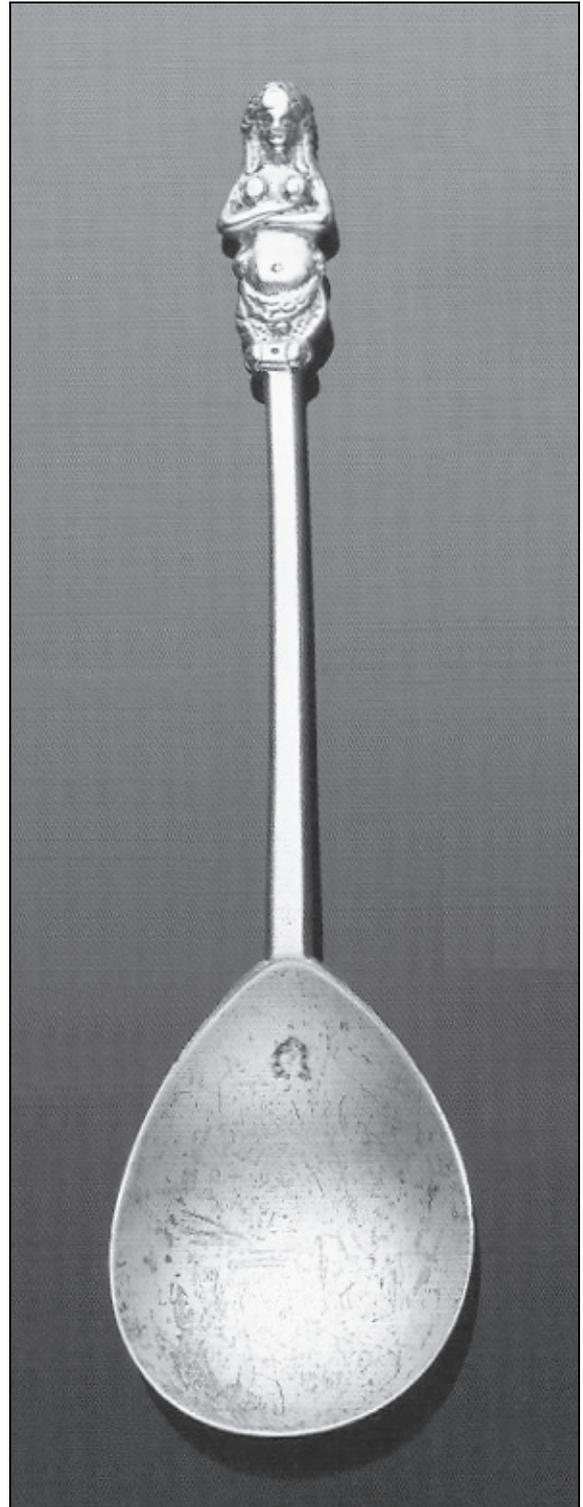
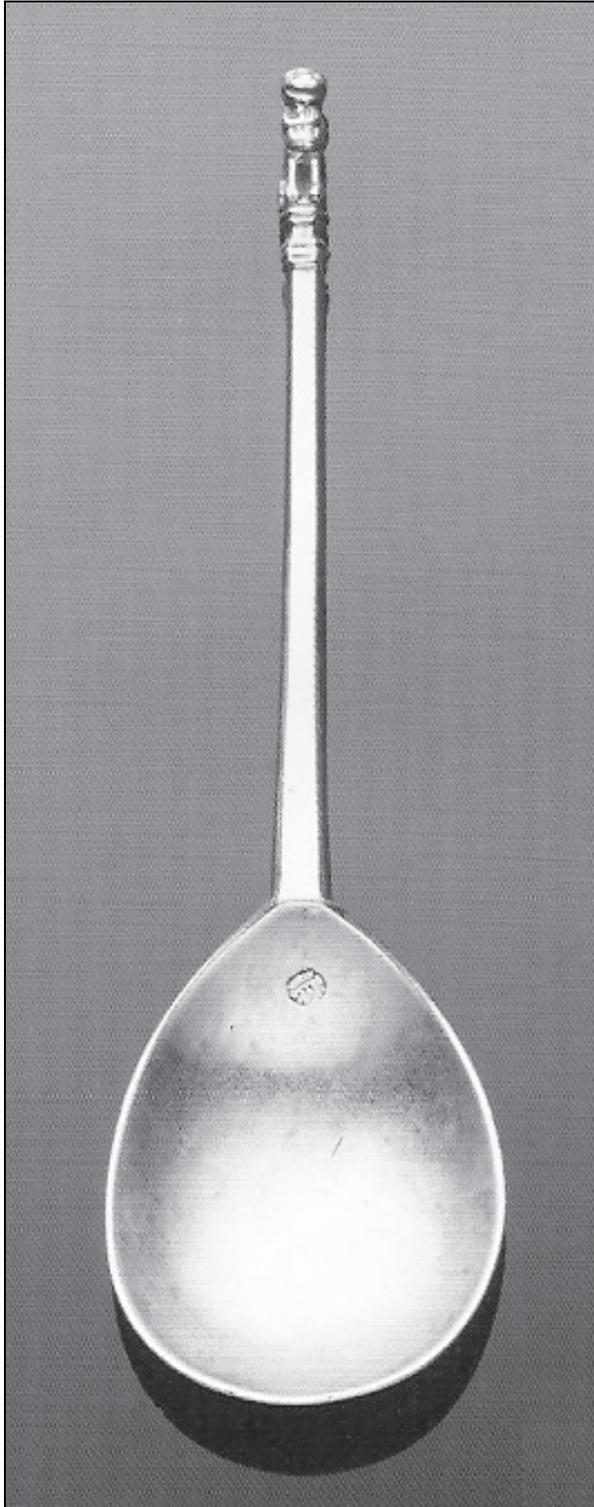


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# James Sturrock in Montrose

By Jonathan Joyce & Laurence Joyce

This article was inspired by the finding in a box of silver junk on Portobello Road of a rather battered oar pattern teaspoon bearing the marks 'JS' and two marks resembling a mitre or bell. This mark is listed on page 611 of *Jackson's Silver and Gold Marks* (3rd edition, 1989), in the section *Scotland – Part 2* by Henry Fotheringham, where it is tentatively ascribed to a Montrose watchmaker, James Sturrock, whose earliest mention is given as 1860.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

On the various items of Scottish silver attributed to James Sturrock, both in *Jackson's* and in other places, can be found the following marks: a mitre or bell; the pot of lilies associated with Dundee; and the five-petalled rose associated with Montrose. The mitre and pot of lilies marks, sometimes stamped several times, occur in combination with the initials 'JS' in a rectangular punch (Figs. 1 & 2). The rose is found, in two cases, in combination with a single mitre mark: the first example is in *Jackson's*, where, although the text seems to indicate that these marks can be found alongside a 'JS' mark, no 'JS' stamp is illustrated, either in the drawing or the accompanying photograph (Fig. 3); the second example can be found on Richard W Turner's CD *A Directory of Scottish Provincial Silversmiths and Their Marks*, where it is filed in the folder labelled Montrose. Again, although a 'JS' is promised in the file name, no 'JS' mark is visible in the photograph (Fig. 4). These rose and mitre marks appear to be the basis on which those occurrences of a 'JS' stamp with mitre marks alone are attributed to a Montrose maker. But are we looking at one maker here, or several?

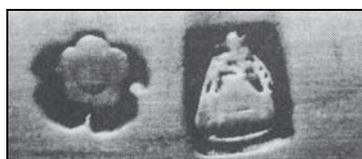


Fig. 3

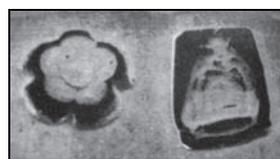


Fig. 4

An examination of the 'JS' initials in Figures 1 & 2 shows that the same punch has been used on both articles (note the polygonal end to the tip of the 'J', the slanted end to the left-hand serif of the cross-stroke to the 'J', the almost rectangular area enclosed by the loop of the 'J', the beaker shaped serif to the 'S' and its enlarged central curve) and that therefore the 'JS' who made the items with the pots of lilies marks, also made the items with the mitre marks. There are also similarities, although the possibilities for comparison are more limited, between the mitre mark in Figures 3 & 4 (in combination with the rose) and the mitre marks accompanied only by the maker's 'JS' stamp (Fig. 1). It seems probable, then, that all of these marks were made by the same maker.

There appears to be no certainty about the dating of these pieces, mostly spoons, attributed to James Sturrock. *Jackson's* gives dates of both 1860 and 1816, though the latter appears to be a mistake, and an item sold at Bonham's Scottish Sale in August 2005 is described as '*A Tablespoon, by James Sturrock of Montrose, circa 1815, four marks, JS, mitre struck four times*'<sup>1</sup>. But as to where the items were made, the marks clearly point to the cities of Dundee<sup>2</sup> and Montrose. James Sturrock is recorded as a watchmaker in both these cities.

James Sturrock was born in 1811 and was christened at Carmylie, Angus, on 21<sup>st</sup> November. His parents were David Sturrock and Helen Milne or Mill. In 1840 James marries Ann Parker of Barrie, a coastal area to the east of and relatively close to Dundee. In the 1841 census James and Ann Sturrock are living in Carnoustie in the Civil Parish of Barry, where Sturrock's occupation is listed as '*Linen Hand Loom Weaver*'. From their children's baptism records<sup>3</sup> it is apparent that the family moved to Dundee some time before

1846. On the Friends of Dundee City Archive's website there is a transcription of an inscription in the Howff cemetery: *'Mary Sturrock 8<sup>th</sup> August 1848, born Barrie, cause of death smallpox. The daughter of James Sturrock, Watchmaker, Wellgate'*

The 1851 census lists James Sturrock and his family at Cables Close, Wellgate, in Dundee and his profession is given as watchmaker. Between 1853 and 1859 he is listed in the Dundee Post Office directories at various dwelling house and shop premises, and in the 1857–58 Municipal List of Voters for the Burgh of Dundee, James Sturrock is given as a watchmaker dwelling in Murraygate northside with other premises in Murraygate and Cowgate. But he is soon on the move again.

In the *Montrose Standard* for 11 February 1859, James Sturrock 'watchmaker and jeweller' places two notices publicising his business at 68 Murray Street, Montrose and, on 15 November 1861, the following notice appears:

*'James Sturrock, watchmaker, begs respectfully to return thanks to the public of Montrose and surrounding district for the liberal support he has received since he opened his present premises in 1859 where he has always on hand a large and select stock of Gold and Silver Watches selected from the best London makers; Gold and Silver Chains and Alberts; Brooches Wedding Rings &c. Clocks in the Best Mahogany and Wainscot Cases at extremely moderate prices. All kinds of Clocks and Watches carefully cleaned and repaired. J.S. [sic] hopes by giving the same strict attention to business to merit a continuance of that support which has hitherto been extended to him. 68 Murray Street Montrose'.*

Three years later, on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1864, his death is announced in the same newspaper. At 122 High Street Montrose on the 5<sup>th</sup> inst, Mr James Sturrock, watchmaker, aged 52 years. The death certificate gives him as *'James Sturrock, Watchmaker (Master)'* and the cause of death as *'Phthisis Pulmonalis (Seven Months)'*. However, this is not the end of this sad story. The 1861 census for James Sturrock 'Watchmaker (Master)', address 134 High Street, Montrose, lists his son, also named James Sturrock, 18 years of age, as 'Watchmaker (app)'. And in April of 1864 he too places a notice in the *Montrose Standard*:

*'J Sturrock begs to call attention to his present stock of Clocks and Watches Gold and Silver Alberts and Guards, Gold Rings, Locketts, Brooches, Seals and Keys which he guarantees to be of a superior quality and at prices considerably below those at which such goods are usually sold. A number of Clocks and Watches which have been for some time in stock but none the worse for the buyer will be sold at and below cost price. All kinds of timekeepers carefully repaired and cleaned. No 6 High Street Montrose'.*

James Sturrock the younger has now taken over the business and moved to different premises. The same advertisement appears again twice in the following month. By August an increasing note of desperation can be detected in further newspaper notices, and in December of the same year, the following notice appears:

*'Notice. James Sturrock watchmaker in Montrose having executed a Trust Deed in favour of Messrs David Gill, watchmaker Aberdeen, and Andrew Bower, watchmaker Montrose, as trustees for behoof of his creditors. All persons having claims against the said James Sturrock are requested to lodge the same with declarations to the verity thereof with David Greig, writer in Montrose, agent for his trustees, within fourteen days from this date: and all those indebted to the same James Sturrock are requested to make payment of their accounts to Mr Bower within the same period. Persons having left watches and other articles with Mr Sturrock for the purpose of being repaired are requested to call upon Mr Bower for the same. Montrose 15 December 1864'.*

Further notices in the *Montrose Herald* describe the entire contents of the shop and its fittings being offered for sale by Private Bargain, and in February of 1865, the new purchaser places this advertisement:

*Great Clearance Sale of Watchmakers and Jewellers' Stock Working Tools, Shop Fittings &c. The subscriber having purchased the whole STOCK &c., which belonged to the Trust Estate of Mr James Sturrock, Watchmaker and Jeweller, in Montrose, he will offer the same shop for Sale for a period of TEN DAYS in that SHOP. No 6, HIGH STREET, where the Business was carried on. The STOCK consists of – Gold and Silver English Lever and Geneva Watches; Eight-Day Clocks; French and other Timepieces; American Clocks; Regulator Clock; Barometers and Thermometers; Gold and Silver Guard and Albert Chains; Gold and Silver Brooches; Ladies and Gentlemen's Finger Rings; Locketts; Scarf Pins; Ear Rings; Seals and Watch Keys; Jet and other Fancy Bracelets, Brooches and Ear Drops; a Fine Assortment of*

Continued overleaf...

*Plated Brooches and Ear Rings; large lot of German Silver and Steel Spectacles and Cases; and a Great Variety of Other Articles. Also, Mahogany Counter-Cases and Show Trays with Shades; Nests of Drawers; Safe; complete set of Window Fittings, consisting of Mirror Plates and Sliding Glass Frames; Gas Brackets; all the Working Tools and a Varied Lot of Other Articles used in carrying on the Trade. The Goods in various departments are all New, and, having been bought for a First Class trade, can be relied on as Genuine. The whole will be offered at such EXTRAORDINARY REDUCED PRICES as cannot fail to command immediate Sale.*

*John Smith Furniture Dealer and Licensed Dealer in Silver, 22 Bridge Street, Montrose. 26 January 1865.'*

A week later on 10 February, the trustees publish a notice to the effect that they have realised the funds of the trust estate and that any outstanding claims against the estate must be made within the next ten days. A fortnight later, on 24<sup>th</sup> February the same notice appears in both the *Montrose Standard* and the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* death announcements:

*'At 48 Overgate Dundee, on the 18th instant, Mr James Sturrock, late watchmaker Montrose, in the 23rd year of his age'.*

James Sturrock the younger's death certificate gives the cause of death as 'consumption'. Like his father before him, he had been ill with the disease that we now call tuberculosis for seven months, and had evidently returned to Dundee when he was no longer able to work, or when the responsibility for the business had passed from his hands. He had outlived his father by little more than a year.

In conclusion, and on a purely geographical basis, James Sturrock is a good candidate to be the maker of those spoons bearing the initials 'JS' with a mitre, or rose (or both) or pot of lilies marks. But if he were indeed the maker of those items, none of them can be dated after 1864, and it would appear that only those made after 1859 can properly be described as by James Sturrock of Montrose. It is possible, of course, that James Sturrock the younger is the maker of some of the items, though it seems improbable that he could have been, in the few years of his adult life, the maker of all the items bearing the mitre mark.

The authors would be glad to hear from any *Finial* readers who can throw any further light on the life and work of James Sturrock and hope to fill in some of the gaps in another article in the near future, in which the earlier period of his life will be explored.

#### Notes

1. The second edition of *Jackson's* (1921), on page 557 entitled *Unascribed Scottish Marks*, shows a drawing of a mitre/bell mark and JS mark found on 'Dessert-spoons: Lord Breadalbane'. The approximate date given is 1750.
2. Several other marks attributed to James Sturrock in Dundee can be found in Dr William Guthrie's book *Dundee Silver 1750-1850* (Donscot Print Ltd, Perth, 1994). These marks, on toddy ladles and mustard spoons, also feature – alongside a JS and a pot of lilies stamps – a single letter S punch, and a curious mark stamped by the same letter C punch struck twice, the second impression turned through 180 degrees to form a crude letter O. Two sets of these marks can be found on Richard Turner's CD *A Directory of Scottish Provincial Silversmiths and Their Marks*. The JS stamped on one of the mustard spoons bears some of the similarities listed earlier, but without examining the objects themselves it has been impossible to form a judgement on whether or not it is the same punch pictured in Figs 1 and 2 above.
3. Children of James Sturock and Ann Parker: records of birth and baptism (International Genealogical Index)

James	born	17 June 1842	baptised 3 July 1842	Barry
Mary	born	1 Mar 1844	baptised 1 April 1844	Barry
Ann	born	23 Jun 1846	baptised 13 July 1846	Dundee
David	born	30 Dec 1847	baptised 4 Feb 1848	Dundee
William Stott	born	30 Dec 1850	baptised 9 Feb 1851	Dundee
Helen Mill	born	8 Mar 1853	baptised 10 April 1853	Dundee
Mary Parker	born	7 Jan 1855		Dundee
Elizabeth Wright	born	7 Jan 1855		Dundee
Alexander	born	16 Dec 1855		Dundee

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