



# The Mystery of History



Who killed Lord Darnley?

# Background Information

- Darnley's wife Mary had become Queen of Scotland when her father James V died less than a week after her birth in 1542.
- To avoid being forced into a marriage with the English prince, Mary was sent to grow up in France.
- By the time she reached the age of 18, she had already married and lost her first husband.
- She returned to Scotland.
- Mary married Darnley in 1565 and they had a son together, James, the following year.



# The Crime!

In the early hours of the morning of **Sunday February 10<sup>th</sup> 1567** the people of Edinburgh were woken by the sounds of a terrible **explosion**. Coming out to see what had happened they found that an old house known as **Kirk O' Fields** had been blown up. What was even more shocking was that Darnley had been staying there and it was his half-naked body, along with the corpse of his manservant, that were discovered in the garden. There didn't seem to be a trace of the explosion on either body.

## How had Darnley died?

# Who did it?

- **On Christmas Eve 1566 Darnley had become seriously ill. It was suspected he had smallpox.**
- **Mary persuaded him to travel to Kirk O' Field in Edinburgh so that he could get better. Some people thought this was strange as Mary now hated Darnley.**
- **At around 2am on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1567 a massive explosion reduced Kirk O' Fields to rubble. These explosions were later attributed to two barrels of gunpowder that had been placed in the small room under Darnley's sleeping quarters. (Mary's room)**

- **Darnley's body, still in his night clothes, was found in the garden not far from the house.**
- **His dead manservant lay next to him and a chair, a cloak and dagger were also nearby. Marks on the body made it look as though they had been strangled.**

# More evidence

- Darnley was called selfish, weak, nasty and vain by people who knew him.
- The English queen Elizabeth I wasn't happy that her cousin Mary had married Darnley.
- Darnley spent time with lots of other women.
- Darnley was very jealous. He had helped to murder Riccio, Mary's assistant. Darnley thought that Mary liked Riccio.
- Darnley was Catholic.



# Evidence



A sketch of the crime scene on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1567, drawn shortly after that night.

# Primary Evidence

The drawing is primary evidence. It was drawn around the time of Darnley's death. Look closely at this piece of evidence.

What questions would you ask?



# Good Detective Questions

**Who drew the picture?**

**When was the picture drawn?**

**Did they see the murder?**



This section of the plan shows the bodies of Lord Darnley and his servant in the garden.

- Why are the men half naked?
- How did the bodies get there?
- What might the chair have been used for?
- Are there any obvious marks on the bodies?
- Who do you think the dagger belonged to?
- How do you think they died?



**This section shows Lord Darnley being carried away and the funeral of his servant.**

- **Where are the men taking Lord Darnley's body?**
- **Why do you think the soldiers were there?**
- **Where is Lord Darnley's servant being buried?**





This section shows the site of Darnley's death.

- Judging from the ruin, how big was the explosion?
- The ruins of Kirk o' Field House have been labelled the site of the murder. Do you think this is really where he was killed?

This is the Infant James – Lord Darnley's son and heir to the throne.

- The infant James is saying 'Judge and revenge my caus, O Lord.' What do you think this means?
- James would have only been a one year old baby at this time. What is the artist trying to suggest about the death of Lord Darnley?
- From what you have found out so far, how do you think Darnley died?



# Mary's letter to Bothwell

To be short, he will go anywhere I want (alas!), I won't have to deceive anybody. I will do whatever you want. Send me word of what I should do and whatever happens to me I will obey you. ... He is very suspicious and fearful for his life but nevertheless trusts my word. All his friends always come with me when I go to visit him. The bearer of this letter will tell you the rest and if I learn anything, every night I will keep a record of it. Burn this letter for it is dangerous. God forgive me and give you, my old friend, the good luck that your humble and faithful lover wishes unto you, who hopes that shortly to be another thing unto you, for the reward of my pains. (Modern Translation)

A translation of Mary's supposed letter to Bothwell, discovered in  
March 1567



**This is a letter allegedly from Mary Queen of Scots to Bothwell.**

**•If the letter is really from Mary to Bothwell, who is the ‘he’ Mary keeps referring to?**

**•What does Mary want Bothwell to do with the letter?**

**•What warnings does Mary give Bothwell?**

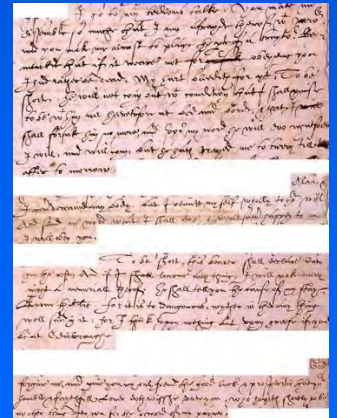
**•Who is his ‘humble and faithful lover’?**

**•What could Mary mean when she says ‘who shortly hopes to be another thing unto you’?**

**•Does the letter show Mary plotting with Bothwell to kill Darnley? Give reasons to back up your answer.**

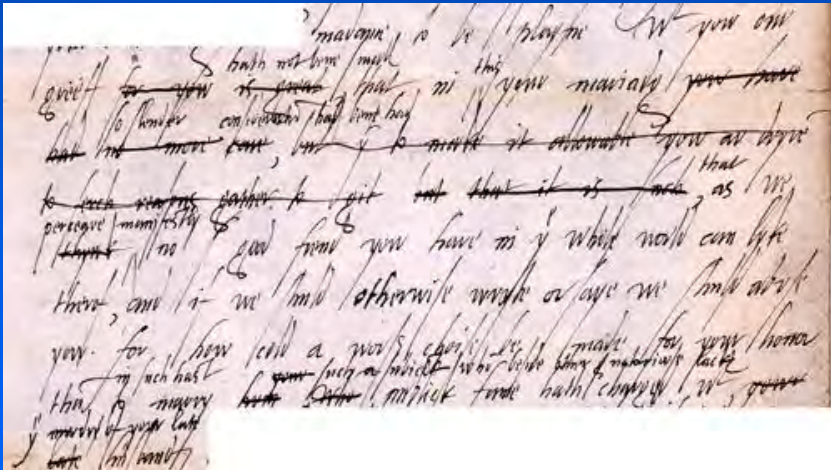
**•Why do you think Bothwell did not burn the letter as Mary asks?**

**•Do you think we can trust this letter as evidence?**



## Transcript

Madame, to be plain with you, our grief has not been small that in this your marriage so slender consideration has been had that, as we perceive manifestly, no good friend you have in the whole world can like thereof, and if we should otherwise write or say we should abuse you. For how could a worse choice be made for your honour that in such haste to marry such a subject, who besides other and notorious lacks, public fame has charged with the murder of your late husband



This is a letter from Elizabeth I to Mary.

- Do you think Elizabeth was happy with Mary's marriage to Bothwell?
- What do you think was the Queen's mood when she wrote this?
- Why do you think the letter has been crossed out and changed so much?
- Who do you think might have made the changes?

## Witnesses

These statements were taken on the 11<sup>th</sup> February  
1567

**May Croket says that she was lying in her house between 2 and 3 when the explosion happened. She thought it was the house above. She ran to the door and saw 11 men coming out from Friar's Lane. She grabbed one by his jacket which was made of silk and asked what had happened. They made no answer.**

**Barbara Mertine says that she was at her window before the explosion. She heard 13 men come out of Friar's Lane and go up another. Then she heard the explosion, and 11 men came back.**

# Notable People

- **David Rizzio** : Mary's private secretary. He was murdered by Lord Darnley at the Palace of Holyrood on 9 March 1566 because it was felt he was getting too close to the Queen
- **William Cecil** : An English statesman, the chief advisor of Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. He commissioned the drawing and presented Mary's letter.
- **Lord Bothwell** : James Hepburn was the 4th Earl of Bothwell and the 3rd husband of Mary, Queen of Scots following the death of her husband, Lord Darnley, and Bothwell's divorce from his wife, Lady Jean Gordon.
- **Earl of Moray**: Moray was the illegitimate son of King James V of Scotland and Lady Margaret Erskine, daughter of John Erskine, 5th Lord Erskine. He was Regent of Scotland from 1567 until his assassination in 1570. He was also Mary's half brother.

# Suspects

After the explosion people began talking about who the suspects might be. Over the next few weeks, a number of people were suspected.

Mary, Queen of  
Scots



Earl Bothwell



Stewart, Earl  
of Moray



# The Verdict

Now that you have seen the evidence  
what do you think happened to Lord  
Darnley?

