
Over the course of the past four decades, Professor Michael Lynch has contributed greatly to our understanding of one of the most important, and complex, centuries. Leaving an indelible stamp on Scotland’s urban, social, political and religious history Lynch has shed light on the Scottish renaissance and reformation, the reigns of Mary Stewart and her son James VI and I, the nature of burgh government, society and their relations with the crown. As reflected in the countless references to his work, Scottish historians of the early modern period continuously look to Lynch’s work for some guidance. In many ways, Lynch’s greatest contribution has been his insistence that historians look for greater continuity rather than abrupt changes between different eras. As a result, Lynch has stretched the sixteenth century back to the middle of the 1400s and extended it well into the 1700s. Given his influence and impact on Scottish early modern history it is not surprising that his colleagues have come together to produce a Festschrift in his honour.

Edited by Julian Goodare and Alasdair A. MacDonald, *Sixteenth-Century Scotland* offers an opportunity to ‘open new windows onto the study of sixteenth-century Scotland.’ The contributions to this collection provide a clear picture of the current state of historical inquiry into early modern Scotland. It is immediately clear to the reader that the topics included in this collection reflect both Lynch’s own research interests as well as his desire to see greater continuities explored over time. While most edited collections contain short essays in the range of five to six thousand words, the eighteen essays presented in *Sixteenth-Century Scotland* are all substantial offerings that, unencumbered by word limits, enable the authors to
engage fully their research materials. The result will undoubtedly make this less accessible to the general reader, but given the price tag and esoteric nature of many of the essays it is clear that this volume is meant for professional historians and their students. Although the editors organized the essays somewhat by chronology, they did not divide them into sections or by themes perhaps illustrating Lynch’s own wide-ranging interests. And while every one of the essays is a solid contribution, it would be difficult to comment on them all in such a short space.

That said, there is a key feature present in most of these essays that deserves notice. Keeping in line with their desire to provide new insights into this period, most of the authors challenge the established historiography by introducing new approaches to the subject or engaging new archival materials. For example, in his evaluation of ‘Royal finance and regional rebellion in the reign of James IV’ Steve Boardman argues that: ‘dissatisfaction created by the crown’s financial strategies was perhaps deeper and more intense than recent scholarly writings have allowed.’ (p. 16) Likewise, David Ditchburn’s examination of Scottish pilgrimages between 1450 and 1550 illustrates that the traditional account of Scottish pilgrims ‘hiding their rosaries in anticipation of Reformation’ (p. 97) fails to take into account changing fashions and religious continuities. As Ditchburn argued, ‘pilgrimage was a religious practice deeply ingrained in the popular psyche and doggedly resistant to authoritarian Protestant diktat.’ (p. 98) Sharon Adams revisits the historiographical controversy surrounding the Conference at Leith in 1572, which saw the kirk ‘endorse’ episcopacy. For Adams, this was an interim measure; regardless of whether or not the kirk accepted bishops at Leith, the most important issue for all of the participants at this conference was how to ‘implement the financial provisions agreed upon at Leith’ (p. 146). Here, as Adams argued, it was the kirk that pressed to see the provisions implemented and the crown that backed away.

Boardman, Ditchburn and Adams are not the only contributors to this collection that challenge the historiographical record. Their work fits nicely with the fifteen other contributions that also bring to light new perspectives on topics as wide-ranging as ‘Robin Hood in Scotland,’ the relationship between Andrew Melville and Patrick Adamson, coronation
rituals of Scottish kings and queens, and the complex politics between the Crown and Kirk, Crown and the burghs, and the Crown and the nobility. Collectively, these essays illustrate both Lynch’s concern to connect the sixteenth century with the period before and after, and to demonstrate the crucial continuities (and changes) in Scottish urban, social and political history during this period. If there is to be any criticism directed towards this collection, its editors and publisher, it can only be that such important essays may prove inaccessible to a wider (academic) audience because the cost of the volume is too prohibitive to enable it to find its way into private, and quite possibly university, libraries. That said, it will become clear to those who have the opportunity to read this collection that they have a responsibility to ensure that others interested in this period can find a way to engage with the important ideas presented here.

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