

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 108 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=108>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Court at Windsor); William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Court at Windsor); William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire (Court at Windsor);

To: Bess of Hardwick; Sir John Manners;

Date: 9 August 1593

Summary: William Cecil, Lord Burghley, writes to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), commending the marriage between Bess's granddaughter, 'Mistress Pierrepont', and George Manners. He also advises her to 'visit your friends and children, and not live so solitary as it seems you do there in Chatsworth amongst hills and rocks of stones'. This letter is a copy sent from Bess, via her son William Cavendish, to John Manners. William writes that once Manners has perused the copy, Bess desires him to 'return it again'.

Archive: Belvoir Castle, Rutland MSS, Letters & Papers XII, folios 131-132

Delivery status: from Bess and Shrewsbury, or from Bess and William Cavendish, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no.

Hands: unknown scribe | William Cavendish |

Version: 1.0

Copyright Information

All material is made available free of charge for individual, non-commercial use only. The copyright and other intellectual property rights in the transcribed letter text, metadata about the letters and the design of the letter display are owned by the University of Glasgow.

You are permitted to access, print and download letters from this site on the following conditions:

- use of all material on this site is for information and for non-commercial or your own personal use only; any copies of these pages saved to disk or to any other storage medium may only be used for subsequent viewing purposes or to print extracts for non-commercial or your own personal use.
- the content must not be modified in any way.
- any use of the material for a permitted purpose must be accompanied by a full source citation.

No part of this site may be reproduced or stored in any other web site or included in any public or private electronic retrieval system or service without the University of Glasgow's prior written permission. Commercial exploitation of the transcribed letters, including use by radio or television programme makers and examination boards, is prohibited without licence from the University of Glasgow.

Further information on copyright and citation can be found at:- (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=171>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 108: 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

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

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 108: William Cecil, Lord Burghley

William Cecil (1521-98), Lord Burghley, was a chief minister to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. Most importantly, he served as secretary of state (1558-71) and lord high treasurer (from 1571) and he was elected chancellor of Cambridge University. He was an especially constant friend to Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury; therefore, upon becoming the countess of Shrewsbury, Bess's own friendship with Cecil was also strengthened.

Other letters associated with William Cecil, Lord Burghley:

- 13 October 1571 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)
- 14 May 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 23 September 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 24 October 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=122>)
- 22 June 1579 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 28 January 1581/2 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 2 August 1584 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>)
- 6 October 1585 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152>)
- [13 June 1586] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=230>)
- 6 October 1587 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156>)
- 19 December 1590 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)
- 11 April 1591 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>)
- 21 September 1592 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>)

People Associated with Letter 108: William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire

William Cavendish, first earl of Devonshire (1551-1626), was the second son of Bess and her second husband, Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557). Upon Bess's marriage to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, William and his brother Charles (also Cavendish) were promised sums when they turned twenty-one - a promise that would later be revisited as a major source of disagreement between Shrewsbury and Bess. William married Anne Keighley in 1581, with whom he had three sons and three daughters. During the feud between Bess and Shrewsbury in the 1580s, William sided clearly with his mother and on one occasion stood armed and ready to defend Chatsworth from one of Shrewsbury's raids. Especially in contrast to her great disappointment with her eldest son, Henry Cavendish, Bess greatly favoured William and he inherited most of her property and land when she died on 13 February 1608. William gained prominence following the accession of James I (in 1603) and was elevated to the peerage as Baron Cavendish of Hardwick in 1605, and then earl of Devonshire in 1618. He managed his money and lands very well and left his son, also William, a great inheritance.

Other letters associated with William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire:

31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)

31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)

[c. 1600] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=22>)

12 November 1600 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20>)

4 July 1604 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)

23 April 1605 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=23>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 108: 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

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

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 108: Sir John Manners

Sir John Manners (of Haddon Hall, not to be confused with John, the fourth earl of Rutland who died in 1588), was the son of Thomas, first earl of Rutland (c.1497-1526). He was the brother-in-law of Bess's fourth husband, George (sixth earl of Shrewsbury), through the latter's first marriage to Manners' sister, Gertrude (d.1566) - which is presumably why Bess refers to him as her 'brother' in her letters. He was the uncle of Edward (the third earl of Rutland), whom also figures in Bess's correspondence.

Other letters associated with Sir John Manners:

2 April 1597 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=239>)

18 May 1601 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=240>)

20 December 1602 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=241>)

21 December 1602 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=44>)

18 June 1604 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=45>)

16 December 1605 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=242>)

Normalised view of Letter 108

Sir my Lady desireth you after yat you haue perused this inclosed to retorne yt ageyn to hur Ladyship/

yours assured to command

W Cauendysse

My honorable good Ladie I hartlie and humblie thanck yow that yt pleasethe your Ladyship to acquainte me with the marriage of your granchilde Mistris Parpoint with Master George Manners whome his ffather would needes commende to my seruice, although I did rather like to vse him as my frend, and truly to my knowledge the younge gent is to be liked and loued for his good condicions which he hathe naturally from his good father by birthe, and I doe perswade my self that your Ladyship shall take mucche comfort of thir matche; so as betwixt his father and your Ladyship the twoe younge folkes may be prouided for, to lyve without want, and so I wishe to your Ladyship to take more Comfort by stirringe abroad to visit your frendes and children, and not to lyue so solitary as yt semeth yow doe there in Chattesworthe amongst hills and Rockes of Stones. ffrom the Court at Wyndsore the ixth of August /1593.

Your Ladyship's bounden assured frend

Will: Burghley./

To the right honorable my verie good Lady the old countesse of Shrewsbury

Diplomatic view of Letter 108

[Letter Text]

S^r my Lady desireth you after y^t you haue
perused this inclosed to retorne yt ageyn to
hur La.^p /

yours assured to command

W Cauendysse

My hono^r able good Ladie I hartlie and humblie thanck yo^w that yt ~
pleaseth yo^r La: to acquainte me wth the marriage of yo^r granchilde
M^{ris} Parpoint wth M^r George Manners whome his ffather
would needs commende to my seruice, although I did rather like
to vse him as my frend, and truly to my knowledge the younge
gent is to be liked and loued for his good condicions w^{ch} he
hathe naturally from his good father by birthe, and I doe
perswade my self that yo^r La: shall take mucche comfort of
thi^r matche; so as betwixt his father and yo^r La: the twoe
younge folkes may be *prouided* for, to lyve wth out want, and
so I wishe to yo^r La: to take more Comfort by stirringe
abroade to visit yo^r frendes and children, and not to lyue so
solitary as yt semeth yo^w doe there in Chattesworthe
amongest hills and Rockes of Stones. ffrom the Court
at Wyndsore the ixth of August /1593.

Yo^r La: bounden assured
frend

Will: Burghley./

To the right hono^r able my
verie good Lady the old ~
countesse of Shrewsbury

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

Version: 1.0