

Dr E.V. Macleod, Department of History, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA.

*Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, eds Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (East Linton: Tuckwell Press Ltd, 1999; pp.xvii + 272. Pb. £14.99) is an opportune collection of twenty short essays. Interest in the history of Scottish women, previously largely neglected, has recently begun to grow substantially (evidenced, for example, by the revival of the Scottish Women's History Network), and it is certainly to be hoped that the essays in this volume may stimulate further research. This is a lively and readable volume, and it is also attractively presented and priced. The essays are divided into six sections on religion, literature, Court, the economy, law and the family. They have deliberately been kept short, in order to showcase as many as possible of the different aspects of current research. All of these qualities make it a book which is likely to be attractive to general readers as well as to students. However, the brevity of the articles (most cannot be much longer than 4000 words) does present drawbacks. Since some of the authors were concerned to include a substantial serving of lively anecdotes, which certainly adds to the accessibility of the book, their essays run the risk of appearing a little inconsequential. However, this reviewer particularly enjoyed such contributions as those by Audrey-Beth Finch (on the cult of the virgin martyrs in the pre-Reformation era), David Mullan (on women and religion in the early seventeenth century), Helen Dingwall (on women and the economy of late seventeenth-century Edinburgh), Michael Graham (on women's involvement in the church courts in the post-Reformation period), Gordon DesBrisay (on the connections between high illegitimacy levels and the deliberate employment of single mothers as wet nurses) and Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart (on early modern women in the western Gàidhealtachd, or Highlands. These contrive to embed an admirable volume of detail within stimulating and carefully constructed discussions. Other essays, such as that by Ian D. Whyte and Kathleen A. Whyte (on ministers' wives, post-1560), present thought-

provoking frameworks for future research. While more than half of the essays in this collection were contributed specially for the book, nine of them were first presented at a conference in Edinburgh in 1996, and, as with any post-conference collection of essays, there is the slight frustration for the reader of not being able to participate in the discussion of the links and discrepancies between the various papers. The editors provide a slightly longer introduction, and the arrangement of the articles into sections on broad topics is helpful; but it is a pity that space was not found for a longer and more wide-ranging article on the problems and opportunities of Scottish women's history in this period. Such an attempt might have lent this collection even greater coherence and importance. None the less, it is to be welcomed warmly for

*University of Stirling*

EMMA VINCENT MACLEOD