

Nativity Scenes on Gravestones in County Louth, Ireland

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A small group of headstones carved in the early 19th century depicting the Nativity have been identified in County Louth, Ireland; these are the only known examples of such a representation on graveyard memorials. Photographic recording using innovative RTI (Reflectance Transform Imaging) software has allowed close examination of the compositions, this being the first detailed study using this method of recording monuments. The training and background of local Catholic clergy and the easy accessibility of printed media in the town of Drogheda probably created interest in Marian theology and the Incarnation, and imagery that could inspire the carving. This may be the explanation for the presence of the Nativity scenes. It is likely that all the memorials were carved by Patrick Corigan, a local mason who produced other unusual work as well as many standard memorial compositions of the time. The commissioners of the memorials were established local Catholic families who, despite limited landholdings, were clearly able to invest in significant commemorative monuments of a distinctive type, indicating the importance of investing in family plots located in Anglican-controlled graveyards.

County Louth, on the eastern side of Ireland north of Dublin, is one of the most fertile areas of the country, and also contains two important commercial centres, Drogheda with its heyday in the Middle Ages, and Dundalk to the north. As with most of Ireland, the majority of the population was Roman Catholic, although there was a significant Protestant minority in the 18th and 19th centuries, and this included most of the landed gentry. Although County Louth has relatively few 17th- or early 18th-century memorials, the fine-grained limestone allowed the carving of many headstones and some other monuments from the late 18th century onwards, and some of these display clear regional and local styles, though these have yet to be fully mapped or published.¹ There has, however, been a limited amount of interest in the memorial designs, notably in several papers by Ada K. Longfield in the 1940s², and recent papers considering dating, plot use, and artefact biography incorporate County Louth examples.³

This is the first County Louth examination of a regional type since Longfield, who had noted four of the five now known cases of Nativity scenes. Her description, however, was very brief and concentrated on noting those examples from Dromin and Termonfeckin; she was unaware of the Drogheda example, and could not see the name on the Dromin or Termonfeckin signed stones; Longfield notes how only signatures high on stones had been easy for her to recognise.⁴ This paper examines the small corpus of Nativity stones in detail, and is enhanced by the first application of RTI (Reflectance Transform Imaging) to detailed memorial analysis in order to create high quality images even where erosion and lichen growth limits appreciation on the ground or with standard photography.⁵ By considering the Irish and local context of production by a single carver, Patrick Corigan, and consumption by Catholic smallholders, some reasons for the brief localised popularity of this design are suggested.

The Nativity Scenes

It is extremely rare to find the Nativity as a scene on a gravestone, and the examples discussed here are the only ones known from Ireland to date. In four of the cases (excluding Termonfeckin 239) a Biblical quotation lies immediately below the Nativity scene, thus:

“And again when he bringeth the first begotten into the World he saith and let all the Angels of God worship him. Hebrews Chap. 1 Verse 6.”

The image fits the verse perfectly, but why this was seen as appropriate on a headstone remains obscure. The central design – Mary holding baby Jesus with Joseph looking on – is unsurprising for a Nativity scene, as are the ox and ass in the stable. This is not a scene with either shepherds or wise men, but there are angels in various forms. All the compositions are broadly similar and contain the same elements, each on a headstone of roughly the same shape. Each stone, however, is unique in its size and profile, the detailed treatment of the various elements and, in some cases, the presence of particular features and their treatment. No two stones came from the same template, though some of the elements are very similar, and this can be best considered by comparative analysis of each stone, in the order of their likely erection.

The Dromin Stone (Anne Hand d. 1805)

Dromin graveyard lies 10 miles north-northeast of Drogheda, serving a scattered rural population. The family burial plots have long use, and some stones are re-set within the plots as new memorials are added as further generations are interred.⁶ The Dromin Nativity stone (Fig. 1) is one of three memorials set along the edge of modern kerbing around a family double plot, and was erected by Anthony Hand of Laulesstown (Lawlesstown) in memory of his 17-year-old daughter. The memorial has been cleaned, removing all lichen, though unlike some others at Dromin its text has not been repainted.

The headstone is a typical regional profile, with the variant of a very high semi-circular central tympanum and well-defined upward curves on the shoulders. The raised border round the whole of the design at the top of the stone is plain, apart from a single incised line that runs around the edge which then defines the vertical edge of the border for the text panel. At either side of the central tympanum the sharp change in direction of the raised border at the start of the shoulder is marked by a pendant decoration in the form of a lozenge, its top defined by two curved incised lines ending in small pellets.

The Dromin stone is unusual in having the tympanum portion standing proud, with the face of the stone below cut back (Fig. 6a), but in most other respects it is similar to many other memorials of this date in southern County Louth. Some decorative features in the region are incised, but here all the decoration is carved in shallow false relief. Many memorials commemorating 19th-century Catholics have IHS with a cross rising from the cross bar of the H above the main inscription, but there are many variations in size and form of this symbol. In the Dromin example the cross bar of the H forms a curved V with a fleur-de-lys below, and the serifs of the letters are matched by the terminals of the Latin cross form. On either side of the IHS are positioned cherubs with flexed legs, wearing loincloths, and blowing trumpets, each leaning in towards the IHS. Below their feet further cherubs with just head and wings in profile face inwards, the one to the left slightly larger than that to the right, presumably because of the different amount of space taken up by the I and the S each side of the centrally-placed H. The IHS with cross is sometimes accompanied by the phrase “In hoc signo” or occasionally the fuller version, “In hoc signo vinces”, “in this sign you will conquer” so the composition in the tympanum relates to salvation following Christ’s death and resurrection, not the Nativity displayed below.

The Dromin Nativity scene may be considered the most accomplished of them all, and perhaps as is fitting for the earliest known example, has the text “THE NATIVITY” incised in the top left of the scene, perhaps reflecting that it was an unusual choice, as popular scenes such as the Crucifixion are not so named. Mary sits on a bench, one wooden leg of which peeks out of the bottom left from the covering of hay indicated in hair-like bunches (Fig. 7a). Mary’s dress is very narrow at the base, but her right hand is just visible holding back the folds to reveal Christ on her lap, and her left arm is across her body so that her hand covers her heart. The Virgin faces forward, her long, centrally-parted hair just visible under her head-covering, around which is a prominent radiate halo. Christ lies on Mary’s lap, facing outwards and wearing swaddling as a loincloth and around his belly. Both legs are slightly flexed, the right more than the left; the right arm is bent but the left is

extended straight. Christ has a halo demarcated by two concentric lines. Joseph stands close to Mary but behind the hay bench and looking towards mother and child. He wears a V-necked garment covered by a cloak, part of which he clutches in his right hand whilst his left arm stretches across his chest to the bottom of the V-neck. His hair is swept back from the forehead and is shoulder-length.

The right hand portion of the scene reveals other features of the stable (Fig. 8a). The hay on the bench continues, representing the hay litter on the floor of the stable. On this can be seen two animals. In the foreground is an accurately depicted bovine, its sex not indicated, but presumably an ox. Its front legs are folded under, and its horned head stares at the baby Jesus, its nostrils clearly indicated. Behind the ox stands an ass or donkey, ears pricked, wearing a bridle, which is also facing Jesus, presumably the beast that brought Mary from Nazareth. To complete the stable scene, behind the ass or donkey is a hayrack set high up, with a large end post on the left and twelve oblique slats. There is hay shown within the rack, similar to that already described, but less deeply incised.

Three locations in the scene contain angels. Balancing the animals on the right are two angels on the left, both in long flowing robes with round necks (Fig. 9a). The angel closest to Mary is kneeling and is depicted side-on facing towards the Christ child, with arms bent and hands clasped together in prayer, almost touching Mary's clothes. The other angel stands close, leaning towards the Virgin and slightly behind the kneeling angel's wings. It is drawn facing in a way that mirrors Joseph, almost full-on but again facing towards the mother and child. The wing to the left stretches out, but that to the right is partly obscured behind the kneeling angel's head and the standing angel's own body. This angel has bent arms and hands that are again held together in prayer. Above these angels, fitting into the space in the curved shoulders of the headstone, are three cherub heads, each with small upturned wings that join together under the cherub heads. The cherub heads are all similar in size and face forward, with the one to the left on its side, the upper one set horizontally, and the lowest angled so that three distinct sets of radiance, each emphasised with incised lines, are directed down towards Christ. All around the cherubs, clouds are depicted. On the right, the presence of the hay rack limits the upper space, and a single larger winged cherub head has been positioned at an angle, its detailed features similar to those on the right (Fig. 8a).

The text on the headstone is set within a decorative border carved in false relief (Fig. 10a). In the centre, beneath Mary, is a lozenge with four deeply-incised lentoid lines running from a central small circle, with four more shallow radiating lines. From each side a symmetrical continuous foliate scroll runs along the top of the inscription panel and down the sides, starting at the lozenge with downward-pointing scrolls. The monument is signed "Patt Corigan sculpt it".⁷

The Drogheda stone (Patrick Toner d. 1793 and James Toner d. 1813)

A single example of the Nativity scene has been identified in the town of Drogheda (Fig. 2), in a now-disused walled and usually locked Cord Cemetery just outside the limits of the medieval town, surrounded by 19th-century and more recent development. It was not known to Longfield, probably because of the state of the graveyard, but its inscription has been published in a book of the transcribed inscriptions, though with only brief comment on the design, with photographs of the Dromin stone to show the Nativity scene.⁸ A recent local initiative by Drogheda Civic Trust is now clearing the graveyard and there are plans for a conservation scheme to restore the site so that public access might be possible. Although the stone was erected by Michael Toner of Townrath in memory of his father who died in 1793, it is clear from the arrangement of the text and the continuity of lettering style that the subsequent family death of Michael's brother James in 1813 had already occurred when the stone was erected, and so makes this example later than the Dromin memorial.

The Drogheda headstone has a more gently curved tympanum with slight curved shoulders (Fig. 6b). The raised border with incised line is similar, but the lozenges at the sharp change in profile on the shoulders are not identical and have the curved incised lines but no pellets. The smaller area of the tympanum is filled with angels with trumpets similar to the Dromin example, though these angels seem more adult in appearance; each is facing into a much smaller IHS with cross. The IHS is also similar, except that the letters have their top and bottom serifs curved to reflect the arc of the stone top, and the same design element is applied to the cross-bar of the H, which does not have any decorative element. There are no inward-facing cherubs, but instead there is a curved banner with swallow-tailed terminals on which is inscribed the text "Soli Deo Honor et Gloria". The first word is placed on the left-hand portion of the banner, but the right-hand side is blank as the inscription finishes on the central section, suggesting an error in planning the lettering; this is not repeated on later stones, though the arrangement of the wording varies.

Mary sits on a rectangular block of hay, some bunched in strands but less finely carved than that of Dromin (Fig. 7b). Mary leans to the left, her face similar to before but with no halo. The most notable difference is the very wide dress, its folds marked with incised lines rather than being moulded in three dimensions, and Christ is held higher. The haloed Christ has his right arm crooked and his left fully extended over Mary's left arm which places her hand in the middle of her chest. Joseph stands slightly further away and is in a similar pose to Dromin, though is not leaning forward. A small amount of bedding hay is shown to the right, on which two rustically depicted animals can be seen. The closest to Mary is the ox, its front and back legs bent in what appears an uncomfortable pose (Fig. 8b). Further to the right is the donkey or ass, standing and not overlapping at all with the other beast. A much smaller hay rack, with just six only slightly angled slats, extends only as far as half way above the ox, and the rack is empty.

The angels on the left retain the pattern of a closer kneeling side-facing figure and one standing, here facing out from the stone (Fig. 9b). They are not positioned close to the Virgin, but placed so that they fill the space against the raised edge-moulding. The kneeling angel has both wings visible and outstretched, one overlapping the standing figure who has both wings partly obscured in the composition. Both angels maintain their arms folded in a position of prayer. The three upper winged cherub heads vary in size and all have smaller wings proportionately, and they are surrounded by schematically represented clouds. The three sets of radiance are more clearly differentiated and each seems to come from the various cherubs. As before, a single, larger, winged cherub head is positioned opposite, above the hay rack.

The decorative border for the Drogheda commemorative text is similar to the Dromin stone, but has some notable differences (Fig. 10b). The central lozenge had slightly concave sides, and a similar inner concentric lozenge. The scroll either side is symmetrical, but only runs across the top and just round the top corners of the text panel. It is then replaced on each side by a run of five flowers, before scrollwork commences once more. Each scroll terminal adjacent to the lozenge is carved as an upward-turned, backward-facing beaked creature, possibly with a small wing springing from the top of the sinuous body; the rest of the scroll appears more like a form of foliage, and ends on the sides of the stone with an inward-facing scroll. Below all this biographical text is the phrase "Requiescant in pace", which was carved to refer to those commemorated on the primary inscription. The headstone is signed "P Corigan Sculp^{tr}" in the lower right of the front face.

The Termonfeckin stones

Three Nativity scenes have been identified at Termonfeckin, one on a damaged headstone, and only one recently cleaned and so fully visible in all details. Nevertheless, these monuments provide an important collection, and each is described referring to the number of the transcription survey conducted by Declan Quail, and also used for recent archaeological recording of all the graveyard monuments.⁹ Termonfeckin lies only five miles north-east of Drogheda, and ten miles south-east of

Dromin, but no other examples of the Nativity have been found in the other historic graveyards within the hinterland of the town.

Termonfeckin 239 (Margaret McDonnell d. 1818)

This memorial (Fig. 3) has been recently cleaned and re-set on its plot. Consideration here is given only to the primary inscription, but the headstone reveals a long sequence of inscriptional events throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century. The stone was erected by Anthony McDonnell of Cannonstown in memory of his wife Margaret McDonnell, alias Curren, who died in 1818. Very similar lettering also records the death of their son Patrick in 1840, but as the inscription for the first death completes a line, it is hard to tell if this was an addition or was part of the original design. However, the date of 1840 is after the death of the carver, P. Corigan, and so it is likely that this is a subsequent inscriptional event.

This headstone has a semi-circular tympanum and curved shoulders similar in profile to that at Dromin (Fig. 6c). The raised border with incised line is similar to Dromin and Drogheda, with the lozenges similar to the latter. The tympanum is filled with the same design as Drogheda, but the narrower format required a less extended central section to the banner. The text is slightly different in spelling and capitalisation: “Soli Deo honour et Gloria”, and is symmetrically placed, with “Soli” and “Gloria” on the two outer portions of the banner. The cherubs with trumpets either side of the IHS are almost identical to Drogheda, but their torsos are slightly more upright because of the available space. The lettering for the IHS is similar, but the cross-bar of the H is a curved V, as at Dromin, but here does not have any decorative element.

Mary sits on a rectangular bench on which hay has been laid (Fig. 7c). She is similar to, but not identical in finer detail with, the Mary at Drogheda. She is slightly more centrally placed, and clearly facing forward. Her dress is slightly less voluminous, though still stretches off to the right. Mary’s body shape is slightly more detailed than at Drogheda, but her arms are similarly arranged, as is the way that she holds Christ, though he is positioned higher and to the left, rather than on her lap. The haloed Christ is identical. Joseph stands slightly further away but is in a similar pose. The animal composition to the right is also very similar to the Drogheda stone, though the ass is slightly skinnier (Fig. 8c). In contrast, the empty hay rack is more substantial and extends to above the ox’s head, and has eight slightly angled slats.

The angels on the left retain the pattern of the earlier memorials, with the standing figure facing out from the stone (Fig. 9c). They are set a little away from the framing edge and so slightly closer to the Virgin than at Drogheda, but otherwise are very similar, except that both these figures have belts around their waists. The upper winged cherub heads are also paralleled at Drogheda, though slightly differently arranged in the space, with a cloud above and not to the left. The three sets of radiance are similar. The single, larger, winged cherub head is positioned opposite, above the hay rack, but is larger and its left wing almost reaches the banner.

The decorative border for the main text is very similar to the Drogheda stone, but the animal heads at the centre are more distinctly beaked (Fig. 10c). The central lozenge has straight sides and is filled with an incised central circle surrounded by lentoid petals. The scroll is a similar design to that at Drogheda, interrupted by five flower motifs on each side. This stone is signed, as with the Drogheda example, but the text is slightly different: “P. Corigan – Sculps”.

Termonfeckin 148 (Cath King d. 1819)

This headstone has not been cleaned, and so it is hard to identify when in the field some of the finer detail in places where the lichen is particularly visually obtrusive. However, the use of RTI photography and image processing reveals the true quality of the monument (Fig. 4a, b).¹⁰ The stone was erected by Patrick King of Termonfeckin for himself and his posterity, and for his wife

Cath King, alias Reynold, who died in 1819. Patrick himself is subsequently recorded with a similar but slightly more heavily carved style of lettering after his death in 1841.

This headstone has a semi-circular tympanum and curved shoulders similar in profile to Termonfeckin 239, though the central portion comprises a gentler arc, and in contrast the shoulders are more compressed (Fig. 6d). The raised border with incised line is similar to the other memorials, with the lozenges similar to those at Drogheda. The tympanum is filled with the same design as Drogheda, but the central section is even more compressed, with a much tighter curve for the relatively thicker banner, which also has very short terminals after the twist. The text is “Soli Deo Honor Et Gloria” and is all in the central section of the banner. The cherubs with trumpets either side of the IHS are very similar to Drogheda and Termonfeckin 239, but the IHS is distinctive, comprising thick lettering with the cross set on a fleur-de-lys as the cross bar of the H. Moreover, immediately within the raised border at the top of the stone runs the inscription “In Nativitate Domini”, relating to the main scene below. Beneath each cherub, but not under the central part of the banner, the surface of the stone is cut back slightly for the background of the Nativity scene beneath, as is the case in a more pronounced form on the Dromin stone, where this feature runs across the whole of the design.

The rectangular bench is particularly visible on this stone, with a large flat front held off the floor with a series of narrow, straight legs (Fig. 7d). The hay is largely on top of the bench, with some cascading down around Mary and at the bench ends. The hay litter on the floor of the stable, on which the ox lies, also runs behind the bench legs, but does not extend beyond the bench to the left. The hay is particularly carefully depicted, with clear bundles visible. Mary’s position is like that on Termonfeckin 239, with similar face, hair and head-covering, but she has a halo with radiating incised lines, as with the Dromin stone. Mary’s dress has a much lower neckline, and a necklace is where the neckline was positioned in the other examples. In other respects the dress is very like Termonfeckin 239, but is rendered in slightly more detail, but Christ is held lower and more centrally on her lap, another feature more akin to the Dromin composition. The haloed Christ is once again identical. Joseph is again more like the Dromin example, though his clothing is rendered in less detail; his left arm is not as exposed as at Dromin but more than at Termonfeckin 239. The animal composition to the right is also very similar to the Dromin stone, with the ass behind the ox and with both having similar detail of head orientation, nostrils and bridle to that of Dromin, though the elongated neck of the ass is more reminiscent of the Drogheda and Termonfeckin 239 examples (Fig. 8d). The empty hay rack extends beyond the ox’s head, and has twelve slightly angled slats and an end-post with a semi-circular top that extends well above the top horizontal of the rack.

The angels on the left retain the pattern of the earlier memorials, with the standing figure facing out from the stone (Fig. 9d). They are set slightly closer to the framing edge than at Termonfeckin 239, but otherwise are very similar, though slightly better detailed and with no belts; the kneeling angel in this case also has a V-neck for the tunic. The upper winged cherub heads are also paralleled on the earlier stones, though the topmost is facing out from the stone rather than angled to face along the lines of radiance. The cloud is only below the cherubs and is limited in extent. The three sets of radiance are very similar to Termonfeckin 239. The winged cherub head on the opposite side, above the hay rack, is positioned as with the Drogheda example, though clear of the hay rack end-post. There is also another slightly smaller winged cherub, at the same angle, placed between the hay rack and Joseph.

The decorative border for the text is very similar to Termonfeckin 239, with beaked animal heads at the centre, though the first tendrils lie beneath the body rather than above (Fig. 10d). The central lozenge has curved petals with lentoid depressions, with a central incised dot and circle. The scroll is a similar design to the previous examples, interrupted by five flower motifs on each side.

Termonfeckin 036 (James Sheridan d. 1820)

The latest known example of the Nativity scenes has lost its semi-circular tympanum, though sufficient survives to indicate that its shoulders were most similar in profile to those of Termonfeckin 148. This headstone is also lichen-covered, to a greater extent than that of any of the other Nativity scenes, but even so the overall design and many stylistic details and the full nature of the surviving text can be discerned with the use of RTI (Fig. 5a, b). It was “erected by Representatives¹¹ in memory of their Father James Sheridan”, who died in 1820.

The raised border is similar to earlier examples and has an incised line, though this is only visible in places. The lozenges where the border sharply changes direction at the shoulder are similar to Termonfeckin 148, but are elaborated each with an additional incised triangle. The tympanum design is missing, but the lowest portions of the banner are still just visible. The text only partially survives on the banner, with “Soli” on the left-hand element, “D” at the start and “Glo” at the end of the central portion, with “-ria” on the right hand element of the banner (Fig. 5). This is the only example where one of the words is split in this way, though minor details of the inscription are different in each case.

The Nativity scene itself survives intact, though much lies beneath lichen, and only the RTI reveals all the details (Fig. 7e). Mary sits on a rectangular bench with legs similar to those on Termonfeckin 148, though most of the vertical face of the bench is here covered with hay. On the right-hand side, the hay on the bench merges with that round the animals, and it would seem that the background has not been completely cut back and smoothed off at this point. Mary has a halo with no radiating lines, her left hand clutches her clothing, a feature of this stone and similar in manner to that of Joseph, who is consistently in this pose. Mary’s dress is similar though not identical to that on the other Termonfeckin stones, but here has rather more deeply carved folds. She holds Christ higher and to the left rather than on her lap, and Christ’s legs are straight with his head slightly to one side. Joseph stands in a similar position and pose to Termonfeckin 239, but the angles of both his arms are different. The animals to the right are similar in form to Drogheda but the ass is set slightly closer to the ox (Fig. 8e). The empty hay rack has ten slightly angled slats and extends to above the ox’s shoulder, with a round-topped end-post that extends slightly above the top rail.

The angels on the left retain the pattern of the earlier memorials (Fig. 9e). The standing angel’s wing touches the frame, but is slightly less compressed than at Drogheda, though the gap between the kneeling angels and the bench is much less. Both these figures have belts around their waists, as with Termonfeckin 239, but the folds of their garments are more detailed and more deeply carved. The three upper winged cherub heads and the clouds are most closely paralleled at Drogheda, though slightly differently arranged with the lower two side by side. The three sets of radiance are similar to the other stones. The single, larger, winged cherub head is positioned opposite, above the hay rack, but is larger and its left wing almost reaches the banner; it is similar to Drogheda and Termonfeckin 239, and the larger cherub on Termonfeckin 148. The decorative border is almost identical to Termonfeckin 239 (Fig. 10e). The scroll border round the commemorative text is a similar design to that on the other stones but only has three flower motifs on each side.

Patrick Corigan, sculptor

Patrick Corigan is hardly known from documentary sources¹², but a descendant, Larry Corrigan, has kindly shared some genealogical information and identified Patrick’s own memorial, which he originally erected in memory of his son, John, who died in 1823. Patrick himself was added after his death in 1831, aged 85 years, implying that he was in his sixties and seventies when he carved the Nativity scenes. Patrick Corrigan is listed in the Tithe Applotment books of 1823-37 under the Kellystown townland of Drumshallon parish, only 6 km north-west of Termonfeckin. He held 18 acres paying £28/18/4 rent. The memorial is at Rathdrummond, Grangebellew graveyard, between Termonfeckin and Dromin. He worked with high quality local stone, and produced a range of designs. Although Termonfeckin 239 could be as late as 1840, given that the other signed Nativity

stones all appear to belong to the second decade of the 19th century, it is likely that this, too, is of this date and suggests that Patrick Corigan used this design only during that decade; he was dead by the 1840s but his descendant Peter Corrigan died in 1877 aged 94 years.

Other locations with signed works by Corigan include another example at the Cord cemetery, Drogheda, with the signature unusually placed on the right-hand edge of the stone. This signed stone attests to Corigan's creativity, with his design of a memorial erected by Owen Smith for his daughter, Ann who died in 1818 (Fig 11). Although most of the face of the stone is taken up by a long and effusive poem, a small portrait of the daughter is set below the altar and Crucifixion – a rare but not unique image of the deceased on Irish exterior monuments.¹³ The border placed around the text here also wraps round three sides of the portrait. It is similar to that seen on the Nativity stones, but does not terminate with animal heads either side of the familiar central lozenge. The winged cherub heads facing out from the stone, though larger than in the Nativity scenes, are very similar in detail to the one on Nativity stones, but of particular relevance are the two cherubs seen in profile either side of Christ, facing onto the Crucifixion. These are extremely similar to those on the Dromin stone either side of the IHS, even to the extent that the one on the viewer's left has more extended wings than the one on the right.

Other signed stones by Corigan have been identified; further work will probably recover more, and a detailed analysis of the features of the signed memorials will probably allow a confident ascription to many others in the region. A headstone at Dysart erected by Patrick and John Phillips of Drumgutter in memory of their father Patrick Philips who died in 1798 aged 50 has been recently cleaned (Fig 12a); it is signed "Patt Corigan Sculpt it" (Fig 12b),¹⁴ and shows the familiar winged cherub heads but the Crucifixion above an altar which supports columns and an arch. This shows much of the quality and confidence seen in the Nativity stones and, although clearly other carvers produce this type of design in the region, this has more complexity than most. Another headstone in Rathdrumin erected by Patrick Murphy blacksmith of Killally to his father Peter who died 1807 and his mother who had died in 1795, signed "P. Corigan Sculps"¹⁵, but has not yet been visited though belongs to the same production period as the Nativity stones.

Later products reveal a decline in detail and close conformity to the prevalent styles produced by others. This may reflect a decline due to age or that demand was higher and production had to be faster. In Clonmore, a later style of stone, with a radiate IHS and a Crucifixion rising from the H, was erected by Owen and Peter Brennan of Corstown Dunany in memory of their father James Brennan who died in 1823 aged 72 years.¹⁶ It is signed "P. Corigan Sculps" but has a simplified scroll, though the winged cherub heads on the shoulders of the stone are retained from the earlier work. A second signed stone in the same graveyard was erected by William Gartlany of Duddistown to his son, William, who died in 1824. It is signed "P. Corrigan Facit"¹⁷, indicating that Corigan could use the double "r", which is how he appears in the limited documentation and on his own memorial. This stone is very similar to the other Clonmore stone, but the Crucifixion fills the centre of the design, with no IHS or radiance. In Mayne, a stone erected by Thomas Flanagan of Mullaughmapis in memory of his father Thomas who died in 1822 aged 74, and of his mother Margret who had died three years earlier. It is signed "P. Corrigan Sculps",¹⁸ and is similar to the Brennan stone at Clonmore, though a cross with expanded terminals replaces the Crucifixion. Another at that site marks the burial place of Thomas Kelly of Banktow. It records his parents who died in 1767 and 1769, before recording Thomas himself who died in 1817. It is signed "P Corigan Sc".¹⁹

Other signed headstones are known from transcriptions²⁰. At Rathdrumin one was erected by Patrick Murphy blacksmith of Killally to his father Peter who died 1807 and his mother who had died in 1795, signed "P. Corigan Sculps"²¹. The graveyard of what is now Ballymakenny St Nicholas' church (originally Anglican but now Baptist), also contains a Corigan signed stone. All the memorials which are not Nativity scenes have yet to be recorded using RTI so, given the extent of

lichen except on those that have been recently cleaned, further analysis of Corigan's style will await a wider programme of recording.

Commissioners of the memorials

To understand the possible motivation behind the brief appearance of Nativity stones, it is worth considering not only the producer – Patrick Corigan – but also those who were commissioning the memorials. The Dromin memorial was erected by Anthony Hand, and this shows a distinct change in style and substance from an earlier monument which he had erected and which, like the Nativity stone, is re-set in a modern kerbed plot but presumably has always been in roughly the same location (Fig 13a). This is a small, roughly shaped stone, with accomplished lettering but without symmetrical layout of text and with the IHS monogram at a slight angle (Fig 13b). The text of this stone, "This stone a / Burial Place b[e] / Longing to An / thony Hand / 1797". It is unfortunately now partially buried beneath the gravel in the kerbed plot. It is notable not only because of the IHS with heart beneath, but the presence above the heart of a cross which, by the treatment of the terminals suggests crossed bones and a mortality symbol. Around the IHS runs a text "LORD JESUS [HAVE ME]RCY ON US SINNERS", with "PRAY" placed vertically to the right as there was no room at the bottom because of the presence of an inscription "Lord have Mercy" in Irish – "A HIARNA DEUN TROCARIÉ" – that ran horizontally between this composition and the main text.

This monument is a high quality example of the memorials in folk art tradition, some of which employ motifs such as the heart; as with many other such memorials it did not commemorate a death, but rather the ownership of a plot (texts often add 'and his posterity' though this example does not).²² These monuments were superseded by the forms and designs represented (albeit with unusual iconography) by the Nativity stones, so the two memorials reveal a shift in production and expectations in a monument within only a decade. That a plot was reserved, a relatively elaborate marker for its time placed on it and, within a decade an elaborate stone erected to a young daughter added suggests sustained commitment to investment in the family burial plot. Anthony Hand leased from the Right Hon. John Foster of Collon a small-holding of about 17 acres in Lawlesstown, only 1.6km south-southeast of Dromin in 1820;²³ a descendant — Christopher Hand — holding the same land in 1854, though by this date from Viscount Massereene.²⁴

The King family of Duffsfarm (immediately east of Termonfeckin village and church) are also known from a few sources, with Patrick, who erected the Nativity stone, renting land from 'J. McC. Newtown' valued at 40 shillings in 1819.²⁵ Patrick is listed in the Tithe Applotment book of 1830 with 20 acres, with some first and second quality land and most being third quality.²⁶ His son, John, later commemorated on the same memorial on his death in 1855, rented 31 acres in Duffsfarm and a further 51 acres at Ganderstown, all from Thomas Joseph Eyre in 1854.²⁷ Sometime after 1840, John was sufficiently affluent to construct Ganderstown House and its enclosed yard.²⁸ James Sheridan (Termonfeckin 036) was also late of Duffsfarm. Three Sheridans – Richard, Patrick and James – each had an equal land allocation of 6 acres in the Tithe Applotment book of 1830, all of only third and fourth quality land.

Anthony McDonnell of Cannonstown (Termonfeckin 239) is listed in the Tithe Applotment book of 1830 with 20 acres, with some second quality land with most being third and some fourth quality.²⁹ Michael Toner lived in Townrath, Drogheda, north-east of the town and only 2 miles from Termonfeckin and adjacent to Cannonstown; the family are therefore distinctly rural even though they were in the parish of Drogheda. A Margaret Toner is listed for Townrath in Griffiths Valuation.³⁰

What other business activities and occupations Anthony Hand and the other commissioners of the high quality Nativity stones may have had to allow investment in such monuments is unknown, but some wealth was being generated by those involved in weaving, and Drogheda with its numerous mercantile opportunities was close by. It is notable that some of those who appear to have limited

financial resources were able to commission such elaborate monuments in the early part of the 19th century, reflecting the importance of memorials as a permanent indication of a family's presence and status in a community where ownership of land by Catholics was impossible.

The Nativity in Context

The presence of this small, geographically and temporally restricted group of headstones with the Nativity design requires some explanation beyond that of identifying the likely carver of at least the majority of the products. In the early 19th century in this region there was a considerable variety of headstone designs being produced, by a number of carvers, and so the commissioners of the monuments had some choice as to what design they would select. As this was not a standard design, it must have been a conscious decision to select it for a loved one. The importance of the commissioner, and their role in the choice of design, is often indicated on County Louth stones by the use of the introductory phrase "Erected by N in memory of", often in larger font than the details of the deceased. The stone is explicitly linked to the erector, and they must have been involved in the selection of an unusual design. The death dates for the stones do not correlate with Christmas, and the memorials commemorate both males and females of a range of ages.

The published sermons of Rev. W. Gahan give some indication of the interpretations made of the Christmas story by Catholic priests in early 19th-century Ireland.³¹ The Christmas Day sermon emphasises a number of themes which relate to God's love for fallen humanity, having set out the corruption following the Fall. Gahan notes how the Incarnation will be admired by both angels and men, and also describes in detail the stable with the straw and animals. Towards the end of the sermon Gahan emphasises how:

"the Angels assembled in choir sounded forth the divine praise in the loudest strains, singing Gloria &c, Glory be to God on high, and on earth be peace to men of good will; for such were the happy fruits of Christ's nativity, glory to God in the highest Heavens, and peace, that is reconciliation, grace, and pardon to men on earth."³²

He then discusses the shepherds, though this aspect of the story is not represented in the headstone designs. The focus is clearly on the birth, the Holy family, and particularly the centrality of Mary. Indeed, Gahan concludes the sermon with further invocations of praise along with the Angels, themes which resonate with the Louth Nativity compositions. He does not, however, quote Hebrews but concentrates on Luke's references to the Angels. The presence of the Angels at the birth has a long tradition in literature, as exemplified in Irishman Nahum Tate's poem, *Song of the Angels at the Nativity of our Blessed Saviour*, written around 1700 and the only Christmas hymn (*While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night*) at that time authorized by the Anglican Church of England and so was probably widely sung in Ireland also. We do not know what hymns the Catholic congregations in Louth would have been singing.

Another published sermon on the birth of Christ is that of Murphy, where there is no strong reference to the adoration and praise of the Angels but instead an emphasis on the Immaculate Conception, reinforcing the key role of Mary in early 19th-century Irish Catholic thinking.³³ The role of Mary in Catholic devotion at this time was substantial, and it is notable that all but Termonfeckin 239 depict the Virgin with a halo. The Angels are celebrating the event of the Incarnation, but Mary is as central in this as Christ Himself.

There is plentiful evidence that the clergy and literate merchants, craftsmen, and more successful Catholic farmers had access to literature and printed images from the vibrant retail outlets in the town of Drogheda.³⁴ By the middle of the 18th century the head of the Dominican priory in the town, father John Donnelly, collected a substantial number of volumes – over 160 – many of which supported his preaching.³⁵ This highlights how, even in what were often difficult times for Catholic clergy, it was possible to accumulate extensive libraries of theological works and operate openly

within the very denominationally mixed urban culture of Drogheda. On his death Donnelly's collection was dispersed, but many would have been purchased locally and some still remain in local collections. No library of local clerics at the time of the Nativity stones is known, but that of a parish priest from County Wexford indicates the type of collection owned by a rural priest in the late 18th century.³⁶ Pdraig O Sulleabhain discusses the collection of John Wickham, priest of Templeshannon and Edermine, who left his collection of around one hundred works to Wexford Franciscan friary on his death in 1777. These included a range of collections of sermons and theological treatises, as well as history, geography and literature. By the early 19th century it would have been easier for many reasons for priests who wished to obtain books and other religious items to do so.

The priests in the parishes of Dromin, Termonfeckin and Drogheda (the last also being the residence of the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh during this period) were often well-educated and no doubt aware of current theological debates, and were not working in isolation. For example at Termonfeckin James Corrigan and his successor Bartholomew Counsel were both trained in Spain, the latter at an Irish college near Madrid, Alcalá de Henares.³⁷ There was a strong tradition of Marian devotion in Spain which developed within a multicultural imperial context and was propagated in significant part by artefacts which assist devotion – not only books and prints but also medals, statues, and other iconographic items.³⁸ It is likely that many Irish trainees were influenced by this form of devotionism, and so images including those of the Nativity would be encouraged and could be obtained through the book and print dealers in Drogheda. It is probable but not certain that the next Termonfeckin priest, Peter McGuire, was also trained in Spain. A strong popular interest in the cult of Mary and the Incarnation could have been established during this succession of Spanish-trained clerics that were in post from 1785. The incumbent at the time of erection of all three Nativity stones at Termonfeckin was James Dowdall, who was trained at the national seminary St. Patrick's College at Maynooth in neighbouring County Kildare and which had a significant library.³⁹

Although the Catholic church was still discriminated against, and could not establish its own burial grounds, it was able to form a coherent diocesan and parochial system and in the east of Ireland, such as County Louth, could provide adequate clerical coverage and have Catholic chapels⁴⁰ constructed on sites provided by sympathetic landlords. The later nationalistic narratives describing the Penal Times and the covert celebration of Mass on isolated rocks in the face of Protestant oppression was certainly not the situation in the later 18th and early 19th century; a series of laws passed between 1771 and 1778 diminished the discrimination, for example leading to the foundation of Maynooth in 1796.⁴¹ Dromin was part of the parish of Dunleer, and at the time of the erection of the first Nativity stone the Catholic priest was John Healy, who had previously been curate there but was then incumbent from 1797 until 1823. He preached in Irish, having written down his text in a phonetic form, like many priests not being trained in writing Irish correctly.⁴² It is therefore highly likely that Father Healy would have been effective in communicating his interpretation of the Bible in his sermons and other teachings, and his teachings may have been the inspiration for the first Nativity stone. That all the Nativity memorials are in English does not indicate the popular vernacular language, but rather that of official record, a pattern seen not only in Ireland but also Wales.⁴³ Father Healy clearly had a strong affection for Dromin, although he was transferred to Louth parish for the last portion of his career; on his death in 1831 he was buried at Dromin and had a memorial erected there.

The political context of the memorials is also noteworthy. The first stone, erected in or soon after 1805, came only a few years after the failed 1798 rebellion, when independence for Ireland was supported by a portion of both Presbyterians and Catholics. The model for independence was that of Republican France, and this alienated the Catholic clergy, many of whom had been educated in that country or the neighbouring Low Countries and knew of the anti-clerical aspects of that style of politics. Indeed, the Drogheda-based Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Richard O Reilly, was

strongly against the uprising, with toleration of Catholics being the dominant Protestant attitude at that time, reflected in considerable amelioration of the Penal Laws, which he did not want undermined. Although discrimination in politics and public office remained, the potential for further reform whilst remaining loyal was strong, many County Louth Catholics did not participate, no doubt taking the lead of their archbishop.⁴⁴ In some parts of Louth, as with other parts of Ireland, however, there was support for the rebellion. There was a riot in Ardee and that town's priest, Father Quigley of Dundalk, was hanged, drawn and quartered for his support.⁴⁵ The Incarnation was to demonstrate God's love to all people, and his sacrifice and resurrection (represented by the IHS and cross on all the stones) and shows hope for all. In a religiously divided Ireland the influence of the conciliatory Archbishop and the relatively affluent position of many Catholics, combined with traditions of material devotion including to Mary exemplified at the birth of Christ, may have encouraged this short and geographically limited enthusiasm for this unusual mortuary iconography. It also required a carver of the quality of Patrick Corigan to design and produce such memorials, and these seem to be amongst his most outstanding creations.

Conclusions

These notable headstones portray in rustic style the Holy Family in the stable, worshiped by angels, but without any other human actors from the Christmas story. In most cases the image is supported by a Biblical text immediately beneath the scene, which is an extremely unusual feature in itself on Irish Catholic memorials of this period, and even where present is not normally placed in this prominent position. The composition and layout of the main memorial texts are all typical for the region at this date, and likewise the letter styles.

The use of RTI photography has allowed the creation of extremely clear images of all the stones, whatever their state in terms of erosion, damage and lichen on the surface. This is the first time that the application of RTI has been used to compare the numerous elements of monument designs, and indicates a potential for application in many other situations. Almost all elements of the Nativity scene are present, similar though with subtle variations, on all the memorials, and this confirms the five stones as products of the same carver.

During the early part of the 19th century a Nativity scene was erected in Dromin, County Louth (death date 1805). This initial version is the only one which explicitly states that the Nativity is depicted, and shows more dynamism than the later renditions, with the left-hand angel and Joseph each leaning towards Mary and the Christ-child, and the ox appearing to be settling down rather than in a position of rest. It is signed, and various features of the design are characteristic of other Patrick Corigan products. These include the detail of the winged cherubs, both in profile and facing out from the stone, and the decorative border and central lozenge. Roughly a decade later he replicated the scene but significantly modified the tympanum element, removing the inward-facing cherubs and adding the banner with various minor variations of the text "Soli Deo Honor et Gloria". Although the quality of the carving varies between the Nativity scenes erected in Dromin, Drogheda, and the nearby village of Termonfeckin, three were signed by Corigan and it is highly likely that he carved all five. The death dates of those being commemorated in the primary inscriptional events on these stones are 1805, 1811, 1818, 1819, and 1820. The stones, however, are all distinctly different variations on the same shape, and are different dimensions. This, and the variations in quality and detail, indicates that they were each produced separately, not as a batch or using a template.

The inspiration for the original design must have come from some locally-available image, either within a church or in printed form within a religious book or cheap print hung on the wall. The phrase "In Nativitate Domini" on Termonfeckin 148 relates to numerous prints found across Europe (Fig. 14), and these were probably widely available in Ireland, and locally through the book and print sellers of Drogheda. The later but undated example illustrated here has many of the elements visible in the Nativity stones, with the Holy Family surrounded by angels, and with the ox and ass to

the right. A banner is in the heavens with more angels, though in this case it reads “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”, which is another popular phrase frequently combined with a radiate-headed IHS and cross symbols on Irish headstones. Elements that are missing from the print, such as angels with trumpets, the IHS itself, and the beams of radiance, may either be the carver’s interpretation or may reflect the arrangement in the original image which inspired the composition; the presence of the IHS and cross is also more appropriate on an image associated with death, being common on Catholic stones of the time. Corigan carved the Nativity scenes, amongst other designs, though why this unique subject matter was selected remains uncertain. Examination of contemporary Catholic sermons and other religious literature indicates an interest in the Incarnation and with the role of Mary, which may well have informed the choice in these cases, but it must have been particularly influential in the region of southern Louth, presumably because of an emphasis by some of the clergy, otherwise the theme would have been taken up elsewhere. It may, perhaps, be that, just as many memorials in the region show Christ crucified, and a few show stations of the cross or the second coming, some felt that depictions of the first coming, supported by angels as at the resurrection tomb, was worthy of depiction as another crucial intervention by God in this world. This study reveals the ways in which regional folk art can identify popular culture and religious emphasis that is otherwise unrecorded in the written sources, even it cannot fully explain it.

Notes

I would like to thank the fieldwork supervisors on my Ireland and Wales and Ireland and Isle of Man field schools over many years, in particular Robert Evans and Kate Chapman, for their efforts in recording graveyard monuments in County Louth. Kate Chapman and J. R. Peterson both have been central in the creation of the RTI images used in this paper, though I have myself created the edited published versions from the cropped files produced by the software. Numerous cohorts of field school students have worked in sometimes challenging conditions to collect the data, and the church authorities and local communities have been supportive, particularly Declan Quaile of the Termonfeckin Historical Society and Collin Byrne, Sean Collins and Terry Collins of Drogheda Civic Trust; Larry Corrigan has kindly provided me with information about his family including his great, great, great grandfather Patrick Corrigan. Assistance with some of the theological and social context has been kindly provided by Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Clodagh Tait, both of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. Tracy Collins kindly provided a translation for the Irish phrase. Anonymous reviewers also provided some important insights and information which have greatly enhanced the paper, and encouraged me to review the Corigan signed stones more confidently and place them in the historical context of their commissioning.

Footnotes

¹ One regional group immediately south of County Louth, in North County Dublin, has been published, H. Mytum, ‘Local traditions in early eighteenth-century commemoration: the headstone memorials from Balrothery, Co. Dublin and their place in the evolution of Irish and British commemorative practice’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 104C (2004), pp. 1-35.

²A. K. Longfield, ‘Some Late 18th and early 19th Century Irish Tombstones. V. Subjects not related to the Crucifixion. Saints and Scenes by Kehoe, at St Mullins, and by an unknown carver, at Termonfeckin’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 77 (1947), pp. 1-4, and ‘Some Late 18th and early 19th Century Irish Tombstones. VI. East County Louth’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 78 (1948), pp. 170-174.

³ H. Mytum, 'The dating of graveyard memorials: evidence from the stones', *Post-medieval Archaeology* 36 (2002), pp. 1-38, 'A long and complex plot: the development of the marked grave space in Ireland', *Church Archaeology* 5/6 (2004), pp. 31-41, and 'Artefact biography as an approach to material culture: Irish gravestones as a material form of genealogy', *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 12/13 (2004), pp. 111-127.

⁴ Longfield, 'Irish Tombstones V'. It would seem that the County Louth graveyards were much more overgrown when Longfield was researching memorials than they are today.

⁵ For application of this method to graveyard monuments, see H. Mytum with K. Chapman, J.R. Peterson and Alistair Cross, 'Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI): Capturing Gravestone Detail via Multiple Digital Images', *Association for Gravestone Studies Newsletter* 41.2 (2017), pp. 3-10; for more general reviews see S. M. Duffy, *Multi-Light Imaging for Heritage Applications* (London, 2013), and Mytum and Peterson, 'The Application of Reflectance Transform Imaging (RTI)', *Historical Archaeology* 52 (2018).

⁶ Mytum, 'A long and complex plot'.

⁷ S. Beilew, M. Murtagh and N. Ross, 'Tombstone Inscriptions in Dromin', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 27.2 (2010), pp. 302-327, esp. p. 313. The re-setting of this headstone has meant that the signature is not longer visible.

⁸ J. Garry, *The Cord Cemetery: History and Tombstone Inscriptions* (Drogheda, 1999), pp. 16-17, 155.

⁹ D. Quaille, 'Termonfeckin Graveyard Inscriptions', *Termonfeckin Historical Society Review* 2003, archive of University of Liverpool Ireland and Isle of Man Archaeological Field School.

¹⁰ RTI is Reflectance Transformation Imaging, a technique which combines numerous digital photographs taken from the same fixed point but with different angles of oblique light. Various forms of output can be produced, and can reduce the impact of lichen and variations in stone colour. A recent guide to the method on archaeological projects, including those in the field as well as museums, is Sarah M. Duffy, *Multi-Light Imaging for Heritage Applications* (London, English Heritage, 2013), available on-line at http://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/multi-light-imaging-heritage-applications/Multi-light_Imaging_FINAL_low-res.pdf/.

¹¹ This is a very rare use of the word 'Representatives' meaning relatives in Irish memorials. County Louth has a large number that commence their inscriptions with details of who erects the stone, and sometimes the year of erection, see Mytum, 'The dating of graveyard memorials'.

¹² Unfortunately, many records were destroyed when the Four Courts in Dublin suffered an explosion during the Irish Civil War in 1922. Many forms of document, including parish and many legal documents, were lost and inhibit much historical research, though some sources remain and can give some insights into the social and economic history of the period. For this reason, Irish gravestone inscriptions are a prized resource by family and social historians, and less attention has been paid by most scholars to the form and decoration of monuments until recently, with the notable exception of Longfield. The last few years have, however, seen a few important studies (largely by local historians and archaeologists rather than art historians or cultural historians) that have considered some regional styles elsewhere in Ireland, including M. B. Timoney, *Had Me Made. A Study of Grave Memorials of Co. Sligo from c. 1650 to the Present* (Keash, 2005), B. Graham and F. McCormick, 'The headstones of James Connelly', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha* 20.1 (2004), pp. 162-178, F. McCormick, 'A group of Tradesmen's headstones (with notes on their trades and tools)', *Clogher Record* 10.1 (1979), pp. 12-22, D. O'Keefe, 'Instruments of the Passion on the gravestones of South Tipperary', *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1998, pp. 155-174, E. Grogan, 'Eighteenth century headstones and the stone mason tradition in county Wicklow: the work of Dennis Cullen of Monaseed', *Wicklow Archaeology and History* 1 (1998), pp. 41-63, H. Mytum, 'The Wheeled cross headstones of West Ulster: towards a definition of the type', *Church Archaeology* 10 (2006), pp. 39-56.

¹³ A local example is of a cleric, Revd. James Corigan pastor of Termonfeckin who died 1795 aged 49, who is depicted on his headstone is at Mayne, Co. Louth; Mallon, P. and Ross, N. 'Gravestone Inscriptions in Mayne', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 20.4 (1984), p.342.

¹⁴ Mallon, P. and Ross, N. 'Gravestone Inscriptions in Dysart, Cappoge and Drumshallon', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 19.3 (1979), p.245.

¹⁵ Ross, N. 'Tombstone Inscriptions in Rathdrummin and Bawntaaffe', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 19.1 (1977), p.76.

¹⁶ Mallon, P. and Ross, N. 'Gravestone Inscriptions in Clonmore', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 20.2 (1982), p.147.

¹⁷ Mallon and Ross, 'Clonmore', p.151.

¹⁸ Mallon, P. and Ross, N. 'Mayne', p.343.

¹⁹ Mallon, P. and Ross, N. 'Mayne', p.345.

²⁰ These stones have not yet been visited by the author.

²¹ Ross, N. 'Tombstone Inscriptions in Rathdrummin and Bawntaaffe', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 19.1 (1977), p.76.

²² Mytum, 'Local traditions in early eighteenth-century commemoration'; this is a relatively late example of this style when other memorials of the new forms were being erected in graveyards in the region.

²³ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for this information.

²⁴ Griffiths Valuation, Valuation of Tenements, County Louth, p. 27

²⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

²⁶ National Archives of Ireland, Tithe Applotment books 1823-37 on-line at <http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp> last consulted 2 October 2017.

²⁷ Griffiths Valuation, Valuation of Tenements, County Louth, p. 7.

²⁸ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

²⁹ Tithe Applotment books,

³⁰ Griffiths Valuation, Valuation of Tenements, County Louth, p. 71.

³¹ W. Gahan *Sermons and Moral Discourses for all the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Year on the most important truths and maxims of the Gospel*, 36-43. (Dublin, 1825).

³² Gahan, *Sermons*, p. 42.

³³ B. Murphy, *Sermons for Every Sunday Throughout the Year: Principally from the Epistles and Gospels Proper to Each Sunday* (Vol. 1) (Dublin 1808), pp. 60-65.

³⁴ J. Finegan, 'The Role of the Printed Word in Drogheda up to 1815: A Case Study of Print Production and Consumption in Provincial Ireland', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* (1998) 23.2, pp. 181-213.

³⁵ H. Fenning, 'The Library of a Preacher of Drogheda: John Donnelly, O.P. (d. 1748)', *Collectanea Hibernica* 18/19 (1976/77), pp. 72-104.

³⁶ P. O Sulleabhain, 'The library of a parish priest of the penal days', *Collectanea Hibernica* 6 (1963), pp. 234-44.

³⁷ D. Quaille, 'Catholic Clergy who Served in Termonfeckin', *Termonfeckin Historical Society Review* 2001.

³⁸ A.M. Stevens-Arroyo, 'The evolution of Marian devotionism within Christianity and the Ibero-Mediterranean polity'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37.1, (1998), pp. 50-73.

³⁹ J. McKee, 'Irish Church Libraries and the French Enlightenment', in G. Gargett and G. Sheridan, (eds) *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (Basingstoke, 1999), 213.

⁴⁰ Before the full official recognition of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, its places of worship were frequently termed chapels; P. Faulkner, 'The Clergy of the Parish of Dunleer', *County Louth Archaeological and Historical Journal* 23.2 (1994), pp. 218-30 passim.

⁴¹ McKee, Irish Church Libraries.

⁴² Many of the manuscripts of Father Healy's sermons survive in Maynooth, but they have not been translated into English and, given their phonetic form, require specialist knowledge to be able to read them.

⁴³ Mytum, 'The Language of Death in a Bilingual Community: 19th-century Memorials in Newport, Pembrokeshire', in R. Blench and M. Spriggs (eds), *Language and Archaeology* (London, 1999), pp. 211-30.

⁴⁴ E. Ó Doibhlin, 'Domhnach Mór: Part VI: The 18th and Early 19th Century', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 5.1 (1969), pp. 140-78, esp. pp. 153-54.

⁴⁵ Ó Doibhlin, Domhnach Mór: Part VI, 155.

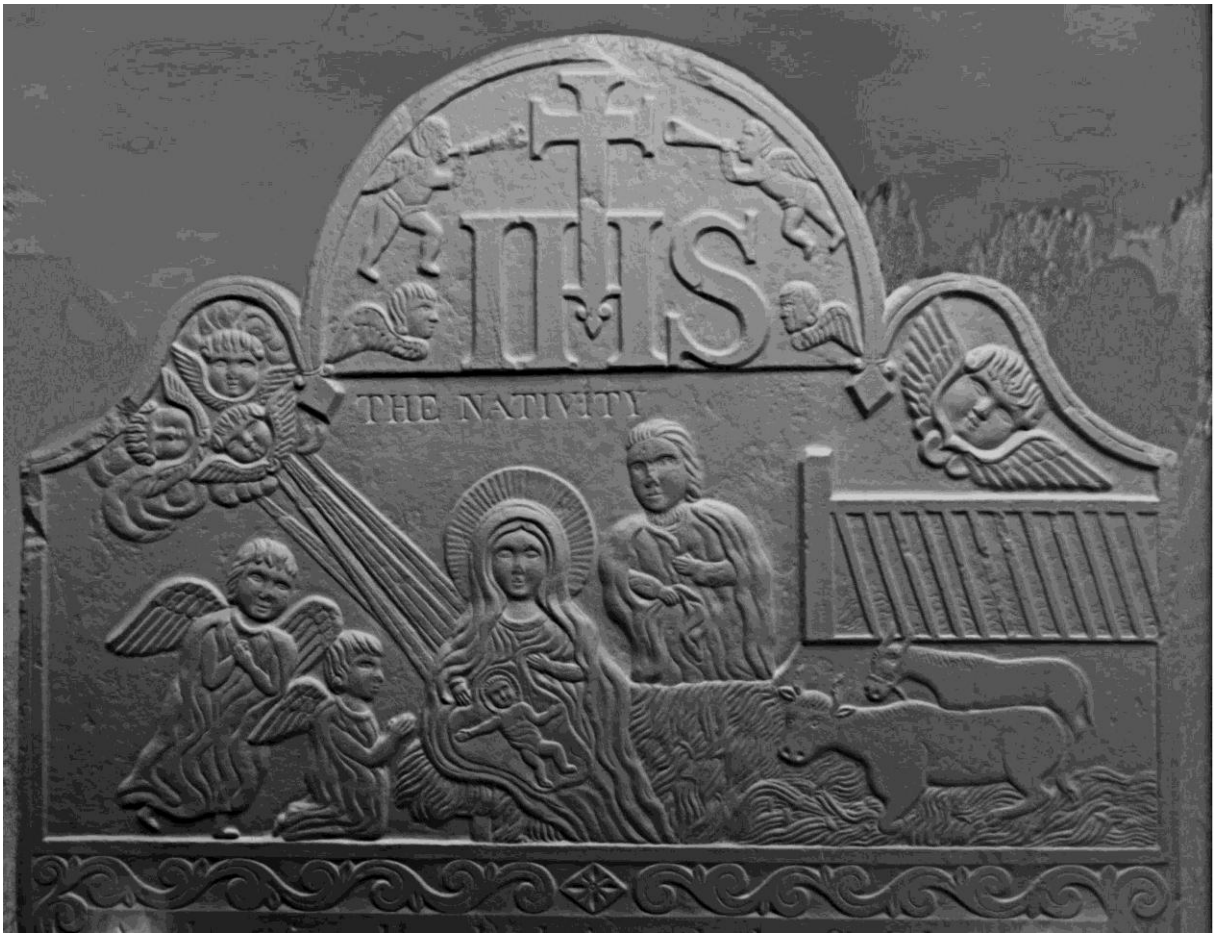


Fig. 1 Dromin

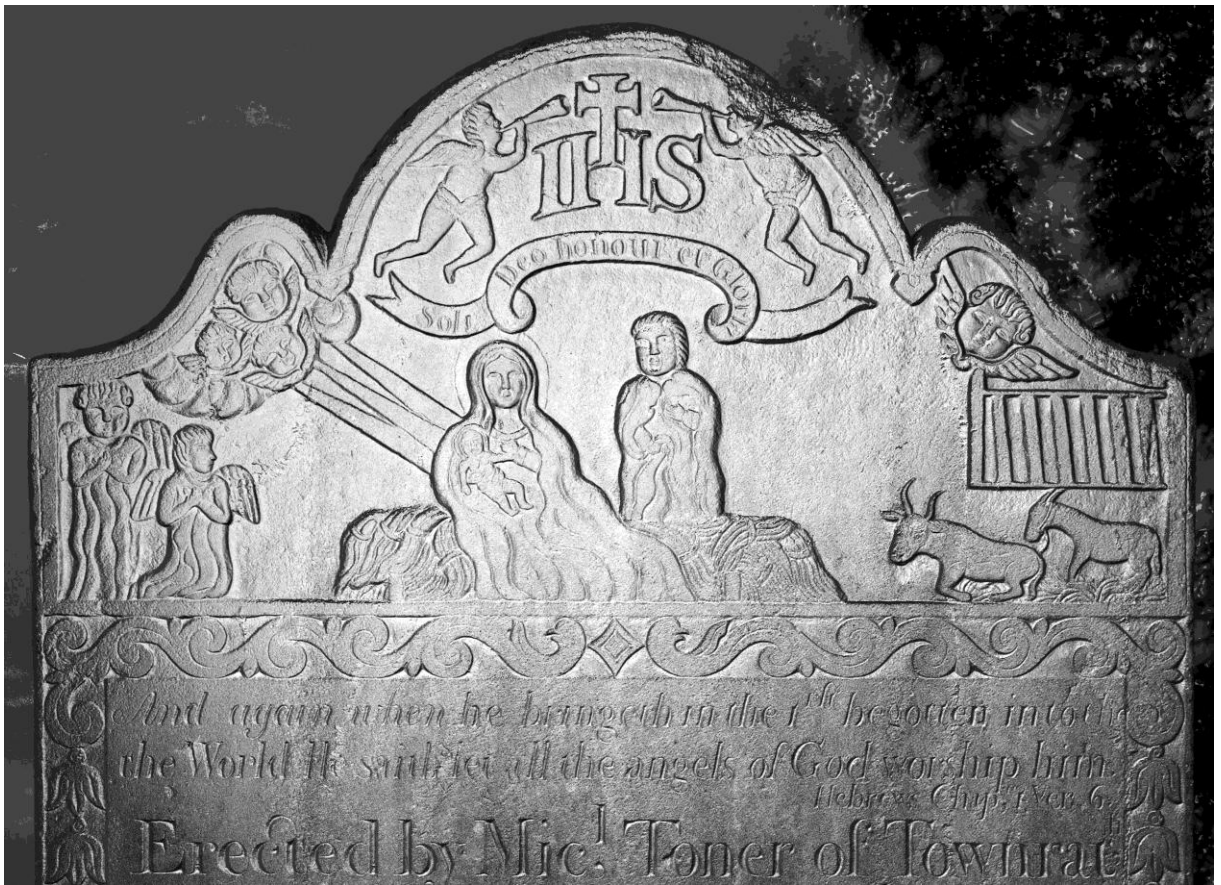


Fig. 2 Drogheda



Fig. 3 Termonfeckin 239

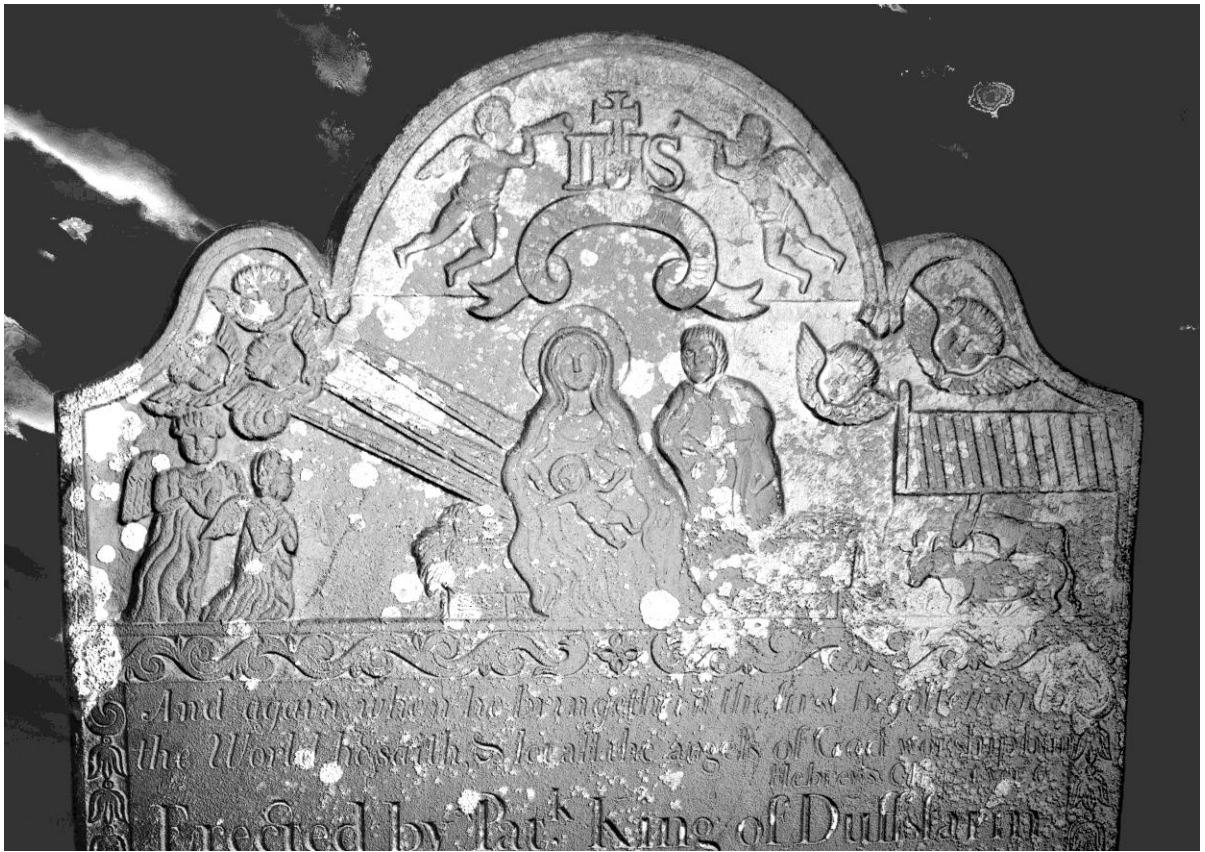
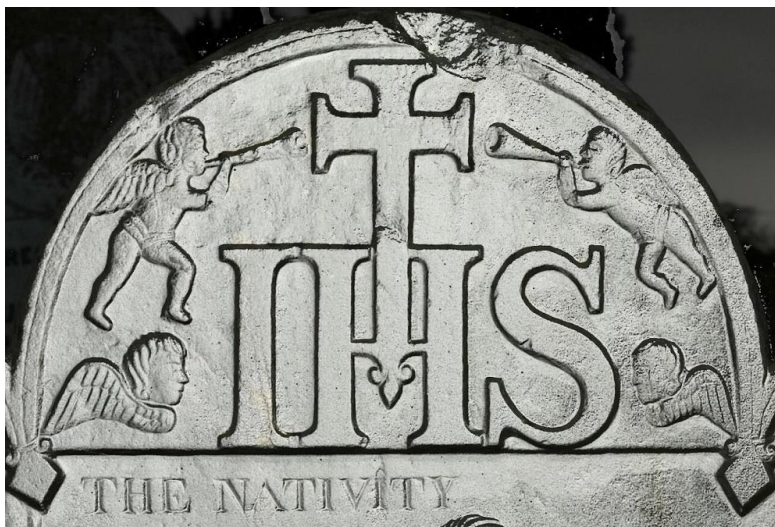


Fig. 4 Termonfeckin 148

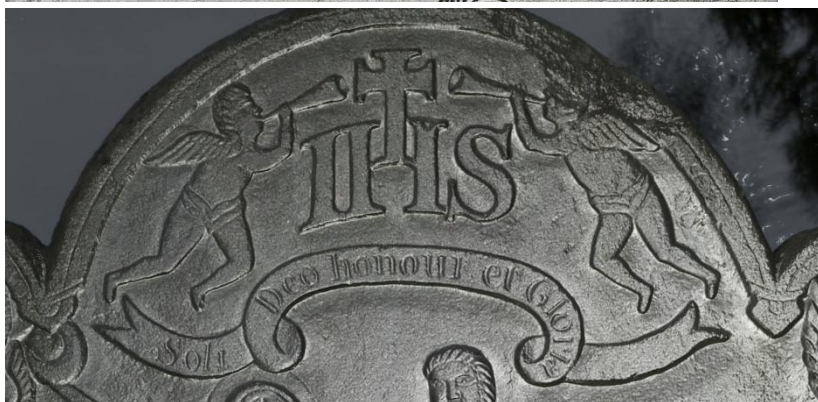


Fig. 5 Termonfeckin 036

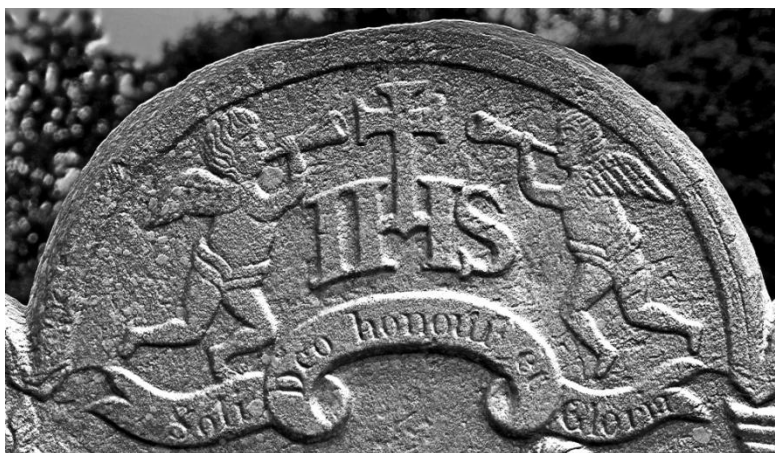
Fig. 6



a Dromin



b Drogheda



c Termonfeckin 239



d Termonfeckin 148

Fig. 7

a Dromin



b Drogheda



c Termonfeckin 148



d Termonfeckin 239

e Termonfeckin 036



a Dromin



b Drogheda



c Termonfeckin 239



d Termonfeckin 148



e Termonfeckin 036



Fig. 8

a Dromin



b Drogheda



c Termonfeckin 239



d Termonfeckin 148

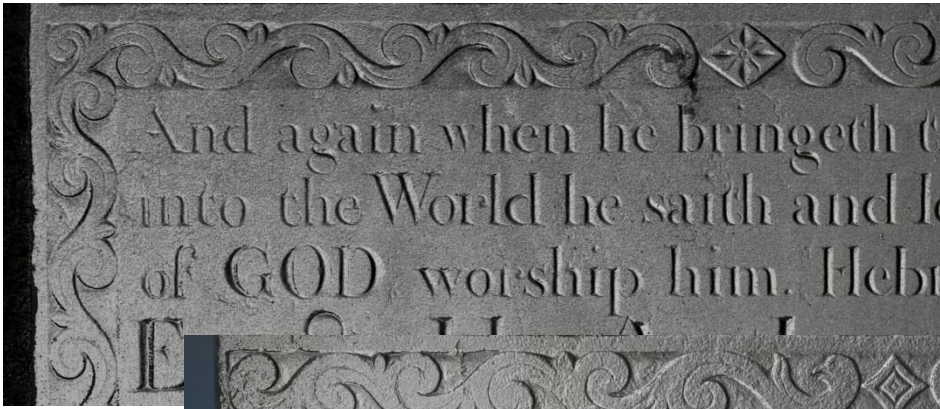


e Termonfeckin 036

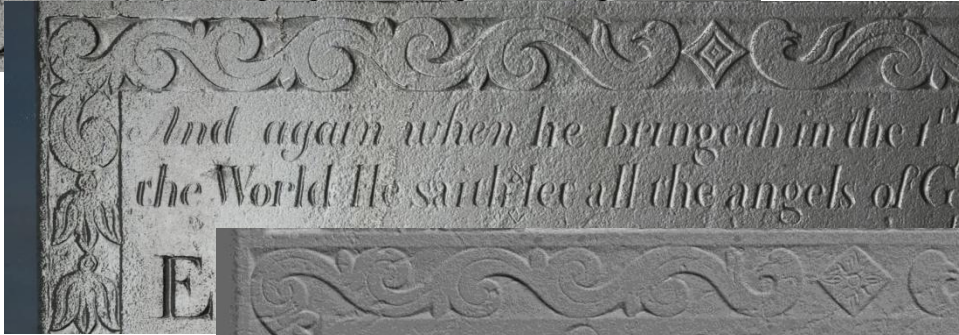


Fig. 9

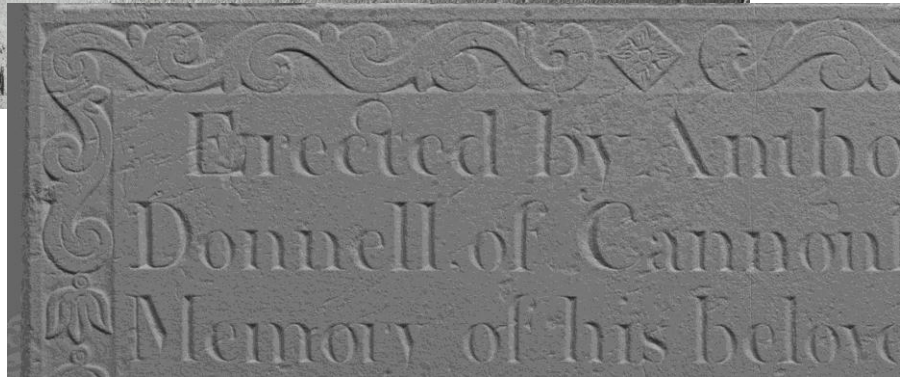
Fig. 10



a Dromin



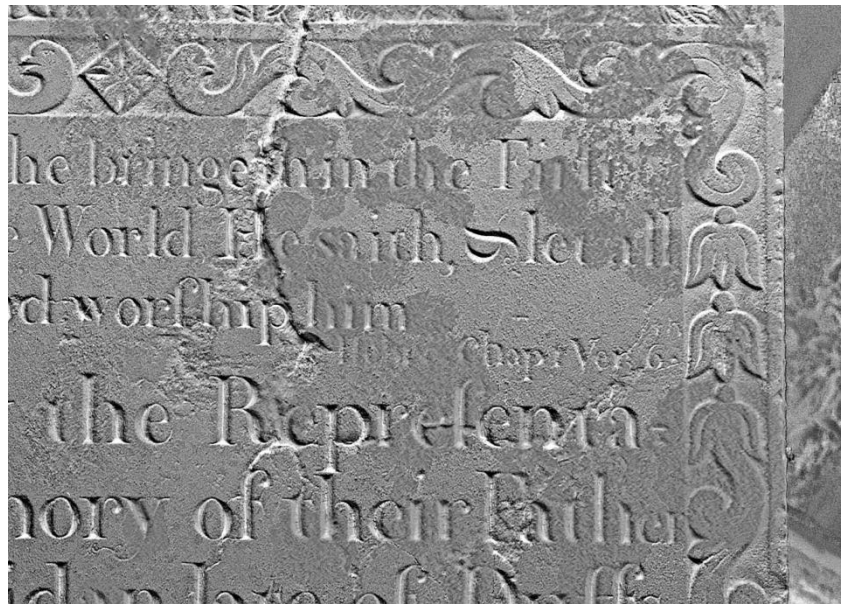
b Drogheda



c Termonfeckin 148



d Termonfeckin 239



e Termonfeckin 036



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13 a



Fig 13b



Fig. 14 a



Fig 14b