

Rare document signed by Lord Nelson to be sold in Edinburgh

A marriage document signed by Lord Nelson, his mistress and others in his social circle will be signed by Lyon & Turnbull from its HQ in Edinburgh.

The single sheet of paper is covered with collectable autographs and is valued between £10,000 and £15,000.

The document records the wedding of British couple William Compton and Anne Battalin who lived in Naples. The marriage was conducted aboard Nelson's ship, HMS Foudroyant, in the Bay of Naples in July 1799.

During the long hot summer of 1799, Nelson decided to host a lavish society wedding aboard HMS Foudroyant in the Bay of Naples for William Compton and Anne Bottalin. The couple, then resident in Naples, both came from Nelson's native Norfolk. Nelson was Captain of the Foudroyant from 6 June 1799 until the end of June 1800.

The certificate up for auction this week reads: "This is to certify that, on board the Foudroyant lying in Naples Bay, on the ninth of July 1799 the marriage between William Compton & Mrs Anne Bottalin, widow, was solemnized by me S. G. Comyn HM. Chaplain to the Right Honble Lord Nelson, H.M.S. Foudroyant, in the presence of..."

Dominic Somerville-Brown, Lyon & Turnbull's Rare Books, Manuscripts and Maps specialist, said of the document: "This is a remarkable grouping of signatures. It is especially rare to get those of Nelson and Lady Hamilton on the same piece of paper.

"This document is unique in British naval history, recording as it does a moment of sublime unreality in the career of Lord Nelson. Newly ennobled as victor of the Nile, he saw fit to host an ostentatious society wedding onboard his ship while the French fleet entered the Mediterranean, threatening to defeat the scattered allied forces and relieve the army of Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt.

"Nelson refused three direct orders from his superior, Admiral Keith, to cruise to Minorca to help repel a combined Franco-Spanish assault. His refusal to obey Keith has been viewed by historians as leaving British forces dangerously exposed, although he escaped with little more than a light reproof from the Admiralty and was appointed acting commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean a month later.

"Heavy criticism was directed at his personal conduct, with his brother officers reportedly appalled to see what they viewed as his "enslavement" at the hands of Lady Emma. We know of no other such document, bearing the signatures of such a spectacular array of characters in the Nelson story, ever coming to market."



Rare marriage document signed by Lord Nelson © Stewart Attwood Photography 2023.



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... the name of Lord Nelson ...
... the name of Lord Nelson ...
... the name of Lord Nelson ...

J. Hamilton
Emma Hamilton
Nelson

J. Duckworth
Eliza Grafer

W. Murray
John Puskoot
John Keble



Amey

A. M.
R. M.
W. M.
Anne

This is to certify that a bond had been
 given in full by the said of the 9th
 of July 1799 between William Compton and Anne
 Bottalin in the presence of the following
 witnesses, to wit:

John Hamilton
 Emma Hamilton
 Nathaniel
 Wm Duckworth
 Eliza Grafer
 Wm Hardy
 John Ruscoat
 J. Nesbit
 Compton



William Compton
 Anne Bottalin

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 Wm Hardy
 John Ruscoat
 J. Nesbit
 Compton

William Compton
 Anne Bottalin

Marriage Certificate between William Compton
 and Anne Bottalin certified on board
 the Foudrayant, 9th July 1799, with Nelson,
 Hardy and Hamilton signatures.