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Dr. James Fraser appointed University of Guelph's new Chair of Scottish Studies

We are thrilled to announce that Dr. James Fraser will be leading The University of Guelph's Centre for Scottish Studies in the winter semester as the Scottish Studies Foundation Chair.

James comes to us from the Department of History at the University of Edinburgh where he is a Senior Lecturer in Early Scottish History. He is the author of *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795*, *The Roman Conquest of Scotland: the Battle of Mons Graupius AD 84* and *The Battle of Dunnichen 685*.

He has extensive teaching experience at the graduate and undergraduate level. Moreover, he is also a graduate of the University of Guelph, having finished his MA degree here in 1999. James will be coming to Guelph with his wife, Dr. Bronagh Ni Chonaill, and their two children.

As an undergraduate, James specialized in history at the University of Toronto before completing his masters work in the Centre for Scottish Studies at the University of Guelph, writing a dissertation examining medieval portrayals of William Wallace. To support his studies, he worked for several years as a manager and management trainer in the private sector.

His doctoral research was undertaken at Edinburgh University under the supervision of Alex Woolf, and considered the written evidence concerning the conversion and christianisation of the Picts. He joined the ranks of the School staff in 2002 and held a post jointly with Celtic and Scottish Studies until 2011.

James has sat on a number of University, College, School and unit management committees, especially as the School's Director of Quality from 2008 to 2011.

He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and formerly sat on the executive committees of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies and the Scottish History Society, and is currently on the executive committee of the Scottish Historical Review Trust.

His present research is primarily concerned with the Pictish peoples of northern Britain and the Dalriadic peoples of northern Britain and Ireland from the Roman

Iron Age to the ninth century. Principal work to date has been in relation to Adomnán's *Vita sancti Columbae*, the circumstances surrounding its composition, and the light shed by this magnificent text on the monastery of Iona where it was written, on political geography and activity in early medieval Scotland, on the conversion and Christianisation of Scotland, and on social questions such as the nature of kingship and war.

Undergraduate teaching has included courses on Medieval Scottish History, Introduction to Medieval History, Saints and Sea-Kings: early medieval Gaelic Scotland, Rome and the Caledonians, The Picts; postgraduate teaching includes *The Dal Riata*, *The Life and Works of Adomnan of Iona*, *War and Society in Dark Age Scotland*.

James is originally from Tottenham, Ontario. His Fraser ancestors were crofters on Loch Inchard in west Sutherland, before Donald Fraser (d. 1916), his great-great-grandfather settled near Gravenhurst, Ontario which he still thinks of as a second hometown. It was his interest in family history that sparked a general interest in Scottish history -- a combination of the role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* and some inspiring teaching at the University of Toronto that drew him to the early Middle Ages.

James has been in Scotland since 1999, thoroughly enjoying living in Edinburgh (until 2012) and Glasgow (since 2012), cities with different spirits that have both been very comfortable places for him to live.

"The real Scotland is quite a different country than many Canadians imagine it to be from afar, and for me it has been a wonderful home away from home. I have missed hockey and Canadian football, but I have been introduced to the delights of South Asian food and St Johnstone FC. I have now experienced three independence referenda in my lifetime, and the strength of feeling I felt



James E. Fraser BA, MA, PhD, FSAScot

during this recent one shows just how much I have come to care about Scotland. I have been very happy here, and have made many good friends. It won't be easy to leave, but I am really looking forward to my return to Ontario. Many familiar things have changed in the fifteen years I have been gone, and it will take some adjusting (not least with two small children) for the family and me.

"This is an exciting time in the history of relations between Scotland and Canada. Activists cited lessons and examples from Canadian history and politics during the referendum campaign, taking the links between the countries for granted. The present Scottish Government has published a Canada Plan that identifies areas of connection and common interest in which matters of heritage and education feature prominently. The Centre for Scottish Studies shares many of the Government's aspirations, and I believe that the Centre can and should participate publicly in the cultivation of relations between Canada and Scotland, whilst maintaining its academic fascination in the historical relationship between the two countries.

"I am very conscious of the considerable achievements of the Centre under its Chairs and directors, and I aspire to safeguard its already-considerable public and academic standing, as well as building on its important relationship with the Scottish Collection and its impressive publication and digitization projects.

"Hollywood having shown us how much general interest there is in medieval Scotland, I intend to increase the breadth of medieval studies that are possible at the

disturbing a winning formula for supporting Scottish-centred research in all time periods that enjoys considerable academic renown in Scotland. I think that the Gaelic tongue creates a particularly special link between Scotland and Canada, and I hope to strengthen the Highland and Gaelic dimensions of the Centre's work. In addition, I want to look at ways in which the Centre can play its part in supporting the family-history interests of so many Canadians.

"The Scottish Studies Foundation enjoys a particularly close and special relationship with this Chair. I am keen to learn more about how the two interact in support of each other, and what scope exists for building on the foundations now in place. The prospect of becoming involved in helping the Foundation achieve its aims excites me. As the son of a keen genealogist and amateur local historian, and a long-time member of the Clan Fraser Society of Canada, I have genuine respect and empathy for the Foundation and its mission." ■

Painting the Town Scottish Urban History in Art

Examining old photographs of our villages, towns and cities can unlock vital clues to the histories of our urban landscapes and provide an insight into the lives of the people who walked the streets before us.

But what of the days before photography, the years before the camera's lens captured buildings since demolished and streetscapes since altered? At this year's Fall Colloquium, this was the topic of Dr. Michael Lynch's talk based on *Painting the Town: Scottish Urban History in Art*, the 2013 book which he co-authored and which gathers together, for the first time, a visual record of contemporary images of Scotland's towns and townspeople before photography, offering key insights into its urban heritage.

The book includes more than 200 paintings, engravings, sketches and maps – many of which have never before been published – and pairs them with commentary from some of Scotland's foremost experts in conservation, archaeology and urban history. The end date coincides with the popular adoption of photography in the third quarter of the 19th century.

Examining Scotland's urban past in close detail, it features images from archives, museums and galleries from across Scotland and beyond. Some are by prominent artists, others are by relative unknowns, but all have been included because of the information they reveal.

The images contain a wealth of ethnographic material, including costume, vernacular architecture, craft, popular music and entertainment with an outstanding value as an educational resource.

However, it is when the motivations behind the paintings featured in the book are examined in greater detail that the most interesting revelations come to light. Just as early portraiture commissioned by wealthy patrons often portrays its subjects in a particularly flattering light, so, too, do paintings of towns and cities in the 18th and 19th centuries tend to steer clear of a 'warts-and-all' approach.

"A commissioned painting of an urban landscape should by no means be considered an accurate likeness," Dr. Lynch warns us.

"Despite enormous industrial changes in most Scottish towns in the first half of the 19th century, few artists chose to accurately portray townscapes complete with factories, chimneys and commercial development. Instead they often edited their subject matter carefully to suit their requirements.

"While such paintings can be scant on factual accuracy, their inaccuracies often serve to reveal so much more about social attitudes at the time, changing fashions, the vanity of the individuals who commissioned them or the personal motivations of the artists.

"There were, of course, a number of notable exceptions to this. The works of John Fleming, John Clark, Thomas Carsell and John Knox include many faithful representations of townscapes. Clark was commissioned by a London publisher to produce a series of paintings of Scottish towns and the results are picturesque, but accurate, depictions of towns including Dumbarton, Falkirk and Paisley.

"On the other hand, an early view of Stirling Bridge (1703-07) painted by John Berrihill celebrates the natural features and abundant resources of the town, revealing the artist's desire to ingratiate himself with the town council. A representation of Aberdeen by William Mosman, commissioned by the town council and painted in 1756, has been embellished with larger-than-life people, animals and boats. Indeed there are a number of examples of works which have later been embellished with 'staffage' – people, animals or objects – to create a more pleasing scene."

Before the 19th century, less-than-respectable scenes were rare. Native



"Kilmarnock Cross"

Between 1834 and 1840 David Octavius Hill toured the southwest of Scotland painting a series of landscapes and townscapes for publication in a book entitled *"The Land of Burns."* Many of the original paintings have been lost but it is believed that this may be one of them. Dr. Lynch points out that whereas buildings and architectural details are probably accurate, the fashions worn by the people would have spanned many decades.

painters, once deprived of ecclesiastical work after the Reformation, tended to confine themselves to the lucrative trades of portraiture, heraldic painting and the internal decoration of country houses. As such, many of the best early views of Scotland came from foreign artists, particularly Dutch painters.

Patronage was vital to the development of the art of the townscape, and artists often pandered to aristocratic tastes by placing noble houses at the centre of their paintings, or including aristocratic figures in the foreground.

The artist John Clark was acutely aware of his publisher's warning that they would subject his paintings 'to the inspection of Gentlemen of taste, resident upon the spot', and as such a number of his paintings feature the same local gentlemen of taste and fashionably dressed ladies.

Old paintings and photographs of the towns and cities where we live and work connect us to our past. There's comfort and continuity in seeing depictions of buildings and streetscapes which remain relatively unchanged today. Knowing that artistic license has featured heavily in such paintings, and that the people and places they depict may, in part, have been plucked from the imagination of the artist, needn't alter that sense of connection.

On the contrary, such information offers vital clues about the lives, fashions and attitudes of the people who have lived in Scotland's towns and cities over the last 500 years, and that itself is an unassailable connection to its urban past. ■

Mythology and Folklore of the Rowan

By Paul Kendall

The rowan's mythic roots go back to classical times. Greek mythology tells of how Hebe the goddess of youth, dispensed rejuvenating ambrosia to the gods from her magical chalice. When, through carelessness, she lost this cup to demons, the gods sent an eagle to recover the cup. The feathers and drops of blood which the eagle shed in the ensuing fight with the demons fell to earth, where each of them turned into a rowan tree. Hence the rowan derived the shape of its leaves from the eagle's feathers and the appearance of its berries from the droplets of blood.

The rowan is also prominent in Norse mythology as the tree from which the first woman was made (the first man being made from the ash tree). It was said to have saved the life of the god Thor by bending over a fast flowing river in the Underworld in which Thor was being swept away, and helping him back to the shore. Rowan was furthermore the prescribed wood on which runes were inscribed to make rune staves.

In the British Isles the rowan has a long and still popular history in folklore as a tree which protects against witchcraft and enchantment. The physical characteristics of the tree may have contributed to its protective reputation, including the tiny five pointed star or pentagram on each berry opposite its stalk (the pentagram being an ancient protective symbol). The colour red was deemed to be the best protection against enchantment, and so the rowan's vibrant display of berries in autumn may have further contributed to its protective abilities, as suggested in the old rhyme: "Rowan tree and red thread / make the witches tine [lose] their speed." The rowan was also denoted as a tree of the Goddess or a Faerie tree by virtue (like the hawthorn and elder) of its white flowers.

There are several recurring themes of protection offered by the rowan. The tree itself was said to afford protection to the dwelling by which it grew, pieces of the tree were carried by people for personal protection from witchcraft, and sprigs or pieces of rowan were used to protect especially cows and their dairy produce from enchantment. Thus we find documented instances as late as the latter half of the twentieth century of people being warned against removing or damaging the rowan tree growing in their newly acquired garden in the Scottish Highlands and Ireland. On the Isle of Man crosses made from rowan twigs without the use of a knife were worn by

people and fastened to cattle, or hung inside over the lintel on May Eve each year. From Scotland to Cornwall similar equal-armed crosses made from rowan twigs and bound with red thread were sewn into the lining of coats or carried in pockets. Other permutations of the use of rowan's protective abilities are many and widespread.

In Scandinavia, rowan trees found growing not in the ground but out of some inaccessible cleft in a rock, or out of crevasses in other trees' trunks or boughs, possessed an even more powerful magic, and such trees were known as 'flying rowan'.

Rowan has had a wide range of popular folk names, the most well known being mountain ash. Its old Gaelic name from the ancient Ogham script was Luis from which the place name Ardlui on Loch Lomond may have been derived. The more common Scots Gaelic name is caorunn (pronounced choroorn, the ch as in loch), which crops up in numerous Highland place names such as Beinn Chaorunn in Inverness-shire and Loch a'chaoran in Easter Ross. Rowan was also the clan badge of the Malcolms and McLachlans. There were strong taboos in the Highlands against the use of any parts of the tree save the berries, except for ritual purposes. For example a Gaelic threshing tool made of rowan and called a buaitéan was used on grain meant for rituals and celebrations. The strength of these taboos did not apply in other parts of Britain it seems, though there were sometimes rituals and timings to be observed in harvesting the rowan's gifts (for example the rule against using knives to cut the wood, mentioned above).

The rowan's wood is strong and resilient, making excellent walking sticks, and is suitable for carving. It was often used for tool handles, and spindles and spinning wheels were traditionally made of rowan wood. Druids used the bark and berries to dye the garments worn during lunar ceremonies black, and the bark was also used in the tanning process. Rowan twigs were used for divining, particularly for metals. The berries can be made into or added to a variety of alcoholic drinks, and different Celtic peoples each seem to have had their favourites. As well as the popular wine still made in the Highlands, the Scots made a strong spirit from the berries, the Welsh brewed an ale, the Irish used them to flavour Mead, and even a cider can be made from



The "Rannoch Rowan" A familiar landmark at the edge of Scotland's Rannoch Moor

them. Today rowan berry jelly is still made in Scotland and is traditionally eaten with game. ■

Golden Rowan

by Bliss Carman
(Canadian Poet 1861-1928)

SHE lived where the mountains
go down to the sea,
And river and tide confer.
Golden Rowan, in Menalowan,
Was the name they gave to her.

She had the soul no circumstance
Can hurry or defer.
Golden Rowan, of Menalowan,
How time stood still for her!

Her playmates for their lovers grew,
But that shy wanderer,
Golden Rowan, of Menalowan
Knew love was not for her.

Hers was the love of wilding things;
To hear a squirrel chir
In the golden rowan of Menalowan
Was joy enough for her.

She sleeps on the hill with the lonely sun,
Where in the days that were,
The golden rowan of Menalowan
So often shadowed her.

The scarlet fruit will come to fill,
The scarlet spring to stir
The golden rowan of Menalowan,
And wake no dream for her.

Only the wind is over her grave,
For mourner and comforter;
And "Golden Rowan, of Menalowan,"
Is all we know of her.

Love & Marriage in Medieval Scotland

By Dr. Heather Parker, University of Guelph

Medieval historians have been grappling with questions about marriage and family relationships for over a century. In particular, the question of whether 'love' existed in the middle ages has been paramount. This is quite the attack on the era that gave us chivalry and courtly love. The problem, then, is not that love didn't exist, but that it may have existed in different forms. In 1936 C.S. Lewis – yes, the one who wrote the *Chronicles of Narnia* (he was also a medievalist) – wrote this:

“Two things prevented the men of that age from connecting their ideal of romantic and passionate love with marriage. The first is, of course, the actual practice of feudal society. Marriages had nothing to do with love, and no ‘nonsense’ about marriage was tolerated. All matches were matches of interest, and, worse still, of an interest that was continually changing. When the alliance which had answered would answer no longer, the husband’s object was to get rid of the lady as quickly as possible. Marriages were frequently dissolved. The same woman who was the lady and the ‘dearest dread’ of her vassals was often little better than a piece of property to her husband...Any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery.”

Twenty four years later, in 1960, Philippe Ariès published his *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, which concluded that parents' perceptions and treatment of their children changed drastically during the early modern period. Ariès was the first historian to argue that the family had a history worth studying, and his book was well received by the general public. This reception did not last long before his work was torn apart by medievalists (such as Jerome Kroll in 1977) resulting in a retraction of his medieval conclusions.

These conclusions have been largely refuted, but they raise important questions, and the responses they prompted are part of a fascinating body of research on childhood, marriage, and the history of love. And while these conclusions are not entirely true, they are also not entirely false. There is evidence that supports Lewis and Ariès' conclusions about love not being central to decisions

about family, but there is also plenty of evidence to suggest that this only applies in limited circumstances.

When Lewis writes that “no ‘nonsense’ about marriage was tolerated,” he was generally correct about the situation in Scotland. Marriages were a matter of importance to all members of a family, and they did not revolve around any notion of romantic love.

In the medieval world, arranged marriages were common and typically followed Catholic marriage law. There are some misconceptions about betrothals in medieval Scotland. Misconceptions about Scottish betrothals arose partly because historians in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries turned towards romantic visions of the Scottish past.

These works established one of the ever-present myths of medieval marriage in Scotland. Thomas Pennant's writing in *A Tour in Scotland*, (1789), although based on little concrete evidence, gained a large popular audience that continues to this day. Pennant was one of the first historians to record the myth that medieval Scots (either Celts or lowlanders depending on the source), were in the habit of entering trial unions, called “handfast marriages.” According to Pennant, after a year and a day, the couple could choose to end their marriage. These ideas were adopted and spread by the great Sir Walter Scott, who echoed Pennant's version of handfasting in his novel, *The Monastery*. Pennant's semi-mythical accounts were used subsequently by historians and were not seriously reassessed until 1950, when A. E. Anton demonstrated that the word 'handfasting' was, in fact, just a synonym for 'betrothal,' and nothing more.

So, far from being based on romantic love, betrothals in medieval Scotland were generally arranged by family members to suit the needs of the family at the time and frequently included pre-arranged marriages for children.

It is difficult to know what a typical age for first marriage in late medieval Scotland was because there are no comprehensive records of marriages. Even when marriages were documented, it is often impossible to know the exact ages of the bride and groom because there are no dated birth records to compare them to.

What we do have is evidence of ages for marriage in the late-sixteenth century and later. Between 1560 and 1600, an average nobleman first married at the age of 22. Noblewomen entered their first marriages at an average age of 18. Noble families generally married earlier than the wider population because there were fewer financial concerns preventing the marriage, although raising a dowry could be a struggle. At all levels of society, the median age for



“A Pair of Lovers” circa 1480

women at their first marriage was between 26 and 27 years of age with one in four women never marrying at all.

It would be inappropriate to see these ages applying to the later medieval period. However, they do show that Scottish marriage ages after the Reformation were very much in line with European norms. What is interesting here is that we know that even if childhood betrothals were occurring, actual marriage did not take place until a bit later.

Anecdotal evidence does exist from earlier periods addressing the question of age at marriage, and the contents of antenuptial contracts provides especially interesting evidence of this. Generally, marriage contracts were intended to be carried out as soon as practicable and included phrases such as, “*in all gudly haste*” to make this explicit. Other contracts go against the grain and include clauses requiring the bride and groom to reach a minimum age before they marry. The age they must reach is sometimes the legal minimum limit for marriage. The 1469 contract of Margaret Preston and John Edmonston, required that they marry “*as soon as they are of lawful age*.” Others were similar. The 1545 contract of the daughter of Margaret Hamilton, and the earl of Arran and James Montgomery, master of Eglinton stated that if the marriage did not occur within a year of James's fourteenth birthday, than the contract should be considered null and void.

In 1557, when Christian Ogilvy of Balnagerro and Walter Ogilvy of Innerquhairty were contracted to marry, their contract used the phrase “*at thair perfect age*.” While the writers may have been referring to the legal minimum, other

contracts in the following twenty years use this kind of language to refer to older children.

A 1569 contract between Sir William Scott of Balweiry and Christian Douglas of Lochleven stated that they should marry when the bride “*beis of fourteine yeirs of age*” and that if either of them were to die before this time, he or she was to be replaced by any other sons or daughters, yet to be born. Grizel Hay and Robert Hume were entered into a marriage contract by their parents in 1576 that specified that they should not be married until they reached the age of eighteen. A later contract even defines “*compleit age*” as fifteen.

These documents indicate that even those parents who chose to enter their children into early betrothals were not always eager for their children to marry as young as legally possible. Instead, they had a wider range of opinions on what age was considered appropriate. Further still, it must be pointed out that the contracts that do specify an age at which the families should proceed with the marriage are not representative of average ages of first marriages, but instead of the absolute minimum that was acceptable.

There were notable exceptions to these mores, especially among royalty and magnates, but these only rarely extended into noble families.

Childhood betrothals are a very clear-cut case of bride and groom being vulnerable to persuasion concerning their marriage arrangements. The type of persuasion here is subtle – and certainly modern parents try to exert this kind of influence on their children to different ends – but there were other levels of coercion that existed as well, even if they were not in the mainstream.

In 1425 a gang of men kidnapped Jonet Jardin and forced her to marry James de Arnot, who imprisoned her for four and a half years and had a child by her. Jonet appealed to the pope for a divorce and, although successful, was excommunicated in the process. James subsequently died, but not before Jonet had contracted to marry another man. This bizarre story is recorded in a petition sent to the pope to legitimize her new marriage and may very well have been fabricated or embellished in order to support her petition for annulment.

Some of the bawdiest portrayals of Scottish marriage came from the 'makar' and courtier, William Dunbar, who was an active poet around the turn of the sixteenth century. Some scholars have portrayed Dunbar as a moralist with a perception that the world contained “eternal values and ultimate truths.” Dunbar’s “*The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*” provided a cynical view of marriage. In this poem, a spy accidentally came upon three young, well-to-do women, who were discussing their

marriages. Two of the women were married and the third was a widow. The widow took the lead as a questioner and asked the married women about their husbands: “*gif ye think, had ye chois, that ye wald cheis better?*”

Each of the married women was unhappy with her husband. The first wife lamented her fate in marriage and wished that marriage were not a lifetime commitment. The second wife, showing her fickle nature, declared that she wished she could have chosen her own husband, thereby demonstrating that although the idea of choice in marriage existed, it was often overshadowed by more mundane concerns. She also declared that she detested her husband, finding him grotesque and disgusting. The second wife described her husband as a lecher who selected her as his wife. When she answered the question of choice she declared: “*Hed I that plesand prevelege, to part quhen me likit,/ To change and ay to cheise agane, than chastite adew!*” Instead of chastity, she wished for a new partner of her own choosing. Marriage was a “cockfight,” and the second wife even complained about being forced into her marriage by “*wekit kyn.*”

Although this poem is full of jests and ironic statements, Dunbar did reveal certain aspects of society that reflected reality. The widow then proceeded to tell the women about how she bettered her husbands and gained wealth and happiness without them. The widow was pleased with her second husband’s wealth but not with his illegitimacy and his role as a merchant, since she was, in fact, of nobler blood. The widow clearly uses property law and written contracts to maximize her wealth through a series of marriages. The real point of Dunbar’s poem, however, comes at the end, when he asks the audience to choose between the women: “*Quhilk wald ye waill to you wif, gif ye suld wed one?*” – Which would you have as your wife, if you should wed one? – certainly a poem meant to show the uglier side of marriage for husbands and wives both.

Now, one of the other observations Lewis had about marriage was that... “When the alliance which had answered would answer no longer, the husband’s object was to get rid of the lady as quickly as possible. Marriages were frequently dissolved.”

He is certainly correct on this front, as well. When a couple no longer wished to be married, they had to apply to the pope for an annulment, and they had to supply a good reason for this. Many claimed they had married without knowing they had existing connections to their spouses. Perhaps they were distant cousins, or that their spouse had had sex with one of their relatives in the past – a situation so common in medieval Scotland’s small aristocratic circles that in

1554, Archbishop Hamilton wrote to the pope that it was nearly impossible to avoid blood related marriages in Scotland and still remain within the gentrified strata of society.

Annulment requests existed because polygamy was unlawful, and so if one wanted a legitimate heir from a different woman, annulment was the only option short of offing one’s wife. It was routine for men to keep mistresses; the only thing separating those women from wives was their legal status and that of their children. There is evidence, though, that in some places in Gaelic Scotland, there wasn’t as much of a concern about legitimacy. In fact, the fourth Macdonald Lord of the Isles, Angus Og, was illegitimate but still able to inherit the lordship without much fuss. This raises questions about how marriage and polygamy are defined when that legal status is blurred.

There is copious evidence of men keeping mistresses, but much less evidence of women committing adultery. One example of this is Isabella Campbell, also known as Iseabail Ní Mheic Cailéin, and possibly the countess of Argyll herself, wrote sexualized poems in Gaelic that described love and lust outside of marriage. Isabella’s most vivid poem, and one that has somehow escaped translation and publication until quite recently, describes in detail “the tale of the powerful penis” of her household priest. In this poem, she mocked the institution of clerical celibacy, writing that it has “made my heart greedy.” She goes on to say, among other things, that “although many beautiful tree-like penises have been in the time before, the man of the religious order has a penis so big and rigid.” Isabella had a good sense of humour, but her approach to sexuality and especially chastity within marriage is well outside the bounds of what people typically think of in the medieval period steeped in church tradition.

Marriage vows in the middle ages were, like today, routinely undermined by adultery, resulting in the breakdown of marital relationships, sometimes leading to annulment and remarriage.

One of the most famous of these divorces involved Archibald Campbell, the 5th earl of Argyll, who was betrothed as a child to Jane Stewart, an illegitimate daughter of king James V. No doubt the Campbell clan had been eager to solidify the details of such as advantageous marriage as one into the royal family, albeit an illegitimate branch. Jane provided Argyll with a link to both the courts of the regent Mary of Guise, and eventually Mary, Queen of Scots, herself but their marriage resulted in a clash of personalities and eventually soured, with neither party agreeing to relax their positions; Argyll refused a physical separation that would mean he had no chance at a legitimate heir, and Jane initially refused to return to her husband. The resulting dispute included

such dramatic actions as flight, imprisonment, and a ground-breaking court case. The couple did not, however, receive an immediate, official separation, as others had done before them, and, instead, their personal friendships with Mary, Queen of Scots, and Protestant reformer John Knox acting as marriage counsellors for the couple. This duo is particularly improbable because John Knox despised not only Mary, Queen of Scots' persistent Catholicism after the reformation – his reformation – but also her existence as a woman. He had just written his treatise, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* partly in her honour. The foursome eventually agreed on a reconciliation, which broke down over the following four years and led to the seemingly inevitable plea for divorce.

The difficulties Argyll faced included a wife who insisted on physical separation but refused outright divorce, an earldom in need of an heir, and a system of marital law that relied on Church courts that had become defunct since the Protestant Reformation. The right of an adulterer to remarry was also under debate, and the existence of this obstacle created the possible consequences for Argyll's ability to produce a legitimate heir. Although the old church courts, and the new Kirk Session of St Andrews, had tried to step into the role of regulating divorce, the Kirk was hesitant to allow any but the highest officials to hold such power. Confusion reigned in determining jurisdiction of the courts and by 1564 both the civil and ecclesiastical courts claimed the right to regulate marriage. In the end, it was Argyll's actions in Parliament that caused lawmakers to pass an act that resolved the case and allowed for divorce on the grounds of desertion so that the commissary court could provide the couple with a divorce, allowing Argyll to remarry. Jane continued to fight this after the death of her erstwhile husband, and was eventually rewarded with her title and land from the marriage.

Even though the Protestant reformation changed some of the outlook on marriage, the medieval laws of marriage and divorce had never been formally re-examined, and so many people, including Mary Queen of Scots' third husband, the earl of Bothwell, ended up in precarious marital situations governed by parallel sets of Protestant and Catholic marriage laws.

Much like the famous divorce cases of Henry VIII of England, annulments could be demanded in order to facilitate political changes. Before Mary, Queen of Scots and James Hepburn, the earl of Bothwell, married, he was married to Jane Gordon. After James had fled with Mary (willing or not), his wife Jane tried to obtain a divorce on account of his adultery, which she

claimed was with a maidservant, probably to avoid restrictions on his remarriage. James simultaneously tried to have the marriage annulled based on consanguinity, despite the fact that the couple had obtained dispensations in 1565 from the archbishop of St Andrews. Jane hid these records from the officials to facilitate the divorce. In the end, the couple received a divorce based on Jane's case, followed soon after by the annulment James demanded from the same Catholic archbishop who had issued the dispensations in the first place. James and Queen Mary married two weeks later in a Protestant wedding.

All of these cases demonstrate a cynical side to arranged marriages, but the story does not end there. There is copious evidence of parents demonstrating care and affection for their children. In the sixteenth century, the matriarch of the Campbells of Glenorchy, Katherine Ruthven, through her letter writing, was personally responsible for gathering intelligence on potential marriage partners for her children to ensure that the final decisions she made were sound. She was interested in the availability and temperaments of potential matches for her children, and used networks of relatives and friends to discover these things. William Maitland, in response to a request from his friend Katherine that his wife inquire about her sister's stepdaughter, informed her, "*as toward the gentill woman quhilk ye persavit come to spy and gett intelligence of I haif by my wyff . . . and sundry uther meanes speirrit and inquiret . . . upon my honour and credit.*" Katherine is arranging betrothals for her children, but she isn't doing it callously. Instead, she is taking great care to ensure that the personality of any potential wife be more than adequate.

Not only are parents involved in making sure some marriages are happy, but we do have evidence of a smaller number of marriages that are based on this idea of 'love.'

Marion Campbell of Glenlyon, wrote a poem that referred both to her own marriage and to that of Katherine Ruthven, and Colin Campbell of Glenorchy. Marion wrote in detail about the circumstances of her own marriage and the murder of her husband by Colin Campbell of Glenorchy. She had eloped rather than marry the man chosen for her by her father and ended up watching the death of her husband at the hands of her father and uncle Colin. Marion wrote about the love she felt for her husband, MacGregor of Glenstrae: "I was sporting with my love, / but before noon came upon us / my heart had been crushed." She continues to write that arranged marriages are far less favourable to her than this romance: "Although the wives of other men are at home / Lying and peacefully sleeping, I shall be at the edge of

my bed / Beating my two hands. / Far better to be married to Gregor / Roaming the wood and heather, / Than married to the little baron of the river-meadow / In a house of stone and lime." Although Marion meets with her beloved, in another poem attributed to her she declares, "Do not let yourself be displeased / Although I failed to keep the tryst, . . . If it were not for the strength of the castles / and of the great gates, / And the restraint of the locks / Which I cannot escape without hammers!" Marion thus presents the conflict between personal choice and parental control, and shows the extent to which parents were able to physically control their children. Marion even described the Glenorchy couple, Katherine and Colin: "A pity my father was not diseased and Grey Colin stricken with plague, / even though Ruthven's daughter / would wring her hands dismayed." The last line sheds light on the marriage of Katherine and Colin, and perhaps on the sympathy of Marion for the plight of another wife.

Marion's poetry gives us examples of distasteful arranged marriages – like her own – elopement for love, and, in her assessment of Katherine Ruthven and Colin Campbell, an arranged marriage that was happy. Marion raises important questions about the relationship between arranged marriage and happiness. The answer to this question is still evident today, for instance in some regions of India where arranged marriages are still important to the social structure. Interviews with the mothers in these families shows that although the mothers themselves experienced the hardships associated with an arranged marriage, they also saw all the benefits of economic and social stability that come with these marriages, and they want the best for their own daughters. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "Marriages had nothing to do with love, and no 'nonsense' about marriage was tolerated."

Medieval historians are pulled back and forth between two major conclusions. The first is that medieval people must have been just like us, with the same breadth of emotion as we have today. The second possible conclusion is that they couldn't have been just like us, because the circumstances were fundamentally different.

Relationships within Scottish families show us that medieval people were real. They lived real, complicated lives, and they had complicated and varied emotions. Because their world was different, because they had different priorities, we cannot assume that their family relationships were identical to ours. Even when they were not concerned with 'love,' they were often able to find some sort of happiness in the harsh realities of medieval life. ■

The Rise and Fall of Glasgow's Tobacco Lords

By Charles Campbell

They were mighty men in their day, the "tobacco lords" of 18th-century Glasgow. In their scarlet cloaks, cocked hats and powdered wigs, carrying their gold-headed canes like rods of office, they strutted on the cobblestones of the Trongate holding "the croon o' the causey," the use of which they arrogated to themselves. A citizen of substance such as a minister, a doctor or a University professor might accost one of these aristocrats of the Saltmarket without rebuff; but for other "lesser breeds" to address them was a liberty not to be permitted, and for common feet to tread these stones was almost sacrilegious. If a shopkeeper wished to confer with a Virginia tobacco merchant, he did not venture to come up to speak, but stood at the side of the street or in the gutter, meekly waiting to catch the great man's eye and deferentially indicate his desire for a word with his lordship.

The rise of the tobacco trade dates from the Union of 1707, before which there was no scope for commercial energy or enterprise for Glasgow. The city could not compete in foreign trade with towns on the East Coast, and on the other hand English laws had prohibited all Scots trading with America and the Indies. The removal of this obstacle at the Union was naturally greeted with howls of English indignation and prophecies of bankruptcy.

But a few Glasgow businessmen put their capital together, got goods for barter, and chartering a small vessel from Whitehaven, Cumberland, sent her forth across the Atlantic. The captain, acting as supercargo, set his course for Virginia, where he stayed until his cargo was disposed of. He came back home with a load of rum and tobacco, along with some money, which, according to tradition, he handed to his employers in a stocking.

Before long, the Glasgow tobacco houses not only secured the lion's share of the foreign export trade but undersold the English merchants in their own home markets. This led to a combination against them by the dealers of London, Liverpool, Bristol and Whitehaven, and a complaint to the Government that Glasgow traders conducted their business upon, and reaped their profits from, a system of fraud on the public revenue.

A searching investigation, held in 1721, resulted in the Lords of the Treasury finding that "the complaints of the merchants of London, etc., are groundless, and proceed from a spirit of envy, and not from a regard

to the interests of trade or of the King's revenue."

Nevertheless, there were further representations and a chain of expensive lawsuits before the Glasgow traders got rid of the last of various vexatious restrictions imposed upon them.

It has been romantically written that "trade in those days was a matter of golden guineas and ships of sail, and adventures in strange lands, and those who succeeded in it conducted themselves with the braggadocio and full-blooded vulgarity of successful pirates." But apart from the braggadocio, it is a description that does not apply to the canny merchants we write of, who knew nothing personally of either adventure or risk.

Glasgow Past and Present gives us an illuminating picture of the way the tobacco traders ran their lucrative business: "At this period (about 1746) and for many years afterwards, the mode of transacting business by our great Glasgow merchants was very different from what it is at present. In making purchases for shipments to the colonies by the Virginia merchants, no fixed term of payment was agreed upon; but there was a tacit understanding between the buyer and the seller that the vessel on board of which the goods were shipped should return, and the return cargo be disposed of, before the sellers were to receive payment for the goods furnished; and if any seller should dare to demand payment of his account before he received a circular letter from the great merchant that the latter was prepared to pay for the goods shipped, the poor seller could never expect to be afterwards favoured with the merchant's custom."

On this same theme in *Social Life of Scotland in the 18th century*, the author writes tartly: "By this ingenious arrangement they who furnished the goods ran most of the risk, while the astute traders got most of the profits, and paced the Trongate with easy mind till the ships they did not own, and the cargoes for which others had paid, returned safely home."

In the earlier years of the tobacco trade Whitehaven supplied most of the required vessels by charter, and it was not until 1718 that the first vessel owned by a Glasgow merchant crossed the Atlantic. She was built in Greenock, and registered only 60 tons.

Even up to 1735 the merchants could only boast of 15 vessels of their own, engaged in the Virginia trade. But by this time activity was increasing rapidly, year by year. Ships were now going out laden with home manufactures of all kinds--wool, linen, carpets, dried herrings and salmon, glass, shoes, ropes, pottery--and coming home with rich cargoes of colonial products.

By 1772 more than half of all the tobacco imported into the United Kingdom was

coming to Glasgow, making the Virginia merchants the most prosperous traders in Scotland; Glasgow's share of the import was 49,000 hogsheads out of a total import of 90,000. In the preceding year Smollett wrote in *Humphry Clinker* that Mr. John Glassford had 25 vessels engaged in the Virginia traffic, with trade running to half-a-million.

It all looked like a marvellous example of "Nothing succeeding like success." But who was to foretell that in a few short years it would collapse like a pricked bubble? The outbreak of the American War of Independence in 1776 was to ruin the great Virginia trade.

Some attempts were made by Scottish farmers at Melrose and elsewhere in the Borders to introduce tobacco as a field crop, some 100 acres being under cultivation in the neighbourhood of Kelso alone. For a time this home-produced contribution to the trade was welcomed by the Glasgow merchants, who, in their dire need, were prepared to pay as much as £50 for an acre's produce. But they soon came to resent this encroachment on their profits by the home crop and denounced the growers to the Government as being in breach of the law. One unfortunate minister who sought to turn an honest bawbee on the side by using his glebe for tobacco growing ruefully saw his crop seized and burned at Leith by the Customs men, who gave him a paltry fourpence a pound in compensation.

The trade was tottering to a fall. Disastrous failures followed fast, princely fortunes were lost, and many who by astute marriages and otherwise had dominated Glasgow society for 35 to 40 years had to warstle along as best they might on shrunken incomes and sink into civic obscurity. There were others, however, who weathered the economic storm, and found new activity and new success in the other trades that had been established.

Sugar from the West Indies, cotton for the mills, calico printing, muslin weaving and cotton spinning were employing thousands, and manufacturers all around the city brought new wealth to new men, and fortunes were not found only in a small set, but diffused widely; the old exclusiveness of society disappeared, and time-honoured distinctions and purse-proud prejudices passed away that had severed foreign merchants and home manufacturers and tradesmen into distinct ranks.

New men and new ways, indeed! But the tobacco trade was for Glasgow a golden memory of great days gone, and now no more. After the American War was over the new States, as was to be expected, in the first flush of their new won independence, largely exported the tobacco of Maryland and Virginia direct to the various European markets. ■

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