman, Ltd., is the record of what must be one of Harmer's first purchases of stone after his return from America, and Mr. R. H. D'Elboux⁴ reproduced the entry by permission of Mr. P. F. Bridgeman:

1800.	Mr. John-n Harmer - Heathfield	
August 11	13-3ft. 3-in. supr. portland Headstone from the saw, at 1/10 p.ft.	£1 4 4

In 1897, Mr. W. C. Alexander bought from Mrs. Moren several examples, which had belonged to her husband, and also part of a bill made out as follows:

	Mr. William Sinden	To Jonathan Harmer	£	s.	d.
Feb. 16, 1808	To 3 Composn. Flower Baskets at 8s.		1	4	0
	To 5 Do. Urns at 10s.		2	10	0
Nov. 26	1 Masonic Tablet with Charity, being the 1st Impression		2	10	0
	Two Do. of Faith and Hope		1	12	0
	To 5 Do. of Charity at 8s.		2	0	0
	To 3 Do. Flower Baskets at 8s.		1	4	0

¹ See Perceval Lucas, *Heathfield Memorials* (1910), pp. 104-108.

² Maps by Jonathan Harmer, junior, 1810 and 1812, and by his son, Sylvan, 1838 and 1845, are in the East Sussex Record Office.

³ See Perceval Lucas, *op. cit.*, Appendix II.

⁴ *Sussex Notes and Queries*, Vol. 12, pp. 54-57.

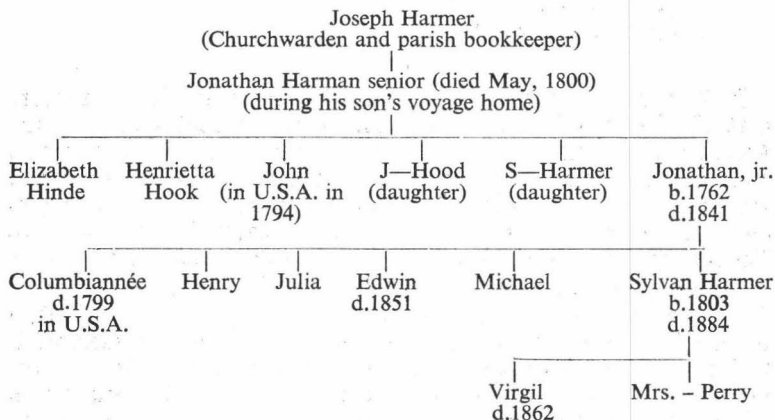
In September, 1897, Mr. Alexander examined and later purchased from Mr. Bertram Watson, a trustee of a Mrs. Perry, the whole stock of pottery, together with some papers and books, stored in an attic of the house in Portland Square, Heathfield, which had belonged to Jonathan, and afterwards to his son, Sylvan, who was Mrs. Perry's father, and whose memorial is in Heathfield churchyard, dated 9 October, 1884.

Jonathan Harmer junior, like his father, also carried on the occupation of land surveyor, as also did his son, Sylvan, though there is no evidence that the last named was engaged in the stonemason's trade. Sylvan Harmer wrote to the Brighton Guardian in June, 1830,¹ quoting a report made by his father in December, 1801, to the effect that he had made a survey of some land on the border of Heathfield and Waldron, and had found a seam of coal close to the surface. Sylvan had surveyed the same ground in 1830, and confirmed his father's discovery.

Sylvan Harmer had literary leanings, and his publication, *Sylvan Harmer's Song Book* contained a number of verses and ditties, probably copied from contemporary broadsides.²

It is on record that a Michael Harmer, of Heathfield, presumed to be another son of Jonathan, born after his return from America, built the wall surrounding Heathfield Park, completing the work in 1836.

The following family tree has been constructed from the available information:



The terracottas vary in colour from cream and buff to bright red, and Sussex pottery experts have expressed the opinion that the red examples are made from local clay, possibly from Heathfield Park,

¹ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. II, pp. 211-212.

² See Perceval Lucas, *op. cit.*, Appendix III.

but that the paler colours were made from imported clay, possibly Fulham clay, which could be obtained at that period. The surviving examples consist of seven main types, viz., baskets of fruit and flowers (22 noted), urns with ramshead handles (18), figure groups representing Charity (7), Masonic designs incorporating figures representing Faith and Hope (1), vases of a tureen shape (4), cherubs (occasionally surmounted by crowns from which rays spread downward (5), and paterae, or rosettes, of varying designs (50). In the stock bought by Mr. Alexander, however, was included one new pattern—a small coat of arms of the second Duke of Newcastle (the whereabouts of this is unknown).

A set of the pottery and some of the moulds were given to the Sussex Archaeological Society by Mr. Alexander in 1908, and can be seen in the Society's Museum, Barbican House, Lewes. In addition to the numbers quoted in the previous paragraph, the specimens held by the Sussex Archaeological Society are as follows:

- 1 Masonic tablet of Faith and Hope, 13in. x 9in.
- 1 Vase, 15in. x 11in.
- 2 urns with ramshead handles complete, and parts of four more.
- 1 basket of fruit and flowers, 10in. x 6in.
- 1 Charity group, 9in. x 6½in.
- 1 cherub, with one wing broken.
- 1 cherub with crown and rays, 15½in. x 11in.
- 2 small crowns as in the previous example, 4½in. x 2½in.
- 1 small urn, 7in. x 5in. and mould for same.
- 20 *paterae* of various designs.
- 10 moulds for above.
- 1 large petalled flower, 5in. x 5in.

In Wartling churchyard can be seen the only example cast in iron, that of a basket of fruit and flowers. It was probably made at the Ashburnham furnace, the only one working in East Sussex at that period. The framework is of iron, in which stone slabs are set, a very rare practice, of which it is believed that the only other examples are at Bethersden and Bridge, two widely separated points in Kent. The inscription on the Wartling stone is unfortunately illegible.

It is believed that Jonathan Harmer junior chose the lettering for his inscriptions from *Penmanship*, by George Bickham, 1731, a book of specimens of writing. In three instances, the memorials to Smith at Herstmonceux, Curtis at Mayfield, and Hilder at Salehurst, the terracottas, all of which are cherubs, give the impression of having been inserted as afterthoughts; alternatively, the inscriptions were cut first, leaving a very tight fit for the ornament. In a fourth case, the headstone of Miller at Heathfield, the basket of flowers was added later, as the word "Sacred" can be seen to have been cut out.

The churchyards in which examples of Jonathan Harmer's work survive are sixteen in number, viz., Brightling, Burwash, Cade

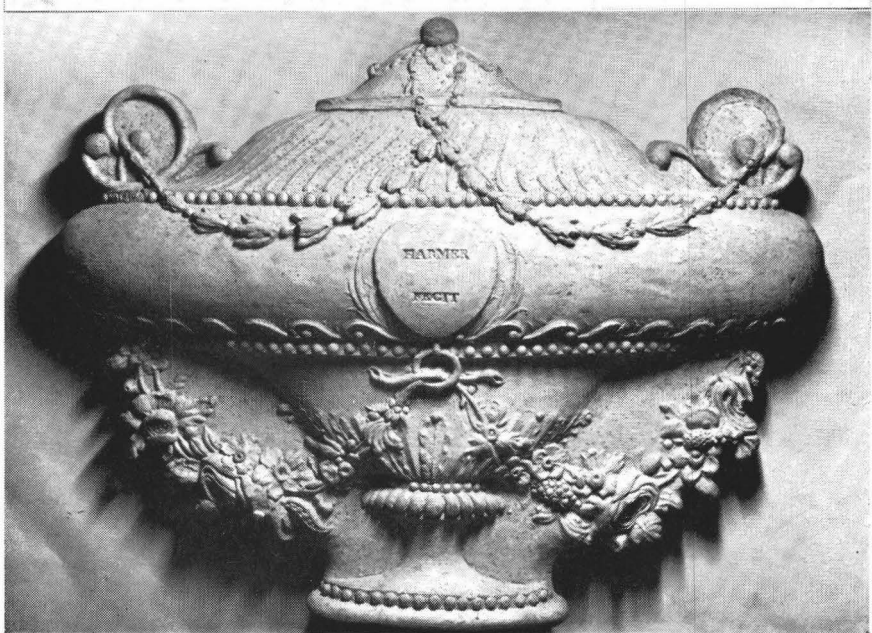
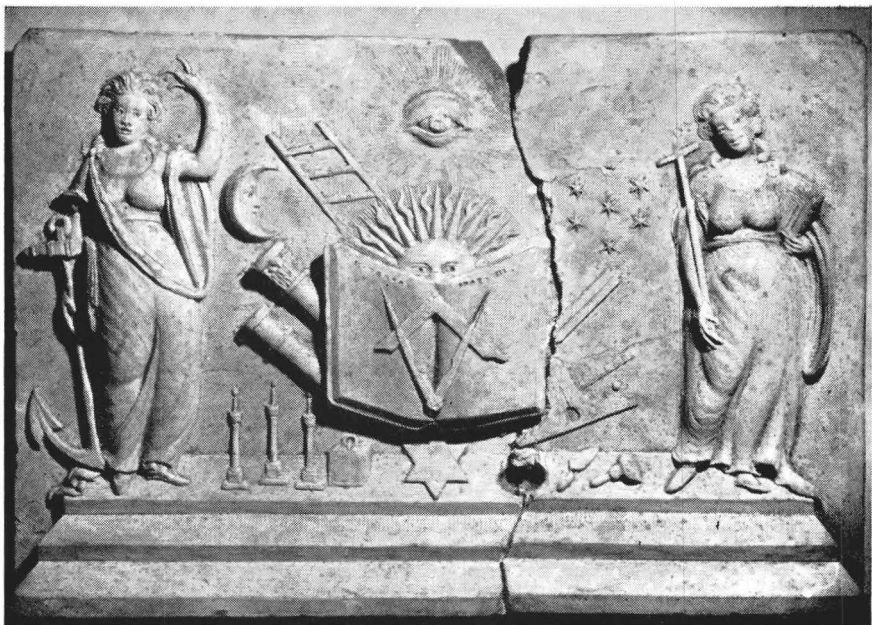


PLATE I

Top. " FAITH AND HOPE " MASONIC GROUP TABLET

Bottom. VASE ORNAMENT

Both in Sussex Archaeological Society's Museum, Barbican House, Lewes



PLATE II

Top. "CHARITY" GROUP ORNAMENT

Bottom. CHERUB WITH CROWN AND RAYS

Both in Sussex Archaeological Society's Museum, Barbican House, Lewes

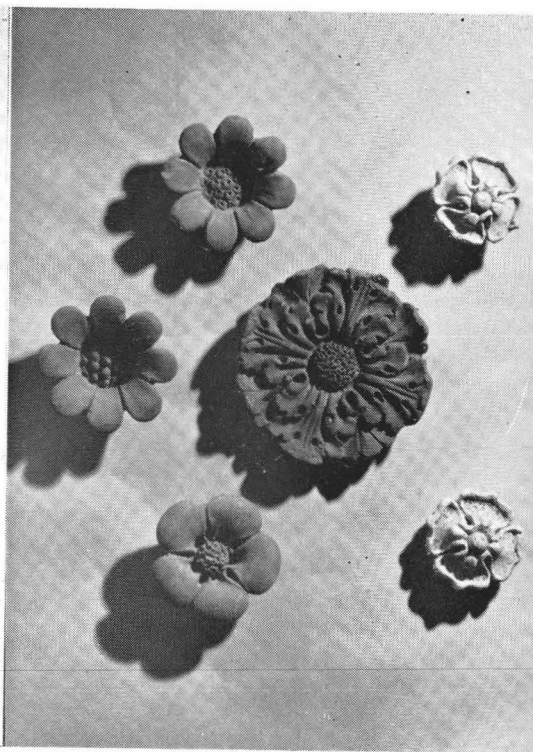
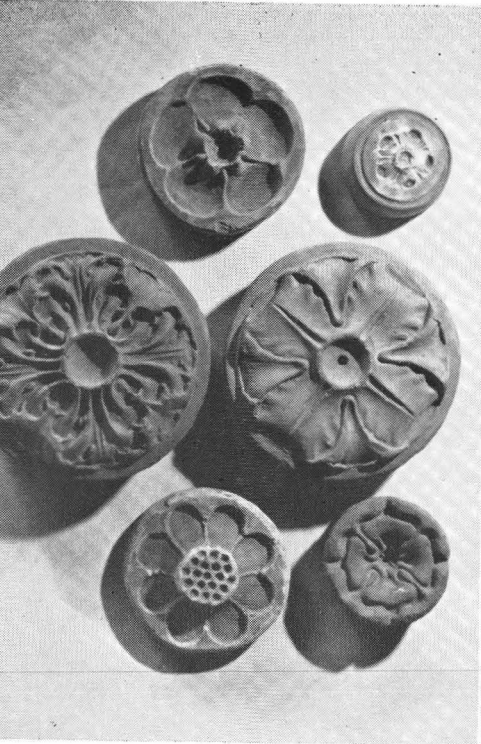


PLATE III

Top. SMALL URN AND CORRESPONDING MOULD

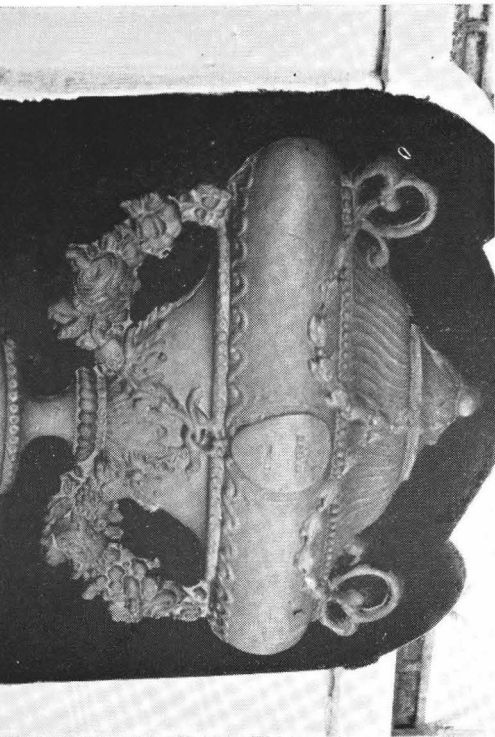
Middle. TYPES OF PATERAE (ROSETTES)

Bottom. MOULDS FOR PATERAE

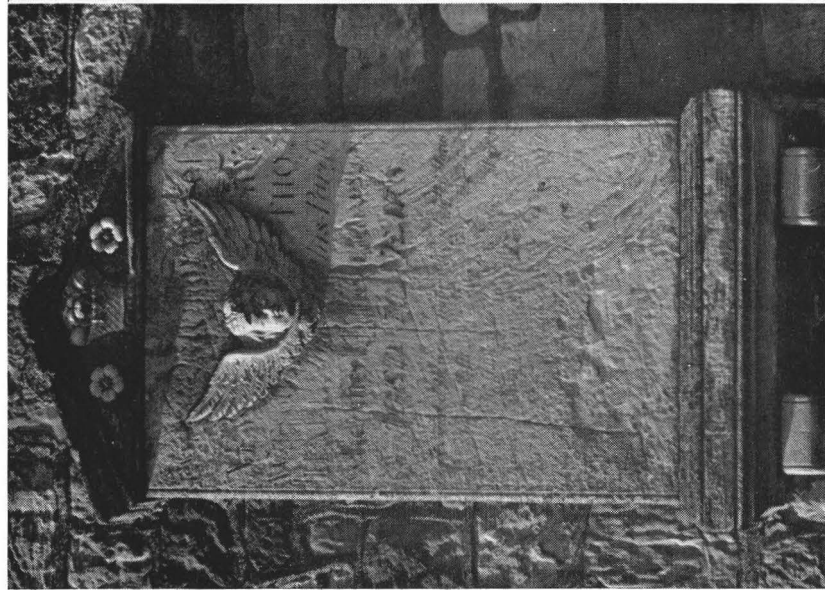
All in Sussex Archaeological Society's Museum, Barbican House, Lewes

PLATE IV

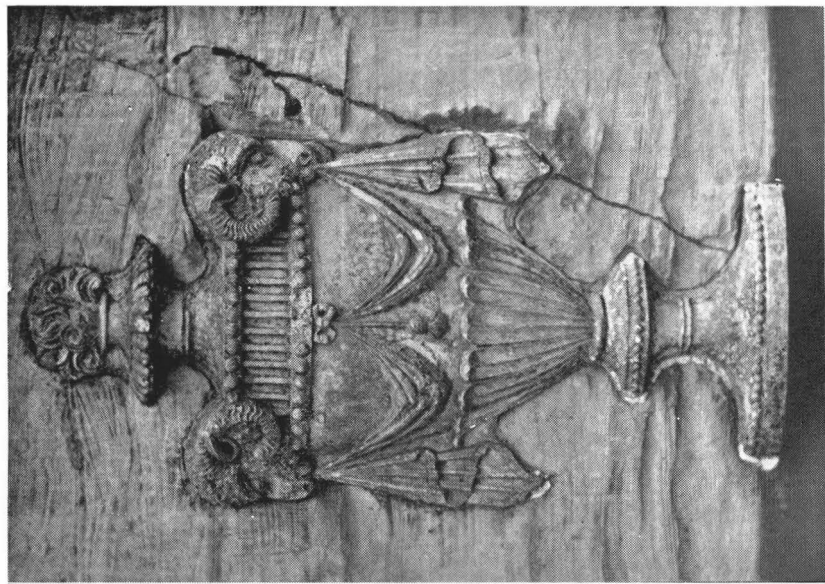
- Top.* ON A HEADSTONE AT GLYNDE TO MARIANNE NEW, 1811
Middle. ON A HEADSTONE AT MAYFIELD TO JUDITH CURTIS, 1810
Bottom. ON A TABLET IN CADE STREET INDEPENDENT CHAPEL







(A) WALL TABLET AT HEATHFIELD TO
MARY HALL, 1818



(B) URN ON THOMAS HICKS' ALTAR TOMB
AT SALEHURST

Street Chapel, Chiddingly, Framfield, Glynde, Hailsham, Heathfield, Herstmonceux, Mayfield, Mountfield, Salehurst, Waldron, Warbleton and Wartling.

In addition to the exterior memorials, a detailed list of types, descriptions and dedications of which is given at the end of this article, the two wall tablets inside Cade Street Independent Chapel are of great interest. Apart from their subject matter, they merit attention because, although identical in design, and bearing at the top a large vase, one of these, erected as late as 1878, must have been taken from the stock available after Jonathan's death. In this connection the latter bears at its foot the words 'Harmer 1878,' whereas the earlier, dated 1832, carries his own mark "Harmer fecit." It is also interesting to note that when his son, Sylvan, was buried at Heathfield, the stone was decorated with a large vase and two rosettes, obviously taken from store.

The inscriptions on the tablets inside Cade Street Chapel are to the Rev. George Gilbert (1827) and his wife Ruth (1832), and to the Rev. John Press (1846) and the Rev. Joseph Ellson (1877) and are shown on Plate V (see also Plate IV *bottom*).

Jonathan Harmer died in 1849, aged 86, and the parish register of Heathfield, now preserved in the East Sussex Record Office, records his burial in Heathfield churchyard on February 2, 1849. His wife, Mary, had predeceased him by some years, and was also buried at Heathfield on December 1, 1841, aged 82. Jonathan's Will, dated April 3, 1848, in which he described himself as 'in failing health,' was proved on March 27, 1849, by Sylvan Harmer, who was co-executor with his brother, Edwin.

By the Will, certain properties in Heathfield were left to Edwin, the house, shops and other properties in Portland Square, to Sylvan, subject to the payment of annuities to his sisters, Jonathan's daughters. The business had been made over by a Deed of Arrangement executed some time earlier to Jonathan's sons, Sylvan and Edwin, and to his grandsons.

There is to-day in Battle a family named Harman engaged in the building trade; their grandfather, George, was a stonemason in Burwash and one of the present generation is called Sylvan. Although these facts suggest a link with Jonathan Harmer, no records have been found to prove the continuity.

BRIGHTLING

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Elizabeth, wife of John HALLAWAY, died 23 April, 1810, aged 71.

BURWASH

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Elizabeth, daughter of James and Ellis NEWINGTON, died February -, 1829, aged 18 (?).
2. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 9½in. x 7in., dedicated to Marta, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. OLIVER, died 26 October, 1836, aged 19. Basket is flanked by rosettes, 2in. diamter.

CADE STREET INDEPENDENT CHAPEL

1. Headstone, with "Charity" group, 8½ in. x 6½ in., dedicated to Elizabeth, wife of John PETTITT, died 26 January, 1820, aged 39.
2. Headstone, with small urn, flanked by rosettes, 2 in. diameter, dedicated to Sarah, wife of Jesse SMITH, died 2 November, 1825, aged 23.
3. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, dedicated to Hannah, wife of Richard GOLDSMITH, died 23 March, 1815, aged 46.
4. Headstone, with "Charity" group, dedicated to William ERREY, late of Mayfield, died 26 February, 1816, aged 68.
5. Headstone, with "Charity" group, dedicated to Hannah, wife of George STEVENS, of Heathfield, died 12 March, 1819, aged 24.
6. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, dedicated to Lydia, wife of Jesse HUGGETT, died 29 October, 1806, aged 27.

CHIDDINGLY

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10 in. x 6½ in., dedicated to John BRAY, formerly of Hailsham, died 9 December, 1814, aged 80.

FRAMFIELD

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½ in. x 6½ in., dedicated to Ann, wife of Wm. D. LEADNER, died 5 March, 1825, aged 40.

GLYNDE

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, dedicated to Marianne NEW, daughter of William and Mary NEW, died 15 January, 1811, aged 10 years and 10 months (*see* Plate IV *top*).

HAILSHAM

1. Altar tomb with memorial urn with ramshead handles, 16½ in. x 8½ in., at each end. Dedicated to Walter JENNER (a former Parish Clerk), died 24 June, 1815, aged 80, also to his wife, Mary, died 13 March, 1817, aged 87. This tomb is breaking up, and the base has been roughly shored up with loose bricks.

HEATHFIELD

1. Wall tablet, with large central winged cherub, and, in pediment at top, basket of fruit and flowers flanked by rosettes. Dedicated to Mary, wife of Thomas HALL, died 14 June, 1818, aged 50 (*see* Plate VIA).
2. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, flanked by rosettes, dedicated to John MILLER, late of this parish, yeoman, died 25 November, 1822, aged 63. "What is Man!" inscribed at foot.
3. Headstone, at far S.W. corner of churchyard, facing against wall, with vase, 15 in. x 12 in., and flanking rosettes, 2½ in. diameter. Dedicated to SYLVAN HARMER, Land Surveyor, son of Jonathan HARMER, died 9 October, 1884, aged 81. Also to Harriot, his wife, died 1 December, 1868, and Virgil, their son, who died 31 May, 1862, aged 6 years and 10 months.
4. Headstone, with recess for "Charity," 8½ in. x 7 in., dedicated to Sarah, wife of Thomas PARSONS. Remainder undecipherable.
5. Headstone, with recess for basket of fruit and flowers, 10 in. x 6 in., dedicated to Sarah, wife of Richard SMITH, died 28 September, 1809, aged 43, "leaving a husband and four children."
6. Headstone, with recess, 9½ in. x 7 in., probably for basket of flowers, dedicated to Edward OSMOND, died 30 August, 1806, aged 52.

HELLINGLY

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10 in. x 6 in., dedicated to George GOLDSMITH (remainder of inscription illegible).
2. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10 in. x 6 in., dedicated to Thomas, son of Will and Mary MAWMAN, died 12 December, 180-(?), aged 19.
3. Headstone, with large urn, 16½ in. x 8½ in., dedicated to Mary PARKER.

HERSTMONCEUX

1. Altar tomb, with urn at each end, approx. 14in. x 7in., both in bad condition. Dedicated to Ann, 2nd daughter of Richard and Elizabeth GIBBS, died 18 August, 1817, aged 13.
2. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Maria MAKING, died 2 October, 1806, aged 12.
3. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Robert, son of John and Mary PURSGLOVE, died 22 March, 1811, aged 82.
4. Headstone, with winged cherub, dedicated to Maria, wife of Isaac SMITH, died 3 May, 1851. Stone badly sunk and one wing of cherub broken away.
5. Wall tablet, with large vase, 14in. x 12in., flanked at base by flowers and foliage, dedicated to Richard, son of Peter and Mary STONE, died 23 August, 1849, also four of their daughters, who died at various dates from 1829 to 1848, and two other members (indecipherable) who died in 1861 and 1865.
6. Headstone, with large central rosette, 4in. diameter, dedicated to Thomas TOMLINSON (?), died 13 March, 1831. Remainder of inscription buried.
7. Headstone, in fragments under yew tree, S. of chancel, with one rosette remaining on top left, dedicated to Ann CAREY, died 28 September, 1838, aged 13 months.
8. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10in. x 6in., dedicated to Mary, daughter of John and Elizabeth —? Stone sunk below soil.
9. Altar tomb, with urn at each end of the two long sides (four in all), dedicated to John ARKCOLL, died 31 October, 1812, aged 60, also to Sarah, his wife, died 12 November, 1830, aged 74.
10. Headstone with recess for vase, 14in. x 11in., dedicated to Lewes ALSOP. Rest of stone buried.

MAYFIELD

1. Altar tomb, with urns at east and west ends (east badly damaged, west in fair condition), dedicated to John BASSETT, died 8 July, 1806, aged 80.
2. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, badly damaged, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to John BUSS, died 16 October, 1810, aged 62.
3. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10in. x 6½in., dedicated to Elizabeth COLE, daughter of William and Mary COLE, died 15 March, 1807, aged 66.
4. Headstone, with winged cherub, 14in. x 6½in., dedicated to Judith, wife of Thomas CURTIS, died 17 February, 1810, aged 78. One wing cracked, and stone broken at top (*see* Plate IV *middle*).
5. Headstone, with urn, 16½in. x 8½in., top broken off. Dedicated to Elizabeth, wife of Edward DADSWELL, died 24 April, 1780, aged 43, also William, her son, died 9 May, 1780, aged 7 months.
6. Altar tomb, with rosettes at corners of tablets on each face, 16 in all, dedicated to William GILBERT, died 10 July, 1817, aged 51, also members of his family.
7. Headstone, with basket of flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to John, son of John and Cordelia PAINE, died 4 April, 1807, aged 2.
8. Headstone, with "Charity" group, 8½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Ann ROGESTER, died 18 January, 1809, aged 23, and Joel, her brother, died 27 February, 1804, aged 12.
9. Headstone, with recess for "Charity" group, 8½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Mary, wife of John ROGESTER, died 22 March, 1811.
10. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Edward RUSSELL, died 25 December, 1803, aged 72.
11. Headstone, with recess for vase, 14in. x 11in., dedication indecipherable.

MOUNTFIELD

1. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Stephen HILDER, died 12 April, 1806, aged 26.
2. Headstone, with "Charity" group, 8½in. x 6½in., dedicated to Mary, wife of Frederick KRAUSE, died 3 October, 1810, aged 48.

SALEHURST

1. Headstone, with "Charity" group, $8\frac{3}{4}$ in. x $6\frac{1}{4}$ in., dedicated to Sarah DAWES, died 2 April, 1812, aged 38, and family.
2. Altar tomb, with urns, one at either end of each long side, dedicated to Thomas HICKS. Rest of inscription indecipherable (see Plate VIb).
3. Altar tomb, with winged cherub under crown and rays, at each end, dedicated to William HILDER, died 1816, aged 58.
4. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, $10\frac{1}{4}$ in. x $6\frac{1}{2}$ in., dedicated to Joseph WATERS, died 10 February, 1802, aged 6.
5. Headstone, with basket of fruit and flowers, 10in. x 6in., flanked by rosettes, 2in. diameter, dedicated to Charles WOODS. Remainder of stone buried.

WALDRON

1. Headstone with urn, badly worn, dedicated to Elizabeth, wife of Nicholas ATTWOOD. Rest of inscription illegible.
2. Altar tomb, with three rosettes on each of eight pilasters at corners of tomb, many now defaced. Dedicated to members of CORNWALL family, but Sarah, wife of John SMITH, is mentioned on one surface.

WARBLETON

1. Headstone, with "Charity" group, $8\frac{3}{4}$ in. x $6\frac{1}{2}$ in., dedicated to Sarah, wife of James KEMP, died 10 October, 1813, aged 52, also James KEMP, died 8 April, 1826, aged 75.

WARTLING

1. Bedhead type of memorial of stone and iron, with basket of fruit and flowers in iron at each end, in very bad order, rusted and broken. Inscription indecipherable.