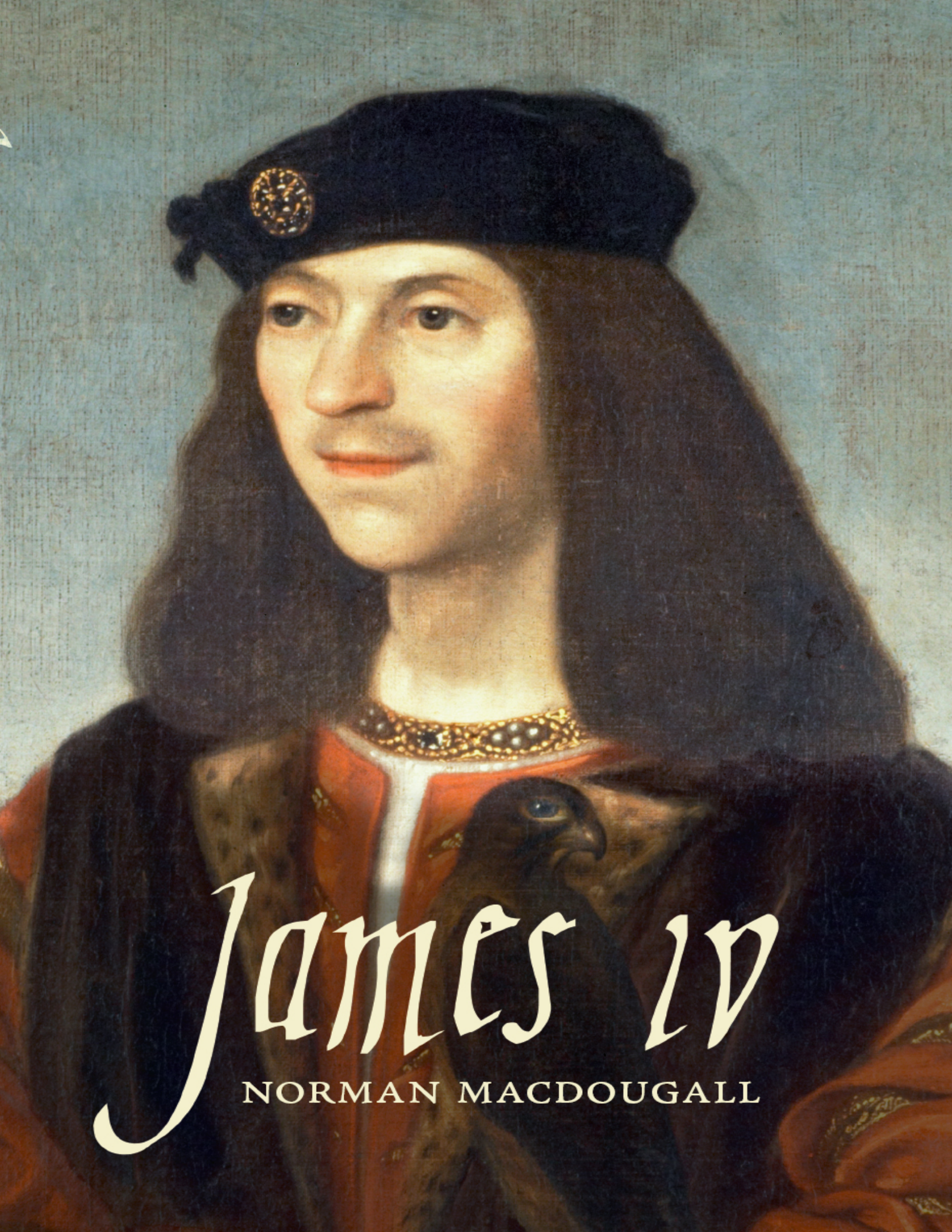
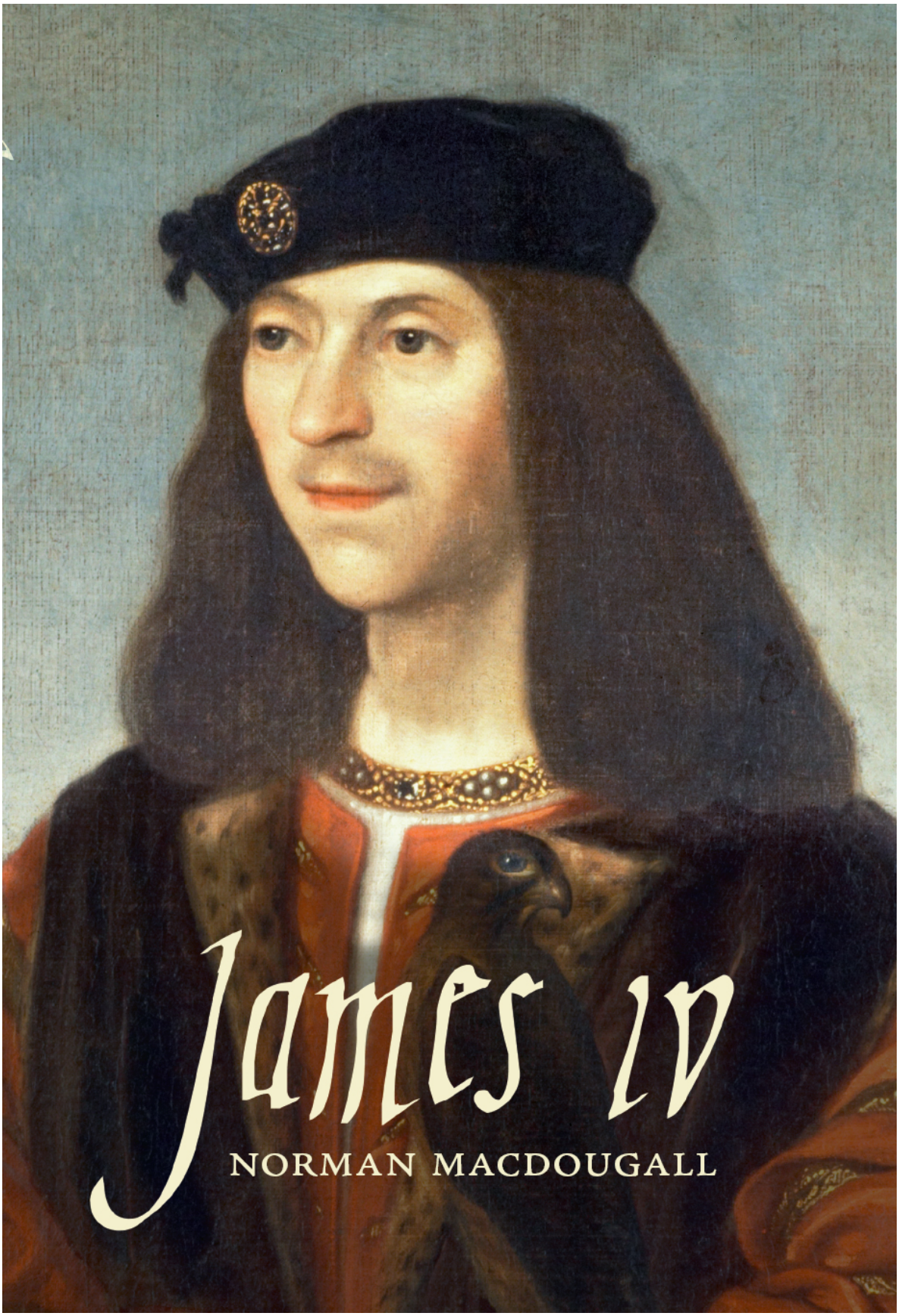


James IV

NORMAN MACDOUGALL


James IV
NORMAN MACDOUGALL

JAMES IV

The Stewart Dynasty in Scotland

JAMES IV

Norman Macdougall

This short run edition first published in 2015 by
John Donald, an imprint of Birlinn Ltd

West Newington House
10 Newington Road
Edinburgh
EH9 IQS

www.birlinn.co.uk

First published in 1989

ISBN 978 1 906566 90 6

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available from the British Library

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Bell & Bain, Glasgow

Acknowledgements

In 1982, shortly after completing a biography of James III, I decided not to be afraid of doing the obvious, and was easily seduced by the prospect of turning my attention from a ruler who proved a disaster in personal and public life alike to one who was clearly a resounding success. My path throughout has been smoothed by assistance from a large number of individuals, friends, colleagues, and students — the categories frequently overlap — who have made valuable suggestions or prevented me from falling into serious error.

I am grateful to many members of the Conference of Scottish Medievalists, above all to Dr Trevor Chalmers, Professor Ian Cowan, Dr Rod Lyall, Dr Michael Lynch, Dr David Caldwell, and Mr Geoffrey Stell. Amongst the Conference's 'elder statesmen', I have greatly benefited from the formidable scholarship and wise advice generously proffered by Dr John Durkan and Dr Leslie Macfarlane, whose kindnesses to me stretch back a quarter of a century. Scholars from further afield whose expertise I have greatly valued include Dr Thomas Riis from Copenhagen and Dr Ian Arthurson, whose important thesis on Henry VII's political and military schemes in 1497 sheds new light on Anglo-Scottish relations during that critical year; and nearer home, I should like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Dr Jane Dawson, of the Department

of Modern History at St Andrews. Dr Jenny Wormald, a friend of very long standing, has patiently endured my wildly fluctuating views of the political events of 1488 and the early ’nineties over many years, and made constructive comments on these; and I should have been very much the poorer without the sage advice of Dr Ronald Cant, who long ago expressed in succinct form what many of us have taken volumes to discover about Stewart kingship.

My colleagues within the Scottish History department at St Andrews, Professor Christopher Smout, Dr Colin Martin, Dr Roger Mason and Dr Keith Brown, have been unfailingly generous with time, comments and suggestions; and I also record with pleasure the courtesy and assistance which I have invariably received from the staff of St Andrews University Library, above all those in charge of the muniments, Mr Robert Smart, Mr Geoffrey Hargreaves, and Mrs Christine Gascoigne. Most of all, perhaps, I have been fortunate in the able and enthusiastic array of students who over the years have graced my James IV Special Subject class, and it is only proper to name them all: Kathy Broun, Jamie Cameron, Ken Emond, Dorothy Husband, Leanda Thornton, Steve Boardman, Fiona Chambers, Geoff Don, Moira Dunn, Ian Dutton, Stephen Major, Maureen Steven, Christine Stewart, Campbell Brady, Michael Brown, Marianne Gilchrist, Susan Neilands, Crispin Oliver, Ed Wallace, Fiona Watson, Edward Clark, Martha Leishman, Fiona McIntyre, Louise Macpherson, Justine Morgan, Gavin Rome, Doug Russell, and Sue Ward. No less than six of these have gone on to postgraduate research in Scottish History at St Andrews itself, at Glasgow, and at Oxford; all of them were a pleasure to teach, in the process contributing enormously to my own understanding of the subject; and all of them have walked

from the parish church of Ladykirk down to the farm gate at the corner and gazed south across the Tweed, as James IV must have done, at the massive pile of Norham castle.

Amongst the galaxy above, I owe special debts to Steve Boardman, currently researching Scottish politics and the feud in the late medieval period, both for his overall perception and for his uncovering of minutiae in the Lords of Council records; to Jamie Cameron and Michael Brown for many helpful suggestions made in the course of lengthy monthly meetings; and to Dr Ken Emond for his scholarly thesis on the minority of James V, much of which will, I hope, soon appear in print. At the business end, John Tuckwell of John Donald publishers has been, as ever, an author's dream — patient to a fault, efficient, courteous, a good friend who is also keenly interested in the subject; and I would run out of superlatives to praise Mrs Margaret Richards, who has processed my untidy manuscript from beginning to end with great skill and immense patience, displaying throughout a marvellous combination of committed concern and cheerful enthusiasm.

Finally, I must record two vitally important contributions. My wife Simone has not only proof-read the entire book and made a number of valuable suggestions, but has also contrived to keep me happy during the writing-up process by spoiling me shamelessly, and by knowing when *not* to talk shop about medieval or Scottish history; and our labrador Bonnie, seven years older but hardly less enthusiastic about exercise than she was when she distracted me from work on James III, has throughout been a persuasive advocate of the need to have great historical thoughts in Tentsmuir Forest rather than at the desk at home. To Simone and Bonnie, with love and affection, this book is dedicated.

St Andrews, October 1989

Preface

More than thirty years have gone by since the appearance of R L Mackie's scholarly and immensely readable biography of James IV.[1] Mackie's king strides confidently through the book, an active, popular, effective ruler — war lord, patron of the arts, firm enforcer of the law, generously endowed with the kingly virtues of piety and liberality, for much of the reign the ideal Stewart king. Few would disagree with this overall estimate of James IV. Indeed it has become enshrined in histories of the king throughout the five centuries since his reign, an unbroken tradition, stretching from the works of Adam Abell, Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, Bishop John Lesley, and Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie,[2] through the seventeenth-century elaborations of Drummond of Hawthornden and Hume of Godscroft,[3] the romantic nineteenth-century excesses of Sir Walter Scott in *Tales of a Grandfather* and *Marmion*,[4] the painstaking scholarship of Tytler and Andrew Lang,[5] down to our own century, with the histories of Hume Brown, Taylor, and the biographies of King James's brother and illegitimate son Alexander by Herkless and Hannay.[6] Mackie's biography is firmly rooted in this tradition, and carries the added authority of extensive recourse to that indispensable treasure-chest of information about the king and reign, the first four volumes of the Treasurer's accounts, together

with the very full treatment of foreign diplomacy which one would expect from the editor of King James's letters.[7]

There are, however, problems about the traditional view of the king which Mackie does little or nothing to resolve. Broadly these fall into two categories: first, with the benefit of hindsight we know that James IV was a highly successful ruler, and there is therefore a tendency to play down the political traumas of the late 1480s and early 1490s in the desire to have the king emerge, adult, able, and popular, as quickly as possible. Thus the famous parliamentary comment on the death of James III — that the king had 'happened' to be slain — is seized upon, the late king is shovelled into his grave and swiftly forgotten, and James IV emerges without difficulty in 1493 from the tutelage of those magnates who had eliminated his father to dominate all of them with ease and earn the much-used but singularly unhelpful title of 'Renaissance Prince'. Such a view is difficult to sustain. Of all decades of the fifteenth century, the 'eighties were the most politically troubled, with no less than three major rebellions — in 1482, 1488, and 1489 — in all of which James, as youthful prince or adolescent king, played a prominent part together with a large, but constantly changing, proportion of the Scottish political community. The shock waves which followed in the wake of these major political upheavals did not subside for many years, and it seems unlikely that James IV was able to assert himself as an effective ruler until at least 1494, or more probably the spring of 1495.

Secondly, many writers have the problem of knowing what to do with King James once they have him launched on his adult career. A reign which is marked by a long period of domestic peace — the sixteen years between 1497 and 1513 are remarkably untroubled — does not lend itself

easily to dramatic stories of intrigue, unrest, and masterful kingship. One solution to this problem is to pillage the Treasurer's accounts for evidence of the king's breadth of interests — his amateurish experiments in dentistry and medicine make excellent copy[8] — and to seize upon Somerset Herald's vivid account of James's marriage to Margaret Tudor in August 1503,[9] the follow-up to the grandly-named Treaty of Perpetual Peace of the previous year, which, despite its significance in making possible the Union of the Crowns a century later, was in terms of its immediate effects one of the least convincing of all Anglo-Scottish treaties.

In any event, few writers on James are content to leave him for long on his precarious pedestal as a paragon of Scottish kingly virtues. As soon as 1503 is safely past, there is a stampede towards the seemingly inevitable disaster of Flodden. Mackie devotes about one-third of his biography of James to the king's supposedly maladroit diplomacy, asserting rather than proving that King James was out of his depth in dealing with the powerful European rulers of his day, that he was blinded to diplomatic realities by his vision of a crusade against the infidel which he himself might lead, and that his growing megalomania was simply used by allies and enemies alike to drag him to his ruin. In Mackie's memorable and oft-quoted phrase, James IV was a 'moonstruck romantic'. But Mackie also believed that the young Henry VIII was a realist. A different view of both kings is offered below.

Discarding both the 'Renaissance' and 'moonstruck' tags as unhelpful in forming any useful estimate of the king's character and policies, I have attempted to chart James's development from the unpleasant, mistrusted, and neglected youth who successfully opposed his father in

1488 to the adult king of seven years later, and then developed a number of the themes which made James's kingship popular and successful — committed military leadership, an effective fiscal policy, firm control of the national church, delegation of royal authority to trustworthy men in the localities, the construction of a royal navy, and — above all — a personal itinerary which in terms of the speed and energy involved would do credit to a modern member of parliament defending a wafer-thin majority at election time. In pursuing these themes, I have benefitted enormously from the veritable explosion of scholarly activity which has transformed our knowledge of late medieval Scotland since Mackie's time. The work of Drs Athol Murray and Craig Madden — on the workings of the Scottish exchequer and royal fiscal policies respectively[10] — has added very substantially to our understanding of the size of income which a medieval Scottish king might hope to receive, and the many methods by which he might seek to augment it. Dr Trevor Chalmers' magisterial thesis on the royal council, patronage, and administration in the reigns of James III and IV[11] should be read by anyone wishing to understand the workings of royal government in the late medieval period; and Dr Leslie Macfarlane's scholarly biography of Bishop William Elphinstone, Privy Seal for twenty-two years, the most eminent legal mind in Scotland, and James IV's loyal servant throughout the reign, is a treasure-house of information, not only about the bishop, but on such varied subjects as government, administration, law, and education.[12] Then in 1986 the eagerly awaited edition of the acts of the Lords of the Isles, superbly edited by R W and Dr Jean Munro, appeared to illuminate the relative darkness of the medieval Highlands and Islands, the

difficult relationships which developed amongst the leaders of Highland society, and between all of them and the Crown.[13]

In the generation since Mackie wrote, our understanding of how the medieval Scottish Crown and magnates viewed their respective roles in government — national and local — diplomacy, and war, has been transformed by the work of Drs Wormald[14] and Grant,[15] carrying us convincingly away from the traditional interpretation of weak — or strong — kings endlessly confronted by over-mighty magnates to a much more balanced assessment of the period, with king and nobility cooperating for much of the fifteenth century because both sought broadly the same objectives. For Dr Wormald in particular, the Stewart kings were more powerful than has often been suggested, for while they could not afford to spend the vast sums available to their much richer European neighbours, they had sufficient wealth to govern Scotland, to distribute patronage — generally in lands or offices — on a scale far greater than that possible to their wealthiest magnates. On the other hand, the Crown could not normally afford a contract army, so that it was bound to rely heavily on loyal members of the nobility in far-flung parts of the kingdom, and to reward them appropriately. Only in this way could royal government be at all effective, or the Scottish host be expected to appear at the muster point on those occasions when warfare on the borders or elsewhere had to be undertaken. The current orthodoxy in historical thinking about government in the late medieval period, then, stresses Crown-magnate cooperation rather than confrontation, an overall political equilibrium upset only by James I’s assault on the Albany Stewarts, James II’s

systematic destruction of the Black Douglases, and one highly unsatisfactory king, James III.

In his extensive overview of late medieval Scotland, first published in 1974, Dr Ranald Nicholson is to some extent at odds with this new orthodoxy, portraying a fifteenth century in which violence directed at the Crown by its subjects, general disorder, and palace revolutions, often seem the norm rather than the exception. Dr Nicholson's major contribution to late medieval Scottish history, however, is surely to be found in his revisionist view of James IV, an estimate of the king which is significantly different from that of Mackie. In place of Mackie's genial, fearless, but ultimately stupid prince, Nicholson portrays a shrewd and occasionally devious ruler, skilled in foreign political intrigues and in screwing as much money out of his subjects as possible without inciting general unrest in the process. This is a stimulating — and broadly convincing — portrayal of successful royal Stewart government; indeed, Dr Nicholson's study of the entire late medieval period seems to increase in stature each time I return to it, and its contribution to the growing historical debate on the nature of late medieval Scottish government and society has been immense.[16]

Moving from the scholarly to the bizarre, in 1970 Scottish historians were confronted with the problem of assessing the validity of an autobiography of James IV, written by a lady who claimed — and claims — to be the reincarnation of the king.[17] Initial scholarly response to the challenge presented by this lady, Ada Kay or Stewart, was understandably cautious, for if she was indeed the reborn James IV, then her knowledge of the period was obviously unchallengeable. Surprisingly, there was a reluctance at the time to test what her racy and readable account of her

former life said about people and events which are very fully described in contemporary official records. Even a casual glance at these swiftly reveals that the memory of the reincarnated king seems to be playing him/her false about incidents in his life which must have been important to him at the time. To take only one example, the James IV of the 1490s would have remembered his first two mistresses, Marion Boyd and Margaret Drummond, much more clearly than his reincarnation of the 1970s, who appears to have had recourse to later histories to jog his/her memory. This is not to deny the patent honesty of Ada Kay's conviction that she is the reincarnation of James IV; but it is to say that her 'autobiography' of the king is most safely read as a highly colourful and entertaining historical novel.[18]

Perhaps, therefore, the time is ripe for a further attempt to understand the career of the most successful of the late medieval Stewarts. No single volume could encompass all aspects of his life and reign, and there are significant and deliberate omissions from this one. For example, those primarily interested in Middle Scots poetry, in the makars who flourished in and around James's court, will find that they receive scant attention here, largely because they are extensively treated elsewhere. Similarly, I have little to add to Dr Macfarlane's scholarly treatment of the development of Scots law during the period, or to Dr Chalmers' unparalleled understanding of the workings of the royal administration; and late medieval feuds, including some in which the king was directly involved, are touched upon rather than discussed at length, because they form the subject of research currently being undertaken by Stephen Boardman.

Thus what follows is a biography of James IV which lays strong emphasis on political and diplomatic affairs. That these fields still offer the widest scope for debate as to the nature of James's kingship can be proved by asking a few apparently straightforward questions. Why was there a major rebellion, lasting no less than nine months from April 1489, only six months after the parliament of October 1488 had confirmed the post-Sauchieburn regime in power? Why was Archibald, fifth earl of Angus, besieged in his castle of Tantallon in the autumn of 1491 by the royal forces, yet trusted with the highest secular office in the kingdom, the Chancellorship, little over a year later? Why did James IV call so few parliaments? How was he able to double, perhaps even treble, royal income without becoming highly unpopular in the process? How significant, in the short term, was the Treaty of Perpetual Peace of 1502? What role did James envisage for the royal navy, his greatest single item of expenditure from the early 1500s? Had the Scottish king any greater commitment to the crusading ideal than his European contemporaries?

Possible answers to all these questions are suggested below. Frequently the search for answers produces still more questions, and I cannot claim to have written anything like a 'definitive' biography of this perennially fascinating ruler. Given the nature of both 'official' and chronicle evidence, this would be impossible. But I hope to have demonstrated convincingly that those elusive skills necessary to the successful governing of medieval Scotland were possessed to a high degree by James IV.

NOTES

1. R. L. Mackie, *King James IV of Scotland: A Brief Survey of his Life and Times* (Edinburgh, 1958).

2. N.L.S. MS. 1746 (Adam Abell, 'The Roit or Quheill of Tyme'), ff. 112 r-v; Sir David Lindsay, 'Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo', in David Laing (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount* (Edin., 1879), i, 61–104, at 79–80; John Lesley, *The History of Scotland from the Death of King James I in the Year 1436 to the Year 1561* (Bannatyne Club, 1830), 59–96; Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* (Scottish Text Society, 1899), i, 213–278.

3. William Drummond of Hawthornden, *History of Scotland from the Year 1423 until the Year 1542* (London, 1681), 121–153; David Hume of Godscroft, *The History of the House and Race of Douglas and Angus* (4th edn., Edin., 1748), ii, 27–62.

4. Sir Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828–9) (Edin., Adam and Charles Black, 1889), 78–87; 'Marmion' (1808), in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (London, Sands edn., 1899), 92–227.

5. Patrick Fraser Tytler, *The History of Scotland from the Accession of Alexander III to the Union* (Edin., 1868), ii, 244–295; Andrew Lang, *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation* (Edin., 1900), i, 361–391.

6. Peter Hume Brown, *History of Scotland to the Present Time* (Cambridge, 1911), i, 237–280; I. A. Taylor, *The Life of James IV* (London, 1913); John Herkless and Robert Kerr Hannay, *The Archbishops of St Andrews* (Edin., 1907), i, 165–214, 215–271.

7. *The Letters of James the Fourth, 1505–1513* [*James IV Letters*], ed. R. L. Mackie (S.H.S., 1953).

8. *T.A.*, i-iv, passim. The king's interest in medicine and dentistry is admirably summarised in John D. Comrie, *History of Scottish Medicine to 1860* (Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, Lond., 1927), 51–62, and in Douglas Guthrie, 'King James the Fourth of Scotland: His Influence on Medicine and Science', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 21 (1947), 173–191.

9. Somerset Herald's account of Margaret Tudor's journey to Scotland and the marriage celebrations is in John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea* (Lond., 1770), iv, 265–300, 173–191.

10. A. L. Murray, 'Exchequer and Crown Revenue of Scotland, 1437–1542' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1961); Craig Madden, 'Royal Treatment of Feudal Casualties in Late Medieval Scotland', *S.H.R.*, lv (2), (1976), 172–194.

11. T. M. Chalmers, 'The King's Council, Patronage, and the Governance of Scotland, 1460–1513' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aberdeen University, 1982).

12. Leslie J. Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland 1431–1514* (Aberdeen, 1985).

13. *Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336–1493*, edd. Jean Munro and R. W. Munro (Edin., S.H.S., 1986).

14. The revisionist view of late medieval Scottish government and society was heralded by a seminal article by Dr Wormald (then Brown): Jennifer M. Brown, 'Taming the Magnates?', in *The Scottish Nation*, ed. Gordon Menzies (BBC, 1972), 46–59. This was greatly expanded a few years later: Jennifer M. Brown, 'The Exercise of Power' in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Jennifer M. Brown (London, 1977), 33–65; and a summary of the extensive research on which she based many of her views is to be found in Jenny Wormald, *Lords and Men in Scotland: Bonds of Manrent 1442–1603* (Edin., 1985). 'Taming the Magnates?', footnoted and updated, is more easily available in K. J. Stringer (ed.), *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland* (Edin., 1985), 270–280.

15. Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306–1469* (Lond., 1984), esp. chapters 6 and 7.

16. Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages* (The Edinburgh History of Scotland volume 2: Edin., 1974), chapters 17 and 18. An important article by the same author, and highly relevant to James IV's money-making schemes, is Ranald Nicholson, 'Feudal Developments in Late Medieval Scotland', *Juridical Review*, 1973 (i), 1–19.

17. *Falcon: The Autobiography of His Grace James the 4, King of Scots*, presented by A. J. Stewart (London, 1970).

18. For a discussion of Ada Kay's claims, see Ian Wilson, *Reincarnation? The Claims Investigated* (Lond., 1982), 200–217.

Contents

Acknowledgements
Preface
List of illustrations

1. A Family at War, 1473–88
2. The Reluctant Regicide
3. 1488–90: Rebels Without a Case?
4. Unholy Alliance: Bothwell, Angus and Bishop Elphinstone, 1490–95
5. 1495–97: The Watershed
6. Money and Power
7. The Demise of Parliament
8. Piety and Politics
9. Royal Obsession: The Navy
10. The Four Horsemen
11. The Legend and the King

Appendix: The Itinerary of James IV
Bibliography
Index

Illustrations

1. James IV, from the Book of Hours of James IV and Margaret Tudor.
2. James IV. A late sixteenth-century anonymous portrait.
3. James IV, by Jacques le Boucq, 1559.
4. Dirge for a King of Scots.
5. James IV and Margaret Tudor.
6. Ladykirk church.
7. St Duthac’s church.
8. Whithorn cathedral priory.
9. Tantallon castle.
10. Mingary castle.
11. Henry VII of England.
12. Perkin Warbeck.
13. *The Great Michael.*
14. Mons Meg.
15. William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen.
16. Louis XII of France.
17. Henry VIII of England.
18. Norham castle.

1

A Family at War, 1473–88

On Friday 14 July 1486, Margaret of Denmark lay dying in Stirling Castle.[1] Thirty years of age, queen of Scots for seventeen of these, she had borne to her husband James III three sons, all of whom had survived infancy and generously fulfilled the queen's principal function of providing for the succession. On her deathbed, if her biographer is to be believed, Queen Margaret called her three boys to her and exhorted them to pursue virtuous lives. In particular, she singled out her eldest son, James, duke of Rothesay, heir to the throne, and said to him:

'James, my eldest boy, I am speeding towards death; I pray you, through your obedience as my son, to love and fear God, always doing good, because nothing achieved by violence, be certain, can endure'.[2]

This admonition may be little more than a conventional literary device by Sabadino, Margaret's Italian biographer, writing about five years after the queen's death; but it contains an element of grim prophetic irony. For within two years the Duke of Rothesay would have seized his father's throne by violence, James III would be dead at the hands of his own subjects, and Margaret of Denmark's memory would be abused even by her son, who would use the fabricated tale of her death by poison with her husband's

compliance to justify to the Danes his successful rebellion in 1488.[3] And the new regime created by the violence of that rebellion, in spite of its assertive self-confidence and some striking successes, would not endure.

The eldest of the three sons of James III and Margaret of Denmark, Prince James, the future king, was born on 17 March 1473.[4] The absence of any major contemporary chronicle, and indeed of most of the Treasurer's accounts before 1488, makes it impossible to produce any more than a thumbnail sketch of the prince in his infancy and youth. He probably spent most of his time before 1488 at Stirling in the care of his mother, and latterly in the company of his two younger brothers, James and John. In 1478 Queen Margaret was officially entrusted with the custody and education of the heir to the throne for five years, though this was probably no more than the confirmation of an already existing situation following James III's general revocation of 1476.[5] From early infancy Prince James, already Duke of Rothesay, was used in his father's diplomacy. In October 1474 James III and Edward IV concluded the first firm Anglo-Scottish alliance of the 15th century, the foundation of which was to be a marriage between the infant Rothesay and Edward IV's daughter Cecilia when both should reach marriageable age — the prospective groom was one year old in 1474, the bride-to-be was aged three. The immediate return for the Scots king was a dowry of 20,000 marks sterling (approximately £40,000 Scots) which would be paid in advance, in annual instalments of 2,000 marks;[6] in the longer term, the treaty marks the beginning of James III's obsessive pursuit of friendship with England, a policy which was as unpopular as it was innovatory. For the Duke of Rothesay, his father's Anglophile stance simply meant a succession of marriage

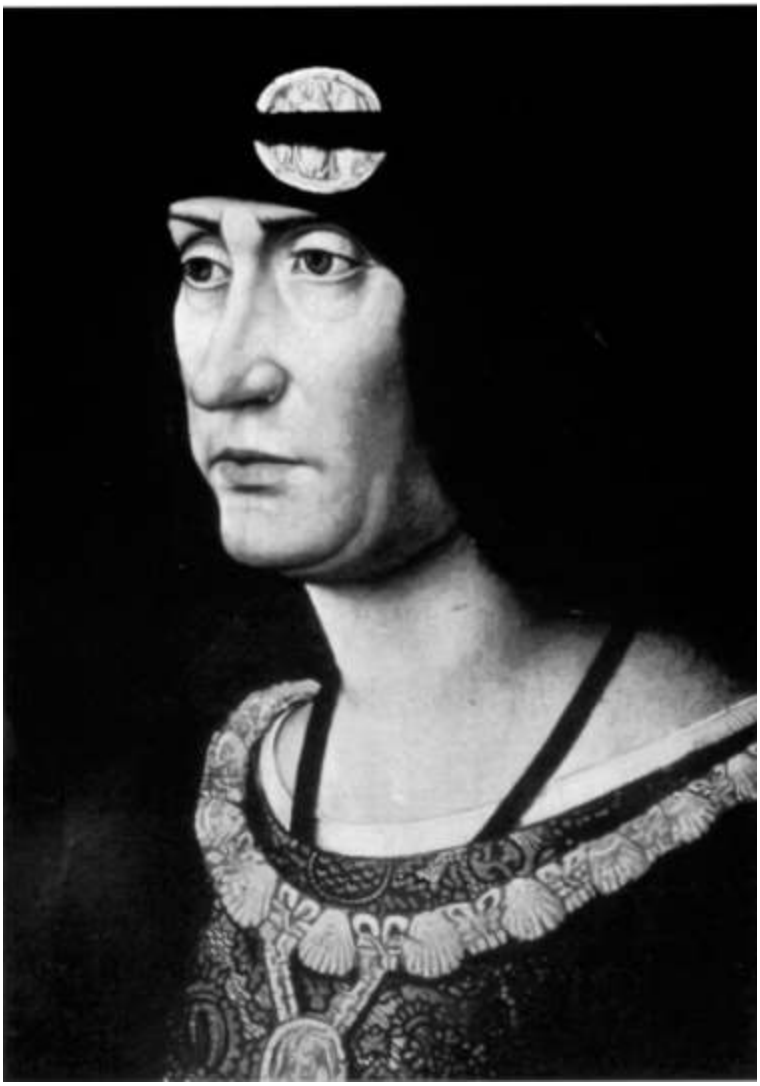
proposals — three prospective English brides between 1474 and 1487[7] — none of which was realised.

The use of the heir to the throne in this high-powered if unsuccessful diplomacy did not of course impinge on Rothesay's early life, and his motives for suddenly emerging as the adolescent rebel of 1488 can only be guessed at. The surviving Treasurer's account for James III's reign — a mere sixteen months in 1473–4 — provides us with a few names of suppliers to the court and members of Margaret of Denmark's household, together with a total of £72 7/10d spent during part of this period on the infant Prince James;[8] but this source, which would have been invaluable in indicating the motives of the adolescent Rothesay in the 1480s, is lost to us until his accession as king in the summer of 1488. From the exchequer records we learn only that Prince James was taken — presumably from Stirling — on visits to Edinburgh in the summers of 1474 and 1479, being lodged in the castle on both occasions. His nurse in the 'seventies was Agnes Turing, wife of an Edinburgh burgess, she and her husband being rewarded with half the farms of Drumcorse, Linlithgowshire, which brought them in £10 per annum. The same source provides us with the name of one servant of the prince, David Balfour, who received as payment the lease of some royal lands in Menteith.[9]

Nor are chronicle accounts much more help. Bishop John Lesley, after recording the prince's birth, described a marvellous comet which appeared in the south for a month — 17 January to 18 February, anticipating James's birth in March — and comments that this was 'ane signe of mony mervellus changes in the warld.'[10] Lesley was writing about a century later, around 1570. However, a contemporary chronicler interpreted the comet's appearance not as a

15. William Elphinstone (*c.* 1431–1514), bishop of Aberdeen, briefly Chancellor for James III (1488), and Keeper of the Privy Seal for 22 years (1492–1514). The outstanding clerical statesman of the reign, Elphinstone was a strong supporter of James IV's 'liturgical nationalism'.

18. The Target. Norham castle, Northumberland, on the south bank of the river Tweed. Isolated in 1496 and besieged in 1497, this great fortress was taken by storm by the Scots at the end of August 1513, only twelve days before the battle of Flodden. (*Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*)



16. The Ally. Louis XII of France, by Jean Perréal. The French king’s practical assistance, from 1502 onwards, in the construction of the Scottish navy provided a strong inducement to James IV to renew the Franco-Scottish alliance in 1512.