

Welcome to this month's expert live chat with Gayle Hulme on Arbella Stuart, a fascinating Tudor lady who had a rather eventful life. Please feel free to ask Gayle anything on Arbella. And a big thank you to Gayle for joining us.

Claire Ridgway0:00

Hi Laurie!

Laurie Duerr0:00

Hi Claire and everyone!

Lorna Wanstall0:00

The strange thing living here is that when ever we get rain we don't get it that bad. Southend and Sheerness do, and they are oly a 2 mile swim from the nature reserve down the road

Gayle Hulme0:00

Hi Laurie. How are you?

Clare Shepherd0:00

Yes, Chester is livy, and thd countryside around is nice. I love that clock in the centre

Gayle Hulme0:01

I'm interested to know how much folks already knew about Arbella?

Laurie Duerr0:01

Hi Gayle, thanks so much for your talk and for joining us!

Claire Ridgway0:01

She's a figure I'd never really researched so I knew very little.

RealTudorLady0:01

Hi Gayle, I always get confused as to how Arbella had a claim to the crown.

Laurie Duerr0:01

I agree, Arbella is definitely one of the most over-looked Tudor potential claimants to the throne!

Lorna Wanstall0:02

Arbella was brought up by one of the most formidable woman ever in Tudor England.. The great Bess of Hardwick

Clare Shepherd0:02

To be honest, she was just a name, until you sketched out her life in the talk

Bill Wolff0:02

Ok, I am on, Hi everyone, I couldn't speak earlier!!

Gayle Hulme0:03

Its a good question. Once again it was through Henry VII. Her father, Charles Stuart, the brother of Lord Darnley was the great grandson of Henry VII.

RealTudorLady0:03

I know more about her daring marriage to William Seymour and her escape dressed as a man than her early life. Dying to know more. Was Bess of Hardwick her grandmother?

Claire Ridgway0:04

Hi Roland!

Gayle Hulme0:04

Charles was the son of Margaret Douglas, daughter of Margaret Tudor, the oldest daughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York.

Gayle Hulme0:05

Yes Bess was Arbella maternal grandmother and really took on responsbility for Arbella after her father and then her mother died.

RealTudorLady0:05

Thanks, Gayle, the Margaret Douglas connection. The line through Margaret Tudor. Cheers.

Roland Hui0:05

Did Arbella and Bess of Hardwick get along well?

Claire Ridgway0:05

By the way, if anyone hasn't had a chance to watch Gayle's video, you can find it at <https://www.tudorsociety.com/arbella-stuart-expert-talk/> but don't go and watch it now lol!

Gayle Hulme0:06

Yes her marriage to William was a massive gamble, although she did believe that she had permission. James I had told her she could marry who she wanted as long as he was one of his subjects.

Lorna Wanstall0:06

Was arbella's marriage to William Seymour a love match.

Shelley Varran0:07

GreetingsEveryone

Gayle Hulme0:07

All Bess's ambitions for real power at the top were attached to Arbella's progress at court. When Elizabeth banished Arbella from court it kind of went up in smoke and Arbella really resented her lack of freedom.

RealTudorLady0:07

Just not one of James royal cousins and subjects lol.

Lorna Wanstall0:07

Hi Shelley

Laurie Duerr0:07

So Bess really had somewhat of a destiny laid out for Arbella from the start!

Clare Shepherd0:07

I just rewatched it. It's excellent. Thank you Gayle

Gayle Hulme0:07

Yes Lorna. Although William was much younger than her, they were both highly intelligent and shared a love of books.

Claire Ridgway0:07

Hi Shelley!

Claire Ridgway0:07

Hi Tamise!

Lorna Wanstall0:08

Hi Tamise

Gayle Hulme0:08

Definitely Laurie. Both grandmothers, Bess and Margaret Lennox knew that a marriage between Charles Stuart and Elizabeth Cavenish would bring one power and the other money.

Tamise Hills0:09

Hi everyone, Gayle - did Arbella choose William because of his link to the throne?

RealTudorLady0:09

I have read some of the letters from Arbella and William and they are rather tender. This may have started out as a Dynastic marriage but after some time its clear they had fallen in love.

Gayle Hulme0:10

Maybe Arbella heard what she wanted to hear from James. I'm sure the king did not mean for her to marry a man with a claim to the throne himself. Even though James had two sons and the succession looked assured.

Lorna Wanstall0:10

Do you think James's reaction about her marriage was odd.

Gayle Hulme0:11

William and Arbella were well suited and I think Queen Anna may have encouraged the two. Arbella had never had any real say on her own destiny and as an intelligent woman she desperately wanted autonomy.

Claire Ridgway0:11

And she was linked to Edward Seymour before William Seymour!

Shelley Varran0:12

GoodHeavens!

RealTudorLady0:12

James's reaction was just what any King did when a cousin or sister with a claim married without permission to another claimant, because it was treason.

Gayle Hulme0:12

James I was not a popular king. He struggled with parliament not granting him funds and the English resented him because he was a foreigner and was continually promoting his Scottish friends to positions of power in England.

Lorna Wanstall0:12

Arbella and William both were descended from Henry VII via his older and younger daughters so therefore had English Tudor blood.

Tamara Hills0:13

If William and Arbella had reached France would they have been happy together or was the lure of the throne too much?

Lorna Wanstall0:13

and my feeling is that James was always fearful that the people would rather have an English King or Queen rather than Scottish.

Gayle Hulme0:13

She did try to marry Edward Seymour with the help of Bess's brother Henry Cavendish. However Bess was estranged from her brother and would not let him onto the grounds of Hardwick and would not let Arbella leave.

RealTudorLady0:14

This is all very early on as well after Gunpowder plots, rebellion, various rumours that Spain might invade. It's easy to see why James might be twitchy about this marriage.

Gayle Hulme0:14

James also had the Bye Plot, the main plot and the gunpowder plot early in his reign. Catholics resented him because of the measures against them and Protestants could not worship in the way they choose either.

Lorna Wanstall0:15
Very true RTL..

Roland Hui0:15
How did Arbella's parents die so young?

Gayle Hulme0:15
I don't think either Arbella or William were all that interested in the trappings of court and kingship. Although William did return to England years later.

Lorna Wanstall0:16
Gayle not to mention that James had a long fear of assassination from a very early age

Lorna Wanstall0:17
That's why James always wore heavily padded clothes.

Tamise Hills0:17
Thanks Gayle

RealTudorLady0:17
I just think William and Arbella wanted to be together. William escaped remarkably easily from Saint Thomas Tower, dressed as his own barber who came to see him and swapped clothes with him. What a pity he was delayed.

Gayle Hulme0:18
Only two of Margaret Lennox's children survived to adulthood and Charles's health was not that robust and he died when Arbella was 18 months old. Elizabeth died when Arbella was 7. Reasons for death are unclear, but as we know life expectancy in the 16th century was not long and illness we think of as minor could be fatal.

Claire Ridgway0:18
Was security reallyy lax at the Tower?

Lorna Wanstall0:19
Do you think Arbella was poisoned when she was in the tower or did she siply die of a broken heart

Gayle Hulme0:20
It was really Arbella insistance to wait for William to derailed the plan. That 30 minutes cost them dear. Had they gone sooner with the tide, they would have made it to the correct ship right away and been home free and clear.

Clare Shepherd0:20
I thought she starved herself to death

Lorna Wanstall0:20
Claire I think some of the escapes or attempted escaped were down to greased palms

RealTudorLady0:21
Arbella was thought to have died of a broken heart or refused food but that's not the case. Medical evidence shows she actually died of a wasting sickness and had cancer.

Claire Ridgway0:21

Lorna, they really must have been!

Gayle Hulme0:21

I think James I had a childhood that none of us would envy. The Scots were continually squabbling and killing each other over who should be regent. His own father was murdered at the hands of his mother's second husband and co.

RealTudorLady0:21

She couldn't eat and that's how she starved because of pain and the illness. It was in a recent documentary.

Lorna Wanstall0:22

Clare S starving to death could be construed as death by a broken heart. She simply didn't want to live without William.

Gayle Hulme0:22

They did suspect poison when Arbella died, but a postmortem confirmed that she had actually starved herself to death. Poor woman.

Clare Shepherd0:23

Yes, true Lorna. But RTL thinks it was cancer. Either way not a good death.

Clare Shepherd0:24

She certainly had a hard life, and death.

Roland Hui0:24

Was Walter Raleigh accused of conspiring on Arbella's behalf?

Gayle Hulme0:24

She had probably had enough of being a pawn in the succession game and after her chance of freedom with William had gone, maybe she just lost her way.

Claire Ridgway0:25

It is a very sad story. Similar in a way to Katherine Grey and Edward Seymour, although at least they managed to see each other for a while and have conjugal visits.

Clare Shepherd0:26

As fascinated as I am by the period, I wouldn't want to have lived then.

Gayle Hulme0:26

Roland. Walter Raleigh's involvement in the Main plot was, I think a stitch up of Robert Cecil's making. James wanted peace with the Spanish - the Spanish hated Raleigh and this was a convenient way to appease the Spanish and make an end to the expensive wars between England and Spain.

Lorna Wanstall0:26

Being of royal blood no matter how distant you were to throne there was always someone who would try and make use of it back then

Gayle Hulme0:27

Yes Claire. It amazes me that even though Bess of Hardwick and Margaret Lennox had witnessed what happened to Katherine Grey they still pushed their children together.

Claire Ridgway0:28

Gayle, yes, a very risky move.

Roland Hui0:29

What were contemporary descriptions of Arbella like? Was she considered beautiful for example?

Gayle Hulme0:30

I agree Lorna. What really struck me when doing this piece was that being a royal heir was really a very precarious thing. Richard, Duke of York was taken from sanctuary at Westminster Abbey because he was an heir, Elizabeth I had a horrendous time in Mary's reign and even Henry VII himself had been exiled in Brittany for his own safety during Edward IV's reign.

RealTudorLady0:30

Arbella could have been home and dry, but she was waiting. William landed in Holland not France but he made it and didn't know Arbella had been taken. He eventually came back and remarried. Poor Arbella was put in the Tower but here she lost hope. Whether she starved herself or because she couldn't eat with the illness of cancer/bone disease it was a tragic and really a Romeo and Juliet story, save Romeo survived. It was sad. A number of sad stories can be told, like Katherine Grey and Edward Seymour. They at least had two children before they were cruelly kept separate and Katherine died because of the cruelty of Elizabeth I. She even had a fit when poor Mary Grey married a low born man who could not possibly claim the throne.

Gayle Hulme0:31

Roland, I don't know whether you have seen the video yet...however there are portraits of Arbella as a young child and also as a teenager.

Lorna Wanstall0:32

Yes the Greys girls didn't have a very happy life and what moments of joy they had were snatched away

Gayle Hulme0:33

I did wonder while studying Arbella's attempted escape with William - what would I have done in a similar situation?

Laurie Duerr0:33

Gayle, do we know if there was ever any realistic chance that Elizabeth would have considered naming Arbella as her heir? Even at the end, like she did with James?

Tamise Hills0:34

I visited Hardwick in 2015 and they had an exhibition about Arbella on at the time. Loved the full length portrait of her.

Lorna Wanstall0:35

Laurie I don't think Elizabeth, would have named Arbella, as she wouldn't have wanted another woman to try and outshine her.

RealTudorLady0:36

The portrait I have seen of Arbella as a small child she was meant to be about seven but looks like a very chubby adult. Was this normal?

Bill Wolff0:36

Gayle, I just jumped over for a moment to your talk. Terrific start!!! I'll go back after we are finished here!

Gayle Hulme0:37

When Elizabeth was on progress at Theobalds in 1588 Arbella was chosen to eat with the Queen which was a great honour. Elizabeth even mentioned to a guest that Arbella would be 'one day as I am'. However we don't know if she was serious or she was just offering Arbella's hand in marriage to the Duke of Parma's son in order to avoid an invasion. By the time Arbella was born, Elizabeth was almost past childbearing age so her marriageable status was losing currency. It was useful to hint at Arbella being her heir as it kept potential suitors looking for the role of Arbella's consort on the hook.

Gayle Hulme0:38

RTL...They would want the child depicted as being an expensive dressed, well fed and robust child.

Lorna Wanstall0:38

RTL I think children were seen as miniature adults. They were expected to look and act as their parents back then

Roland Hui0:38

About the proposed marriage between Edward Seymour and Arbella, wasn't he about 30 years older than her?

Laurie Duerr0:38

Very interesting, thanks Gayle! Yes, Elizabeth certainly had a way of using situations to her advantage!

RealTudorLady0:40

The beautiful full length portrait of Arbella all in white with all that lovely loose red hair is my favourite of her. Interesting the way children were shown.

Lorna Wanstall0:41

How did William feel when told of Arbellas death.. Did he care? I know he remarried quite quickly, but that was usual back then.

Gayle Hulme0:43

Edward Seymour was born in 1561 and Arbella in 1575, so about 14 years or so.

RealTudorLady0:43

If Elizabeth and James didn't want her to marry someone they didn't approve of, why on earth didn't they marry her to someone they would. After all it was normal for noble people to marry, even to cousins of the King, if they approved. Or were they just so jealous and paranoid that nobody was going to marry other than them?

Gayle Hulme0:44

I'm not sure William would be keen to make any public mention of his marriage. If he had made it back to England and safety, he probably wanted the whole sad and regrettable episode to disappear. He could well have been tried for High Treason on his return.

Roland Hui0:44

Thanks Gayle. I had Ed. Seymour mixed up with his father, also named Edward.

Lorna Wanstall0:45

Did he view his marriage to Arbella regrettable?

Gayle Hulme0:45

RTL it was much more advantageous to Elizabeth to use Arbella's marriageable status to the political advantage and the unpopular James just didn't want any over rivals for the throne, particularly English ones.

Gayle Hulme0:46

Perhaps not regret in the sense that he was sorry they fell in love and married, but regret that the whole thing went so tragically wrong.

Lorna Wanstall0:46

James was weird with a capital WE

RealTudorLady0:47

Thanks, Gayle. Poor Arbella. She was just a pawn then and maybe her marriage to William was a declaration of independence.

Gayle Hulme0:47

I know Roland, so many with the same names. Sometimes even siblings had the same names. I believe the Duke of Norfolk had two daughters called Elizabeth. Wow.

RealTudorLady0:48

How old was she when she died? 40?

Lorna Wanstall0:48

I believe the duke also called some of his son Henry too

Gayle Hulme0:49

Yes RTL she was a pawn and she knew it. I think the biggest agony in her life was that she never had a shred of independence. She had to fight tooth and nail for money, as James would not give her the right to the Lennox estate after her father's death. She was always reliant on the largess of her relatives. Just another way to control her.

Lorna Wanstall0:49

As it goes calling sons by the same name was quite a common practise, it would insure that the name would stay within the family

Gayle Hulme0:50

Yes 39. As she died in September and her birthday must have been (presuming she was born on time) she died just before her 40th birthday.

Lorna Wanstall0:50

James could claim the Lennox estate anyway.

RealTudorLady0:51

Thanks, Gayle. I am definitely giving her a thumbs up for her brief few weeks of independence in making this marriage. It's just a pity her and William didn't get away and live happily in France

Roland Hui0:51

I have to ask - was she also called 'Arabella'? Or is that a modernization of her name?

Lorna Wanstall0:52

Do you think James would have still acted as he did if Arbella chose someone else

Claire Ridgway0:52

It was far simpler to be a peasant's daughter!

Lorna Wanstall0:53

Yes Claire.. As Henry 8th said after the mess of his 4th marriage.. Poor man may chose their wives

Shelley Varran0:54

Hellooooo

Lorna Wanstall0:54

Hello Shelly

Gayle Hulme0:54

James claimed that his father, Lord Darnley as the eldest son of the Earl of Lennox would have inherited the estate had he lived and therefore it was rightly his. Unfortunately even after the intervention of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots he would not give it up.

RealTudorLady0:54

Hi Shelley.

Claire Ridgway0:55

Hi Shelley!

Lorna Wanstall0:55

James could be a right B at times

RealTudorLady0:55

Are you writing a book, Gayle?

Gayle Hulme0:55

Its hard to know...William did have a claim himself so the marriage was, if you like, a double whammy for James. Although no matter who she married her children would have inherited her claim.

Gayle Hulme0:56

Yeah Claire, being a royal looks like fun until someone is pushing you around.

Shelley Varran0:56

Screen must of frozen up....

Shelley Varran0:56

Thank you!

Bill Wolff0:57

Clare S., please send me an email at [REMOVED] My G.G. Uncle is from Devon!! I have a question on early family.

Lorna Wanstall0:57

In a way then Elizabeth and James would always make sure she was under the thumb.. she would have never known any happiness.

Claire Ridgway0:57

Are there any historical novels with Arbella as the heroine? And also, are there non-fiction books you'd recommend on her?

Gayle Hulme0:57

Roland, she was referred to as Arabella and Arbella. It seems that Arbella was an anglicised version of Arbella.

Clare Shepherd0:57

OK Bill

RealTudorLady0:58

What a pity she didn't get herself knocked up by William! At least then she would have had an heir 😊

Bill Wolff0:58

Ah Real, you have such a way with words!!

Tamise Hills0:59

Arbella is in 'The Girl in the Glass Tower' by Elizabeth Fremantle and has a minor role in 'The Devil's Slave' by Tracy Borman.

Shelley Varran0:59

Hey man you only go around once!! haha

Claire Ridgway0:59

RTL, yes!

Gayle Hulme0:59

That's a good question RTL. I have had some articles published and an essay published about the marriages of Mary Queen of Scots. There is a long standing fictional WIP about Anne Boleyn which will probably be finished by early 2040 if I continue at today's speed. lol

Claire Ridgway0:59

Tamise, thank you!

Gayle Hulme0:59

yes James was not an easy man to deal with, but he did have a pretty difficult job to do.

Shelley Varran0:59

What were some of her likes and dislikes?

Shelley Varran1:00

Arabella's I mean

Claire Ridgway1:00

Right, it's just come up to the o'clock. A big thank you to Gayle for her talk and for joining us in the chatroom. And thank you, everyone, for your wonderful questions.

Bill Wolff1:00

Fun hour! I learned a lot. Thanks all! Cocktail time here in California!!

Shelley Varran1:00

Thank you.....

Lorna Wanstall1:00

Gayle I think Mary QoS reason for marrying Darnley was a good one.. It's just a pity she rushed so blindly headlong into it.

Claire Ridgway1:00

Enjoy the cocktails, Bill!

RealTudorLady1:01

Thanks Gayle, I will look out for the articles. Sarah Grinswood wrote a book on Arbella

Claire Ridgway1:01

Have a wonderful weekend, everyone! Keep safe. Night night!

Gayle Hulme1:01

There are rumours that Arbella did conceive with William. There a little bit of evidence to suggest that that is why she moved from the swearing before witnesses to full marriage so quickly. However it seems Arbella lost that pregnancy. Just another tragedy for her.

Tamise Hills1:01

Thank you. It has been worth staying up for.

Gayle Hulme1:01

Tamise. I had the Girl in the Glass Tower on audiobook. I really enjoyed it.

Claire Ridgway1:02

Night everyone!

Tamise Hills1:02

Gayle - It is a great book.

Tamise Hills1:02

Night