

**Parkhead's Lost Icon:  
The Bailie James Hamilton Memorial Drinking Fountain.**



**By Gary Nisbet. 2020.**

## **Introduction**

The Bailie James Hamilton Memorial Drinking Fountain stood on the east side of Parkhead Cross, at the junction of Westmuir Street and Tollcross Road. It was one of a number of commemorative drinking fountains that appeared in Glasgow's streets and parks around the turn of the twentieth century, many of which, like the Hamilton fountain itself, have since disappeared.

The fountain is long gone and is virtually forgotten today, its presence only brought to mind when viewing vintage photographs of Parkhead Cross in books on old Glasgow. However, despite the fountain's prominence and importance as a historic landmark at the cross, not to mention that it was the only public monument in Parkhead, it is often never referred to at all in their texts. This is mainly due to the fact that, until recently, little was known about the fountain's history and its dedicatee, or of the existence of the sculptor's original design for it, and the copies that were made of the fountain for other towns in Britain.

Fortunately, as a result of almost a decades' worth of research into the fountain's history, which included the discovery of the original design and, more recently, the location of the fountain's copies, this situation has been resolved and, for the first time, the fascinating history of Parkhead's lost icon can now be told in its near entirety.

As this research project was launched partly by a proposal to recreate the fountain as part of the regeneration of Parkhead cross in the early 2000s, which was subsequently shelved, it is to be hoped that the contents of this booklet might revive interest in the fountain, and that some serious thought might once again be given to recreating it and returning to Parkhead this lost icon of its past glory. Only then will the telling of its story be at last complete.

### ***Background: Glasgow's Memorial Drinking Fountains***

The majority of Glasgow's memorial drinking fountains were erected by public subscription to commemorate local politicians and benefactors. They were also often gifted to communities by their dedicatees or their families as posthumous tributes for the services they had rendered in public life or to popular causes. The one particular cause that would virtually guarantee anyone of local importance involved with it the honour of having a drinking fountain erected in their memory (alive or dead) was the Temperance Movement.

With intemperance being a serious problem in the city by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, temperance campaigners seized upon the availability of the fresh water that was now being piped into the city from the Trossachs after the completion of the

Loch Katrine Water Scheme in 1859, and the newly popular vogue for erecting drinking fountains in other British cities as a means of tempting people away from public houses and the demon drink. Of course, they were also intended to provide fresh water for sober citizens as well, particularly in poorer districts, public parks and commercial thoroughfares.

This followed a campaign started in Liverpool in 1854 by Charles Melly, who is famous for his many 'Melly' drinking fountains there, and later by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Association in London (founded in 1859). There was no similar charitable organisation in Glasgow at this time, as the city's Corporation had already identified the need for public wells and drinking fountains and had included their provision within the remit of the Loch Katrine Water Scheme.

By March 1859, thirty two drinking fountains had been erected throughout the city including one near Parkhead Cross, at the corner of Burgher Street. These were of the small, standpipe variety, cheaply made in cast iron and entirely utilitarian in form and function, rather than the artistically designed structures in granite that began to appear later.

The first commemorative drinking fountain in Glasgow was the granite James Crum fountain, which was erected in George Square in 1861 as a gift to the city from its dedicatee, James Crum of Busby (the fountain was relocated to John Knox Street in 2019).



*The Crum fountain, George Square, 1861.*

Most of Glasgow's commemorative fountains were built in granite sourced from Aberdeenshire quarries and supplied by Aberdeen based monumental sculptors, such as MacDonald, Field & Co. (who produced the Crum fountain) or William Boddie & Son. Many others were made in ornate cast iron by Glasgow's famous Saracen and Sun foundries, who specialised in producing this cheaper form of commemorative drinking fountain and mass-produced them on a scale to rival the prodigious output of granite fountains from Aberdeen.

In Glasgow, the most important builders of granite fountains were J. & G. Mossman, who are better known for the astonishing quantity of monumental, public and architectural sculpture that they produced in the 1800s and 1900s. They also owned their own silver granite quarry near Creetown, as well as purchasing other kinds and colours of granite from Aberdeen suppliers for their own use.

Although the Mossman's usually produced their own fountain designs, they occasionally worked from plans supplied by architects and other monumental sculptors, and were at liberty to sign the completed work with their own name as a trademark, rather than that of its original designer or supplier. The James Hamilton fountain at Parkhead Cross was a perfect example of this mode of working, with its builder being different from its designer and supplier, and ultimately credited to him as its 'sculptor'.

Commemorative drinking fountains were also intended to provide their districts with prominently sited and tastefully designed landmarks. However, their cost and a certain degree of Scottish artistic reticence prevented them from being as sculptural or exuberant as European examples, which tended to be more figurative rather than architectural in concept.

The Bailie James Hamilton Fountain was of the architectural variety and, although it featured no significant bronze sculpture or portrait medallion, it grandly fulfilled its function as the focal point of Parkhead Cross for about sixty years until the 1960s, by which time it was surrounded and hidden from view by other utility structures that had gradually been built around it.

When the fountain was erected at the end of 1903, it was briefly the most prominent feature in the streetscape, the buildings close to it at that time being the relatively low and plain survivors from Parkhead's early days as a weaving and mining village in the previous century. Although a relatively modest design itself, the fountain gained much in stature from their diminutive scale and from the isolated site that it occupied, which further emphasised its height and presence when viewed from a distance.



*The Hamilton fountain at Parkhead Cross, c. 1904.*

A painting (above) and a postcard view of the cross (below) illustrate this perfectly, and also record how the fountain and the cross looked for the last time before the area was transformed by the construction of the grandiose Edwardian tenements and public buildings that still stand there today.



*The Hamilton fountain (right) dwarfed by its Edwardian neighbours.*

This redevelopment transformed the cross into something of a *Grand Place* in the European manner; as architecturally impressive as any cosmopolitan city required its major junctions to be, but with a distinctly Glaswegian flavour, with



its own versions of the Baronial, Renaissance and Baroque styles employed for its building's high elevations and prominent corners.



*The Hamilton fountain (right), c. 1904.*

Although overwhelmed by the giant scale of its new neighbours, the fountain continued to hold its own as the monumental hub of the junction and its most impressive feature at ground level. The fountain's delicate mixture of Renaissance and Classical forms was also the perfect antidote to the robust Scottishness of all that stood around it.

The precise date of the fountain's inauguration ceremony is as yet unknown. It would appear from the lack of contemporary press reports about it, that the occasion was allowed to pass without public comment or notice, which was quite unusual for new commemorative fountains at this time.

However, there is sufficient documentation to suggest that the ceremony was most likely held on the first anniversary of Hamilton's death in December 1903; the first anniversary being a popular time for inaugurating monuments to deceased worthies. A further consideration is the fact that the fountain was recorded as having been built in August that year, and was awaiting its formal presentation to the city by the time the anniversary of Hamilton's death arrived.

### *Bailie James Hamilton - The fountain's dedicatee*



*Bailie James Hamilton (1841-1902).*

The fountain commemorated James Hamilton, who had been a prominent figure in Parkhead's commerce and politics before his death in 1902. He was born in Parkhead in 1841, the son of a handloom weaver. After initially following his father's trade he became a grocer, opening a shop at 30 East Wellington Street (now Wellington Street East), where he is listed in the Glasgow Post Office Directory for the first time in 1892, as a Provision Merchant selling eggs, potatoes and fish. He lived nearby with his wife and family at 32 East Wellington Street. He also owned a number of properties throughout the city, augmenting his income from their rents.

Hamilton was also active in local politics and the temperance movement, and served on various boards and committees, including the Old Second Ward Committee, which he served for twenty years, ten of them as its chairman. He was also a City Magistrate. In 1895, he was elected onto the Barony Parish Council and, in November 1896, was elected to Glasgow Town Council as the Councillor for the Third (Mile End) Ward.

His political career reached its zenith in 1902, when he became a Bailie, or representative of the Lord Provost, a few months before his death. According to his obituary in the Glasgow Herald (13 December 1902), Hamilton rarely spoke in the council chamber but 'rendered valuable service in committees'.

He was married to Jane Marshall in 1869, and had five children: two sons, John and James Imrie, and a daughter, Agnes. Two other sons, Robert and Alexander, died in infancy. A measure of Hamilton's prosperity by 1891 was

the presence in his household of a domestic servant, Mary Brotherston. John, his oldest son, would eventually inherit his father's grocery business and later traded as a glass merchant and glazier.

James Hamilton died from Cerebral Apoplexy (stroke) which he suffered on Thursday, 11 December 1902. He had been taken ill in the evening whilst presiding at a meeting of the Band of Hope Eastern Union, and was immediately conveyed to his home, where he died at 5.20 am the following morning without regaining consciousness. His death and funeral were announced in the Evening Times on Saturday, 13 December, the funeral being scheduled for 2.30 pm the following Monday, at Parkhead Public Hall. He was then taken for burial in the Eastern Necropolis (Janefield Cemetery), in compartment 18, lair 49. His internment cost £57 13s 6d.

### ***Hamilton Monument, Eastern Necropolis***

Hamilton's grave is marked by a tall, Roman-style granite obelisk on a pedestal, which was commissioned by his wife and produced by the monumental sculptor James Robertson at his workshop at 736 London Road. It was probably erected around the same time as the Hamilton fountain at Parkhead Cross.



*Hamilton's gravestone in the Eastern Necropolis.*



His monument in the Eastern Necropolis is one of the few in its compartment that have survived the vandalism that has wrecked many of the other monuments around about it. The monument stands facing north across a path at the southern end of the cemetery, close to the boundary wall of Celtic Park football stadium. The inscriptions on the front and sides of his monument record that Hamilton was eventually joined in his 9ft (2.74m) deep lair by his wife and sons, together with one of their wives and an uncle.



*The main inscription on Hamilton's gravestone.*

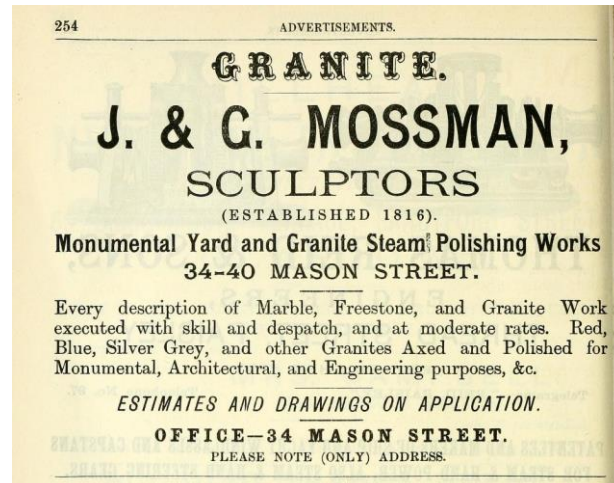
The executors of Hamilton's estate were his sons and his nephew, Robert Dick Paton, who was a house factor in Glasgow; and a family friend, Samuel Smith, a draper at 18 Westmuir Street, Parkhead. Confirmation of his will was granted on 20 June 1903, when his estate was valued at £1,313 12s 7d.

### **A Public Tribute**

At some point during this period, some thought was given to erecting a more appropriate public symbol of the community's high regard for Hamilton and his services, and one that would actually be of some practical benefit to them, rather than being just a commemorative monument like his gravestone. A decision was reached in the summer of 1903 that the monument should be in the form of a granite drinking fountain and a subscription fund was soon opened to finance its construction.

## **J. & G. Mossman: The fountain's builders**

It was Samuel Smith the draper who placed the commission for the drinking fountain with its builders, the Glasgow firm of architectural and monumental sculptors, J. & G. Mossman, who had already designed and built a number of important commemorative fountains in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland.



*Advertisement for J. & G. Mossman.*

Based at 34-40 Mason Street (now the east end of Cathedral Street), their work in this particular genre of public sculpture includes the colossal Stewart Memorial Fountain in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Park (1872), which commemorated the completion of the Loch Katrine Water Supply Scheme that supplied the city's fountains and homes with fresh water.

They also produced the smaller-scale drinking fountains to Bailie James Bain (1873. Lost), Sir William Collins (1881) and Hugh MacDonald (1877) on Glasgow Green, and the Bailie James Torrens fountain in New City Road (1888). After the James Hamilton fountain at Parkhead Cross in 1903, their next drinking fountain in Glasgow would be the Lady Ure Primrose fountain in Bellahouston Park (1913).



*John Mossman, of J. & G. Mossman, Sculptors.*

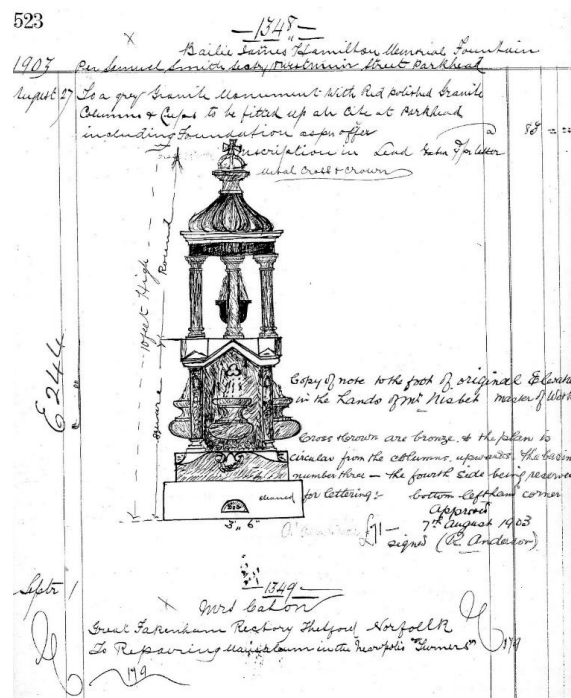
The fountains designed and produced by J. & G. Mossman in the 1800s were largely the work of the firm's owner, John Mossman (1817-1890), who is now regarded as the 'Father of Glasgow Sculpture' on account of his extraordinary output of public statues, architectural sculpture, cemetery monuments, portrait busts and fine art work; not to mention his training of many of the city's best sculptors and carvers in his workshops and at Glasgow School of Art.

However, by the time the James Hamilton fountain was produced, the firm had already passed out of the Mossman family's hands in 1891, when it was sold to the granite sculptor Peter Smith (1843-1911) by John Mossman's nephew, William, after he had inherited it on his uncle's death in 1890.

Peter Smith had once been the manager of Mossman's granite workshop and had established his own firm of monumental sculptors by this time, and he was shrewd enough to retain the old Mossman name as a marque of long-established fame and reliability. If the Hamilton fountain was signed, it would have been with Mossman's name rather than Peter Smith's. The firm continues to trade under the name J. & G. Mossman (Ltd) today, and is owned by Peter Smith's descendant, Russell Pollock Smith.

The firm's Job Book for 1898-1904 records that the order for the James Hamilton fountain was placed with them on 27 August 1903. Significantly, the order also contains an elevation drawing of the fountain, together with its dimensions, materials and cost (below). The original drawing is in colour to indicate the type of granite used for its parts (see next page). It also records that a copy of the design was passed to Glasgow Corporation's Master of Works,

Thomas Nisbet, for his approval. The Corporation's Water Department granted the fountain a free water supply, on 31 August 1903.



*The original design for the Bailie James Hamilton fountain in J. & G. Mossman's Job Book for 1898-1904 (Author's collection).*

## The Mossman Drawing



*The Hamilton Fountain in the Mossman Job Book (detail).*



The Mossman drawing reveals that the fountain was French Renaissance in style and was to be 10ft (3.048 m) high and 3ft 6ins (1.097 m) wide, with a circular upper section and a square lower section. The latter featured a moulded basin and lion mask water spouts on each of its three sides, and an inscription panel on its fourth. The drinking cups (metal) were attached to chains which hung from hooks on the sides of the colonettes that formed the corners of the lower section.

The upper half of the fountain was an open tempietto formed by four columns enclosing a blue granite spray urn at its centre. Above them was a fluted dome and ball finial. The spray urn spouted a jet of water upwards as a decorative feature, as illustrated in the drawing. A Small basin was also provided at the foot of the fountain for thirsty dogs to use. The fountain was built in polished red Peterhead granite and grey Rubislaw granite purchased from Aberdeen for £71 on 7th August 1903, whilst the overall cost of the fountain itself was estimated at £83. This included the costs of digging its foundation and its construction at Parkhead Cross.

### **An important modification**

The Mossman drawing, together with other images of the fountain, confirm that its design was modified around the time of its construction. The original intention was to surmount the fountain with a finial in the form of a bronze crown and cross, modelled after Queen Victoria's Imperial crown. However, this was replaced with a less ornate granite ball on a slender stalk, which not only altered its appearance stylistically, but also raised the fountain's height to about 16ft (4.87m).

The ball finial also removed any possibility that the fountain with its crown could be mistaken for having any link to royalty, such as Queen Victoria, when viewed from afar. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee of 1897 had unleashed an unprecedented wave of commemorative fountain building in Britain that lasted well into the early 1900s, and it seemed that every town and city in the British U.K. had to have one as a symbol of their patriotism and loyalty, complete with a crown as part of its ornament.

Many of these were copies of other fountains whose manufacturing costs were low and whose designs in granite or iron were readily available in the catalogues of monumental sculptors and iron foundries in Glasgow and Aberdeen. There was a need, therefore, to modify the Hamilton fountain at Parkhead to avoid any confusion with these, and to enable it to assert its own distinctive presence and identity in the streetscape. However, there was and

always will be a royal link of sorts to the Hamilton fountain, despite the loss of its intended crown, which will be revealed later.

### **The Hamilton fountain's final days**

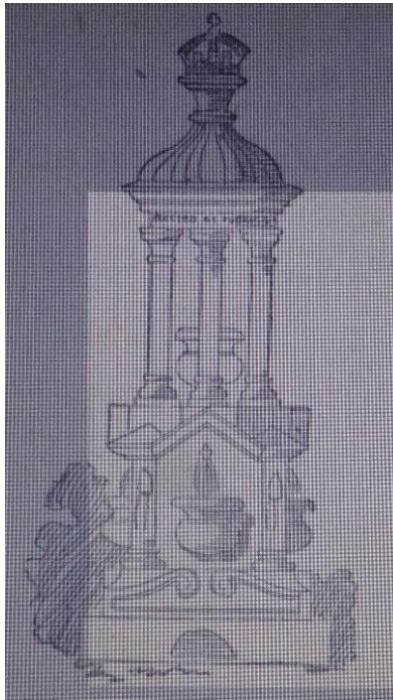
The Hamilton fountain remained in situ at Parkhead Cross until the early 1960s, when it was demolished during alterations to the roadway that had been planned for it by Glasgow Corporation in 1959. By then, together with the city's other public drinking fountains and wells, the fountain's water supply had been turned off due to hygiene concerns and high maintenance costs, and its presence was regarded as little more than an inconvenience to traffic management.

With Hamilton long gone from public memory and his fountain defunct and virtually forgotten, it seems that the only way the city authorities could think of dealing with it at the time was to regard it as an unwanted relic of a bygone age and an impediment to progress, rather than as an important historic feature that deserved to be saved and restored as a prominent landmark within the community that originally built and paid for it. With little or no protest from historians, conservationists or the media about the fountain's plight, and pretty much summoning up the prevailing attitude regarding the conservation of anything Victorian and Edwardian at the time, the fountain was inevitably condemned and suddenly disappeared. The exact date of the fountain's removal is as yet unknown. However, it is known to have survived until as late as March 1962, as confirmed by a photograph that was later published in Cedric Greenwood's book *Glasgowtrammerung* in 1986 (p. 60).

It can only be assumed that after the fountain was demolished, its parts were placed in storage by the authorities, rather than being discarded or sold off. So far, there has been no re-discovery of the fountain in any of the city council's storage facilities or museums, or in anyone's back garden for that matter, and it is believed that the fountain and its constituent parts, collected or otherwise, are now lost.

### **A well-used design: The royal connection**

The design for the Hamilton fountain was not unique, or even an original work conceived by J. & G. Mossman, despite its presence in their job books suggesting otherwise. It was in fact a copy of a prototype designed a few years earlier by another sculptor and erected elsewhere. Indeed, several copies of the fountain exist in Britain to remind us of how the Hamilton fountain once looked in all its glory at Parkhead Cross. The only differences between them were in their finials, water spouts and inscriptions.



*Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Fountain, Ballater, 1898.*

The earliest and most important examples of these copies are the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee fountains at Ballater in Aberdeenshire (*above*), and Bognor Regis, England (*below*), both of which date from 1898 and feature the bronze imperial crown later illustrated in the Mossman Job Book as part of the Hamilton fountain's original design. The Bognor Regis fountain was made by Albert Seymour, a monumental sculptor and general mason, who worked from the town's Station Road.



*The Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Fountain in Steyn Gardens, Bognor Regis, by Albert Seymour, Sculptor, in 1898.*

The other copy is the *Kilmarnock Equitable Co-operative Society Jubilee Fountain* in Elmbank Drive, Kilmarnock, of 1910, which post-dates the Hamilton fountain by seven years and has since lost its original crown, which in this instance was carved in granite. This was produced and signed by William Boddie & Son of Aberdeen, in 1910.



*Kilmarnock Co-operative Society Jubilee Fountain in Kilmarnock, by Wm Boddie & Son of Aberdeen, 1910.*

Rather than commissioning an entirely original design from a fashionable sculptor for a unique work of art, or holding a competition for its design, Hamilton's family chose the easiest and least expensive route to satisfying their wishes, by selecting a copy of a tried and tested model that could be easily assembled at minimal cost in time and money. To achieve this, they consulted J. & G. Mossman in Glasgow, who were undoubtedly familiar with the earlier Queen Victoria fountains produced by William Boddie & Son in Aberdeen, and selected this model as a suitable design on the Mossman's recommendation.

### **William Boddie & Son (George Duff Boddie)**

The original designer of the Hamilton fountain was George Duff Boddie, the son of the owner of William Boddie & Son of Aberdeen, who is identified as the designer of the Bognor Regis, Ballater and Kilmarnock fountains in the press reports of their 'switching on' ceremonies. The fountains were then produced by his father's firm of granite merchants and monumental sculptors, at their St. Clair Street Granite Works in King Street, Aberdeen.



George Duff Boddie (1870-1930) was born in Aberdeen and later became a partner in his father's firm. He ran their branch yard in Huntly, and continued to run the firm after his father's death. He later left the granite industry to open a Tobacconist and Newsagent's a shop at 236 George Street, Aberdeen. He is also known to have suffered a tragic death in 1930, when it was reported in the Aberdeen press that he had gone missing and was presumed to have committed suicide after his clothes were found left in a pile at the end of Aberdeen's North Pier. Having been last seen alive on 22 November 1930, his wife and family were eventually granted a warrant declaring him dead, seven years later, in 1937. He was sixty one years of age when he disappeared.



*Advertisement for Wm. Boddie & Son, Aberdeen, 1911.*

William Boddie & Son (fl. 1872-1943) was one of Aberdeen's most important firms of granite merchants and monumental sculptors at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By then, its founder, William Boddie (1839-1917) was already regarded as the 'Father of Aberdeen's Granite Trade', on account of his long and distinguished association with it. Like many other granite merchants and sculptors in Aberdeen, such as Alexander MacDonald & Co (the most important of them all), Boddie's market was national and international, and chiefly concerned with producing granite columns and facades for banks and public buildings, together with pedestals for public statues, monuments for cemeteries, and commemorative drinking fountains.

Their work in Glasgow includes the pedestals for the statue of Sir William Gladstone in George Square (1902) and James Reid of Auchterarder in Springburn Park (1903). They also produced granite for the foundations of buildings, such as the Parish Council Offices in George Street (1900).

The fountain at Bognor Regis bears the name of the local monumental sculptor entrusted with ordering and building it, Albert Seymour, rather than that of its original maker, William Boddie. This was not an unusual practice and it is clear that Boddie had licensed the design for use by other monumental sculptors, who were permitted to affix their own name to the structure instead of Boddie's, although only after purchasing the fountain from him. By this token the Hamilton fountain at Parkhead Cross would probably have been signed by J. & G. Mossman as its builders, if it was signed at all. The Kilmarnock fountain includes Boddie's name as its sculptor in leaded letters on its base, but these are so badly eroded that the name is now virtually illegible.



*William Boddie's name on the Kilmarnock Co-op Fountain.*

According to the *Kilmarnock Herald and Ayrshire Gazette's* report on the Kilmarnock fountain's inauguration in 1910 (complete with a photograph and description), the fountain was a reproduction of four fountains previously ordered from Boddie to mark the late Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897, of which the Bognor Regis and Ballater fountains are the only examples identified so far. Interestingly, no reference was made to the Hamilton fountain in Glasgow as one of these copies.

It is in another newspaper report that we find the final confirmation of Boddie & Son as the original sculptors of the Hamilton fountain: *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*, which announced on 8 December 1903 that the fountain was being sent to Glasgow from Boddie's works in Aberdeen, although it mistakenly said that the fountain was to be erected in one of the city's parks. As there were no other significant granite fountains erected in Glasgow in 1903, this must therefore have been the Hamilton fountain and its destination Parkhead Cross.

## Sources

Glasgow Post Office Directories: 1892-1951; Adam & Co (1897): *Local And Municipal Souvenir Of Glasgow 1837-1897*, p. 60 (ill.); Glasgow Herald: *Deaths* (James Hamilton), 13 December 1902, p. 1; Eastern Necropolis Burial Registers: 1902-1918, Spool No. 6; Confirmations and Inventories: 1903, p. 237; J. & G. Mossman Ltd: Job Book, 1898-1904, Order No. 1345, 27 August 1903, p. 523 (ill.); Glasgow City Archives: C13.30: *Glasgow Corporation Minutes*, 18 December 1902, p. 210; Water Department, 31 August 1903, p. 1056; AGN 233; Aberdeen Press and Journal: *Granite Fountain For Glasgow*, 8 December 1903, p. 4, Ibid, *Public Notices* (George D. Boddie), 31 December 1937, p. 1; Cedric Greenwood (1986): *Glasgowtrammerung: The Twilight of the Glasgow Tram*, p. 60 (photo: 8 March 1962); George Lane (1990): *The Shooglies*, p. 22 (ill.); Charles McDonald (1996): *Old Parkhead* (ills.); RCAHMS: 309B2/23 (photo: c. 1960); Kilmarnock Herald and Ayrshire Gazette: 30 September 1910, p. 5 (ill.).

## Acknowledgements

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