

MARGARET STEWART, COUNTESS OF ANGUS, LADY OF ABERNETHY AND BONKILL

Margaret Stewart lived from c1349-1417. She was the daughter of Thomas Stewart, 2nd Earl of Angus (Stewart line) born c1331 Angus-shire, Scotland and Countess Margaret St Clair (Sinclair) born c1330 of Roslin (Roslyn), Midlothian, Scotland.

It has been said that at the age of 6 or 7 in 1360 she married Thomas of Mar, 2nd Earl of Mar and Garioch, but I think that she has to have been at least 12 which was apparently then the legitimate age for girls to marry in Scotland. Even that age is extremely young to be placed in such a role. Thomas was said to be about 20 years older than Margaret. It is estimated that Thomas of Mar and Garioch was born in c1332 in Mar, Aberdeen-shire. He may have been previously married to Margaret Graham, Countess of Monteith?

Margaret Stewart is said to have had siblings - Thomas, William and Elizabeth. Their father died in c1361 but it was Margaret who at some early stage inherited her father's title of Angus, becoming the Countess of Angus in her own right. Thomas Stewart junior died young and Elizabeth Stewart married Alexander Hamilton of Innerwick. From her father's family Margaret Stewart also inherited the titles of Lady Abernethy and of Bonkill or Bonkyll. Margaret may have shared the latter two titles with her sister Elizabeth Stewart.

Thomas of Mar and Garioch died in about 1374 and as his widow Margaret Stewart inherited the title of Countess of Mar (Widow's Terce) in that if no other provision had been made for her then she was entitled to life-rent one third of her husband's estate, which Margaret Stewart is said to have done. Thomas and Margaret had no offspring.

There is intrigue in that Margaret of Mar (Mormaer) c1332-1393 the sister of Thomas of Mar, had married William Douglas, 1st Earl of

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Douglas. William was born in c1323 at Douglas Castle, Douglas, Lanarkshire. Margaret Mar and William Douglas had James Douglas, 2nd Earl of Douglas c1358 and Isabel/Isabella Douglas c1360 who later became the Countess of Mar and Garioch. Margaret of Mar may have had a marriage after her marriage to William and it was to Sir John Swinton? William Douglas died in 1384 and Margaret of Mar died in 1393.

The intrigue being that Thomas' wife Margaret Stewart, Countess of Angus had two children with William Douglas, 1st Earl of Douglas as his mistress; and they were Margaret Douglas who became 'of Bonjedward' c1376 and George Douglas c1378 who became the 1st Earl of Angus (Douglas line). These two children may have been born at Mar, Aberdeen-shire or at Tantallon Castle, North Berwick where Margaret Douglas may have been living at the time.

Margaret Stewart received a Charter of her estates in 1389 and the Angus title of Earl of Angus was then gifted by King Robert II of Scotland to her son George Douglas who became the 1st Earl of Angus (Douglas line). It is said that Margaret Stewart was a lady of great energy and that she continued to make the utmost efforts to obtain settlements of Douglas lands in favour of her son George.

At some stage William Douglas added Mar to his titles, so was that a claim linked to part of the estate of his wife Margaret of Mar? Or did William just assume that title?

Postscript - Margaret Stewart's ancestry in the Stewart line descends back to the High Stewards of Scotland and then to Stewards and Dapifers of Dol and Combourg in Brittany; to the Kings and Counts of Rennes, Nantes, Poher and to Brittany itself; to many families from Normandy such as Hesdin (connected to "William the Conqueror"),

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Varenne (Warene) (who became Earls of Surrey), and Vermandois (descendants of Charlemagne).

In fact this ancestry incorporates Viking influences such as in the Kings of Isles - Mann, the Hebrides and the islands of the Firth of Clyde including Arran (Norse); the Lords of Lorn, Argyll and Bute (Norse and Gaelic); Princesses of the Orkneys and Caithness (Norse and Pictish); rulers of principalities such as Normandy, Provence, Lens, Boulogne, Blois, Hainaut or Hainault, and France itself; Counts of Flanders (Belgium) ie there was a strong Flemish influence; Dukes and Duchesses of Flanders, Luxembourg, Holland and Bavaria; Kings of the Lombards and Italy (Franks); rulers of Saxony and Lotharingia in Germany; rulers (Jarls) of Denmark; Earls of Norway; Kings of Sweden; Anne of Kiev, Queen of the Ukraine and Yuri Yaroslav, Grand Duke of Veiliky, Novogrod and Kiev (the ancestry here goes back to Vagangians who were Byzantine bodyguards in the 800's); Earls and Princesses of England, Northumbria and Wessex such as Alfred the Great.

In reality Britain and Europe are well represented in Margaret's diverse ancestry and that is just from her father's line. The rulers included women who were Queens and Princesses in the own right, some who ruled with a husband and occasionally a son.

Sally E Douglas

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