

Wronged mother

Jane Douglas

1698-1753

Jane's life had so much promise – the daughter of the Duke of Douglas, she was noted for her beauty and intelligence.

But she fell for the handsome, impoverished Jacobite, Colonel John Steuart of Grandtully.

After two years of courtship Lady Jane sent her suitor away – an act she later blamed on having heeded false rumours.

Ten years passed until they were reconciled, but her father disapproved.

In 1746 the couple wed in secret and left for the Low Countries.

Two years later they went to Paris, with Jane heavily pregnant.

Giving birth to twins at the age of 50 caused claims that the couple had faked the pregnancy to put them in line for the duke's inheritance.

Lady Jane was rejected by her father and brother.

After returning to Britain the colonel was jailed for debt and Lady Jane was turned away from Douglas Castle.

One of her sons, Sholto, then sickened and died.

Even this, combined with her own failing health, failed to soften the hearts of her kin.

Lady Jane died in Edinburgh.

However a long and bitter legal dispute in the 1760s saw Archibald, her surviving son, declared the legitimate Douglas heir and vindicated his mother.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/7905.html>.