This is a one-volume history of medieval Scotland, concentrating on the period between the middle of the eleventh century and the Reformation and taking full account of recent scholarship.

It is primarily a political and ecclesiastical study, analysing the development of the institutions of the Scottish state, conflict and co-operation between the crown and the nobility, relations with external powers, the history of the church in Scotland, and the formation of a distinctive Scottish identity. The Wars of Independence are examined in their historical context, and elements of continuity and change are identified across the whole period. Particular emphasis is placed upon relations between core and periphery in medieval Scotland and on the difficulties experienced by the crown in imposing royal authority in the north and west.

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This is a series of specially commissioned textbooks for teachers and students, designed to complement the monograph series Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought by providing introductions to a range of topics in medieval history. This series combines both chronological and thematic approaches, and will deal with British and European topics. All volumes in the series will be published in hard covers and in paperback.

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Writers of textbooks are faced with many challenges, not least that of deciding which aspects of their topic should be included and which left on the sidelines. In the case of a volume on medieval Scotland which aims to cover several centuries, it is inevitable that large areas of scholarly activity will be bypassed in an attempt to retain the length of the book within reasonable bounds. My approach to the subject has been a traditional one, and I have concentrated on political and ecclesiastical history rather than on the economy and society, although I have endeavoured to retain an awareness of the effect of social and economic changes on the people of Scotland. Despite the paucity of Scottish sources, scholars have increasingly found it possible to investigate the lives of those below the political elite, and have thereby immeasurably enriched our view of medieval life, but it was impossible to do their work full justice in this volume. Other areas, including relations with Scandinavia, Germany and the Low Countries, the development of Scots law, and the flowering of Scottish literature, have also been given less attention than they deserve. Political history, however, provides one of the most accessible approaches to the past and to the lessons that we can learn from it. If we are to discover the origins and nature of Scottish identity, we must strive to understand the development of the institutions of the state, the relations between the crown and the nobility, the distinctive features of ecclesiastical life in Scotland, and the significance of the Wars of Independence.
My debt to the work of other scholars will be apparent throughout the book. Their challenging new interpretations and exploration of fresh areas of Scottish history have led academics, students and the general public to question old orthodoxies and view the past with a different perspective. I hope that I have not misconstrued their arguments too grievously, and that this volume will stimulate further debate about the history of Scotland and the country’s place in the wider world. In a book of this nature it is inappropriate to footnote the discussion in full, although I have given references for some specific points, and have used the bibliography to list those works which I have found especially valuable.

I have been fortunate to be able to develop courses in medieval Scottish history at The Queen’s University of Belfast, and have learnt much from the challenging questions and thoughtful insights provided by my students over several years. I am greatly indebted to the university for granting me a semester’s study leave to enable me to complete this book. My research on papal relations with Scotland has continued during the preparation of this volume and has informed the chapters on the church, and I am most grateful to the staff of the Department of Scottish History at the University of Glasgow, especially Professor James Kirk, for their hospitality on my visits to consult the Ross Fund collection of microfilms from the Vatican. Finally, I offer my thanks to William Davies and his colleagues at Cambridge University Press for their care and attention during the publishing process.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BIHR</td>
<td><em>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</em></td>
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<td>Chron. Holyrood</td>
<td><em>A Scottish Chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood</em>, ed. M. O. Anderson with some additional notes by A. O. Anderson (Scottish History Society, 1938)</td>
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List of abbreviations

Dryb. Lib.  Liber S. Marie de Dryburgh (Bannatyne Club, 1847)
EHR    English Historical Review
Howden, Chron.  Chronica Rogeri de Hovedene, ed. W. Stubbs, 4 vols. (Rolls Series, 1868–71)
Howden, Gesta  Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (Rolls Series, 1867)
IR     Innes Review
SHR    Scottish Historical Review
TRHS   Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
Map 1  Earldoms and major lordships in medieval Scotland
Map 2  Ecclesiastical centres

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Map 3  Scotland, showing some of the more significant places mentioned in the text