



The Forgotten Tudor Women: Margaret Douglas, Mary Howard & Mary Shelton

Sylvia Barbara Soberton

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Everyone knows that Henry VIII had six wives, two sisters and two daughters. All of these women received attention in academic circles and are the subjects of countless biographies. Not many people, however, realize that Henry VIII also had a niece, a daughter-in-law and a mistress, who were close friends, but who today remain on the fringes of history.

Margaret Douglas was the daughter of Henry VIII's elder sister Margaret, Queen of Scotland. She was imprisoned thrice, and each time, as she admitted, "not for matters of treason, but for love matters". Her legacy includes marrying her son to Mary, Queen of Scots, and playing the doting grandmother to King James VI and I.

Mary Howard was the daughter of Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, leading peer of the Tudor court. She served as maid of honour to her first cousin, Anne Boleyn, and married Henry VIII's illegitimate but acknowledged son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond. Widowed at the age of seventeen, Mary fought for her rightful jointure and was, by her father's admission, "too wise for a woman".

Mary Shelton, like Mary Howard, was related to Anne Boleyn and became her servant at court. Beautiful and skilled in poetry, Mary attracted Henry VIII's attention and became his mistress in 1535, but many don't realize how important her contributions were to the literary scene of the time.

This book moves Margaret Douglas, Mary Howard and Mary Shelton from the footnotes of history into the spotlight, where they deserve to shine along with their more famous contemporaries.

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