

BUILT IN REMEMBRANCE

MAUSOLEA IN ULSTER

Written and illustrated by JAMES STEVENS CURL



1—THE MAUSOLEUM AT DOWNHILL, DESIGNED BY SHANAHAN AFTER THE TOMB OF THE JULII AT ST RÉMY



2—THE TEMPLETON MAUSOLEUM AT CASTLE UPTON, COUNTY ANTRIM, BY ROBERT ADAM, 1789.

In the 4th century BC Queen Artemisia had a great tomb built for her husband, Mausolus, at Halicarnassus. All roofed buildings for the dead are named after this structure, and Ulster is rich in spectacular 18th- and early-19th-century mausolea, mostly found in burial grounds attached to churches and some in cemeteries divorced from ecclesiastical buildings. A few are in the grounds of great houses, and two of these stand out by their quality.

Frederick Hervey, fourth Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry (1730-1803), was one of the greatest builders of his day. Downhill was

his largest building project planned for the site on the headlands of north Derry. This great house had magnificent grounds and views, and the composition of house, site, prospects, Mussenden Temple, and mausoleum was to the 18th-century eye truly sublime.

The mausoleum is a free-standing structure near the ruins of the house, and was erected in memory of the Bishop's brother, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. It was started in 1779, and was modelled on the Roman Mausoleum of the Julii at St Rémy in Provence. The architect, Michael Shanahan, designed a version of the original which was considered "a beautifully sublime piece of architecture" at the time. On a square base was set an Ionic Order flanking arched openings of a Venetian window-type evolved by Wyatt. Above the entablature was a drum of Corinthian columns supporting a dome and an urn. Under this little circular temple was a marble statue of the Lord Lieutenant carved by John Van Nost (1714-80), the leading Dublin portrait-sculptor of the period. Unfortunately, the statue and cupola were victims of the Great Wind that devastated Ireland in 1839. The inscription around the frieze is by Virgil:

ILLE MEAS ERRARE BOVES UT CERNIS,
ET IPSUM
LUDERE QUAE VELLE CALAMO
PERMISIT AGRESTI

Today the fragment of this noble mausoleum is surrounded by unsightly fencing, and has overhead power lines sited near it.

Equally superb in quality, but this time complete, is the Templeton mausoleum at Castle Upton near Templepatrick, in Co. Antrim. It is a supremely refined work by Robert Adam of 1789, erected by the Hon. Mrs Upton in memory of the Rt. Hon. Arthur Upton. This serene design is basically a rectangular roofed structure with a façade treated as a grand arched entrance flanked by niches. Medallions, plaques, urns, sarcophagi and garlands add to the funereal character of the edifice.

Though fine in themselves, these two beautiful examples of funerary architecture are perhaps placed in the shade by the truly astonishing collection of mausolea in the churchyard of Knockbreda, Co. Down. These



3—THE RAINEY MAUSOLEUM IN KNOCKBREDA. (Right) 4—THE GREG MAUSOLEUM OF THE 1790s AT KNOCKBREDA, CO. DOWN





5—THE STEPHENSON MAUSOLEUM. KILBRIDE. CO. ANTRIM

monuments were erected in the last two decades of the 18th century by various wealthy landowners and merchants of the Belfast area. They are square on plan and have elegant arrangements of slender columns and fine entablatures. The superstructures, however, are truly original, being crowned with urns and obelisks, pyramids and domes.

The Knockbreda mausolea comprise the finest group of such structures in Ulster, and probably in the whole of the British Isles. The most elaborate mausoleum in the group is the Greg monument of the 1790s, while the Waddell Cunningham Douglas tomb of the same period, with its pile-up of Adamesque motifs, urns and pyramids, runs it a close second. These sumptuous mausolea are surrounded by fine memorials. Nearby is the Rainey tomb, a perfectly proportioned building of the same period, crowned by four pyramids, an octagonal cap with concave sides, and a capping urn. All these Knockbreda mausolea appear to be by the same hand.

Other mausolea, though less distinguished, exist in some numbers in the old Clifton Graveyard in Belfast. In 1774 the Earl of Donegall gave the ground on which the Charitable Institution was built together with 19 acres of land for a "New Burying Ground" to replace the insanitary and overcrowded churchyard of St George in the High Street. This new cemetery was enlarged in 1819, and was unattached to a church. It is surrounded by walls, and elaborate tombs are built around the perimeter. The Belfast Charitable Society operated the cemetery, which was a fashionable place of burial. The Batts, the McCrackens, Lord Kelvin's father, the whiskey distillers Dunville, and the Lukes were among those buried there.

It is in Clifton Graveyard that we find a type of tomb derived from funerary architecture of ancient Rome, with a truncated obelisk surmounting a small rectangular mausoleum. The Luke vault, a distinguished design in sandstone, is one example, although there is a similar building of gault bricks now much overgrown in the cemetery. This graveyard also contains the elaborate high Victorian Gothic mausoleum of the Dunville family.

The neo-Classical type of tomb exemplified by the Luke vault is also found in the tiny churchyard of Desertcreat in Co. Tyrone. The Greer family mausoleum is a sophisticated building with a strongly Egyptian flavour

dating from about 1830. The Greers lived in Tullylagan House, from whose grounds came the stone for the building. The sides of the mausoleum are battered and are capped by an Egyptian cornice. Above are steps that support a stumpy obelisk and a sarcophagus.

A clue to the identity of the architect of a collection of mausolea in North Derry may be obtained from the neo-Classicism of Seaforde House, possibly by John Hargrave, who designed Drenagh House near Limavady. The Beresford and Conn mausolea of the 1830s and '40s in the churchyard of Christ Church, Limavady, are slightly reminiscent of the gates at Seaforde in their detail, while at Ballykelly, at Walworth Old Church, stands the Cather Mausoleum, obviously by the same hand as the Limavady tombs. The Cather mausoleum has shallow pediments and bold acroteria with anthemion motifs and other details very like the Limavady designs and the gates at Seaforde.

Yet not far from Walworth, in Tamlaghtfinlagan Parish churchyard, stands the charming Gothic Gage family vault, a low rectangular building with crocketed finials. The first burial in the Gage mausoleum was in 1882, and the building appears to date from the 1870s, by which time Gothic was becoming almost respectable in Ulster. The church at Tamlaghtfinlagan was built by the Bishop of Derry in 1795 to designs attributed to Shanahan.

Different again is the churchyard of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterians at Stream Street, Downpatrick. This contains several remarkable tombs of decidedly classical flavour. The inspirations of the rectangular mausolea with their high concave-sided pyramidal caps were obviously the tombs of the Kedron Valley near Jerusalem, and certain elements of tomb design in Petra. Other tombs, shaped like wartime Nissen-huts, are found in Downpatrick.

All the mausolea mentioned so far have had origins in classical precedent or in Gothic forms. The astonishingly exotic Stephenson mausoleum (Fig 5) in the tiny Presbyterian churchyard of Kilbride in Co. Antrim is quite different. It is a miniature Taj Mahal, complete with dome, pointed arches and pinnacles. The Stephensons had connections with India, and this fact is celebrated in the extraordinary tomb on an Ulster hillside. Not far from Kilbride, at Duneane Presbyterian churchyard, is the

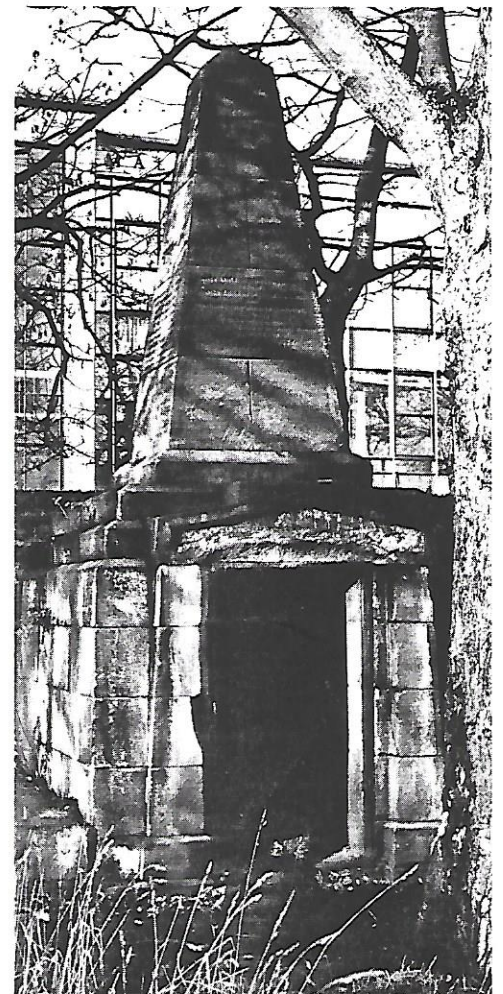
tomb designed by John Carey in memory of his father. The cast-iron railings incorporate a disturbingly surrealist array of interlocking arms and hands, and a finger points hopefully heavenwards above a weird feature of Gothic and classical motifs. Bombastic and pious inscriptions record the life and lineage of Carey, who rescued the heathen of the far-flung corners of the Empire for his brand of Christianity.

The Carey tomb is almost hamfisted in its design. Very different is the full-blown work of Victorian funerary architecture found in the Murland vault at Clough Presbyterian churchyard, Co. Down. The giant "Order" of consoles instead of pilasters or columns; the massive vermiculated rustication of the entrance; and the shrouded urns with the remnants of neo-Classical form give an indication of the "fat atmosphere" of funerals so typical of the 19th century.

Not all 19th-century mausolea were so confidently handled, however, as the somewhat unconvinced tetrastyle temple of the Burges mausoleum in St Michael's churchyard at Castlecaulfeild demonstrates. The straight columns, coarse caps and over-heavy pediment suggest the country mason's interpretation of a dying language of classicism. Yet classicism survived in Ulster until the 20th century, as many tombstones, funerary monuments, churches and halls so amply demonstrate.

The variety and sheer quality of design found in Ulster mausolea compare favourably with other areas in the British Isles, and French and Scottish neo-Classicism undoubtedly influenced these designs; fluent examples can be found incongruously lurking in the shades of ruined walls and tiny country churches.

Ulster is a land of surprises, but her mausolea are among the most interesting of all her many riches. They are not well known, and not sufficiently appreciated.



6—THE LUKE MAUSOLEUM IN THE CLIFTON GRAVEYARD, BELFAST. A neo-Classical design with a stumpy obelisk