



A Queen's Jewel Box: The 1566 Inventory of Mary Queen of Scot's Jewels

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Abstract: In the summer of 1566, before the birth of her son James, later James VI and I, Mary Queen of Scots annotated an inventory of her jewels with bequests to her French and Scottish relatives, courtiers, and servants. The inventory is often called her testamentary inventory as, while we know that Mary drew up a will on the 9 June and that two copies were made, none of the three has survived. The document gives us a precious insight into a luxurious collection of jewels worthy of a Renaissance queen, which was largely dispersed after her imprisonment in Lochleven and flight to England, as well as into Mary’s familial and political networks at that particular juncture. The article examines the types of jewels listed, what they say about the Renaissance mindset and culture, and looks at the individuals and groups who were at the forefront of her mind when she made her annotations.

Keywords: Jewellery; Renaissance; Mary Queen of Scots; Inventories; France; Scotland.

In early June 1566, the heavily pregnant Mary Queen of Scots took to her chambers in Edinburgh Castle.¹ Three months earlier, her secretary and favourite, David Rizzio, had been brutally murdered by a number of her nobles with the complicity of her husband, Lord Darnley. Acting decisively, Mary detached her husband from his co-plotters, rallied her troops, and appeared to have recovered the situation. Despite rapprochements over the summer, the decision not to have her child at Stirling Castle but to confine herself in the heavily fortified Edinburgh Castle for the birth, was an indication that all was not entirely well. On 5 April, the Privy Council had thought it “commodious” for the good of the country and the health of the queen that she remain in the Castle with some of her nobles for the delivery.² The following month, Mary wrote to her aunt, Anne d’Este, Duchess of Guise, referring to the downturn in her

¹ The author would like to thank the private owner for the use of the image of the portrait of Annas Keith, and the National Records of Scotland for the use of the images from the 1566 inventory. She would also like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

² Burton, *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* 1:445.

fortunes and her struggle against “*continuel troubles et fascheries*.”³ Against this background, she drew up her will in early June and two copies were made, one of which was sent to France. None of the three wills has survived.⁴

Three hundred years later, in 1854, clerks looking through unsorted legal papers in Register House in Edinburgh made an astonishing discovery: a cache of inventories and accounts detailing the contents of Mary’s wardrobe, her jewellery, and books; a list of articles lost at Stirling Castle at the baptism of James VI in December 1566, and of the furniture destroyed at Kirk O’ Field at the murder of Lord Darnley in February 1567.⁵ The choicest item was the inventory of the jewels of Mary Queen of Scots, annotated in her characteristic spindly Italic handwriting, with bequests to her French and Scottish relations, friends, courtiers, and household, in the event of her death in childbirth.⁶ Internal evidence—the note written in the Queen’s hand on the back of the first gathering—enabled it to be dated to the months preceding the birth of Prince James: “I intend that this be executed should the child not survive me, but if he lives, I make him the heir of everything.”⁷ The document is known as her testamentary inventory (Figure 1).

³ Labanoff, *Lettres*, 1:353.

⁴ Bain, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland*, [hereafter *CSP Scotland*] 2:253. Sir Thomas Randolph reports that Mary had made her will “thrysse written,” sending one to France, keeping one herself, and the third to those in charge, though the king had no knowledge of the contents.

⁵ “Catalogue of historical records found among the warrants of decreets,” NRS, SRO5/82.

⁶ NRS, E35/3/3 and E35/3/4, “Inventaires de la Royne” and “Inventaires des brodures” [Inventory of headdresses, or jewelled borders] (1566), published in Robertson, *Inventaires*, 93–125.

⁷ “J’entends que cestuissi soyte execute au cas que lanfant ne me survive mais si il vit ie le fays heritier de tout,” Robertson, *Inventaires*, 115. There has been speculation that the handwriting in the margin is Mary Livingston’s but her signature on folio 10 is strong and more neatly formed.

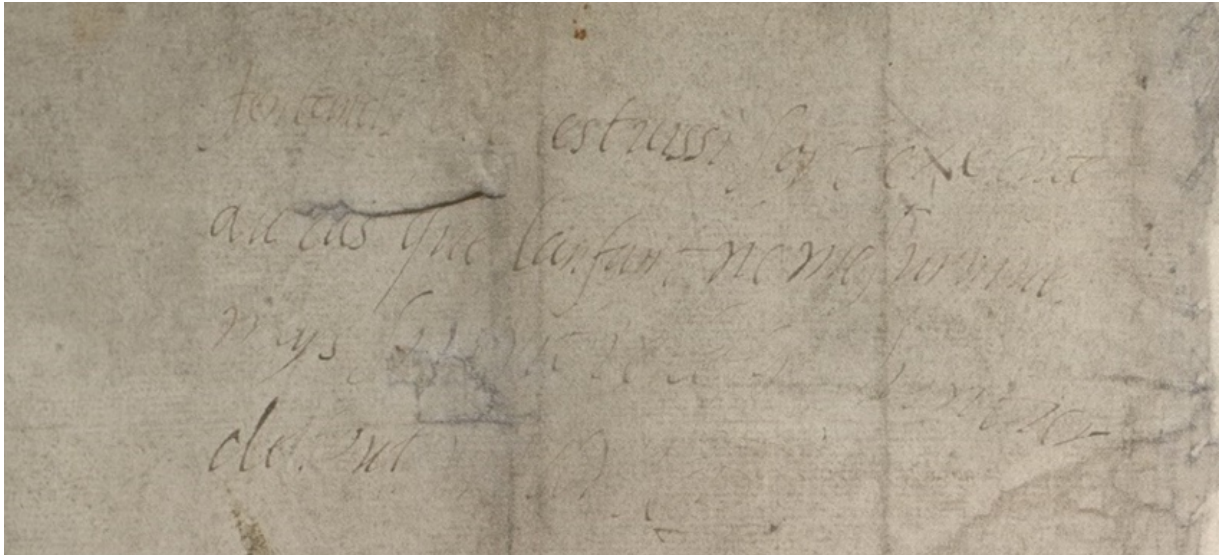


Figure 1. Instruction by Queen Mary, written in her own hand, as to the execution of her bequests. The text is much faded. One of the slits through which the ribbon was tied is visible (Crown copyright, National Records of Scotland, E35/3/3/10b).

In 1863 Joseph Robertson, the antiquarian and historian, published transcripts of the newly discovered documents with a comprehensive introduction which remains of great value.⁸ He described the inventory as being of two gatherings originally tied together with a ribbon and secured with a seal, now missing. Both were signed by the queen and Mary Livingston, one of her four Maries in charge of the queen’s jewellery, while in the smaller gathering, Margaret Carwood, responsible for the queen’s private cabinet, signs off the list of its contents.

The document is in French, as are the majority of the inventories and household accounts surviving from Mary’s personal reign, and in a clerical secretary hand, with the queen’s annotations in italic indicating her bequests. Additional comments have been added at a later date identifying missing items, or where gemstones had been repurposed into another jewel.⁹ At the very end, also in the queen’s hand, is the bequest of her Greek and Latin books to the University of St Andrews to establish a library for the writing of a bible, and of her not inconsiderable collection of French, Italian and English books to Mary

⁸ Robertson, *Inventaires*, xxxi–lix. The first gathering comprises ten folios, the second, six folios.

⁹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 108, 111–112. Some annotations suggest they were made between June 1566 and 1568. Removal of a chain from a marten fur and given to the King; ninety-eight gold aglets are noted as missing, and then “Said to be at Lochleven”; seventy-one buttons are marked as having been sent to England.

Beaton, the most intellectual of the four Maries.¹⁰ While it is likely that Mary's testament would have asked for her servants wages to be paid, in the inventory she leaves her linen to her bedchamber women, and the proceeds of the sale of her plate in her coffer for the benefit of her valets, ushers, and tapestry men.

The expansion in the study of the European Renaissance court, and within that the study of queenship, has brought to the fore the importance of costume and jewellery in the transmission of ideas of princely magnificence. Expensive materials and sparkling jewels communicated status and wealth, but also political power and moral values. Yet as Erin Griffey has pointed out, jewellery has been "relatively unexplored as a central component of bodily display at court."¹¹ The examination of the material culture of Mary's court lags behind that of her English neighbour.¹² Margaret Swain's study of Mary's embroideries has yet to be bettered, but a comprehensive appraisal of the queen's collections of clothing and jewellery, as evidenced in the surviving inventories, household accounts, and correspondence, has still to be undertaken. An early study by Andrew Lang drew on her inventories in an attempt to identify jewels depicted in her portraits while, more recently, the essays in Anna Groundwater's *Decoding the Jewels* provide a much-needed overview of Renaissance jewellery in Scotland.¹³

With its precious insight into a luxurious collection of jewels largely dispersed after Mary's imprisonment in Lochleven and flight to England, the 1566 inventory deserves the re-examination it has not had since Robertson. The document is the sole survivor to indicate the Queen's state of mind at a critical time. Most Scottish queens died intestate. Mary of Guise's simple will makes no specific mention of jewellery, and did not need to do so as she already had an heir, Mary, who would inherit her jewels.¹⁴ The inventory thus provides a more nuanced view of Mary's thinking than might have been given in her testament alone. This article will explore, firstly, Mary's collection of jewellery and how it

¹⁰ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 124. On Mary Beaton, Verweij, *The Literary Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, 87. Several inventories of the Queen's possessions were made on her arrival in Scotland. It seems curious that there would not also have been one of her books. The earliest, partial, surviving inventory, dates from November 1569: Robertson, *Inventaires*, 179–183.

¹¹ See Griffey, "Introduction," in *Sartorial Politics*, 25, with a useful overview of the scholarship in this field. See also Griffey, *Early Modern Court Culture*, particularly Part 5.

¹² For examples, see: Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*; Arnold, "Sweet England's Jewels"; Collins, *Jewels and Plate of Elizabeth I*; Vincent, "Queen Elizabeth," 115–138.

¹³ Swain, *The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots*; Lang, "Portraits and Jewels of Mary Stuart," 129–156, 274–300; Groundwater, *Decoding the Jewels*; Marshall, *The Art of Jewellery in Scotland*.

¹⁴ Marshall, *Mary of Guise*, 97.

fits into the material culture and mentalité of the Renaissance court, and, secondly, an examination of the recipients of her bequests and the reasoning behind them. It is beyond the scope of this study to make direct comparison with jewels and inventories of other Renaissance courts.

Jewellery in the Renaissance

If dressing magnificently was essential to the Renaissance elite to communicate their status, for a queen it was imperative. In 1578, Catherine de Medici advised her daughter, "it is up to you to invent and create beautiful new fashions and wherever you go, the court should follow you and not you the court."¹⁵ It was also a divine obligation. As James VI and I explained to Parliament, kings, and presumably ruling queens, "were God's vice-gerents on earth and so adorned and furnished with some sparks of Divinitie."¹⁶ Royal jewels and clothing were worn with a careful consideration of their impact. Precious gems were intrinsically valuable and affordable to few; they were also rare and exotic.¹⁷ The sixteenth century was the age of exploration with the discovery of new sources of precious gems and superior pearls: diamonds from India and Central Africa, emeralds from Colombia, rubies from Burma and Ceylon, sapphires from Sri Lanka, and pearls from the Persian Gulf and the South China seas.¹⁸ The gems were attributed with magical and medicinal properties, conferring virtues on the wearer improving health and state of mind, and with the ability to detect, or to provide protection from, poison. Mary's 1566 inventory lists a sapphire, pierced for hanging from a chain, "for rubbing on the eyes." Sapphires were believed to be efficacious in the treatment of eye ailments, as well as clearing the complexion and protecting from poison.¹⁹ Only the elite could afford such jewels but also only the elite were considered to have the learning to appreciate their symbolic qualities.²⁰

Jewels could be used as powerful political tools. Gifts of jewellery played an important role in greasing the wheels of diplomacy, cementing personal relationships, and sending out or reaffirming political messages. The diamond ring which Mary received from Elizabeth in December 1563 was, performatively, "marvellously esteemed, often looked

¹⁵ Quoted in Paresys, "Vêtir les souverains français à la Renaissance," 150.

¹⁶ Scarisbrick, *Jewellery*, 69–70.

¹⁷ Studies include essays in Somers Cocks, *Princely Magnificence*; Scarisbrick, *Tudor and Jacobean Jewellery*.

¹⁸ Jobbins, "Sources of Gemstones in the Renaissance," 12–19. See also Forsyth, *The Cheapside Hoard*.

¹⁹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 101: "Ung saffiz perce a pandre ...qui sert a frotter au yeux."

²⁰ On the magical and medicinal qualities of jewels see Vincent, "Queen Elizabeth," 115–138. As Vincent writes, "Gems and precious metals were seen by few and owned by even fewer," 118.

upon and many times kissed" in the presence of the English ambassador, Sir Thomas Randolph, and her courtiers.²¹ The ring came with a promise of friendship and aid in the future should Mary need it. The importance Mary attached to it was highlighted in public, and in Randolph's presence, at the Feast of the Bean the following February, when Mary "wore no other jewell or gold about her that day, but the ring hanging at her breast."²² Mary understood the promise to be a solemn undertaking and returned the ring to Elizabeth on her arrival in England, signalling her need for assistance, and, as this was not forthcoming, she would frequently allude to it in their correspondence.²³

Royal collections of jewellery were treasure stores to be plundered for gifts, given out to inspire and reward loyalty. Significant events and the visits of diplomats were the occasion of the exchange of gifts. The Treasurer's accounts record purchases of gold chains for presentation to visiting ambassadors.²⁴ More lavish gifts, "2 fayre basins and ewers" and other silver vessels, were called for when the Swedish ambassador pressed the suit of his King for Mary's hand.²⁵ In December 1566, the Duke of Bedford, Elizabeth I's representative at Prince James' baptism, was presented with a "rich chain of diamonds" worth 2000 crowns, and Sir Christopher Hatton, one of Elizabeth's favourites, a chain with a jewel with Mary's picture.²⁶ The gifting and exchange of royal portraits was designed to create bonds of amity and loyalty at a period when "diplomatic relations between rulers were still personal, revolving around the ambitions, friendships and animosities of individual rulers."²⁷

Mary, a generous benefactor, must also have received gifts of jewellery from relatives and courtiers, though the evidence is slight. She received a "marvellous fair and rich juell" from the Earl of Lennox on his rehabilitation in October 1564, as well as a clock and a dial "curiously wrought and set with stones and a looking glass very richly set with stones."²⁸ The 1566 inventory notes a hat badge, with ten rubies and a pendant pearl, given to her by David Rizzio, which she bequeaths to his young brother Joseph. There are no lists of Mary's New Year's Day gifts (*étrennes*), such as survive for Elizabeth I, though there are

²¹ *CSP Scotland* 2:28.

²² Dennistoun and Macdonald, *Miscellany* 2, 391, Letter, Randolph to Lord Robert Dudley, 15 January 1563/4.

²³ This is explored in Auble, "Royal Jewellery Exchange," 70–82.

²⁴ For example, Paul, *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* [hereafter *TA*], xi, 76, a gold chain to the English Ambassador worth £400 Scots, October 1561.

²⁵ *CSP Scotland*, 1:630, Randolph to Cecil, 3 June 1562.

²⁶ Thomson, *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill*, 172.

²⁷ Sowerby, "A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith," 318.

²⁸ *CSP Scotland*, 2:86, Randolph to Cecil, 24 October 1564.

indications that this custom was observed. A pair of earrings decorated with turquoises and *vermeilles* is marked up as having been gifted to Lady Livingston for her *étrennes* but often the recipients remain anonymous, as in a pair of bracelets with four table rubies and eight pearls in each annotated "The Queen has gifted them."²⁹

A royal jewellery collection was never static. Pieces were routinely broken up and the gems repurposed or put in new more fashionable settings. During the 1560s, Mary was continually adding to hers. In the months leading up to the birth of Prince James, she made several sizeable purchases. In April, she paid £355 Scots to James Mosman, the Edinburgh goldsmith, for rings and "certane goldsmith werk" and, in the following month, £2000 to Guillaume Mignott, a merchant in Bordeaux, for unspecified goldsmith work and precious stones. These are likely to be the pendants, gold chains and rings which are identified in the 1566 inventory as having been purchased recently by the queen.³⁰ Mary is also likely to have used money from her dower lands in France to make additional purchases of jewellery in France, though no accounts for this expenditure have survived.³¹

Jewels were also assets to be pledged for money in difficult times, being highly portable and much more useful than coinage whose value rose and fell. In February 1562, a few months after her arrival in Scotland, the Treasurer's accounts record that Mary redeemed a gold cross set with diamonds and rubies pledged to John Home of Blackadder as security for a loan of £1000 Scots to her mother, Mary of Guise.³² Once Mary was in captivity, the jewels listed in her inventory were dispersed, many ending up pledged for loans to raise money for the Marian cause. Jewels could easily be broken up or, like the gold and jewel-encrusted baptismal font gifted by Elizabeth for the baptism of her godson James in December 1566, melted down scarcely six months later to fund Mary's troops.³³

Jewels of the 1566 inventory

The jewels described in the 1566 inventory bear out Bishop Leslie's assertion that Mary arrived in Scotland with "mony costly jewells and golden wark, precious stanis, orient

²⁹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 88, 1561/2 inventory, and 84, "La Royne les a donner."

³⁰ TA, 11:492 and 499; Robertson, *Inventaires*, 114.

³¹ Greengrass, "Mary, Dowager Queen of France," 171–194. Mary's jointure was determined at 60 000 livres tournois on the county of Poitou and Duchy of Touraine, though Greengrass reckons she only saw two thirds, which she used to support the costs of her household, 175.

³² TA, 11:108.

³³ CSP Scotland, 2:328, Kirkcaldy of Grange to the Earl of Bedford, 8 May 1566. 5000 crowns have been coined from the gold font to support troops raised for the Queen and the Earl of Bothwell. The font weighed 333 ounces. For the dispersal of the Queen's jewels see Pearce, "The Jewels Mary Queen of Scots Left Behind."

pearle, maist excellent of any that was in Europe, and mony costly abilyementis for her body.”³⁴ Three main inventories detailing these jewels survive from the period of Mary’s personal rule in Scotland. The first, dated August 1561, just before she set sail for Scotland, has 159 entries. The second, dated February 1562, has 180 entries, and the 1566 inventory has 253 entries. A later inventory of 1578 taken at Edinburgh Castle reveals a much-depleted collection.³⁵

The 1566 inventory is organised hierarchically. The first gathering comprises the most valuable items beginning with those containing the largest and most costly gems, and starting with thirteen pendants, one of the most important, and popular, type of jewel during the Renaissance.³⁶ These are made up of large diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and great pendant pearls. First in the inventory is the jewel known as the ‘Great Harry,’ a pendant in the form of the letter “H” of a large faceted diamond below a large cabochon ruby which Mary had received from her father-in-law, Henri II, and worn on the day of her wedding to the Dauphin François.³⁷ The penultimate item in this group is a large cross set with seven diamonds, two ruby cabochons, and a large pendant pearl, perhaps her mother’s cross, which had been redeemed in 1562.³⁸

The 1560s witnessed a change in how jewellery was worn by the elite, and particularly by elite women. The fashion became one of profusion, including the wearing of multiple items of gold, heavily embellished with a mix of gems, semi-precious stones, and pearls. The fashionable black clothing worn at Renaissance courts was the perfect foil for these jewels with the focus on the head or neck, considered during the Middle Ages and Renaissance period to be the noblest part of the body (see Figure 2).³⁹ Twenty sets, or parures (*acoustrements*), make up the next category, combinations of large faceted diamonds, cabochon rubies, and pearls, primarily, but also coral, amethysts, jasper, peridot, and garnets, enamelled in black, white, red or green. The sets are composed of

³⁴ Thomson, *The History of Scotland*, 299.

³⁵ Each entry might involve more than one item of jewellery, eg. several dozen buttons. The original inventories are in NRS, E35/5, NRS, E35/3/2 and NRS, E35/3/4 and 5, and printed in Robertson, *Inventaires*, 7–17, 75–92, 93–115. The 1578 inventory is printed in Thomson, *A Collection of inventories*. There are earlier inventories of 1556 and 1559 (*Inventaires*, 3–6 and NRS, E35/4) with smaller lists dating from 1573 in NRS, E35/11.

³⁶ Somers Cocks, *Courtly Jewellery*, 26–33, and *Princely Magnificence*, 56–59, both with good examples.

³⁷ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 93: “Une grosse bague a pandre facon de H en laquelle y a ung groz diamant taille a faces et au dessus ung groz rubiz cabochin garny dune petite chesne.”

³⁸ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 94.

³⁹ Chadour-Sampson and Hindman, “*Living Nobly*,” 17.

highly decorative matching edgings for headdresses, with front and back pieces (*tour* and *aureillette*), carcans for round the throat, cottiers, round the top of the bodice, and girdles or belts. The precious gems were set in gold collets separated by linking pieces (*entredoux*) usually set with pearls. One of the richest sets, a “garnishing of large rubies and large pearls” has a *cottoire* composed of 17 pieces each set with two rubies, one cabochon and the other table cut, with 16 links decorated with two pearls on each and 32 letters “S” enamelled in black and white.⁴⁰



Figure 2: Marriage portrait of Annas Keith, Countess of Mar, by Hans Eworth, 1562. She is dressed in fashionable black, a gold chain and ruby, diamond and pearl pendant. Her jewelled headpiece can just be seen at the back of her head (Courtesy of a Private Scottish Collection).

³⁹Robertson, *Inventaires*, 96: “Acoustrement de groz Rubiz et grosses Perles.”

Also listed are chains, belts, bracelets, earrings, filigree beads for containing perfume, and rings given "as remembrances to recommend me to my good friends."⁴¹ These jewels are set with peridots (chrysoliths), sapphires, cornelian, crystal, coral, amethyst, and turquoises. Twenty-seven sets of buttons and aglets (the metal and jewelled tips at the end of laces) are recorded. While the aglets were mainly bequeathed to women, the buttons were divided between Mary's husband, Lord Darnley, and her nephew, Francis Stewart. Buttons might have been used as fastenings but generally referred to clusters of gems, or of pearls, applied to the surface of a garment, both male and female.⁴² They came in a variety of shapes and designs, such as the 404 feather-shaped buttons enamelled in white and each decorated with a ruby, bequeathed to Darnley, or the fifty-eight triangular buttons, each adorned with three pearls and enamelled with red, white, and green, for her nephew Francis.⁴³

The intention behind drawing up the inventory is to record the number of stones or pearls in each jewel, the cut of the gem, whether table, faceted, cabochon or pointed, and the colour of the enamelling. No indication is given of the design of the jewels, though this does not entirely explain the absence of historiated jewels with classical themes, cameos, or jewels with mottoes, which were fashionable at the time.⁴⁴ Unlike French royal inventories of the period, the monetary value is not given, nor the weight.⁴⁵ Some objects that are not strictly jewellery appear because they are set with gemstones, such as watches, mirrors, and a set of coif, collar, and pair of sleeves studded with rubies, pearls, and garnets bequeathed to the Countess of Bothwell.⁴⁶

Symbolic of innocence and purity, pearls were a major feature of Renaissance jewellery. All jewels combined pearls with other gems, and they were sewn in profusion over garments.⁴⁷ The 1566 inventory, however, makes no mention of the famous lustrous pearls Mary was given by her mother-in-law, Catherine de Medici.⁴⁸ There are sets of jewels

⁴¹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 112.

⁴² Awais-Dean, *Bejewelled* has a useful chapter on buttons on male garments.

⁴³ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 109, 110.

⁴⁴ From lists of jewels pawned in the late 1560s and early 1570, it is clear that these would have amounted to a significant sum, NRS, E35/11. A letter from Regent Mar to Robert Richardson, Commendator of St Mary's Isle, mentions emeralds traded "from hand to hand" in Paris before being bought on behalf of King James for 1800 crowns, nd, NRS, E35/11/24.

⁴⁵ Robertson, *Inventaires*, Appendix, Inventory and valuation of the jewels returned by Mary to the King, 1561, 191–201. Each stone is valued separately. Bapst, *Histoire des Joyaux*, 78–83.

⁴⁶ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 110.

⁴⁷ Chadour-Sampson, *Pearls*, 62–75, overview with good illustrations; Evans, *History of Jewellery*, 105–106.

⁴⁸ Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, *Vies des dames illustres*, 36.

listed containing large pearls and large pear-shaped pearls, but if these are indeed the famous pearls, by 1568 when sent for sale in London, they were reported as being in six long ropes with twenty-five additional large pearls, described as being as large as nutmegs. Their setting into numerous different jewels seems unlikely. Valued by some London merchants as worth anything between £3000 and £12000, they were snapped up by Queen Elizabeth before Catherine de Medici could get her hands on them.⁴⁹

The inventory shows that Mary certainly had the wherewithal to encrust her clothing as richly as her European royal sisters, but we cannot be certain how Mary wore her jewellery as the visual and documentary evidence is so slight. No portraits of Mary survive from the 1560s, and witness descriptions of her clothing and jewellery are disappointingly rare. There is, as we have seen, her very deliberate wearing of no other jewel but Elizabeth I's ring at the Feast of the Bean, but that this was deemed worthy of mention might suggest that normally she was in the habit of wearing significantly more jewellery. In contrast, at the same event, clothed as Queen of the Bean, Mary Fleming is described as having "her head, her neck, her shoulders, the rest of her whole body, so beset with stones, that more in our whole jewell house were not to be found."⁵⁰

Scented Jewellery

Two sections of the inventory detail sets of jewels made of filigree beads for containing musk, civet, or ambergris paste. The beads are described as "*a jour*," an open-work style created by sawing or piercing metal that allowed perfume to be inserted. Annas Keith, Countess of Moray, and *ma soeur* the Countess of Argyll, were both bequeathed sets of jewels containing paternoster beads filled with perfume. The Countess of Argyll's includes a *cottoire* of eighty-nine gold perfumed beads, with plain gold beads as links.⁵¹ In the sixteenth century, paternoster beads, sometimes called pomander beads, were not exclusively used for rosaries but were a term used loosely to mean all kinds of beads.

The role of the perfumer at the malodorous Renaissance court was an important one. Scented clothing, gloves and shoes, beads and pomanders surrounded the vulnerable

⁴⁹ These and other jewels, including the Great Harry, were taken to England by Nicol Elphinstone and John Wood, but only the pearls were sold. NRS, E35/9/3.

⁵⁰ Dennistoun and Macdonald, *Miscellany of the Maitland Club*, 391, Randolph to Lord Robert Dudley, 15 January 1564.

⁵¹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 103–105. Similar filigree beads, known as the Penicuk beads, date from the period of Mary's captivity in England and were given to her servant Gillis Mowbray. They are now held by the National Museum of Scotland where, upon examination, they were found to contain the remnants of what is thought to be ambergris.

sixteenth-century body with sweet-smelling, healthy air, keeping dangerous vapours, and thus disease, at bay.⁵² Mary employed her own perfumer, Angelo Maria, an Italian from a country reputed for its expertise in making perfume. Such perfumers were also skilled in distillations for cosmetics and creams, scented waters (used externally or taken internally), as well as, allegedly, poisons.⁵³ Poison was seen as a real danger at Renaissance courts, of which Mary was conscious throughout her life. An attempt to poison her food had been thwarted when she was a girl, but her fears became more acute during her imprisonment in England. In May 1574, concerned that her food might be being poisoned, she asked the Archbishop of Glasgow to acquire “*terra sigillata*” (a mineral clay used as proof against poison) or, if this could not be got, a unicorn horn, “for I am in great need of it.”⁵⁴

The inventory of the contents of Mary’s private cabinet of 1561 records two *langues de serpents* or tongue stones (fossilised shark teeth) used to detect poison.⁵⁵ She may have inherited them from her Scottish royal forebears as a “gret serpent tounge set with gold, pearl and precious stanes and two small ones set in gold” are recorded as being stored in a coffer in Edinburgh Castle in 1488.⁵⁶ Emeralds, diamonds, amethysts, and aquamarine were all thought to neutralise poisons, but it was the rare and enormously expensive unicorn horn, actually narwhal tusk, which was prized as the best means of detecting poison. Mary’s serpent tongues do not appear in the 1566 inventory, but she bequeaths a unicorn horn on a silver chain to her nephew Francis Stewart. This may be the same jewel as that which James, Earl of Moray, attempted to sell in England in 1568, described as being “very well made and richly decorated.”⁵⁷

The queen’s cabinet

A cabinet could be a private chamber where precious, unusual, or scientifically interesting items were kept or, increasingly in the sixteenth century, a chest with drawers to hold or display small *objets de vertu*. Mary described the room where she was dining on the night of

⁵² Welch, “Scented Buttons and Perfumed Gloves,” 13–39. Rings might also be scented with a paste in a space under the bezel.

⁵³ CSP Scotland, 3:539 and 566. Maria joined the Queen’s entourage in England, leaving for France in 1571, and sent two pairs of perfumed gloves to the Bishop of Ross in August 1571.

⁵⁴ Labanoff, *Lettres*, 4:170, letter of 8 May 1574: “un morceau de fine licorne car elle m’est bien nécessaire.” See also Akkerman and Langman, *Spycraft*, chapter 5.

⁵⁵ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 17.

⁵⁶ TA, 1:81. Belonging to Margaret of Denmark, wife of King James III.

⁵⁷ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 110.

Rizzio’s murder, often called her supper room, as “our cabinet.”⁵⁸ In June 1562, the English ambassador, Thomas Randolph, reported that Mary placed the portrait of King Eric of Sweden in her “secrete cabinet,” where she stored items she esteemed “either for antiquetie, noveltie, or that she dothe tayke pleasure in.”⁵⁹ The smallness of the items listed in her cabinet in 1561, including a little cage with a parrot inside, a gold enamelled sheep, a little golden apple with the portrait of James V, and a gold comb, might suggest a chest of some description. The absence of these objects from the 1566 inventory, apart from a hat badge of a mermaid holding a ruby comb and a diamond mirror which she bequeathed to Bothwell, can be explained by their want of gemstones, though they may also have been previously gifted. In 1566, the items listed in the cabinet are of far greater value and include a cross with five table diamonds and three pendant pearls, bequeathed to her half-brother, Robert, Earl of Orkney; two watches, luxury items, set with ten diamonds and two rubies, for Darnley; another watch with twelve rubies, two large sapphires, and a pendant pearl for Magdalen Livingston, and a portrait of the queen set with a cross of five diamonds bequeathed to her favourite chamber woman, Margaret Carwood.⁶⁰

Zibellini

The bejewelled zibelline fur, named from the Italian word for sable, was perhaps the most luxurious accessory of the period. Emerging in the late fifteenth century, the fashion spread from northern Italy, where it was often the focus of sumptuary legislation, to the royal courts of Europe. The heads and paws of pelts of furs from the weasel family (martens, stoats, and sable) were removed and replaced by gem-embellished heads and paws of gold, crystal, or jet. This combination of exotic furs and precious gemstones was a powerful signifier of the wearer’s wealth and status. Most often represented in portraits hung over the arm from a chain attached to a belt at the waist, they could also be worn round the neck.⁶¹ As an accessory, the furs were less about function than display but, like so much in

⁵⁸ Labanoff, *Lettres*, 1:344, 2 April 1566, Mary to the Archbishop of Glasgow. A report on the French ambassador’s account of the murder of Rizzio notes that Rizzio retreated to the corner of the chamber “ou estoit le cabinet,” suggesting furniture, Teulet, *Relations politiques* 2:265. To add to the confusion, Randolph in his report of the event, describes the murder having taken place in “a Cabinet abowte xij square” lying off the Queen’s chamber. Ellis, *Letters*, 2: 210.

⁵⁹ CSP Scotland, 1:630, Randolph to Cecil, 3 June 1562.

⁶⁰ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 15–17, 122–123. George Buchanan, later an opponent of Mary, described her as “A woman privy to all her secrets,” Buchanan, *A detection*, 8–9.

⁶¹ Most of the examples come from Italian portraits. Some examples are in Musacchio, “Weasels and Pregnancy,” but see also the portrait of Elisabeth de Valois in the Prado: <https://www.museodelprado.es>

the Renaissance jewellery box, the zibelline fur was also suffused with meaning. Sables, martens, lynx, and ermines, which were all known as "weasels," were associated with fertility and childbirth. Arising from the tale of Galathis who, according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was turned into a weasel, it was believed that weasels conceived through their ear and gave birth through the mouth. By 1566, Mary owned at least eight zibelline furs. Three of them are recorded in the 1561 inventory: a marten head decorated with rubies, sapphires, and pearls; and two ermines, one with a gold head enamelled in white, and the other with a head of jet covered in gold. She inherited at least two from her mother, Mary of Guise, a marten and an ermine "to wear around the neck."⁶² The skills to create these opulent objects were clearly already available in Scotland as the Treasurer's accounts record Scottish gold being given to the Edinburgh goldsmith, John Mosman, in December 1539 to make "ane martick heid and feet of gold of the mynde [mine], annamelit" for Mary of Guise.⁶³ Mary was due to give birth the following May and the commissioning of a talismanic object associated with childbirth suggests that she was making preparations ahead of the birth.⁶⁴

These prestigious items appeared in the first gathering of more precious jewels and were bequeathed to her close female family and intimates including her half-sister, the Countess of Argyll, her cousins Margaret Fleming, Countess of Atholl, and Agnes Fleming, Lady Livingston, Annas Keith, Countess of Moray, and Annabella Murray, Countess of Mar. The most expensive is a lynx (*loup servier*) with a head of crystal embellished with gold, enamelled in red and set with 21 turquoises, four crystal paws each with three turquoises, but the others of marten and ermine are similarly embellished with gold heads and paws decorated with rubies, diamonds, and pearls. After the queen's flight to England, the Earl of Morton attempted to recover her jewels. Mary Livingston's husband, John Semple, was pursued and imprisoned to force his wife to give up "certane jewellis and furies of martrick and sables."⁶⁵ It is likely that they were never returned to Mary as the two furs described

[/coleccion/obra-de-arte/la-reina-isabel-de-valois/4bf43b3b-a3cf-44ef-aaf8-928b4ca51e0b](https://coleccion.obra-de-arte/la-reina-isabel-de-valois/4bf43b3b-a3cf-44ef-aaf8-928b4ca51e0b), accessed 10 March 2025. A surviving example of a richly jewelled zibelline head is held by the Walters Museum, Baltimore: <http://art.thewalters.org/object/57.1982>, accessed 10 March 2025.

⁶² Robertson, *Inventaires*, 12 and 130: List of distributions from the wardrobe by Servais de Conde, December 1561, "a metre a l'entour du col."

⁶³ TA, 7:265.

⁶⁴ Musacchio, "Weasels and Pregnancy," 172–187.

⁶⁵ CSP Scotland, 6:438, and CSP Scotland, 3:434, letter from Mary to the Bishop of Ross, 24 November 1570: "Lennox presumes to spoil us certane jewels; yea of the best we have, whom he torments with imprisonment."

in the inventories of her possessions at Chartley and Fotheringhay, a “*martre brune*” (possibly pine marten) and a “*martre blanche*” (ermine), cannot be positively identified as those in the 1566 inventory.⁶⁶

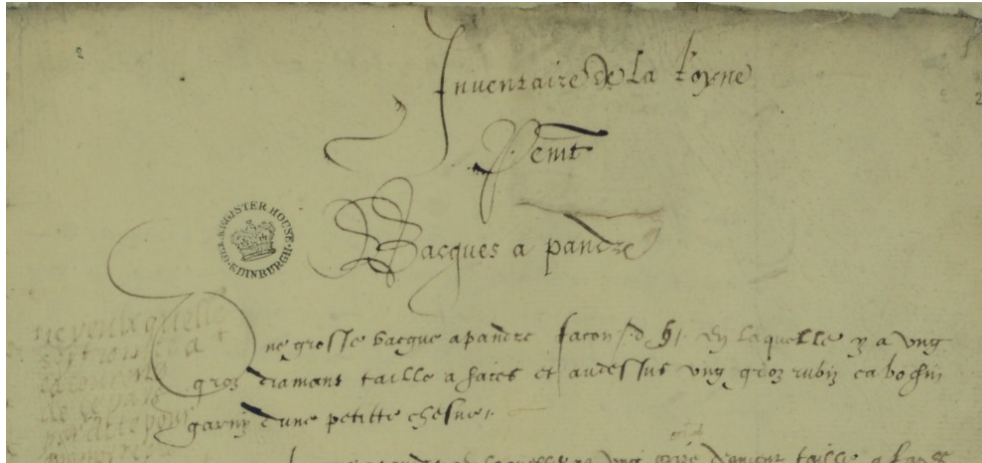


Figure 3. Opening page of the inventory showing, in first position, the jewel the Great Harry. (Crown copyright, National Records of Scotland, E35/3/3/2).

Recipients

In premier place in the inventory is the Great Harry jewel which Mary bequeathed to the Crown of Scotland “in memory of me and the place from whence I received it” and specifically in “memory of the alliance with Lorraine” (Figure 3). She left the Crown seven other diamond and ruby chains, a ring with a large table cut diamond, and a set of diamond, ruby, and pearl carcan, *cottoire*, and belt, as well as a great cross of diamonds, rubies, and pearls. A set of garnishings made up of particularly large diamonds are designated for future Queens of Scotland:

For the ornament of all the Queens, who can never change their setting nor give them away but only receive them from the hand of he who looks after the said jewels with the Crown, and on their death [the Queens] will return them there to remain with the Crown for all future Queens.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Labanoff, *Lettres*, 7:242 and 270.

⁶⁷ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 94: “Pour ornament de toutes les Roynes qui ne les pourront iamays changer doeuve ni donner seullement les resevoir par la mayn de celui guardera les subdites bagues avesques la Couronne at mourant les remettra la pour demeurer a la Couronne de toutes les Roynes.” Other bequests to the Crown appear in Robertson, *Inventaires*, 93–95, 97, 98, and 112.

Mary was seeking to establish the concept of inalienable crown jewels extending beyond the Scottish regalia of crown, sceptre, and sword of state. This was surely influenced by the example of the French crown, which had taken this step in 1530, but also perhaps informed by her own experience, as many of the jewels owned by her father James V had been sold to fund the wars against England in the 1540s.⁶⁸ Just before his marriage in June 1530, Francis I gifted eight jewels to his successors which were never to be alienated nor modified. As Mary had done, French queens were obliged to return the jewels to the Royal Treasury on the death of their husbands. Letters patent of 2 July 1559 designated seven costly jewels to "remain forever with the House of the Crown of France as worthy of that place."⁶⁹ In similar fashion, Mary specifies that the settings of her jewels are not to be altered, the fate, indeed, of the Great Harry, which was incorporated into the hat badge known as the Mirror of Great Britain and later sold and broken up.⁷⁰

It is well on in the inventory before Mary's husband Darnley makes his first appearance. This is not the slight it might appear to be. The inventory is largely a feminine document in terms of the number and value of bequests, with women outnumbering men by about three to two, a reflection perhaps of the more intimate and female nature of the household of a queen and the nature of the jewels themselves: sets of garnishings for women's headdresses, necklaces, and bracelets predominate, rather than the more masculine hat badges and heavy gold chains. The Scots male recipients of bequests, such as Mary's half-brothers, as well as the Earls of Argyll, Atholl, and Mar, and the members of Mary's Privy Council, receive solitary keepsakes of diamond or ruby rings. The Earls of Huntly and Bothwell, instrumental in Mary's escape after Rizzio's murder, were rewarded with more expensive jewels from the queen's cabinet: a fleur-de-lis with diamonds and pearls and a hat badge of a mermaid combing her hair.⁷¹

Given the breakdown of their relations after his involvement in the murder of Rizzio, Darnley's prominence in the inventory, in which he appears 26 times, might seem surprising, but may have been determined by the queen's sense of duty to her husband. There is, perhaps, a cool detachment in the manner of her return to him of one of her three wedding rings, a diamond ring enamelled in red. "It was with this that I was married; I

⁶⁸ Bapst, *Histoire des Joyaux*, ch. 1.

⁶⁹ Bapst, *Histoire des Joyaux*, Appendix, 71: "demeurer a tousiours a la Maison de la Couronne de France comme digne de ce lieu." The jewels Mary returned amounted to an astonishing 478,900 ecus.

⁷⁰ Groundwater, "Tracing Royal Stewart jewels," 166–167, for the fate of the Great Harry jewel.

⁷¹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 113, 122–123. See also Awais-Dean, *Bejewelled*, 3–4.

leave it to the King who gave it to me.”⁷² His first appearance is as recipient of sets of bejewelled buttons and aglets, but later he receives larger, more precious items from the Queen's cabinet, including a pendant in the shape of the letter 'H' set with a ruby and pendant pearl, a diamond and ruby-encrusted watch and another dial (*cadren*) set with eight diamonds and two rubies. Watches, worn like a jewel hanging from the neck or belt, were highly prized and were as much a demonstration of status as a means of telling the time, as they were not particularly accurate. They indicated the cultivation of the owner and were to be found in the cabinets, or *Kunstkammers*, of the European elite.⁷³

The Guise family

A dynastic imperative and a love of the country where she had spent her formative years run like a thread through Mary's life and lie behind the next most important group of bequests. Mary's Guise relations dominate the early pages of the inventory and scoop up the majority of the more costly and elaborate jewels, including most of the large pendants. The ability of the Guise family to advance in the service of the kings of France was, it has been said, due to the extraordinary level of their family solidarity and clan mentality: not for nothing was their family motto "all for one and one for all."⁷⁴ Mary was held in the warm embrace of this affectionate family and it was to their chateaux at Nanteuil and Joinville, and to her aunt at St Pierre-les-Dames, that she retreated when she was widowed, away from the French court and the hostility of Catherine de Medici.

Mary's Guise uncles, the Ducs d'Aumale and d'Elboeuf, and François de Guise, Grand Prior of the Order of Malta, accompanied her to Scotland to provide a guiding hand in the first year of her personal reign. To their houses, she bequeathed sets of head garnishings of rubies and pearls "to the house of Guise to remain forever with the eldest son," and similarly to those of Aumale and Elboeuf, establishing dynastic collections of jewels as she had done for the Scottish Crown.⁷⁵ Mary left little to the aunts who had served as her ladies-in-waiting in France, although her favourite, Anne d'Este, Duchesse de Guise, received a pendant with a large emerald and pendant pearl. One aunt, of the four still surviving at the

⁷² Robertson, *Inventaires*, 112. Randolph's report of the wedding, which he did not attend, describes Darnley putting three rings on her hand with the middle one containing "a riche diamond." Randolph to Leicester, 31 July 1565 in Ellis, *Original Letters*, 2:200–204.

⁷³ For background and examples of princely collecting, see Koeppel, *Making Marvels*: a range of essays on the collections gathered in *Kunstkammers*/cabinets of curiosities, in particular, Dirk Syndram on "Amassing Significance: The Role of the *Kunstkammer* in Princely Self-Representation."

⁷⁴ Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers*, 22.

⁷⁵ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 96, 101–103.

time of the inventory, received particular attention: Renée, Abbess of St Pierre-les-Dames in Reims. This was the burial place of Mary's mother, and in her will of 1587, in which her cousin the Duc de Guise was named as principal executor, the queen expressed her desire to be buried there too.⁷⁶ Mary had a deep attachment to the Abbess and she is the beneficiary of a large diamond-studded mirror containing the image of Queen Elizabeth I, and two gold hearts, one of which Mary had received full of gold coins on her first official entry into Perth.⁷⁷ Otherwise, Mary focussed her largesse on the next generation, her cousins, and especially the Duc de Guise and those of his siblings born during Mary's time in France, all of whom were destined to receive costly pendants. Henri, Duc de Guise, Catherine, daughter of Claude, Duc d'Aumale, and Marie, daughter of the Marquis d'Elbouef, Mary's goddaughter, would have benefitted the most. The latter's special relationship accounts for her receiving two pendants, head garnishings set with forty-three cabochon rubies and eighty-eight pearls, and a *cottoire* and belt of coral with pearl embellished links.⁷⁸

The only other recipients then living in France, and not members of the Guise family, were Marie de Beaucaire, the Viscountess of Martigues, who had served as the queen's maid of honour in France from 1556 until 1561, and Livia Pica, the daughter of the Count della Miradola known as La Contine. Marie de Beaucaire's reputation as a particular favourite is borne out by her appearance in second position in the inventory and the richness of the bequests to her and her daughter, the queen's goddaughter.⁷⁹ These are some of the finest jewels, including the third best pendant set with a very large emerald, a set of head dress, carcan, *cottoire* of cabochon rubies and pearls, as well as the finest of zibelline furs. Marie came from a family which had shown conspicuous loyalty to the queen and her mother over a number of decades. Her father Jean de Beaucaire, sieur de Puiguillon, a client of the house of Lorraine, had served Mary of Guise before being appointed Mary's Master of Household from 1556 until 1574. Randolph described him as "chief in credit above any that serve her, and his wife as well favoured of the Queen as any woman that ever served her."⁸⁰ The couple and their son, Gilbert, followed Mary to

⁷⁶ Wilkinson, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 34–35.

⁷⁷ *CSP Scotland*, 1:555. 24 September 1561, Randolph to Cecil: on her entry into St Johnston (Perth), the queen received "a harte of gold, full of gold."

⁷⁸ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 93–96, 114.

⁷⁹ *CSP Scotland*., 1:621. In April 1562, Randolph reported to Cecil that the Sieur de Martigues, who had seen military service in Scotland, had petitioned Mary to be godmother to his daughter.

⁸⁰ *CSP Scotland*, 1:645.

Scotland in 1561, remaining there for a year before returning to France. A much lesser jewel, a diamond ring, was bequeathed to the friend of her childhood, Livia Pica, but is no less heartfelt and uses Livia's pet name: "to La Contine for remembrance."⁸¹ For some reason, Mary changed her mind about giving an emerald ring to Antoinette de la Marcq, another of her maids of honour in France. In 1559 she had married Henri de Montmorency, sieur de Damville, who had accompanied Mary to Scotland in 1561. In 1557, the young queen had written to her mother asking her to find a husband for Antoinette who, she said, loved Mary so much she would marry anyone if she could stay with her.⁸²

There is no place in the inventory for bequests to any of the French royal family. Back in Scotland, Mary kept in contact with, and received advice from, Catherine de Medici, but the warmth of their relationship fluctuated according to France's political needs. In December 1562, Randolph reported that Mary received a letter from her former mother-in-law:

with more gentle words than ever she dyd wryte before. We looke suspicious (knowinge before what unkyndnesses there was betweene thys Quene and her good mother not longe before her departure owte of France) that for some occasione she courrieth favour.⁸³

More surprising, perhaps, is the absence of Elisabeth de Valois, Queen of Spain, her childhood roommate and friend. In November 1559, just before Elisabeth left France to be married, Mary wrote to Philip II describing herself as "the person who loves her most in the world."⁸⁴ While only one letter has survived from Mary to her, the content of that letter suggests a more regular correspondence. Written to her "*Bonne Soeur*" from Bolton in September 1568, with Mary desperate to raise support on the continent, she praises God for the good fortune in the "nourishing childhood" they had enjoyed, the source of their "unbreakable friendship" and refers to a proposal which Elisabeth made that Prince James should marry one of her daughters.⁸⁵ Her absence from the bequests underlines Mary's dynastic focus and loyalty to her Guise relatives.

⁸¹ Marshall, *Queen Mary's Women*, 52–53.

⁸² Antoinette's name is scored out and Rizzio's brother, Joseph, is inserted and tasked with delivering the ring to an unidentified person as directed by Mary, Robertson, *Inventaires*, 113. Labanoff, *Lettres*, 1:42–43, c. May 1557; Marshall, *Queen Mary's Women*, 69.

⁸³ CSP Scotland, 1:674, Randolph to Cecil.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Chang, *Young Queens*, 132.

⁸⁵ Labanoff, *Lettres*, 2:182–187.

The Scots: family and friends

The first Scottish recipients are the queen's blood relatives, the illegitimate offspring of her father James V. Blood, even if not legitimate, really was thicker than water. Jean Stewart, the Countess of Argyll, the queen's half-sister and confidante, was a major beneficiary and is the first Scot on the list, receiving twelve items, including two full sets of garnishings with rubies and pearls, scented beads, a sable fur, earrings, and rings. The countess had grown up at court and her illegitimate birth was no bar to her marriage in 1554 to Archibald Campbell, the future Earl of Argyll. She spent much time with Mary as her lady-in-waiting, away from her husband whom, despite Mary's attempts to heal their division, she eventually divorced, and she was with the queen when Rizzio was murdered. Later that year she stood proxy for Elizabeth I as James VI's godmother at his baptism in Stirling. Despite her personal struggles, she remained faithful to Mary.⁸⁶

In line with Mary's generosity to her French godsons and goddaughters, her godson, the four-year-old Francis Stewart, son of her favourite half-brother, John Stewart, Commendator of Coldingham, appears thirteen times in the inventory. As well as the unicorn horn, he was to receive several dozen jewelled buttons and aglets, a chain decorated with rubies, diamonds, and pearls and, from the queen's cabinet, a painting of unknown subject, decorated with five rubies and one emerald. Her half-brothers, James, Earl of Moray, and Robert, Commendator of Holyrood, also receive costly jewels from her cabinet: a golden rose with fourteen diamonds, a ruby and pendant pearl, and a cross with five table diamonds and three pendant pearls. Mary's cousin Margaret Fleming, Countess of Atholl, one of the queen's companions and ladies-in-waiting, receives a zibelline fur, an ermine with a jet head. She remained a supporter of the queen throughout her life, was present with her at the birth of Prince James, and, in 1570, sent Mary a highly politicised jewel "well dekkit with gold and anamellit" with the message "fall what may fall the lion will be Lord of All," which was immediately confiscated by Elizabeth I.⁸⁷ In 1585, she offered to join Mary in her captivity.

⁸⁶ CSP Scotland, 3, 313–315; and BL, MS Cotton Caligula C/II f.34. Marie Pierres (Pieris), Lady Seton, writing to the queen in August 1570, describes the impact their support of Mary could have on her friends. The Countess of Argyll, she reports, is in Stirling, very angry, and in great poverty. Her condition might be attributed also to her separation from her husband. Dawson: "The Noble and the Bastard," 154–156; and Marshall, *Queen Mary's Women*, 166–167.

⁸⁷ *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie*, 23–24, Alexander Hay to the Earl of Mar, 29 November 1570.

The Countess of Moray, Annas Keith, Mary's sister-in-law, also receives one of the sets of scented beads, while her newly born daughter receives an *aureillette* and a carcan set with rubies and emeralds. The countess was one of Mary's intimates, and in July 1567 Throckmorton reported the "great sorrow between the Queen and her at meeting [on Lochleven] and much greater at parting." Once Mary was in exile, their relationship broke down for a while, tainted by the Earl of Moray's treatment of the queen and the countess' refusal to give up some of Mary's jewels, including the Great Harry, resulting in increasingly acrimonious letters to the countess from the queen.⁸⁸

The Four Maries and their families

The appearance in the inventory of the queen's childhood companions, the four Maries (Fleming, Livingston, Seton, and Beaton) whose fates were linked inextricably to hers, is not at all surprising. But, as maids of honour rather than ladies-in-waiting, bequests to the four appear in the second gathering. There, apart from the contents of the queen's cabinet, the items are of lesser value: gold enamelled in black, white, green, or red but devoid of precious stones. All four Maries receive small diamond rings as memorials of the queen but are not equally favoured in other bequests. Fleming, Beaton, and Livingston are bequeathed parures of head garnishings, carcans, *cottoires*, and belts, while Seton is the least favoured with a smaller set of head garnishings without carcan or *cottoire*. In addition, Fleming receives seventy large gold beads for perfume and Livingston, 126 aglets, large and small, enamelled in white, and two strings of coral beads.⁸⁹ The female members of the Fleming and Livingston families receive nineteen bequests of single and multiple jewels, more than any other of the four families.

Mary Fleming had the closest blood relationship to the queen, being a granddaughter of James IV. In March 1563, she was the Marie selected to be the queen's "bedfellow" after the shock of Chatelard's intrusion into the queen's bedchamber and subsequent execution.⁹⁰ She was reputed to have sent to Lochleven a ring with the message "he who has spirit enough will not want force," and in the early 1570s she joined her husband, William Maitland of Lethington, in Edinburgh Castle, which he held on behalf of

⁸⁸ *Earl of Moray Papers*, Appendix: 638. Countess of Moray: *CSP Scotland*, 2:363, 26 July 1567, Throckmorton to Elizabeth I.

⁸⁹ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 111, 117–119. Mary Livingston's prominence in the group is mirrored in the 1562 inventory of the Queen's clothing, marked up to show where items have been removed, in which she is the recipient of double the items of the other Maries, NRS E35/3; Robertson, *Inventaires*, 60–74.

⁹⁰ *CSP Scotland*, 1:688.

the queen's party.⁹¹ Her brother, John, Fifth Lord Fleming, was a redoubtable supporter of the queen, serving as her Great Chamberlain and Master Usher of her chamber from 1565. He joined her after her escape from Lochleven in 1568 and served as one of her commissioners at the conference in York later that year. As we have seen, Mary Fleming's sister, Margaret, became Countess of Atholl. Her other sister, Agnes, married Mary Livingston's brother, William, Sixth Lord Livingston. He and his wife joined Mary in her captivity, arriving at Bolton in August 1568 and remaining with her until 1572. Sir Francis Knollys described Lady Livingston to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, as the one "whom this Quene dothe esteme moste dearly."⁹² It is not surprising then to find her in the first gathering, sharing the queen's collection of earrings with the countesses of Argyll and Mar, and receiving one of the lesser zibelline furs, an ermine with enamelled head and feet, but without gemstones.⁹³

Mary Livingston's sister, Magdalen Livingston, usually called "Livingston the Younger," married Arthur Erskine of Blackgrange, brother of the Earl of Mar, in 1562. He had served in Mary's household since 1556 and was present at some of the most dramatic episodes of her reign.⁹⁴ He was in the queen's cabinet on the night of Rizzio's murder and carried the queen on his horse at the escape to Dunbar. The affection in which the couple were held by the queen can be seen in the bequest to them of precious items from Mary's cabinet: a hat badge (*enseigne*) with a sapphire and pendant pearl for Arthur, and a watch embellished with two rubies, two large sapphires, and a pendant pearl for Magdalen.⁹⁵

The Maries lay at the centre of a network of close-knit, intermarried families with a long history of service to the queen in France and Scotland which, for some, continued into her incarceration in England. Apart from the Flemings, with their royal background, these were not families of the highest status and did not necessarily follow the queen's faith (the Flemings and Livingstons were Protestant, the Setons and Beatons, Catholic), but their ties with France were strong and they formed a deeply loyal and tight, protective circle around the queen.⁹⁶ Two of the four had French mothers who had arrived in Scotland as ladies-in-waiting to Mary of Guise: Mary Beaton's mother, Jeanne de Grismoir, and Mary

⁹¹ NRS, SP13/99, Statement by a supporter c. 1567–1568; Marshall, *The Queen's Women*, 147–149.

⁹² *CSP Scotland*, 2:614 and 633.

⁹³ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 106–109.

⁹⁴ Ellis, *Original Letters*, 2:213, Earl of Bedford and Randolph to the English Privy Council, 27 March 1566.

⁹⁵ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 106–107, 109, 111, 120–121, 123.

⁹⁶ Marshall, *The Queen's Women*, ch. 9, and Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, ch. 4. Donaldson has a useful table showing the interconnections between the families, 170–171.

Seton's mother, Marie Pierres, who, due to their seniority and long service, were bequeathed amethyst and cornelian bracelets.⁹⁷ In 1570, Lady Seton was imprisoned briefly for having sent a letter to the queen in England.⁹⁸ Her daughter, Mary Seton, never married, and shared Mary's captivity on Lochleven and in England, retiring in 1583 to the convent of St Pierre-les-Dames in Rheims due to ill health. Her brother, the Fifth Lord Seton, who had been raised and educated in France, proved to be the queen's loyal supporter, waiting for her when she escaped from Lochleven and trying to raise support for her in France and Spain once she was in England. In January 1571, he is described as a gentleman who "has continually remained all his days the Queen's true subject."⁹⁹

The four Maries and their extended families formed part of the queen's intimate circle, were regularly in her company. The bequests are their reward for loyalty and long service, but also made in the hope of their future devotion to Mary's heir should she die.

Conclusion

In September 1567, the Earl of Moray was reported as being busy receiving inventories of the queen's jewellery and clothing, which were "said to be of much greater value than she was esteemed to have."¹⁰⁰ The testamentary inventory reveals the substantial, costly, and fashionable collection of jewellery which she had enlarged during her personal reign in Scotland. Growing up at the centre of the sophisticated French court, she was imbued with its culture of magnificence and would have been conscious of how she could express this through the wearing of her jewellery.

The 1566 inventory is one among a number of inventories of her jewels listed during her lifetime, but this is by far the most significant in that it gives us an insight into what she thought was important at that juncture: commemoration, dynasty, family, and the hope of continued service. Testamentary wishes, an intensely personal matter, were for a reigning queen also political. The document is first of all a dynastic statement. Mary's major bequests of her most significant jewels are to the two families joined in her person: the royal family of Scotland and the Guise family of Lorraine, both of which dynasties she intended would preserve her memory through their ownership of these heirlooms. Mary was intensely aware of both her French and Scottish roots and the inventory is thus the

⁹⁷ Robertson, *Inventaires*, 106.

⁹⁸ Marshall, *Queen Mary's Women*, 157.

⁹⁹ *CSP Scotland*, 3:468.

¹⁰⁰ Crosby, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, 8:337, 11 September 1567, Earl of Bedford to Cecil.

embodiment of the Franco-Scottish connections forged during the reigns of Mary, her father, James V, and her mother. Mary, while accessible and affectionate to those who served her, was also deeply aware of her status. The inventory is a hierarchical document in terms of the jewels and those who were to receive them: intimacy, or a special service rendered, might allow some individuals of lower status to receive expensive jewels, but in the main the bequests are appropriate to the rank of the recipient. Finally, the document is a personal and intimate statement in which the queen expresses gratitude for years of service and loyalty from her inner circle and those serving in her household, many of whom continued to support her, either in person or from a distance, in the years following her downfall.

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E35/11 Receipts and other papers relating to jewels 'laid in wed' [pledged] or otherwise disposed of by Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange, captain of Edinburgh Castle, and others, 1571-1573, including: E35/11/24 Letter from Regent Mar to [Robert Richardson] commendator of St Mary's Isle, Stirling, 2 September 1572.

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