INVESTIGATING MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Information for teachers

The story of Scotland’s most famous queen has everything: battles, murder, plotting, romance, kidnap, imprisonment, escape and execution. This resource identifies some of the key sites and aims to give teachers strategies for investigating these sites with primary age pupils.
Using this resource

Introduction
This resource is for teachers investigating the life of Mary Queen of Scots with their pupils. It aims to link ongoing classroom work with the places associated with the queen, and events with the historic sites where they took place.

NB: This pack is aimed at teachers rather than pupils and it is not intended that it should be copied and distributed to pupils.

This resource aims to provide:
- an indication of how visits to historic sites can illuminate a study of the dramatic events of the life of Mary Queen of Scots
- support for the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence
- background information for the non-specialist teacher about the life of Mary Queen of Scots and her contemporaries and life at the royal court
- maps and further information to show which sites are linked with Mary Queen of Scots
- suggestions for other places to visit and other sources of evidence

Bringing the past to life
Visits to historic sites can fire the imagination, inspire learning and provoke further questioning. The sites at Edinburgh Castle and Stirling Castle clearly reveal the power of the people who built and lived in them; the kitchens at Linlithgow Palace help pupils compare cooking then and now. The destruction of St Andrews Castle tells us something about what it must have been like to be under attack and the warmth of Huntingtower Castle speaks of more settled, easier times. A visit can also be great fun – most pupils find castles and ruins interesting and exciting. Some of the sites have replica objects or costumes for pupils to handle.

Many of the key sites associated with Mary are, because of their royal connections, in a good state of repair. At Stirling there is the great bonus that the rooms of the royal palace are currently being restored to their 16th-century splendour. Many sites are, however, ruinous. Presented properly, this can be a powerful motivator for pupils: What could this hole in the floor have been used for? Can you work out how the Prestons might defend their castle at Craigmillar? Can anyone see any clues as to what this room used to be?
Pupils should be encouraged at all times to ‘read the stones’ and offer their own interpretations of what they see around them.

However, without some prior knowledge, pupils are unlikely to be able to do this effectively, and they will gain far more from a visit if they come to the site with at least some experience in interpretation and knowledge of the period. Some ideas for preparatory activities can be found on pages 6–7.

A list of key sites with a brief description and a map showing their location is on page 35. This is intended to help you choose a site which best supports the angle you are taking on the topic and which is convenient for travel.

Site visits
Curriculum for Excellence aspires to motivate and challenge pupils through a wide range of varied learning experiences. Site visits have a particular role to play in ‘joining up’ learning outcomes, making learning relevant and in their capacity to offer learners a degree of personalisation and choice. See page 4 for more detailed links to Curriculum for Excellence.
Booking a visit

Historic Scotland holds the key to the nation’s historic environment, caring for 345 attractions across Scotland. A number of these sites played a key role in the life of Mary Queen of Scots and a class site visit makes these events feel real to pupils and can be hugely motivating and memorable. See page 35 for a map giving names and locations of key sites.

Contact details
Historic Scotland Education Unit
Tel: 0131 668 8793/8736
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

To book a visit to any of the Historic Scotland sites featured in this booklet, please call the number above or contact the sites directly on the numbers given on pages 36–8.

Two types of visit are currently available for schools:

Teacher-led visits
Teachers are encouraged to lead their own class visits to our sites. All visits must be booked. Historic Scotland operates a year-round free admission scheme for teacher-led educational visits. The exceptions to this are visits to Stirling Castle and Edinburgh Castle during the months of May–August inclusive, when there is a charge.

Teacher-led tours for many of the sites featured in this pack are available to download from our website. These contain background information and notes for activities and discussion.

Special events and activities for schools
Many sites run special activity sessions for school groups. To book or to find out more about these activities, call the Education Unit on the number above, or look at our Schools Activity Programme on our website. There is usually a small charge for these activities.

Travel subsidy scheme
Schools can apply for a travel subsidy to visit any Historic Scotland site. This provides financial assistance with transportation costs between the school and the chosen site. To find out more about the scheme please call the Education Unit on the number above, or download an application form from our website.

Risk assessment
Risk assessment of the site is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the group. To assist with this, hazard information sheets are available on the Historic Scotland website or contact the Education Unit for more information.

We strongly encourage teachers to make a free pre-visit themselves before bringing a class. This gives teachers the chance to carry out their risk assessment, try out material and become familiar with the site. Please discuss this when booking your class visit.

Craigmillar Castle

INVESTIGATING HISTORIC SITES: PEOPLE
Supporting learning and teaching

Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence presents teachers with an unrivalled opportunity to make the most of site visits, both in specific curriculum areas and through cross-curricular studies.

The guiding principles behind Curriculum for Excellence are at the heart of learning activities suggested here and in our downloadable Site Investigation packs. While providing guidance and suggested activities for teachers or parent helpers who are unfamiliar with the topic and the site, they aim to build in opportunities for personalisation and choice and for pupils to set their own research goals and targets. Suggested activities should be regarded as a starting point; ideally, pupils, if properly prepared, will be setting their own agenda on-site and understanding the purpose and relevance of all activities and of their visit.

Most of the sites referred to in this booklet are at least partly outdoors. The power of outdoor learning is well-documented, as pupils benefit from learning in context and through experience and place. The less formal environment can have positive effects on social development as a different kind of relationship develops among pupils and between pupils and staff.

Most teachers will be visiting a historic site to support ongoing work in achieving outcomes in Social Studies: people, past events and societies. More broadly speaking, a visit can help support the development of the four broad capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, as outlined in the panel opposite.

A visit and use of any supporting material will help to:

Develop successful learners by
- Exploring places, investigating artefacts and discussing the past
- Encouraging pupils to think critically about the nature of historical evidence and arrive at their own conclusions
- Making links between current and previous knowledge
- Providing a real context for learning which helps to bring the past to life

Develop confident individuals by
- Providing opportunities for pupils to share and present their learning to others using a range of media
- Giving pupils opportunities to communicate their own views on historical events and issues raised during the visit

Develop responsible citizens by
- Encouraging greater understanding of and respect for their own historic and built environment
- Experiencing examples of the work of historians, archaeologists and conservationists and understanding why this is important

Develop effective contributors by
- Encouraging pupils to record and express their observations following on-site investigations
- Providing pupils with the opportunity to develop life skills such as photography during their visit

INVESTIGATING HISTORIC SITES: PEOPLE
Learning in Social Studies

Most teachers will be visiting a historic site to support ongoing work in achieving outcomes in Social Studies: people, past events and societies. A study of the Mary Queen of Scots with a focus on a site visit will help pupils work towards the following broad outcomes:

Children and young people participating in experiences and outcomes in Social Studies will:

- develop an understanding of how Scotland has developed as a nation, resulting in an appreciation of their local and national heritage within the global community by understanding the impact of the events of Mary’s reign
- broaden their understanding of the world by learning about human activities and achievements in the past and present by finding out about life in Mary’s time in their local area through investigating places and objects
- develop their understanding of their own values, beliefs and cultures and those of others by finding out what motivated people to support or oppose Mary and her supporters
- learn how to locate, explore and link periods, people and events in time and place by focusing on a series of events in the past
- learn how to locate, explore and link features and places locally and further afield by using maps to plot events
- establish firm foundations for lifelong learning and for further specialised study and careers by developing life skills such as photography and understanding more about jobs in conservation and heritage

Cross-curricular studies

Curriculum for Excellence actively promotes learning beyond subject boundaries. A site visit offers obvious learning opportunities across many curricular areas in addition to Social Subjects. Key areas are as follows:

Language

Pupils will read and write, talk and listen as they find out about Mary’s life and express what they have learned. Activities on-site promote listening and talking in groups. There are opportunities for reading and discussing a wide range of texts and for producing functional, personal and imaginative writing for a range of audiences. There may also be opportunities for work in foreign languages – for example, in producing a guide leaflet to a site for a foreign visitor, or in carrying out role-play relating to Mary in French.

Expressive Arts

Many pupils have strong reactions to historic sites such as castles, which may be expressed and explored through art and design, music, dance or drama. The dramatic and controversial events of Mary’s life lend themselves well to role-play and debate. Some schools may use their visit as a springboard for exploring the traditional music of Gaelic and Scots.

Using ICT to promote learning

There are several activities suggested within this pack for utilising the power of technology to motivate and challenge pupils. Key examples are:

- Pupils can become familiar with how to use database websites such as www.scran.ac.uk to stimulate questioning and provide background information before and after a visit
- Pupils can take photographs of historic sites using digital cameras or mobile phones. At a lower level, these could be designed as postcards which could be sold as part of an enterprise project. At a higher level, these can be developed into a PowerPoint-type presentation about their visit or as evidence to support their research findings. Pupils can learn how to embed photographs within text documents as part of a class or school newsletter, or on a school website.
- Pupils can storyboard, script and film or audio-record their own responses to or recreations of events which took place at the visited site.
Integrating a visit with classroom studies

Educational visits have the greatest value if they are built into the original planning of the topic. We recommend visiting the historic site somewhere in the middle of the study, giving pupils time to become familiar with the key players, key features of the period and the main events of Mary’s life. Here are some suggestions which may help with this preparation.

Before your visit
• To introduce the idea of history as a process of learning from evidence, play the Rubbish Game with your pupils. Assemble a collection of objects, ideally belonging to a real person (for example, another member of staff, yourself, a member of your family). These objects need not be anything special – it is worth just turning out your bag and seeing what is there! They could include a bus ticket, an apple core, a shoelace from a sports shoe, a birthday card, a family photograph, a copy of a timetable and so on.

Divide the class into groups and pass round the objects. Ask the groups to consider each item in turn and try to build up a picture of the owner of the objects. In the case of the items suggested above, they might conclude that the owner sometimes travelled by bus, and therefore maybe lived in a city, had access to fresh fruit, maybe took part in a sporting activity, was involved in some way with a school, and so on. In the end you can reveal the identity of the mystery person. Point out that this is how historians work: they look at the evidence left by a person and try to work out what they can about that person, a bit like a jigsaw. Sometimes they might get it wrong. The more objects they have, the more complete a picture it is possible to build up about the person.

• Historians are fortunate in the case of Mary Queen of Scots: because of her royal status many sources of evidence survive to help us find out about her. Get pupils to think about what kinds of things could help us know about her life. Help them to see that evidence about her exists in the form of:
  • words (letters, descriptions, contemporary posters)
  • pictures (portraits, drawings)
  • objects (tapestries, costume, furniture)
  • places (castles and palaces)

Which of these do pupils think is the most reliable source? Which is least reliable and why? It is easy not to tell the truth, or only to tell part of the truth in a letter or portrait, but objects and buildings are more reliable.

A selection of items of ‘rubbish’
• To introduce the topic, you could play another version of the Rubbish Game – a Royal Rubbish Game.
Make a collection of pictures of objects relating to the life of Mary Queen of Scots. These could include copies of portraits, pictures of the tapestries she wove, a postcard of Stirling Castle, a picture of her execution, a picture of the clarsach she allegedly played, quotations from letters and so on. What can the pupils deduce about the life of Mary from these objects? The SCiRAN website (www.scran.ac.uk) is an excellent source of images for this; you can create your own page of their images and then project this using a data projector or the interactive whiteboard.

• It is really useful if pupils are able to develop a sense of time. One way to do this is with the pupils to construct a timeline in the classroom. Mark out on a long strip of paper intervals of ten centimetres. Help the pupils count backwards in decades and mark these decades on the paper strip. Help them become familiar with the idea of centuries; many pupils become confused over the fact that dates which start 15 – are in fact known as the 16th century.

As the project develops, pupils will build up a picture of the key events of Mary's life. The timeline on pages 10–11 may help with this. Pupils can add pictures or key words to the class timeline, or you may wish them to develop their own individual Mary timelines, perhaps as little ‘zigzag’ books.

To gain a sense of connection with the past, count backwards in ‘grannies’. Say: ‘When you were born, your gran was 50; when she was born, her gran was 50; and when she was born her gran was 50.’ Pupils can take it in turns to be the next gran, holding hands with the previous and working out on what date they would have been born. You only need about nine grannies to find yourself back in the time of Mary Queen of Scots! That would be your great-great-great-great-gran!

• Once you have decided which site you are going to visit, try to highlight events where it features on the class timeline. It is helpful if pupils are able to look at pictures of the site before they get there, know something about the people who used the site and how it is significant in the story of Mary.

A selection of evidence sources relating to Mary
• Help pupils gain an understanding of everyday life in the sixteenth century through assembling a collection of raw materials. Once pupils have identified what the materials are, they can then carry out further research to find what each material was used for, where it came from and why that material was important in the mediaeval period. Some suggestions for materials include leather, untreated sheep’s wool, dyed wool, heather, rushes, logs or branches, oats, barley, herbs (lavender, rosemary, mint), spices (ginger, pepper, cloves), honey, fruit, vegetables, horseshoes, pieces of clay pottery, beeswax.

Many of the food items can be found in health food shops. You could also discuss with pupils which materials survive, and which decay, and how this has a bearing on which objects have survived as sources of evidence for us today.

• Depending on the site to be visited, pupils can form groups and take on responsibility for researching different areas of interest (for example, food and cooking, defence, entertainment). Help pupils develop key questions before their visit, so that they arrive on-site with a sense of ‘mission’ (for example, I want to find out what kind of defences the castle had).

A selection of raw materials used at the time of Mary
Working on-site

Whatever the site, pupils should be encouraged to look for physical evidence of the history of the site and also how it contributes to their understanding of Mary Queen of Scots. You will probably want the pupils to have the chance to explore some of the building with you or, if site staff are available, to tour the building with them. If you are not closely familiar with the building yourself, here are some useful starting points for discussion:

• What do you think this building/room was used for? How can you tell?
• Can you see if it has been changed anywhere? How?
• Can you see any clues that parts of the building have fallen down or rotted?
• How do you think it might have once looked? Why do you think that?
• Are there any mysteries in the building/room? Can anyone work out a solution?
• What does the site tell us about the lives of the people who lived here?
• What can we add to what we know about Mary Queen of Scots? What can you imagine her doing here?

As pupils explore the building, they can compile an Evidence Record about the site. You can download a general Evidence Record from the Historic Scotland website. The aim of the Evidence Record should be to encourage pupils to develop observation, recording and interpretive skills, rather than to focus on finding answers to questions which might just as easily be found in books or on a website. For this reason encourage pupils to look at the site, rather than the site information panels, which often are not aimed at young children and may discourage pupils.

There are many ways of recording evidence. Pupils can:
• write short descriptions of what they see
• sketch what they can see
• take photographs
• use tape recorders to describe what they can see, hear, feel and smell.

Help pupils draw conclusions from their evidence (for example, I can see... This tells me that the people who used this building might...). This could take place back at school and could be done orally.

Suggestions for follow-up work

Following the visit pupils can pool their findings in groups to create a fuller record of the site and the lives of the people who lived and worked there. This can then form the basis for a range of presentation activities, for example:

• a guide book or promotional poster or leaflet for future visitors
• a slide show, with commentary, of their visit
• imaginative writing based on the lives of the inhabitants of the site

Pupils can use photographs taken on-site as the basis for reconstruction work – they can draw, cut out and stick on pictures showing what the site might have looked like when first constructed.

Using their Evidence Records, pupils can work out what they can definitely deduce from the site, what is uncertain, and what is still unknown.
Timeline: the life of Mary Queen of Scots

8 December 1542
Mary born at Linlithgow Palace

14 December 1542
Mary’s father, James V, dies at Falkland

9 September 1543
Mary crowned Queen of Scots at Stirling

24 April 1558
Mary marries François, the French Dauphin

19 July 1548
Mary sent to France

18 September 1559
Dauphin crowned King of France, François II
Mary becomes Queen of France

19 August 1561
Mary returns to Scotland

August 1560
Scotland becomes officially Protestant

1544-45
The ‘Rough Wooing’ begins: the troops of Henry VIII of England invade Scotland

5 December 1560
François dies

19 August 1561
Mary returns to Scotland
Mary Queen of Scots

1 March 1566
Mary marries Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley

29 July 1565
Mary marries Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley

1562
Mary tours Scotland

15 June 1567
Rebellion against Mary and Bothwell at Carberry Hill; Mary surrenders

10 February 1567
Darnley murdered at Kirk o’ Field, Edinburgh

19 June 1566
Mary’s son, Charles James, born in Edinburgh Castle

9 March 1566
Darnley and other lords murder Rizzio, Mary’s secretary and confidant

15 May 1567
Mary marries James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell

24 July 1567
Mary forced to abdicate throne while a prisoner in Lochleven Castle

2 May 1568
Mary escapes from castle and raises army

13 May 1568
Mary’s army defeated at Battle of Langside

16 May 1568
Mary sails to England and hands herself over to Queen Elizabeth; kept in captivity

8 February 1587
Mary executed at Fotheringhay Castle; eventually given state funeral and buried in Peterborough Cathedral

October 1612
Mary’s body exhumed from Peterborough and reinterred at Westminster Cathedral

INVESTIGATING HISTORIC SITES: PEOPLE
### Who’s who: key people in the life of Mary Queen of Scots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Marie de Guise</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>Marie of Lorraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was she?</td>
<td>Mary’s French mother; second wife of James V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did she do?</td>
<td>Regent of Scotland for her daughter 1554–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with her?</td>
<td>Married at St Andrews; crowned Queen Consort at Holyrood Palace; lived at Stirling Castle and Edinburgh Castle, Falkland Palace, Linlithgow Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to her?</td>
<td>Died 1560 in Edinburgh Castle; her body was returned to France</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>François II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>The Dauphin, King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>Mary’s first husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>Grew up with Mary at the French court; married Mary 1558; crowned king 1559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>Palaces at St Germain, Fontainebleau, Blois, Amboise, Chambord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Died of an ear infection in 1560 in Orleans</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Henry Stewart</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>Lord Darnley, Duke of Albany, Earl of Ross, Earl of Lennox, ‘King of Scots’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>Mary’s second husband; father of future James VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>One of Rizzio’s murderers</td>
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<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Murdered at Kirk o’ Field, Edinburgh, February 1567</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>James Hepburn</th>
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<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>4th Earl of Bothwell, Duke of Orkney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>Mary’s third husband; leading Protestant noble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>Possibly one of Darnley’s murderers; abducted Mary then married her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>Crichton Castle, Hermitage Castle, Hailes Castle, Dunbar Castle, Spynie Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Fled to Shetland, Norway and Denmark after Mary’s surrender; died in prison in Denmark in 1578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>James Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>Lord James, 1st Earl of Moray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>Mary’s half brother, the illegitimate son of James V; key Protestant; one of the Lords of the Congregation; key adviser to Mary in the first years of her reign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>Organised rebellion against Darnley when Mary married him (‘Chaseabout Raid’) Regent of Scotland 1567–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>Darnaway Castle, Forres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Assassinated in 1570 in Linlithgow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>James Douglas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>4th Earl of Morton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>One of the most powerful Protestant lords; Chancellor from 1562; Regent 1572–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>One of Rizzio’s murderers; commanded rebel army at Carberry 1567; organised rebuilding of Edinburgh Castle after siege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>Aberdour Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Executed 1581 on the Maiden guillotine for his role in Darnley’s murder (the Maiden can be seen in the National Museum of Scotland); buried in Greyfriars’ Kirkyard, Edinburgh</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>John Knox</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>An influential Protestant preacher; born in Haddington; first Protestant minister of Kirk of St Giles in Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>Leader of the Reformation movement in Scotland; involved in the taking and holding of St Andrews Castle in 1546; campaigning tirelessly against Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>The house where, allegedly, he died can still be visited on the Royal Mile, Edinburgh; Kirk of St Giles, Edinburgh; St Andrews – took part in siege at St Andrews Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Died 1572; buried at Kirk of St Giles</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>David Rizzio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also known as</td>
<td>Riccio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was he?</td>
<td>Italian musician, secretary of Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he do?</td>
<td>Mary’s secretary for French correspondence; lute player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places are connected with him?</td>
<td>Holyrood Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened to him?</td>
<td>Stabbed to death by Darnley and other lords in 1566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life of Mary Queen of Scots

Mary’s early life
On a wintry December day in 1542 a baby was born at the royal palace at Linlithgow. Marie of Guise, wife of James V gave birth to the girl who was to become known as Mary Queen of Scots. It did not seem a time for rejoicing, however: James V lay dying in Falkland Palace after the disastrous defeat of his troops by the English at Solway Moss. Six days after her birth he died and Mary was declared the new monarch of Scotland. Still only a baby, she was crowned Queen on 9 September 1543 at Stirling Castle, during which ceremony she howled non-stop.

Almost immediately Mary found herself at the centre of a political tussle. Henry VIII of England wanted to strengthen Scotland’s ties with Catholic France and those who preferred a link with Protestant England. In a series of military actions which became known as the Rough Wooing, English forces invaded Scotland between 1544 and 1547. They attacked several key Scottish sites, including Craigmillar Castle and Holyrood Palace. The infant Mary was moved first of all to Stirling Castle for safety, then briefly to Inchmahome Priory on the Lake of Menteith and then to Dumbarton Castle.
Mary Queen of Scots

Did you know?

To celebrate the marriage of Mary to the French Dauphin in 1558, a huge cannon known as Mons Meg was fired from Edinburgh Castle in salute. The cannon ball was later found on Wardie Muir, where the Royal Botanical Garden is today - almost two miles away!

Following lengthy negotiations it was decided that Mary was to be betrothed to François, heir or Dauphin to the French throne. In July 1548 the five-year-old queen sailed off down the Clyde to start a new life at the French court.

Her childhood in France was a happy one. Mary was brought up with the young prince François, his sisters and 37 other royal children. She and François were educated together and apparently became good friends. Mary learned to speak, read and write in French as well as Scots and, unusually for the time, followed a course of education identical to her male counterpart, François. She learned skills considered essential for a ruler at that time: languages (including Latin, Greek, Italian and possibly Spanish), history, geography, rhetoric or debating, and poetry. She developed a love of music, especially dancing, and enjoyed the vigorous exercise of hunting.

In 1558 Mary married François in a spectacular ceremony. When he was crowned king in 1559 she became, in addition to Scotland, queen of France. With the death of the English queen, Mary Tudor, in late 1558, many thought that Mary had the best claim to the English throne too. Some Protestants regarded the new queen, Elizabeth, as illegitimate because in their eyes her mother, Anne Boleyn, had not been legally married to her father. When François died suddenly of an ear infection in 1560, however, Mary decided to return to Scotland, recognising that she no longer had any meaningful role in France.
Mary’s return to Scotland

Mary’s first impressions of Scotland must have been underwhelming. Her journey by boat from France had taken only five days, much quicker than usual, so that when she arrived in Leith on 19 August 1561, she was welcomed only by the seasonal sea mist or haar, and had to make her way to Holyrood Palace on borrowed horses, her own having not yet arrived. However, with her instinct for making an impression, Mary soon made her presence in Scotland known with a lavish entrée royale on 2 September. She processed through the streets of Edinburgh and was greeted with a series of spectacular tableaux, some of them provocatively anti-Catholic. Since 1560 Scotland had become officially a Protestant nation and though Mary was greeted warmly by the citizens of Edinburgh, many Scottish leaders were openly hostile to Mary’s Catholicism.

Within weeks of arriving back in Scotland Mary had her first meeting with arch-Protestant John Knox.

Mary spent the first years of her time in Scotland attempting to establish herself as the reigning monarch, something the Scottish nobles were not used to. In her absence the Protestant lords had banded together, calling themselves the Lords of the Congregation. Moreover, Scotland had only ever had one other queen, Margaret, the ‘maid of Norway’ and she never set foot on mainland Scotland, dying en route in Orkney.

Mary needed to win the support of influential Scottish lords and also recognised the value of gaining the loyalty of ordinary Scots. Her chief adviser was her Protestant half-brother, James Stewart, one of the illegitimate sons of James V. He later became the Earl of Moray. He was appointed by Mary to use his powerful connections to her advantage. Between 1562 and 1565 she made several progresses or tours around Scotland, visiting sites from her childhood such as Linlithgow Palace and Stirling Castle, and touring around Aberdeenshire, Fife, Argyll and Dumfries and Galloway.
In the summer of 1562 she successfully crushed the rebellious Earl of Huntly, a staunch Catholic who objected to Mary’s tolerant approach to Protestantism. He raised an army against her but his troops were defeated at Corrichie, just west of Aberdeen. Huntly died after falling off his horse in the battle. His corpse was later tried and found guilty of treason, his son was executed and Mary confiscated the rich contents of Huntly Castle.

Her strategy of showing her face to the population of Scotland, combined with her personal charisma, worked in her favour in the first years of her reign and she soon enjoyed widespread popular support. Three hundred years before Queen Victoria, Mary was sporting tartan when she visited the Highlands and enjoyed harp music and bardic poetry. She was even willing to listen to the bagpipes. Her appearances at the Court of Sessions and her demands that they sit more frequently to hear the cases of poor people increased her popularity and gave the lie to Knox’s claims that she was only interested in frivolous matters. She even managed the deft balancing act of playing off the Scottish lords against each other. All this changed in 1565 when she married Lord Darnley.
Enter Lord Darnley

It was expected by everyone that Mary would marry again. One of her roles was to produce an heir, who, if Elizabeth remained unmarried, would also inherit the English throne. A great deal was riding on her choice of husband and she had no shortage of suitors. Elizabeth was keen to influence Mary’s choice of husband and even set out conditions as to what kind of man she should marry. She even offered Mary one of her former suitors, Lord Robert Dudley. Eventually Mary settled on the 18-year-old Henry Stewart, otherwise known as Lord Darnley. A Protestant, he was her first cousin and had claims of his own to the English throne.

The two met for the first time in Scotland at Wemyss Castle in February 1565 (they had met previously as children in France). Traditionally Mary fell in love with him at first sight, describing him gushily as ‘the lustiest and best proportioned lang [i.e. tall] man’ she had ever seen. An unusually tall woman, Mary was perhaps unduly impressed by his height. Later that month Mary went to watch him riding on the sands at Leith, taking part in a popular sport known as ‘running at the ring’. By April they were playing billiards together in Stirling Castle and in July 1565 they were married in the chapel at Holyrood Palace. Darnley was not a popular choice, and the marriage was particularly opposed by the Earl of Moray, who did not attend the wedding. In a series of events which became known as the Chaseabout Raid, Moray and the Earl of Arran led a rebellion against Darnley which had the support of many of the leading nobles. Mary crushed this rebellion, and Moray and Arran fled to England.

Darnley’s failings soon became clear. Vain, weak, promiscuous, he was only interested in furthering his own position. He swung from being a Protestant to an ardent Catholic for his own political purposes, threatening to undo Mary’s careful work to appease the Protestants. Although king in name, he still did not have all the rights that Mary had, and started plotting with the exiled...
Moray to persuade him to lobby the other nobles of the Parliament to grant Darnley these rights. In exchange, Darnley would pardon Moray and the other banished Chaseabout nobles.

As part of the plot, in March 1566 Darnley and others murdered Mary’s confidant and secretary, the Italian David Rizzio. The nobles needed a scapegoat and Rizzio fitted the bill. Darnley believed Rizzio had been having an affair with Mary and he was also someone who could be blamed for the resurgence of interest in Catholicism. The plotters, including Darnley, broke into Mary’s apartments in Holyrood, dragged Rizzio aside and stabbed him 56 times. Mary, by this time pregnant, was present at the murder and feared for her own life; however, she kept her wits about her, talked Darnley round and together they escaped through the night to Dunbar Castle, stopping only for the heavily pregnant Mary to be sick. Here she rallied her forces and a week later returned to Holyrood to rout and punish the plotters – except for Darnley, of course. Many of them forfeited the contents of their homes, the Earl of Morton surrendering Tantallon Castle and Lord Ruthven the contents of the House of Ruthven (later known as Huntingtower Castle) outside Perth. This did nothing to endear Darnley to the rebel nobles. The plot had backfired disastrously.

Whatever infatuation Mary may have had for Darnley had long evaporated. However, he had done one thing right: Mary was now pregnant and in June 1566 she gave birth to a son, the future James VI, in a tiny room in Edinburgh Castle. His baptism in December of that year at Stirling Castle was a lavish and glittering three-day affair to celebrate the birth of a male heir, settling the question of Scottish succession. Mary had to borrow £12,000 from the merchants of Edinburgh to foot the bill for the fireworks – the first ever seen in Scotland – feasting, costumes and an extraordinary mechanical engine which served the banquet on the final day.
Exit Darnley

Despite all these attractions, Darnley refused to attend the ceremony. The situation between Mary and he had deteriorated to such an extent that there were rumours that he was plotting to imprison Mary and rule on behalf of their son himself. However, others were plotting against him and it has been suggested that Craigmillar Castle, just outside Edinburgh was the place where his fate was decided.

It is still a matter for debate among historians to what extent, if at all, Mary was party to the plans for his murder. What does remain clear is that on the night of 10 February 1567 the house at Kirk o’Field in Edinburgh where the 19-year-old Darnley was recovering from syphilis was destroyed by an almighty explosion. Darnley managed to escape from the building, only to be strangled and left half-naked and dead in the gardens.

Mary was shocked and aghast by this news, fearing that the assassination attempt may have been aimed at her. She offered a reward for anyone prepared to inform against the murderer – an unlikely course of action had she been part of the plot. Public opinion turned against her abruptly and she found herself blamed for the murder along with James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, one of the most powerful, violent and ambitious of the Protestant nobles. He was tried for the murder but managed to pack the court with his allies and was acquitted. His and Mary's names quickly became romantically linked in the public eye but it is still extraordinary that within a matter of weeks Mary married Bothwell. He waylaid and abducted her at Almond Bridge, carried her off to his castle at Dunbar and, after quickly divorcing his wife, married Mary at Holyrood in a Protestant ceremony in May 1567.
This was really the end for Mary. She was imprisoned by the Lords in Lochleven Castle, where she miscarried twins, and was forced to abdicate the throne in favour of her son. He was crowned James VI in July 1567 and Moray became ruler as his regent. Mary managed to escape briefly in May 1568 and raised an army. However, she was again defeated at the Battle of Langside – where Queen's Park is now in Glasgow – and after spending her last night in Scotland in Dundrennan Abbey, fled to England in a fishing boat, throwing herself on the mercy of her cousin Queen Elizabeth.

Elizabeth could not decide what to do with her. Mary was kept captive in a number of different castles and stately homes for the next 19 years. In the meantime Scotland was in a state of civil war: those who supported Mary against those who supported the infant James VI and the Protestant lords. Mary became more and more bitter and in the end started plotting against Elizabeth, whom she never met, despite frequent requests. For this she was tried, found guilty and finally executed at Fotheringhay in February 1587. She was still only 44.*

* A detailed and gripping account of Mary’s last hours can be found in the opening chapter of John Guy’s biography – My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots (HarperCollins 2004).
With the death of Elizabeth in 1603, Mary’s son James VI of Scotland was declared King of England and Ireland as well, a vindication of Mary’s assertion that she was Elizabeth’s rightful heir. In time, James came to regret that he had not intervened in support of his captive mother and attempted to atone for this. Originally buried in Peterborough Cathedral, Mary’s body was disinterred in 1612 and transferred to Westminster Abbey. James commissioned a massive and impressive tomb for her, considerably larger and more expensive than the one ordered for Elizabeth at the same time, and placed it in a position of honour where today it is one of the abbey’s biggest tourist attractions. A cast of this tomb can be seen in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. Although Elizabeth put an end to Mary, history has seen the Queen of Scots come out ahead: every subsequent British ruler has been a descendant of the doomed queen.
Life at the court of Mary Queen of Scots

Life for royalty in Scotland at this time focused on the five royal residences: Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle in Edinburgh, Linlithgow Palace in West Lothian, Falkland Palace in Fife and Stirling Castle. All of these sites can be visited today, but it is perhaps the buildings at Stirling which give the best idea of what life at Mary’s court might have been like.

The surroundings

Mary lived in Stirling Castle as a child, from July 1543 until February 1548, and it was there that she was crowned queen. The Palace at this time was brand-new, commissioned by her father James V about 1538 and probably completed after his death in 1542. It was one of the first buildings in Scotland to be constructed in the Renaissance style. Much of it has now been re-presented to give us a glimpse of its former glittering glory. The outside of the royal residence is ornately decorated with elaborate carvings of Classical gods, saints, kings (including James V himself), devils, courtiers, men-at-arms, with well over 100 putti (or cherubs), and even a Sphinx!

Inside, the six main rooms of the Royal Lodgings are presented as they may have looked in the 16th century, with magnificent four-poster beds, rich tapestries on the walls, heraldic decorations on walls and ceilings, and sumptuous rugs and bed coverings. Within a studio elsewhere in the castle you can watch the tapestries being woven. Seven tapestries are to be produced in total, four of which are finished tapestries. These hang in the Queen’s Inner Hall.

An original 16th-century tapestry from Linlithgow Palace can be seen in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The ceilings in Stirling would have been richly decorated. At least one of the king’s rooms had a panelled ceiling which included circular carved and painted heads, known today as the Stirling Heads. Replicas of these have been hand-carved and used to decorate the ceiling of the King’s Inner Hall. The originals are on display on the upper floor of the Palace.

Other rooms almost certainly had painted ceilings. There is a good example of a painted ceiling in the room in Edinburgh Castle where Mary gave birth to James VI. On the ceiling you can see his initials (IR = James Rex or King James) and those of his mother (MR= Maria Regina or Queen Mary); on the
Mary Queen of Scots

wall is painted his birth date: 19 Iunii 1566. Pupils can gain an excellent impression of what interiors might have looked like if you visit Falkland Palace. However, as most of the work is 19th-century reconstruction, young children might find the mixture of genuinely old, Victorian reconstruction and modern (electricity, bathroom fittings) confusing.

Until the royal entourage arrived, the royal residences would have felt quite bare by modern standards. There would not have been much furniture – just some trestle tables, some collapsible benches and some timber beds. When the royal party descended, they brought much of their furnishings with them: tapestries, bed hangings, linen, royal beds and bedding, the throne canopy, cushions and so on. It is documented that when James V was travelling from Falkland Palace to St Andrews in 1539 it took three cart-loads to carry his ‘great green bed’, and at a cost of £160 then, the equivalent of £67,000 today! Sturdy oak kists or chests were used to store eating and drinking utensils as well as clothes and state papers. At Falkland Palace you can see one of the chests which was used for this purpose. In 1538 it took nine horse-drawn carriages to transport the contents of the wardrobe of Marie of Guise from Stirling to Falkland and a further seven to carry her bedding and possessions belonging to her servants. In the National Museum of Scotland you can see a carved oak cabinet which was imported from France and used by Bothwell’s family. The floors would have been bare or simply covered with rushes. Mary brought much of her tapestries and bed linen with her from France and was also accompanied by two professional embroiderers and three upholsterers, all male.

At Stirling you can see the scheme of rooms traditional in a palace. The king and queen each had a suite of reception rooms: a guard hall where people waited to be seen; a presence chamber where formal meetings took place and a bedchamber, which was more a kind of intimate presence chamber, where private meetings and discussions took place. If you visit Mary’s apartments in Holyrood Palace, you can understand more easily the context for the murder of Rizzio in her bedchamber. At Falkland there are reconstructions of both the king’s and the queen’s bedchambers. At Linlithgow Palace, although the queen’s apartments no longer exist, the sequence of the rooms in the king’s apartments is clear too; also there are markings on the floor which show where visitors were expected to stand when meeting the monarch. Pupils can role play an audience with royalty here!
When the royal party arrived, they would of course come with their retinue of advisers and servants, all of whom had to be accommodated too. The servants had to bed down wherever they could find a space, but more important visitors were accommodated in their own suite of rooms. Although slightly later, built by James VI in 1620, the four floors of guest rooms in the north wing of Linlithgow Palace give a good idea of things to come. Each of these rooms had its own en suite toilet facilities, an advance on previous arrangements of chamber pots and commodes.

Important state functions took place in the Great Hall. The hall at Stirling, the biggest ever built in Scotland, is the best example to visit as it has been stripped back and reconstructed to show how it might have looked when new in 1503. It has been replastered and is hung with thick curtains, to give an idea of the tapestries which would have adorned the walls. Five fireplaces heated the hall. Giant windows shed light on to the proceedings, with most light of course falling on the throne areas and the high table. At the other end of the hall is the musicians’ gallery, below which is the partitioned area where food might have been prepared. This is a fantastic place to bring pupils as it conjures up some of the splendour and makes it easier to imagine royal events such as the baptism of Mary’s son, James VI. This took three days to celebrate and included fireworks, a siege of an enchanted castle and sumptuous banquets during which a child dressed as an angel was lowered from the ceiling of the Great Hall, reciting verses. The great halls at Linlithgow Palace and Edinburgh Castle are well worth a visit too, the former roofless and ruined and that in Edinburgh Castle much reworked in Victorian times.
Food and cooking

Feeding the royal party would have been a huge job and a drain on local resources. At Stirling you can see a lively recreation of the scene in the royal kitchens, perhaps only lacking in heat and aromas! Hunting provided a source of fresh meat – the forests around Stirling and Falkland would have been home to deer, boar and game birds. Dovecots housed pigeons, valued for their eggs as well as a source of fresh meat. The royal estates would have provided beef, mutton and chicken; fish and eels would have come from lochs and ponds within the grounds or locally. In the kitchens at Stirling you can see replica peacocks and swans being prepared in the kitchen. Fruit, herbs and vegetables were grown locally, but royalty would have expected to eat some fruits imported from further afield: at Stirling you can see a carving of a pineapple atop one of the walls. At Falkland the orchard still produces fruit and there are many herb gardens too. Bread was cooked daily in the huge ovens and ale was drunk universally by the servants and ‘lower orders’: it was a safer option than milk or water as it was boiled during its production. Royalty and the nobility drank wine. Linlithgow is a good place to go to see an unreconstructed kitchen and also has a huge wine cellar and numerous storerooms.

Food was roasted on a spit, turned by a small boy or ‘turnbrochie’, boiled in a stew, grilled, steamed, or baked in an oven. The French cooks at Mary’s court introduced new ways of preparing and presenting food, often in rich sauces. The quantities of food produced and eaten are staggering. One evening in December 1528 it is recorded that King James V held a banquet at Linlithgow where the guests ate 95 loaves of bread, 40 white fish, 40 codlings, 200 herring, four salted salmon, one halibut, two Pike, not to mention scallops, eels, cuttlefish, cheese, eggs and apples. They drank 23 gallons of ale. The next day they ate 43 loaves of bread, five and three-quarter sheep, two and a quarter sides of beef, two pounds of cuttlefish, five geese, six chickens, about 25 other birds, and drank 13 gallons of ale. Even when a prisoner in England, Mary was offered a choice of 32 dishes for lunch and a different choice of 32 again at dinner. Royalty ate first; leftovers were passed down the social orders until they reached the kitchen cats and dogs.
The castle household

Running a royal residence was a complex task and depended on a number of key employees. The **constable** was in charge of security – the guards, the porters and the armourers. The **marshall** supervised everything to do with transport and dealt with blacksmiths, ostlers, grooms, stable boys, messengers, carters and so on.
The **chaplain** took charge of the spiritual life of the residence and was also responsible for secretarial matters. Finally, the **steward** was responsible for managing the troops of other support staff – cooks, bakers, builders, gardeners, and so on.
Recreation

Mary had many opportunities for recreation and loved physical activity all her life. The gardens and decorative earthworks at Stirling are still impressive, even though they have probably changed quite a lot since Mary’s time. As well as walking in the gardens, Mary loved to ride and hunt: Falkland Palace was a superb place for this, surrounded as it was then by woods and forests and here Mary enjoyed a pleasure from childhood: falconry and hare coursing. The name Falkland derives from the word ‘falcon’. At all the palaces royalty would have practised the sport of archery; you can imagine this specially well at Falkland. Also at Falkland is the unique Real Tennis Court, built in 1539 for James V. Legend has it that Mary shocked her courtiers by playing tennis in breeches! There are also records that Darnley played tennis or ‘catchpule’ at Linlithgow and played tennis against Rizzio shortly before his murder. Mary played golf and enjoyed watching football – while in captivity at Carlisle she was allowed to go and cheer on her male servants as they played against each other in a football match.

Inside, Mary was no less active. It is easy to imagine her dancing in the great hall at Stirling and Linlithgow and this was a lifelong pleasure for her. She loved to sing and listen to music; a harp closely connected with Mary can be seen in the National Museum of Scotland.

More sedate pleasures included embroidery and playing cards. In the reconstruction of her room at Falkland you can also see a spinning wheel. You can see some examples of her tapestries on display in Holyrood Palace, and in the National Museum of Scotland there is a gold and silver gaming board for backgammon, chess and draughts which is said to have belonged to Mary. She also organised elaborate ‘masques’ or performances in which she and her courtiers dressed up in elaborate costumes. In Mary’s wardrobe were 33 different costumes!
On the move

Mary travelled a lot around her kingdom and not only when she was pursuing or fleeing from her enemies. Her royal ‘progresses’ were at least in part to show her face to the people of Scotland and build up a base of support. She would usually travel on horseback; when pregnant she was carried in a litter or portable couch. This was really before the time of coaches as the roads were so poor. Long journeys were more comfortable by boat if this was possible. She was accompanied by her advisers, household servants and usually a number of armed guards and then finally by the long train of her household possessions, laboriously pulled on carts or simple carriages.

Another, perhaps more compelling, reason why Mary moved around so much was for reasons of health and hygiene. In the days before plumbing, the privies or long-drop toilets would literally fill up after a matter of weeks, less time if there were many visitors. It would become a matter of urgency for the visitors to leave so that the toilets could literally be cleared out and cleaned again for the next visitors. Rooms would be full of fragrant herbs in the form of pot-pourri which was scattered on the floor to try to disguise the smell. In the National Museum of Scotland you can see a necklace which belonged to Mary which contains a small perfume bottle. It is said that James VI kept his clothes hanging in his privy in the hope that the smell would keep the moths away! You can imagine the relief for the royal household when Mary and her royal party moved on.

Government in Scotland

This was before the time of democratic governments in Scotland and the country at this time was run on a feudal system:

- At the top was the king or queen. If the king or queen was a baby or child, then a regent, known in Scotland as a governor, was appointed to rule in his or her place.
- The next level was known as the Three Estates: nobility – earls, barons, lords church – abbots, bishops, priests burgesses – important townsmen (i.e. from the ‘burghs’) – merchants, shopkeepers
- Below that was everyone else – people who worked on the land, ordinary people who lived in towns.

Society in the Highland regions of Scotland was markedly different from life in the Lowlands. Gaelic was spoken, the clan chiefs still wielded a great deal of power and they even had their own system of law.

The Three Estates met as a parliament. They did not meet frequently, and most of what we would know as parliamentary work was carried out by committees. Parliament would meet in different locations and at different times sat in the great halls at St Andrews Castle, Linlithgow Palace and Stirling Castle, depending on where the king or queen was in residence.

The king or queen would assemble a group of advisers, known as the Privy Council, who would help to rule the country. The Council would meet frequently, nearly every day, and when the sovereign was on tour, members of the council would accompany him or her. The Privy Council included posts such as Lord Chancellor (finance), Secretary of State, Justice Clerk, and so on.

When Mary arrived back in Scotland in 1561, the position of the monarch had been seriously eroded. Since the death of Marie of Guise in 1560 Scotland had been almost operating as a republic, under a council of 24 lords – the Lords of the Congregation. It was one of Mary’s first challenges to re-establish the position of sovereign. However, most people continued to regard the position of sovereign as ‘God-given’ and unchallengeable.
Everyday life in Scotland

Life for the nobility

On her many official progresses round Scotland or when fleeing hostilities, Mary visited her troublesome lords in their castle homes. **Craigmillar Castle** is just one of many which has a room known as Mary’s bedchamber. For the Scottish nobility, life in their castle residences would have been a scaled-down, less luxurious version of life at the royal court. The halls of their castles would have been used for local matters – local courts of justice, collecting rents, sorting out local property disputes. Their castle dungeons or prisons would have held petty criminals; more important political prisoners were closely confined in noble apartments. Furniture would have been minimal, but better-off families would have had coloured hangings, even tapestries, on the walls, albeit in less luxurious textiles than at **Stirling** or **Holyrood**. A fabulous example of 16th-century decoration can be seen at **Huntingtower Castle** just outside Perth, which still has an original painted ceiling and wall decorations.

There are many castles still in good enough condition to fire the imagination of pupils and help them to understand something of everyday life at the time of Mary. The following castles are particularly well-preserved – some are later and some predate the reign of Mary but still help to give an impression:


Many of the castles were heavily fortified and were frequently under attack. **Craigmillar Castle**, outside Edinburgh and one of Mary’s local retreats, was badly damaged during the Rough Wooing of 1544, as was **Hermitage Castle**, home of the Hepburn family and retreat of Bothwell. Other good examples of castles from that time with fortifications include **Caerlaverock**, **St Andrews** and **Kildrummy**.

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Life for ordinary people

It is much harder for us to find evidence to tell us about the lives of ordinary people at this time. Generally objects were made out of simple materials and, unlike artefacts of the rich and well-connected, were not treasured and handed down to future generations. Their houses were not built to last, unlike castles designed to withstand cannon balls, never mind the ravages of time. This is something which is well worth discussing with pupils. Most of the evidence is fragmentary and our clues come from the painstaking work of archaeologists and some documentary evidence (for example, parish records). What is clear is that the lives of ordinary people were many, many notches below royalty and nobility in terms of comforts and living conditions.

Although this was the time of the growth of the burghs in Scotland, around 90 per cent of people did not live in the towns. Most people lived a hard life in rural areas, growing barley and oats and tending cattle for beef and sheep for wool and mutton. The small farming communities shared expensive items such as ploughs, oxen and horses. Sheep stayed out all year in the care of shepherds, while cattle grazed by day on common grazing land and spent the nights in the byre, often an integral part of the house. Rent was paid twice a year to the local nobleman or laird, partly in money and partly in foodstuffs such as oats or eggs.

People who lived in burgh towns such as Perth, St Andrews, or Linlithgow might work as tanners, butchers, millers, weavers, metal workers, potters or tailors. Their diet was overwhelmingly cereal-based, in the form of porridge, broth, bread and ale, supplemented when available with vegetables such as kail, pease or beans. Boiled or roasted meat was available, especially beef, but was not generally affordable to most people. Fish was more widely available, though fish from rivers were a delicacy reserved for the tables of the nobility. Most people lived in small, single-storey wooden houses with wattle walls, often backing onto accommodation for animals. It has been suggested that more than half of the population at this time died before they were 18 years old, with only a quarter of adults reaching middle age.

Sites which help us to understand more about the lives of ordinary people at the time of Mary Queen of Scots are limited. Local museums may have medieval artefacts on display and the National Museum of Scotland has some displays of objects from excavations of medieval Perth. The SCran website (www.scran.ac.uk) gives access to images of medieval objects which you can explore virtually. The Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie and Newtonmore has an excellent museum and a reconstructed Highland village and is well worth a visit to investigate rural life (www.highlandfolk.com). Gladstone’s Land, a tenement house completed in 1620, gives some idea of life in Edinburgh (www.nts.org.uk).
The Reformation in Scotland

It is hard for us now to understand the extent to which religion affected so many elements of life in the 16th century. The Church was responsible for many practical aspects of life: education, health and welfare, as well as holding church services. A tenth of one’s income was payable directly to the Church. Spiritually, religion influenced the way people lived their lives – entry to Heaven was by no means guaranteed.

In the early 16th century Scotland started to become influenced by the teachings of Martin Luther, a German monk. He rejected the authority of the Pope and questioned many aspects of how the Catholic Church was organised. His ideas became the start of a process of religious change known as the Reformation and his supporters became known as Protestants.

Most people in Scotland were Catholic. However, when the teachings of Luther and his follower, Calvin, became available in Scotland, some of the ideas and teachings started to take hold. The Church in Scotland became divided into those who still supported the authority of the Pope and those Protestants who rejected this and who wanted to reform the Church.

When Henry VIII of England converted to Protestantism, most of England became Protestant too. Scottish Protestants received help from England, while Scottish Catholics were supported by France, which was still Catholic. This was the background to the Rough Wooing of the 1540s, in which Henry and his successors tried to force the engagement of the infant Mary to his son, although clearly there were political issues at stake too.

The Catholic Church meanwhile was fighting back, condemning the Protestants as heretics. At St Andrews, the headquarters of the Scottish Church, Protestants such as Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart were executed at the orders of Cardinal Beaton, who was subsequently murdered himself. The Catholic response to this led with support from France to the capture of the rebels, including John Knox. England had reverted to the Catholic faith under Mary Tudor, while the infant queen of Scotland was receiving a Catholic upbringing at the French court. The governor or regent of Scotland was the Catholic Earl of Arran.

The 1550s saw a reversal in the flagging fortunes of the Scottish Protestant movement. Elizabeth I of England returned England to the Protestantism of her father. Though only about ten per cent of the Scottish population were Protestants by this time, a powerful group of Scottish nobles, calling themselves the Lords of the Congregation began to gain in influence. They were supported by England and led by James Stewart, 1st Earl of Moray and illegitimate half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots. John Knox returned from exile and in 1559 preached a sermon in Perth condemning ‘ idolatry’ – the worship of religious images and statues. This sermon led to mob action: the great cathedral of St Andrews was stripped of its rich interior overnight. With the death of Mary of Guise in 1560, the Lords of the Congregation became more powerful still and by 1560 most of the nobility supported the Protestant cause. The Scottish Parliament renounced the Pope’s authority and it became illegal to celebrate Mass. Scotland had become officially Protestant.
Little wonder that the nobles treated the return of Mary Queen of Scots to Scotland in 1561 with anxiety. As a Catholic ruler, she had the power to return Scotland to Catholicism. However, in a deal brokered by Moray, Mary was tolerant of Protestantism, though she negotiated the right to continue to celebrate Mass herself. This led to direct confrontation and debate between Mary and John Knox; his attempt to disrupt her worship at Holyrood with a Protestant mob, however, came to nothing. For a while the anomalous situation of a Protestant country under a Catholic ruler seemed to be working.

Religion and politics continued to intertwine throughout the political events of Mary’s reign. Following the imprisonment and abdication of Mary in 1567, Scotland’s Protestant status seemed certain, even though many people were still Catholic. The echoes of this tumultuous period in Scotland’s history continue to resonate today.

**Places to visit**

There are several sites connected with the Reformation in Scotland which are well worth a visit. Most significant are probably the Castle and the Cathedral at St Andrews. The castle was home to the Scottish bishops and archbishops and was the scene of the murder of Cardinal Beaton. The fascinating mine and countermine, two subterranean passages, are a legacy of the siege of 1546–7, when the castle was occupied by Protestant rebels. The nearby cathedral, once the biggest and most impressive church building in Scotland, lies in ruins, abandoned since its attack by the mob in 1559. In Edinburgh, you can visit the house where John Knox allegedly lived and the Kirk of St Giles, where Knox became the first Protestant minister. The Chapel Royal at Stirling Castle was Scotland’s first purpose-built Protestant kirk.
Historic sites with links to Mary Queen of Scots

Royal Residences
1 Linlithgow Palace, West Lothian
2 Stirling Castle, Stirling
3 Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh
4 Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh
5 Falkland Palace, Fife

Castles
6 Aberdour Castle, Fife
7 Balvaird Castle, Perth and Kinross
8 Blackness Castle, West Lothian
9 Borthwick Castle, Midlothian
10 Castle Campbell, Clackmannanshire
11 Craigmillar Castle, Edinburgh
12 Crichton Castle, Midlothian
13 Darnaway Castle, Moray
14 Dumbarton Castle, Dunbartonshire
15 Hailes Castle, East Lothian
16 Hermitage Castle, Scottish Borders
17 Huntingtower Castle, Perth and Kinross
18 Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire
19 Kinneil House, West Lothian
20 Lochleven Castle, Perth and Kinross
21 Niddry Castle, West Lothian
22 Tantallon Castle, East Lothian
23 St Andrews Castle, Fife

Other Sites
24 Inchmahome Priory, Stirling
25 St Andrews Cathedral, Fife
26 Dundrennan Abbey, Dumfries and Galloway
27 Dunfermline Abbey and Palace, Fife

More information about these sites is provided on pages 36–8.
Places to visit

There are many sites you can visit today which have connections to Mary Queen of Scots. Those asterisked * are in the care of Historic Scotland. Further details of these sites can be found on the Historic Scotland website: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

For all visit and booking enquiries, please contact 0131 668 8793/8736, or contact sites directly on the numbers given.

Royal residences

  Tel: 0131 225 9846

  Tel: 0131 225 5856

- *Holyrood Palace*, Edinburgh. Mary’s apartments can be visited. Site of Rizzio’s murder. Objects belonging to Mary on display, including fragments of tapestries she made in captivity. Portraits on display.
  Tel: 0131 557 2500

  Tel: 01506 842896

  Tel: 01786 450000

Castles

  Tel: 01383 860519

  Tel: 01786 431324 for details about occasional openings.

- *Blackness Castle*, Blackness, West Lothian. Royal castle, used by Earl of Arran in Mary’s day. Dramatic and forbidding fortifications. Once a royal prison.
  Tel: 01506 842065

  Tel: 01875 820514

  Tel: 01259 742408
• "Craigmillar Castle", Edinburgh. Home of Preston family, loyal supporters of Mary. Traditionally the place where Darnley’s murder was planned. Well-preserved and evocative castle.
   Tel: 0131 661 4445

• "Crichton Castle", near Pathhead, Midlothian. 1562, Mary was guest here at the marriage of one of her half-brothers, Sir John of Coldingham, to Lady Janet Hepburn, Bothwell’s sister. One of Bothwell’s residences. Dramatic and interesting. Stunning 16th-century courtyard façade.
   Tel: 01875 320017

• "Darnaway Castle", Forres, Moray. Residence of Earl of Moray. Great hall roof oldest in Scotland (c1385).

• "Dumbarton Castle", Dunbartonshire. Mary lived here for a short time in 1548 before setting off for France.
   Tel: 01389 732167

• "Hailes Castle", East Lothian. One of Bothwell’s family residences, forfeited after 1567. Mary and he stopped here on the way to Dunbar after he had abducted her. Attractive riverside ruins. Two pit prisons.

• "Hermitage Castle", Newcastleton, Scottish Borders. Solid and imposing. One of Bothwell’s residences. Mary almost died after a dramatic cross-country gallop to Hermitage in 1566 to visit the sick Bothwell.
   Tel: 01387 376222

   Tel: 01738 627231

   Tel: 01466 793191

• "Kinneil House", Bo’ness, West Lothian. Oldest part of the house is a 15th-century tower remodelled by Earl of Arran between 1546 and 1550. Note: May view exterior only.

• "Lochleven Castle", Loch Leven, Perth and Kinross. Island castle. Site of Mary’s miscarriage of twins, abdication and imprisonment.
   Tel: 07778 040483

• "Niddry Castle", West Lothian. Mary spent the night here after escaping from Loch Leven. Home of Lord Seton. Note: this castle is not normally open to the public and may be viewed only from the outside. If you live locally, it may be worth doing this, or even contacting the owners.

• "Tantallon Castle", East Lothian. Vast, impressive cliff-top ruins.
   Tel: 01620 892727

   Tel: 01334 477196
Other sites

• *Dundrennan Abbey*, near Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Galloway. Mary spent her last night on Scottish soil here.
  Tel: 01557 500262

• *Dunfermline Abbey and Palace, Dunfermline, Fife*. Guesthouse here was frequently used by Mary while travelling through her kingdom.
  Tel: 01383 739026

• *Inchmahome Priory*, Lake of Menteith, Stirling. Refuge for infant Mary before she left for France.
  Tel: 01877 385294

• *St Andrews Cathedral, St Andrews, Fife*. Ruined former headquarters of Scottish medieval Church.
  Tel: 01334 472563

Museums and galleries

• *National Museum of Scotland*, Edinburgh. Artefacts belonging to Mary, including a harp, a game board, jewellery, coins minted to celebrate her marriage to Darnley and a cast of her tomb. Furniture and objects from her time. Events for schools include costumed role-play investigating court life at the time of Mary.
  Tel: 0131 247 4041; www.nms.ac.uk

• *Scottish National Portrait Gallery*, Queen St, Edinburgh. Portraits of Mary Queen of Scots; James VI as a child and adult; Francis II; Bothwell and his first wife, Lady Jean Gordon; the Earl of Morton; Lord Darnley as a child; Mary of Guise; James V. Tours available. (Gallery closed at present, reopening late 2011)
  Tel: 0131 624 6200; www.nationalgalleries.org

  Tel: 0131 556 9579

• *Gladstone’s Land*, Royal Mile, Edinburgh. Completed in 1620, Gladstone’s Land is a typical Edinburgh Old Town tenement and, though later than the Edinburgh Mary knew, gives an impression of life in the city.
  Tel: 0131 226 5856; www.nts.org.uk

• *Mary Queen of Scots’ Visitor Centre*, Jedburgh. 16th-century town house with interpretive material about Mary Queen of Scots, who visited the town in 1566.
  Tel: 01835 863331

• *Blairs Museum*, near Aberdeen, is an excellent educational resource for schools studying Mary Queen of Scots and Scotland’s Catholic history. A teacher’s resource book is downloadable from the museum website, including ready to use museum activity sheets and background information to help plan a visit.
  Tel: 01224 863767; www.blairsmuseum.com

• *The Highland Folk Museum*, Kingussie and Newtonmore. Wonderful museum of rural Highland life with reconstructed rural buildings, live interpretation and demonstrations.
  Tel: 01540 673551; www.highlandfolk.com
Other resources

Books for teachers
John Guy *My Heart is my Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots* HarperCollins 2004
A gripping biography, highly readable and utilising many new sources of evidence.

Jenny Wormald *Mary Queen of Scots: Politics, Passion and a Kingdom Lost* Tauris Parke 2001
A good counterbalance to the above – very readable and much less generous to Mary than John Guy!

Angela Royston *Mary Queen of Scots* Pitkin Unichrome Ltd 2000
A well-illustrated biographical pamphlet. Also suitable for more able pupils.

David Breeze *A Queen’s Progress* HMSO 1987
An account of Mary’s life, told with reference to the places she visited. Excellent photographs.

National Archives of Scotland *Scotland in the 16th Century* National Archives of Scotland and Learning and Teaching Scotland 2004
An excellent resource with accompanying CD which helps teachers and pupils investigate life in 16th-century Scotland. Using contemporary documents as evidence, it includes transcripts of documents, images, audio versions and suggested activities. It includes many items relating to Mary, including items relating to the less dramatic elements of her reign.

Books for pupils
Harriet Castor *Mary Queen of Scots* Franklin Watts 2001
The story of Mary in simple language. Illustrations but no photographs.

Margaret Simpson *Mary Queen of Scots and her Horrible Husbands* Scholastic 2001
Similar in approach to *Bloody Scotland*.

Colin Dargie *Stuart Scotland* Heinemann 2002
One of the excellent *Explore Scottish History* series, this book is richly illustrated with photographs and contemporary accounts.

Terry Deary *Bloody Scotland* Scholastic 1998
One of the ever-popular *Horrible Histories* series. Lively, engaging and provocative history with some truly awful puns.

Websites for teachers
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
The website of Historic Scotland with details of sites, opening hours, resources for teachers, etc.

www.scran.ac.uk
An excellent source of images of objects associated with Mary. Also includes Pathfinder Packs – illustrated essays on topics associated with Mary.

www.marie-stuart.co.uk
A comprehensive site with good links.

www.englishhistory.net/tudor/relative/maryqos.html
A good selection of portraits of Mary Queen of Scots.

www.nls.uk/digital-gallery
The site of the National Library of Scotland includes a transcript of Mary’s last letter.

Websites for pupils
www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/as/burghlife
Explore 16th-century burgh life in Stirling. Complete the quiz to gain an invite to the christening of Mary’s baby.

www.ltscotland.org.uk/scottishhistory/renaissancereformation/index.asp
An excellent library of resources relating to the life of Mary and to life at that time.

Acknowledgements
Author: Elspeth Mackay  
Series Editor: Sue Mitchell  
Copy editor: Jackie Henrie  
Layout and Production: The House

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