

# Rare letter to Queen Elizabeth I sold in Edinburgh

An extremely rare [autographed letter to Queen Elizabeth I](#) from her lifelong friend and possible love interest, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, has been sold by auctioneers Lyon & Turnbull for £32,700, four times more than the estimated price.

The manuscript featured in the [Books & Manuscripts sale](#) on Wednesday live online and in the Edinburgh auction room, contains an enigmatic reference to an unspecified great matter of state, said to bear directly on the Queen's life and likely relating to England's policy towards Scotland in the aftermath of the Throckmorton plot of 1583. This was a conspiracy between English Catholics and continental powers to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary Queen of Scots.

Leicester also apologises in the letter for his elusiveness during his recent journey across the Midlands of England. His marriage to Lettice, dowager countess of Essex, in 1578, whom Elizabeth loathed, no doubt contributed to his absence and he was forced to keep his marriage half-hidden as a result.

The statesman and Queen had known one another since childhood. Although Leicester failed to win Queen Elizabeth's hand in marriage, they remained close friends until his death.

Experts at Lyon & Turnbull traced just two other autographed letters from Leicester to Elizabeth. One is now at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C and the other, at the National Archives in London, was written by Leicester a few days before his death.

Meanwhile, a letter written and signed by Henry VIII's elder daughter, Mary I, (1516-1558), Queen of England and Ireland, known as Bloody Mary, fetched £37,700, more than double the asking price.

Signed '*Mary the quene*,' it was written to William, Lord Paget, on the outbreak of Wyatt's Rebellion, 28th January 1554.

Wyatt's Rebellion was intended by its leaders, members of parliament alarmed by Mary's imminent marriage to Prince Philip of Spain, as a series of four coordinated uprisings to take place in Devon, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, and Kent. Mary, who was avowedly Catholic, hoped the marriage would produce a son and heir and re-establish the Catholic faith across England and Ireland.

In addition, a handwritten notebook filled with remedies and recipes sold in the auction for £10,080, more than double its estimate.

This fascinating snapshot into the life and times of mid-seventeenth century England reflects a period when the country was gripped by civil war and beset by the plague.

It contains 82 pages of remedies, at least 25 of them written by Dr William Fyffe, who was Honorary Physician to the King for the County of Lancashire. Many were for treated for the plague, which was rife during this period, and for wounds caused by sword or gunshot.

Dominic Somerville-Brown, Specialist in Rare Books & Manuscripts at Lyon & Turnbull said:

"The letter to Elizabeth from her lifelong favourite Robert Dudley provides a window onto one of history's most famous love stories.

"Mary's letter is a vivid snapshot of her thinking at a pivotal moment in her rule. This was a stunning pair of results for two documents of first-rate importance.

"Bidders were drawn to the contrasting portraits of England's two Tudor Queens and came together to produce a succession of dramatic saleroom battles.

"There was also substantial interest and correspondingly strong prices for other historical manuscripts in the sale, including the seventeenth century English cookery book."

Hight may please y<sup>e</sup> most excellent ma<sup>t</sup> being past sur<sup>e</sup>  
 desert contrary to seldome I suppose an the fonde my  
 whom bin some agone, I say made me no less gentle  
 to be vydd of your mysservable myb, than vally to excuse the  
 slarkness of sur<sup>e</sup> as followed me, for so longe as I  
 travell'd & remoured in these playes I never heard of any  
 of my sending mysservant sent nor of any other to being  
 and any tidings of y<sup>e</sup> and prayd for good estate, and  
 now finding the time & overlong in hearing of y<sup>e</sup> mine  
 causeth me sent to ad. where in knowling y<sup>e</sup> ma<sup>t</sup> and  
 the remembrance of y<sup>e</sup> most humble doctor, albeit  
 these vnde & vnsly the contrary to do vnde nothing more  
 y<sup>e</sup> may aduocysment.

Coming yetter is day to a sorrow of my high Derbat  
 more cheere in the contrary of what I said most w<sup>t</sup>  
 one of my mysservant in last w<sup>t</sup> I first sent the hande  
 on sur<sup>e</sup> by I do hear to my greatest comfort of y<sup>e</sup> most  
 swa<sup>t</sup> & good estate and did vnde by my mysservant  
 heretofore at also the vnde vnde y<sup>e</sup> guarantee & favorable  
 acceptance of my late mysservant sent to vnde ma<sup>t</sup> and  
 it pleased vnde to say that a good way betweene these  
 is vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde, as sur<sup>e</sup> by any mysservant  
 and do pray to god for y<sup>e</sup> most happy sur<sup>e</sup> vnde vnde  
 way or any way vnde vnde vnde vnde shall allow for vnde  
 meke for vnde vnde & sur<sup>e</sup>, and so vnde vnde  
 humble vnde vnde vnde for vnde my vnde vnde, do vnde  
 any vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde vnde  
 vnde vnde to y<sup>e</sup> vnde vnde of the Almighty. In  
 Sunday Caple vnde of June

y<sup>e</sup> most humble & joyful  
 loyall s<sup>r</sup>

R. L. S. S. S.