

= James I of Scotland =

James I ( late July 1394 ? 21 February 1437 ) , King of Scotland from 1406 , was the son of King Robert III and Annabella Drummond . He was the last of three sons . By the time he was eight , both of his elder brothers were dead ? Robert had died in infancy but David , Duke of Rothesay died suspiciously in Falkland Castle while being detained by his uncle , Robert , Duke of Albany . Although parliament exonerated Albany , fears for James 's safety grew during the winter of 1405 ? 1406 and plans were made to send him to France . In February 1406 , James was accompanying nobles close to his father when they clashed with supporters of Archibald , 4th Earl of Douglas , forcing the prince to take refuge in the castle of the Bass Rock , a small islet in the Firth of Forth . He remained there until mid @-@ March , when he boarded a vessel bound for France , but on 22 March while off the English coast , pirates captured the ship and delivered James to Henry IV of England . Two weeks later , on 4 April the ailing Robert III died , and the 12 @-@ year @-@ old uncrowned King of Scots began his 18 @-@ year detention .

James was given a good education at the English Court , where he developed respect for English methods of governance and for Henry V to the extent that he served in the English army against the French during 1420 ? 1421 . The Scottish King 's cousin , Murdoch Stewart , Albany 's son , a captive in England since 1402 , was traded for Henry Percy , Earl of Northumberland in 1416 . Eight more years passed before James was ransomed , by which time Murdoch had succeeded his father to the dukedom and the governorship of Scotland . James married Joan Beaufort , daughter of the Earl of Somerset in February 1424 shortly before his release in April when they journeyed to Scotland . This was not altogether a popular re @-@ entry to Scottish affairs , since James had fought on behalf of Henry V and at times against Scottish forces in France . Noble families would now not only have to pay increased taxes to cover the £ 40 @,@ 000 ransom repayments but would also have to provide hostages as security . Despite this , James held qualities that were admired . The contemporary Scotichronicon by Walter Bower described James as excelling at sport and appreciative of literature and music . Unlike his father and grandfather he did not take mistresses , but had many children by his consort , Queen Joan . The King had a strong desire to impose law and order on his subjects , but applied it selectively at times .

To bolster his authority and secure the position of the crown , James launched pre @-@ emptive attacks on some of his nobles beginning in 1425 with his close kinsmen the Albany Stewarts resulting in the execution of Duke Murdoch and his sons . In 1428 James detained Alexander , Lord of the Isles , while attending a parliament in Inverness . Archibald , 5th Earl of Douglas , was arrested in 1431 , followed by George , Earl of March , in 1434 . The plight of the ransom hostages held in England was ignored and the repayment money was diverted into the construction of Linlithgow Palace and other grandiose schemes .

In August 1436 , James failed humiliatingly in his siege of the English @-@ held Roxburgh Castle and then faced an ineffective attempt by Sir Robert Graham to arrest him at a general council . James was murdered at Perth on the night of 20 / 21 February 1437 in a failed coup by his uncle and former ally Walter Stewart , Earl of Atholl . Queen Joan , although wounded , managed to evade the attackers and was eventually reunited with her son James II in Edinburgh Castle .

= = Prince and Steward of Scotland = =

James was probably born in late July 1394 at Dunfermline Abbey , 27 years after the marriage of his parents Robert III and Annabella Drummond . It was also at Dunfermline under his mother 's care that James would have spent most of his early childhood . The prince was seven years old when his mother died in 1401 and a year later his elder brother David , Duke of Rothesay was probably murdered by their uncle Robert Stewart , Duke of Albany after being held at Albany 's Falkland Castle . Prince James , now heir to the throne , was the only impediment to the transfer of the royal line to the Albany Stewarts . In 1402 Albany and his close Black Douglas ally Archibald , 4th Earl of Douglas were absolved of any involvement in Rothesay 's death clearing the way for Albany 's re @-@ appointed as the king 's lieutenant . Albany rewarded Douglas for his support by

allowing him to resume hostilities in England . The Albany and Douglas affinity received a serious reversal in September 1402 when their large army was defeated by the English at Homildon and numerous prominent nobles and their followers were captured . These included Douglas himself , Albany 's son Murdoch , and the earls of Moray , Angus and Orkney . That same year , as well as the death of Rothesay , Alexander Leslie , Earl of Ross and Malcolm Drummond , lord of Mar had also died . The void created by these events was inevitably filled by lesser men who had not previously been conspicuously politically active . In the years between 1402 and 1406 , the northern earldoms of Ross , Moray and Mar were without adult leadership and with Murdoch Stewart , the Justiciar for the territory north of the Forth , a prisoner in England , Albany found himself reluctantly having to form an alliance with his brother Alexander Stewart , Earl of Buchan and Buchan 's son , also called Alexander to hold back the ambitions of the Lord of the Isles . Douglas 's absence from his power base in the Lothians and the Scottish Marches encouraged King Robert 's close allies Henry Sinclair , Earl of Orkney and Sir David Fleming of Biggar to take full advantage to become the principal political force in that region .

In December 1404 the king granted the royal Stewart lands in the west , in Ayrshire and around the Firth of Clyde , to James in regality protecting them from outside interference and providing the prince with a territorial centre should the need arise . Yet , in 1405 James was under the protection and tutelage of Bishop Henry Wardlaw of St Andrews on the country 's east coast . Douglas animosity was intensifying because of the activities of Orkney and Fleming who continued to expand their involvement in border politics and foreign relations with England . Although a decision to send the young prince to France and out of Albany 's reach was taken in the winter of 1405 ? 06 , James 's departure from Scotland was unplanned . In February 1406 Bishop Wardlaw released James to Orkney and Fleming who , with their large force of Lothian adherents , proceeded into hostile Douglas east Lothian . James 's custodians may have been giving a demonstration of royal approval to further their interests in Douglas country . This provoked a fierce response from James Douglas of Balvenie and his supporters who , at a place called Long Hermiston Muir , engaged with and killed Fleming while Orkney and James escaped to the comparative safety of the Bass Rock islet in the Firth of Forth . They endured more than a month there before boarding the France @-@ bound Maryenknyght , a ship from Danzig . On 22 March 1406 the ship was taken by English pirates and James became the hostage of King Henry IV of England . Robert III was at Rothesay Castle when he learned of his son 's capture , and he died soon after on 4 April 1406 and was buried in the Stewart foundation abbey of Paisley .

= = King in captivity = =

James , now the uncrowned King of Scots , began what proved to be his 18 @-@ year period as a hostage while at the same time Albany transitioned from his position of lieutenant to that of governor . Albany took James 's lands under his own control depriving the king of income and any of the regalia of his position and was referred to in records as ' the son of the late king ' . The king had a small household of Scots that included Henry Sinclair , Earl of Orkney , Alexander Seaton , the nephew of Sir David Fleming , and Orkney 's brother John Sinclair following the earl 's return to Scotland . In time , James 's household ? now paid for by the English ? changed from high ranking individuals to less notable men . Henry IV treated the young James well , providing him with a good education . James was ideally placed to observe Henry 's methods of kingship and political control having probably been admitted into the royal household on reaching adulthood . James used personal visits from his nobles coupled with letters to individuals to maintain his visibility in his kingdom . Henry died in 1413 and his son , Henry V , immediately ended James 's comparative freedom initially holding him in the Tower of London along with the other Scottish prisoners . One of these prisoners was James 's cousin , Murdoch Stewart , Albany 's son , who had been captured in 1402 at the Battle of Homildon Hill . Initially held apart but from 1413 until Murdoch 's release in 1415 they were together in the Tower and at Windsor Castle .

By 1420 , James 's standing at Henry V 's court improved greatly ; he ceased to be regarded as a hostage and more of a guest . James 's value to Henry became apparent in 1420 when he

accompanied the English king to France where his presence was used against the Scots fighting on the Dauphinist side . Following the English success at the siege of Melun , a town southeast of Paris , the contingent of Scots were hanged for treason against their king . After his return to England , James attended Queen Catherine 's coronation on 23 February 1421 receiving an honoured position of sitting immediately on the queen 's left at the coronation banquet . In March , Henry began a circuit of the important towns in England as a show of strength and it was during this tour that James was knighted on Saint George 's day . By July , the two kings were back campaigning in France where James , evidently approving of Henry 's methods of kingship , seemed content to endorse the English king 's desire for the French crown . Henry appointed the Duke of Bedford and James as the joint commanders of the siege of Dreux on 18 July 1421 and on 20 August they received the surrender of the garrison . Henry died of dysentery on 31 August 1422 and in September James was part of the escort taking the English king 's body back to London .

The regency council of the infant King Henry VI was inclined to have James released as soon as possible . In the early months of 1423 their attempts to resolve the issue met with little response from the Scots , clearly influenced by the Albany Stewarts and adherents . Archibald , Earl of Douglas was an astute and adaptable power in Southern Scotland whose influence even eclipsed that of the Albany Stewarts . Despite his complicity in James 's brother 's death in Albany 's castle in 1402 Douglas was still able to engage with the king . From 1421 , Douglas had been in regular contact with James and they formed an alliance that was to prove pivotal in 1423 . Although Douglas was the pre @-@ eminent Scottish magnate his position in the borders and Lothians was jeopardized ? not only did he have to forcibly retake Edinburgh Castle from his own designated warden but was very likely under threat from the earls of Angus and March . In return for James 's endorsement of Douglas 's position in the kingdom , the earl was able to deliver his affinity in the cause of the king 's home @-@ coming . Also , the relationship between Murdoch ? now Duke of Albany following his father 's death in 1420 ? and his own appointee Bishop William Lauder seemed to be under strain perhaps evidence of an influential grouping at odds with Murdoch 's stance . Pressure from these advocates for the king almost certainly compelled Murdoch to agree to a general council in August 1423 when it was agreed that a mission should be sent to England to negotiate James 's release . James 's relationship with the House of Lancaster changed in February 1423 when he married Joan Beaufort , a cousin of Henry VI and the niece of Thomas , Duke of Exeter and Henry , Bishop of Winchester . A ransom treaty of £ 40 @,@ 000 sterling ( less a dowry remittance of 10 @,@ 000 marks ) was agreed at Durham on 28 March 1424 to which James attached his own seal . The king and queen escorted by English and Scottish nobles reached Melrose Abbey on 5 April and were met by Albany who relinquished his governor 's seal of office .

= = Personal rule = =

= = = First acts = = =

Throughout the 15th century , Scottish kings suffered from a lack of crown revenue and James 's reign was no exception . The Albany regency had also been constrained with Duke Robert owed his fees of governorship . For the nobility , royal patronage ceased entirely following James 's capture ; irregular forms of political favours emerged with Albany allowing nobles such as the earl of Douglas and his brother James to remove funds from the customs . It was against this backdrop that James 's coronation took place at Scone on 21 May 1424 . The coronation parliament of the Three Estates witnessed the king perform a knighthood ceremony for eighteen prominent nobles including Alexander Stewart , Murdoch 's son ; an event probably intended to foster loyalty to the crown within the political community . Called primarily to discuss issues surrounding the finance of the ransom payments , the parliament heard James underline his position and authority as monarch . He ensured the passing of legislation designed to substantially improve crown income by revoking the patronage of royal predecessors and guardians . The earls of Douglas and Mar were immediately affected by this when their ability to remove large sums from the customs was blocked . Despite this

, James was still dependent on the nobility ? especially Douglas ? for its support and initially adopted a less confrontational stance . The early exception to this was Walter Stewart , Albany 's son . Walter was the heir to the earldom of Lennox and had been in open revolt against his father during 1423 for not giving way to his younger brother Alexander for this title . He also disagreed with his father 's acquiescence to the return of James to Scotland . James had Walter arrested on 13 May 1424 and imprisoned on the Bass Rock ? at this time , this was probably in Murdoch 's interests as well as James 's . It is probable that the king felt unable to move against the rest of the Albany Stewarts while Murdoch 's brother , John Stewart , Earl of Buchan and Archibald , Earl of Douglas were fighting the English on the Dauphinist cause in France . Buchan , a leader with an international reputation , commanded the large Scottish army but both he and Douglas fell at the Battle of Verneuil in August 1424 and the Scottish army routed . The loss of his brother and the large fighting force left Murdoch politically exposed .

= = = A ruthless and acquisitive king = = =

Douglas 's death at Verneuill was to weaken the position of his son Archibald , the 5th earl . On 12 October 1424 , the king and Archibald met at Melrose Abbey ostensibly to agree the appointment of John Fogo , a monk of Melrose , to the abbacy . The meeting may also have been intended as an official acceptance of Douglas but it signalled a change in the Black Douglas predominance vis @-@ a @-@ vis the crown and other nobles . Important Douglas allies died in France and some of their heirs realigned with rival nobles through blood ties while at the same time Douglas experienced a loosening of allegiances in the Lothians and , with the loss of his command over Edinburgh Castle , this all served to improve James 's position . Even though , James continued to retain Black Douglas support allowing him to begin a campaign of political alienation of Albany and his family . The king 's rancor directed at Duke Murdoch had its roots in the past ? Duke Robert was responsible for his brother David 's death and neither Robert nor Murdoch exerted themselves in negotiating James 's release and must have left the king with the suspicion that they held aspirations for the throne itself . Buchan 's lands did not fall to the Albany Stewarts but were forfeited by the crown , Albany 's father @-@ in @-@ law , Duncan , Earl of Lennox was imprisoned and in December the duke 's main ally Alexander Stewart , Earl of Mar settled his differences with the king . An acrimonious sitting of parliament in March 1425 precipitated the arrest of Murdoch , Isabella , his wife , and his son Alexander ? of Albany 's other sons Walter was already in prison and James , his youngest , also known as James the Fat , escaped into the Lennox .

James the Fat led the men of Lennox and Argyll in open rebellion against the crown and this may have been what the king needed to bring a charge of treason against the Albany Stewarts . Murdoch , his sons Walter and Alexander and Duncan , Earl of Lennox were in Stirling Castle for their trial on 18 May at a specially convened parliament . An assize of seven earls and fourteen lesser nobles were appointed to hear the evidence that linked the prisoners to the rebellion in the Lennox . The four men were condemned , Walter on 24 May and the others on 25 May and immediately beheaded in ' front of the castle ' . James demonstrated a ruthless and avaricious side to his nature in the destruction of his close family , the Albany Stewarts , that yielded the three forfeited earldoms of Fife , Menteith and Lennox . An enquiry set up by James in 1424 into the dispersal of crown estates since the reign of Robert I exposed legal defects in a number of transactions where the earldoms of Mar , March and Strathearn together with the Black Douglas lordships of Selkirk and Wigtown were found to be problematic . Strathearn and March were forfeited in 1427 and 1435 respectively . Mar was forfeited in 1435 on the earl 's death without heir which also meant that the lordships of Garioch and Badenoch reverted to the crown . James sought to boost his income further through taxation and succeeded in getting parliament to pass legislation in 1424 for a tax to go towards paying off the ransom ? £ 26 @,@ 000 was raised but James sent only £ 12 @,@ 000 to England . By 1429 , James stopped the ransom payments completely and used the remainder of the taxation on buying cannons and luxury goods from Flanders . Following a fire in the castle of Linlithgow in 1425 , funds were also diverted to the building of Linlithgow Palace which continued until James 's death in 1437 and absorbed an estimated one tenth of royal income .

### == Relations with the church ==

James asserted his authority not only over the nobility but also upon the Church and lamented that King David I's benevolence towards the Church proved costly to his successors and that he was 'a sair sanct to the croun'. James also considered that the monastic institutions in particular needed improvement and that they should return to being strictly ordered communities. Part of James's solution was to create an assembly of overseeing abbots and followed this up by establishing a Carthusian priory at Perth to provide other religious houses with an example of internal conduct. He also sought to influence Church attitudes to his policies by having his own clerics appointed to the bishoprics of Dunblane, Dunkeld, Glasgow and Moray. In March 1425, James's parliament directed that all bishops must instruct their clerics to offer up prayers for the king and his family; a year later, parliament toughened up this edict insisting that the prayers be given at every mass under sanction of a fine and severe rebuke. This same parliament legislated that every person in Scotland should 'be governed under the king's laws and statutes of this realm only'. From this, laws were enacted in 1426 to restrict the actions of prelates whether it was to regulate their need to travel to the Roman Curia or their ability to purchase additional ecclesiastical positions while there. In James's parliament of July 1427, it is evident that statute being enacted had the purpose of reducing the powers of the church jurisdiction.

On 25 July 1431, the general council of the Church convened in Basel but its initial full meeting did not take place until 14 December by which time Pope Eugenius and the council were in complete disagreement. It was the council and not the pope who requested that James send representatives of the Scottish church and it is known that two delegates? Abbot Thomas Livingston of Dundrenan and John de Winchester, canon of Moray and a servant of the king? were in attendance in November and December 1432. In 1433 James, this time in response to a summons by the pope, appointed two bishops, two abbots and four dignatories to attend the council. Twenty? eight Scottish ecclesiasts attended at intervals from 1434 to 1437 but the majority of the higher ranking churchmen sent proxy attendees but Bishops John Cameron of Glasgow and John de Crannach of Brechin attended in person as did Abbot Patrick Wotherspoon of Holyrood. Even in the midst of the Basel general council, Pope Eugenius instructed his legate, Bishop Antonio Altan of Urbino, to meet with James to raise the issue of the king's controversial anti @-@ barratry laws of 1426. The Bishop of Urbino arrived in Scotland in December 1436 and apparently a reconciliation between James and the papal legate had taken place by the middle of February 1437 but the events of 21 February when James was assassinated prevented the legate from completing his commission.

### == The Highland problem ==

In July 1428, the king convened a general council at Perth aimed at obtaining finance for an expedition to the Highlands against the semi @-@ autonomous Lord of the Isles. The council initially resisted granting James the funds? even with royal support from the powerful Earls of Mar and Atholl? it eventually gave in to the king's wishes. Although it seemed that an all @-@ out attack on the Gaels of the north was not the king's intention, James had resolved to use a degree of force to strengthen royal authority. He told the assembly:

The leaders of the Gaelic kindreds in the north and west were summoned by James ostensibly to a sitting of parliament in Inverness. Of those assembled the king arrested around 50 of them including Alexander, the third Lord of the Isles and his mother, Mary, Countess of Ross around 24 August. A few were executed but the remainder, with the exception of Alexander and his mother, quickly released. During Alexander's captivity James attempted to split Clann Dòmhnall? Alexander's uncle John Mór was approached by an agent of the king to take the clan leadership but his refusal to have any dealings with the king while his nephew was held prisoner led to John Mór's attempted arrest and death.

The king's need for allies in the west and north led him to soften his approach towards the Lord of

the Isles and , hoping that Alexander would now become a loyal servant of the crown , he was given his freedom . Alexander , probably under pressure from his close kinsmen Donald Balloch , John Mór 's son , and Alasdair Carrach of Lochaber , led a rebellion attacking the castle and burgh of Inverness in spring 1429 . The crisis deepened when a fleet from the Lordship was dispatched to bring James the Fat back from Ulster ' to convey him home that he might be king ' . With James 's intention to form an alliance with the Ulster O 'Donnells of Tyreconnell against the MacDonalds , the English became distrustful of the Scottish king 's motives and they themselves tried to bring James the Fat to England . Before he could become an active player , James the Fat died suddenly releasing James to prepare for decisive action against the Lordship .

The armies met on 21 June in Lochaber and Alexander , suffering the defection of Clan Chattan ( the MacKintoshes ) and Clan Cameron , was heavily defeated . Alexander escaped probably to Islay but James continued his assault on the Lordship by taking the strongholds of Dingwall and Urquhart castles in July . The king pushed home his advantage when an army reinforced with artillery was dispatched to the isles . Alexander probably realised that his position was hopeless and tried to negotiate terms of surrender but James demanded and received his total submission . From August 1429 the king delegated royal authority to Alexander Stewart , Earl of Mar for the keeping of the peace in the north and west . The Islesmen rose again in September 1431 and inflicted two important defeats on the king 's men ? Mar 's army was beaten at Inverlochy and Angus Moray 's in a fierce battle near Tongue in Caithness . This was a serious setback for James and his credibility was adversely affected . In 1431 , before the September uprising , the king had arrested two of his nephews , John Kennedy of Carrick and Archibald , Earl of Douglas possibly as a result of a conflict between John and his uncle , Thomas Kennedy in which Douglas may have become involved . Douglas 's arrest had raised tensions in the country and James acted to reduce the unrest by freeing the earl on 29 September ? it was quite likely that the king made the earl 's release conditional on support at the forthcoming parliament at Perth at which James intended to push for further funding for the campaign against the Lordship . Parliament was in no mood to allow James unconditional backing ? he was allowed a tax to fund his Highland campaign but parliament retained full control over the levy . The rules parliament attached to the taxation indicated a robust stand against further conflict in the north and probably led to the turnaround that took place on 22 October when the king ' forgave the offence of each earl , namely Douglas and Ross [ i.e. Alexander ] ' . For Douglas this was a formal acknowledgement of his having already been freed three weeks earlier but for Alexander this was a total reversal of crown policy towards the Lordship . Four summer campaigns against the Lordship were now officially at an end with James 's wishes having effectively been blocked by parliament .

= = = Foreign policy = = =

James 's release in 1424 did not herald a new Scottish relationship with its southern neighbour . He didn 't become the submissive king that the English council had hoped for but instead emerged as a confident and independently @-@ minded European monarch . The only substantive matters of contention between the two kingdoms were the payments due under the terms of James 's release and the renewal of the truce that would expire in 1430 . In 1428 after setbacks on the battlefield Charles VII of France sent his ambassador Regnault of Chartres , Archbishop of Rheims to Scotland to persuade James to renew the Auld Alliance ? the terms were to include the marriage of the princess Margaret to Louis , the dauphin of France , and a gift of the province of Saintonge to James . The ratification of the treaty by Charles took place in October 1428 and James , now with the intended marriage of his daughter into the French royal family and the possession of French lands , had his political importance in Europe boosted .

The effectiveness of the alliance with France had virtually ceased after Verneuil and its renewal in 1428 did not alter that ? James adopted a much more non @-@ aligned position with England , France and Burgandy while at the same time opening up diplomatic contacts with Aragon , Austria , Castile , Denmark , Milan , Naples and the Vatican . Generally , Scotto ? English relations were relatively amiable and an extension of the truce until 1436 helped the English cause in France and

the promises made in 1428 of a Scottish army to help Charles VII and the marriage of James 's eldest daughter to the French king 's son Louis were unrealised . James had to balance his European responses carefully ? England 's ally , the Duke of Burgundy whose possessions included Scotland 's major trading partners , the Low Countries , ensured support for France would be muted . The truce with England expired in May 1436 but James 's perception of the Anglo @-@ French conflict changed following a realignment of the combatants . The breakdown of the talks between England and France in 1435 precipitated an alliance between Burgundy and France and a request from France for Scottish involvement in the war and for the fulfilment of the promised marriage of Princess Margaret to the Dauphin . In the spring of 1436 Princess Margaret sailed to France and in August Scotland entered the war with James leading a large army to lay siege to the English enclave of Roxburgh Castle . The campaign was to prove pivotal , the Book of Pluscarden describes ' a detestable split and most unworthy difference arising from jealousy ' within the Scottish camp and the historian Michael Brown explains that a contemporary source has James appointing his young and inexperienced cousin Robert Stewart of Atholl as the constable of the host ahead of the experienced march wardens , the earls of Douglas and Angus . Brown explains that both earls possessed considerable local interests and that the effects of such a large army living off the land may have created considerable resentment and hostility in the area . When the militant prelates of York and Durham together with the Earl of Northumberland took their forces into the marches to relieve the fortress , the Scots swiftly retreated ? a chronicle written a year later said that the Scots ' had fled wretchedly and ignominiously ' ? but the effects and the manner of the defeat and the loss of their expensive artillery was a major reversal for James both in terms of foreign policy and internal authority .

= = Assassination = =

= = = Background = = =

Walter Stewart was the youngest of Robert II 's sons and the only one not to have been provided with an earldom during his father 's lifetime . Walter 's brother , David , earl of Strathearn and Caithness had died before 5 March 1389 when his daughter Euphemia was first recorded as countess of Strathearn . Walter , now ward to his niece , administered Strathearn for the next decade and a half during which time he aided his brother Robert , Earl of Fife and Guardian of Scotland by enforcing law and order upon another brother Alexander , lord of Badenoch ? he again supported Robert ( now Duke of Albany ) against their nephew , David , Duke of Rothesay in 1402 . Albany most likely engineered the marriage of Euphemia to one of his affinity , Patrick Graham and by doing so ended Walter 's involvement in Strathearn . Duke Robert , possibly to make up for the loss of the fruits of Strathearn , made Walter earl of Atholl and Lord of Methven . In 1413 , Graham was killed in a quarrel with his own principal servant in the earldom , John Drummond .

The Drummond kindred were close to Atholl and the earl 's renewed involvement in Strathearn as ward to Graham 's son despite strong opposition from Albany hint at Atholl 's possible party to the murder . The bad blood now existing between Albany and Atholl led James on his return to Scotland in 1424 to ally himself with Earl Walter , his uncle . Atholl participated at the assize that sat over the 24 / 25 May 1425 that tried and found the prominent members of the Albany Stewarts guilty of rebellion ? their executions followed swiftly .

James granted Atholl the positions of Sheriff of Perth and Justicier and also the earldom of Strathearn but this , significantly , in life @-@ rent only ? acts that confirmed Earl Walter 's policing remit given by Albany and his already effective grip on Strathearn . Atholl 's elder son , David had been one of the hostages sent to England as a condition of James 's release and had died there in 1434 ? his younger son , Alan died in the king 's service at the Battle of Inverlochy in 1431 . David 's son Robert was now Atholl 's heir and both were now in line to the throne after the young Prince James . James continued to show favour to Atholl and appointed his grandson Robert as his personal chamberlain but by 1437 , after a series of setbacks at the hands of James , the earl and

Robert probably viewed the king 's actions as a prelude to further acquisitions at Atholl 's expense . Atholl 's hold on the rich earldom of Strathearn was weak and both he and Robert would have realised that after the earl 's death Strathearn would have reverted to the crown . This meant that Robert 's holdings would have been the relatively impoverished earldoms of Caithness and Atholl and amounted to no more than what was in the Earl Walter 's possession in the years between 1406 and 1416 .

The retreat from Roxburgh exposed the king to questions regarding his control over his subjects , his military competence and his diplomatic abilities yet he remained determined to continue with the war against England . Just two months after the Roxburgh fiasco , James called a general council in October 1436 to finance further hostilities through more taxation . The estates firmly resisted this and their opposition was articulated by their speaker Sir Robert Graham , a former Albany attendant but now a servant of Atholl . The council then witnessed an unsuccessful attempt by Graham to arrest the king resulting in the knight 's imprisonment followed by banishment but James did not see Graham 's actions as part of any extended threat . In January 1437 , Atholl received yet another rebuff in his own heartlands when James overturned the chapter of Dunkeld Cathedral whose nominee was replaced by the king 's nephew and firm supporter , James Kennedy .

= = = Conspiracy and regicide = = =

The reaction against the king at the general council had shown Atholl that James was not only on the back @-@ foot but his political standing had received a huge set @-@ back and may have convinced the earl that James 's death was now a viable course of action . Atholl had seen how assertive action by two of his brothers at different times had allowed them to take control of the kingdom and that as James 's nearest adult relative , the earl must have considered that decisive intervention on his part at this time could prove to be equally successful .

The destruction of the Albany Stewarts in 1425 appears to have played a significant part in the conspiracy against the king . Their judicial killing and forfeiture of their lands impacted on the servants who administered and depended on these estates for their living . The vacuum left by this was filled by Atholl in whose employment many of these disaffected Albany men appear . These included Sir Robert Graham who only three months earlier had attempted to arrest the king at the Perth council , and the brothers Christopher and Robert Chambers . Even although Robert Chambers was a member of the Royal household , the old Albany ties were stronger .

A general council was held in Atholl 's heartland in Perth on 4 February 1437 and crucially for the conspirators , the king and queen had remained in the town at their lodgings in the Blackfriars monastery . In the evening of 20 February 1437 the king and queen were in their rooms and separated from most of their servants . Atholl 's grandson and heir Robert Stewart , the king 's chamberlain , allowed his co @-@ conspirators ? thought to number about thirty ? led by Robert Graham and the Chambers brothers access to the building . James was alerted to the men 's presence giving the king time to hide in a sewer tunnel but with its exit recently blocked off to prevent tennis balls getting lost , James was trapped and killed .

= = = Aftermath = = =

The assassins had achieved their priority in killing the king but the queen , although wounded , had escaped . Importantly , the six @-@ year @-@ old king , now James II , had been safeguarded from Atholl 's control by the removal of the earl 's associate , John Spens , from his role as James 's custodian . Spens vanished from the records following the regicide but the re @-@ allocation of his positions and lands immediately following the murder indicate his part in the plot . Yet , in the chaos following the murder , it appeared that the queen 's attempt to position herself as regent was not guaranteed . No surviving documentation exists that suggest that there was any general feeling of horror or condemnation aimed at the murderers . It was possible that had the botched attempt at killing the queen succeeded and had Atholl taken control of the young king then his attempted coup might have succeeded . The queen 's small group of loyal supporters that included the Earl of Angus



and William Crichton ensured her continued hold of James . This in itself greatly reinforced her situation but Atholl still had followers . By the first week of March neither side seemed to have ascendancy and the Bishop of Urbino , the pope 's envoy , called for the council to pursue a peaceful outcome .

Despite this by the middle of March it is probable that both Angus and Crichton had mobilised to move against Atholl . It is equally likely that Atholl had gathered his forces to resist encursions into his heartlands ? on 7 March the queen and the council entreated the burgess ' of Perth to resist the forces of the ' feloune traitors ' .

The position of Atholl and his circle of close supporters only collapsed after Earl Walter 's heir Robert Stewart had been captured and who , in Shirley 's account , confessed to his part in the crime . Walter was taken prisoner by Angus and held at the Edinburgh Tolbooth where he was tried and beheaded on 26 March 1437 , the day after the coronation of the young James II . Sir Robert Graham , the leader of the band of assassins was captured by former Atholl allies and was tried at a session of the council sitting at Stirling castle and subsequently executed sometime shortly after 9 April .

Queen Joan 's pursuit of the regency ended probably at the council of June 1437 when Archibald , 5th Earl of Douglas was appointed to act as lieutenant @-@ general of the kingdom .

King James ' embalmed heart may have been taken on pilgrimage to the Holy Land following his interment at Perth Charterhouse , as the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland for 1443 note the payment of £ 90 to cover the costs of a knight of the Order of St John who had returned it to the Charterhouse from the Island of Rhodes .

= = Historiography = =

James was a paradoxical figure . Although a prisoner of England he still received a good education and developed into a cultured individual becoming a poet , an accomplished musician and skilled in sports . Walter Bower , abbot of Inchcolm , lists James 's qualities as a musician ? ' not just as an enthusiastic amateur ' but a master , ' another Orpheus . ' His mastery included the organ , drum , flute and lyre . James 's sporting abilities such as wrestling , hammer throwing , archery and jousting are also listed by Bower . He described James as possessing an ' eagerness ' in ' literary composition and writing ' , the best known of which is his love poem , The Kingis Quair . Bower characterised the king as ' a tower , a lion , a light , a jewel , a pillar and a leader ' and was ' our law giver king ' who ended the ' thieving , dishonest conduct and plundering ' .

Abbot Bower also described the king as capable of stabbing a near relative through the hand for creating a disturbance at court . The abbot was generally supportive of James but that he and others ' regretted the demise of the Albany Stewarts and that he was confounded by James 's greed for territory and wealth . Although Bower didn 't dwell at length on the negative aspects of James 's character he alluded to the dismay of even those close to the king at his harsh regime . John Shirley 's account of the events leading up to James 's murder in the work The Dethe of the Kynge of Scotis provided an accurate narrative of politics in Scotland and which must have depended upon knowledgeable witnesses . The Dethe describes James as ' tyrannous ' and whose actions were motivated by revenge and ' covetise . . . than for anny laweful cawse ' . Shirley agrees with Bower as far as the Albany Stewarts were concerned when he wrote that the Albanys ' whos dethe the people of the land sore grutched and mowrned ' . Writing nearly a century later both the chroniclers John Mair and Hector Boece relied extensively on Bower for their own narratives . They described James as the embodiment of good monarchy with Mair 's eulogy that James ' ... indeed excelled by far in virtue his father , grandfather and his great @-@ grandfather nor will I give precedence over the first James to any of the Stewarts ' while Boece in similar vein calls James the ' maist vertuous Prince that evir was afoir his days ' . Late in the 16th century the early historians George Buchanan and Bishop John Lesley from opposite ends of the religious spectrum both looked favourably on James 's reign but were uneasily mindful of an enduring aggressive history regarding the king .

The first 20th century history of James I was written by E.W.M. Balfour @-@ Melville in 1936 and continued the theme of James as the strong upholder of law and order and when describing Albany

's trial and execution he writes ' the King had proved that high rank was no defence for lawlessness ; the crown was enriched by the revenues of Fife , Menteith and Lennox ' . Balfour @-@ Melville views James as a lawmaker and a ' reformer ' whose legislation was aimed at not only increasing the position of the king but of parliament . Michael Lynch describes how James 's positive reputation began immediately after his death when the Bishop of Urbino kissed James 's wounds and declared him to be a martyr . He suggests that the praise of the pro @-@ James Scottish chroniclers and also of some modern historians to ' find strong king 's to applaud ' should not diminish the extent of parliament 's ability to restrain the king nor minimise the confrontation that took place between James and a more self @-@ assured parliament . Stephen Boardman takes the view that by the time of his death James had succeeded in breaking down the constraints on the exercise of royal authority which were rooted in the ' settlement of the kingdom ' by Robert II . Christine McGladdery describes how opposing views were the result of ' competing propaganda after the murder ' . To those who were glad to see the king dead , James was a tyrant who without reason aggressively assailed the nobility imposing forfeiture on their estates and who ' failed to deliver justice to his people ' . She also provides the opposite viewpoint that the king was seen as giving ' strong leadership against magnate excesses ' and that the murder ' was a disaster for the Scottish people , leaving them to endure the instability of years of consequent faction fighting ' . McGladdery continues that James was the example for the Stewart kings to follow by putting ' Scotland firmly within a European context ' . Michael Brown describes James as an ' able , aggressive and opportunistic politician ' whose chief aim was to establish a monarchy that had stature and was free from the confrontations that had beset his father 's reign . He characterises James as ' capable of highly effective short @-@ term interventions ' yet had failed to achieve a position of unqualified authority . Brown writes that James had come to power after ' fifty years when kings looked like magnates and magnates acted like kings ' and succeeded in completely changing the outlook and objectives of the monarchy . His policy of reducing the power and influence of the magnates , continued by his son James II , led to a more subordinate nobility . Alexander Grant repudiates James 's reputation as the ' law giver ' and explains that nearly all of the king 's legislation were reconstructions of laws laid down by previous monarchs and concludes that ' the idea of James 's return in 1424 marks a turning @-@ point in the development of Scots law is an exaggeration ' . At James 's death only the Douglasses of the predominant magnatial houses was left and , according to Grant , this reduction was the most far @-@ reaching change to the nobility and was ' by far the most important consequence of James I 's reign ' .

= = Marriage and issue = =

On February 2 , 1424 , he married , in London , Joan Beaufort , daughter of John Beaufort , 1st Earl of Somerset and Margaret Holland . Together they had eight children :

Margaret Stewart ( 1424 - 16 August 1445 ) , married the Dauphin Louis , future Louis XI of France , at Tours , 24 June 1436 .

Isabella Stewart ( 1426 - 13 October 1494 / 5 March 1499 ) , married Francis I , Duke of Brittany , at Auray , 30 October 1442 .

Joan Stewart ( 1428 - aft . 16 October 1486 ) ; she was deaf and dumb , known as " the dumb lady of Dalkeith " . Married on 1459 to James Douglas , 1st Earl of Morton ( + 1493 ) .

Alexander Stewart , Duke of Rothesay ( born and died 16 October 1430 ) , elder twin of James II .

James II of Scotland ( 16 October 1430 - 3 August 1460 ) .

Eleanor Stewart ( 1433 - 20 November 1480 ) , married Sigismund , Archduke of Austria , at Merano , 12 February 1449 .

Mary Stewart , Countess of Buchan ( 1434 / 35 ? 20 March 1465 ) , married Wolfert VI of Borselen in 1444 .

Annabella Stewart ( 1436 - 1509 ) , married firstly 14 December 1447 Louis of Savoy , Count of Geneva , secondly in 1458 George Gordon , 2nd Earl of Huntly .

= = Ancestry = =

= = Fictional portrayals = =

James I has been depicted in plays , historical novels and short stories . They include :

The Caged Lion ( 1870 ) by Charlotte Mary Yonge . The novel depicts the captivity of James I in the Kingdom of England , with the main events taking place in 1421 @-@ 1422 . A friendly relationship with Henry V of England is prominently featured . Catherine of Valois and Richard Whittington are the most prominent among the secondary characters .

A King 's Tragedy ( 1905 ) by May Wynne . The novel depicts events of the years 1436 @-@ 1437 . The action leads to the assassination of James I. Catherine Douglas is among the characters featured .

Lion Let Loose ( 1967 ) by Nigel Tranter . Covers the life of James I from c . 1405 to his death in 1437 .

A Royal Poet ( 1819 ) by Washington Irving . The author muses over the greatness of James I while on an excursion to Windsor Castle , mentioning two of his poems : " The Kingis Quair " and " Christ ? s Kirk of the Green " .

James I : The Key Will Keep The Lock ( 2014 ) by Rona Munro . A co @-@ production between the National Theatre of Scotland , Edinburgh International Festival and the National Theatre of Great Britain . The James Plays ? James I , James II and James III ? are a trio of history plays by Rona Munro . Each play stands alone as a vision of a country tussling with its past and future . This play focuses on the personal development of James I after his release by Henry V of England , his marriage to Joan and the struggles with the noble families in order to establish his authority in Scotland .

= = Explanatory notes = =