

The Book of Hours of James IV, King of Scots

The Symbol of a Watershed in Scotland's History

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The Book of Hours of James IV, King of Scots, is rightly regarded as one of the supreme examples of late mediaeval manuscript illumination. Yet it is more than simply that, for it was created to celebrate a momentous event in the history of the Kingdom of Scotland that was to have far-reaching effects on the course of history for centuries to come.

This stunning showpiece of Scotland's cultural heritage, created to commemorate James's marriage to the English princess Margaret Tudor on 8 August 1503, is in fact closely associated with a whole series of historic events and developments, and marks the start of the process that resulted in the formation of the United Kingdom.

The highlight of its content is the famous full-page folio portrait of James IV, King of Scots, wearing the Scottish State Crown in its pre-1540 configuration. Artistically, the book is a breathtaking masterpiece of Renaissance art, but it is also of significance in political and constitutional history.

It was created in the Netherlands, but in concept and production was clearly directly guided and influenced by leading Scottish figures, probably including James himself. Now scrupulously conserved in the National Library of Austria, its story is a saga that goes back for centuries to Scotland's wars of independence and continues to this day.

The Mediaeval Book of Hours

One of the main branches of book painting, or illumination, in western Europe was the Book of Hours, a personal prayer book, a very sophisticated branch of high art, ownership of which, for reasons of cost, was restricted mainly to royalty and the very highest aristocracy. Developed out of a thousand years of monastic tradition that in previous centuries had produced religious masterpieces like the Book of Kells, by the Renaissance age the art of book painting, religious and secular, had emerged from its cloistered production locations and become a commercial activity carried on in a host of small private studios.

The artists, known to each other across frontiers, were organised in craft guilds with rules of apprenticeship. Many of them can be identified from individual motifs they employed in diverse commissions for clients all over the continent. By the early 16th century production was to a great extent concentrated in two centres – in Paris, and in the cities of the southern Netherlands, principally Flanders. Even in Paris the artists were often predominantly Flemish and accustomed to moving between the two centres as commissions arose.

Just as the sailing ship reached its highest development with the extreme clipper during the succeeding age of steam, the art of book illumination reached its absolute

zenith in the work of this Paris-Flanders axis over just a few decades, after the technology of movable type printing was already established and widespread. The tradition died out almost everywhere in the first half of the 16th century, but in what became known as the Ghent-Bruges School it went through a final flowering during a few glorious decades that lasted till mid-century.

The Book of Hours of James IV, King of Scots, stands at the very pinnacle of this final flowering of the art form, which surpassed by far anything in the monastic tradition in its superlative artistic quality. Commissioned for a royal client, created by artists who would now be called the superstars of the Ghent-Bruges school of illumination, and commemorating a momentous historic event, the James IV book's importance in the history of this art form is unsurpassed in every respect.

The book was a manifestation of the Northern Renaissance in Europe at its height, one that amongst others encompassed centuries-old links between Scottish and continental societies. These links were broken in the end as Scotland was eventually forced to divert its vision more narrowly southwards, and then overseas, rather than to the continent of Europe, primarily as a result of the very event that the book was created to commemorate. In that respect the Book of Hours of James IV is the outstanding symbol of a watershed in the history of the Nation of Scots, with far-reaching ramifications through a chain of events and developments that have continued right down to our own day.

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The relevant learned literature dealing with this book fills volumes. However, a brief description of the Scottish connection with its creators, and of its links with the Burgundian empire in which this artistic tradition developed, is necessary for a full understanding of the book's considerable importance in the history of art, and also its place in dynastic and constitutional history. Much of this is not wholly comprehensible to commentators who are unacquainted with the Scottish background and its links with the European continent at the time.

The volume, in its sumptuous crimson velvet binding, contains most of the features of books of hours generally, but is untypical in a number of respects. Its production was centred on the atelier belonging to Alexander (Sanders) Bening, who was a prominent member of the craft guilds in both Ghent and Bruges. Sanders himself is not widely listed for personal artistic achievements, although he seems to have made a good living, but his studio was a place where artists like his wife's relative (brother or uncle), the painter Hugo van der Goes, went in and out, and where his former apprentice, the miniaturist Gerard Horenbout, learned his trade. The Bening family also had marital connections with the Scottish royal court, which is certainly how this ultra-prestigious commission for a book of hours came about (see below).

Expert specialists in this branch later identified the two principal artists who created the James IV book as Gerard Horenbout and Sanders's 19-year-old son and heir Simon Bening, already a guild member with a precocious talent, and later to achieve outstanding fame in this branch of art. It is accepted that others were also anonymously involved in the artwork, especially the full-page biblical illustrations,

some of which were apparently subcontracted, while specialist calligraphers and initial painters wrote the Latin texts within the frames determined by the text length.

Most of the 245 parchment folios are illustrated on both sides, but only one side of the leaves is used for the 18 full-page illustrations covering biblical themes, the portraits of James and Margaret, the requiem for James III, and the royal arms of Scotland, that mark the chapter headings. It seems that they were done separately from the main body of the book, and inserted at the final binding.

The book starts with a 12-month calendar of saints' days and other feasts, each month covered by two pages, the right-hand half page depicting a variant of a "mountain and the flood" landscape, all with the appropriate signs of the zodiac, inside an "architectural" border attributed to Horenbout. The selection of saints' names used by the calligrapher suggests that the compiler belonged to the Franciscan Order. William Dunbar, who became poet laureate to James IV from about the year 1500 until 1513, was a friar of the Order of St. Francis and may well have been involved here.

The Scottish royal arms (Fol.14) that follows displays such heraldic perfection that the artist must have received minutely detailed instructions from Edinburgh. It has been suggested that the artist may have been the King's Limner, Sir Thomas Galbraith, who did the illumination of the marriage treaty signed in January 1502, but on the other hand Galbraith may just have been the one who supplied the detailed instructions to Horenbout. The heraldic display is surrounded by a border incorporating the combined arms of James and Margaret as well as their initials, and is decorated with thistles, marguerites, and branches arranged as Saltire crosses.

The highlight of the book is, of course, Horenbout's resplendent portrait of James IV himself kneeling before a Gothic chapel altar with, behind him, his patron St. James the Elder, who is dressed as a pilgrim with staff and water bottle (Fol.24). James IV is wearing the pre-1540 Scottish State Crown, i.e. before some remodelling work done in that year for James V by the Edinburgh goldsmith John Mosman. (The painting proves that Mosman did not add the arches, as is sometimes alleged, which suggests that the basic substance of the present Crown is still the same one that tradition traces back to Robert the Bruce.)

The altar triptych shows the Saviour with a hand raised in blessing, while its left wing carries a picture of St. Andrew with his Saltire cross. Outside the chapel, in the main body of the church, two soldiers with lances, presumably James's bodyguard, are peeping in with interest. Whether James actually sat for the portrait is unknown, but the depiction is so utterly perfect in every detail that the artist could have actually visited Edinburgh for the assignment in conjunction with that for the heraldic plate.

The Bening atelier may have sub-contracted the portrait of Margaret Tudor and some of the full-page biblical illustrations at the beginnings of chapters, although that would have been unlikely for such a commission. Horenbout has been named in connection with the picture, but others have suggested that the artist was Clara de Keyser.

It is difficult to see how one of the marriage partners could have been relegated to a position at the end of the book (Fol.243), but it may have been a case of late delivery

by the artist at an advanced stage of production with a deadline – a not unknown situation – or it may be related to the story of Lady Margaret Drummond, the love of James's life, who was poisoned along with two of her sisters in 1501 – allegedly to force him to enter the dynastic marriage with England. (See the special chapter)

At any rate, Margaret Tudor is depicted kneeling before an altar, with both it and the prayer stool carrying the royal arms of the Queen of Scots, the depictions of which look identical to those in Horenbout's work. The altar also carries her and James's initials in a love knot, and her small dog is lying at the foot. As with James, another saintly figure stands behind her, but this one has never been convincingly identified.

The requiem scene (Fol.141) has caused a lot of conjecture on the part of foreign commentators unacquainted with Scottish history, but an explanation is simple for those who know James's story. The Lion Rampant banners in the background leave no doubt that the ceremony is in honour of a King of Scots, and there can be no doubt that in this case it was for his father, King James III. As Crown Prince, the immature 15-year-old Duke of Rothesay had allowed himself to be used as a figurehead by a group of rebel lords against his father. James III survived the defeat of his force at Sauchieburn, near Stirling, on 11 June 1488, but someone unknown murdered him after the battle.

James IV carried an iron belt or chain around his waist for the rest of his life in expiation of the crime against his father, and this picture can be seen as another manifestation of his permanent sense of guilt. It is probable that the mysterious youthful figure with long hair in the left background was intended to represent the teenage James himself at his father's funeral in Cambuskenneth Abbey.

The requiem picture marks the start of the section containing the prayers for the deceased, the text being headed by a particularly large and elaborate initial D. At the end of the section (Fol.170) there is a full-page painting of angels conveying souls to Heaven from Purgatory, which was evidently situated somewhere on the spherical Earth depicted.

In view of the likely personal significance of the requiem picture for James – he probably specifically ordered its inclusion – it is unlikely that Sanders Bening would have allowed it to be carried out by anyone outside the family circle. It seems to bear some of the stamp of Horenbout, although Simon Bening could also come into consideration as its artist.

Simon may also have completed some of the smaller miniatures set in the text pages, although these are mostly credited to Horenbout, especially the 40 that usually mark the beginnings of prayers and must have demanded the closest collaboration between artist and calligrapher. St. Andrew with his cross is of course there among the series of portraits of saints (Fol.48).

It is tempting to read a degree of youthful exuberance into some of these masterly miniatures. St. Dionysus (Fol.51) is seen wandering through a landscape carrying his head under his arm. The artist resolves the problem of where to put the halo by putting it round the severed neck. There is a particularly refreshing portrait of the Virgin Mary with an apparently four-year-old Jesus (Fol.41) seated beside a basket of

washing with tongs, and framed by a scene of a mediaeval bird-catcher at work, the latter a standard scene that also appears in other books of hours.

One of the most spectacular presentations in the book is the double-page spread illustrating the biblical story of King David of Israel (Fol.118-119), which introduces the psalms section. On the right-hand page, surrounding the first psalm text, he is seen as a youth arriving home carrying the head of Goliath the Philistine on a spear and greeted by a jubilant crowd. On the opposite page he is seen as a mature man before his palace, in supplication beside his harp as the author of the psalms of David. This image is set within a picture of David spying from a window on the bathing Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of his officers, before sending her husband to a certain death in battle so that he himself could marry her.

A brief description of these highlights cannot do full justice to this masterpiece of Renaissance art. Its 245 folio parchment leaves are the basis for 472 pages of stunning artistry, with 65 miniatures of almost unbelievable intricacy, and every single page is embellished with minutely worked gold leaf. Stylised saltires, thistles, some roses, cornflowers and other blossoms, but mostly marguerites in honour of the bride adorn the borders. The hundreds of hand-painted ornate initial letters in the text alone are an extravagance rarely found elsewhere. Birds, bees, dragonflies and other forms of life abound, and many of the illustrations provide first-hand contemporary evidence in colour of people and their way of life around the turn of the 16th century.

This was clearly no ordinary commission, even for a studio that was accustomed to fulfilling the wishes of the crowned heads and higher aristocracy of the whole of Europe. It is clear that the Sanders Bening atelier put a special effort into creating the book, no doubt under pressure from his son-in-law Andrew Halyburton, who may even have commissioned and paid for it. As Professor Unterkircher remarks in the commentary volume, the number of large and small illustrations in the James IV book, and with them the amount of border and other decorations, is significantly higher than in other comparable books of hours, which underlines the outstanding position it merits in the history of this art form as well as its significant place in political and constitutional history.

Culturally and economically, Scotland was obviously well integrated into the Northern Renaissance in Europe in the early 16th century, especially as a result of its intimate relations with the duchy of Burgundy, which during its brief existence as a major political power eclipsed every other European state as the cultural centre of the continent. These relations continued after the Habsburg succession by marriage to what now became the Austrian Netherlands. A brief description of the political background is therefore essential to an understanding of how the James IV book came to be created.

The Burgundian Alliance

On 23 October 1295, at the height of the military aggression against Scotland by the English king Edward I, the Scots concluded the first formal treaty of the Auld Alliance with France, with a pledge of mutual assistance against the common enemy that was to endure for two and a half centuries. While the Scottish annihilation of a huge English army at the battle of Bannockburn on 23/24 June 1314, and the

Declaration of Arbroath signed by the Scottish leaders on 6 April 1320 in the name of “the whole community of the realm of Scotland”, settled the matter of Scotland’s independence, they did not put an end to English belligerence during the following centuries.

The Hundred Years War, as the Plantagenet kings of England persisted in their attempts to conquer France, saw Scottish forces fighting in France for Jeanne d’Arc and several French kings. Scottish generals often commanded the French armies. Even after English pirates had abducted the young King James I at sea in April 1406, the Scottish regents and parliaments not only pursued the war during the years of his captivity in England, but also carried on a vigorous diplomatic campaign to unite the oft-divided French factions in the struggle against the common enemy.

One of these was the Duke of Burgundy, the ruler of a conglomerate state that had originated as a feudal grant of territory to the younger son of a French king, but which through further territorial acquisitions throughout the 15th century was well on the way to becoming in its own right one of the major powers in late mediaeval Europe, albeit an ephemeral one. At the height of its power Burgundy’s territories extended from Lake Geneva to the north of Holland, and from the Black Forest to west of Boulogne on the Channel coast, including the whole of Flanders and the Netherlands.

Its rich cultural life was largely founded on the prosperity of the trading cities in Flanders, where the Scottish merchants, mostly operating out of the Forth seaports or the Royal Burgh of Berwick on Tweed, had their main export markets in towns like Bruges or Veere (where their waterfront mansions, the Schotse Huizen, are now a museum). The fabulous wealth of the Burgundian ducal court enabled it to exercise a munificent patronage of the arts, which was seen in the court musical tradition as much as in Dutch painting and Flemish illuminated books, amongst others.

Four of Scottish king James I’s daughters made important dynastic marriages in Europe, one of them marrying the Dauphin of France, while another became Duchess of Austria. Their brother, James II, King of Scots, took a princess of the rich and powerful ducal house of Burgundy as his queen consort. Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, with the concurrence of King Charles VII of France, arranged the marriage of his great-niece, Mary of Guelders, to the Scottish monarch. A huge escort of Burgundian nobility accompanied her in 14 ships across the North Sea to her wedding at Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh on 3 July 1449.

This was a union devoutly desired by the Scots, with their important commercial interests in the Low Countries. It was no less desired by the Burgundians and French for obvious strategic reasons, above all the need to maintain a ring of steel around the dangerously aggressive and acquisitive English. The clause in the marriage treaty that provided for perpetual friendship and alliance between Scotland and Burgundy was one that allowed Scottish merchants a favourable status in all the Burgundian dominions. The Scots made full use of their preferential rights.

Mary of Guelders continued to exert her own and Burgundy’s influence after James II was killed by the bursting of a heavy cannon while besieging Roxburgh Castle in order to drive out the last of the English invaders, since for years she had to preside over a council of state in the name of her young son. The links with Burgundy

continued even after James III made a dynastic marriage with Princess Margaret of Denmark, and thereby gained the Orkney and Shetland Islands for Scotland.

The Burgundian influence was documented in the altar portraits of James III and Margaret of Denmark by the Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes for the Collegiate Church of the Holy Trinity in Edinburgh. Now in the National Gallery of Scotland, this altarpiece with its portrait of James III obviously influenced van der Goes's disciple and admirer, the miniaturist Gerard Horenbout, who did the very similar James IV portrait in the Book of Hours.

James IV, impressively educated, cultured and athletic, succeeded to the Scottish throne in 1488, at the age of 15. He nonetheless took a firm grip of his kingdom, quelled all intrigues, and for 25 years ruled in harmony with parliament and people. His court, doubtless influenced by his Burgundian family connections, was the cultural centre of the land, where music, literature and graphic art went through a golden age.

James introduced printing to Scotland, the University of Aberdeen was founded in 1494, and the Royal College of Surgeons in 1506. In 1496 the Scottish parliament passed the first compulsory education act, which ordered that the eldest children of the barons and freeholders had to attend school. His efforts to protect the Christian religion led Pope Julius II to present James in 1507 with the Scottish Sword of State – which can still be viewed along with Scotland's Crown of State and the other regalia in Edinburgh Castle, including the State Sceptre presented to James by Pope Alexander VI in 1494.

The Marriage of the Thistle and the Rose

And so, in the year 1500, at the turn of the century, James IV, King of Scots, was secure on his throne, popular and successful at home, and respected throughout Europe. In order to protect Scotland's vitally important trading routes across the North Sea, James maintained a small but powerful navy, from 1511 including his gigantic flagship, the "Great St. Michael", the largest and most powerful warship in the known world at that time. Clearly, the Flanders connection was still one of the major factors in Scottish domestic and foreign policy, for both dynastic and economic reasons.

There now remained the question of the succession to the Scottish throne. Matches had been suggested with a princess of Spain and a daughter of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I, who meanwhile (1477) had married the heiress to the duchy of Burgundy, the northern ancillary territories of which were now subsumed into the Austrian Netherlands, while the duchy itself and its remaining more southerly parts reverted to the French crown.

But James, and especially his advisers, had their eyes on something nearer home. Despite the support his father had given to the new Welsh Tudor dynasty on the throne of England, and the resulting rundown of hostilities after centuries of warfare, relations with England were still unsettled. Old customs usually die hard.

And so when, after an ominous armed skirmish on the Scottish-English frontier during a period of truce in 1498, an English emissary had a private audience with James at Melrose Abbey, he made it clear that his prior condition for peace and friendship with England was a dynastic marriage between himself and Henry VII's elder daughter, Margaret, then aged nine years old.

Henry Tudor, an astute statesman, was well aware that such a match could enable the Scottish royal dynasty to succeed to the throne of England, but, as he put it to his counsellors, in that event the greater country would always predominate in such a union. History was to prove him right.

The marriage contract was signed in London on 24 January 1502, when the bride had attained the age of twelve. Margaret Tudor was to receive lands and castles in Scotland worth £2,000 sterling annually, and James was to receive a dowry of £10,000 sterling. A separate treaty of perpetual peace between Scotland and England accompanied the marriage treaty, the first one since the Treaty of Northampton in 1328. A proxy marriage ceremony took place in England in January 1503, when the Earl of Bothwell represented James.

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It is unrecorded, but highly likely, that the Book of Hours was ordered around the time of the signing of the marriage treaty, in order to have it ready for the wedding the following year. James's Scottish trade representative and "Conservator of the Scottish Privileges in the Netherlands" (i.e. consul) at the time was Andrew Halyburton, who had top connections in both countries. James personally described him in letters to Flanders as "our merchant" and "the king's familiar servant" when informing the Flemish authorities about his right to defend Scottish citizens and privileges in the courts of Flanders.

In addition to being an intimate personal confidante of James, Halyburton also happened to be married to Cornelia, daughter of the old master illuminator Sanders Bening and elder sister of the young Simon Bening, who worked on the Book of Hours.

So there can be no doubt about the channels through which the project was initiated and organised. In addition to keeping it within the family, Halyburton probably supervised its execution at all stages, and brought in all the prominent Scottish advisers who must have assisted in its planning and completion. Indeed, in view of the circumstances, the book may well have been his idea in the first place, for very good personal reasons.

What is still in doubt is who paid for it, since there is no reference to the acquisition in the state treasurer's accounts. James may have paid for it privately, or it could even have been a wedding present from his relatives and friends in Flanders. Or did Halyburton himself seize the opportunity with both hands?

He was a very wealthy member of the Edinburgh establishment. He apparently commuted between his substantial house in Edinburgh (on the north side of the

Royal Mile, near the Mercat Cross), where a lot of his export business was conducted, and his equally substantial residence in Middelburg in Flanders, and he seems to have been more than rich enough to finance such a project himself. He would thereby have enjoyed the favour of both his sovereign and his in-laws. Was the book, in fact, Halyburton's personal wedding present to James and Margaret?

The considerable prestige from such a major commission would not have done his wife's family any harm either, certainly not Halyburton's brother-in-law, the young Simon Bening, who was not even 20 years old when he worked on the prestigious James IV commission. Simon Bening went on to become the star figure during the final flowering of the art of book illumination in Europe during the first half of the 16th century.

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The not-quite-13-year-old Margaret Tudor's journey north in July 1503 for her wedding was a regal progress, when she was met at the Tweed border by a delegation of the highest nobility of Scotland and escorted to Dalkeith Castle, where James came to receive her. Four days later they made their state entry into Edinburgh amid an ostentatious display of pageantry.

The marriage took place on 8 August 1503, in Holyrood Abbey, and was followed by five days of festivities in James's new palace of Holyrood House. The poet William Dunbar composed a famous ode celebrating the marriage of "The Thistle and the Rose", the national flowers of Scotland and England respectively.

James spared no expense for his wedding. His new gowns cost more than 600 each and the wine bill exceeded 2,000 – incredible figures for the time. It is against this background that one must view the acquisition of a Book of Hours that would adequately reflect the importance of the occasion and underline the status of the Scottish monarchy in a European context. Scotland was by then fully integrated into the Northern Renaissance in Europe, when it was the social norm among the very top aristocracy to possess such an expensive personal work of art that no more than a handful of them could even afford.

The dynastic marriage did in fact usher in a period of more or less peaceful relations between Scotland and England until the death of Henry Tudor in 1509. Unfortunately, however, it did not lead to lasting peace between Scotland and England, especially after Margaret Tudor's unscrupulous brother ascended the throne of England as Henry VIII. He resumed the long-standing English attempts to conquer France, whereupon the French appealed to the Scots for assistance.

Under the terms of the alliance James could not refuse. He was bound by treaty to attack England if England attacked France. There was considerable resistance among the Scottish national leaders, but they eventually gave way, and James marched his army against the English. On 9 September 1513, at Flodden, just over the border, he made a stupid tactical error, and for the first time in his life he quite unnecessarily lost a battle. He lost a good deal more, for he himself fell in the front row of his troops.

The Later Story

And so, ten years after the brilliant dynastic wedding, Margaret Tudor found herself a young and still very attractive widow, but she did not go back to England. Now freed from the irksome obligations of an arranged and apparently loveless dynastic marriage, she nevertheless remained in Scotland and married for a second and third time within the Scottish aristocracy.

The beautiful Book of Hours, however, she gave as a present to her younger sister Mary Tudor, who was to marry King Louis XII of France in October 1514. Her motive for parting with what ought to have been a treasured memento of her husband can only be estimated, but it is quite feasible that she wanted to be rid of a reminder of how, as an innocent child, she had been used as a political tool in a dynastic power struggle. And anyway, her portrait as a 13-year-old had been disrespectfully placed away at the back of the book, far from the place of honour at her new husband's side.

Folio 188 in the book carries an inscription in Margaret Tudor's handwriting; it is undated, but probably written some time in 1513/14. The ink has faded badly over the centuries, but comes up well under ultraviolet light:

*Madame I pray your grace
Remember on me when ye
Loke upon thys boke
Your lofing syster
Margaret*

When the elderly Louis died three months after the wedding, leaving no heir (and inevitably causing speculation about the demands made upon him by his young bride), Mary returned to England and eventually remarried, apparently taking the book with her and retaining it till her early death in 1533. We know this from the calendar, because, after the English Reformation under Henry VIII, there were some deletions of the title "papa" from the names of saints who had been popes, and the complete removal of the name of Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury, whose Catholic sainthood was anathema to the Tudors. (Becket's name seems to have been subsequently re-entered, in a different hand.) Since Henry VIII's decree to this effect was issued in 1538, the book was still in England at least until that year.

From this point on it disappeared from the records for 106 years until it turned up during the 17th century in the Habsburg collection in Vienna, by what means and route remains unknown. The Habsburg dynasty had by then acquired the northern part of the Burgundian empire, including the book's birthplace in Flanders. The Low Countries were by this time known as the "Austrian Netherlands", later Belgium and Luxembourg. Archduke Maximilian I of Austria, later Holy Roman Emperor, had married the Burgundian heiress Duchess Maria in 1477 after the death of Duke Charles the Bold at the Battle of Nancy against a French and Swiss allied army in January of that year.

The first record of its being in Habsburg possession, now vanished but adequately described in later documents, was dated 1644, when the book was stated to be the property of Archduke Leopold, who was then four years old! The inscription on the

endpaper, which was lost during 19th-century conservation work, seems to have been in the childish misspelling of “Erzherzogk Leobolld”, the form in which it has been reported. However, the book was probably in Habsburg possession much earlier than that, since it was certainly already famous among connoisseurs of the by that time practically extinct art form.

Leopold was originally destined from his childhood for the Catholic Church, but later became Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation. After his death in 1705 the book and other personal documentary possessions were transferred into the general Habsburg Court Library in the Hofburg palace in Vienna.

Around the year 1720 a handwritten catalogue by the court librarian Johann Benedikt Freiherr von Gentilotti described the book with the 1644 inscription and its luxurious red velvet binding, which has been reproduced exactly for every copy of the facsimile edition. It apparently disappeared from the library in 1785, but turned up again in 1791, and apart from very rare appearances at special exhibitions in Flanders and Scotland has never been removed since.

The “Marriage of the Thistle and the Rose” in 1503 had lasting dynastic consequences exactly one hundred years later. When the Tudor dynasty in England died out in 1603 with the death of the childless Elizabeth, the heir to the English throne was none other than James VI, King of Scots, son of Mary I and great grandson of James IV and Margaret, who ascended the English throne as James I and ruled over both still independent states in a purely personal capacity as a dual monarch with two titles.

It took another century before the crowns of the kingdoms of Scotland and England were finally combined into a single monarchy, when the new United Kingdom of Great Britain was formed in 1707. By then, however, the Book of Hours of James IV and Margaret Tudor already formed part of the Habsburg Imperial Court Library in Vienna. After the proclamation of the Republic of Austria in late 1918 the Habsburg collection was incorporated into the Austrian National Library, where the book remains to this day, meticulously conserved as befits its status, within the imposing historic ambience of the Hofburg palace.

(Secondary article for insertion in a box at an appropriate position)

It was never a simple story

James IV, King of Scots, came to the throne in 1488, at the age of 15, and from the very start had a number of mistresses, all of them from the highest ranks of the Scottish aristocracy. The Exchequer Rolls and State Treasurer’s accounts record the names of some of their offspring: Alexander, Catherine, James, Janet and Margaret, all of whom were supported by their father, were given the royal family name of Stewart and attained high positions in the state.

Margaret Stewart, born about 1497, later married as Countess of Huntly, and her name appears to this day on the genealogies of some members of the modern British royal family. Her mother was Lady Margaret Drummond, the eldest of the first Lord

Drummond's six daughters, who appears to have been the love of James IV's life. His liaison with her lasted for around five or six years until her death in 1501 (or 1502 according to some sources), well after negotiations had begun for his dynastic marriage to the English princess Margaret Tudor.

That his duty did not coincide with his desires seems to be fairly clear, and indeed can be surmised from one or two aspects of the history of the Book of Hours itself, especially the placing of Margaret Tudor's portrait at the beginning of the last and shortest chapter in the book instead of in the place of honour beside James's own portrait nearer the beginning. No doubt James's consul in Flanders and intimate personal friend, Andrew Halyburton, saw to that.

James had several extra-marital relationships even after his marriage to his dynastic child-bride Margaret Tudor, which supports the general impression that the latter was no love match, after some harmonious early years together with the immature teenager. It can therefore be surmised that, some time after James's death at Flodden on 9 September 1513, the still young and by then emancipated 23-year-old Queen Margaret gave the Book of Hours to her sister in order to get rid of this reminder of her previous status as a mere tool of dynastic and political plotting – although the marriage settlement had left her a very wealthy widow with vast possessions within Scotland, and she had in fact produced the heir to the Scottish throne.

The Drummond family was in no doubt about what had happened to force the apparently reluctant James into the English marriage. A rumour had spread that James had previously married Margaret Drummond in a secret ceremony – which, if true, would hardly have been unknown to her uncle Walter Drummond, who was Dean of Dunblane Cathedral. If it had been no more than loose talk by Drummond herself or members of her family, it certainly rebounded on them.

True or untrue, the rumour itself sufficed. Its implications not only threatened the planned dynastic marriage with England, since a previous legitimate marriage, with the young Margaret Stewart as a legitimate heir, would have played havoc with dynastic plans, and the eventual union of Scotland and England would probably never have taken place. Furthermore, the implied rise of the Drummond clan to such a level of power in the state could have threatened quite a lot of establishment interests.

These threats all conveniently evaporated when Margaret Drummond and two of her sisters died of a poisoned breakfast at Drummond Castle in 1501 (or 1502, as some official sources state). No culprit was ever named, and historians since then have tended to discount the event as a simple case of accidental food poisoning in an unhygienic age.

The Drummond family themselves remained unimpressed by this argument. William Drummond of Strathallan first recorded the murder assertion in writing in a family history written in 1681 and later printed in a limited edition for private circulation.

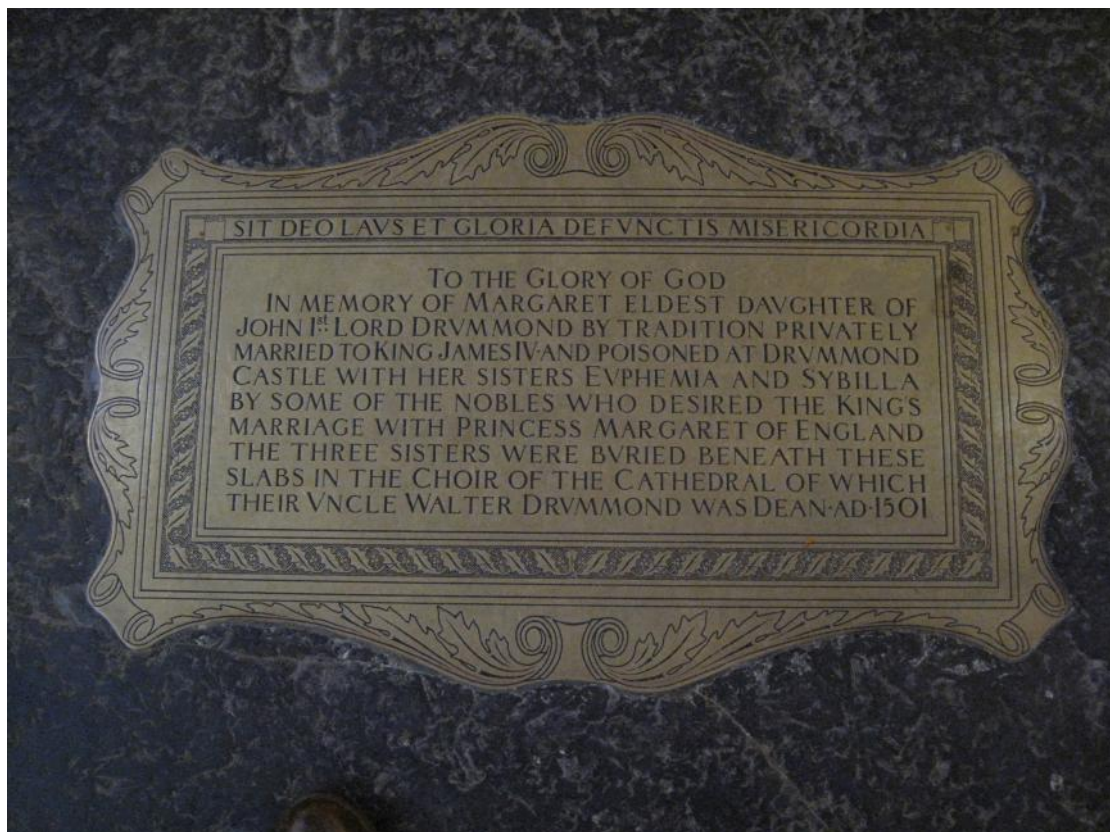
The gap in time, however, does not prove that the account of the event that had been handed down in the family for 180 years has no substance. Even with all the resources of modern forensic science many similar crimes nowadays still remain

unsolved for lack of corroboratory evidence, but the circumstantial evidence here certainly fits the known facts.

James's continued liaisons with other members of the aristocracy like Janet Kennedy or Marion Boyd represented no threat to the dynastic plans as Drummond did. There was no talk of marriage with any of them, and their children with James were unquestionably illegitimate.

The death of the three sisters could also have been a demonstration that the powerful political forces behind the campaign for a Stewart-Tudor dynastic marriage were not to be trifled with, and that open opposition to the project would be seriously detrimental to health. That could also account for the deafening official silence over the circumstances.

Lady Margaret Drummond and her sisters Euphemia and Sybilla were interred with full honour under marble slabs in front of the high altar in the choir of the Cathedral of Dunblane. Mediaeval memorials with brass inscriptions marked their graves. These were, however, later removed and destroyed, as if they constituted an embarrassment. In 1873, however, in the course of a restoration of the cathedral that was partly financed by the Drummond family with the Earl of Perth at its head, they were replaced by four brass plates that to this day openly repeat the murder assertion and its connection with the dynastic marriage between the Scottish and English royal families.



The modern Dunblane Cathedral guidebook mentions the story in a few words, but relates it only to the alleged secret marriage between James IV and Margaret Drummond, and quite correctly states, “. . . there is no evidence to suggest that this actually happened.”

It does not mention the possible connection with the impending arranged dynastic marriage with the Welsh/English Tudor dynasty, which would in time enable the Scottish Stewart dynasty to take over the throne of England, and later the United Kingdom. However, history-conscious visitors can still read the four brass plates on the floor, which nobody nowadays would dare to remove.

As the guidebook states, King James IV was “a frequent visitor to Dunblane – the burial place of his former mistress, Margaret Drummond.” And for years on end he continued to pay Dunblane Cathedral for masses to be said for her soul. It would appear that Margaret Tudor was unable to fill the void the “other Margaret” left in James’s heart.

The murder allegation appears to have been a taboo theme that has been played down for generations because it brings the origins of the dynastic union between Scotland and England into association with collusion, conspiracy and murder. Furthermore, it casts a shadow of doubt over the legitimacy of the later Scottish and subsequently English and United Kingdom royal line of succession. There is only the faintest hint of this situation in the Book of Hours, for which the dynastic marriage in 1503 was an occasion for celebration.

