

- **FACTSHEET 2**

- **Tapestries in medieval and renaissance times**

- Tapestry was an integral part of medieval and renaissance interior decoration in the large state-rooms and great halls of Scottish Royal residences. It provided decoration and a lavish display of wealth and also kept out the cold and damp.
- Tapestries were prized not only for their beauty, but also for the amount of time they took to weave and their consequent great cost.
- The benefit of tapestries was that they could be rolled up and transported in the royal baggage train, fitting in perfectly with the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the court.
- Medieval tapestries were made mainly from wool, silk and the more costly works would include gold thread.
- James V and his father James IV were great collectors of tapestry. They both married women who brought their own tapestry sets to the royal collection.
- At the wedding of James IV and Margaret Tudor in 1503 at Holyroodhouse, we learn from an eye-witness account that the King's Hall was hung with 'The History of Old Troy' and the Queen's Hall with the 'History of Hercules'. It is likely that these sets came from the English Royal Collection.
- In 1539, the first major inventory of James's rule appeared with more than 100 tapestries listed. James was only nine years into his personal rule and it is unlikely that these tapestries were all brought by him, so we must attribute the majority of these to his father's collection.
- By 1536, James V was purchasing his own tapestry, possibly on his trip to France before his first (and short-lived) marriage to Madeline. The treasurers' accounts show that in 1538 further tapestries were delivered from Flanders. Like many of his royal European contemporaries, James V spent a great deal of money furnishing his palaces.
- After the death of James V's widow Mary of Guise in 1561, her daughter Mary Queen of Scots returned from France and all the goods of her wardrobe were again inventoried. We learn that there were still a significant number of tapestries in the collection but many were very old and worn and some had been made into seat and bed covers.
- It would appear that after James V's death in 1542 there were no new purchases of tapestry. By the time young James VI went south to the English court much of the royal collection was dispersed among the leading aristocrats of the day.
- James VI inherited the fabulous English Collection amassed by Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey.