

*Scotland and Europe: the Medieval Kingdom and its Contacts with Christendom, 1214-1560 – volume I: Religion, Culture and Commerce.* By David Ditchburn. Tuckwell Press. 2000. xiii + 335 pp., £16.99.

This is a marvellous and important book. Based upon over a decade of trawling European archives and printed primary sources - followed by thoughtful reflection on recent studies - this is the way history should be researched and written. As the first of two projected volumes, this work sets the scene by surveying thematically the Scottish kingdom's interaction with north-western Europe and wider Christendom between *c.* 1215 and *c.* 1542, dealing in turn with the mechanisms of Scots' travel abroad; the institutional, educational and spiritual ties of religion; the cultural bonds of chivalry and the arts; the commodities and markets of economic links; the push and pull factors which found Scots resident abroad and (far fewer) foreigners in Scotland; and European perceptions of Scotland (from England to Morocco). As the author cautions, the nature of the sources lends itself to a preponderance of post-1400 evidence, and readers must await volume two for an analysis of this continental interaction over-time in the context of high crown, noble and papal politics. Nonetheless, this instalment alone works on many rewarding levels. It is undoubtedly fitting that the everyday, the long-term and necessary contact of Scotland with her neighbours - *at all levels of society* - be mapped first, before analysing how the agendas and conflicts of the elites might shape or alter (and even relent in the face of) these trends and traditions. As a catalogue of Scotland's diverse and

growing exchange with Europe this book will have many new surprises for specialists: e.g. south-European cartographers' and writers' views of Scotland and especially its (lack of) towns. It also contains the clearest studies to date of Scotland's crucial wool trade and emigration to Europe. Some may haggle with the occasional inference (e.g. David II *did* hold tournaments; the earl of Angus may not be 'Hagre l'Escot' celebrated in French service as he was dead by 1362?). But such nit-picking will never detract from the wealth of detail and overall scope of this study. The fascinating bibliography (35 pages!) cannot fail to inspire many to a variety of new approaches to the study of Scotland's history, identity, economy and environment: a printed guide by the author to the various archives he encountered would be invaluable. Overall, the newcomer and informed student cannot help but be convinced of Scotland's full participation in the European mainstream and the predominance before 1560 of ties with the continent rather than England. Volume two will thus be eagerly awaited. It is surely a work worth illustrating with plates and maps?