

## Elaborate Headstones Appear

Headstones developed from simple lair markers in the 1700s to ornate statuary in the 1800s. They became normal memorial practice and continued, usually in less ostentatious designs, to modern times.



## The Lairds' Creations

The poor had no memorials, and the tacksmen had their tablestones. But some estate owners wanted memorials that stood out. We thus have a “doorway” pedestal memorial (Urquhart of Braelangwell), a spectacular mausoleum (Grant of Ardoch), a beautiful Georgian memorial by Regnart (Gun Munro of Poyntzfield), a massive granite edifice (General Sir Hugh Fraser of Braelangwell) – which collapsed due to its own weight, and the unique tomb below for Lady Ardoch.



## Getting to Kirkmichael

The historic site of Kirkmichael lies 16 miles from Inverness, beside the beautiful bird reserve at Udale Bay on the north side of the Black Isle. From the A9, follow the B9163; satnav IV7 8LQ



Discover more about Kirkmichael and the families, heritage and graveyards of the north at [www.kirkmichael.info](http://www.kirkmichael.info) and <https://www.facebook.com/kirkmichaeltrust/>

The buildings at Kirkmichael were on the verge of collapse when they were rescued by the community through the Kirkmichael Trust. We were supported by the many funding bodies and private donors set out on our website and on our funders' on-site plaque.

Please help to maintain our buildings, display of ornate medieval gravestones and interpretation of the site and the area. You can donate via our website or by our on-site donation box.



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MAOINICHTE LEIS  
A' CHRANNCHUR



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Photography by Andrew Dowsett and Jim Mackay.



## From Head-sets to Headstones

Memorial practice at Kirkmichael through the ages



## Burial in Prehistoric Times

Within the Black Isle, on the higher ground, several long cairns and chambered cairns survive, within which local leaders were interred.



**Long cairn, Mulbuie Forest**

It is stated in the first Statistical Account that there were many cairns in Resolis, large ones formed of stone and others of earth and stone. "In removing the stones of some of these cairns, stone-coffins were found, formed by 4 large and 2 small slabs of unhewn free-stone, containing ashes, and blades of offensive weapons, almost totally consumed by rust."



**Chambered cairn, Woodhead  
The Chapelton Burials**

Just round the corner from Kirkmichael, at Chapelton, lies an early Christian burial ground, in use in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In about half of the graves, the heads of the deceased were enclosed by "head-sets" – a stone on each side and a stone over the top.



## Pre-Reformation

Leading up to the Reformation in 1560, gravestones of important people were richly ornamented with elaborate crosses and symbols such as swords and stars. These stones would originally have been inside the church, as this was the most prestigious location.



Effigies of the distinguished were placed within arched tomb recesses in the wall of the church, as seen in Fortrose Cathedral. One such arched tomb recess survives at Kirkmichael.



## Early Post-Reformation

After 1560, earlier symbols, even the cross, became anathema. Only the sword survived as a gravestone symbol: we have one such at Cullicudden with date 1605, and two at Kirkmichael, one a Hossack stone dated 1600 and the other (below) an Urquhart stone dated 1630.

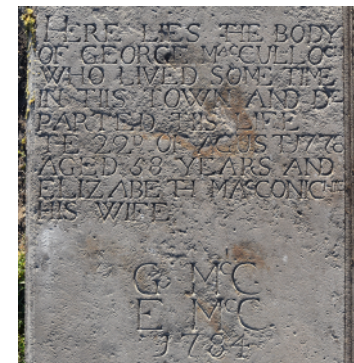


## Slabs with Post-Reformation Symbols

There are many slabs in our local graveyards from the late 1600s and 1700s with symbols of mortality. These often bear just the initials of the couple, a date and a skull and crossbones.



But families wishing to make an impact had stones carved with genealogy and symbols like the gravedigger's tools, coffin, hourglass and deadbell.



## Tablestones

In the late 1700s and 1800s, families to impress raised their slabs on stylised "legs" (painted in this example). The weight tended to drive the legs underground.

