WOMEN IN SCOTLAND

C.1100-C.1750
To the Women of Scotland – past, present and future.
    May their voices be heard.
# Table of Contents

*List of Illustrations* ix  
*Foreword* xi  
*Acknowledgements* xiii  
*Timeline* xv  
*Introduction* xix

## PART ONE

1. The Foundation and Patronage of Nunneries by Native Elites in Twelfth- and Early Thirteenth-Century Scotland  
   *R. Andrew McDonald* 3

2. Power Through Purity: The Virgin Martyrs and Women’s Salvation in Pre-Reformation Scotland  
   *Audrey-Beth Fitch* 16

3. Women in Scottish Divinity, *c.1590–c.1640*  
   *David G. Mullan* 29

## PART TWO

4. Scots Abroad in the Fifteenth Century: The Princesses Margaret, Isabella and Eleanor  
   *Priscilla Bawcutt and Bridget Henisch* 45

5. Images of Women in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Literary Manuscripts  
   *Evelyn S. Newlyn* 56

6. Women of the Gàidhealtachd and their Songs to *1750*  
   *Anne C. Frater* 67

## PART THREE

7. ‘Dragonis baith and dowis ay in double forme’: Women at the Court of James V, *1513–1542*  
   *Andrea Thomas* 83

8. Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Ferniehirst, the Countess of Arran and the Countess of Huntly, *c. 1580–1603*  
   *Ruth Grant* 95
9. ‘Holde her at the Oeconomicke rule of the House’: Anna of Denmark and Scottish Court Finances, 1589–1603
   Maureen M. Meikle

10. In Search of the Antecedents of Women’s Political Activism in Early Eighteenth-Century Scotland: the Daughters of Anne, Duchess of Hamilton Karl von den Steinen

PART FOUR

11. ‘For Whatever Ales Ye’: Women as Consumers and Producers in Late Medieval Scottish Towns Elizabeth Ewan

12. Embroidery to Enterprise: the Role of Women in the Book Trade of Early Modern Scotland Alastair J. Mann

13. The Power Behind the Merchant? Women and the Economy in Late Seventeenth-Century Edinburgh Helen Dingwall

PART FIVE

14. Women and Legal Representation in Early Sixteenth-Century Scotland John Finlay

15. Wife and Widow: The Evidence of Testaments and Marriage Contracts c. 1600 Winifred Coutts

16. Women and the Church Courts in Reformation-Era Scotland Michael F. Graham

PART SIX

17. A Woman’s Place: Birth Order, Gender and Social Status in Highland Houses Roxanne Reddington-Wilde

18. Wet Nurses and Unwed Mothers in Seventeenth-Century Aberdeen Gordon DesBrisay

19. Wed to the Manse: The Wives of Scottish Ministers, c.1560–c.1800 Ian D. Whyte and Kathleen A. Whyte

20. Women and Gender in the Early Modern Western Gàidhealtachd Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart

Contributors

Index
List of Illustrations

1. The Prioress Anna of the nunnery at Iona as depicted upon her tombstone.
2. Eleanor, fourth daughter of James I.
3. Margery Bowes or Margaret Stewart, wife of John Knox.
4. Dame Jean or Jonet Scott, Lady Ferniehirst, shown as a widow in 1593.
5. Anna of Denmark, consort of James VI and I.
6. The family of Sir William Dick of Braid.
7. Washer women of Dundee, as depicted by John Slezer in 1678.
8a. Esther Inglis, calligrapher, printer and embroiderer of bookbindings.
8b. Title pages of Bibles printed by Agnes Campbell in 1707.

(Part title illustrations)

1. Iona nun (detail).
   H. D. Graham, Antiquities of Iona (1850)
2. Lady Grisel Baillie’s crewel work.
   The Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie, 1692–1733
   ed. R. Scott-Moncrieff (Scottish History Society, 1911)
   The Scottish National Portrait Gallery
4. Woman with a basket (detail).
   J. Slezer, ‘Ruins of Dryburgh’, Theatrum Scotiae (1874), plate 33. By permission of Special Collections, University of Guelph Library.
5. A Scotch Woman.
   J. Speed, The Kingdome of Scotland (1652)
6. A Highland Woman.
   J. Speed, The Kingdome of Scotland (1652)
Foreword

On 18 May 1996 the Scottish History Department of the University of Edinburgh, in conjunction with the Scottish Women's History Network, held a highly successful day conference entitled *Women in Scotland c.1100–c.1750*. It was exciting to hear a series of papers based on the latest research, all the more so because relatively little on that subject had appeared in print. Twenty years ago, feminists were publishing vehement and often entertaining polemics deploring sexual stereotyping and the plight of women condemned to lives of domestic drudgery. In order to achieve social change, inspired enthusiasts often use lively rhetoric to alert others to wrongs which need to be righted but, in drawing urgent attention to sexual inequalities, most feminist writers had no time to undertake historical research and when they did allude to the situation in centuries gone by, they often gave the impression that women had consistently been held down by the law and by their husbands, forced into a submissive, secondary role which they were unable to challenge.

Anyone who looks at the records soon discovers that this was far from being so, and indeed most people have vague recollections of stories heard in childhood about Black Agnes of Dunbar defending her castle or Flora MacDonald taking Bonnie Prince Charlie across the sea to Skye. Amusing as these tales may be, they are largely anecdotal and most of them derive from one small section of society, the aristocracy. For any more scientific study, what was needed was fundamental documentary research of the kind which takes time, expert knowledge and, above all else, patience. The evidence exists, but it is fragmentary, scattered and requires painstaking investigation over a period of months and years before it can be gathered together and conclusions can be drawn.

Fortunately, scholars have not been deterred by these difficulties and in the past few years we have begun to see the results of their work. Now, this splendid volume of conference papers, with additional essays by other experts, gives us a comprehensive view of the feminine situation, based on archival sources ranging from Court of Session records to Middle Scots poetry. Here we can discover how women really lived and what they really thought, whether they were twelfth-century nuns or late-medieval brewers, widows or wives of ministers of the kirk. Their attitudes, their experiences, the way people perceived them and the manner in which they perceived themselves are examined and assessed, to fascinating effect.
In 1983, when I was completing my own contribution to Scottish women’s studies, I longed for information like this. Sixteen years later, it is therefore a particular pleasure to contribute the Foreword to this book.

Rosalind K. Marshall
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our contributors for taking part in this project and for giving us such a rich variety of papers. Thanks are also due to our anonymous referees who gave excellent guidance. The conference on which this book is based would not have been possible without the official help of Professor Michael Lynch and the Department of Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh and the support of the Scottish Women’s History Network. Ruth Grant and Sharon Adams deserve a special mention for co-ordinating the entire conference preparations and administration whilst the editors were busy elsewhere. Their efficiency ensured a smooth-running event that was greatly enjoyed by speakers, session chairs and audience alike. The conference sessions were expertly chaired by Dr Jane Dawson, Dr Rosalind Marshall, Mr David Sellar and Professor Geoffrey Barrow. Dr Stana Nenadic’s closing comments were incisive and encouraging to all involved in researching medieval and early modern Scotswomen.

Post-conference thanks are due to Dr Rosalind Marshall and the staff of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery for helping us acquire illustrations for the book. By agreeing to write the Foreword for the book, Dr Marshall gave the project a most welcome bonus. For agreeing to publish an unusual collection of Scottish essays, we are very grateful to John and Val Tuckwell of Tuckwell Press, who have also extended hospitality to us on several occasions.

We would like to point out that the project could not have gone ahead so quickly without the assistance of e-mail, as one editor and many of our contributors live in North America. If only the same could be said of Scotrail! They took Elizabeth on an extra journey to North Berwick in the summer of 1996, whilst Maureen was waiting for her to alight at Longniddry. The train door refused to open at the station, so Maureen chased the train to North Berwick, via Drem, to try and rescue Elizabeth. Every time the train was in sight, the traffic intervened. We eventually met back at Longniddry and proceeded to visit the Tuckwells as planned.

The University of Guelph and its Archives have assisted the book’s production, as has the University of Sunderland. Elizabeth would like specifically to acknowledge the assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the International Social Sciences Institute at the University of Edinburgh. She also thanks Jean and
Marjorie Ewan for their Edinburgh hospitality and Kris Inwood for moral and intellectual support. Maureen would like to thank her parents Roy and Davina Meikle for all their support over many years and their ever-welcoming hospitality at Gullane.
Timeline

This timeline is selective and meant to illustrate the events mentioned in the essays in this collection. It is not a detailed outline of Scottish history.

1058-93 Reign of Malcolm III and St Margaret
1113-4 Matilda princess of Scotland marries Henry I of England
1107-24 Reign of Alexander I
1124-53 Reign of David I
1136-53 David supports his niece Empress Matilda against Stephen in England, takes over much of Northern England
1153-65 Reign of Malcolm IV
1157 Henry II of England recovers English lands from Scotland
1160-4 Malcolm IV subdues Galloway, Argyll and Somerled, ancestor of the Lords of the Isles
1165-1214 Reign of William I 'the Lion'
1214-49 Reign of Alexander II, marries 1221 Joan of England, 1239 Marie de Coucy
1249 Alexander II dies on expedition to subdue Western Isles
1249-86 Reign of Alexander III, marries 1251 Margaret of England, 1285 Yolande de Dreux
1263-6 Alexander ends Norse control of Western Isles, ceded to Scotland in 1266
1286-90 Margaret, Maid of Norway, granddaughter of Alexander III, recognised as queen, dies on way to Scotland in 1290
1291-2 Edward I of England, asked to rule on nearest heir to throne, chooses John Balliol
1295 Balliol makes alliance with France
1296 Edward I invades Scotland and deposes John, claims direct rule over Scotland
1296-1328 First War of Independence
1306 Robert Bruce claims Scottish throne
1328 England recognises Scottish independence
1329-71 Reign of David II
1332-41 Second War of Independence
1371-90 Reign of Robert II, first king of Stewart dynasty
1390-1406 Reign of Robert III
1406-1424 Prince James captured by English and imprisoned to 1424. Robert III dies 1406. James marries Joan Beaufort 1424
1424-37 James I returns to Scotland, personal reign
1436 James commits to French alliance, marries daughter to Dauphin
1437-60 Reign of James II
1449  James II marries Mary of Gueldres
1460-88 Reign of James III
1468 James III marries Margaret of Denmark, Orkney and Shetland pledged for her dowry, come into Scottish possession
1488-1513 Reign of James IV
late 15th C/16th C flourishing of Scots poetry - William Dunbar, Robert Henryson, David Lindsay, Gavin Douglas, Alexander Scott
1493 Final forfeiture of Lordship of the Isles
1503 Marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor of England
1507-8 First printing press established in Edinburgh
1512 Renewal of Auld Alliance with France
1513 Battle of Flodden against English - James IV and leading nobles killed
1513-15 Regency of Margaret Tudor for James V
1513-28 Minority of James V - struggle for power between factions
1521 Major, History of Greater Britain
1527 Boece, History of Scotland
1532 Establishment of College of Justice as central court in Edinburgh
1530-40s Growth of Protestantism
1537 James V marries Madeleine of France
1538 James V marries Mary of Guise-Lorraine
1542 Scots defeated by English at Solway Moss, James V dies, infant Mary succeeds
1554-60 Regency of Mary of Guise
1558 Mary Queen of Scots marries Dauphin of France
1559-60 Protestant Reformation established, Kirk Sessions established
1561-7 Widowed Mary returns to Scotland and rules as Catholic queen
1563 Legislation against witchcraft and adultery
1566 Prince James born, Mary's second husband Darnley murdered
1567 Mary deposed, James accedes as James VI
1568-87 Mary imprisoned in England, factional fighting for power over James VI
1568 Bannatyne Manuscript
1579-83 Sir James Balfour, Practicks
1580s Maitland Folio
1581 Presbyteries established, influence of Andrew Melville on church
1589 James VI marries Anna of Denmark
1590 Beginning of Catholic missions to Scotland
1592 Spanish Blanks - letters by Catholic earl of Huntly to king of Spain
1603 James VI succeeds to English throne (Union of the Crowns)
1609 Statutes of Iona and other royal efforts to 'civilise' Gaelic society
1610 Restoration of bishops
1625 Accession of Charles I
Timeline

early 17th C  Rise to power of Campbells of Argyll
1637  Attempt by Charles I to impose new prayer book on Scottish church
1638–49  National Covenant to defend Presbyterian church, Scots join war in England against Charles I
1644–5  Royalist campaign led by Montrose and Alasdair MacColla
1650–9  Cromwellian occupation of Scotland
1660  Restoration of Charles II
1662  Restoration of Episcopacy
1680s  Persecution of Covenanters defending Presbyterian church
1685  Accession of James VII
1688–9  deposition of James VII, accession of William of Orange and Mary
1690  Establishment of Presbyterianism
1696–1700  Famine, Dutch and French wars
1695–8  Darien scheme to found Scottish trading colony in Americas fails disastrously
1707  Parliamentary Union with England
1715  First Jacobite Rising to restore James VIII, defeated at Battle of Sheriffmuir
1730s  Decline of kirk session discipline
mid 18th C  Scottish Enlightenment begins
1745–6  Second Jacobite rising, defeated at Battle of Culloden
1746  Punitive measures taken against Gaelic society and culture
c.1750  Beginning of industrialisation