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Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to you from Manor Lodge in Sheffield, formerly one of the finest Tudor manor houses in the land. It was visited by Cardinal Wolsey in 1529 – he died on his journey from here to London where he was to face his fate at the hands of his king, Henry VIII. However, it is probably most famous as the place where Mary, Queen of Scots was held under the watchful eye of George Talbot, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury and his even more watchful wife, Bess of Hardwick. Mary was held under house arrest in and around Sheffield from 1570 to 1584. Much of this time was spent at Manor Lodge, one of the residences of the Earl. At the time it was at the centre of a vast deer park and had stunning views over the surrounding countryside.

Today it stands at the centre of a vast housing estate, the sole remnant of a glorious bygone age. Patches of green are still visible to all sides and it is easy to imagine what the views would have been like way back in Tudor times.

The ruins of the manor house still sit on the hilltop overlooking Sheffield and its surroundings. The Turret House is the only building that remains virtually intact. It was built in 1574 partly as a gatehouse to the main lodge grounds and also as a hunting tower. The hunt would be viewed from the roof of the Turret House and afterwards the group would seek shelter and refreshment in one of the rooms below.

One of these rooms, known as "Mary's room", retains the original plasterwork ceiling thought to have been designed, in part, by Mary and Bess of Hardwick. There are various motifs that reflect the life of the Scottish Queen such as a hand holding marigolds, the thistle of Scotland and the grapes of France. There are also two heads that are purported to have been based on the features of the two women.

Sadly, the Turret House and the remains of the manor house are in need of urgent attention. The Turret House, a Grade II* listed building, is on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk register. We have been told by experts that

if damp were to get hold of the plasterwork ceiling then we could lose the whole thing in a matter of 6 months. Obviously this would be tragic beyond words and in order to try to save the building and stabilise the remains of the main house we are seeking donations from far and wide, targeting people and societies who may feel as strongly as ourselves about the importance of the site and its irreplaceable heritage value. Can you help? Do you know somebody who would be interested in supporting our cause? Manor Lodge is desperately in need of funds. Please do what you can to support us.

If you are interested in securing the future of Sheffield Manor Lodge please contact me by phone, email or letter. I would be happy to discuss our plans for the site and supply any further information.

Yours truly

Clare Kelly
Visitor management Officer