

James V, King of Scots, 10.04.1512 – 14.12.1542



James V (1512–1542), king of Scots, was born at Linlithgow Palace, the fourth of the six children of James IV (1473–1513) and Margaret Tudor (1489–1541). James was the only one of their offspring to survive infancy and was crowned on 21 September 1513 at the age of seventeen months. James's personal rule began in 1528 when aged 16, he deposed his stepfather, the last of a series of regents who had ruled in his name.

Following this long period of Regency, James sought to reinforce the power of the Crown. James greatly increased his income by tightening control over royal estates and from the profits of justice, customs and feudal rights. He founded the College of Justice in 1532, and also acted to end lawlessness and rebellion in the kingdom. He cemented the 'Auld Alliance' and negotiated two prestigious French marriages, first to Madeleine of Valois (who died months after arriving in Scotland), and then to Mary of Guise.

James V's reign saw the beginnings of Protestantism in Scotland, and, in contrast to his uncle, Henry VIII of England, James took a strongly Catholic stance. Pope Paul III granted him the title of 'Defender of the Faith' upon his first marriage in 1537. James V also corresponded with Irish nobles and chiefs throughout their resistance to Henry VIII in the 1530s, and in 1540 they offered him the kingship of Ireland.

A patron of the arts, James spent lavishly on the construction of several royal residences including Falkland Palace and Stirling Castle. He made regular gifts and pilgrimages to St Adrian on the Isle of May, commissioned tapestries, poetry and music, and built up a fleet of ships. Despite this, he has been characterised as the "poor man's king". Accounts suggest that he liked to learn about his subjects by circulating among them incognito and inspired Walter Scott's portrayal of him as the 'gudeman of Ballengeich' in *Tales of a Grandfather*.

It was in this guise that King James is said to have visited Anstruther and was carried across the Dreel Burn by a local woman who forded the stream with the King on her back. James paid her fee, in return for which she gave him a blessing or 'benison'. This story, in turn, became the founding myth of the 18th century 'Beggars Benison' Club of Anstruther.

James died, probably of cholera or dysentery, during a renewed period of warfare with England, the last monarch to die in Scotland until Queen Elizabeth II 480 years later. His only surviving legitimate child, Mary, succeeded him at the age of just six days old.