

5. St Cuthbert's Kirkyard

5.1. Background

St Cuthbert's is one of the oldest ecclesiastical seats in Edinburgh, if not southeastern Scotland. According to Gray¹, Chalmers Caledonia states that this site as a Kirk and Kirkyard "is older than record in Scotland." Its connections to Celtic and Roman Christianity, plus its strong links to the Reformation suggest that this site is an intrinsic part of the story of Christianity in Scotland from the Dark Ages up to at least the nineteenth century.

It is believed that a church dedicated to St Cuthbert² has been on this location since the 8th century.³ It is at least one of two oldest seats in Edinburgh (the other being St Giles⁴) and it is possible that the church originally belonged to the Bishopric of Lindisfarne.⁵ However, the earliest known record of a building on this site dates to the 12th century, when it is recorded that St Cuthbert's was gifted by King David to the Abbey of Holyrood.⁶

Little is known of St Cuthbert's Kirk or its Kirkyard from this time on up until the Reformation, except that the remains of a Templar Knight may have been sent to this Kirk from the crusades to be buried at St Cuthbert's,⁷ indicating its potential importance within the parish. After the Reformation in 1568, it became popularly known as the West Kirk - a title that was commonly used until the nineteenth century, when it changed back its original name.

¹ *W Forbes Gray, Historic Churches of Edinburgh (Edinburgh & London: The Moray Press, 1940).*

² *St Cuthbert was the Bishop of Durham. who began life as a missionary at Melrose abbey and evangelised the greater part of eastern Scotland before his death in 687 See J.C. Carrick, St Cuthbert and St Cuthberts: Two Historical Sketches (J. Gardner Hitt, George Street, Edinburgh, 1894). 9*

³ *William Maitland and Alexander Bannerman, The History of Edinburgh, : From Its Foundation to the Present Time. Containing a Faithful Relation of the Publick Transactions of the Citizens; Accounts of the Several Parishes; Its Governments, Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Military; Incorporations of Trades and Manufactures; Courts of Justice; State of Learning; Charitable Foundations, &C. With the Several Accounts of the Parishes of the Canongate, St. Cuthbert, and Other Districts within the Suburbs of Edinburgh. Together with the Antient and Present State of the Town of Leith, and a Perambulation of Divers Miles Round the City. With an Alphabetical Index. In Nine Books (Edinburgh: Printed by Hamilton, Balfour and Neill, for the author., 1753).170*

⁴ *Carrick, St Cuthbert and St Cuthberts: Two Historical Sketches. 36*

⁵ *A list of churches belonging to the Bishop of Lindisfarne, between the Tyne and the Nith includes one in "Edwinsburgh - an Ecclesia Sancti Cuthberti. See Ibid. 37*

⁶ *Forbes Gray, Historic Churches of Edinburgh.*

⁷ *Taken from St Cuthbert's website <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkhist.php> and ascribed to Sir Walter Scott's 'Tales of a Grandfather.' -Scott's volumes on the History of Scotland.*

Development

The earliest depiction of the St Cuthbert's Kirkyard is on Gordon's map of 1647 (Figure 1). This shows a rural parish surrounded by farmland, with an enclosed field to the south and buildings and landscaped gardens to the west and a small area of landscaped garden to the north of the site. By the late eighteenth century, it is apparent that this area is being influenced by the improvements and expansion of Edinburgh as the surrounding farmland becomes less rural in character and pathways towards St Cuthbert's from both the north and the south become more defined and increase in size. The first expansion of St Cuthbert's Kirkyard appears to have occurred around the same time as the development of the new Kirk in the later eighteenth century. Armstrong's map of 1773 (Figure 2) shows an extension of the western part of the Kirkyard by the removal of the buildings and landscape gardens shown on the 1647 map. Kirkwood's 1817 map (Figure 6,) shows a further area of 'new burial ground', with developed lairs is laid out to the north of the Kirk. However, this map also depicts what is perhaps the most dramatic change to the surrounding landscape of St Cuthbert's - the development of St John's Church directly to the north of St Cuthbert's Kirkyard. This development has later resulted in the perception of visual continuity between the Kirkyards and often causes some confusion over the existence of two separate establishments at this site in the present day.

Pressure for burial space appears to have continued within St Cuthbert's, despite this addition to the north of the Kirkyard. Information on pre-printed burial sheets in the 1830s suggests that a high number of interments were being carried out in this Kirkyard in the early nineteenth century,⁸ but this could not be sustained by even second large extension to the southeast over part of the manse and its gardens in the 1830s.⁹ This was also exacerbated by development of the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway tunnel in the 1840s,¹⁰ which bisected through the southern part of the site, removing a number of burials and creating an area where interments were no longer possible.

⁸ Michael Smith, "The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh," *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXXVIII, 1, no. No. 225 (April 2009).

⁹ *Ibid.* iii

¹⁰ Smith, *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Newer Portion)*. Iii, <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkyard.php>

By the 1860s, Henry J. Littlejohn's report on the sanitary condition of the City recommended St Cuthbert's immediate closure on the grounds of public health, citing it as a prime example of the need for cemetery reform and a change in the management of burial practices.¹¹ This closure was challenged by appeal by the Kirk Session and burials continued on the site until 1874, when the appeal was lost and they were forced by law to cease any further interments on the site.¹²

Use

St Cuthbert's long history renders it difficult to ascertain the use of this land before the development of the Kirk and Kirkyard in the 8th century. Since this point, its use as an area for the interment of the dead and for the erection of monuments to the memory and commemoration of the departed has been continuous, with areas developed for housing ministers of the parish, and their surrounding gardens becoming incorporated into the Kirkyard by the nineteenth century. However, the close proximity of the parish of St Cuthbert and the Town of Edinburgh has also resulted in the Kirkyard being the scene of many sieges on Edinburgh Castle throughout the civil wars of the seventeenth century, with both barracks and strongholds being erected within the Kirk, the Kirkyard and its environs.

Previous Surveys

There are a number of nineteenth¹³ and early twentieth century¹⁴ publications on the narrative history of St Cuthbert's Parish, its Kirk and Kirkyard. Some of

¹¹ Henry J. Littlejohn, "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh," (Edinburgh 1863). 96

¹²Data in the Edinburgh Town Council Minutes held at the Edinburgh City Archives may note a small number of applications for burials and monument erection at this site up to and during the 20th century, but this has not yet been confirmed. See Edinburgh City Archives, reference number SL1.

¹³ William Sime, History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh (Edinburgh 1829). James Grant, Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh : Its History, Its People, and Its Places (London ; New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1881).

¹⁴ George Lorimer, The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh (Annotated by Author with Additional Remarks) (William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1915), Handbook to the Church of St Cuthbert, (Edinburgh 1933(?)), Forbes Gray, Historic Churches of Edinburgh. 23-31

these are particularly comprehensive, having used primary sources now located within the Edinburgh City Archives and the National Archives of Scotland.¹⁵

The recording of inscriptions by the Scottish Records Society in 1915 and 1919¹⁶ were deemed so comprehensive that a mid-twentieth century monument survey was not considered necessary for this site, as it was for other graveyards in the City.¹⁷ Out with Anderson's chapter on St Cuthbert's in his 1931 publication *Silences that Speak* therefore,¹⁸ subsequent surveys of this site did not occur until the late twentieth century.¹⁹ This was followed in the 21st century by a brief scoping survey on the condition and character of the Kirkyard²⁰ and more recently academic research on the management of Edinburgh's burial grounds by the Church of Scotland, which has been considered through the analysis of Kirk parish records and included information on burial records at St Cuthbert's.²¹

5.2. Burial records and other information on interments

Burial records survive in piecemeal form from 1740. These are held in the custody of the registrar general at the National Archives of Scotland²². Burial records between 1780-1890 are also available to view at Edinburgh City Archives and further information may be available in the Edinburgh Town Council Minutes, also held in this institution.

¹⁵ *Lorimer*, The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh (Annotated by Author with Additional Remarks).

¹⁶ *John Smith*, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion), ed. *Sir James Balfour Paul*, *Scottish Record Society* (1915), ———, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Newer Portion), ed. *Sir James Balfour Paul*, *Scottish Record Society* (1919).

¹⁷ *J F Mitchell*, Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions (1961). 2

¹⁸ This provided a narrative history and detailed background to a number of notable interments within a variety of Edinburgh's burial grounds. *William Pitcairn Anderson*, *Silences That Speak*. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There (Edinburgh, 1931).

¹⁹ *Anne Boyle et al.*, Ruins and Remains : Edinburgh's Neglected Heritage (Edinburgh: Scotland's Cultural Heritage, 1985). and *Betty Willsher*, "Midlothian and Edinburgh " in Survey of Scottish Gravestones (National Monuments Record for Scotland c.1985).

²⁰ *Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership and Benjamin Tindall Architects*, "St Johns and St Cuthbert's Graveyards: Proposal for a Feasibility Study " (2000).

²¹ *Smith*, "The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh."

²² *Mitchell*, Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions.

A series of minute books, written in Scots from the period 1586 to the end of the seventeenth century may also provide some information on interments, along with the Parish Session records, which are continuous from 1586 to present day. Both of these are in the keeping of the National Archives of Scotland.

5.3. Site chronology

c. 8th century – Suggested date for the establishment of the Church of St Cuthbert on this site.

1127 – A charter is granted by King David I which gives all the land below the Castle to St Cuthbert's. This is the oldest document in the Scottish Records Office, Register House, Edinburgh.²³

1242 – St Cuthbert's under the castle is dedicated by the Bishop of St Andrews.²⁴

1314 – Death of an English Templar Knight, St Giles de Argentine at Bannockburn. His body is buried at St Cuthbert's Kirk.²⁵

1544 - The Earl of Hertford was sent by King Henry VIII to enforce marriage between Mary, Queen of Scots and Henry's son, Edward. The Scots refused this "Rough Wooing" and so Leith was captured, Border Abbeys destroyed and Holyrood and Edinburgh were burned. St Cuthbert's suffered severely in these attacks.²⁶

1597 – The wall of the Kirkyard is repaired as "nolt, horse and scheipe" were gaining access to the grounds and grazing within the site.²⁷

²³ <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkhist.php>

²⁴ The Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh, (1961).7 and Carrick, St Cuthbert and St Cuthberts: Two Historical Sketches.47.

²⁵ Taken from St Cuthbert's website <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkhist.php> and ascribed to Sir Walter Scott's 'Tales of a Grandfather.' -Scott's volumes on the History of Scotland.

²⁶ <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkhist.php>

²⁷ Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion). iii

1640 – The Covenanters placed their batteries amongst the graves at St Cuthbert's during the Second Bishop's war.²⁸

1646 - The Kirk Session enacted that 'No burials should take place between six in the morning and seven at night because of the problems of the plague.'²⁹

1647 – James Gordon's "Edinodunensis Tabulam" (Figure 1), depicts a Kirk and Kirkyard situated to the northwest of the Castle Rock, surrounded by farmland. Entranceways into the Kirkyard are depicted on the southwest and eastern sides. Buildings and landscaped gardens are situated on the western exterior of the Kirkyard and a further area of landscaped garden is visible to the north. An enclosed field is depicted to the south of the Kirkyard.

1650 – Cromwell's armies used St Cuthbert's as a barrack after the battle of Dunbar.³⁰

1689 – Supporters of William and Mary based themselves within St Cuthbert's and used the church tower as an attacking point against the castle. The church was badly affected by the canon and musket counter attack from Edinburgh Castle³¹

1701 – The marshland around St Cuthbert's was drained and walled in on the western side. A piece of ground was added to the west.³²

1738 – Boundary walls were raised to 8 feet high to deter robbers attempts to violate fresh graves for the supply of cadavers for medical research.³³

²⁸ The Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh. 18

²⁹ Lorimer, The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh (Annotated by Author with Additional Remarks). 115

³⁰ Anderson, Silences That Speak. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There. 41

³¹ The Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh.19 and Sime, History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh. 62

³² Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion).

³³ Sime, History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh. 135

1740 – The Kirk Session appointed an officer to keep records of the dead. A lodge on the site of the present watchtower was used as an office for this purpose.³⁴

1742 - A number of bodies were stolen from this graveyard. According to Turnbull, the prime suspect was one of the Beadles.³⁵

1772 - Part of roof of St Cuthbert's Kirk collapsed and the building was subsequently demolished. During these works, a lead coffin was discovered with some bones and sweet-smelling lead urn, which held a human heart embalmed with spices. The church authorities believed that that was the heart of a soldier who had died in the holy land during the crusades.³⁶

1773 - Andrew Mostyn Armstrong's "Map of the Three Lothians" (Figure 2), depicts St Cuthbert's Kirkyard with a defined curtiledge. The buildings and gardens to the west of the Kirkyard no longer exist, with the Kirkyard appearing to have extended into this area. A manse and other auxiliary buildings are depicted to the south of the Kirkyard, with one small rectilinear structure shown within the Kirkyard on the southern curtiledge.

c. 1774 – New Kirk erected. During the works for the new Kirk, the foundations of at least five earlier buildings were noted below the old structure.³⁷

1784 - Alexander Kincaid's "A plan of the City and suburbs of Edinburgh" (Figure 3), depicts a track or river to the north of the site. Arboreal planting is depicted around the manse and other auxiliary buildings situated to the south of the site.

April 1787 – Grant's volumes state that a marsh to the north of the Kirkyard was drained and partially filled with earth. It is possible that this was carried out earlier than this date, as this appears to be depicted in Kincaid's 1784 map. In

³⁴ *Ibid.* 136

³⁵ Michael T R B Turnbull, *The Edinburgh Graveyard Guide (2006)*. 143-158

³⁶ This story is also featured in the *Scots Magazine*, September 1773.

³⁷ Carrick, St Cuthbert and St Cuthberts: Two Historical Sketches. 49. In *The Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh*. 16, it says that at least six different foundations were found!

addition, Grant also states that the walls and gates were repaired and the ground at the east end was raised and enclosed by a wall a few years later.³⁸

1803 – A regular watch began to patrol the Kirkyard at night in order to deter grave robbers.³⁹

1804 - John Ainslie's "Old and New Town of Edinburgh and Leith with the proposed docks" (Figure 4), denotes the site as *West Kirk* and defines a number of pathways within the Kirkyard that leading from the south and west and out to the northeast.

1805 – "The Strangers Guide, being a Plan of Edinburgh & Leith exhibiting all the streets principal buildings & late improvements." (Figure 5), denotes the site as *St Cuthbert's Church*. This map also depicts a substantial wall on the southeastern side and a possible circular roofed structure to the north of the church. The structure in the southwestern corner of the Kirkyard is no longer shown.

1817 - Robert Kirkwood's "This plan of the City of Edinburgh and its environs." (Figure 6), depicts burial lairs around the eastern, southeastern and northern curtilage, with a few lairs also depicted at the southwestern part of the site. An extension to the northern end of the site is denoted as *New burying ground*.

1819 - Robert Kirkwood's – "Plan elevation of the New Town of Edinburgh." (Figure 7), depicts the Kirkyard with numerous substantial lairs around the curtilage and some smaller gravemarkers scattered throughout the site.

1820s - An order is issued 'to prohibit sheep or other bestial from being allowed to pasture in the churchyard.'⁴⁰

1824 – A former kitchen garden used by the Ministers on the northern side is incorporated into the cemetery.⁴¹

³⁸ James Grant, *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh : Its History, Its People, and Its Places (London ; New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1881). Volume III. 136.*

³⁹ Sime, *History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh. 180*

⁴⁰ Smith, "*The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh.*"

⁴¹ Sime, *History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh. 181*

1827 – The Watch House is erected to deter grave robbers.⁴²

1830s – St Cuthbert's issues pre-printed slips to issue orders for coffins - this indicates the high numbers of burials that were being conducted in the graveyard during this period.⁴³

1831 - John Wood's "Plan of the City of Edinburgh, including all the latest and intended improvements" (Figure 8), depicts a roofed, circular structure on the western side of the graveyard.

1831 – The Manse and adjacent garden and grounds which lay to the south of the south east of the Kirkyard, which belonged to the junior minister of the parish, were feued to the Kirk Session for the purpose of being made into a burying ground.⁴⁴

1831 – A small piece of waste ground that lay to the south of the manse garden and which formed part of the glebe, was added to the burying ground.⁴⁵

1832 – The Cholera epidemic caused St Cuthbert's to lay aside specific areas for 'hazardous interments.'⁴⁶

1832 – The Anatomy Act, which permitted the legalized sale of dead bodies to the medical schools was introduced. This removed the threat of graverobbers from graveyards.⁴⁷

1833 - The northernmost part of the Kirkyard was acquired by St Johns Church from the Town Council.⁴⁸

1841 – The Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company obtained the power to lay

⁴² John Gifford et al., *Edinburgh, The Buildings of Scotland: Pevsner Architectural Guides* (London : Penguin, 1991). 274

⁴³ Smith, "The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh." 114

⁴⁴ ———, *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Newer Portion)*. iii

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* iii

⁴⁶ ———, "The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh." 116

⁴⁷ *Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, "Anatomy Act (2 & 3 Will. Iv C.75)," (1832).*

⁴⁸ John F. Mitchell, *Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions (Pre 1855)*. Vol. 3, *St John's Episcopal Churchyard, Buccleuch Burial Ground, Jewish Burial Ground & Quaker Burial Ground.*, ed. Stuart E. Fleming. (2003). i

a tunnel through the Kirkyard.⁴⁹ This work resulted in the loss of a number of stones erected between 1834 and 1841. No graves now exist over the tunnel.

1851 - Alfred Lancefield's "Johnston's plan of Edinburgh Leith" (Figure 9), denotes the site as *St Cuthbert's Graveyard*. The Kirkyard is extended to the southeast, where part of the manse was located. The tunnel for the Edinburgh-Glasgow trainline is depicted on this map, which shows its location under the Kirkyard in the southern part of the site.

1852 - The Ordnance Survey's "Large Scale Town Plan" (Figure 10), depicts substantial landscaping and tree planting on the site. A circular tower in western curtilage denoted as a '*Recorder's Office*.'

1854- James Skene of Rubislaw, "East view of St Cuthbert's church."⁵⁰ This image depicts an unmanicured Kirkyard, which is overgrown with shrubbery and trees. Many of the monuments appear to be sinking into the undergrowth, but this image still portrays the wide variations in monument carvings and styles that could be found within the Kirkyard.

1856 - A programme of improvement in the Kirkyard is carried out as it was noted that certain elements of the Kirkyard were 'at variance with the taste of the present day and therefore put advantageous competition with modern cemeteries out of the question'.⁵¹

1863 - The Littlejohn *Report on the Sanitary Condition of Edinburgh* notes that St Cuthbert's was very overcrowded and that "More complaints have reached me the author] with reference to [the state of] this burying ground than any other".⁵²

1874 - St Cuthbert's loses an appeal to remain open as a Kirkyard under the

⁴⁹ Smith, *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Newer Portion). Iii*, <http://www.st-Cuthbert's.net/kirkyard.php>

⁵⁰ *Frontispiece of Lorimer, The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh (Annotated by Author with Additional Remarks)*.

⁵¹ *National Archives of Scotland CH2/718/259*.

⁵² Littlejohn, "*Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh*." 96-97

Public Health (Nuisance) act of 1867.⁵³

1875 - Burials ceased at St Cuthbert's - except in exceptional circumstances. The upkeep of the Kirkyard became the responsibility of the City Council.⁵⁴

1892-94 - A new Kirk was developed within the burying ground.

1910 - The tunnel of 1841 is extended beneath the Kirkyard to accommodate further extensions to the railway line. This may have been responsible for the loss of stones erected between 1834 and 1841, although it is not clear whether this occurred during 1841 or 1910, or at both instances of excavation. No graves now exist over the tunnel.⁵⁵

1915 - Publication of the Scottish Records Society Monumental inscriptions in St Cuthbert's. It is noted within this publication that many stones in the Kirkyard are in a state of decay.

1951- RCAHMS Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh is published.⁵⁶

1979 - City of Edinburgh District Council produce the Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. This includes a concise description and brief historical background on St Cuthbert's Kirkyard in Volume 1 and further detailed information and documentary evidence on some of the monuments found in the Kirkyard in Volumes 2-4.⁵⁷

c.1985 - Betty Willsher survey of eighteenth century gravestones- Midlothian version

⁵³"Any churchyard, cemetery or place of sepulture so situated or crowded with bodies, or otherwise so conducted as to be 'offensive or injurious to health.'"

⁵⁴ <http://www.st-cuthbert's.net/kirkyard.php>

⁵⁵ <http://www.st-cuthbert's.net/kirkyard.php>

⁵⁶ *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland., "An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of the City of Edinburgh (with the Thirteenth Report of the Commission, HmsO)," (1951).*

⁵⁷ *City of Edinburgh District Council, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volume 1, Primary Files," (1979), ———, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volumes 2-4, Supplementary Information," (1979).*

2000 – A survey of the site notes that “Many of the headstones and walls are damaged, and some trees require attention.”⁵⁸

5.4. Key features

Monuments

St Cuthbert's is calculated to contain some 505 monuments, 14 tombs and 227 wall plaques, monuments, and ledgers.⁵⁹ Information and archival notes on some of the better-known monuments erected at St Cuthbert's are recorded in the City of Edinburgh Council Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds, dating to 1979.⁶⁰ This includes a broad description of the site and supplementary information from the Edinburgh City Archives but is in no way an exhaustive list of all of the monuments of note that are found at this site.

The Kirkyard of St Cuthbert's lies immediately around the church and extends up to the southwest. This area in the southwest is considered the oldest part of the Kirkyard and has probably been a place of interment for over 1000 years.⁶¹ However, the oldest known surviving inscription in this Kirkyard is dated to 1606.⁶² *Buildings of Scotland* notes that there are some hundreds of monuments, worthy of notice in this site ⁶³ and that the monuments on southwestern corner, known as 'The Knowe', holds numerous eighteenth century stones of particular importance and deserving of detailed study.⁶⁴ Anderson, in his 1931 survey of the site also comments on the high quality of these monuments, stating that they are “ singularly attractive in their rich strong carvings...[and are]... often marvellously well preserved. A feature is that often the back as well as the front is sculptured.”⁶⁵

⁵⁸ *Architects, "St Johns and St Cuthbert's Graveyards: Proposal for a Feasibility Study "*.

⁵⁹ *Figures produced by the City of Edinburgh Council Graveyard Regeneration and Marketing Project (2007-08)*

⁶⁰ City of Edinburgh District Council, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volume 1, Primary Files.", ———, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volumes 2-4, Supplementary Information."

⁶¹ *Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion).*

⁶² *Mitchell, Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions.2*

⁶³ *Gifford et al., Edinburgh. 276*

⁶⁴ *Boyle et al., Ruins and Remains : Edinburgh's Neglected Heritage.*

⁶⁵ *Anderson, Silences That Speak. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There. 125*

The Willsher survey carried out in the 1980s⁶⁶ records some monuments that were deemed of key architectural and artistic significance. These are:

- 1721** - Headstone, David Gray – which has an unusual flaming hourglasses
- 1730** - Headstone Margaret Loch,
- 1731** – Headstone, Elizabeth Sheill
- 1756** - Headstone, Andrew Hardie – with an unusual and pleasing resurrection scene
- 174(1)** - Headstone, John Laurie - The leafy volutes in the detail are typical of west Lothian and Midlothian
- 1801** - Headstone, Samuel Gilmour - Although this has a late date, it is similar to earlier styles seen in north Leith.
- 1842** - Mural monument The Reverend David Dickson. Sculptor Alex Handyside Ritchie.

Anderson's *Silences that Speak* provides detailed information on not only the person's interred within the Kirkyard, but also the family crypts located inside the church. One of these is The tomb of the Nisbets of Dean, which is accessed by outside steps in the Kirkyard, on the northern side of the church.⁶⁷

Sir John Steell's 1834 sculpture for Robert Jameson's memorial is also of some artistic merit.

Other Architectural features

St Cuthbert's Kirk, its Kirkyard, monuments and boundaries are category 'A' Listed.⁶⁸ St Cuthbert's Kirk is described in the *Buildings of Scotland* series for Edinburgh as "... a mixed renaissance church by Hippolyte J. Blanc...[which has kept] the late c18 steeple of its predecessor."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Willsher, "Midlothian and Edinburgh ".122-132

⁶⁷ Anderson, *Silences That Speak*. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There. 49

⁶⁸ *Historic Scotland, "Lothian Road, St Cuthbert's Church (Church of Scotland), Churchyard and Monuments, Boundary Walls, Gatepiers and Railings," in Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 27339 (1970).*

⁶⁹ Gifford et al., *Edinburgh*. 274

Other structures found within this Kirkyard are the 'B' listed watchhouse⁷⁰ and a small 'C(s)' listed toolhouse⁷¹. Neither of these structures is considered to be of particular architectural interest⁷² but rather, the watchhouse is of some historical interest. In the early nineteenth Century, it was illegal for medical schools to obtain fresh corpses for the purpose of medical dissection and so the theft of newly interred bodies obtained from graveyards became a lucrative business and one that caused many problems throughout the City's graveyards. St Cuthbert's in particular had so many problems with the 'bodysnatchers', that it was deemed necessary in 1827 to erect a watchhouse for the Kirkyard's night patrolmen. Shortly after its construction, however, the Anatomy Act of 1832 legalised the sale of bodies to medical schools and the robbing of graves petered out as it was no longer necessary for the supply of fresh bodies. This meant that just five years after it was built, this tower became redundant from its original purpose and instead became a records office until the closure of the Kirkyard in the 1870s.

Landscape and setting

The present extent of St Cuthbert's Kirkyard is measured at 1.808 hectares.⁷³ St Cuthbert's is included in the City of Edinburgh council's list of gardens and designed landscapes in Edinburgh.⁷⁴ Its inclusion in this list is a recognition of the importance of this landscape to the City, although its brief description mentions historical features and monuments, rather than landscape attributes. The 2000 feasibility study identified some of the key features within the Kirkyard which were defined as;

⁷⁰ Despite its B listing, it has been given a group Category 'A'. Historic Scotland, "Kings Stables Road and Lothian Road, St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Watch Tower.," in Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 27346 (1970).

⁷¹ ———, "Kings Stables Road, St Cuthbert's Churchyard Former Toolhouse.," in Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 47884 (2001).

⁷² The Watch house is described in Buildings of Scotland as being two-storeyed, with a crenellated top. The Tool house is described as wedge-shaped and in a sad condition. Gifford et al., Edinburgh. 276

⁷³ Figures produced by the City of Edinburgh Council Graveyard Regeneration and Marketing Project (2007-08)

⁷⁴ Peter McGowan Associates, "Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes - List of Sites," in Edinburgh: Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (City of Edinburgh Council, 2009). Appendix 1

“The burial grounds of St Cuthbert’s occupy the lower part of the site, divided into a series of squares separated by stone walls that display memorials. The formal layout of the stone walls and memorials are strengthened by the grid layout of the trees. The expanse of lawn softens the rigidity of the built structure, and herbaceous plantings have been undertaken close to the church. There is a lush, dense planted area atop the Edinburgh railway tunnel, which divides two of the burial grounds [St Johns and St Cuthbert’s]. The planted area invites exploration into the farthest burial ground, which is at the foot of Edinburgh castle. From the entrance of the church to Lothian Road there is a strong avenue planting of trees.”⁷⁵

This study also identified that both the Kirkyards of St Cuthbert’s and St John’s are often appreciated as a single entity, although they have different characteristics, St Cuthbert’s being noted at this point as having a “more manicured, lighter and open atmosphere” than its neighbour, St John’s.⁷⁶

Association with historical events

Its close proximity to the City of Edinburgh has resulted in it having an active role in the civil and religious wars of the seventeenth century, as a battery during the wars of the Covenanters and as a barrack and stronghold for the Cromwellian army, from which they could attack Edinburgh castle.

In the nineteenth century, the Kirkyard is associated with Burke and Hare and the general problem of grave robbing for the medical school, resulting in a watchtower being erected on the site in order to deter the “Bodysnatchers” in 1827.

5.5. Key Figures

⁷⁵ *Architects, "St Johns and St Cuthbert's Graveyards: Proposal for a Feasibility Study ". 2 Background; Present Condition*

⁷⁶ *Ibid. 2. Background.*

The 1915 and 1919 Scottish Records Surveys record the names of many notable personages interred in St Cuthbert's Kirkyard, and observe that many members of the best and oldest families in Scotland have been buried at this site.⁷⁷ Smith notes, in particular that "The inscriptions touch life, and particularly Edinburgh life on all points."⁷⁸ The older portion of the Kirkyard includes ancient nobility, ministers, medics, authors, scholars and artists,⁷⁹ while the newer portion of the Kirkyard includes many distinguished citizens of Edinburgh, such as lawyers, doctors and clerics of the nineteenth century, along with a few literary and artistic notables of this period.⁸⁰

Many of these notable figures and their monuments are described in detail in Rogers 1871 book on monuments and monumental inscriptions.⁸¹ Turnbull's guide to Edinburgh graveyards⁸² also includes some information on significant burials within the Kirkyard. A variety of personages have therefore been taken from a selection of these secondary resources in order to bring context to the range of people buried at this site and the dates at which they were interred within the Kirkyard.

1606 – Robert Pont - One of the earliest ministers of St Cuthbert's Kirk after the reformation⁸³

1617 - John Napier of Merchiston - Astronomer and Mathematician

1796 - Reverend John Cunningham – Fifteenth Earl of Glencairn and Officer in the 14th Dragoons

1802 – Dr. Alexander Hamilton - Eminent Professor of Midwifery

⁷⁷ Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion). *V Some of these burials are located in crypts inside the Kirk, but a list of these families is provided in Anderson, Silences That Speak. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There. 37-128*

⁷⁸ Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion). *Vi and Rev. Charles Rogers, Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions in Scotland vol. 1 (1871). 59.*

⁷⁹ Recorded in the 1915 survey.

⁸⁰ Recorded in the 1919 survey.

⁸¹ Rogers, Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions in Scotland 57-71

⁸² Turnbull, The Edinburgh Graveyard Guide. 143-158.

⁸³ Noted in Smith, Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion). *As an early surviving gravestone. iv*

- 1815** – Girolamo Stabilini – Prominent violinist and musical teacher
- 1829** – Robert Archibald Smith- Musician and composer of Scottish music
- 1831** - Alexander Sutherland – Author of *The History of the Knights of Malta*, and Editor of the Edinburgh Observer
- 1834** – Robert Jameson – Advocate who was “one of the leading figures of his day in the Scottish Courts”.⁸⁴ His sculptured memorial by Sir John Steell was paid for by the Faculty of Advocates
- 1838** – Anne Grant of Laggan - Author of *Letters from the Mountains*
- 1838** – Reverend John Jamieson – Author of the *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808-9)⁸⁵
- 1840** - Alexander Nasmyth – Artist and designer.
- 1847** – Dr. Andrew Combe – Physiologist and Phrenologist
- 1847** – Joanna Gordon - Countess of Stair
- 1844** - George Meikle Kemp - Designer of the Scott Monument in Princess Street Gardens
- 1853** – William Bonnar – Artist
- 1859** - Thomas De Quincy – Author of *Confessions of an Opium Eater*
- 1859** – William Home Lizars – Painter and Engraver
- 1860** – John Lizars – Surgeon and brother of W.H. Lizars. His chief work ‘*A System of Anatomical Plates of the Human Body with Descriptions and Surgical Operations*’ was illustrated by his brother
- 1864** – Professor James Pillans – Rector of the Royal High School and Chair of Humanities at Edinburgh University
- 1864** – Professor Frederick Ferrier – Metaphysician
- 1886** – Duncan McLaren – Lord Provost and M.P.
- 1919** - Sir John Hay Athole Macdonald – Lord Kingsburgh, Solicitor General for Scotland and Lord Advocate

⁸⁴ *Turnbull*, The Edinburgh Graveyard Guide. 147

⁸⁵ *Father of Robert Jameson, Lawyer*

References and identified sources

Bibliography

- Anderson, William Pitcairn. *Silences That Speak. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There*. Edinburgh, 1931.
- Architects, Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership and Benjamin Tindall. "St Johns and St Cuthbert's Graveyards: Proposal for a Feasibility Study", 2000.
- Boyle, Anne, Colin Dickson, Alasdair McEwan, and Colin MacLean. *Ruins and Remains : Edinburgh's Neglected Heritage*. Edinburgh: Scotland's Cultural Heritage, 1985.
- Carrick, J.C. *St Cuthbert and St Cuthberts: Two Historical Sketches*: J. Gardner Hitt, George Street, Edinburgh, 1894.
- Forbes Gray, W. *Historic Churches of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh & London: The Moray Press, 1940.
- Gifford, John, Colin McWilliam, David Walker, and Christopher Wilson. *Edinburgh, The Buildings of Scotland: Pevsner Architectural Guides*: London : Penguin, 1991.
- Grant, James. *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh : Its History, Its People, and Its Places*. London ; New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1881.
- Handbook to the Church of St Cuthbert*. Edinburgh 1933(?).
- Historic Scotland. "Kings Stables Road and Lothian Road, St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Watch Tower." In *Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 27346*, 1970.
- . "Kings Stables Road, St Cuthbert's Churchyard Former Toolhouse." In *Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 47884*, 2001.
- . "Lothian Road, St Cuthbert's Church (Church of Scotland), Churchyard and Monuments, Boundary Walls, Gatepiers and Railings." In *Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 27339*, 1970.
- Littlejohn, Henry J. . "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh." Edinburgh, 1863.
- Lorimer, George. *The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh (Annotated by Author with Additional Remarks)*: William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1915.
- Maitland, William, and Alexander Bannerman. *The History of Edinburgh, : From Its Foundation to the Present Time. Containing a Faithful Relation of the Publick Transactions of the Citizens; Accounts of the Several Parishes; Its Governments, Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Military; Incorporations of Trades and Manufactures; Courts of Justice; State of Learning; Charitable Foundations, &C. With the Several Accounts of the Parishes of the Canongate, St. Cuthbert, and Other Districts within the Suburbs of Edinburgh. Together with the Antient and Present State of the Town of Leith, and a Perambulation of Divers Miles Round the City. With an Alphabetical Index. In Nine Books*. Edinburgh: Printed by Hamilton, Balfour and Neill, for the author., 1753.
- Mitchell, J F. *Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions* 1961.

- Mitchell, John F. *Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions (Pre 1855). Vol. 3, St John's Episcopal Churchyard, Buccleuch Burial Ground, Jewish Burial Ground & Quaker Burial Ground.* Edited by Stuart E. Fleming.2003.
- Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. "Anatomy Act (2 & 3 Will. Iv C.75)." 1832.
- Peter McGowan Associates. "Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes - List of Sites." In *Edinburgh: Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes: City of Edinburgh Council*, 2009.
- Rogers, Rev. Charles. *Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions in Scotland* Vol. 11871.
- Scotland., Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of. "An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of the City of Edinburgh (with the Thirteenth Report of the Commission, HmsO)." 1951.
- Sime, William. *History of the Church and Parish of St Cuthbert, or the West Kirk of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh1829.
- Smith, John. *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Newer Portion)*. Edited by Sir James Balfour Paul, Scottish Record Society1919.
- . *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh (Older Portion)*. Edited by Sir James Balfour Paul, Scottish Record Society1915.
- Smith, Michael. "The Church of Scotland and the Funeral Industry in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh." *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXXVIII, 1, no. No. 225 (April 2009): 108-33.
- The Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh*. 1961.
- Turnbull, Michael T R B. *The Edinburgh Graveyard Guide*2006.
- Willsher, Betty. "Midlothian and Edinburgh " In *Survey of Scottish Gravestones: National Monuments Record for Scotland* c.1985.