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While some chapters in this book engage only loosely with identity, overall this volume indicates a number of approaches to the study of Scottish identities that will be useful in shaping future research.

The University of the Highlands and Islands

D.A.J. MACPHERSON
DOI: 10.3366/shr.2012.0113

Britain and Europe, 1500–1780.

By Ralph Houlbrooke. Pp. xvi, 383.

ISBN: 9780340581193 (paperback).

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. £19.99.

The great challenge of producing broad historical surveys is to avoid meaningless generalities and to endeavour to draw on the best and latest research (not always the same thing) in serving the readers' interests. This is a book not just for university students but for the elusive 'general reader', and it brings together an impressive amount of work with largely Anglophone historiography. It focuses on Britain but does make a genuine effort to analyse early modern British history in a European context. One advantage of such an approach is that it enables the author to explore the ambiguities of the relationship of Ireland to England but also to the island of Britain as a whole, over what can be understood as the key period in its development. Of course, this could be said of British relations with France, with Spain, with the Netherlands and with other parts of Europe but considering the development of Ireland's relationship with Britain (as colony and province but never as equal) makes for particularly effective analysis in a broader European context. Much text in a substantial book is taken up with the need to include a great deal of information. The author has the advantage of considerable knowledge of the life and career of James VI and I of Scotland and England (and Wales and Ireland). This is reflected in the division of the text into three parts divided chronologically into 1500–1603, 1603–1707 and 1707–1780 (though why not to 1789 and the outbreak of the French Revolution is unclear). The union of the crowns in 1603 gave substance to the idea of Britain on several levels, with and without an Irish context; the seventeenth century is characterised both by a catastrophic descent into anarchy and the emergence of a civil society out of that disaster and the British perspective of the book is made explicit in accepting the date of the parliamentary union of England and Scotland as the starting point for consideration of British and European history for most of the eighteenth century.

The author squares up to the challenge of avoiding superficiality by complementing more general discussion of the Reformation, the monarchy, population and the economy, and the Enlightenment (there is a single reference to the 'renaissance' in the index) with specific discussion at certain points in the text of Britain and Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Spain in particular, but not to the complete exclusion of other kingdoms and regions of the continent. How does Scotland fare in relation to the demands of accommodating so much else within one text? Some readers might suspect tokenism but there is an even consideration of aspects of Scottish subjects throughout the text. There are separate discussions of the Reformation in relation to England and to Scotland but also to France and the Netherlands, and a separate discussion of 'the impact of the British Reformations', as well as a chapter entitled 'Contacts and Connections: Renaissance and Reformation'. It is interesting that the author

makes the confident statement (p. 231) that ‘English politicians tended to treat Scotland almost like a colony’. Discuss! This certainly is an example of a determination not to be content to generalise. A valuable characteristic of the book is its awareness of the broader context of the union issue, for example, by careful (but not lengthy) discussion of the history of the British union with Hanover from 1714, which did not come to an end until the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. Houlbrooke relates that ‘as early as February 1716, George I made a will for the separation of Britain and Hanover, which he thought would benefit both of them’ (p. 286). George II suppressed this but his son Prince Frederick had planned to implement independence for Hanover only for death to overtake his ambitions. Was his son a unionist because his tutor and mentor was a Scotsman in the shape of the third earl of Bute?

The University of Edinburgh

ALEXANDER MURDOCH
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The Scottish Middle March, 1573–1625. Power, Kinship, Alliance.

By Anna Groundwater. Pp. xii, 236.

ISBN: 9780861933075.

Woodbridge: The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2010.
£50.00.

Recent studies of the Borders centering on the sixteenth century—such as Professor Meikle’s *A British Frontier?* (2004)—have concentrated less on cataloguing the violence of a society distinctively organized for warfare (the society of the ‘steel bonnets’ highlighted by disapproving contemporaries, and romanticised by Sir Walter Scott). Instead, emphasis has been placed on parallels in their social organization and governance with other parts of Scotland, and on their links with the Court and central government. The eventual containment and marginalisation of violence in Border society has been viewed in the context of the state’s more general reformist interventions, especially from the later sixteenth century onwards.

Dr Groundwater’s study reinforces and expands these interpretative trends. Her analysis advances our understanding of how the deeply rooted, often unruly, kinship groups of the Middle March came to be transformed into more responsive agencies of government policy and, ultimately, came to lose their rationale and vigour. The study is valuable too for understanding the varying pace of change throughout the Anglo-Scottish marches. Comparisons are made with the more intractable Scottish west march, rent by the long-lasting Johnstone-Maxwell feud and remote from the haunts of court and privy council. Some contrasts are sketched with the English marches, wary and sometimes resistant to peremptory admonitions from distant Whitehall.

At the core of the study is the reconstitution of the composition and mechanisms of Border kin-groups, the ‘surnames’, in the middle march. Aspects of them besides their well-rehearsed capacity for collective and fragmented violence are emphasised and reappraised. They are shown as being characteristically of long-standing provenance, and susceptible to use as forces for stability as well as disorder. They provided mechanisms for the settlement of disputes and feuds, as well as for their prosecution. In James VI’s minority, inclinations to violence by surnames were notably ratcheted up through the attachment of chiefs to rival magnates and Court factions, as well as by cross-Border raiding; James’ often fraught relations with Queen Elizabeth inclined him on occasion to tolerate the unruly power and defiant willfulness of surnames. The issue of the English succession was a prime factor in his