



Graveyards

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Introduction and History of Research

Simply defined, graveyards are areas of land set aside for the disposal of the dead, where burial may be accompanied by some form of commemoration. Historic graveyards are a remarkably rich source of information about past communities, as can be seen from their gravestones, buildings and landscapes. Evidence may also be found in associated documentary records or survive below ground as archaeological remains. The umbrella term 'graveyard' covers a diverse range of burial landscape types, from churchyards to burial sites associated with institutions such as hospitals, to plague pits, private family burial grounds and nineteenth-century cemeteries. Distinctions can be drawn between different types of graveyards not only on the basis of their physical appearance, but also depending on the nature of their ownership and use, ability to convey individual and group identities and capacity to hold specific cultural associations such as sanctity or sanctuary.

Amongst a graveyard's many features, gravestones have long attracted particular interest for both their inscriptions and their design. This interest may have been held by contemporary audiences when a gravestone was first erected, or develop over time as stones become historical curiosities. For example, early collections of old gravestone inscriptions recognize their value as historic records (Monteith 1713; Rogers 1871). During the nineteenth century many local newspapers reported selected inscriptions and gravestone designs that had been newly erected in neighbourhood graveyards. Scott's 2005 book about Glasgow Necropolis and Blair's 1857 compendium on the same site highlight the enduring public interest in visiting graveyards. Indeed, many nineteenth-century city guides and travelogues include graveyards as attractions to visit (Buchan 1843).

Since the 1950s, family history societies across Scotland have made remarkable efforts to transcribe all surviving memorial inscriptions and to create a list of all known graveyards. In more recent years, other local groups and enthusiasts have adopted a more archaeological approach to recording that includes noting details of a gravestone's design and materials, as well as any inscription. By far the most comprehensive graveyard records are those compiled by professional bodies for heritage management purposes. These records are to be found on the Canmore website, in the Historic Environment Record (HER) and Historic Scotland's databases of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Designed Landscapes (see Online resources, at the end of this paper). The development of public sanitation during the Victorian period also provided valuable records about graveyards. A crisis in burial provision during the nineteenth century resulted in many urban graveyards being surveyed to assess if their condition presented threats to public health and decency. Such surveys often captured basic details about a graveyard's establishment, ownership, use and appearance (MacLeod 1876). In 1831, when making his case for the establishment of

Glasgow Necropolis, Strang included a similar appendix on Glasgow burial grounds to help demonstrate the pressing need for new burial space.

The gravestones and carved stones within the study area date from the early medieval period through to the modern day, but not all periods and gravestone types have enjoyed the same level of study. Research into early medieval gravestones in the West of Scotland began in the nineteenth century with studies documenting the location, form and decoration of hogback stones and cross-slabs (Stuart 1856; Stirling Maxwell 1899; Allen and Anderson 1903). In the absence of inscriptions, calculating the age of early medieval stones requires an art-historical assessment of carved decoration and design. Our understanding of early medieval stones has been greatly advanced by the study of material from across Britain but in particular through the analysis of the collection of carved stones at Govan Old Parish Church (Lang 1972; Ritchie 1994, 2004). In contrast, relatively little work has been carried out on later medieval and early post-Reformation gravestones types in the study area, which includes mural monuments, discoid stones, coped stones, table-stones and headstones. Notable exceptions include Betty Willsher's (c. 1987 and c. 1991) surveys of eighteenth-century carved symbols, Catherine Cutmore's (1997) study of the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century gravestones in Govan Old churchyard and Alan Welsh's (1979) dissertation on nineteenth-century gravestone designs in Glasgow Necropolis. Gravestone records are well used by genealogical researchers. Yet the wider application of this information has been more limited. Several local history accounts draw upon the biographical information held on gravestones (Young 2000) and a handful of studies have used gravestone information to identify people linked by a shared experience of a historical event, such as Covenanters (Horne and Hardie 1974).

An interest in documenting the history and development of individual burial sites (Donald 1895; Gunson 1910) or, less commonly, particular types of graveyards, such as Taylor's (1903) study of Quaker burial grounds, only really began after the later nineteenth century. Very few studies have been able to draw on below-ground archaeological evidence, with Driscoll's excavations at Glasgow Cathedral and Govan Old churchyard standing out as rare examples (Driscoll 2002 and 2004).

Early Gravestones

At Govan Old Parish Church there is an unparalleled collection of early medieval carved stones, which are thought to mainly date from between the tenth and eleventh centuries. The collection includes a magnificently carved sarcophagus, five hogback stones, 21 recumbent cross-slabs – which survive from a total of 37 known to have existed at Govan – and four upright crosses that did not have a funerary purpose originally, though two stones were later reused as horizontal grave-slabs. In Scotland, hogbacks are arguably the most



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Figure 1. Two of the hogback stones at Govan Old Parish Church.



Figure 2. Recumbent cross-slabs at Govan Old Parish Church, with inscribed letters showing evidence of reuse, as recorded by Stirling Maxwell in 1899.

well-studied type of early gravestone (Lang 1972; fig. 1). These distinctively shaped recumbent monuments are popularly believed to be modelled on buildings and to have strong Anglo-Norse associations (Crawford 2005). While no hogback stone has been directly linked to an associated burial, their appearance in early churchyards clearly suggests their use as Christian gravestones. Further hogback stones in west central Scotland can be found at Dalsersf, South Lanarkshire, and Luss, West Dunbartonshire.

Grave-slabs, which were laid flat over a grave, were used throughout the medieval period and occur at variety of locations. Govan's 37 early medieval cross-slabs, (fig. 2) form a significantly large collection, with no more than a handful of such stones surviving at any other site. The fact that all of these grave-slabs are decorated suggests that they were for secular patrons (Driscoll 1998). While each recumbent cross-slab possesses its own unique design, all of the stones share common stylistic traits. Only two other sites on the Clyde, Dumbarton Castle and Inchinnan, have stones with a similar style of decoration. Together the stones from these three sites represent a distinctive group within the wider traditions of early medieval grave-slab design (Higgitt 1990) and it seems likely that they were produced by the same workshop (Driscoll et al. 2005).

At Govan only one medieval gravestone was found, a coffin-shaped stone dating to the fifteenth century. This suggests that the early medieval grave-slabs may have continued in use throughout the medieval period (Driscoll 2004). Roger's account (1857) of several later medieval-style gravestones once at Govan but lost by the beginning of the nineteenth century is largely doubted by later researchers. A significantly large collection, however, of at least 15 later medieval grave-slabs survives at St Michael's Churchyard, Cambusnethan (also known as Kirknethan) in North Lanarkshire (Buckham 2013).

Post-Reformation Headstones

Headstones first appeared within churchyards in west central Scotland, in common with most other areas, during the seventeenth century. The oldest examples occur in Lanarkshire, rather than in Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire where a preference for the earlier monument forms of grave-slabs, table-stones and mural monuments initially prevailed (Willsher unpublished c. 1987 and c. 1991). Generally speaking, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century headstones from Dunbartonshire display less elaborate and varied carvings to elsewhere in west central Scotland, where the regional decorative styles and unique carvings are more easily identified (figs 3, 4 and 5). Regional differences are also evident within gravestone inscriptions. For example, many Renfrewshire gravestones display only the briefest information, their inscriptions bearing only a name or initials and dates. In these cases the stones act more as grave markers rather than as memorials to commemorate the deceased. By contrast, Dunbartonshire gravestones tend to display more informative inscriptions and may include details of

Figure 3. A gravestone at Robertson Parish Churchyard, South Lanarkshire, with the mortality carving of a swag with a collection of protruding femur bones. This motif is traditional to the Lanarkshire region and is found on a number of 17th and 18th century gravestones.





Figure 4. Winged souls appear in a variety of designs on Lanarkshire gravestones. This example at the Old Parish Churchyard, Montgomery Street, which has hands emerging from the wings to hold a crown, and is unique to the East Kilbride area.



Figure 5. Within the study area there are a small number of gravestones which have carvings depicting religious scenes, such as this Adam and Eve at Biggar, South Lanarkshire; there is another Adam and Eve at Crawfordjohn and an Abraham and Isaac scene at Wiston, both also in South Lanarkshire.

residence, trade and kinship, as well as epitaphs. In many Lanarkshire parishes the details of other family members who died were also subsequently added to a gravestone. This practice differed from the convention elsewhere in the study area, where details of later deaths were usually omitted (Willsher unpublished c. 1991, 1992).

There is some evidence to show how different social groups could favour different types of gravestones. It should be stressed, however, that many people buried in graveyards did not have any gravestone at all. At Govan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, headstones were largely erected by the artisan classes. In contrast, the local landowners (heritors) chose table-stones or preferred to use the traditional monument type of grave-slabs, which included reusing the early medieval grave-slabs described earlier (Cutmore 1997). Lacaille (1928) reports a further example of the reuse of early medieval gravestones at Luss, Dunbartonshire. Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, headstone designs increased in both size and complexity (Cutmore 1997). A study of gravestone designs in Glasgow's Necropolis revealed that prior to the introduction of granite gravestones in the 1860s no two headstones had exactly the same design

(Welsh 1979). This is because the earlier sandstone gravestones were still largely hand carved in a pre-industrial tradition. It was only as a result of the technological advancements made later on in the nineteenth century and the use of machinery that full standardization in gravestone designs could be achieved.

It is helpful to remember that rather than being permanent and fixed features within a graveyard, gravestones are vulnerable to being moved or even removed (Willsher 1992). During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, gravestones could be taken away if they were erected without authority or due payment (Davidson Kelly 1994), while in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gravestones were sometimes removed by graveyard owners if they were not being well-maintained by families (Donald 1895; Hutt 1996).

Early Graveyards

Early churchyards can sometimes be identified by their curvilinear layout, as for example at Lamington and Old Kilpatrick (Thomas 1994), although later extensions might affect this shape. Excavations at Govan Old established that the churchyard boundary was ancient, being no later than ninth to tenth century

in date and indeed probably earlier. Archaeological evidence also indicated a workshop against the churchyard's southern boundary and the remains of a substantial paved road at a south-eastern entrance (Driscoll 1998; fig. 6). The earliest excavated burials at Govan date to between the fifth and sixth centuries, making it one of the oldest Christian burial sites in west central Scotland. (Driscoll 2004). Gravestones and other carved stones also provide important evidence to help us understand early graveyard sites. For example, the quality, quantity and range of the collection of early medieval stones at Govan testifies to the site's status as a royal cemetery (Driscoll 1998). The two cross-slabs found at Dumbarton Castle provide the strongest indication for a burial site at the castle (Higgitt 1990). Excavations of the nave at Glasgow Cathedral uncovered evidence of burials from the seventh and eighth centuries. These burials pre-dated the construction of the twelfth-century cathedral and were located within an early graveyard close to the traditional site of St Kentigern's tomb. This discovery suggests that within a few generations of Kentigern's death in c. 614, burial was taking place in a graveyard associated with the saint's cult (Driscoll 2002). Excavations also revealed the presence of high-status burials within the cathedral's nave, possibly dating

from the twelfth and certainly from thirteenth century. The nave continued as a popular space for burials into the eighteenth century (Driscoll 2002).

Post-Reformation Graveyards

Following the Reformation churchyards were typically more rectangular in shape and were often enclosed. Church authorities prohibited burial within churches, resulting in the churchyard becoming the primary focus for burial and commemoration. New types of monuments developed, predominantly to mark the graves of the local landowners and their families, and these included burial aisles, enclosures, table-stones and mural monuments. Although prohibited after the Reformation, interment would still sometimes take place inside churches. For example, John Mure appeared before the Presbytery of Lanark in 1625 to confess that he had taken the key of Symington Church in order to bury his father inside (Gordon 1984).

As well as being a space for burial, churchyards could host a range of community activities, some of which were also practised before the Reformation. The churchyard could provide a venue for weapons training, markets and fairs, schooling and the enforcement of law and order. Evidence of these activities can still sometimes be found, such as the prison cell built in 1698 into the steeple at New Monklands Church and the fragment of jugs (neck irons) that still survives at

Figure 6. Govan's churchyard was originally circular. However, a slight extension to the south-east of the site sometime before the 10th century created its distinctive pear-shape which can still be seen today (Driscoll 1998). This pronounced perimeter is clearly shown by this 19th-century etching.



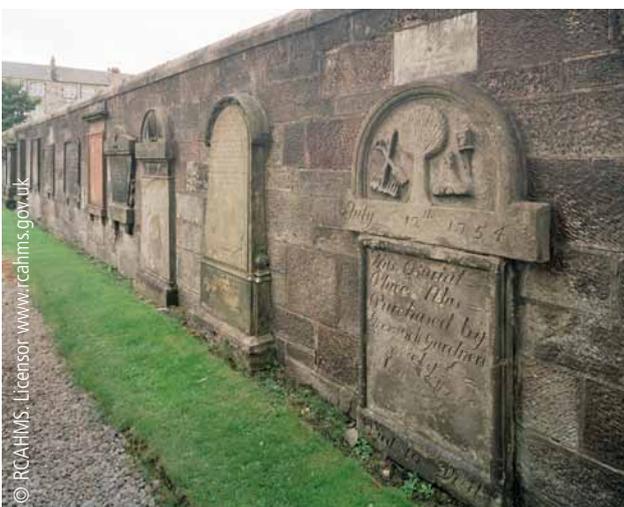
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Figure 7. This etching from around 1890 shows visitors to Glasgow Necropolis (left) and Glasgow Cathedral burial ground (right). An iron enclosure to guard against bodysnatching can be seen to the far right near the cathedral.

Lamington Church. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and until the passing of the Anatomy Act of 1832, 'resurrectionists' or bodysnatchers raided churchyards across Scotland to furnish medical schools with cadavers. Many sites still have traces of the measures designed to protect graves. These include permanent iron cages around graves, mort safes (devices used to protect coffins from being opened), mort houses (buildings in which coffins could be locked away until bodies decayed) and watch houses from which people could guard the graveyard (Gunson 1910; fig. 7).

Figure 8. A gravestone marking the communal burial plot purchased by the Greenock Gardeners' Society in 1754, Old West Kirk, Greenock.



A range of agencies might be involved with burial provision, most notably the heritors. The heritors were the proprietors of lands or houses within a parish who were liable for the payment of public burdens, such as the minister's stipend, the schoolmaster's salary, poor rates and the local churchyard. In burghs the local magistrates took on the role of heritors. Strang (1831) noted that in Glasgow in 1733 a burial ground was formed behind the town hospital for paupers. The Calton Incorporation of Weavers opened the Calton Burial Ground in Glasgow in 1786 (Curl 1974) and at other graveyards trade incorporations might purchase communal burial plots for their members (fig. 8). In addition, non-Church of Scotland denominations could establish their own graveyards, such as the Quakers (Taylor 1903), and private families sometimes owned their own burial ground, as for example the Buchannans of Drumpellier at Coatbridge.

The Introduction of Cemeteries

In 1831, a new type of burial landscape was established with the founding of Glasgow's Necropolis (fig. 7). The Necropolis was the first cemetery to be built in Scotland and was considered 'the parent not only of other ultramural cemeteries of Glasgow but of all the numerous garden cemeteries throughout Scotland' (Imperial Gazetteer of Scotland, c. 1860). Other early cemeteries in west central Scotland include Sighthill (1840), the Southern Necropolis (1840), Paisley (1845), Greenock (1847) and the Eastern Necropolis (1847). Garden cemeteries had large landscaped grounds, which were enhanced with careful planting and pathways. In the early nineteenth

century there was a dramatic and unprecedented rise in population numbers. The cramped, overcrowded conditions of the living were soon being mimicked amongst the dead. Complaints abounded about the overcrowded, unhygienic and disrespectful condition of churchyards (Buchan c. 1843). In 1831 Strang described one as 'little better than a disgusting charnel house' and 'full of noxious weeds, broken tombstones and defaced inscriptions'. Epidemics had long proved a challenge for burial provision. For example, in 1500 at Cumbernauld, the Black Death so decimated the population that a graveyard had to be established locally as it was impossible to find enough healthy people to carry the dead to the parish graveyard at Kirkintilloch (Willsher 1985). The cholera outbreaks in the nineteenth century increased the pressure placed on the already overfilled churchyards. The establishment of large cemeteries provided an answer to burial overcrowding, but it also signified new sensibilities towards burial and attitudes towards the dead. Typically, cemeteries were open to all denominations and their pleasant grounds were designed as much for recreation as commemoration. Many of the leading figures in British cemetery design had a local connection to west central Scotland, including John Strang, John Claudius Loudon, WR McKelvie and Stuart Murray. The minutes of the Merchants' House record that by 1836 Glasgow Necropolis received more than 100 visitors a day (Scott 2005). In 1855, the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act gave public bodies the authority to close overcrowded graveyards and to establish new cemeteries.

Summary and Recommendations for Future Research

Our understanding of graveyards in west central Scotland is fragmentary. Currently, it is hard to gain a comprehensive oversight of the work previously completed. It is difficult to appreciate the number and variability of our graveyards, how well they survive physically, or to map changes in their appearance and use over time. We know little of people's memories and experiences of these sites.

Much research on graveyards in west central Scotland remains unpublished and is held locally. As a result, work may be difficult to access. Published studies span a range of disciplines, for example, local history, archaeology, art, architecture, family history, social history, theology and geology, but there is an absence of joined up inter-disciplinary studies to knit existing research together. When work is undertaken as part of a wider research interest, for example for a particular geographic area, family, building or historical period, it can be difficult to quickly establish whether graveyards form part of the study or not. Therefore, future research would greatly benefit from

drawing together a bibliography for the whole of west central Scotland in the model of Willing and Fairie's (1997) work for Glasgow.

At present, there is no detailed inventory of graveyard sites in west central Scotland that includes every graveyard in the study area and summarizes all of the main features they contain in a compatible and searchable format. The Scottish Association of Family History Society's Inventory of Scottish Graveyards and the records of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland are both very strong sources of information that would require moderate resources to develop into a comprehensive, consistent and searchable register of graveyards in west central Scotland.

The synthesis of material as described above is the starting point for us to address the current gaps in our knowledge of historic graveyards. Relatively little is known, for example, about site types other than cemeteries and churchyards or about the many built features graveyards contain in addition to gravestones (see Archaeology Scotland's guide to graveyard recording, Willsher 1985 and Love 1989 for examples). Some areas, such as Glasgow (Curl 1974; Willing and Fairie 1997), have been better studied and similarly some periods, such as the nineteenth century, are better documented than others.

Many possible topics remain under-researched and an area of particular importance is understanding how the character and development of graveyards in west central Scotland could differ from graveyards across Scotland and the rest of the UK (Gordon 1984; Willsher 1985; Love 1989; Tarlow 1999, 2010; McFarland 2004). Our understanding of the nature of local variation within the study area is similarly limited but several avenues of investigation could help address this. Identifying the rules and regulations that governed burial, commemoration and other activities within a specific graveyard and how these might affect a site's appearance can be used to help tease out examples of local practice. The identification of individual stonemasons and production centres of post-Reformation gravestones offers a means to better understand regional differences in gravestone designs. Govan Old churchyard is one of the rare examples of an individual site where research has considered the extent of continuity and change over time and the relationship of the graveyard to its setting (Buckham 2014; Cutmore 1997; Driscoll 2004; Willsher 1992). As more case studies of individual graveyards are completed, our opportunities to explore how social identities, based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation or class, are reflected through commemoration and burial by a local community will also increase.

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Abbreviations

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Online resources

- <http://pastmap.org.uk/>
This website is an online map-based resource that provides access to the following records:
Historic Scotland's Listed Buildings of Scotland
Historic Scotland's Scheduled Ancient Monuments of Scotland
The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland's Canmore records
Scottish Natural Heritage's Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
West of Scotland Archaeological Service's Historic Environment Records
- www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk
This website makes available information on the conservation, recording and research of Scottish graveyards. Guidance materials that can be downloaded include the illustrated booklets *An Introduction to Graveyard Recording* by Archaeology Scotland, which contains a glossary of graveyard features and illustrated guides to gravestone styles and carvings, and *Researching Your Graveyard*, published by Historic Scotland, which contains a comprehensive bibliography of published studies of Scottish churchyards and other burial grounds.