

Wicked husband

Patrick Maxwell

fl.1580s

A cultured and man of refined architectural tastes, Sir Patrick Maxwell was a justice of the peace and a friend of the king.

He was also notorious as a murderer and wife-beater.

His terrible deeds unfolded in one of Scotland's most elegant settings.

Sir Patrick was owner of Newark Castle, outside Glasgow, where he built a beautiful new range in the 1590s which incorporated the latest Renaissance features.

This was set amidst fine orchards and formal gardens.

Among his most bitter enemies were the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie – in 1584 he murdered two of them in one day.

He was even implicated in the death of his own kinsman, Patrick Maxwell of Stanley Castle.

Perhaps worst of all was his treatment of his wife, Lady Margaret, who bore him 16 children during 44 terrible years of marriage.

She was beaten and even attacked with a sword – eventually fleeing to live at Dumbarton Castle in poverty.

Unusually for the day, Lady Margaret tried to take action to have her 'unkind and unnatural husband' restrained.

Sadly, being a man of power and guile, Sir Patrick was always able to avoid answering for his crimes.

It seemed that matters would finally be brought to a head when Lady Margaret arranged for her husband to go on trial in Edinburgh.

Again Sir Patrick escaped punishment – but this time because he fell ill and died.