THE SCOTS CANADIAN

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Sharing the Scottish Tradition in Canada

REPORT FROM THE EDITOR

Dear fellow members,

This February I was delighted to be back in Canada in time for the Grand Opening of the Scottish Studies Foundation Digitization Room at the University of Guelph. As mentioned previously, this project will allow archival materials that have traditionally been accessible only through hands-on visits to be available to users worldwide.

In the room where the event took place, the University had on display many books and manuscripts from its special collections department. Looking at these, many of which were hundreds of year old, I couldn't help thinking that the people who wrote, sold or read these when they were first published, could hardly have imagined that in the 21st century not only would they have survived, but would be able to be read by people all over the globe. As Daniel Atlin, Vice-President, External, University of Guelph put it, "From this room, we'll be able to share our treasures not just with the University of Guelph community but with the world."

Foundation President and newsletter editor David Hunter with Vice-President Maggie McEwan at the Grand Opening of the Scottish Studies Foundation Digitization Room which took place on February 21 this year. The Scottish Studies Foundation is proud to have supported this facility at the University of Guelph. It will preserve and make accessible to scholars, students, teachers, genealogists and the general public worldwide, archival materials including rare books, manuscripts, archives and ephemera as these become ever more threatened by age.

All of this is thanks to our members, whose donations made it happen and which continue to support the program run by the Centre for Scottish Studies in the University's Department of History.

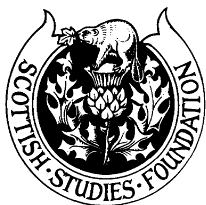
Back in October we held a very successful "Scot of the Year" event at which we paid tribute to Graham Fraser, the 2018 recipient of the award. Graham was Canada's sixth Commissioner of Official Languages and is a former Canadian journalist and writer whose Scots ancestry can be traced to the north of Scotland. His attendance brought both French and English speaking guests to the event, an appropriate reminder of the "Auld Alliance" between Scotland and France. Thanks to the efforts of our Vice-President Maggie McEwan and help from Douglas Gibson and our past Scots of the Year, the event was a night to remember.

I would also like to thank Pearl Nixon for her continued work in organizing the Oor Club, held monthly in Toronto. Pearl enthusiastically seeks out a wide variety of interesting presenters who come along to educate, inform and entertain everyone present and over the years the donations received from the Club total many thousands of dollars. Details of the club can be found on our website and it is worth noting that Stuart Macdonald's article on page 3 is based on the talk he gave at the club in February this year and that Bruce Simpson, Scot of the Year 2017, will be the speaker on April 5 when he will be advocating closer ties between Scotland and Canada.

For the balance of the year, our focus will be on funding our ongoing commitments: payments to the students who staff the Scottish Studies Office; printing the International Review of Scottish Studies; payments to guest lecturers etc. and in this regard, support from our members is crucial and truly appreciated.

So thanks to each and every one of you for all your support and encouragement and I do hope you have a great year.

Sincerely,
David Hunter



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Under the Radar: The Secret Life of Sir Robert Watson-Watt

Based on information sent by Bryan Davies and Rob Herholz, United Front Toronto.

Speaking on the BBC's 2018 series of Reith Lectures, Canadian award-winning historian Margaret MacMillan explored the tangled history of war including its dark paradox: that it can bring benefits and progress as funds quickly become available for projects that were not undertaken in peacetime.

The development of radar during the Second World War is a case in point and we were pleased to learn that Canadian researcher Bryan Davies is now working to create the first full-life biography of the enigmatic figure of Sir Robert Watson-Watt, the Scottish radar pioneer credited with developing the technology which detected incoming German aircraft during the Second World War.

Bryan is from southern Ontario and has written a number of military history books but it was the chance discovery of a fascinating treasure trove of personal items – from Watson-Watt's Dux-medal winning schooldays in his Scottish home town of Brechin to a friendship with Sir Winston Churchill – which sparked Bryan's interest in proceeding with the book. A team has been assembled and transatlantic links are now being forged to tell the story of Watson-Watt in print and on screen.

Bryan was in Scotland recently and met with Watson-Watt authority Steve Nicoll who was “absolutely thrilled” to be included.

“We now have a team that has embraced this story for all the right reasons – because it simply is a great story,” said Bryan.

“In 2017, one of our members, Blake Parnham, inherited a remarkable Watson-Watt treasure trove of personal memorabilia from his grandfather who was Sir Robert’s stepson from his marriage to his Canadian second wife Jean who died in 1964.

“The expansive material includes medals and prizes from Watson-Watt’s schooling in Brechin – he won the Smart Medal as high school Dux – research papers from the mid-1920s onwards, and private correspondence with figures including Sir Winston Churchill and Lord Beaverbrook, as well as an insight into his life in Canada and the US when he mixed with high level politicians and film stars of the day.

“He was a great hoarder and that is amazing for us – we are so excited about what we are uncovering.

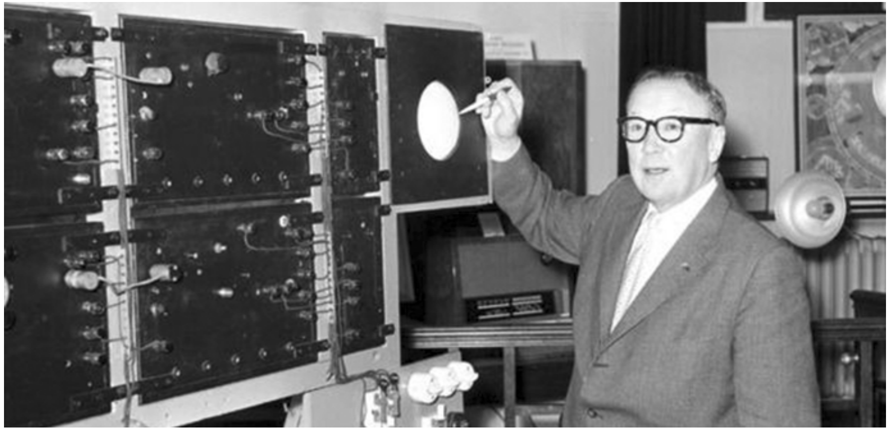
“Watson-Watt was so much more than just the story of radar and the Battle of Britain and it’s become apparent that perhaps the reason no-one has attempted such a biography befitting his importance to military technology innovation is that they didn’t have access to his Canadian life or materials like these.”

He added: “Our team hopes to produce a worthy biography and we also hope to become involved in a collaboration which could lead to a television mini-series.”

The national records collection is also set to benefit from the generosity of the Canadian descendant, who has already said he would like to see the material return to Scotland.

Mr. Nicoll is set to provide the Scottish connection to the project and said that, “Watson-Watt was a fascinating character … a wee lad from Brechin who was knighted. He was educated at Damacre School in Brechin and Brechin High School. He graduated with a BSc (engineering) in 1912 from University College, Dundee which was then part of the University of St Andrews. Following graduation he was offered an assistantship by Professor William Peddie who excited his interest in radio waves and later he worked as a meteorologist with the aim of applying his knowledge of radio to locate thunderstorms so as to provide warnings to airmen.” ■

In the 1930s, as the German air force grew in strength, the fear of air attack became intense. Prime Minister Baldwin had warned that ‘the bomber would always get through’, but a minority, including Winston Churchill and his scientific adviser, Frederick Lindemann, argued that some new form of technical defence must be possible. Surely Britain’s scientists – affectionately known as boffins – could devise a countermeasure?



Sir Robert Watson-Watt with his radar apparatus in 1935

In February 1935, a pilot from the flight research establishment, Farnborough, was told to fly a bomber to the Midlands and back. He was not told why, but the course took the aircraft past the BBC’s short-wave transmitter at Daventry.

Hunched in a van on the ground nearby, Robert Watson-Watt from the National Physical Laboratory and his colleague, Arnold Wilkins, intently watched a cathode ray tube on a cumbersome radio receiver. They hoped that the powerful BBC signal would be reflected strongly enough from the bomber to be detected. As the aircraft flew past about eight miles away, a green spot on the screen appeared, grew, and shrank away again.

The two men had “seen” the aircraft by its electronic echo. Watson-Watt turned to Wilkins and reputedly said, "Britain is an island once more." Following this trial – the Daventry experiment – cash secretly began to pour into developing radar technology and just a year after the first trial, the detection range had improved to 75 miles and 120 miles was later achieved.

Soon, a series of stations with massive 360 feet radar masts began to spring up around the coast until there was an unbroken chain watching out to sea for enemy aircraft called the “Chain Home.” This radar system was not, for its time, especially “hi-tech,” but it was designed to be built fast. It was incorporated into a comprehensive control system for reporting and plotting raids, for steering RAF fighters to their targets and for directing the air battles of World War II in real time. It was this integrated system that changed the nation’s fortunes in the Battle of Britain.

From a press release from the London Science Museum which exhibited Watson-Watt’s original radar apparatus in 2016.

Threats to a Godly Society: Scottish Witchcraft Accusations, 1560 - 1710

By the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald,
Professor of Church and Society,
Knox College, University of Toronto

Last term I was on sabbatical and upon my return to the University of Toronto it dawned on me that something I had done openly only 30 years ago was now banned from campus. You see, when I was at Knox College in the early 1980s I occasionally smoked a pipe and it may seem odd now, but back then I could puff away in a student lounge surrounded by others – just think, a smoking lounge in a theological college! But now, a little over thirty years later, that activity, once commonly practiced, has now been made illegal – it's been banned.

The Scottish Witchcraft Act, 4 June 1563

Anentis Witchcraftis

ITEM Forsamekill as the Quenis Majestie and thre Estatis in this present Parliament being informit, that the havy and abominabill superstitioun usit be divers of the liegis of this Realme, be using of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie and Necromancie, and credence gevin thairto in tymes bygane aganis the Law of God: And for avoiding and away putting of all sic vane superstitioun in tymes tocum:

It is statute and ordanit be the Quenis Majestie, and thre Estatis foirsaidis, that na maner of persoun nor persounis, of quhatsumever estate, degre or conditioun they be of, tak upone hand in ony tymes heirefter, to use ony maner of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie or Necromancie, nor gif thame selfis furth to have ony sic craft or knawlege thairof, thairthrow abusand the pepill: Nor that na persoun seik ony help, response or cosultatioun at ony sic usaris or abusaris foirsaidis of Witchcraftis, Sorsareis or Necromancie, under the pane of deid, aslweill to be execute aganis the usar, abusar, as the seikar of the response or consultatioun. And this to be put to executioun be the Justice, Schireffis, Stewartis, Baillies, Lordis of Regaliteis and Rialteis, thair Deputis, and uthers Ordinar Jugeis competent within this Realme, with all rigour, having powar to execute the samin.

That's something to think about when we look at witchcraft accusations in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth century because it all really began with a law – The Scottish Witchcraft Act – that was passed in Scotland in 1563 declaring witchcraft (the practice and belief in magical skills and abilities carried out by solitary practitioners or groups) to be a crime.

Witches in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1946 production of Macbeth
Photo by Angus McBean

Anyone practicing witchcraft, and other offences such as charming (chanting or reciting magic spells) or necromancy (the practice of communicating with the dead, especially in order to predict the future), or consulting with anyone practicing these activities could be sentenced to death.

Once the law was in place, accusations of people involved in witchcraft commenced and most of them – over 80 percent – were women. This continued over roughly the next 150 years. There were a few scattered accusations after 1710, but the key period of witchcraft accusations runs from around 1560 to 1710.

And in this period, over 3,800 individuals were accused of this crime in Scotland. Or to be more specific, the latest attempt at counting, *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft (2003),* lists 3,837 witches; 3,212 named witches plus another 625 situations where we don't have an actual name. However, we do not know how many were executed and this remains a matter of considerable dispute and argument.

All of this has become a major subject of interest and of historical research over the last forty or so years. Before this, although historians were aware of the subject, it wasn't one they were particularly interested in or comfortable with.

Someone once quipped… "There were no witches in Gordon Donaldson's Scotland!" referring to the great historian of the Scottish reformation and the sixteenth century, Gordon Donaldson, Professor of Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh who expressed little or no interest in the matter. As General Editor of *The Edinburgh History of Scotland* published in 1965, he made scant reference to the subject in that book – the one which, when I was a Scottish Studies student at Guelph, was still the major work in the field.

But things were changing at that time and have changed since. Notably, in 1981 Christina Larner, from the University of Glasgow, published *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland.* This was the first book-length investigation of the Scottish witch-hunt and it has shaped the field ever since. It also has done something that few books on Scottish history have done: it contributed to the broader conversation on European history, in this case the European witch-hunt.

Too often Scotland is at best an afterthought for European historians studying topics such as the Reformation or political events of the sixteenth century. If it were not for Mary Queen of Scots, no-one would think of Scotland in this period. That might be a bit of an overstatement, but at times I wonder. So Christina Larner's book was a major accomplishment. It offered a coherent study of the Scottish witch-hunt – which is how historians thought of witchcraft accusations. They thought in terms of hunts for witches, where people aggressively sought out witches, and forced them to identify other witches.

Enemies of God gave us historians background information, including the passage of the Witchcraft Act. It gave us a graph showing when those accusations took place, and when the major hunts occurred. It identified what parts of Scotland were involved. And it gave us a basic explanation and inserted what happened in Scotland into the larger European understanding of the witch-hunt which had by then developed. And it was all fairly straightforward.

Scotland criminalized witchcraft in 1563, but it was not until thirty years later, when King James VI returned from the continent with a belief in demonological witchcraft (the idea that witches gathered in groups to conspire to overthrow society) that witch-hunting began seriously. It was the idea of a conspiracy with the Devil and the belief in a demonic pact between witches and Satan that energized the Scottish witch-hunt.

There was also the belief that the Scottish witch-hunt became extreme because in Scotland torture was allowed as part of the judicial system.

So this was the understanding of the Scottish witch-hunt which emerged from Larner's book and which contributed to the

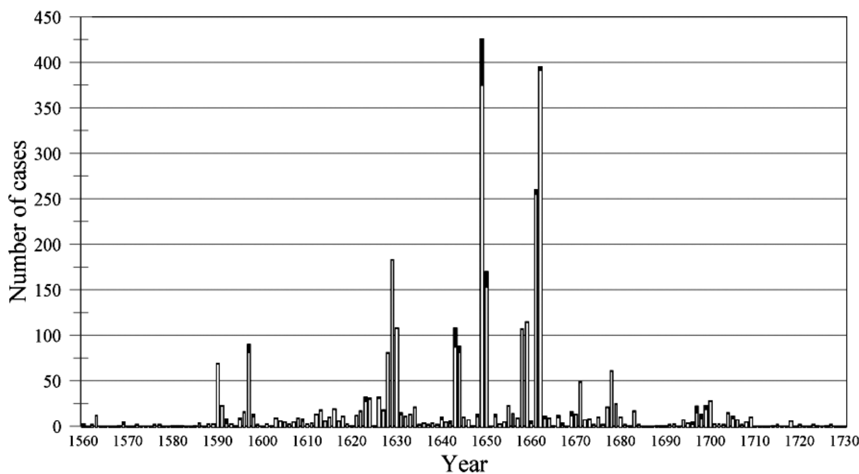


Fig-1

broader understanding of the European witch-hunt, and which shaped subsequent research into the Scottish witch-hunt, including my own work.

One of the key contrasts was with the experience of Scotland (which was seen as more continental) and England (which, it was argued, had a much different experience because of its different legal system). And this has shaped our understanding of the Scottish witch-hunt and continues to shape it.

Except, almost everything in that original understanding has been challenged; indeed, I would argue that most of it has been proven wrong; or, has been highly qualified.

For example, although belief in the demonic pact (in traditional Christian belief about witchcraft, a pact between a person and Satan) existed in Scotland, we also find examples of it in England.

But in Scotland it doesn't seem to be as omnipresent as Larner's book would suggest. So, if we're looking for that as an explanation of why the Scottish witch-hunt was more severe than the English witch-hunt, this cannot be it. And is that question – why Scotland had a more serious witch-hunt than England – even the right question to ask?

Enemies of God was a great book and an important book. And among researchers working at understanding the Scottish witch-hunt there are many who continue to work from the assumptions that the book laid out. They continue to support them and make the argument that this is what the Scottish witch-hunt was all about.

I am not one of those historians. I've been working in this area on and off since 1981. Christina Larner had published *Enemies of God* but a copy had not yet found its way into the University Guelph library when I began working in this area. Though my main research area is currently quite different, I have continued my interest and I published two articles in this area in 2017. Over the years, as much as I appreciate what Larner accomplished, I have come to understand what happened in Scotland quite differently. So, what I want to share are some challenges to the picture that Larner presented.

Let's begin with an important one: James VI was not obsessed with witches; and most of the Scottish witch-hunt did not occur during his reign. And, he did not introduce the idea of demonic witchcraft into Scotland. That's quite a challenge to Larner's picture of the Scottish witch-hunt.

James has loomed large. And he does play a role. He wrote a philosophical dissertation, *Daemonologie*, about witches. He was involved in questioning some of the North Berwick witches, who it was claimed had been part of a conspiracy to sink his ship as he returned from Denmark with his new bride. James VI has a clear place in our story. But that role is more limited and different from what we imagine. There is no evidence anyone in Scotland ever applied the ideas in *Daemonologie* in actual Scottish witchcraft cases. How do we know this? Well, James made some unique arguments in his book, including his rejection of the commonly held belief that witches could actually fly.

These ideas do not show up later in Scottish cases. He also didn't introduce the idea of the demonic as it pertained to witches and witchcraft; recent research has demonstrated, he didn't actually encounter these ideas in Denmark as was once suggested; and those elements were already present in the case before he became involved.

But it is clear that while James VI believed in witches as most people did in this period, he was skeptical – in particular as to whether any particular person might be a witch.

In 1597, Margaret Aitken, known as the "Great Witch of Balwearie" and who claimed to be able to recognize other witches by looking for a special mark in their eyes, was exposed as a fraud and this reinforced James' skepticism which he then carried into England when he became king of that country as well.

Finally, the vast majority of accusations of witchcraft did not come under his reign, but later during the reign of his son, Charles I.

Another important topic that needs to be reconsidered is the role of torture. It has been claimed that the vast majority of Scottish witches were tortured and that this was what made the Scottish witch-hunt so severe. Again, this is usually contrasted with the situation in England.

Here is a typical scene we are to imagine: a woman is brought in as an accused witch and she is asked if she is a witch; and, when she denies this, is physically tortured by a hot iron. This is done again and again until she confesses. She is then forced to reveal the names of her fellow witches who, in turn, are then brought in and the same thing done to them.

Did this happen in Scotland? The answer is yes. We know of a few cases where specific individuals were physically tortured. Except in several situations, no accomplices were sought; and in most cases, the torture was not part of the legal system at all (and this matters). Torture was done outside of the legal system – it was illegal.

Why does this matter? Well, the argument has always been that it was because Scotland had a different legal system from England but that's not what's going on here – there also could have been torture in England outside the legal system. Actually, when we look at the Scottish witch-hunt, there are only a few occasions that we know for certain that individuals were tortured. Instead, because there are particular situations in which one accused is known to have been tortured, it has then been assumed that this happened everywhere and with everyone who was accused.

Unfortunately, sometimes historians do this but when it happens we need to be clear that this is what is being done. We also should look for circumstantial evidence to support it. Indeed, there are a few situations where we have a concentration of many accusations in one place at one time which would suggest something like this might have been happening; but we also have many situations where we have totally random accusations, and these do not support this pattern.

Scottish historians have invested a great deal of energy into counting witches and so we have a very good chronology of the Scottish witch-hunt. With some minor adjustments, this graph in Fig-1 shows what we've had to work with for almost forty years. This is a national pattern. What's interesting is when we break this down by region, e.g. how many were accused in 1628 in a particular county in Scotland, we see some intense concentrations of accusations, but in many cases we see scattered accusations all across Scotland.

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A Visit by the Vikings A.D. 1010

From the Karlsevni Saga translated by Einar Haughen

Ngkh'Gtkeuqp)u'Xkpncpf "y cu'vj g'i qcn'qh" cp'Kegncpf ke'o gtej cpv'ecmgf "Vj qtkhpp" Mctnugxpk'cpf "qh'vj g'eqnqpk| kpi " gzr gf kvkqp'j g'ngf "kp'vj g'gngxgpvj "egpwt{ ."dwv" vj gkt'hktuv'y kpvgt'y cu'ur gpv'kp'O ctmcpf ." y j kej "o c{ "j cxg'dggp'kp'P qxc'Uequvkc"*vj qwi j " cdqwv'vj ku'uej qnctu'f kuci tgg+0'Vj g'ncpf hcm' j cu'c"ewtkqwu'uki pkhkecpeg'kh'kv'y cu'P qxc" Uequvkc."hqt'vy q'Uequvkuj "o go dgtu'qh'vj g" gzr gf kvkqp"cpvkekr cvgf "d{ "qxgt'ugxgp" egpwtkgu'vj g'J ki j ncpf gtu'y j q'eco g'vq'õP gy " Uequvcpf ö'vq'uvc{0'

Cnqpi "y kvj "vj gtg'y gtg'382"o gp'cdqctf "vj g" vj tgg'uj kr u0'Vj g{ "ucknf "hktuv'vq'vj g'Y guvgtp" Ugwngo gpv'*I tggpncpf +"cpf "vj gp'qpw'vq'Dgct" Kungu0'Htqo "vj gtg'vj g{ "ucknf "hqt'vy q'f c{ u" y kvj "c'pqtvj gtn{ "y kpf "dghqtg'vj g{ "uki j vgf " ncpf 0'Vj g{ "tqy gf "vq'uj qtg'kp'vj gkt'dqcv'cpf " gzr nqtgf "vj g'eqwpvt{ =vj gtg'vj g{ "hqwpf "j wi g" uncdu'qh'uvqpg."o cp{ "qh'vj go " vy gpv{ hqwt "hggv'cetquu0'Vj g{ " ucy "o cp{ "ctevke'hqzgu'vj gtg0' Vj g{ "pco gf "vj g'eqwpvt{ " J gmwncpf "*vj g'ncpf "qh'hncv'tqemu/ P gy hqwpf ncpf "qt'Ncdtcf qt"A+0' Vj gp'vj g{ "ucknf "hqt'vy q'f c{ u" o qtg'y kvj "vj gkt'eqwtug'wtpkpi " htqo "uqwvj "vq'uqwvj /gcuv."cpf " tgcej gf "c'ncpf "y kvj "i tgcv'hqtguvu' cpf "o cp{ "cpko cnu0'Qhh'vj g'uj qtg" vq'vj g'uqwvj /gcuv'nc{ "cp'kuncpf ." cpf "j gtg'vj g{ "mknngf "c'dgct0'Hqt" vj ku'tgcuqp'vj g{ "ecmgf "kv'Dgct" Kuncpf ."y j kng'vj g{ "pco gf "vj g" eqwpvt{ "kvugnh'O ctmncpf "*hqtguv'ncpf "ó'P qxc" Uequvkc"A+'dgecwug'qh'vj g'y qqf u0'

Vj gp'vj g{ "ucknf "c"nqpi "vko g"cnqpi "vj g" eqcuv'cpf "eco g'vq'c'ecr g0'Vj g{ "vcemgf " cnqpi "vj g'eqcuv'y kvj "y cu'qp'vj gkt" uvctdqctf 0'Kv'y cu'cp'wphtkgpf n{ "uj qtgnkpg." y kvj "nqpi "ucpf { "dgcej gu0'Vj g{ "r wv'qwv'vj gkt" dqcvu'cpf "tqy gf "cuj qtg0'Qp'vj g'ecr g'vj g{ " hqwpf "vj g'mggn'qh'c'uj kr ."cpf "uq'vj g{ "ecmgf "kv" Mggnpguu0'Vj g{ "cnuq"ecmgf "vj g'uvtcpf " Y qpf gtuvtcpf u'dgecwug'kv'vqqm'uq'nqpi "vq'uckn" r cuv'vj go 0'Vj gp'vj g'eqcuv'i tgy "o qtg" kpf gpvgf "y kvj "dc{ u'cpf "vj g{ "uvggtgf "vj g'uj kr " kpvq'qpg'qh'vj gug0'

Y j gp'Ngkh'Gtkeuqp'j cf "dggp'cv'vj g'eqwtv' qh'Qnch'Vt{ i xcuqp."cpf "Mkpi "Qnch'j cf "cumgf " j ko "vq'r tqenckp'Ej tkuvkcpkv{ 'kp'I tggpncpf ."j g" j cf "i kxgp'Ngkh'vy q'Uequvkuj "*I cgnke+"r gqr ng." c"o cp'pco gf "J cmk'cpf "c'y qo cp'pco gf " J gmlc0'"

Vj g'mkpi "uwi i guvgf "vj cv'kh'j g'pggf gf "ur ggf " j g'o ki j v'wug'vj go ."hqt'vj g{ "y gtg'uy khvgt'vj cp" f ggt0'Ngkh'cpf "Gtke'j cf "wtpgf "vj go "qxgt'vq" Mctnugxpk'hqt'vj g'xq{ ci g'Y j gp'vj g{ "j cf " ucknf "r cuv'Y qpf gtuvtcpf u'vj g{ "ncpf gf "vj g" Uequ'cpf "vqnf "vj go "vq'twp'uqwvj y ctf u'cpf " ugg'y j cv'vj g'eqwpvt{ "j cf "vq'qhhgt."dwv'vq" tgwtp'dghqtg'vj tgg'f c{ u'y gtg'r cuv0000'Vj g{ " ecuv'cpej qt'cpf "nc{ "vj gtg'kp'vj g'o gcpy j kng." y j gp'vj tgg'f c{ u'j cf "r cuugf ."vj g'Uequ'eco g" twppkpi "f qy p'vq'vj g'uj qtg0'Qpg'qh'vj go "dqtg" c"dwpej "qh'i tcr gu'kp'j ku'j cpf ."vj g'qvj gt'cp" gct'qh'y knf "y j gcv0'Mctnugxpk'f genctgf "vj cv' vj g{ "uggo gf "vq'j cxg'hqwpf "c'eqwpvt{ "tkej "kp" tguqwtegu'cpf "vqqm'vj go "dcem'qp'dqctf 0'Vj gp" vj g{ "cm'uckngf "cy c{ "qp'vj gkt'eqwtug'wpvkn'vj g{ " tgcej gf "c'r nceg'y j gtg'vj g'uj qtgnkpg'y cu" dtqmgp'd{ "c'hlqtf ."cpf "kpvq'vj ku'hlqtf "vj g{ " j gcf gf "vj gkt'uj kr u0'Cv'vj g'o qwvj "nc{ "cp" kuncpf ."y cuj gf "d{ "uvtqpi "ewttgpvu=vj ku" vj g{ "ecmgf "Uvtgco "Kung0'Vj gtg'y gtg'uq'o cp{ " gkf gt/f wemu'vj gtg'vj cv'kv'y cu'j ctf n{ "r quukdng" vq'uvgr "dgw ggp'vj g'gi i u0'Vj g{ "uvggtgf "kpvq" vj g'hlqtf "cpf "ecmgf "kv'Uvtgco hlqtf 0'

J gtg'vj g{ "wpnqcf gf "vj gkt'ecti qgu'cpf "ugv" wr "c'eco r 0'Vj g{ "j cf "dtqwi j v'cm'mkpf u" qh'nkxguvqem'cpf "pqy "vj g{ "wtpgf "vj go "qwv'vq" i tc| g'kp'vj g'vcm'i tcuu0'Vj gtg'y gtg'o qwpvckpu" vj gtg."cpf "vj g'eqwpvt{ "y cu'dgcwkhwn'vq'ugg0' Vj g'o gp'ur gpv'cm'vj gkt'vko g'gzr nqtkpi 0'Vj g{ " uvc{gf "vj gtg'vj tqwi j qwv'vj g'y kpvgt."y j kej "wtpgf " qwv'vq'dg'c'ugxgtg'qpg0■

Greenland
Eric the red
Norway
Helluland
Thorfinn Karlsefni
(Saga of Eric the Red)
Western settlement
Eastern settlement
Iceland
Faroe
Shetland
Orkney
Scotland
Leif Erikson
(Saga of the Greenlanders)
Ireland
Markland
Bjarni Herjolfsson
(Saga of the Greenlanders)
Vinland
Leif Erikson
(Saga of Eric the Red)

Xkmkpi "uckkpi "tqwvgu'vq'r tgugpv/f c{ "Ecpcf c"

The Maid of Norway: The Child Queen of Scots, 1286-1290

By Stephen Spinks

The Maid of Norway is a name or title that echoes out of the mists of history. Yet, ask anyone to embellish, and few can place her or better still begin to tell her story. It's unsurprising, given that Margaret, the last of the Scottish royal house of Dunkeld, lived, ruled and died all by the age of seven. Her death in 1290 sparked the first Scottish War of Independence, when Edward I sought to subjugate the Scots to English rule. But who was Margaret and why was her status so important? How did her short life have such an impact on Anglo, Scottish and Norwegian relations?

Scotland of the late thirteenth century, was, up until the premature death of Alexander III, King of Scots (r. 1249-1286), a kingdom living in relative peace and security. With a population of approximately 500,000 it had established trading routes with Europe and a complex web of small towns, villages.

The relationship with the kingdom of England, its immediate neighbour south of the border, had throughout the last three hundred years been complicated, sometimes punctuated by war, but in the last seventy years there had been a prolonged period of peace.

King Alexander III, born in September 1241, had married Margaret, the daughter of Henry III, King of England at Christmas in 1251 in a lavish ceremony at York.

Margaret Plantagenet, herself only a year older than her very young new husband, was a perfect match. They hit it off immediately, and their ensuing marriage became a successful one and at the age of twenty, Queen Margaret gave birth to her first child, who became her namesake. Two further children would follow; Alexander, named after his father and therefore the heir, was born on 21 January 1264, and David arrived on 20 March 1273. Succession to the Scottish royal house therefore looked secure and Alexander III's reign prospered. His rule would be considered, with the benefit of hindsight, as something of a golden age, like that of David I who had ruled Scotland from 1124-1153. However, fortune is fickle and on 26 February 1275, Queen Margaret, only thirty-five years of age, died at Cupar, Fife; the reason for her premature death unclear. The chronicler of Lanercost wrote that she had been a woman of great beauty, chastity and humility, "three qualities seldom united in one individual." It was high praise indeed from the pages of a chronicler who was often misogynistic, even for his time. Their marriage had been something of a love match, and like his brother-in-law Edward I, who famously remained unmarried for over a decade after the death of his own wife Eleanor of Castile in 1290, Alexander made no attempt to remarry for nine years until events overtook him.

One of Alexander III's greatest achievements was the Scottish expansion and reconquest of the Western Isles, overcoming the Norwegian rule of King Haakon and his son, Magnus Lagaboater in the 1260's. Held by Norwegian hands since the days of the Vikings, Alexander secured his western kingdom by force, which was recognized in the Scots-Norwegian Treaty of Perth of 1266, in return for a Scottish compensation payment of 4,000 marks and 100 marks annually, paid in perpetuity.

Lerwick Town Hall stained glass window depicting "Margaret, queen of Scotland and daughter of Norway"

Orkney and the Shetland Isles were reserved for the Norwegian kingdom, only passing to the Scots in 1466. Under the same treaty, Alexander's daughter, then six years old, was betrothed to the Norwegian royal heir. Some years later, by 1281, the thirteen year old King Eric II Magnusson now ruled Norway, and in fulfilling the terms, Alexander sent his only daughter, now twenty-one, to marry Eric at Riga that August. The Lanercost chronicler wrote; "She comported herself so graciously towards the king [Eric] and his people that she altered their manners for the better, taught them the French and English languages, and set the fashion of more seemly dress and food."

A year and a half later, in April 1283, Margaret gave birth to their first child, a baby daughter, who keeping with the tradition of the period, was named after the child's mother. It was this little girl, who was destined to become Margaret, Maid of Norway. Sadly for the mother, she did not survive the child birthing chamber.
Like so many women in the medieval period, giving birth was a dangerous occasion, which often resulted in complications and premature death of mother or child, or worse still, both.

Fortune's wheel once more turned. Alexander III's heir, his son Alexander, married a year after his elder sister. On 15 November 1282 he wedded Marguerite, daughter of Guy de Dampierre, Count of Flanders, but despite their youth, the marriage was childless and short-lived, Alexander dying fourteen months later on 28 January 1284. His younger brother David had already predeceased himself in the summer of 1281. Some nine years after the death of his wife Queen Margaret, Alexander III suddenly found himself without legitimate heirs. In desperation, he was forced to seek a second marriage, settling on Yolande de Dreux, daughter of Robert II, Count of Dreux, who was descended from King Louis VI of France and was also a vassal of Edward I in France. They married on All Saints Day on 14 October 1285 at Jedburgh Abbey.

But for Alexander, fortune and time was also running out. At the age of forty-three, he was described in the *Scotichronicon*, as being "exceptional in appearance, physically well built, thickset and tall in stature, though he could not be called fat. He had a jovial face, a steadfast heart and a devout spirit." Despite these qualities, his steadfast heart was possibly his undoing. Holding a long meeting of his council on 18 March 1286 in Edinburgh Castle, the king determined to head out into the night, despite the terrible weather and thick fog in order to reach his manor of Kinghorn across the mighty coastal river of the Forth, to spend the night with his young wife. He set off with three squires, and having been ferried across the tidal river without incident, was riding along the coastal track where he became detached from his men in thick fog. The squires arrived at Kinghorn but the king failed to appear. A search party was sent out and as dawn broke, the king's body was found at the foot of the steep cliffs, broken and disheveled. Whether his horse stumbled and fell or simply threw him, the golden reign of Alexander III was prematurely cut short, and Scotland was inadvertently thrown into a royal succession crisis.

As the late king was laid to rest on 29 March at the royal abbey of Dunfermline, Scottish nobles gathered at Scone on 2 April. Queen Yolande promptly declared she was pregnant which would give the late king a posthumous heir. There was of course his granddaughter, Margaret, the Maid of Norway who was now three years old and

living with her father King Eric. The Scottish nobles were sceptical of Queen Yolande's sudden revelation, and the prospect of a young female foreign child ruling the kingdom, influenced by her father whose family had only two decades before been Scotland's enemy, did not appeal. Rival families such as the Bruces and the Balliols lined up their male heirs and reminded their peers that they too were closely related to the royal house and ought to be considered contenders for the crown. In the heated year of 1286, six Guardians of Scotland were eventually appointed to run the affairs of the kingdom while a way forward could be determined. All the nobles agreed on oath of fealty to uphold and support the "nearest by blood who by right must inherit" – a suitably vague oath that decided nothing but kept some form of peace in the kingdom. In the following months Queen Yolande either miscarried, or it became apparent that she was not pregnant at all, and promptly left the kingdom. From 1286 until 1289, the rule of Queen Margaret was neither proclaimed in Scotland nor established and the Guardians continued to rule in the absence of a declared sovereign. It was clear that there remained little appetite to accept her, even though she was the last of a long Scottish royal house.

Frustrated, on 1 April 1289, three years after Alexander's death, King Eric II of Norway was determined to see his daughter come into her rightful inheritance. Writing to Edward I, King of England, Eric encouraged Edward to discuss the status of Margaret and also a potential marriage. It was a guaranteed way to ensure the nobles and Guardians of Scotland would now stand to attention and take Margaret's status seriously. They would either recognize her or be outmaneuvered and left out in the cold political wilderness. Edward I, recently returned from his two-and-a-half year sojourn around his Duchy of Aquitaine, invited Norwegian delegates and three surviving Guardians – the bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow as well as John Comyn of Badenoch – and Robert Bruce V, Lord of Annandale (grandfather of Robert Bruce, later King of Scots) to Salisbury to discuss the details. The meeting proved fruitful. Under the subsequent Treaty of Salisbury, ratified on 6 November 1289, the Maid of Norway was accepted and proclaimed as the "Lady, Queen and Heiress" of the Scots. Eric had played his card well. To ensure her reign could fully begin, it was agreed that Queen Margaret would arrive in Scotland by 1 November 1290, and that if her ship landed in England first, Edward I would deliver her to Scotland "when the kingdom shall have been well settled and in peace." Even more importantly for the Scots, Margaret was to be "free and quit of all contract of marriage or betrothal," safeguarding for the Guardians the imposition of a marriage to a man who may not have been of their liking. However, they were not out of the woods yet, being forced not to arrange her future marriage either without first consulting Edward I and receiving the assent of King Eric.

Edward I, that cunning and shrewd medieval monarch, now saw an opportunity. His only surviving son, Edward of Caernarfon, born in April 1284, was a year younger than Margaret. A marriage between the two would, without any need for war, unite the two separate kingdoms of Scotland and England under their heirs into perpetuity. The King of England discreetly sent Otto de Grandison to Rome to seek the necessary papal dispensation to marry as they were related too closely under the prohibited degrees of affinity in canonical law. Rumour quickly spread of Edward I's machinations, reaching the Scottish guardians on 14 March 1290 while they stayed at Birgham.

The English king, at this stage not a political threat to the Scots and had throughout his life so far been a friendly and supportive brother-in-law to the late Alexander III, was therefore seemingly a natural ally. Three days later, on 17 March the Scots wrote to Edward informing him they had heard of the rumour and were happy to consent to a marriage between the two children. Suddenly everything began to move at pace. On 18 July 1290, the Treaty of Birgham was ratified in which Margaret, Queen of Scots and Edward of Caernarfon, the future Edward II, were betrothed. The treaty focused at length on the thorny issue of how the two ancient kingdoms would be governed, the Scots eager to ensure that the political and constitutional identities of both would remain separate. It was agreed that Edward, on marriage, would become King of Scots *jure uxoris* (by right of his wife only), meaning Margaret would remain as Queen Regnant of Scotland. Any heirs to this marriage would inherit both kingdoms, but they would remain separate politically, and importantly for the Scots, the Scottish people would not be compelled to give fealty to England, as had been asked in centuries past and remained a delicate issue between the two countries. Margaret in turn would become Queen Consort of England when her future husband would inherit his throne. The deal was done and accepted by all involved.

Edward I now became increasingly focused on Scottish affairs. On the 20 May he sent English ships from Yarmouth to Norway provisioned with sweetmeats, dried fruits, gingerbreads and even an organ for the young queen's amusement, with the view to bring her to her new kingdom. However, Eric II was not prepared to send his daughter to Scotland on English ships, instead insisting that his dignity be observed. It was a wise choice, for on the return journey, when the English ships docked in the Humber, the sick crew disembarked, with several of their number having already succumbed to disease and death. It had been a lucky escape.

Little is known of Margaret's personal life up until this point. Born in April 1283, she had grown up at the court of her father King Eric so Scotland was an alien place to her, although she must have been taught about it. Now at the delicate age of seven, she was to board her father's ship and sail from Norway to her new life as Queen of Scots. She would be accompanied by Narne, Bishop of Bergen, as well as attendants Ban Thorir Haaknson and Fan Ingebirorg Erlingsdottir. Setting sail in the late summer, the small fleet may have hit a storm and sought refuge in Orkney off the northern coast of Scotland. Either the boats were wrecked or simply seeking shelter, or worse, sickness had broken out on board, but either way the Maid was taken ill so the party remained at Orkney for some time. News was sent to the Scottish nobles waiting near Scone which became confused and irregular. Her sickness deepened and in an age of limited effective medical help, Margaret died "between the hands of Bishop Narne."

News was sent to Scotland shortly afterwards. With the death of the infant Queen, the ancient royal house of Dunkeld came to an abrupt end. There now ensued a bitter race to press the claims of many nobles in Scotland for the crown, they themselves being known as "The Claimants," the most serious of which would be the Bruces and the Balliols. Edward I had been cheated of an opportunity, but in attempting to marry his son to Scotland's infant queen, the King of England had become fixed on an idea of unity between the two kingdoms. With no legitimate heir of Dunkeld now living, he was free to pursue a policy of conquest that would be devastating for Scotland, bringing about the First War of Scottish Independence and later the rise of Robert the Bruce, King of Scots in 1306. The young Edward of Caernarfon, now freed from his first betrothal, would eventually marry Isabella of France in 1308, a marriage which has in many ways become the stuff of legend.

History changes on a pinpoint, and the life of Margaret, Queen of Scots, is just one such occasion whose untimely death inadvertently changed the course of history for many, far beyond those directly or immediately involved with her. ■

Stephen Spinks is author of 'Edward II the Man: A Doomed Inheritance' and is currently writing 'Robert the Bruce: Champion of a Nation,' due for release in Autumn 2019.

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