

Historic Scotland podcast: Episode 5 transcript

Chapter 1

Sarah:

Hello, and welcome to the Historic Scotland podcast. My name is Sarah MacGillivray. I'm an actor and writer with a passion for people, place and story.

Each episode, we will be travelling across Scotland to a different site, unearthing their surprising tales. Today, we're at Linlithgow Palace.

Once a grand royal residence, now a striking ruin, it remains a key symbol of Scotland's medieval and Renaissance past.

Join me as we find out more about it and about one very special resident.

Rachel:

I think for a long time historians have seen her as inept but now we're starting to re-evaluate that fear and see her as a politically savvy queen.

Sarah:

That's Rachel. She's one of the experts we'll be talking to today, and this is Morvern.

Morvern:

Henry VII's advisors were saying to him, oh, aren't you a bit worried that a Scot could inherit the throne? And he said, it's fine. We'll absorb *them* rather than the other way around.

Chapter 2

01:09

Sarah:

Linlithgow Palace is a place with centuries of history, much of it shaped by Scotland's Stewart kings. James IV, in particular, left a lasting mark by preparing the castle for Margaret Tudor.

This is Dr Rachel Delman.

Rachel:

So we're in the northwest corner of Linlithgow Palace. So the palace as we see it today was begun in the reign of James I in 1425, after a fire destroyed the earlier palace in 1424.

So James I was responsible for building the Great Hall, and then successive kings added to it, so James III, and then in the reign of Margaret's husband, James IV, the palace was extended significantly. So James added these north and west ranges that we're in.

And the bower that we're going up to up this turnpike staircase is the culmination of the private apartments of the king and queen. So it's really the jewel in the crown, so to speak.

Sarah:

So he was responsible for quite extensively adding to this Linlithgow Palace?

Rachel:

Yeah, absolutely. So Linlithgow really expressed James's sort of outward-looking aspirations on a European stage, like really proclaimed his status as a starring European monarch, I guess. And the works were completed in anticipation of Margaret's arrival in 1503.

Sarah:

Really, did he want to have everything in place before she arrived here?

Rachel:

Yes. So it was one of Margaret's dower castles, along with Stirling and Doune as well. And James was keen to get it completed before Margaret arrived but works did carry on once she arrived as well.

Sarah:

It's quite a lot of stairs.

Rachel:

It is, yeah. It's a long way up.

Sarah:

I thought I was doing quite well, and about now I'm feeling like, oh yeah, a little break, a little look into the loch. Well-positioned windows.

Rachel:

Absolutely. You really get this sense of sort of exclusivity of this being, you know, the kind of private apartments of the king and queen as well.

Rachel, talking to a Palace visitor:

Oh hello. Sheltering from the wind.

Visitor:

Yeah, it's cold out there.

Rachel:

It is cold, isn't it?

Sarah:

Wow! It's quite high.

Rachel:

Yeah, absolutely. So from up here we can see... so we obviously came in through the entrance there which is covered in scaffolding now and so across the way we can see the Great Hall that was begun by James I in the 1420s. And when James IV came to the throne, he extended this... so he extended it southwards and put in larger windows so that that would light the upper end of the Great Hall known as the dais, where the king and queen and their guests would sit. And he also added a really magnificent fireplace as well. It's enormous. You can go and stand in it today, which takes up the majority of the south wall. And then, as I mentioned, James IV really extends the palace to the north and west so where we are is like the very exclusive part of the palace where the king and queen's apartments were and where they would have spent much of their time.

So Linlithgow was the nursery for royal children, but it was also a stopping point between Edinburgh and Stirling castles, which were more sort of politically significant. So this was more of a Renaissance retreat; so a place where the Stewarts really enjoyed spending their time. And obviously the landscape setting would have been there, their hunting ground, their deer park as well.

So it was somewhere that they enjoyed being. And we think it was Margaret's favourite palace as well. And it's obviously where she gave birth to James V. So for her, very significant.

Chapter 3

04:53

Sarah's intro:

The legend of Margaret's Bower is one of love and loss, woven into the very fabric of the palace. But it might not be quite as simple as the Victorians imagined.

To give a bit of context here, in 1513, James IV led a Scottish invasion of northern England. It was part of a wider conflict tied to the Auld Alliance with France.

The campaign culminated in the Battle of Flodden. It was a catastrophic defeat for the Scots. James IV was killed along with many of his nobles. He never returned to Linlithgow.

Chapter 4

05:35

Rachel:

So Margaret's connection to this room, typically the reason it's called Margaret's Bower is because of a Victorian connection that was made to her. And the legend is that she waited in this room in vain for her husband, James IV, to return from the Battle of Flodden. And of course, he never did.

But there is a sense that this room might have been genuinely connected to Margaret. So, as I mentioned, this is the intersection of the north and west ranges of the palace and the culmination of those today. And it's very likely Margaret would have been able to access this space from her own private apartments in the palace.

And if you look up on the ceiling, so you can see in the centre, it's very defaced now, but you can see what would have been very likely a rose detail that's kind of stamped in the top of the ceiling. And this very likely would have been painted.

So it could be a Tudor rose, which was red and white, marking the union between York and Lancaster after the Wars of the Roses. Or it could have been perhaps a Lancastrian rose. So we know that red rose imagery was commonly used to signal Margaret's line and appears on lots of material culture that's associated with the marriage of James and Margaret and her role as a young Tudor princess.

In the turnpike staircase that we came up directly beneath the bower, there's some really interesting other architectural features.

So we have 'I's entwined with 'M's, which are crowned, and 'I' was commonly used instead of 'J' in this period so they're interchangeable so the J and M was commonly used to symbolise the marriage between James and Margaret and those alternate with Scottish thistles. Again they're

really defaced today but we have a Victorian or, sorry, an antiquarian drawing that shows the pattern of them alternating so, yeah, there is a sense that this is a possible Tudor or Union rose or Lancastrian rose, as I say, and that that pattern of Scottish thistles and those I and Ms entwined culminates in this space to celebrate the marriage and to mark Margaret's ownership over this space.

In terms of how it might have been used, obviously as I mentioned, there's this sense of it, from the Victorian period onwards, as a space of stasis and female passivity and this idea that Margaret's kind of wistfully awaiting her husband, but we think it was probably used in a more dynamic way. We don't know exactly how it was used but obviously, as you've mentioned, we've got these really breathtaking views – towards St Michael's Church, which you can see over there, and out towards the loch and the wider landscape. The privy gardens as well from this period were on to the west side of the palace, so it's likely that Margaret would have had a view on to the gardens from here as well. So maybe a space of contemplation, maybe a space for entertaining a very few select guests, given that there's only four of us at the moment and it's very crowded.

As you can see, we're sitting on a stone bench that kind of runs the length or the circumference of the bower. It's possible that there was a table in the middle here so might have been a site of gaming, of play, maybe of prayer. It could have been used for all sorts of reasons and purposes.

Chapter 5

09:18

Sarah:

Standing in the bower today with its views over the loch and the surrounding landscape, it's easy to see why Linlithgow held such significance for Scotland's royal family. One of its most famous residents was born here, Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots.

Her birth at Linlithgow was more than just a royal event. It was a moment that would change the course of British history.

The union of Scotland and England was foreshadowed long before Mary's time with the marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor.

This is Morvern French. She works in the interpretation team at Historic Scotland.

Chapter 6

10:00

Morvern:

So as Rachel said, she was part of the Tudor dynasty, which is a very famous dynasty in England. So she was the first Tudor princess.

But what people might not be aware of is that at the time of the marriage to James IV in 1503, James was actually a much better-established king than Margaret's father, Henry VII.

Sarah:

Oh, really?

Morvern:

So Henry, he took the throne of England in 1485. So just four years before Margaret was born.

There'd been the Wars of the Roses for a long time before that with the Yorkists and the Lancastrians. And then Henry, who was a Lancastrian, finally won.

So Henry married Elizabeth of York who, as the name suggests, came from the Yorkist side, so this was the tying together of the two dynasties that Rachel's been talking about with the iconography.

So Henry was insecure and in the years before the marriage between James and Margaret, there had been pretenders to Henry's crown, so people coming and saying 'oh I'm actually a Yorkist prince', so Henry wanted to get rid of these guys, obviously, and one of them, one of the most famous was called Perkin Warbeck, and he was saying that he was a son of Edward IV, Henry's predecessor. And he actually came up to Scotland and was received by James IV. You know, treated as if he was a prince and this was a threat to Henry because James actually made incursions into northern England on Perkin Warbeck's behalf.

Sarah:

Oh really? Okay.

Morvern:

So just literally a couple of years before this marriage James was supporting Henry's enemies And so James, on the other hand, he was part of the Stewart dynasty, which had been in power for a long time, since 1371.

So he was in a much more secure position in terms of dynastic legitimacy and claim to the throne. There was no question about him being king.

So when they did get married and make this alliance, it was actually James that was in the stronger position in terms of dynastic strength.

But, as we know, the Tudors did hang around for quite a while after that. So it was actually Margaret Tudor, her descendants with James IV, that eventually led to the union of the crowns in 1603. So their son, James V, he had Mary Queen of Scots, she had James VI, and then he became James I of England.

Sarah:

Queen Margaret Tudor is instrumental in the eventual uniting of the crowns of Scotland and England.

Morvern:

Yeah, and even at the time, even though it was 100 years away and they could never have truly foreseen what was going to happen, back then Henry VII's advisors were saying to him, weren't you a bit worried that a Scot could inherit the throne?

And he said, it's fine, we'll absorb *them* rather than the other way around.

And I mean, no comment on that.

You know, he wasn't worried in that case.

But another important element is that by the time, by 1503, by the time James and Margaret married, Henry VII only had one son because his eldest son, Arthur, had died.

And this was scary for him because he only had one son to inherit and he was trying to establish and strengthen the Tudor dynasty.

So there was a possibility that if anything happened to the future Henry VIII, Margaret and James could have inherited the throne of England themselves.

Sarah:

And her brother, who did inherit the English crown, was Henry VIII.

Morvern:

So he became king in 1509, married Catherine of Aragon from Spain, and their own problems with having children may be well known to lots of people. They did produce lots of children, but only one survived to adulthood, which became Queen Mary.

This was a sort of bone of contention between Henry and Margaret Tudor, because she and James kind of had a similar problem. She and James had six children together. One of them, Alexander, was born after James died, but by the time she gave birth to James V, here at Linlithgow, they'd already had three children come and go.

Sarah:

Oh, that's so sad.

Morvern:

Yeah, so she'd been successful in having the pregnancies, but in those days children often died before they reached the age of five. And so it's kind of, both in Scotland and in England, the monarchs were under huge pressure to create heirs. And before James V they actually... so they had a different son called James, then they had a daughter whose name hasn't survived so she might have been stillborn or lived such a short time that her name wasn't recorded. Then they had another son who they called Arthur, which was kind of provocative because Margaret's brother who died had been called Arthur. Henry and Catherine had a son called Arthur.

Sarah:

Oh really?

Morvern:

So for them to call their son Arthur was them sort of hinting that they could one day be in that position too.

Chapter 7

16:20

Sarah:

When Morvern says 'in that position' here, she means the idea that Arthur is a symbol of pan-Britishness packed with aspirations to rule the British Isles. Choosing the name Arthur is their way of saying 'this is all ours'.

Morvern:

And then they finally had James V. But, of course, they didn't know for sure that he would live. After James V they had another daughter, her name we don't know, and then Margaret was pregnant when James IV went away to Flodden. And so, by the time of Flodden, they had one son, and they didn't know what was going to happen with the pregnancy.

So this was a source of concern, and later chroniclers write that she said to James, 'don't go because we're not in a secure position with the children situation'.

So this was a later 16th-century chronicler called Pitscottie who wrote this. Apparently, James was not concerned. And off he went.

Rachel:

Yeah, if we move backwards in time... So, as Morvern says, Flodden happened in 1513, 10

years into their marriage. But if we move backwards to the kind of earlier point about the marriage between Margaret and James and the Tudors being this fledgling royal dynasty, it was accompanied by the signing of what was known as the Treaty of Perpetual Peace.

And so there'd obviously been a lot of conflict and animosity between England and Scotland for a long time. And it was seen... the signing of this was seen as a sign of hope. Obviously, it didn't last. Ten years later, we know what happened.

But yes, so the marriage was really about dynastic ambitions and Margaret as the first Tudor princess, I guess, was always expected to marry strategically to strengthen England's position on the European stage, and it just so happens that she married into England's... one of England's closest neighbours essentially.

She was only 13 when she married James, so very young and she would have been younger but her mother and grandmother... so her grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, after whom she was named, stepped in because Margaret Beaufort herself had had Henry VII very young. And we think, well she certainly didn't have any other children, so we think the marriage having been consummated so early damaged her at a young age. So she was quite mindful, she was quite protective over her young granddaughter. So a proxy marriage took place, so technically Margaret became Queen of Scots in London, with a representative representing James IV.

Sarah:

Really? So they would have had this ceremony, this marriage ceremony, with a representative of James IV, not him.

Rachel:

Yeah, so the Earl of Bothwell stood in for James IV on that occasion. And then in the summer of 1503, Margaret departed from Richmond Palace. And, you know, it must have been a time of mixed feelings for her. She was very young. Her mother and her brother Arthur, as well had died, you know, very soon before, so she'd lost two close family members and as a 13-year-old

girl going off on the roads all the way up to Edinburgh from London up the Great North Road, which is now the A1. And so, yes, it must have been a time of sort of excitement but also anticipation and I'm sure she was quite anxious about it as well.

In terms of the journey itself, we know quite a lot about it because, as I mentioned, it was really seen as this massive triumph for the Tudor dynasty, so they really wanted to proclaim how amazing this match was and really celebrate it with heraldry and spectacle. So we know the party was led by the Earl of Surrey and that most of the sort of notables of England accompanied her on her journey.

So the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were there. Her father, the king, so King Henry VII, accompanied her as far as Collyweston in Northamptonshire, which was her grandmother's palace. And yeah, we know that it was a really amazing spectacle. So her baggage wagons, for example, were painted in the colours of green and white and decorated with the arms of England and Scotland to celebrate the Union and crowned portcullises, which was the Beaufort, so her grandmother's kind of lineage, the symbol of that.

And there were minstrels and trumpeters, so it would have been a really amazing, multi-sensory spectacle on the move, essentially, from Richmond right up to Edinburgh.

And, as I said, the first stopping point was her grandmother's palace at Collyweston. So she'd been named after her grandmother, Margaret Beaufort. And Margaret Beaufort, there's a surviving prayer book that was given to her by her own mother. She was also called Margaret – there are a lot of Margarets. And Margaret Beaufort actually records the arrival of the wedding party at Collyweston in this prayer book, that's now in the British Library, as one of the key events in sort of forming and shaping the Tudor dynasty. So it just shows you how important it was for them, and she had newly extended the palace. So nothing of it survives at all now, it's just a field of sheep, in this sleepy village in Northamptonshire, that Margaret had newly extended this palace. It was a kind of hub of frenetic activity, the works preparing for her granddaughter's arrival and Margaret stayed, the younger Margaret stayed in newly created lodgings that were created for her arrival.

Sarah:

Oh, that's amazing, that's wonderful. It must have been quite a sight to see that whole pageantry coming into Northamptonshire and then moving north as well.

Rachel:

Yeah, absolutely. So we know that many people kind of came out to see the party moving northwards as well and then, as I say, they worked their way up the Great North Road, stopping at various places, including York, where you can still see, just over from King's Manor near the City Art Gallery, there's still the gate where Margaret entered into the city. It's marked with a plaque.

Chapter 8

23:12

Sarah:

And when does she meet James IV for the first time or what greets her when she comes to Edinburgh? Is it Edinburgh that she...

Morvern:

So she first meets James at Dalkeith Castle, which was on the site of what is now Dalkeith Palace, which is just outside what is now Edinburgh. So that's one of the stops, the many stops that she made on the way up.

James comes over. They're introduced. This is recorded by Somerset Herald, who was an English herald who accompanied the expedition to record it and records it in great detail.

They were introduced. They had a private conversation. She danced for James. I think they dined together and then he went away back to Edinburgh. But before he went back, he was quite ostentatious. He performed a stunt in front of Margaret. He jumped on to his horse without putting his foot in the stirrup.

Sarah:

That's quite impressive.

Morvern:

So I don't know if he sort of put his hand... You know how in films people can do it by putting their hands on the horse's bum and then sort of flip? Possibly something like that. But he jumped on to his horse without the stirrups to show how athletic he is.

Sarah:

Must have landed it successfully. Yeah, he's done this before. He's well practised.

Morvern:

Yeah. But when they met, so they had never met before until Dalkeith. Margaret was 13 and James was 30 years old.

Sarah:

30? That's a massive age gap.

Morvern:

It seems big to us, but it was quite normal in those days. And Margaret, further down the line, she didn't have her first child that we know about until 1507, four years after the marriage.

We can't say for sure, but it's possible that James left her in peace for a few years before starting to have a family with her.

Sarah:

Okay.

Morvern:

But yeah, this was not a love match in any sense. It was a strictly political, diplomatic occasion. And Margaret was the agent of that.

Sarah:

Right.

Morvern:

So if we think of her as an agent that has to perpetuate this alliance rather than having any personal... She wouldn't have expected to... No one cared if they liked each other. Their job was to have children together. And by 1503, James already had seven illegitimate children. So there was no concern there in terms of his fertility.

Sarah:

Right.

Morvern:

All the pressure was on Margaret now. So he had assorted partners right up until the time of the wedding.

One of his children in Stirling unfortunately died while he was at the wedding feast at Holyrood. But some of them did live to adulthood. Alexander, for example, who was his oldest illegitimate child, he went with James to Flodden. He died too.

Sarah:

At Flodden.

Morvern:

Yeah. He was 20 years old by that point. So he was almost as old as Margaret Tudor herself.

But, well it's hard to know exactly how people felt at this time, but my understanding is that Margaret wouldn't have been shocked by this, it would have been completely normal to her that the king would have existing children and existing relationships.

Sarah:

So that was very like a normal thing to be happening at this time?

Morvern:

Yeah, and so she was 13, and at that time, the canonical age of marriage for a girl was 12. So according to the church, a girl could be 12, and a boy could be 14 when he got married.

Sarah:

Really? It's hard for us to comprehend that now.

So it's almost like when a woman starts menstruating, you're going to be like... is that a terrible thing to say? Then you're an adult.

Morvern:

With elites like James and Margaret, they tended to marry, especially the women, early. But ordinary folk usually waited until later in life because there was no... they didn't have dynasties to create. So they usually waited until a more normal age to get married.

Sarah:

Yeah, it was very much a political marriage to create an heir for this dynasty.

Morvern:

Yeah, definitely. And another thing that makes me remember the age difference between them is that... I think it was the day after the marriage at Holyrood, James had his beard cut off, because apparently Margaret did not like beards. And when you think about it, why would a 13-year-old be into beards?

So, you know, he was firmly in his adulthood, experienced in many ways. She was kind of the opposite of that.

Sarah:

So we've spoken about how this was such a hugely political marriage in bringing together Scotland and England, and obviously Margaret playing a massive role in that at such a young age as well. And then, tragically, James IV is killed, correct, during battle? So how old was Margaret when James IV died in battle?

Morvern:

She was only 23 at this point.

Sarah:

23?

Morvern:

Yes, so she was still very young. And she was pregnant with her last child by James, who was called Alexander.

And what happened in the aftermath is that Margaret was to be the regent for the young James V, only if she stayed unmarried in her widowhood.

Sarah:

So that was the rules around it?

Morvern:

Yeah. And no one truly knows why, but she got married again.

Sarah:

Did she?

Morvern:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Just a year later as well.

Sarah:

A year later, that's great.

Morvern:

Yeah, so she had Alexander and then she married the Earl of Angus, Archibald Douglas, who

seems not very nice.

Sarah:

Oh, no.

Morvern:

So he was very prominent in politics at this time, so maybe she thought that it would strengthen her position to be connected to him. It's not clear. So she married Angus and then so she lost the regency and she also lost custody of her children, James and Alexander.

Sarah:

Really? She wasn't allowed custody of them because she'd remarried?

Morvern:

Yeah, they were forcibly removed from her at Stirling Castle.

Sarah:

Really?

Morvern:

So the new regent, the Duke of Albany, he came and forcibly took them from her. And so at that

point, Margaret looked to her homeland, to England, for support. And she went down to England for a couple of years, 1515 to 17.

And it was while she was in England that she gave birth to her daughter by Angus, Margaret Douglas. Because everyone was called Margaret. So she gave birth to Margaret Douglas there.

She actually appears in the new series of *Wolf Hall*.

Margaret Douglas grew up at the English court as Henry VIII's niece and so Margaret spent some time there.

She said, look Angus is controlling all my lands and my revenues and he's got a mistress, and she didn't have control over her own dower properties and income, and Henry was only willing to help so much financially.

He kind of seems to have seen Margaret as a bit of a nuisance and always asking for money, but she wasn't getting her due in Scotland, so she looked to him for help there.

Sarah:

Right, and this is all because of when she got married, her husband then was sort of taking control of all her monies and her properties.

Morvern:

Yeah, exactly. So she came back, she was trying to get a formal separation from Angus. And Albany was the regent for periods in the sort of 15-teens and 1520s.

And then Albany, he was a Franco-Scottish nobleman. So he was French, really, but he had Scottish heritage. He went to France again and Margaret orchestrated a coup. So in 1524 she said James V is now of age, even though he wasn't, he was only 12. She said he's now in his majority rule, the regency is finished, but in reality she was the regent.

And so this is one of those times when... in the past historians have often thought of her as politically inept but actually she was pretty savvy and, you know, she wasn't always successful, but who is? So in this case it was quite a wise move.

Sarah:

Compared to how I understand her being portrayed in the past, actually like you're saying she's very astute and politically aware and a smart woman really.

Morvern:

Yeah, so she splits from Angus and then the next year she gets married again.

Sarah:

She gets married again? Do you think this was more romantically motivated than maybe like previously or like what would be her thinking behind getting married again?

Morvern:

Well, it's unclear because her third husband was Henry Stewart. He wasn't high status particularly; he was like a step down yet again from her first and second husbands, so it's unclear what she was hoping to achieve. Maybe they did have a relationship and possibly it overlapped with her second marriage.

Sarah:

Okay, oh really?

Morvern:

Yeah, maybe. So she married him, but he turned out to be kind of similar to Angus in that he was also having affairs and spending all her money and she still couldn't access all of her property because he was yet another blockage. So she didn't really know how to pick men.

Sarah:

I suppose it must have been such a precarious time. It'd be difficult to be looking for someone to trust and for someone to create a partnership with to help you regain sort of strength.

Morvern:

Yes, and they did get... so when they got married, James V granted them lordship of Methven in Perthshire. But it's still, in terms of prestige, it was still a step down for Margaret.

When James did reach his actual adulthood, and he was starting to think about getting married himself, she was trying to influence this and she said, you know, why don't you marry an English woman, strengthen the alliance?

So continuing her role from the treaty of 1502 to strengthen the bond between the two countries. Although she wasn't successful, of course. He married two French women in succession. But she also did try and arrange a meeting, a diplomatic meeting between James V and Henry VIII. That never came to pass either. But into the 1530s, she was still working on these diplomatic missions and, you know, a bit of underhand play as well.

But probably that was going on quite a lot. It wasn't only her.

Sarah:

So she was almost committed to that Perpetual Peace Treaty then. She was trying to be a diplomat.

Morvern:

Yeah, and she did say when she was writing to the Earl of Surrey as a spy, she did acknowledge this sort of tension between these two loyalties.

She said, "It's a right sore matter to me that is mother to the one and sister to the other."

So, you know, it's not easy for her to navigate these different relationships that she's got.

Sarah:

She really is stuck in the middle there. Yeah.

Chapter 9

36:36

Sarah's intro:

Margaret was nothing if not resilient. She fought to reclaim her influence, navigating the treacherous politics of Scotland and England. She even attempted to broker peace between the two nations but ultimately found herself caught between them.

Margaret was known to have sent detailed military information, including troop numbers, to England. Corresponding with the Earl of Surrey, she walked a fine line between her loyalties as sister to the English king and mother to the Scottish one.

Her letters reveal her as a politically astute player, far from the passive romantic figure some later imagined her to be, a story that, as we know, is well tied to this palace.

Sarah:

Yes, so there's often this image of Queen Margaret portrayed as sort of quite a romantic, sort of passive figure in history, you know, up at the bower, sort of looking out, waiting for her husband to return. Would you say that's an accurate portrayal?

Rachel:

So I think for a long time, historians have seen her as inept, but now they're starting to re-evaluate that view and see her as a politically savvy queen. And that's encapsulated by the bower. So we have this sort of romantic Victorian image, as you say, of her sitting in the bower, wistfully awaiting her husband's return from Flodden.

But actually, you know, it was a much more dynamic space, very likely used by her in different ways rather than her just sort of sitting idly and waiting.

And yeah, I think that really kind of sums up her queenship as well in terms of she was very politically astute. And we know this largely because of her letters, don't we? So many of her letters survive.

Morvern:

I think as well, when we think about her time as Queen Consort, which is only 10 years, she did produce six children there. And that is a success by the standards of what they were trying to achieve with this alliance. Unfortunately, most of them didn't survive very long, but it's not easy to do that.

Rachel:

No.

Morvern:

And that is her being an active agent in the alliance making. So I think we need to give credit to her as a mother and to acknowledge that at the time of James IV's death, she was still only 23.

So she sort of came into her own as a political player after his death, actively involved in the regency, which, of course, when James was still alive, there was no need for her to be the regent. So I suppose that opened up a way for her to be a more active participant.

Rachel:

Yeah, absolutely.

Sarah:

And I suppose she'd be so driven by making sure that her son became King of Scots.

Morvern:

Yeah, actually, immediately after Flodden, the whole court transported itself to Stirling, because this was seen as a more secure location than Edinburgh. And they had the coronation there at Stirling and she made sure this happened soon after, to sort of secure the succession.

Chapter 10

40:09

Sarah's intro:

Margaret's later years were no less complex. Despite her political savvy, her final years were incredibly significant.

She died in 1541 at Methven Castle, aged just 51, estranged from her third husband and still battling for control over her own income and influence. It's a poignant end to a life spent navigating some of the most volatile decades in British history.

But Margaret Tudor's story is one of resilience, diplomacy and determination.

Far from the passive figure of legend, she was a key player in shaping the future of Scotland and England. Her influence is still felt even today.

Her marriage to James IV was meant to bring peace between two warring nations, but within a decade she found herself widowed, her husband lost at Flodden, and her position more precarious than ever.

Despite the immense pressures placed upon her as both queen and mother, Margaret refused to be sidelined. She navigated the turbulent politics of Scotland, fought to secure her son's throne and played a crucial role in the unfolding story of Britain.

Her letters, her actions and her political manoeuvres paint a picture not of a queen waiting idly in a tower, but of a woman who understood the power she held and how to wield it.

The Treaty of Perpetual Peace may not have lasted, but the dynastic union she helped forge through her descendants would change the course of history forever.

Today, Linlithgow Palace stands as a powerful reminder of Scotland's royal past, its walls whispering stories of power, ambition and legacy. And among those stories, Margaret Tudor's remains one of the most fascinating.

This has been the Historic Scotland podcast.

It was produced and edited by Adam Stoner. I'm Sarah MacGillivray.

Next time, we're off to Melrose Abbey on the quest to find the heart of one of Scotland's most infamous kings.

See you then.