



M314 Monument to Talwin Morris

Introduction

This grey granite monument, the last of four gravestones made to Mackintosh's design, marks the grave of his friends, the designer Talwin Morris and Alice Talwin Morris.

Authorship: A preliminary drawing by Mackintosh survives, the job-book entry is written in his hand, and an illustration of the completed monument was published under his name during his lifetime.

Alternative addresses: Garshake Road

Cost from job book: £50 10s 0d

Status: Standing structure

Listing category: B: listing category for whole cemetery

Historic Scotland/HB Number: 24913 (HB number for whole cemetery)

RCAHMS Site Number: NS47NW 63 (RCAHMS site number for whole cemetery)

Grid reference: NS 4088 7597

Chronology

1911

29 March: Death of Talwin Morris. ¹

26 October: Estimate for 'making and erecting' monument accepted. ²

October: Full-size drawing made for inscription panel. ³

1912

11 October: Sketch of completed monument published in the *British Architect*. ⁴

1955

24 December: Death of Alice Talwin Morris. ⁵

Late 20th century

Kerb removed. ⁶

Description

The English-born designer Talwin Morris (1865–1911), art director for the Glasgow publishers Blackie & Son Ltd from 1893 to 1909, was an important exponent of the Glasgow Style. He was a friend of the Mackintoshes, and following his early death his widow commissioned Mackintosh to design his monument in Dumbarton Cemetery. ¹

The grave lies in a prominent position, bordering the E. side of the main drive that curves N.W. from the entrance at the corner of Stirling Road and Garshake Road, about 50 metres from the cemetery gates. The grey granite monument has been significantly altered, but Mackintosh's original conception is preserved in the drawing he produced for Mrs Morris, and in a sketch and brief description published in the *British Architect* (see Critical Reception below). ²



Mackintosh's drawing shows a double plot enclosed by a low, chamfered kerb, swooping upwards at the head of the grave where it finishes in a pair of small triangular peaks. The resulting shape is a broad, spreading M. Overlapping – or rather interlocking – with this is a projecting rectangular slab for the inscription. In the drawing, the interlocking of the two shapes is emphasised by the way the masonry is jointed: the twin peaks, the rectangular slab and the top parts of the upward-curving kerb are shown carved from a single block of stone. As executed, however, vertical joints separate the slab completely from the kerb on either side, undermining this effect. Mackintosh reportedly made a full-size model of the monument, which was then carved in granite by a 'capable stonecutter'.³



On the drawing, the triangular space between the peaks is shown carved with chevrons, and the same motif of twin peaks with chevron infill is repeated twice on the kerb at the foot of the grave. In execution, chevrons were also carved on the peaks themselves, but while those on the intervening triangle are grooves separated by sharp arrises, those on the peaks are round, cable-like mouldings, making a negative-positive contrast. The *British Architect* attempted to explain the meaning of these linked and repeated shapes (presumably on the basis of information provided by Mackintosh): 'the Morris memorial ... has, for motive (because a devoted husband and wife are to be buried here) two hearts and one soul below (at the foot of the grave), and two hearts and one soul above.'⁴ The introduction of geometric ornament alongside softer, more organic curves points the way to Mackintosh's later decorative work at 78 Derngate, Northampton, where jagged angularity predominates.



Mackintosh's design shows a cast lead panel, inscribed in raised letters with Morris's name and date of death, and a quotation from the Paisley-born Celtic Revival writer and mystic Fiona Macleod (the pseudonym of William Sharp, 1855–1905): 'Love is more great than we conceive, and Death is the keeper of unknown redemptions.' This text, from Macleod/Sharp's collection of tales *The Dominion of Dreams*, first published in 1899, was chosen by Sharp himself for his own memorial, as described in Mrs Sharp's memoir of her husband published in 1910, the year before Morris's death.⁵ The two blank lines between date and quotation were no doubt intended for Mrs Morris's name and date of death, when the time came, although this would have meant recasting the whole panel. A full-size drawing for the panel survives, and an estimate for making it was supplied by the Scottish Guild of Handicraft.⁶ It was described by the *British Architect* in 1912, but in its place the monument now (2014) bears matching inscriptions for Morris and his wife in painted metal letters of a standard commercial pattern. The uniform appearance of these inscriptions suggests they were carried out at the same time, after Mrs Morris's death on 24 December 1955, when, presumably, the original lead panel was removed.



Mackintosh's drawing includes the slender trunk and delicate trailing branches of a weeping ash tree, planted centrally behind the grave. The faintness of the pencil marks makes it look like an incidental background detail or an afterthought, but it is mentioned in the description published in the *British Architect* and it seems to have been an integral part of the design.⁷ Today, after a century of growth, the tree dwarfs and overshadows the monument. The kerb at the foot and sides of the grave was removed along with others in the cemetery in the late 20th century, to make grass-cutting easier.⁸

Critical reception

In September 1912 the *British Architect* published a short article on 'Tombstone Memorials', accompanied by sketches of some 18th-century examples. Mackintosh responded with a letter, which was published as part of a follow-up article on 11 October 1912:

I see with pleasure in the issue of THE BRITISH ARCHITECT of September 6, some of your charming sketches, illustrating headstones at Cobham. Your notes regarding these are most appropriate and important. The present day graveyard is surely the most ugly and depressing place in any town or village, because of the assemblage of tombstones of an inartistic and thoughtless character. Surely here is shown the worst possible result of education – religious – artistic – and general. It is not a hopeful thought, that architects, sculptors and monumental workers (who are supposed to have had some art training) have no more influence on the general public (so far as respectful, *not* sorrowful, records go) than these graveyards of to-day represent. I am sending you an odd notebook of mine, showing some headstones at Chiddingstone, Penshurst, Leigh and Hever, all in Kent.

The stones at Chiddingstone are interesting, because they are of the simplest form – a slab with a good outline – (a good outline with many pleasing variations), and practically no ornamental details, which might lead the mason into some badly-executed expression of unnecessary sentimentality.

The stones at Penshurst, Leigh and Hever, are, in many cases, more fanciful, but they also have the charm of simplicity and restraint. This is not the place to discuss the bad taste of people, rich and poor, who vie with each other as to who shall have the most arrogantly ugly heap of granite, marble, or freestone

erected in the name of a tombstone. But it is certainly possible that in your admirable weekly you can suggest from time to time that simplicity and sincerity may be fine, and may be art, but that thoughtless extravagance never can be either. *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241.

Mackintosh was here returning to a subject on which he had written to the same journal 16 years earlier: the debased character of modern gravestones, and the superiority of simple, unpretentious 18th-century ones. ¹⁰ On the previous occasion some of his sketches of gravestones at Chipping Campden were reproduced, and he may have hoped that the Kent sketches would be too, but this did not happen. ¹¹ However, sketches of his Talwin Morris monument and his Orrock Johnston monument at East Wemyss were published along with his letter. ¹² These sketches do not appear to have been made by Mackintosh himself, but his own drawing for the much earlier James Reid gravestone at Kilmacolm was also published. ¹³ All three monuments were favourably described in the accompanying article, and the *British Architect* welcomed them as evidence that in the design of gravestones there was an alternative to 'plain copyism' on the one hand, and 'extravagant eclecticism' on the other: 'It is a pleasure to give some designs to-day, which indicate refinement and thought, and show some striking originality of treatment.'

People

Clients:

- Alice Talwin Morris

Contractors:

- Gray & Co.
- Scottish Guild of Handicraft

Other:

- Talwin Morris

Job Book

The job books of Honeyman & Keppie (later Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh) are now held by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow and include four volumes related to the Mackintosh period. The books were used by the firm to keep a project-by-project, day-by-day record of contractors, suppliers and expenditure. The name of a project and/or client is usually at the top of the left-hand page, followed by information about tradesmen who tendered. The name of the measurer (quantity surveyor) is usually at the top of the right-hand page, followed by information about payments to contractors and suppliers. All of the data for M314 is entered in the tables below.

Page numbering is not consistent in the job books. Sometimes a single number refers to a double-page spread and sometimes each page is individually numbered. Here, each image of a double-page spread is identified by the number given at the top of the left-hand page. (Images of all of the pages from the four job books can be found at [Browse Job Books, Visit Book and Cash Book.](#))

The following information about M314 has been extracted from the job books:



Job book: 53063
Page: 63

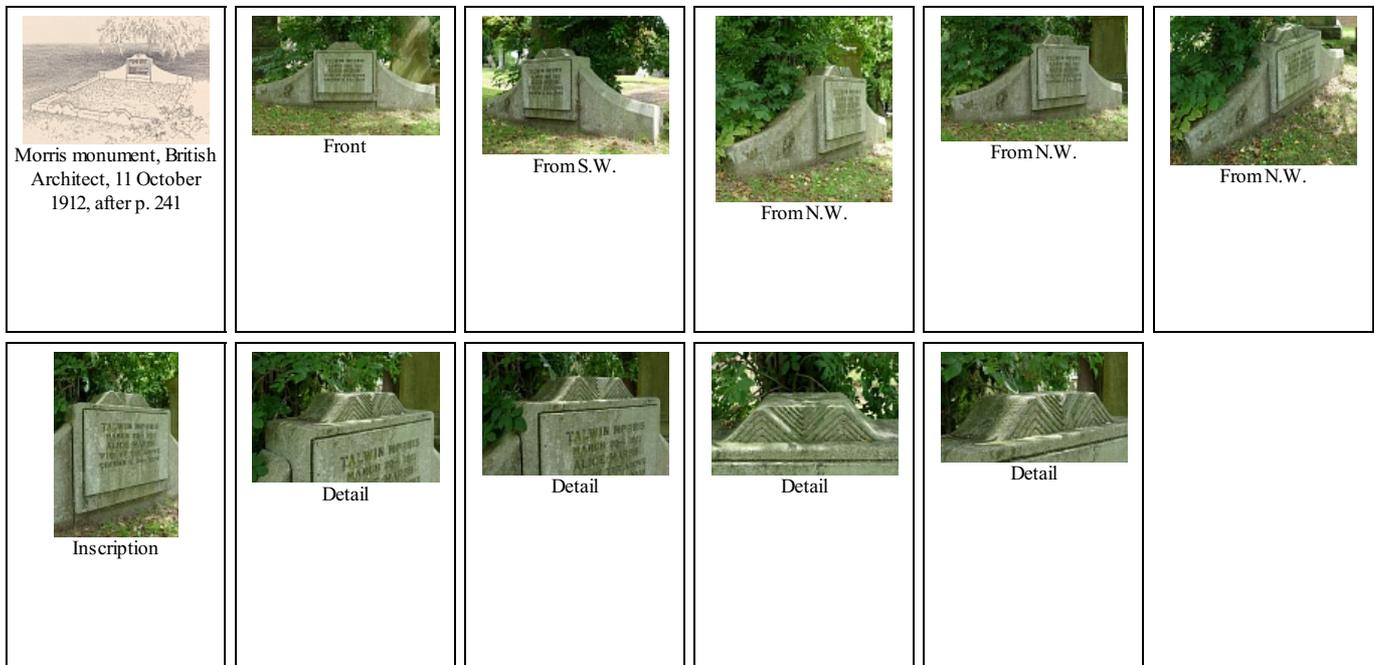
Client: Alice Talwin Morris

Tenders:

Contractor	Type	Date	Value	Accepted
Gray & Co.	carving	26 October 1911	£45 0s 0d ¹	yes
Scottish Guild of Handicraft	lead work	26 October 1911	£5 10s 0d	data not in job book

Documents

Images



Bibliography

Published

- *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241 and illustration following p. 246

Unpublished

- The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Alice Talwin Morris to Thomas Howarth, 11 October 1944, GLAHA 53924

Notes:

- 1: Date inscribed on monument.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh job book, GLAHA 53063, p. 63.
- 3: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41932 (M314-002).
- 4: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, following p. 246.
- 5: Date inscribed on monument.
- 6: Information from cemetery superintendent, 2011.
- 7: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Alice Talwin Morris to Thomas Howarth, 11 October 1944, GLAHA 53924.
- 8: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41931 (M314-001); *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241, illustration following p. 246.
- 9: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241.
- 10: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241.
- 11: Elizabeth A. Sharp, *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod): A Memoir Compiled by his Wife*, London: William Heinemann, 1910, pp. 305–6, 419.
- 12: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41932 (M314-002); Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh job book, GLAHA 53063, p. 63.
- 13: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241.
- 14: Information from cemetery superintendent, 2011.
- 15: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 241.
- 16: *British Architect*, 44, 22 November 1895, p. 360.
- 17: A sketchbook now in The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, GLAHA 53014, includes sketches of headstones at all the places named by Mackintosh,

and is probably the 'odd notebook' referred to in the letter.

18: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, following p. 246.

19: *British Architect*, 78, 11 October 1912, p. 242.

20: For 'making & erecting'.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

Led by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council; with additional support from The Monument Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; and collaborative input from Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.



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