

FOURTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH ROYAL WOMEN 1306-1371: PAWNS,
PLAYERS AND PRISONERS

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The kings of Scotland in the fourteenth century, with the exception of David II, did not initially marry the daughters of kings. Their wives were Scottish and were drawn in the main from the level of earls and lairds. Furthermore, unlike most Scottish princesses in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, who went out of the realm to marry, those in the fourteenth century were on the whole stay at home princesses. These women were married into the ranks of the nobility thereby strengthening the political position of any given monarch within the realm. However, the possible claims to the throne through the highly fertile female lines proliferated. After the crown had passed to the house of Stewart through a female, Marjory, daughter of Robert the Bruce, the possibility of such claims probably served to maintain the royal status as *primus inter pares* or 'first among equals'. This paper will attempt to examine the nature of the royal court to which queens came and at which their daughters were brought up.

The experiences of the royal women involved were varied. They were often pawns, moved about by male relatives and other authoritarian figures on the board of domestic and foreign politics that plagued Scotland in the fourteenth century. At other times they were active players in the running of the realm, and in trying to preserve it. At stages some were even prisoners in alien countries. The paper is pieced together from various sources including parliamentary records, state papers and chronicles and in particular the *Scotichronicon*, which was composed by Walter Bower in 1440, while he was an abbot at Inchcolm, an Island in the middle of the Firth of Forth. The material pertaining to the royal women of this period is of a limited nature, but what little that is available, especially for the early part of the fourteenth century, is valuable. Records are much greater toward the closing years of the 1300s, at a time when Scotland was more stable and firm in its status as an independent realm.

Margaret, daughter of Alexander III and his first wife (also Margaret, sister to Edward I of England), was married to Erik II Magnusson of Norway in August 1281.¹ Their daughter was Margaret, 'Maid of Norway',

¹ Archibald A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1975), p. 592. On 12 August 1281, Margaret sailed to Norway with the earl and countess of Mentieth, Bernard de

who, following the death of Alexander III in March 1286, eventually set sail for Scotland in August or September 1290, to be crowned as Queen.² She was accompanied by Bishop Narve of Bergen, Baron Tore Haakonsson, former chancellor to King Magnus Haakasson, Ingeborf, Tore's wife and sister of Earl Alv Erlingsson.³ Alexander left no surviving children and it had been agreed in 1284, at a parliament held at Scone on 5 February, that when the last of his children died, that this Norwegian granddaughter would be the heir to the Scottish throne.⁴ There have been various debates about whether or not Alexander wished her to be queen regnant, but the consensus is that Alexander III assumed that she would have a husband, who would be king, at her side.⁵ Margaret's future in Scotland was decided by the Treaty of Salisbury, concluded in November 1289. Margaret was to come to Scotland without a husband, and when the time came for her to marry the Scots would "not contract her in marriage save with 'the ordinance, will and council of King Edward'", and also with the consent of her father, the king of Norway.⁶ Indeed, as far as a husband for 'the maid' was concerned, Margaret's great uncle, Edward I of England, held an upper hand and was already negotiating her betrothal to his son and heir, Edward.⁷ However,

Mowat and the abbot of Balmerino. She was immediately married to Erik who was fourteen at the time.

² W. Croft Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, third edition revised and edited Archibald A. M. Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 140-141; K. Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume LXIX, 2: No. 188: October 1990, p. 151.

³ Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', p. 151; Barbara E. Crawford, 'North Sea Kingdoms, North Sea Bureaucrat: A Royal Official Transcends National Boundaries', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 69 (2), no. 188 (1990), p. 175.

⁴ C. Innes (ed.), *The Acts of Parliaments of Scotland*, Vol. I (England, 1844), pp. 7, 424; Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 140-144; Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of the Kingdom*, p. 614; Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', pp. 148-150.

⁵ Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*, p. 614; Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', p. 149.

⁶ Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, p. 142.

⁷ For an in depth account of these negotiations see, G. W. S. Barrow, 'A Kingdom in Crisis: Scotland and the Maid of Norway', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume 69 (2), no. 188 (1990), pp. 120-141; G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 36-39; Michael Prestwich, 'Edward I and the Maid of Norway', *The Scottish Historical Review* 69 (2), no. 188 (1990), pp. 157-174; Helle, 'Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway', pp. 149-151

Margaret became sick on the journey to Scotland and died at Orkney in 1290, aged about six, without making her coronation.⁸ Her death not only created a vacuum as far as the crown was concerned, but also served as a precedent in 1315, for deciding the future of the throne of Scotland.⁹ Furthermore, it took into account the importance of female descendants of a king. What is important to this paper is that in the absence of a direct male heir, the line of succession could be passed on through a female.

What ensued following ‘the maid’s’ death, was a fight for the crown between the Houses of Balliol and Bruce.¹⁰ It is not the intention of this paper to discuss this but to look at the place the daughters of kings played in the political stakes. I shall, therefore, proceed to the House of Bruce that came to the throne in 1306. Robert the Bruce was installed on the throne on 25 March 1306 by countess Isabel of Buchan, the sister of the late earl of Fife, “who had arrived to claim the traditional MacDuff privilege of setting a new king on the throne”.¹¹ Bruce’s first wife Isabella, daughter of the earl of Mar, had already died in 1296 after the birth of their only child Marjory. His second wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster.¹² There is no mention of his wife being enthroned with him.¹³

While there was a king on the throne, it did not necessarily mean that politics was straight forward and trouble-free. Scotland was anything except harmonious at this time and the struggle for the throne, backed by the

⁸ Helle, ‘Norwegian Foreign Policy and the Maid of Norway’, pp. 149-150.

⁹ Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁰ For more in depth discussion on this topic please see, for example, Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 119-265; Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt, Vol. 6 (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), pp. 302-317; Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 140-175; John of Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Facsimile reprint, ed. W. F. Skene, Vol. 2 (Lampeter: Llanerch Publishers, 1993), pp. 330-334; Michael Lynch, *Scotland A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1998), pp. 111-131; Ronald McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce, King of Scots* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993), pp. 3-76; Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1974), pp. 27-72.

¹¹ Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, p. 333; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 72. For a more comprehensive account of the enthroning of Bruce see Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 195-197.

¹² *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, pp. 375-377; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 70.

¹³ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 72; *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, pp. 317-319.

English king, Edward I, continued. Shortly after Robert the Bruce was crowned the lot of the queen and her intimate court was thrown into chaos and uncertainty. After a hostile encounter at Dalry in the summer of 1306, “King Robert’s queen, his daughter Marjory and other ladies, had been escorted by the earl of Athol and Neil or Niall Bruce, one of the king’s brothers, to the supposed safety of Kildrumny Castle”.¹⁴ This bastion was besieged in September 1306 by Aymer de Valence chief guardian and lieutenant (earl of Pembroke), and the Prince of Wales, Edward of Canarvon (the future Edward II). Some in the queen’s entourage were forced to surrender when a traitor, a blacksmith by the name of Osborne, who had been promised gold by the English, set fire to the grain storage in the great hall.¹⁵ The gold he received was paid rather barbarically, for it was poured, in molten form, down his throat.¹⁶ While Neil was captured, Athol and the royal ladies had already escaped to the north to St. Duthac. Neil and the others taken prisoner with him were taken to Berwick to be sentenced by King Edward I who was lodged there.¹⁷

It was thought that Athol and the royal women might have been travelling northward in an attempt to escape to Orkney, which at that time was under Norwegian rule. Since Scotland was on friendly terms with Norway, and Bruce’s sister Isabel, was queen dowager and sister-in-law to King Hakon V, Orkney would have offered them a safe haven until the crisis was over.¹⁸ Moreover, it may have presented a place for negotiations to take place for the supply of soldiers from Norway for Bruce’s depleted army.¹⁹ However, Athol and the ladies did not make it that far, but were captured by Earl William Ross in the sanctuary of St. Duthac at Tain, and then escorted to Edward I for further consideration.²⁰

¹⁴ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 75

¹⁵ John Barbour, *The Bruce: The History of Robert The Bruce King Of Scots*, translated George Eyre-Todd (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1996), p. 56; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 208.

¹⁶ McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 87.

¹⁷ McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 87.

¹⁸ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 208-209.

¹⁹ McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 83. Bruce had met with the bishop of Moray at Aberdeen in 1306 from where Bruce was going to embark for Norway. The bishop and Bruce contrived another plan for the renewal of hostilities in 1307, but in spite of these plans, the bishop managed to make his way to Orkney.

²⁰ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, p. 323; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 208; McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, pp. 82-86

At Edward's command the men were all executed: Neil Bruce and Christopher Seton, brother and brother-in-law respectively of Robert Bruce, along with the men captured with them, were dragged through the streets to the place of execution where they were hanged and beheaded. Furthermore, the earl of Athol was thought to be the first earl to be executed in England in over two hundred and thirty years.²¹ The earl, who was not only a nobleman, but also a kinsman of Edward, should have been able to plead a quicker death, but Edward responded by ordering that "he should be hanged from a higher gallows than anyone else, and then decapitated and burned".²² Edward's treatment of the ladies, all of them of the highest rank, while quite severe, at least ensured that their lives were spared. Three of them were to be kept in cages and the others in various safe prisons around England.²³ However, their captivity by the English was to put a halt to any courtly activities in Scotland for at least the next eight years.

Elizabeth the queen was kept in a manor house with only two pages and two ladies-in-waiting that were "elderly and not at all gay".²⁴ This was at Burstwick-in-Holderness. Some of her complaints were that she did not have either attire for her body, head nor a bed or furniture for her chamber. For herself she had only three robes yearly and for her servants one robe had to suffice for all occasions and weather.²⁵ Furthermore, Elizabeth's servants had not been paid for their labour and she petitioned the King for a yearly sum for her and her servants' sustenance.²⁶ Because her father was the earl of Ulster, a favourite, and an extremely valuable noble of the English king, Elizabeth was, therefore, much more sympathetically treated

²¹ Fordun, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, pp. 334-335; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 209; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 75.

²² Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 209.

²³ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London (CDS)*, Vol. II, ed. Joseph Bain (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1884), CDS, No. 1851.

²⁴ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 209; McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 88; F. Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland, and the Transactions Between the Crowns of Scotland and England, Preserved in the Treasury of Her Majesty's Exchequer*, Vol. I, printed under the direction of the Commissioners of the Public Records of the Kingdom, Great Britain, 1837, pp. 357-358.

²⁵ CDS, Vol. II, No. 1963.

²⁶ CDS, Vol. II, No. 1963.

than the others in her cohort. The Scottish queen remained detained for the next eight years.²⁷

Elizabeth experienced a series of moves and some limited privileges during her captivity. Edward II commanded that she be removed from Brustwick on 22 June 1308 stating that “the bailiff of Brustwyk [is] to deliver her with her retinue and baggage to his valet John de Bentlee to be conducted where the King has instructed him”²⁸ The place to where she was to be relocated is not named. However she was at Bistesham by October 15 1310, when the sheriff of Oxford and Berkshire was ordered to buy “30 qrs. of wheat” and “30qrs. of malt”, for her use.²⁹ Just how much of what had been specified for Elizabeth actually made its way to her is debatable. A month later a command was made for the sheriff of Oxford “to deliver to John of Benteleye keeper of the household of Elizabeth de Brus, 30 qrs. of wheat and 10*l.* in money for her expenses, which he had omitted to do”.³⁰ Yet another move came in early February of 1312 after a directive was given for her, and her retinue’s removal to Windsor castle, where the constable was “to provide sufficient houses to accommodate them”.³¹ Furthermore, John de Benteleye was to continue to be in attendance on them.³² A further 10*l.* was paid to Benteleye for the expenses of “Lady Elisabeth wife of Sir Robert de Brus” in January of 1312-13.³³ Elizabeth was then moved quite quickly to Shaftsbury, where the sheriff of Somerset and Dorset was ordered to pay her 20*s.* a week from 12 February for the upkeep of her and her retinue.³⁴ She received a further 36*l.* from the sheriff John de Chdyok during her stay at Shaftsbury. She spent at least thirteen months at Shaftsbury before going to the Abbey of Barking where the cost of relocating herself and her retinue was 8*l.* 8*s.* 4*d.*³⁵ A further 12*l.* was paid to Elizabeth on 1 July 1313. It is likely that her retinue was the original one given by Edward I. I have been unable to discover any others joining her small entourage up to this point in her adventures. Nevertheless this changed when she went from the abbey of Barking to Rochester castle.

²⁷ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*; p. 209; McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 88; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 75. Note: She was not necessarily treated any better because she was the Queen of Scotland since Edward I did not recognize Brus as the Scottish King.

²⁸ CDS, No. 48.

²⁹ CDS, Vol. III, No. 169.

³⁰ CDS, Vol. III, No. 174.

³¹ CDS, Vol. III, No. 239.

³² CDS, Vol. III, No. 239.

³³ CDS, Vol. III, No. 299.

³⁴ CDS, Vol. III, No. 305.

³⁵ CDS, Vol. III, No. 323.

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She was removed on 12 March 1314, from the Abbey of Barking to Rochester castle. The order states that the constable was directed to “assign her a sufficient chamber and 20s. weekly for expenses”.³⁶ Elizabeth was also allowed to “take exercise within the castle and in St. Andrew’s priory at suitable times” but only, “under sure guard”.³⁷ By 23 April that same year she was allowed to have a small retinue of her own and these included Elena Edgar, John de Claydon, Samuel de Lynford and Samuel de Preston.

Edward I ordered Christina Bruce, King Robert’s sister, to a nunnery in Sixhill in Lincolnshire. This lady was twice widowed, first, by the death of the earl of Mar and secondly, with the execution of Christopher Seton.³⁸ Later in 1326 she married Andrew Moray who became guardian of the realm.³⁹ Her son Donald, second earl of Mar, was born in 1302, and was aged four when he was captured along with the Bruce womenfolk. Subsequently he was brought up at the court of Edward II.⁴⁰ He was immediately put in charge of the constable of Bristol, and was allowed to go freely about the castle. These orders were altered shortly after allowing him to go about the garden and walk in the close of the castle. Furthermore, because of his tender age, he was not to be put into irons; this suggests that initially he would have been restrained in this manner as a matter of course.⁴¹

On 18 July 1413, Christina was ordered to be taken by the prior of Sixhill to the sheriff of Lincoln who was to bring her to see Edward II at York, ready for exchange following the Battle of Bannockburn on 24 June that same year.⁴² It was on 2 October 1314 that she, along with Robert Bishop of Glasgow, the Scottish Queen Elizabeth, Margery Bruce and Donald Mar were moved to Carlisle castle ready for exchange, at an unnamed place, back to Scotland. The men responsible for arranging this transfer were the Earl of Essex (Humphrey de Bohun) and presumably the Sheriff of York since the order came from there.⁴³

³⁶ CDS, Vol. III, No. 354.

³⁷ CDS, Vol. III, No. 354.

³⁸ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 209-10.

³⁹ Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, p. 343.

⁴⁰ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 354.

⁴¹ Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, pp.

clxxxviii-clxxxix, 353.

⁴² CDS, Vol. III, No. 371.

⁴³ CDS, Vol. III, Nos. 371, 372, 393.

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Mary Bruce, sister to the Scottish king, was guarded in a specifically constructed cage, “a prison of lattice work” in Roxburgh castle.⁴⁴ She was the wife of Neil Campbell, earl of Atholl. The treatment she received at Edward’s hands is probably as a result of Atholl’s treason. In August 1310, she was sent to Newcastle after being exchanged for Walter Comyn.⁴⁵ She was exchanged once again in February 1312 for the brother of Sir Philip Mowbray.⁴⁶

Isabella, countess of Buchan, while not a royal women, needs to be included in this analysis since she a prominent female figure in the court of Robert the Bruce and his queen Elizabeth. Furthermore, Isabella was with the queen when they were both captured. Isabella was placed in a cage in one of the towers of Berwick Castle. No Scots were allowed to speak to her. Like Mary Bruce the cage was made out of “strong lattice work of wood, barred, and well strengthened with iron”.⁴⁷ Jutting from the battlements, the only concession to their modesty was the provision of a privy in the walls.⁴⁸ Her offense had been that she had “committed the unpardonable crime of crowning or enthroning Bruce”.⁴⁹ Sir Thomas Gray states that “She was put in a wooden hut, in one of the towers of Berwick Castle, with criss-crossed walls, so that all could watch her for spectacle”.⁵⁰ The cage was supposed to have been constructed so that the countess was to have “therein all conveniences of a handsome chamber: but the same is to be so safely and surely ordained that no peril may happen concerning the care of the Countess, and that he who has care of her, may answer body for body”.⁵¹ Four years passed before she was less rigorously confined. In 1312 she was sent to the Carmelite nuns and in 1313 into the custody of Henry Beaumont.⁵² She is thought to have died there as she was not part of the

⁴⁴ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 75; Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, pp. clxxxvii-clxxxix, 359.

⁴⁵ CDS, Vol. III, Nos. 131, 227, 248, 340.

⁴⁶ CDS, Vol. III, No. 244.

⁴⁷ Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, pp. clxxxix, 358.

⁴⁸ Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, p. 358.

⁴⁹ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 210.

⁵⁰ Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica 1272-1362*, edited and translated by Andy King (Boydell: Suretees Society, 2005), p. 53.

⁵¹ Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, pp. clxxxix, 358.

⁵² CDS, Vol. III, No. 313.

exchange that took place of all the captive Bruce women and the earl of Mar (the king's nephew) in October 1314.

The treatment of Mary Bruce and the countess of Buchan appeared to have been particularly harsh. Geoffrey Barrow states that “the inspiration for this bizarre piece of cruelty may have come from Italy”.⁵³ Following the battle of Fossalta in 1249, the bastard son of the Emperor Frederick II died in an iron cage after being held captive in it for twenty-two years. The cages, not uncommon in Italy at the time, were constructed of iron or timber, and were most often “placed on the tops of towers or other high buildings”.⁵⁴ Marjory, aged about ten, was Robert the Bruce's only child at this stage, and was supposed to be kept in a similar cage-like construction in the Tower of London. She was not to be allowed to speak to anyone, nor was anyone allowed to speak to her except for the constable of the tower.⁵⁵ Edward reneged on this punishment and she was later removed to Yorkshire, where she resided at a Gilbertine nunnery at Walton.⁵⁶

Eight years after their initial capture the queen (Bruce's wife), his sister Christina, daughter Marjory and Nephew the earl of Mar were finally returned to Scotland. They were exchanged after Bannockburn in 1314 for the captive earl of Hereford.⁵⁷ All were taken to Carlisle Castle and then to another place, where they were to be exchanged, that had been “arranged by the Earl of Essex and Hereford and the sherriff”.⁵⁸ However, the earl of Mar remained in England at the court of Edward II, and did not return to Scotland until after Edward's deposition.⁵⁹

Clearly the lot of a royal consort and princess left much to be desired at this time. Not much is known about what sort of activities they participated in during their confinement. Presumably time may have been passed with needlework and other female pastimes. Whether or not Marjory, as the daughter of a king, was educated in any way, particularly when she was removed to a convent, where one might expect some

⁵³ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 210.

⁵⁴ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 210.

⁵⁵ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 210.

⁵⁶ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 210; McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, pp. 86-88; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, pp. 75, 91; Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, p. 359.

⁵⁷ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 91.

⁵⁸ Fordun, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, pp. 332-333; CDS, Vol. III, Nos. 371, 372, 393, 403. Presumably Hereford was organizing this event from the Scottish side.

⁵⁹ CDS, Nos. 302, 496; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 354.

education in reading, womanly skills necessary for marriage and indeed religious instruction, is not known either.

There is not much written about any form of court life in the ten years following the battle of Bannockburn. One assumes that much of the energy, time and expense that normally would have been extended to courtly pursuits, was spent pursuing enemies, defending lands and taming the realm. Indeed, a nomadic existence seems to have been the norm, with a preoccupation to protecting property and lineage.⁶⁰ It is not clear at all from the documents of the time just where the queen and her ladies were. However, when hostilities in the realm settled down around 1325, Robert the Bruce built a manor house for his family near the village of Cardross on the north side of the Firth of Clyde and close to Dumbarton castle, which could be used for protection in times of need. The manor house was by no means a fortified establishment, but a substantial dwelling consisting of a hall, chambers for the king and queen respectively, chapel, kitchen and a larder. The roofs were thatched and the windows were glazed. It had a garden, hunting park and aviary for the royal falcons and a slipway for the royal yacht. The land was bought from the earl of Lennox and its location is significant to both the King's love of the sea and the importance that he attached throughout his reign to the security of the western approaches.⁶¹ Cardross, according to Archibald Duncan, is not in the same place as it is on the modern map for it "lay on the right bank of the river Leven, across from, and now part of, the burgh of Dumbarton".⁶² It can be assumed that such an establishment not only provided for a family, but for courtly pursuits as well. Certainly, some affairs of state were being conducted from Cardross from February 1328.⁶³

In 1315 Robert the Bruce did not have a male heir. A parliamentary sitting held at Ayr on 26 April of that year discussed the issue and approved, with Marjory's consent that in the absence of a male heir, the

⁶⁰ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp.304-404

⁶¹ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 414-417; McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, pp. 210-211.

⁶² Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, fn. 9, p. 175.

⁶³ *Regesta Regum Scottorum, The Acts of Robert I King of Scots (RRS,)* Vol. V, ed. A. A. Duncan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). Documents pertaining to matters of the realm appeared as early as 15 February 1328 (No. 333); see also No's., 334, 342, 357, 376, 379, 380, 381.

crown would not pass to Marjory but to the King's brother, Edward Bruce.⁶⁴ The *Acts of Parliament* described this individual as "a vigorous man...highly skilled in warlike deeds".⁶⁵ However, Marjory's marriage to Walter the Steward in 1315 produced a son, the future Robert II. He was to be their only child. Marjorie is thought to have fallen from her horse and died and Robert was born of Caesarean section. Apparently he was crippled throughout his life from an injury sustained at his birth.⁶⁶ When Edward the Bruce died childless in 1318, this child had been recognized as heir presumptive.⁶⁷ This position was relegated to second when a son, David, the future David II, was born on 5 March 1323, at the monastery at Dunfermline, to Robert the Bruce and Elizabeth de Burgh.⁶⁸ This child was first heir presumptive followed by Robert Stewart who was the grandson of Robert Bruce. At Cambuskenneth on 15 July 1326, all the Scottish clergy, lords, barons and nobles gathered and swore fidelity and homage to David and also to Robert Stewart, the grandson of Robert the Bruce.⁶⁹

Two daughters, Margaret and Matilda, were also born to Robert the Bruce and Elizabeth de Burgh. Their eldest daughter, Margaret, was married to William fifth earl of Sutherland. She had a son John who died in 1361, probably in captivity in England, as a hostage for his uncle, David II. Margaret died in childbirth when he was born in 1347.⁷⁰ Had John lived he "ought to have succeeded King David in accordance with the tailzie [of 1318] as having been born of the elder daughter", for Margaret, unlike Marjory, was David's full sister and not half sister.⁷¹

⁶⁴ APS, Vol. 1, pp. 464-465; RRS, Vol. 5, p. 63, No. 58 All three seals, Marjory, Robert and Edward Bruce's, were appended to this document signifying its extreme importance.

⁶⁵ APS, Vol. 1, pp. 464-5.

⁶⁶ McNair Scott, *Robert the Bruce*, p. 177.

⁶⁷ APS, Vol. 1, p. 465; RRS, Vol. V, p. 63, no. 58. Note: The tailzie of 1315 only reverts to Marjory 'as long as she was married off consent of the king, him failing, by consent of the realm'; Norman H. Reid, 'Crown and Community Under Robert I', in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer eds., *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993, pp. 212-214.

⁶⁸ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt, Vol. 7 (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1996), pp. 13-15.

⁶⁹ APS, Vol. 1, pp. 475-476; Fordun, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Vol. II, p. 343; *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 35.

⁷⁰ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, p. 377; *Scalacronica*, p. 151.

⁷¹ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, pp. 377-381; — Vol. VII, pp. 39-43. Note: Archie Duncan suggests that this was not a tailzie but a settlement that reverted to the tailzie of 1314. RRS, Vol. V, p. 62.

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Matilda married Thomas de Isaac, who Fordun describes as a “certain squire”, she had one daughter Jonet, who married the lord of Lorne.⁷² Eventually Matilda became the great grandmother of James Stewart, the Black Knight, who Joan Beaufort married after James I died, in 1439. Of Matilda, Fordun says, he is not going to write about her because she did “nothing worth remembering”.⁷³ Matilda died at Aberdeen in 1453 and was buried with her parents in Dunfermline.⁷⁴

David married princess Joan of England at Berwick on 16 July 1328, she was seven and he was four. Although Queen Isabella of England attended her daughter’s wedding, Edward III did not attend his sister’s wedding so the Scottish King didn’t either. Edward II had abdicated and was succeeded by his fourteen-year-old son in 1327, and Isabella and her lover, Roger Mortimer, held the government.⁷⁵ Queen Joan, David’s mother had already died at Cardross on 26 October 1327. It may be possible that King Robert did not attend the wedding since he was sick at the time. David and Joan’s marriage was political and cemented a peace treaty and resignation of English sovereignty over Scotland. Both David and Joan were pawns in this marriage. Bower states that the English king Edward III in a letter to Robert Bruce wrote that:

we wish by grant of this letter for us, our heirs and all our successors... that the kingdom of Scotland within its correct boundaries as they existed and were maintained at the time of the later Alexander the last king of Scotland... shall remain forever with the magnificent prince sir Robert, by the grace of God king of Scots our illustrious ally and friend, and his heirs and successors, distinct in every way from the kingdom of England.⁷⁶

A treaty between King Robert and Edward II was confirmed at Northampton when the English parliament met there in May 1328, in which there was a renunciation by England of the claims of superiority over Scotland, as well as recognition, by England, of Robert Bruce as king of

⁷² Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, p. 360; *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, p. 377.

⁷³ Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, p. 312.

⁷⁴ Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, p. 360.

⁷⁵ Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, p. 170.

⁷⁶ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 37.

Scotland.⁷⁷ Furthermore, this treaty of “final and perpetual peace” was recognized by Pope John XXII in 1328, who released Bruce from the ban of excommunication placed on him in 1320, and thus, recognized him as king of Scotland.⁷⁸

On 13 June 1329, the Pope “issued a Bull authorizing Robert I and his successors to be crowned and anointed as kings of Scotland”. As A. A. Duncan states: “But the king, who in the Declaration of Arbroath, had ‘cheerfully endured all manner of toil, fatigue, hardship and hazard’ that ‘he might deliver his people and his heritage from the hands of enemies’, had died on [7 June] at Cardross, a week earlier”.⁷⁹ Robert Bruce was never to know that he had received recognition not only of his kingship, but indeed the independence of his kingdom. Fordun describes him as having been “beyond all living men of his day, a valiant knight”.⁸⁰

Presumably there were some sort of marriage celebrations, tournaments and other entertainments. This was a marriage of immense importance to both Scotland and England; it would be very strange indeed if there were no corresponding celebrations, especially as £1000 was spent from the Scottish exchequer for the purpose.⁸¹ There was possibly a court of sorts, but since the king and queen were still children, it must have been of a limited nature. Nevertheless, even though Joan was very young, she did act out at least one act of queenship with her young husband in 1328. Both David and she petitioned her brother Edward III to pardon Adam son of Richard of West Swynburne for supporting the Scots against the English.⁸²

King David was crowned at seven years of age on 24 November 1331, and was the first king of Scotland to be anointed. This auspicious occasion was undertaken by the bishop of St. Andrews, lord James Ben.

⁷⁷ CDS, Vol. III, p. xxxv; Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, p. 170.

⁷⁸ Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 170-171. Note, the Declaration of Arbroath was written as a response to the excommunication, in a bid of support for Robert the Bruce in this matter, by the Scottish magnates. For a more in depth account of the ‘Treaty of Arbroath’, see Edward J. Cowan, ‘*For Freedom Alone*’, *the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320* (East Lothian: Tuckwell, 2003).

⁷⁹ CDS, Vol. III, pp. xxxv-xxxvii; Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, p. 171.

⁸⁰ Fordun, *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Vol. II, p. 345.

⁸¹ Michael A. Penman, *David II: 1329-71* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005), p. 18.

⁸² CDS, No. 964.

Queen Joan was also crowned with him on the same day. The sources do not say whether or not Joan was anointed as well.⁸³ John Stewart, Earl of Angus, Thomas Randolph, the Earl of Moray's son and heir along with other nobles received the order of knighthood at this time. Since David II was a minor sir Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray and lord of Man, in accordance with the tailzies of 1315 and 1318, undertook the guardianship of the whole kingdom and the people.⁸⁴ When Randolph died in July 1332 he should have, in compliance with the 1318 tailzie promulgated at the Scone parliament of 3 December that year, been replaced with sir James, lord of Douglas, but he was already dead.⁸⁵ He died in Spain fighting the Moors on his way to take Robert the Bruce's heart to the Holy Land.⁸⁶ The regency was then assumed on 6 August 1332, by Donald earl of Mar who had returned to Scotland in 1327.⁸⁷ His reign as regent was short-lived for he was defeated and killed by Edward Balliol, son of King John on 12 August that same year at the battle of Duplin Moor.⁸⁸ The struggle for the throne had begun again. Balliol had received the support of Edward III, and already secretly done "homage to Edward III for his prospective kingdom of Scotland".⁸⁹ The situation became so grim that David and his young bride were sent, for safety, to France in May 1334 and stayed seven years, returning in 1341.⁹⁰ While they were in France they were housed at Chateau Gaillard.⁹¹

⁸³ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, pp. 71-73; Fordun, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Vol. II, p. 346; Penman, *David II: 1329-71*, p. 83.

Note: Fordun makes no mention of Joan being crowned with David. Bishop Ben was authorized to carry out the coronation at the request of a Papal Bull given by John XXII.

⁸⁴ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 6, p. 379-381; — Vol. 7, p. 41; *CDS*, Vol. III, p. Xxxvii.

⁸⁵ *APS*, Vol. I, pp. 165-466; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 382.

⁸⁶ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, pp. 19-73; *Scalacronica*, p. 82; Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 176-7; Sonja Cameron, 'Sir James Douglas, Spain and the Holy Land', in T. Robertson and David Ditchburn (eds), *Freedom and Authority in Scotland: c1060-1650. Essays Presented to Grant Simpson* (East Lothian: Tuckwell, 2000), p. 108. Note: There is a debate as to whether Douglas was really intent on the Holy Land. He could have fought the infidels in Spain with ease and been home in a short time.

⁸⁷ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, pp. 73, 75.

⁸⁸ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 205, fn. 31.

⁸⁹ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 125; *Scalacronica*, pp. 113-115.

⁹⁰ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 83, 151.

⁹¹ *Scalacronica*, p. 117.

With the kingdom in chaos and an absent monarch it seems unlikely that there was very much in the way of courtly activity at all until the royal couple returned. It is quite probable that while this young king and queen were in France that they were exposed to, and indeed participated and were educated in, the French court. In this instance they are sure to have brought back much in the way of manners and culture to Scotland. However, the sources are devoid of any glimpses of the style of court that they would have orchestrated as young adults.

Only five years after their return from France David was captured by the English at the battle of Neville's Cross in October 1346. Once again he was separated from his realm and spent eleven years as a prisoner of his brother-in-law, Edward III.⁹² David returned home from English captivity in 1357, and it appears, according to Bower, that Joan went back to England with David's permission⁹³ a safe conduct having been arranged for her to travel to England on 9 May, 1358.⁹⁴ King David and his wife had separated by mutual consent. They had no children. The treaty for David's release was signed at Berwick on 3 October 1357.⁹⁵ David was ransomed for 100,000 marks of silver and twenty-five high ranking hostages. The hostages included his brother-in-law and nephew, the Earl of Sutherland and son, Thomas the Steward known by the Scots as the Earl of Angus, and Thomas Murray, Baron of Bothwell.⁹⁶

While there is nothing mentioned about Queen Joan being held in captivity with him, she was probably at her brother's court, where she influenced him in February 1358 to grant a respite of 10,000 marks for David's ransom, which had been due at Midsummer, until the following Martimas.⁹⁷ Thomas Gray states that Joan 'came to Windsor in the same season, to speak to her brother the King, and put forward a longer treaty for discussion; and she was with her mother Queen Isabella, who died at Hertford in the same season, who she had not seen for thirty years'.⁹⁸ Queen Isabella died on 22 August 1358.⁹⁹ Furthermore, on 9 October 1359 her

⁹² Steven Boardman, *The Stewart Dynasty in Scotland. The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III, 1371-1406* (East Lothian: Tuckwell, 1996), p. 7.

⁹³ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 305.

⁹⁴ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 485, fn. 34-37.

⁹⁵ *RRS*, IV, no. 148.

⁹⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 151; Penman, *David II: 1329-71*, p. 188; *RRS*, VI, Nos. 148, 149.

⁹⁷ *CDS*, Vol. 4, p. xii, No. 27.

⁹⁸ *Scalacronica*, p. 151, p. 246, fn 17.

⁹⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 246, fn 17.

brother Edward III granted her £50 of £200 he had allocated her during her stay in England.¹⁰⁰ She received another quarter of the annual payment in May/June 1362.¹⁰¹ She died sometime in the following year for the next time she is mentioned is in association for banners and other things procured from Gilbert Prince, a painter of London, 'for the exsequies of Johanna, late Queen of Scotland'.¹⁰² Michael Penman suggests that Joan had entered a Franciscan religious order before her death. This might suggest that since she had not produced an heir that David was considering divorce and remarriage, which he most certainly did in later years.¹⁰³ She is buried at the Greyfriars Church (Newgate), beside her mother, Queen Isabella.¹⁰⁴

David married Margaret Drummond in 1363 and he divorced her in 1369. Walter Bower, writing with the benefit of hindsight did not consider her of suitable character for a queen at all. He states that "With the aim therefore of providing for the succession to the kingdom from the fruit of her womb (if God granted it), King David chose a most beautiful lady, Margaret Logie, perhaps not so much for the excellence of her character as a woman as for the pleasure he took in her desirable appearance".¹⁰⁵ He makes a point of writing that "marriage ought not to be entered into lightly for immediate advantage without first establishing previous mutual regard and serious forethought. And thus a man about to marry will get to know the following four matters which King David did not fully anticipate."¹⁰⁶ Bower then starts a ten page diatribe that begins with "Firstly therefore, a wife should be chosen prudently, and not married suddenly or hastily, for such passion in the beginning produces its penalty in the future".¹⁰⁷ He then continues for the rest of the pages discussing aspects of various evilly-perceived women and creatures from the bible. There is little doubt that it is Margaret Drummond's virtue and character that he seeks to decry.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Thomas Gray states that "David took to wife Lady Margaret de Logie, a lady who had been married previously, and who had been living with him before. This marriage was made only through the force of love,

¹⁰⁰ CDS, Vol. 4, pp. xii-xiii, No. 37.

¹⁰¹ CDS, Vol. 4, p. xiii, No. 65.

¹⁰² CDS, Vol. 4, p. xiii, No. 94; *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 485, fn. 30-31. Her accepted date of death is 7 September 1363; *Scalacronica*, p. 201.

¹⁰³ Penman, *David II: 1329-71*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 246, fn.17, p. 254, fn. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 333.

¹⁰⁶ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 333.

¹⁰⁷ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 335.

¹⁰⁸ *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, pp. 335-355

which overcomes everything”.¹⁰⁹ While Gray appears on the surface to take a chivalric perspective on this marriage, the undertone nevertheless points to Margaret’s less-than virtuous behaviour. Moreover he is implying, somewhat cynically, I think, that much more than ‘the force of love’, is required for such an important marriage, and that he does not hold out much hope for its success.

Nevertheless, Margaret was a political player who was put aside as queen because she had not produced an heir. As Ranald Nicholson states, “this was hardly her fault: she had already proved her fruitfulness while David had not proved his”.¹¹⁰ She had probably orchestrated the marriage of her niece, Annabella Drummond, to Robert III, which took place in 1367. Furthermore, she had persuaded David to imprison Robert the Steward the future Robert II, and some of his sons.¹¹¹ David released them after his divorce.¹¹² David had hoped that Margaret would be content with a £100 pension, but she was made of much sterner stuff and headed off to Avignon to see Pope Gregory XI and commenced an appeal in the *curia* against her divorce, which had meant the possibility of placing Scotland under an interdict.¹¹³ It is doubtful that she went before 1371 when David died, but her cause was certainly represented before she arrived in Avignon and was supported by the English. It was an opportunity for them to lay claim to the Scottish throne in the absence of a legitimate heir of David II.¹¹⁴ Fortunately for Scotland, Margaret died in 1375, and the appeal died with her. In the meantime David II had begun an affair with Agnes Dunbar, sister of George, earl of March.¹¹⁵ David had seriously considered her for queen when he bestowed on her a life pension of 1000 marks for her ‘trousseau and adornment’ in February of 1371.¹¹⁶ This endeavour was short-lived as David II died eleven days later at the age of forty-seven.¹¹⁷ His nearest heir and nephew, Robert, hereditary steward of Scotland and earl of Strathearn, already adult and the most powerful nobleman in Scotland, succeeded to the throne.¹¹⁸ He was nearest in blood and therefore under terms of parliamentary entails that had been drawn up under Robert I’s direction in

¹⁰⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 205.

¹¹⁰ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 182.

¹¹¹ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 179.

¹¹² *Scoticronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 359.

¹¹³ *Scoticronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 359; Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, pp. 182-3.

¹¹⁴ Penman, *David II: 1329-71*, pp. 385-6.

¹¹⁵ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, pp. 182-183.

¹¹⁶ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 183.

¹¹⁷ *Scoticronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 361.

¹¹⁸ *Scoticronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 365.

1318 and 1326, was rightful king of Scotland.¹¹⁹ The throne of Scotland was now occupied by the Stewarts and had come through the female line by way of Marjory, daughter of Robert the Bruce and mother of the newly appointed king, Robert Stewart, the first King of Scots, of that name.

It is fitting to end this article at this point in time as it is, in a sense, the beginning of a new dynasty. The Stewarts were a large family and Robert II was an experienced political player, whose legacy was to last well into the next two centuries. The Bruce women, and particularly the queens of the fourteenth century, had endured much. There is very little information to be gained from the chronicles and other sources of the time that shed very much in the way of light on courtly life in the early to mid-fourteenth century and, indeed, on anything very much that these royal women undertook at this time. Nevertheless, while it may look as if their roles were somewhat limited in comparison to other queens, such as Queen Isabella of England, Queen Joan's mother, who was engaged in both foreign and domestic politics, these Scottish royal women were essential to the success of the Scottish crown. They were energetic players that took their roles seriously.

The close female relatives of Robert the Bruce were important enough to have been captured, imprisoned and exchanged by the English in the early years of the fourteenth century. The closeness with which they were guarded suggests that they were more than capable of both making an escape and organizing a Scottish conspiracy against their English captors. It would have been particularly difficult for any court culture to have been undertaken by this group of women at the time as much of it was spent not only incarcerated, but on the move around the realm in a bid to outrun and beat the English. It was not until the later 1320s that Robert I set up a home of sorts at Cardross where something akin to a court may have taken place.

The reign of David II in the mid fourteenth century was as difficult as the reign of his father. His child marriage to Joan of England and the renewed push by the Balliols for the crown resulting in the young king and queen being sent to France for safety, are hardly conducive to a court life. This was compounded by David's capture five years after they returned from France. However, Joan does do some bidding both with him and for him and the realm of Scotland with her brother Edward III. While she had

¹¹⁹ APS, Vol. 1, p. 465; RRS, Vol. V, p. 63 and no. 58; Norman H. Reid, 'Crown and Community Under Robert I', pp. 212-214; APS, Vol. 1, pp. 475-476; Fordun, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, Vol. II, p. 343; *Scotichronicon*, Vol. 7, p. 35.

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been a captive in exile, and a political player at times she failed the ultimate role of providing an heir. In this sense she was a pawn, put aside so that David could marry again. A second wife, Margaret Drummond was an influential queen by who David seems to have been easily manipulated. However, she was a political player and not easily dissuaded from getting her own way. She had enough support from Scottish and English nobility to get her divorce questioned by the pope and had audience with him. She may well have been responsible for the initial marriage negotiations between Annabella Drummond and the future Robert III. These political alliances suggest that she was indeed involved in a very energetic court but one which was more political than cultural.

It is not until the end of the fourteenth century that there appears to be anything like a Scottish royal court as such. This is not to say that there was not one before, but the records are much more plentiful for the later fourteenth century, as are the chronicles and this later court is the subject of a future paper. While a dearth of sources for the earlier thirteenth century renders these elite women as rather shadowy figures, they were collectively, formidable women. They existed in a fragmented and often turbulent Scottish court but nevertheless survived the times to bring hope of a continued royal dynasty that would last for some centuries into the future. Finally I would posit that whether they were pawns, players or prisoners or occupied one, some or all of these categories, these fourteenth century Scottish royal women were necessary and pivotal players in Scottish dynastic politics.