Wanlip churchyard, Leicestershire. A draped and garlanded urn with ram head handles (Another detail of a previously illustrated 1776/1782 headstone at Wanlip).

Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire. Urn with snake handles. 1784 headstone signed "Hind Junr". The banner reads "As in Adam all die even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. XV. 22."

Stoughton churchyard, Leicestershire. Later C18th incised urn.

Quorn Baptist Chapel graveyard. 1804 urn carved (almost certainly) by Benjamin Pollard (see Note j). This seems to be a very unusual style of urn, with Harpy-like figures for handles. (Photo taken with flash due to the position of this headstone).

St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester. A urn of 1814. (See 98 for full view of headstone).

Shenton churchyard, Leicestershire. Detail of a headstone by Priestnal of Barwell, 1820.

Burton Overy churchyard, Leicestershire C18th. Urn with sprays of foliage.

Chalice (below)

Swithland churchyard, Leicestershire. Headstone (presumably carved by one of the Hind family) of Henry Hind, died 1801 (his will calls him "Slate Merchant"). Chalice inscribed "The Seal of the new Covenant", Cross and anchor. The banner reads: "Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life".

Other Symbolism

Wymeswold churchyard, Leicestershire. 1784 headstone by Winfield (see also 92).

This headstone of 1784, carved by Winfield of Wymeswold (and another here, of 1787, with a crowned skull) has a scene which almost certainly shows the influence of published books on the mason. An arm appears from Heavenly clouds, hand holding a pair of scales. Although the slate is slightly damaged, the meaning is clear. The "heavier" scale pan, which holds an ouroboros, is inscribed "Eternity". The "lighter" pan contains a globe, which is certainly inscribed "Lighter than Vanity" on the 1787 headstone. This symbolism probably derives from Quarles (105). On the ground lies a skull inscribed "Mortality". The source for the scales held by a hand emerging from Heavenly clouds was probably Plate XXXVIII in the Second Book of George Withers' "Emblemes", a work published originally in 1635 (108). This carving is a pictorial representation of an idea commonly found on the Swithland Slate headstones of this period: the futility of earthly, as opposed to Heavenly, rewards.

On essentially the same theme is a representation (now unfortunately rather poorly preserved), in St Margaret's churchyard, Leicester. Here, Death, in the form of a skeleton, offers a globe (i.e. the whole world) to a man lying in his

sick bed. On the wall of the sickroom is a clock. The message again is that Man can choose between the here-and-now of wealth and possession, and the eternal rewards of Heaven. This is a visual realization of the following passage from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter VIII, Verse 36:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

St Margaret's churchyard, Leicester. 1776 headstone. Death offers the world to a man lying in his sick bed. (Note the clock on the wall with carefully-carved Roman numerals). This is unfortunately one of a sizeable number of headstones in this churchyard which have suffered more than most Swithland Slates due to industrial pollution in Victorian times and on into the earlier C20th. This more dramatic style of symbolism in which action involving a human is used to enhance the message previously conveyed largely by static symbols seems to have developed during the 1770's.

The idea of the finality of death in the absence of faith is probably the meaning of a scene which occurs on a number of late C18th and early C19th slates, including examples at All Saints, Leicester; Belgrave, Leicester (57); Kibworth and Hathern (both Leicestershire); Clifton Campville, Staffordshire and in a somewhat different rendering at Welford, Northamptonshire (see Note q).

Belgrave churchyard, Leicester. This 1787 headstone (one of two similar examples here, the second of 1824, with rather less-accomplished figures) carries a scene which also occurs elsewhere. (Certain features of these various depictions suggest the use of the same source image rather than execution by the same carver). A centrally-placed closed urn (symbolic of death) is flanked by Father Time and Hope (symbolized by her anchor). Hope offers the Crown of Life. Father Time offers what is almost certainly a snuffed candle, another symbol of death. (The snuffer carries a small loop of the same sort as that by which Death holds the snuffer in [39 lower]). The verse on the tomb plinth is adapted from Thessalonians, Chapter IV, Verse 13.

Miscellaneous

Two examples of headstones with heraldic decoration can be seen in the churchyard of All Saints, Leicester (see 58 upper). Nearby in the churchyard of the early C18th "Great Meeting" Unitarian chapel (then Presbyterian) in East Bond Street, Leicester (well-hidden in the very heart of city centre) is the Swithland Slate headstone of Captain Nathaniel Spencer who died at Worksop (Notts.) "on his March home" 4th March 1783. This headstone, signed "Cockshaw Sculp." shows military equipment (58 lower, see Note n). (A very fine slate panel of 1765 depicting military trophies can also be seen on the tomb of Lord Rollo in the nearby churchyard of St Margaret's).

All Saints churchyard, Leicester (? 1760's: date not visible, but a similar headstone here is 1767).

"Great Meeting" Chapel churchyard, Leicester (1783).

MOURNING

St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester. St Mary de Castro has possibly the best collection of accomplished Swithland Slate carvings of human figures. This classically elegant figure of Mourning embracing a flower-garlanded urn was carved by W. Kirk of Narborough (1816). This massive slate must approach 6 feet in height. The Cross, anchor and (presumably) Bible give this scene a more noticeable religious dimension, which is present in (60), but only in the verse inscribed below the urn. In the same churchyard is a very elegant figure of Faith, by Kirk, of 1821.

Skeffington, Leicestershire. Late C18th. This is probably the finest of a number of quite similar figures of Mourning to be seen in a number of east Leicestershire churchyards. She is shown embracing an urn, symbolic of the deceased. At nearby Billesdon is a different figure (139 upper).

PHEASANTS   East Bridgford churchyard, Nottinghamshire. Pheasants carved by Wood of Bingham. Wood was fond of depicting animals on his headstones (see also 129 upper, 134 lower).

CADUCEUS   All Saints churchyard, Leicester. 1754 headstone signed by H. Hind. A caduceus, (a snake-entwined, winged rod), symbol of Hermes/Mercury, unusual on Swithland headstones. This classical god conducted the dead to the underworld, which may explain its occurrence on a headstone along with other mortality symbolism. (The caduceus appears in some of the illustrations in Bickham's "Universal Penman". See also 133 upper).

MASONIC SYMBOLS   St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester. 1837, signed by Mortin.

5) Some Headstones

Humberstone churchyard, Leicester. A 1711 headstone of engaging rusticity.
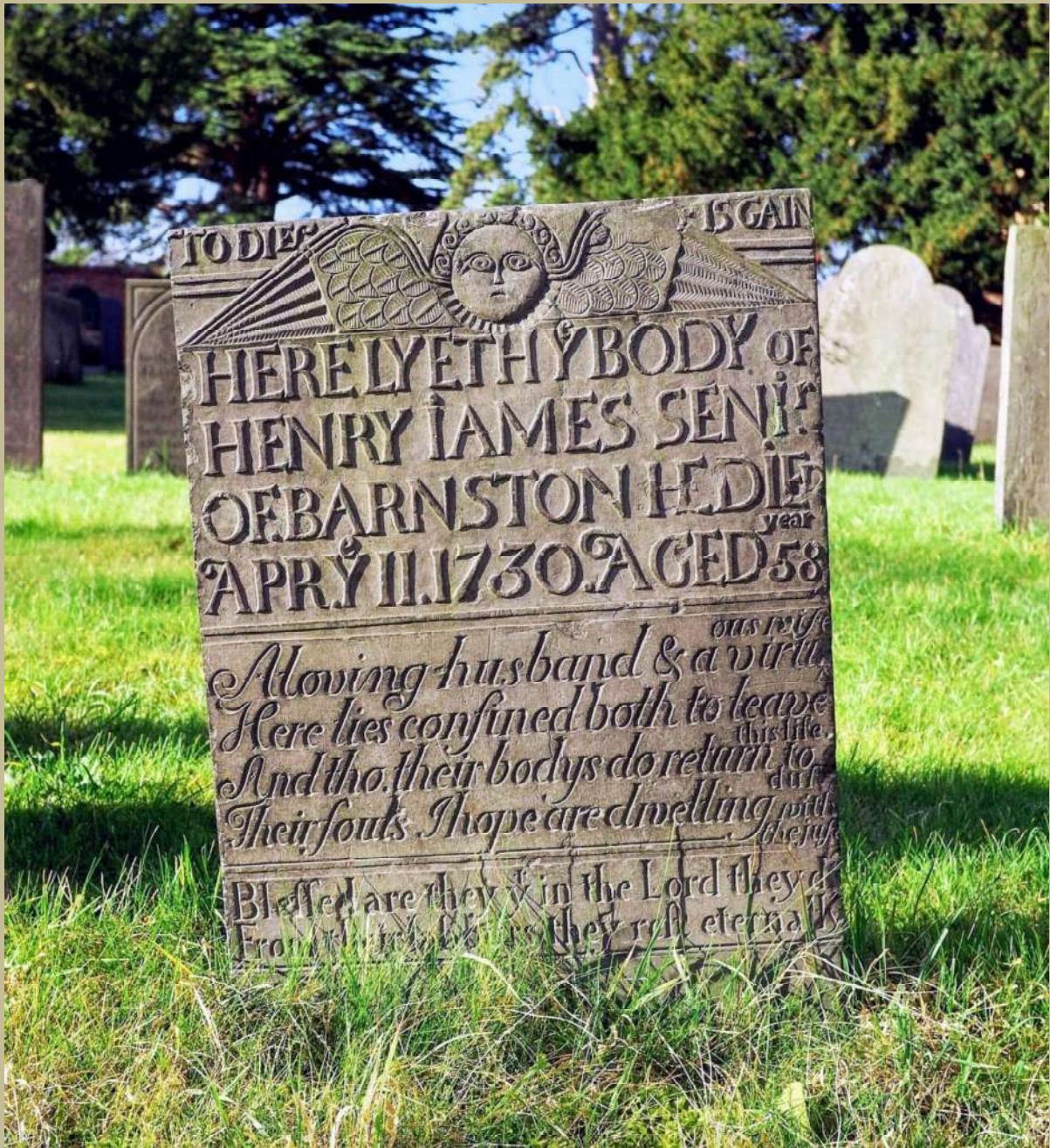
Kirby Bellars churchyard, Leicestershire. 1721 slate with unusual decorative elements (upper left is what seems to be a stylised animal head), and showing a relish for different lettering styles.

Wymeswold, Leicestershire. 1722/28 headstone signed by William Charles. "Belvoirish" angels.

Langar churchyard, Nottinghamshire. A "Belvoir Angel" headstone of 1730 with some of the lettering cut in relief in a way which was common on some of these headstones and probably inspired by wood-carving (carver unknown). The biblical quotation "To Die Is Gain" (from Philippians) was commonly used on some "Belvoir Angel" headstones. "Belvoir Angel" headstones do in fact display a considerable amount of variation, especially in terms of the degree of elaboration of the lettering, some showing considerable calligraphic refinement.

Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire. 1730 headstone. Here, the husband was not commemorated in stone until some 36 years after his death. This headstone was clearly all carved after the death of his wife.

Stanford on Soar, Nottinghamshire. 1733 headstone signed "W. Charles Fecit". There are numerous headstones by W. Charles to a similar design (e.g. also in his native village churchyard at Wymeswold). Mortality symbols: hourglass and ouroboros, scythe and book with wording "Memento Mori" ("remember you must die"), skull, femur. Since there is no "Junior" attached to the signature, this was presumably William Charles who died in 1736. His son, also William, had been born in 1708 and it is certainly his work which can be seen in 76, 77. Dynasties of carvers were quite common, e.g. the Hinds and Pollards and it is not always clear which family member carved which headstones.

Swithland churchyard, Leicestershire. 1733/1734/1754 headstone with winged cherub heads. The right-hand panel was carved some twenty years before the left.
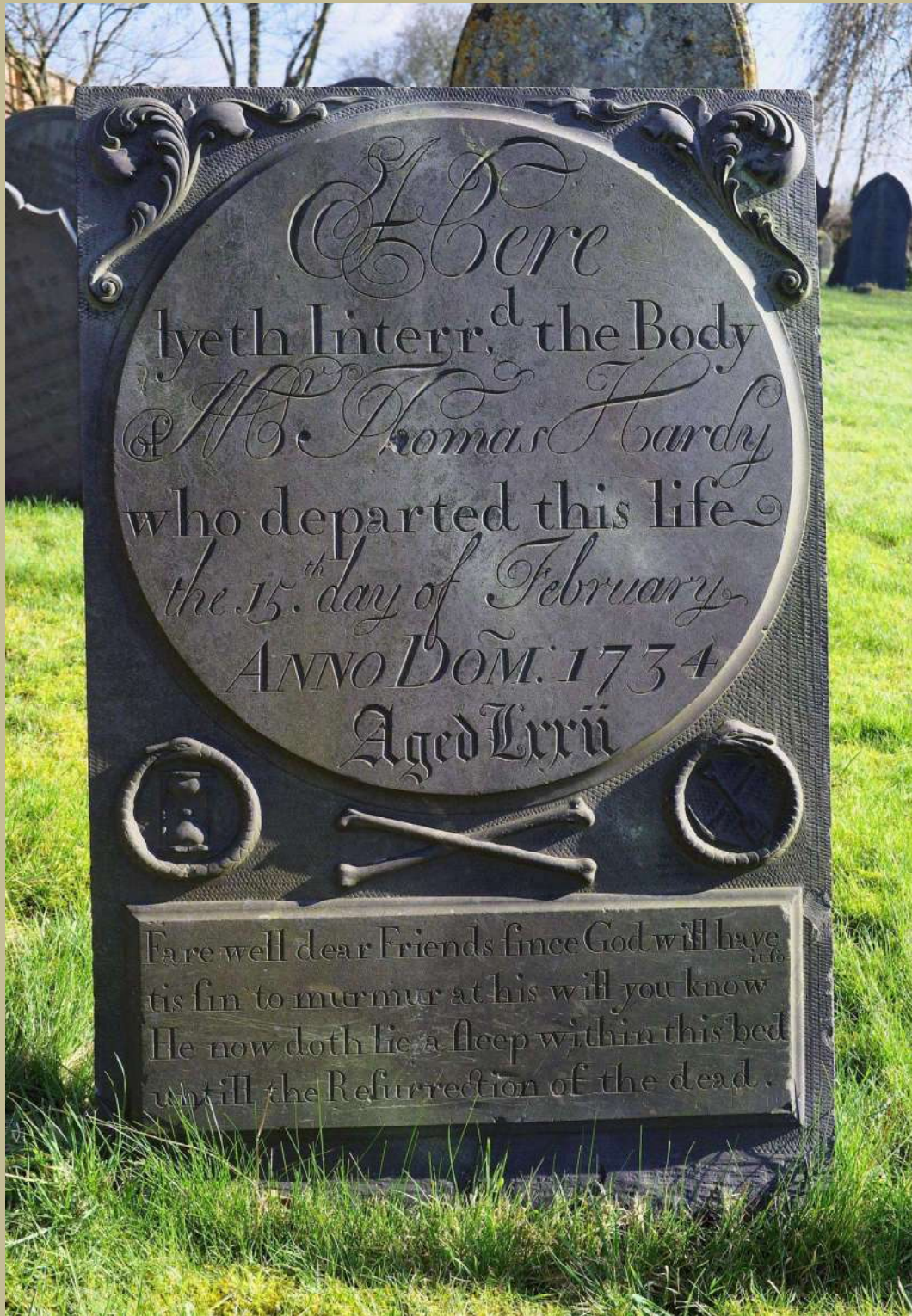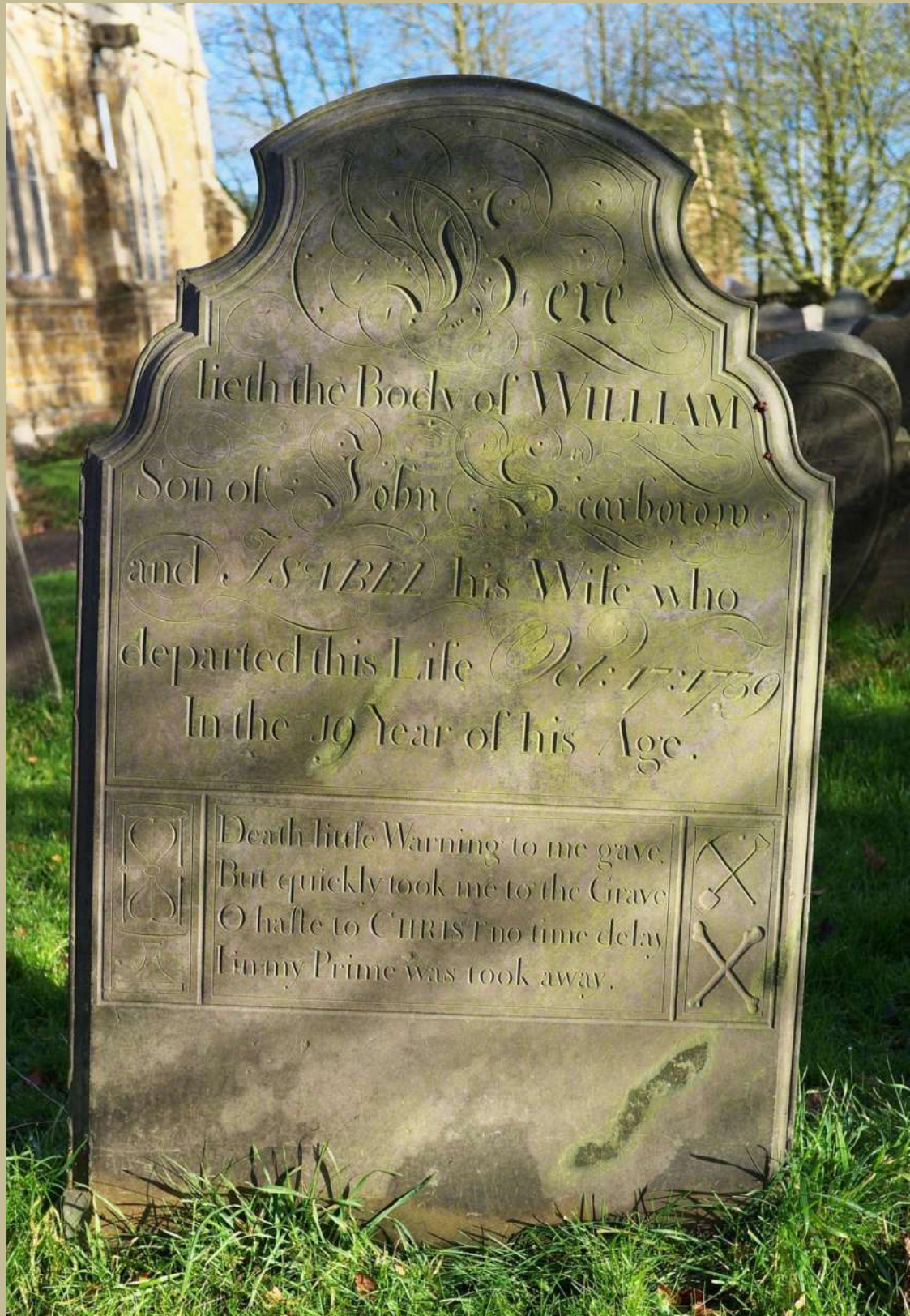
Gaddesby churchyard, Leicestershire. 1734 headstone (carver unknown). The mortality symbolism depicted here is essentially the same as that seen in photo (66) of a near-contemporary headstone.

Anstey churchyard, Leicestershire. One of the Heard headstones (see also 131). This churchyard, just at the edge of Charnwood Forest, does not figure in the listing of churchyards in Frederick Burgess's "English Churchyard Memorials", but it has a large collection of Swithland Slate headstones and several are especially interesting, not least, this example dated 1735/6. It carries a Biblical quote *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"*. Later in the century, the Biblical chapter and verse numbers were normally inscribed as well. The form of dating, seen here and on numerous other headstones, is known as dual dating. Until 1752 the new administrative year began on March 25th (Lady Day). Therefore although the historic year 1736 began on January 1st, February 27th 1736 was in the administrative year 1735/36. The 25th March following this February date was simply written 25th March 1736, and dates were then written in this format for all subsequent days until the end of December 1736. The following day, January 1st, was written as January 1st 1736/37.

Tilton on the Hill churchyard, Leicestershire. 1739 headstone.

Melton Mowbray churchyard, Leicestershire. An unusual 1741 Swithland Slate with rich relief carving including scrollwork, and very elaborate calligraphy.

Little Dalby, Leicestershire. 1745/1747 Swithland Slate headstone (carver unknown). This is a large and very thick slate with an especially rough-hewn back to which the incised calligraphy and the carefully delineated cranial sutures of the skulls provide a great contrast. Mortality symbols, top left and right, with winged cherub heads at centre. The churchyard is situated on a hilltop amid rolling countryside and clearly this headstone, like the overwhelming majority of C18th finished Swithland Slate headstones, would have been transported by horse-drawn cart or wagon to its destination.

Rothwell churchyard, Northamptonshire. This very fine headstone (covered here in dew) is the work of Samuel Turner of Market Harborough, 1750 (see also 133 lower). Like the headstones from Melton (71), Little Dalby (72), and Tilton on the Hill (74), from this same mid-C18th period, the carving of the symbols and decorative elements is in a higher relief than was generally used later. All of these headstones also show highly elaborate incised "writing master" calligraphy, none more so than this example. Samuel Turner's own autobiographical headstone is illustrated in J. C. Davies's "Harborough Slate Engravers".
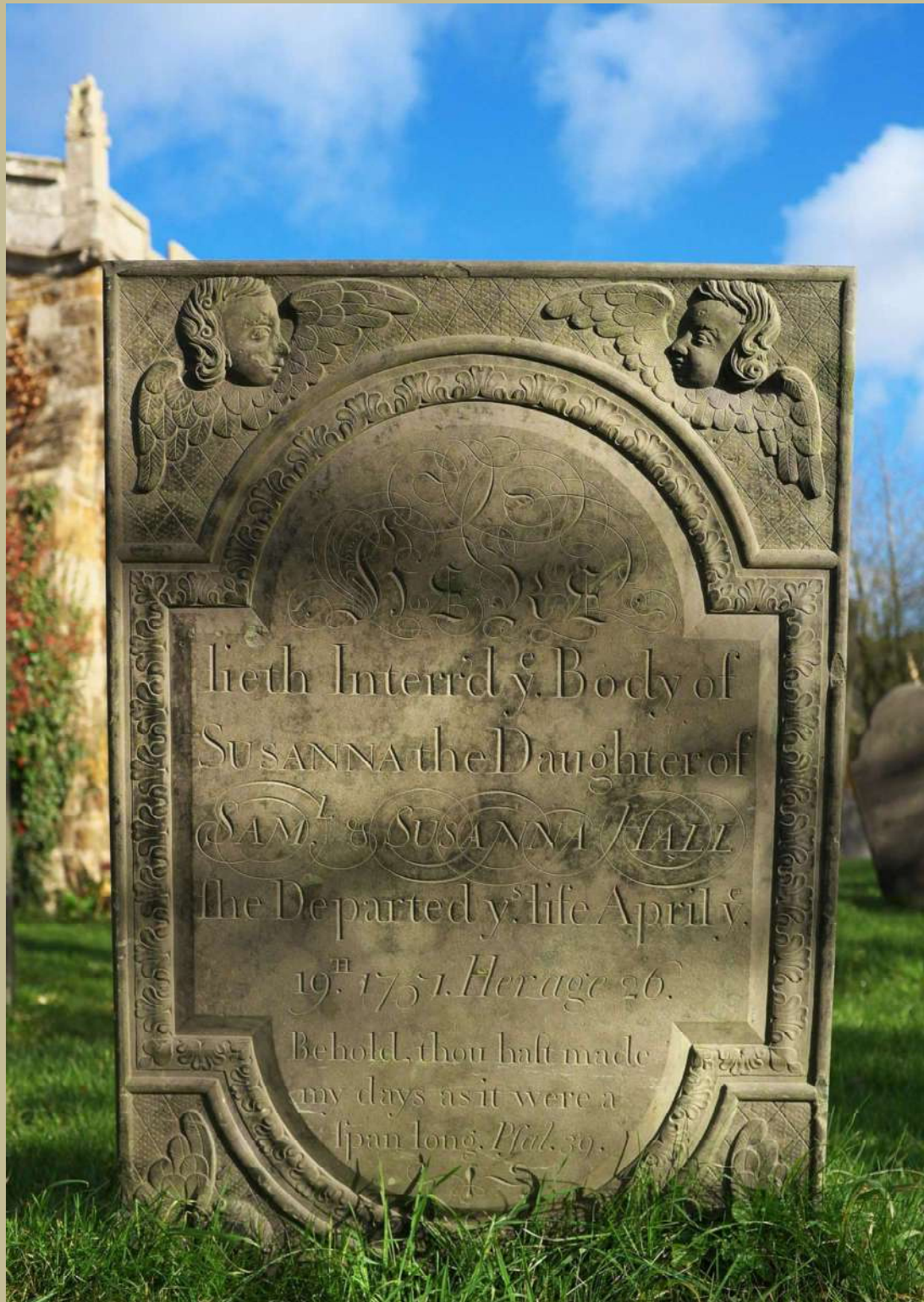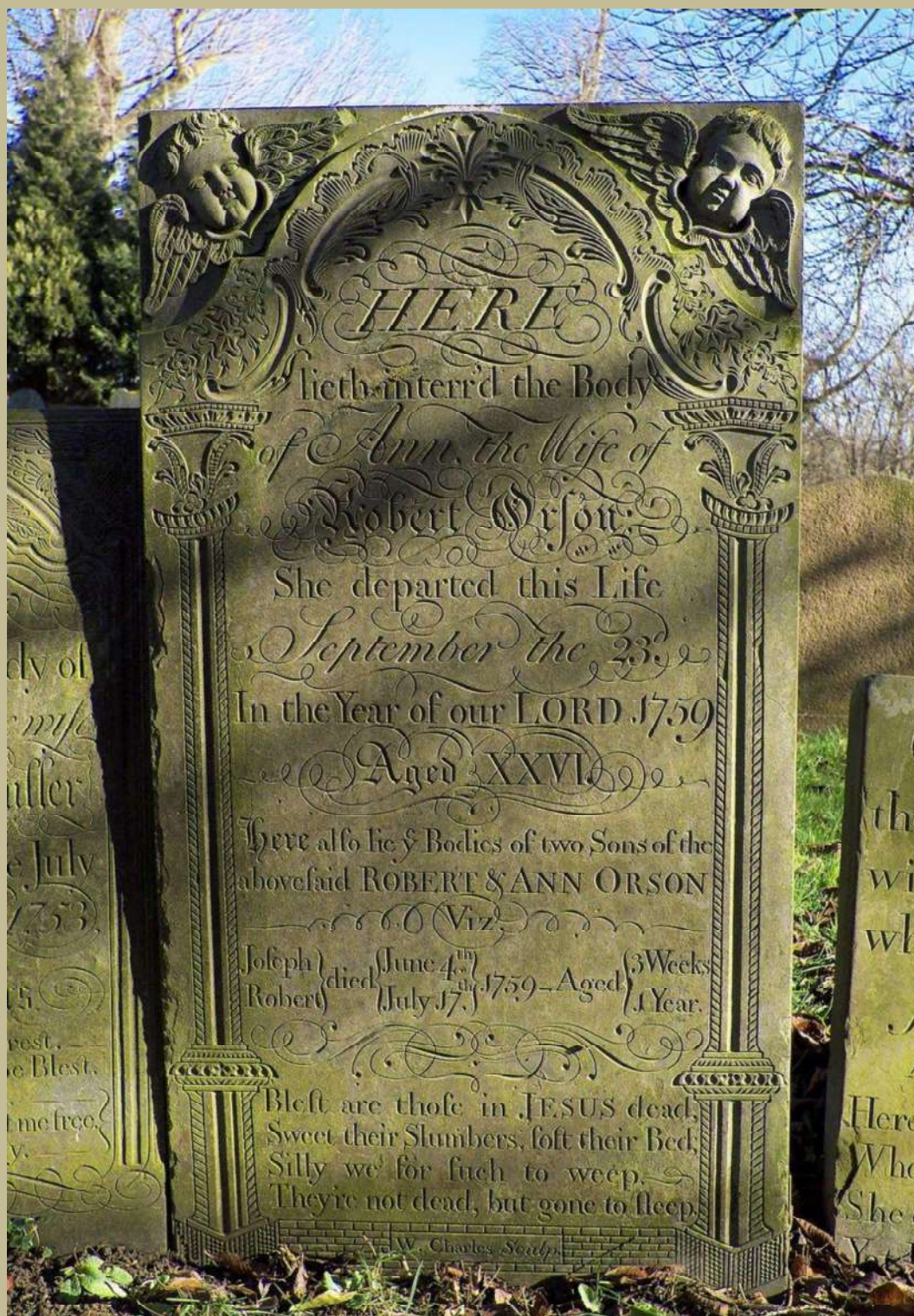
Tilton on the Hill churchyard, Leicestershire. 1751 headstone (carver unknown).

Hoby churchyard, Leicestershire. 1758 headstone in a Rococo-Gothic style. This work is signed "J.S." This is James Sparrow of Radcliffe on Trent, Nottinghamshire, who carved another headstone here at Hoby (80). His work may also be seen at Syston, a short distance from Hoby (Burgess, Plate 30).

Hickling churchyard, Nottinghamshire. 1759 headstone signed by (the younger) William Charles of Wymeswold.

Wymeswold churchyard, Leicestershire. A headstone of 1760/1774 carved by (the younger) William Charles of Wymeswold, commemorating members of his own family.
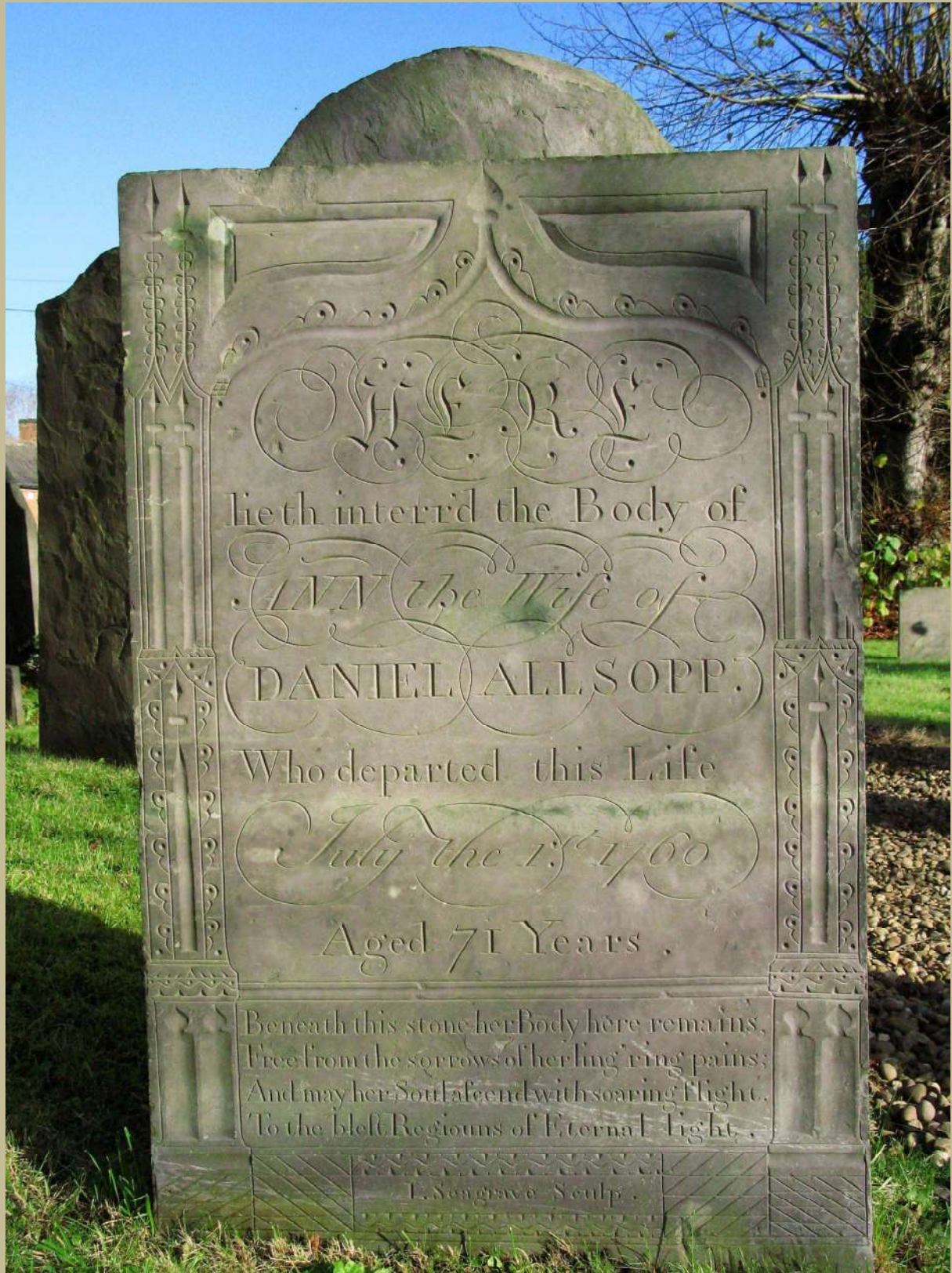
Hoby churchyard, Leicestershire. A headstone with Gothic ornamentation (and a flaming candle motif?), 1760, signed by J. Seagrave (John Seagrave of the neighbouring village of Frisby on the Wreake). The "Here" of the superscription is probably based on German script as illustrated in Bickham's "Universal Penman".

Whatton churchyard, Nottinghamshire. 1760 headstone signed by James Sparrow (of Radcliffe on Trent), to a mother and her (unnamed) baby daughter. The headstone was finally completed by Wood (Thomas Wood of Bingham) after the death of the husband some forty years later, in 1800. Note the fine winged cherub heads, hourglass and ouroboros of the 1760 design. (See Note o).
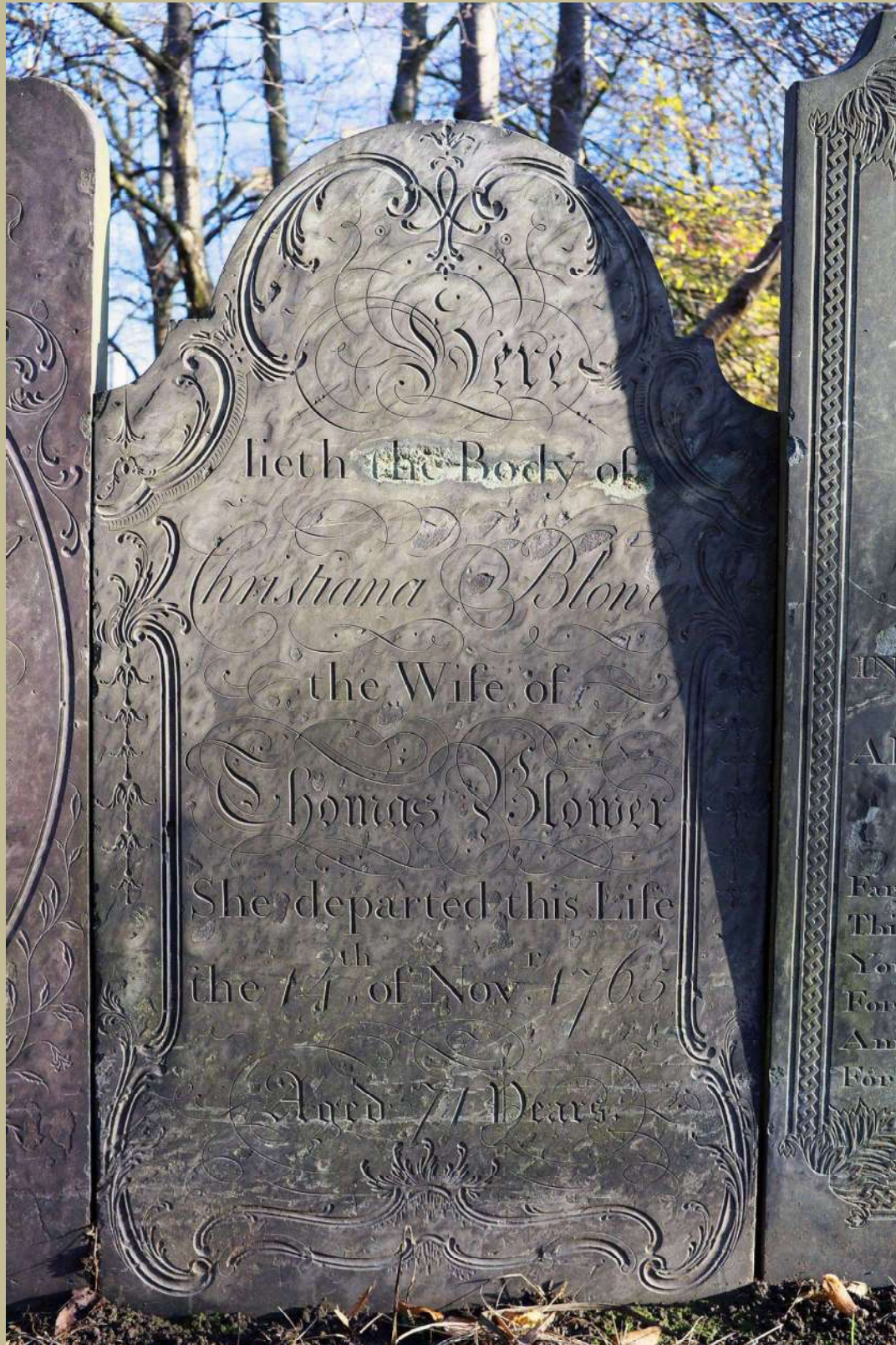
Hoby churchyard, Leicestershire. This headstone of 1762/1782/1789 is quite informative. It is to a wife who died in 1762, when the headstone was initially carved, but with the left hand panel left blank. The carver was "J.S." The same initials occur at Radcliffe on Trent, Nottinghamshire. This was James Sparrow of Radcliffe. The raw Swithland Slate was therefore carried to this Nottinghamshire village and then the finished headstone was carried to Hoby, back in Leicestershire. (If the "Belvoir Angel" headstones were carved near to Hickling, as has been suggested by Burgess, then this sort of movement would have applied to some of those headstones too). After the death of the husband in 1782 and of his second wife in 1789, their details were added, carved by a different mason, initials H.C. There are numerous instances (e.g. 79) where headstones carved by one mason were finished by a different carver after the later death of a spouse. Some double panelled headstones, which must have been intended to carry the details of a spouse, have one panel still blank.

The considerable distance to which some slates like this example were carried shows the extent to which a well-regarded mason's reputation could spread. Choice of mason was clearly a more complex matter than simply choosing the nearest local carver (see Note a).

St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester. 1765 Rococo-style headstone.
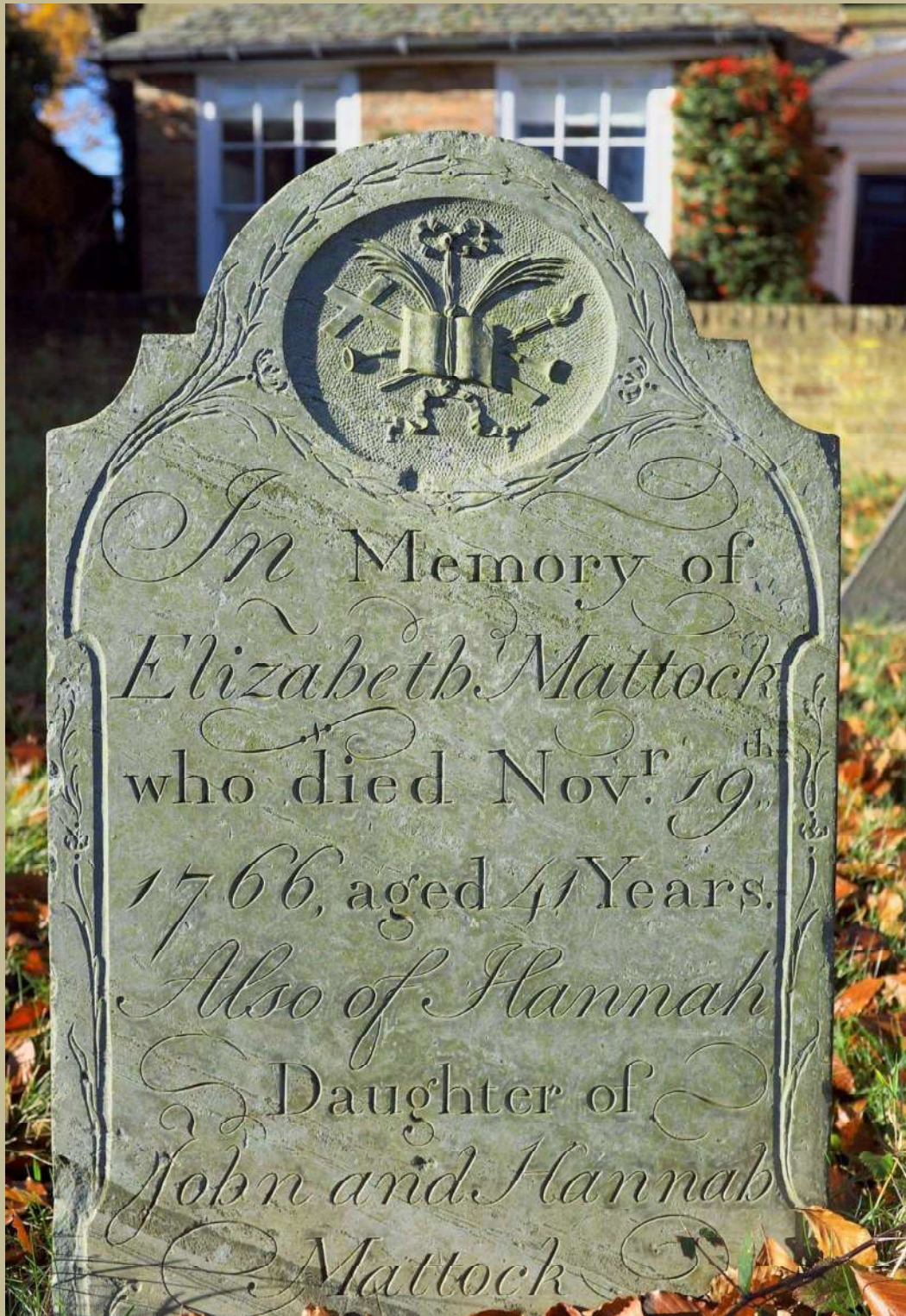
Burton Overy churchyard, Leicestershire. A fine headstone of 1766.

Twyford, Leicestershire. A 1774 headstone with a heavier style of carving than had become the norm by this time.

Seagrave churchyard, Leicestershire. 1768/1775 headstone carved by J. Winfield, a mason from nearby Wymeswold. Winfield carved a headstone which was sent as far as the Bunhill Fields non-conformist graveyard in London (158). On that headstone he signs "J. Winfield Wimeswould Leicestershire", presumably because he did not expect people in London to know of his home village and presumably he hoped to get more business from the London area.

Tilton on the Hill churchyard, Leicestershire. 1776 headstone signed by J. Edenborough (possibly from Great Dalby).

Wanlip churchyard, Leicestershire. 1775/1784 headstone carved and signed by Hind of Swithland. This unusually-coloured Swithland Slate carries very accomplished relief carving in the Adam style. By contrast, the reverse face is left very rough-hewn. The roundel contains what is almost certainly a depiction of Faith (she has her hand on the Holy Bible and sits beside the Cross), one of the three Theological Virtues (the others being Hope, frequently portrayed on Swithland Slate headstones of this period, e.g. by Hind at Thrussington, and Charity, also found in the later C18th [43]). Together with the increasing use of Biblical quotations, they point to the likely influence of the religious revival which has been linked to the spread of nonconformism.
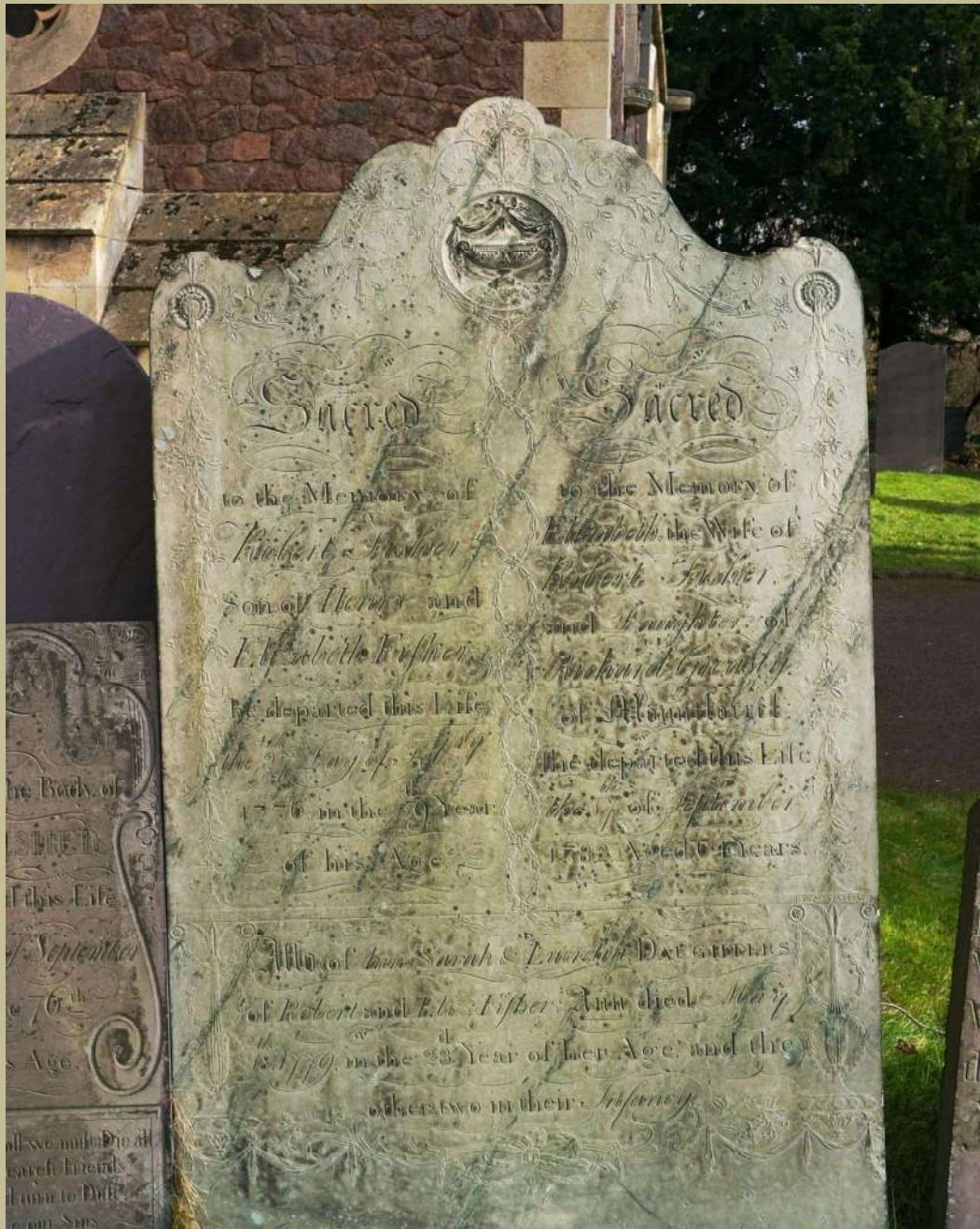
Wanlip churchyard, Leicestershire. 1775/1784 headstone carved and signed by H. Hind of Swithland. This unusually-coloured Swithland Slate carries very accomplished relief carving in the Adam style.

Wanlip churchyard, Leicestershire. 1776/1782 headstone, probably carved by Hind (the other headstone here which also carries very accomplished relief carving is signed by Hind of Swithland. Both headstones are also unusual, though different, in colour). This large headstone, with a rough back, has exceptionally delicate Adam-style decoration. The carving of the tendrils is so fine that it can only be seen on close examination and must have required a great deal of painstaking labour. This is possibly the most technically-accomplished example of Swithland Slate carving. (See also photos on pages 10, 11, 51, 89). The diagonal stripes seen here (and in some form on many other Swithland headstones) are most likely evidence of bedding planes in the slate (which has probably become more pronounced due to weathering over time). It is particularly noticeable on the Wanlip headstone in the preceding photos.

Wanlip churchyard, Leicestershire. 1776/1782 headstone (detail). The tendrils are extremely finely carved in shallow relief.

St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester city centre. Rococo style headstone (wearing a "winter coat" of green algae), 1781, signed by Bell, a Leicester engraver (Note p).

91

Kirby Muxloe churchyard, Leicestershire. Above: 1773 and 1771 headstones (carvers unknown), below: three more C18th headstones, 1775, 1769, and on the right, signed by Hind, 1784 (also 51).

Wymeswold, Leicestershire. 1784 headstone by Winfield of Wymeswold (see also 55).

Thrussington churchyard, Leicestershire. 1787 headstone (carver's signature not visible). This later C18th headstone carries beautiful lettering, an urn and floral decoration. The wording "Sacred To the Memory of" had become very common around this time. Contrast this lettering with the extreme elaboration of e.g. (19, 20, 73) and also with the generally much simpler lettering which had become common by 1830 (103). (This is wet with mist and lit by weak November sunlight.)

East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire. 1788 headstone signed by Wood of Bingham, "Carver and Engraver". Note that the "foot" of the headstone is left in a similar, rough state to the back. Some examples can be seen with practice letter carving at this (normally hidden) level.

Whatton churchyard, Nottinghamshire. 1797 headstone (possibly by Wood of Bingham). The decorative in-filling of some of the lettering, as in the deceased individual's name here, was a fashion around this time: see also the next photo.

Plungar churchyard, Leicestershire. 1802 headstone. The decorative in-filling of the lettering of "Sacred" is of a sort which was popular around this time. The strange letters seem to hark back to earlier models: the "c" is of an old form which looks like an "r" (which was certainly still in use around this time by clerks copying wills at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury).

Ragdale churchyard, Leicestershire. 1812 headstone carved by Pollard of Quorn. He used a considerable variety of shapes for the tops of his headstones.

St Mary de Castro churchyard, Leicester. An 1814 headstone (signature not visible) to a husband and wife who both died in November of that year. The epitaphs are interesting.

Stanford on Soar churchyard, Nottinghamshire. 1815 headstone signed by Roworth, a Wymeswold engraver. The angel is possibly indebted to the work of Benjamin Pollard (28 lower).

In memory of
MARY COX
Daughter of
FRANCIS & MARY COX;
who died
November 16th 1816,
AGED
21 Years.

When the Archangel's trump shall sound,
And souls to bodies join,
What crowds below would wish their lives,
Had been as short as mine!
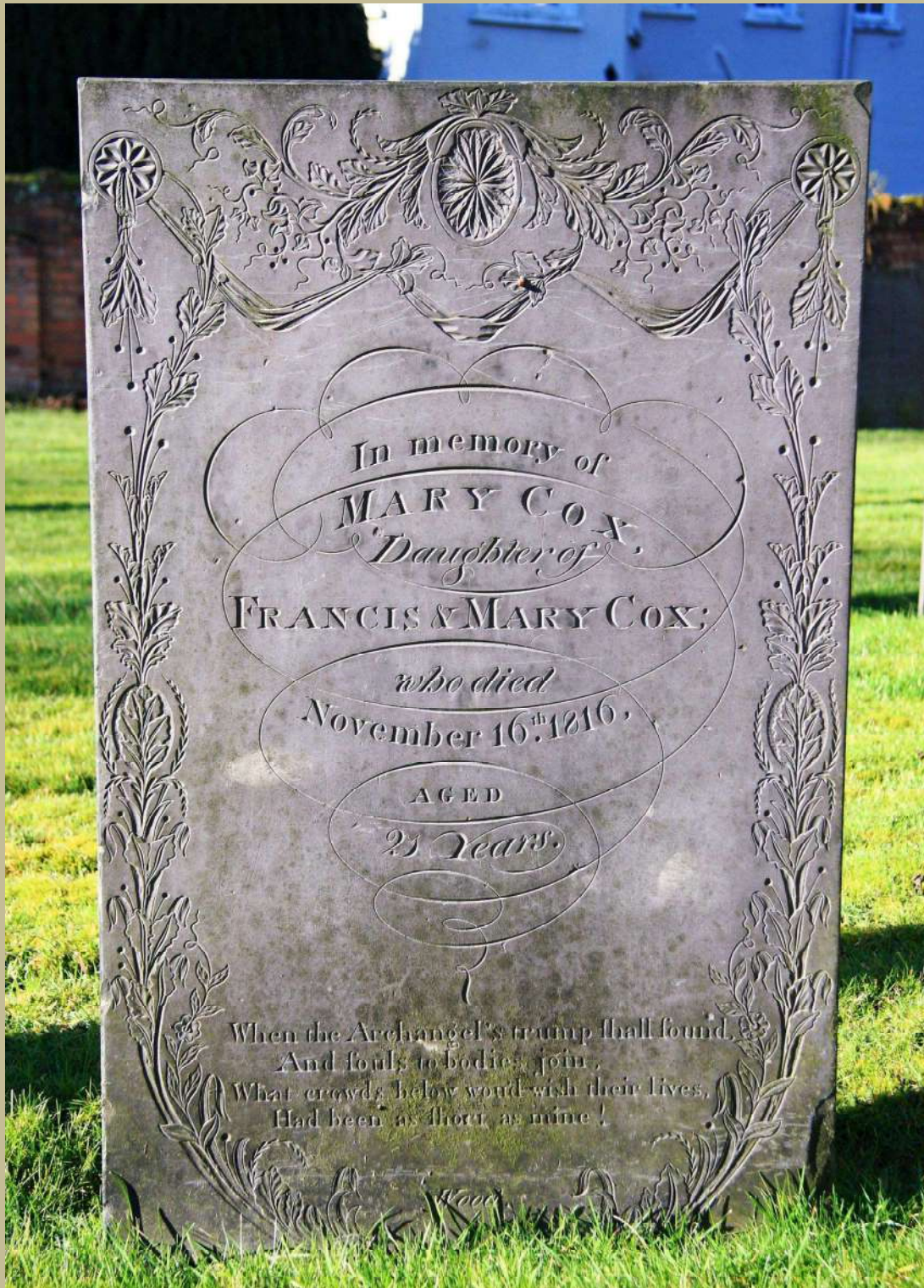
East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire. 1816 headstone carved by Thomas Wood of Bingham. As well as work like this, Wood was also around this time still producing headstones carrying the sort of imagery which had been more common in the C18th, like his Resurrection scene (45 lower).

Swithland churchyard, Leicestershire (see also 156 lower). A comparatively simple 1815 headstone of a baby, signed J.P. (John Pollard, who also signed Pollard, Swithland, when carving a headstone for a destination beyond his native village. See Note k). Visible to the right is part of a chest-tomb type of monument to some members of the Hind family, slate carvers and merchants, almost certainly carved by a family member (The Hind tombs are shown in 151 upper).
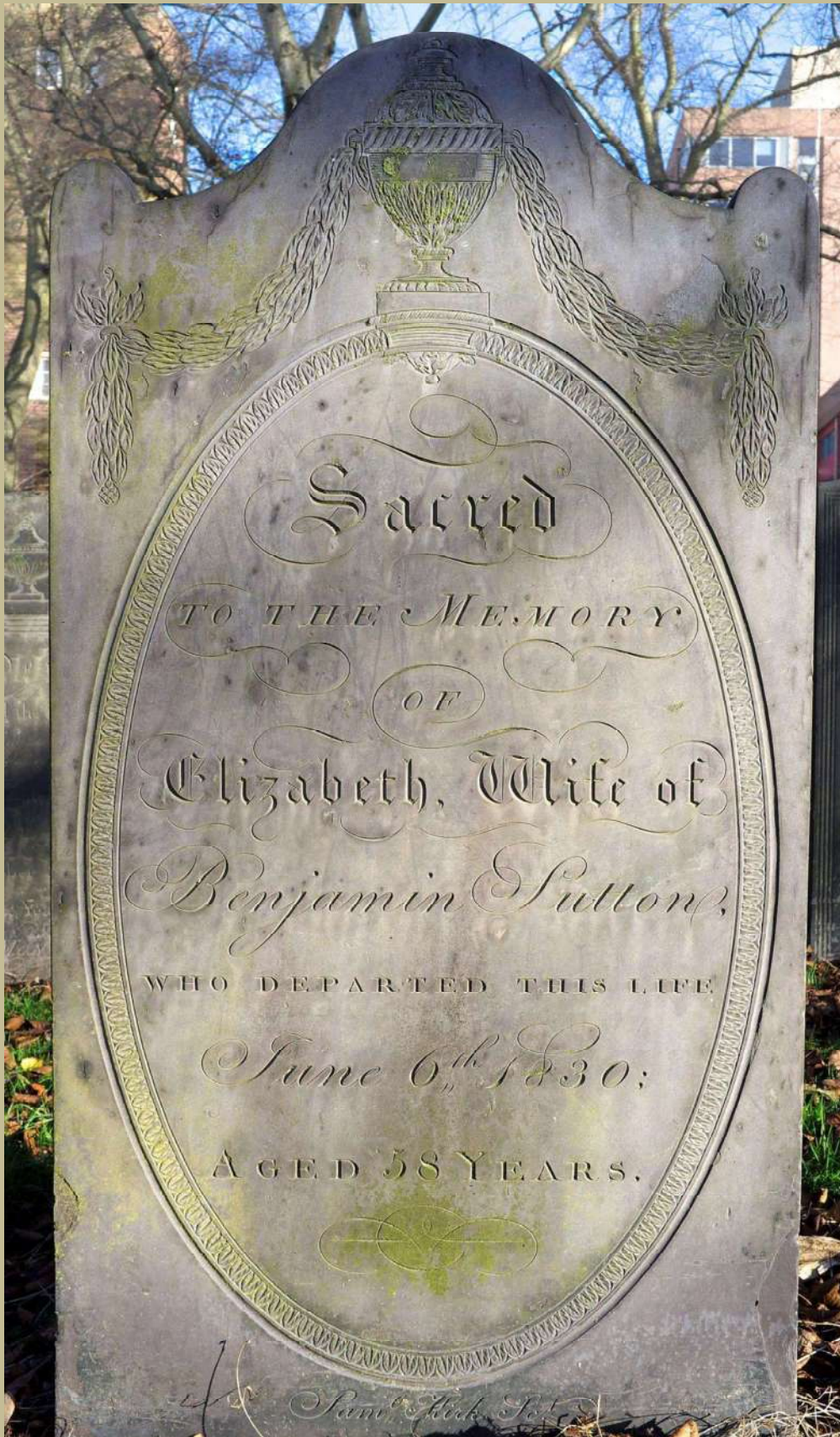
St Mary de Castro, Leicester. An elegant 1830 Neoclassical slate carved by Samuel Kirk.

Swithland churchyard, Leicestershire. 1833/37 headstone simply signed "Pollard". (By this time Benjamin Pollard and Thomas Benjamin Pollard were no longer living (see Note j).

6) Some Possible Sources Used by the Slate Craftsmen

It is clear that a remarkable transformation occurred in the craft of Swithland Slate headstone carving from the rustic works which were first cut in the last quarter of the C17th. The changes affected not just the quality of the lettering, but the introduction of designs of increasing complexity and the development of a quite sophisticated iconography, accompanied by Biblical quotations.

The highly accomplished calligraphy is clearly indebted to the works of the "writing masters", which had an enormous impact on Swithland Slate carvers (as mentioned in section 3), although, as Frederick Burgess noted, it is seldom possible to point to cases of exact copying.

Where decorative elements are concerned, it is again only really possible to suggest sources of inspiration rather than point to directly-copied models. This is because the carvers were genuine, inventive craftsmen, rather than slavish copyists. It is true that in the later C18th and beyond, some headstones can be found which seem to be less well-executed copies of other headstones but the best quality works which may have given rise to such copies were certainly inspired works of craftsmanship (see Note q).

The Rococo designs to be seen in the work of Thomas Chippendale and Thomas Johnson seem to have inspired some of the Rococo work of carvers like James Sparrow of Radcliffe on Trent, Staveley of Melton Mowbray and Bell of Leicester. The neo-classicism which followed, producing masterpieces like Hind's Wanlip headstones, is indebted to the designs of Robert and James Adam. Other possible sources for some of the later C18th designs were the illustrations in the writings of architect William Pain.

Frederick Burgess suggested the C17th emblem books (which remained popular in the following century) as a likely inspiration for the mortality and other religious symbolism on some of these headstones. He singled out Francis Quarles in this context but some very suggestive likely sources of inspiration also occur in George Withers' "Emblemes" of 1635. A few pages from Quarles and Withers are reproduced here (taken from the Penn State University Library "English Emblem Books" project website).
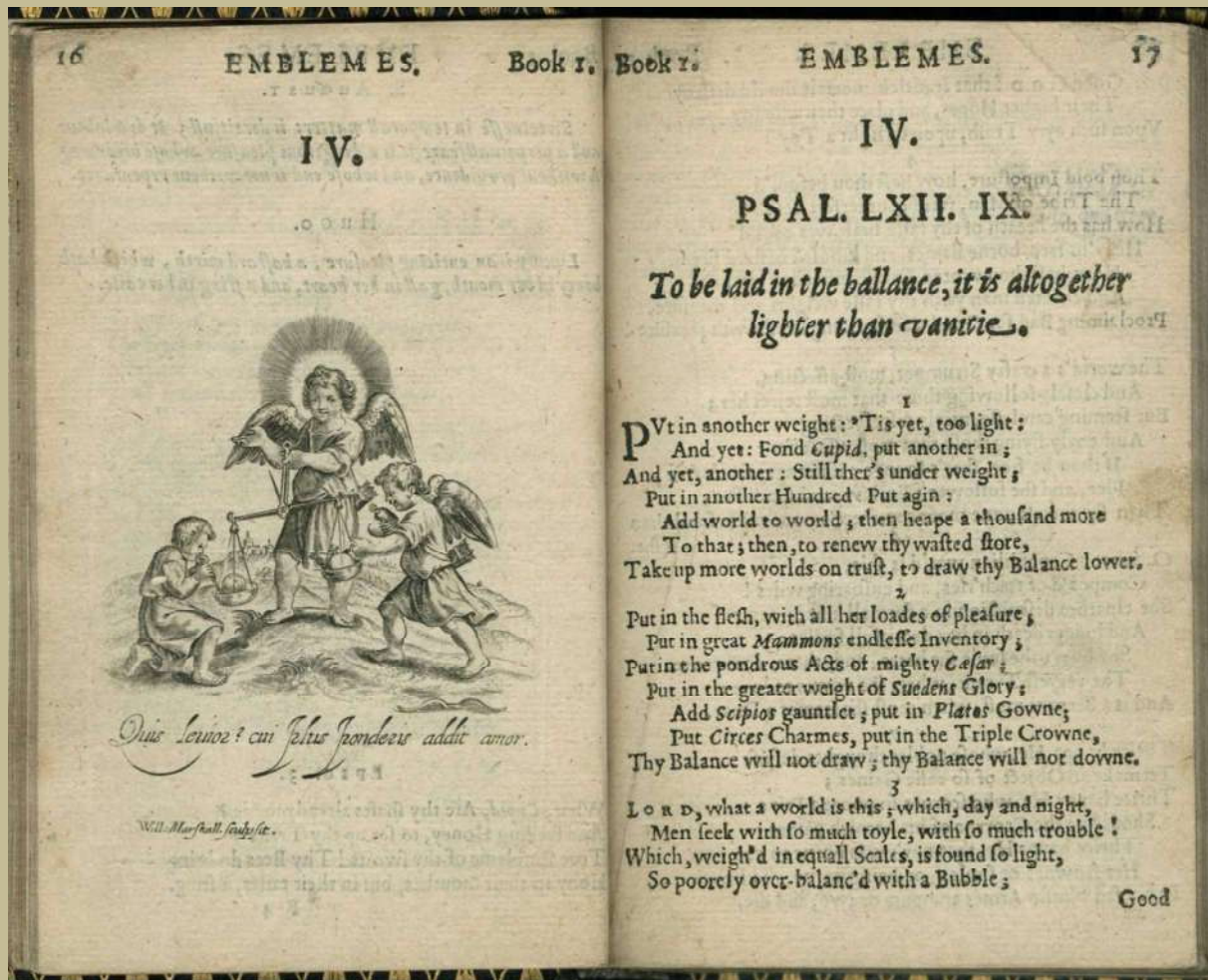
An example from Francis Quarles "Emblemes". This imagery with the idea of the weighing of vanity may have been used together with the imagery in the Withers illustration below (page 108) showing an arm emerging from the Heavens, as the inspiration for the headstone at Wymeswold shown on page 55.

IX.

Feustra quis stabilem figat in orbe gradum?

Will. Marshall sculsit.

IX.

I IOH. II. XVII.

The world passeth away, and all the lusts thereof.

1

Draw neare, brave sparks, whose spirits scorne to light
    Your hallow'd Tapours, but at Honours flame;
You, whose heroick Actions take delight
    To varnish ouer a new painted name;
Whose high-bred thoughts disdaine to take their flight,
    But on th'Icarian wings of babbling Fame,
        Behold, how tottring are your high-built stories
Of earth, whereon you trust the groundwork of your Glories.

2

And you, more braine-sick Lovers, that can prize
    A wanton smile before eternall Ioyes;
That know no heav'n but in your Mistresse eyes;
    That feele no pleasure but what sense enjoyes;
That can, like crowne-distemper'd fooles, despise
    True riches, and like Babies, whine for Toyes;
        Think ye, the Pageants of your hopes are able
To stand secure on earth, when earth it selfe's unstable?

3

Come dungbill worldlings; you, that root like swine,
    And cast up golden Trenches, where ye come;

Whose

An example from Francis Quarles "Emblemes": Father Time.

George Withers "Emblemes". The verse "All flesh..." is almost identical to that which appears on numerous Swithland Slate headstones in Nottinghamshire, e.g. at Bingham and Langar. It suggests that the mason (or possibly his client) had access to a copy of Withers' book.

100

*Falfe Weights, with Meafures falfe efchew,
And, give to ev'ry man, their Due.*

88.

ILLVSTR. XXXVIII.

Book.2

Orth of a *Cloud* (with *Scale* and *Rule*) extended
An *Arme* (for this next *Emblem*) doth appeare;
Which hath to us in *filent-fhewes*, commended,
A *Vertue*, that is often wanting, here.

George Withers "Emblemes". It seems likely that this plate provided inspiration for the headstones at Wymeswold, Leicestershire which show the world (Vanity) outweighed by Eternity.

George Withers "Emblemes". It seems likely that this emblem was the inspiration for headstones at Langar, Nottinghamshire (48) and Denton, Lincolnshire which carry Crown of Life and Serpent imagery.

110

George Withers "Emblemes". A winged hourglass which may have inspired some of the Swithland carvers.