

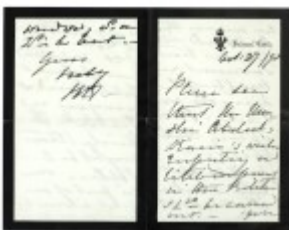
Bonhams to sell 'witty' letters penned by Queen Victoria

MOVING, WITTY AND ACERBIC LETTERS FROM QUEEN VICTORIA FOR SALE AT BONHAMS EDINBURGH

A series of over 20 letters hand written by Queen Victoria during the last four years of her life are to be sold at Bonhams Edinburgh on 21 August as part of the annual Scottish Sale. The letters form part of an archive, including other royal memorabilia, which is estimated at £6,000-8,000.

The letters were addressed to James Forbes, Victoria's Commissioner at Balmoral and the person responsible for the running of the castle. They show the Queen's keen interest in the welfare of her staff and tenants ,and continued appetite for life despite her advancing years.

All the letters are written on the heavy mourning paper she adopted on the death of Prince Albert in 1861 and most are signed VR1. They were sent from Windsor, Osborne and Nice as well as internally at Balmoral itself.





Bonhams Book Specialist in Edinburgh, Henry Baggott, said: "These letters throw a fascinating light on the private Queen Victoria and show her to have been far kinder and more considerate than her rather forbidding public image suggested."

The letters give a particularly vivid impression of Victoria's personality. Here she advises Forbes on how to handle the tricky minister at Balmoral: "be very careful to be exact & very discreet & keep out of rows (like the choir trouble) or writing in any of the papers wh. was one of Mr Sibald's accusations last year. But I fear Mr S. is of a vindictive spirit & I rather fear, not very exact himself. At any rate you shd try & find out the story abt the Free Kirk Minister, as I am sure that *that* is a 'mistake'."

Victoria was always solicitous about her staff whom she regarded as part of her extended family. On the death of Lizzie Brown, the wife of William who was brother to the Queen's favourite, John, she wrote: "The death of dear excellent Mrs Wm Brown whom I was so very fond of and with whom I had been so intimate is real grief to me & I dare not think of how dreadfully I shall miss her. Her loss is really irreparable... Poor William I do pity so much for he is so helpless & dear Lizzie was everything in the world to him".

The Queen's views of her aristocratic neighbours, however,

were less charitable: "I have never invited the Duke of Atholl to come over with his men and I think it wd. be better not to do so this year. It wd. entail the encampment of his men in our grounds wh. wd. be inconvenient".

Also included in the lot are items indicating the closeness of the relationship between the Forbes family and the Monarch. A watercolour calendar illustrated with portraits of the Forbes's three children, for example, inscribed by Victoria to Mrs Forbes on the occasion of the birth of the youngest, to whom she was Godmother; a telegram from Victoria on his birth and the child's birth-certificate signed by Victoria; and a handsome morocco-bound visitor's book for the Forbes's house, Craig Gowan, 1900 signed by Victoria on 19 June 1900, by the Prince of Wales on 29 September 1900 and again after he became Edward VII.