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Holding a piece of English history (SCRC Behind the Scenes)

Barbara Brooker

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SCRC Behind the Scenes

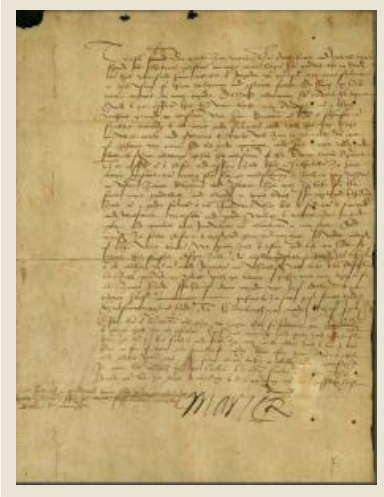
Holding a piece of English history

November 9th, 2011 by Barbara Brooker

In 1969 my parents and I made the first of many trips to England and Europe. My dad decided that I should study the history of the different countries so that I would have some appreciation for what I was going to see.

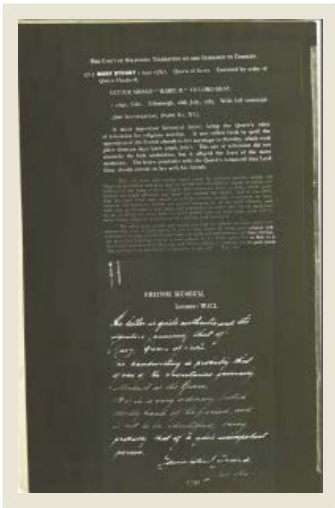
I remember reading about the king who had six wives, the queen who burned so many people at the stake, and the queen who never married. The period that I became obsessed with was the Tudor era with Henry VIII, Mary I [better known as Bloody Mary], and Elizabeth I.

Here it is forty-two years later and the fascination with the period has not subsided. I still devour any book, particularly on Elizabeth Tudor, that I can get my hands on. I am preparing to finally complete my undergraduate studies and am thinking that I may just have to go for a masters degree in English history. Why not put my 40+ year obsession to good use?



What does this have to do with Special Collections you ask? Well, yesterday our director asked me to scan a couple of documents – one of which was in a protective sleeve. I glanced at the document and realized I was looking at the signature of a queen. The signature was a bold Marie R.

I then looked at the other document he had asked me to scan and it was the statement authenticating the signature as that of Mary Queen of Scots. I looked at the letter with the royal signature and could not help but wonder what was going on in the life of the ill-fated Scottish queen at the time she signed this piece of parchment.



As I read the supporting paperwork, it turns out that this particular letter was written to Lord Gray and was actually Mary's edict of toleration for religious worship. I most certainly was holding history in my hands.

I have known for many years that I am a hopeless Anglophile but my presence in SCRC and the treasures it holds truly reinforces that knowledge. I am excited to see what will surface next to quench my desire for more Tudor history!

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When and Where:

01-30-2014 to 06-27-2014

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One Response to “Holding a piece of English history”

1. **Lynda Kachurek** Says:

November 21st, 2011 at 9:33 am



Those “a-ha” moments make all the other, less exciting ones worth it. When I was doing research at Simancas in Spain, the first day I was there, they handed me a folio of letters from Queen Elizabeth I, including her signature and wax seal. It was at that moment I began to realize Archives (and preserving documents like that for others to “discover”) was where I wanted to be....

Thanks for the post and sharing your story!

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HER EDICT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION ON HER MARRIAGE TO DARNLEY.

1717 **MARY STUART** (1542-1587). Queen of Scots. Executed by order of Queen Elizabeth.

LETTER SIGNED "MARIE R." TO LORD GRAY.

1 page, folio, Edinburgh, 16th July, 1565. With full transcript.

(SEE ILLUSTRATION, PLATE No. XI.)

A most important historical letter, being the Queen's edict of toleration for religious worship. It was called forth to quell the opposition of the Scotch church to her marriage to Darnley, which took place thirteen days later (29th July). This act of toleration did not reconcile the kirk authorities, but it allayed the fears of the more moderate. The letter concludes with the Queen's command that Lord Gray should attend on her with his friends.

"This evil brabe and untrue report spread by seditious persons among our lieges has grieved us indeed so that we should have intended to impede or molest our subjects in the using of their religion and conscience freely, a thing which never entered our mind, although ever many has credited the report. And to the effect that this vaine brabe may vanish as a thing without ground or occasion we have directed our letters to signify our sincere meaning to all our good subjects, and with that we thought it very meete and convenient to write unto you in particular as one of whom we never had but good opinion and see your ready good will to serve always when the occasion of the common weal require it.

"The effect is to certifie and assure you that as hitherto we have never permitted stop stay or molestation to you or any others in using your religion and conscience, so may ye look for the same our good will and clemency in these coming. For next God behoving you as a good subject to us, think rather but to find us a favourable and beneficial Maestrie and Prince willing to content you in good peace and quietness but innovation or alteration in any sort." Etc., etc.

BRITISH MUSEUM,

LONDON: W.C.1.

The letter is quite authentic and the signature, essentially, that of Mary, Queen of Scots.

The handwriting is probably that of one of the secretaries generally attendant on the Queen.

It is in a very ordinary Scotch clerical hand of the period, and is not to be identified, being probably that of a quite unimportant person.

James Stuart Board

1500

