

The monuments existed in three discrete geographical groups: a long row extending the entire length of the western wall, a small group in the southeast, and a single walled enclosure immediately to the east of the main entrance. The orientation of corpses to face the east makes the choice of the western wall a logical one – assuming the corpses’ heads lay at the bases of the monuments – and a similar orientation appears amongst the early modern monuments in nearby Anstruther Easter. The reasonings behind the locations of the other two groups is less clear, although the symbolism of the Wormiston enclosure looming over the main entrance – a very visible expression of the power of the landed elites in the parish – is obvious enough.

While four date from the early eighteenth century and one from the very end of the sixteenth, the vast majority of monuments were erected for persons who died between 1613 and 1654, forty years which probably correspond to a period of exceptional prosperity for the burgh. Even within that relatively narrow window, however, a distinct evolution in style can be identified.


There follows a gap from 1654 to 1707. While the East Neuk burghs were already beginning to slip into decline, exacerbated by civil war and plague, in the latter half of the seventeenth century this seems insufficient to account for the complete lack of monuments over a fifty-year period. A clue, however, may be offered by an entry in the kirk session register for May 1684, noting that the then minister, Alexander Edward, was buried “in the Quier at the back of Balcomies sets where three Ministers do celebrat the Sacrament of thee Lords Supper”. Coinciding as it does with the episcopal settlement brought about by the Restoration, this period may have seen a return to practices of more frequent burial within the church.

The final period of mural monument building in Crail took place in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, between 1707 and 1723. Tomb 7 (1707) bears evident traces of the older Baroque style, with memento mori at its base, but boasts Egyptian pilasters, a richly decorated semi-circular pediment, and ball- or vase-shaped finials strongly reminiscent of the monument to the Gillespies of Kirkcounie in Elie kirkyard.


In reconstructing the kirkyard as it would have appeared soon after the erection of the last of these monuments, it is impossible to avoid a glaring absence: that of many of the chief heritors of the parish. The Lindsays of Wormiston (tomb 16) and Lumsden of Airdrie (tomb 11) are present, but none of the families who owned the estates of Balcomie, Barns, Cambo, Newhall, or Randerston are represented. This is all the more puzzling given the survival of a series of carved oak panels – apparently originally attached to pews – which date from between 1594 and 1605 and represent the arms of Myrton of Cambo, Cunningham of Barns, Lindsay, Learmonth of Balcomie, and Myrton of Randerston, all families absent from the kirkyard. Has it suffered from more ravages than might at first appear and were monuments to these families once present but since destroyed?




12
Name: Alexander Leslie & John Lindsay
Rank: Episcopal Minister & Merchant
Death: 1703-14
Style and Language: Neo-Classical; Latin




11
Name: James Lumsden of Airdrie
Rank: Heritor
Death: 1598
Style and Language: Renaissance; Latin & Scots




10
Name: John Mackieson and Catherine Philp
Rank: Town Clerk & Wife
Death: post-1636
Style and Language: Baroque; inscription defaced




9
Name: Andrew Moncreiff & Isabella Brydie
Rank: Bailie & Wife
Death: 1631-32
Style and Language: Transitional from Plain to Baroque; Scots




8
Name: Robert Durie
Rank: Burgess
Death: 1636
Style and Language: Baroque; Latin




7
Name: George Moncreiff
Rank: Bailie
Death: 1707
Style and Language: Neo-Classical; Latin & Scots




6
Name: Patrick Hunter
Rank: Bailie
Death: 1649
Style and Language: Baroque; Latin




5
Name: Allan Millar
Rank: Treasurer
Death: 1630
Style and Language: Plain; Latin & Scots




14
Name: uncertain
Rank: uncertain
Death: ?1640s
Style and Language: Baroque; inscription defaced




13
Name: William Bruce of Symbister
Rank: Heritor
Death: c.1630
Style and Language: Baroque; Scots




15
Name: Robert Lun
Rank: Town Councillor
Death: ?1654
Style and Language: Plain; initials



16
Name: Lindsays of Wormiston
Rank: Heritors
Death: 1718
Style and Language: Baroque; Latin




1
Name: John Wood of Sauchope
Rank: Bailie
Death: 1723
Style and Language: Neo-Classical; Latin



2
Name: Andrew Daw & Ann Murray
Rank: Bailie & Wife
Death: 1645-46
Style and Language: Baroque; Latin



3
Name: Andrew Daw
Rank: Bailie
Death: 1613
Style and Language: Plain; Latin and Scots



4
Name: John Douglas
Rank: Bailie
Death: 1621
Style and Language: Plain; Scots

Back Sile
Mortuary

Kirk