

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 103 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Lord Thomas Paget;

Date: 29 March 1576

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to Lord Thomas Paget regarding her servant, Robinson, who has been accused of murder. She requests Paget 'to stand his good lord', for she would 'gladly do the poor man good in this case'.

Archive: Keele University Library, Paget Papers, MS 4, ff. 15- (D603K/1/4/9)

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 103: Bess of Hardwick

Born Elizabeth Hardwick (in c.1521/2, d. 13 February 1608), the woman known to posterity as Bess of Hardwick married four times during her life, as a result of which her name changed from Hardwick to Barlow (or Barley), Cavendish, St Loe and then finally (when she was countess of Shrewsbury and then dowager countess) Talbot. As one of the five children of John Hardwick (1495-1528) of Hardwick, Derbyshire, and his first wife, Elizabeth (née Leake), Bess had three sisters (Mary, Jane and Alice) and one brother (James). The Hardwicks were established Derbyshire gentry who had inherited a modest manor house and c.400 acres in and around Hardwick. But when John died in 1528, and their lands were seized by the crown, Bess faced hardship. Bess's mother quickly remarried but her new husband, Ralph Leche of Chatsworth, Derbyshire, brought little land or money to the marriage, and three more daughters were born (Bess's half-sisters Elizabeth, Jane and Margaret). Little else is known of Bess's childhood but, while still young, she was married for the first time, to Robert Barlow (or Barley) of Barlow, Derbyshire, sometime in or before 1543. Barlow died in 1544 and Bess received a small inheritance. In 1547 she married the twice-widowed Sir William Cavendish, treasurer of the king's chamber. Bess and Cavendish had eight children, six of whom survived: Frances (1548), Henry (1550), William (1551, from whom the dukes of Devonshire are descended), Charles (1553, from whom the dukes of Newcastle and Portland are descended), Elizabeth (1554) and Mary (1556). Probably due to a mixture of affection and shared social ambition, Bess's second marriage was happy and fortuitous. She was now moving in courtly circles and experiencing (for the first time) considerable wealth. In 1549 Cavendish and Bess bought the estate of Chatsworth, which was held jointly in both their names and which he and then Bess, following Cavendish's death in 1557, ambitiously rebuilt. Soon after her second husband's death, and sometime before Elizabeth I's accession (in 1558), Bess married Sir William St Loe, a wealthy widower of ancient noble pedigree. St Loe was captain of the guard to the young queen and in addition to further improving Bess's finances, he also brought her into the queen's inner circle and she served briefly as a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber (in 1559). The marriage seems to have not been without affection; however, the two would have spent most of it apart - he serving the queen in London and Bess mostly at Chatsworth. Upon St Loe's death (probably in 1565), Bess inherited most of the estate. In 1567 Bess married for a final time, to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, one of the richest and most powerful men in England. To consolidate the union of their fortunes, the couple had Bess's eldest son, Henry, marry Shrewsbury's daughter (from his previous marriage), and Shrewsbury's eldest son, Gilbert (later the seventh earl), marry Bess's daughter, Mary. Also around this time, Shrewsbury was appointed to be the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots (from 1568-84). At first, relations between Bess and the Catholic Scottish queen seem to have been amicable; however, relations deteriorated all around as Bess's marriage to Shrewsbury broke down in the 1580s. An infamously nasty and highly public legal battle over estates ensued and finally the courts resolved that Shrewsbury provide Bess with a sizeable income from 1587 onwards (Shrewsbury died in 1590). In 1582, Bess took charge of the upbringing of her orphaned granddaughter, Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), claimant to the English

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and Scottish crowns. In 1587, Bess undertook her remarkable building works at Hardwick: the house now known as Hardwick Old Hall was complete by 1591; next to it, the extraordinary building now known as Hardwick New Hall was complete by 1599 and is one of the greatest architectural ventures of Elizabethan England. It was at Hardwick that Bess spent most of the remainder of her life, much of it devoted to caring for and managing Arbella, who came to loathe her existence in Derbyshire and devised several bizarre plans for her escape (to Bess's great distress). Bess also quarrelled with her eldest son, Henry, and disinherited both him and Arbella in her will. She left most of her estate to her beloved and faithful son, William Cavendish, who continued her great dynasty into the seventeenth century.

People Associated with Letter 103: Lord Thomas Paget

Thomas Paget, fourth Baron Paget (c.1544-1590), was a Roman Catholic layman and exile (from 1583 until his death).

Other letters associated with Lord Thomas Paget:

[1570s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)

28 November 1581 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=104>)

10 June 1582 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)

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Other letters associated with Sheffield, Yorkshire

- 27 Aug 1567 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)
- 3 May 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=29>)
- 8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
- 7 Jun 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
- 19 Jun [c.1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
- [Oct 1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 Oct 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 27 Jun [1576?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=110>)
- 18 May [1577?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
- 1 Aug 1577 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 17 Mar 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)
- 14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 29 Dec 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123>)
- 17 Jan 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
- 13 May 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
- 21 Jun 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)
- 28 Nov 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=104>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 8 Feb 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)
- 10 Jun 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)
- 24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204>)

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7 Feb 1583 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=148>)

4 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)

23 Oct 1585 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=117>)

19 Dec 1590 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)

14 Apr [1600?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=2>)

Normalised view of Letter 103

To my verie good lord. the Lord Padget.

The contesse of Shreswesbury.

After my verie hartie commendations./ good my Lord wheras your Lordship and other the Quenes Iustices shall have the hearing and determening of an offence to the lawe, for the deathe of a man by the great misfortune of one Robinson my servant/ I am in his behalfe, standing at theis assyses in Stafford vpon tryall of lyfe most earnestly to crave your Lordship's favour towards him, according to the true evidence alreedy brought before the Coroner by men indifferent: and the same I trust is to be geven againe at the foresaid tyme before your LLordships. Truly my Lord I would gladly do the pore man good in this case: and therefore trust your Lordship will the rather at my request stand his good Lorde./ Wherin I shall thinke myselfe greatly behoulden, and wishe it in me to requyte suche your Lordship's favour/ And thus leaving eny further to trouble your Lordship do take my leave Sheffield the xxixth of Marche 1576./

your Lordship's assuryed frend

EShrouesbury

my Lord Padget

Diplomatic view of Letter 103

[Address Leaf]

To my verie good
lord. the L. Padget.

The contesse of Shreswesb.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

15 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

PAG IV/9 [Item number, hand: archivist]

After my verie hartie commendations./ good my L. wheras yo^r
L. and other the Quenes Iustices shall have the
hearing and determening of an offence to the lawe, for
the deathe of a man by the great misfortune of one
Robinson my servant/ I am in his behalfe, de standing
at theis assyses in Stafford vpon tryall of lyfe
most earnestly to crave yo^r L. favour towards him, according
to the true evidence alre dy brought before the Coroner
by men indifferent: and the same I trust is to be geven
again e at the foresaid tyme before yo^r LLs. Truly
my L. I would gladly do the pore man good in this
case: and therefore trust yo^r L. will the rather at my
request stand his good Lorde./ Wherin I shall
thinke my selfe greatly behoulden, and wishe it
in me to requyte suche yo^r L. favour/ And
thus leaving eny furth^r to trouble yo^r L do take
my leave ^ xxixth ^ Sheffield the ^ xxixth ^ of Marche
1576 ./

your .L. assuryed frend

EShrouesbury

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my L. Padget

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