



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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PHOTO CALL

10.00AM MONDAY 4 MAY 2015

**MAIN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
GEORGE SQUARE EH8 9LJ**

Letter written in William Burke's blood to go on show

A letter written in the blood of one of Britain's most notorious killers is to go on public display for the first time in living memory.

The blood was taken from William Burke after he was tried and executed for murder on 28 January 1829. The letter is usually held in the University of Edinburgh's archives.

Burke is best known for the killing spree he undertook with William Hare in 1827-28 to provide bodies for anatomy classes in the Edinburgh Medical School. At that time, the demand for cadavers could not be met through legal means, so Burke and Hare provided bodies from 17 victims for which they received payment.

The letter in blood reads: *"This is written in the blood of William Burke, who was hanged at Edinburgh on 28 Jan. 1829 for the murder of Mrs Campbell or Docherty. The blood was taken from his head on the 1 Feb. 1829."*

The letter will be displayed during the University of Edinburgh's *One Last Fright* weekend (15-17 May). The events – part of the Scotland-wide Festival of Museums – aim to unearth sinister stories from the capital's history with the help of the University's archives and special collections.

A petition from Edinburgh medical students demanding more bodies – written at the time Burke and Hare were supplying them – will also be showcased at the event.

Joseph Marshall, Head of Special Collections at the University of Edinburgh, says "The story of Burke and Hare has captured people's imaginations for generations. We are pleased to offer this rare insight into this dark and fascinating tale in Edinburgh's history."

After his death, Burke was publicly dissected. His skeleton and death mask are still exhibited in the University of Edinburgh's Anatomical Museum.

One Last Fright programme and booking information: <https://onelastfright.wordpress.com/>

The letter, petition and death mask are available for photography in the University of Edinburgh's Main Library at 10am, Monday 4 May. Please meet at the reception desk.

For further information please contact: kathryn.dunlop@ed.ac.uk; 0787 539 5069

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