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Join one of Europe's leading centres for the study of the History

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology offers a diverse and energetic research culture covering many periods, geographical areas, themes and approaches across the subjects of History, Classics, and Archaeology.

The University of Edinburgh is ranked in the World's top 20 for Arts and Humanities (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016/17). The University is committed to delivering world-leading research and knowledge exchange, in order to do so we have a number of cross-School research groups including: Digital Humanities; Global and Transnational History; Political History; Intellectual History; Late Antique and Byzantine Studies; Material Culture; the History of Science and Medicine and Technology, as well as three Research Centres: The Centre for the Study of Modern Conflict; the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; and the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies. Graduate students participate actively in our lively research culture through our research groups and centres and through staff and student-led workshops and seminars.

With over 100 academic staff, all experts in their own research fields, the School offers a diverse and energetic research culture grounded in a tradition of excellence that dates back to the late-19th century. We cover a wide variety of periods, geographical places, themes and approaches, from prehistory to the contemporary world. Whilst retaining the traditional strengths of our three subjects of Archaeology, Classics and History, the School cultivates new synergies and inter-disciplinary collaborations that bring together dynamic

groups of experienced academics, early career and postdoctoral researchers, and postgraduates.

Please read on to discover some of the fascinating research undertaken within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

Dr Cordelia Beattie
BA, MA, DPhil, FRHistS
Senior Lecturer in History



I have been researching women in late medieval England since choosing to do my undergraduate dissertation on prostitution in this period. My interest in both women's history and social history stemmed from a realization that the lives of many people, while important, were not covered in the History I was taught at school.

Since taking up a lectureship at the University of Edinburgh, I have supervised a number of postgraduates on gender in pre-modern Scotland because of the wealth of archival material on our doorstep. This has influenced the direction that my own research has taken.

I am currently engaged in a project with a former student of mine, Dr Cathryn Spence, who is now a Professor of History at Vancouver Island University in Canada,

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in partnership with the National Records of Scotland (NRS).

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) holds more than fourteen thousand testamentary documents for sixteenth-century Scotland and about half of these are testaments testamentar (that is, drawn up by the person before her death). Of these, just over a quarter were written by women. In England by this date the married woman's will was a rarity because of the common law doctrine of 'coverture', which gave legal guardianship of a wife's property to her husband (until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882). However, this was not the case in Scotland. In all eight commissary courts the largest single group of women making testaments was wives. This point has been overlooked to date and so our project seeks

to explain this divergence in legal customs and analyse this substantial body of material. It will explore married women's ownership and control of different kinds of property and the factors affecting it. It will also assess whether there was a gendered pattern of will making, particularly in respect to friendship networks and relationship to material culture.

The sixteenth-century Scottish hand is very different to the one that I am used to for fifteenth-century England and Cathryn Spence's familiarity with it (gained during her postgraduate study both at the University of Guelph and the University of Edinburgh) has been indispensable to the project.

The partnership with the NRS has enabled access to their database cataloguing the testamentary material, which allowed statistics to be generated for checking. In return we will share the corrections to the NRS database with them and the improved entries will then be made available to the public through their search. The partnership with the NRS has also given us digital access to the probate material so that Cathryn can work on the project from Canada. We have also attracted funding both internally and externally, for example, from the Economic History Society, the Strathmartine Trust and the Society for Antiquaries of Scotland.