

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 161 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=161>)**

From: Bess of Hardwick (Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire);

To: Sir Julius Caesar;

Date: 31 January 1603/4

Summary: Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) writes to Sir Julius Caesar, declaring that a recent petition from tenants in and near the forest of High Peak regarding 'common of pasture for their cattle' is untrue, and asking for his 'lawful favour' in the matter.

Archive: British Library, Additional, MS 12506, fols 209r-10v.

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: Scribe D | unknown scribe | archivist | Scribe B | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 161: 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.

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## **People Associated with Letter 161: Sir Julius Caesar**

Sir Julius Caesar (bap.1558, d.1636) was a civil lawyer and courtier.

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## Other letters associated with Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire

1 Dec [c.1564] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=30>)  
20 Jan [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=31>)  
[1574?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=41>)  
3 Aug [1580s?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=205>)  
2 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>)  
4 Aug 1584 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)  
18 Feb [1591?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>)  
21 Sep 1592 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>)  
11 Mar 1593 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=160>)  
19 Sep 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=1>)  
20 May 1595 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=124>)  
27 Feb 1596 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=16>)  
11 Aug 1597 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=46>)  
28 Feb [1598?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)  
[c.1600] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=7>)  
2 Jun 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=125>)  
6 Oct 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=126>)  
28 Apr 1601 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=127>)  
21 Dec 1602 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=44>)  
9 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=128>)  
18 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=139>)  
29 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=129>)  
2 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=130>)  
6 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=131>)  
21 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=132>)  
3 Mar 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=134>)

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10 Mar 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=135>)  
18 Apr 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=140>)  
12 May 1604 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=63>)  
18 Jun 1604 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=45>)  
4 Jul 1604 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)  
16 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=242>)  
15 Jan [1606] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)  
7 Mar 1606 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=49>)  
13 Feb 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=14>)  
25 May [1607] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=3>)  
22 Jun 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=34>)  
27 Jun [1607] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=4>)  
30 Nov 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179>)  
31 Dec 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=35>)

## Normalised view of Letter 161

To the right worshipfull Sir Julius Cecer knight Master of the requestes to the Kinges most Excellent Majesty.

Vltimo Ianuarij .1603. Elizabeth Countesse of Shrewsbury. touching her answer to the inhabitants of the forest of high Peake.

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Whereas aboute the xxth of Iune last past a petition was preferred to the Kinges most excellent Majestie by Robert Allyn Hugh Needham and Iohn Wright in the behalf of themselves and others Inhabitanes in and nere the forest of the Highe Peake wherein they alledge that they ought to haue Common of pasture for their Cattle within his Highnes seuerall demesnes of the Castle of the High Peake Called the Inner seuerall of the Champion The sayd petition: is altogether vntrue and thereby they Clayme some of his Highnes Inheritaunce to be their owne as by a decree vnder the Duchie Seale and by my answere and my sonne William Cauendishe sent you by this bearer you may perceive. The said petitioners were presently after the delyvery of their petition dispatched to Come to me for Answere thereof but they Came not to me vntill within this weeke at which tyme they desired rather some Composition in ground then any thinge Conteyned in their petition./ I hartily pray your lawfull fauour for the speedie receivinge of the answere and dispatch of the matter restinge much beholdinge to you and willinge in parte to requite your trooble as this bearer vpon the dispatch of the matter will further signifie vnto you to whom I pray you geve Credytt./ And soe with my very harty Commendacions I Ceasse. ffrom Hardwicke this last day of Ianuary .1603./

your uery louing frend

EShrouesbury



## Diplomatic view of Letter 161

[Address Leaf]

To the right wor:<sup>ll</sup> S<sup>r</sup> Julius  
Cecer knight M<sup>er</sup> of the ~  
requestes to the Kinges  
most Excellent Ma:<sup>ty</sup> .

Vlt. Ianuarij .1603.  
Eliz Countesse of Shrewsbury.  
touching her answer to the in=habitants of the forest of high  
Peake.

[Overleaf]

### [Overleaf: Notes]

196 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]  
210 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

209 [Foliation, hand: archivist]  
195 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

Whereas aboute the xx<sup>th</sup> of Iune last past a petition was preferred to the Kinges  
most excellent Ma:<sup>tie</sup> by Robert Allyn Hugh Needham and Iohn Wright in the  
behalf of themselves and others Inhabitan<sup>tes</sup> in and nere the forest of the Highe  
Peake wherein they alledge that they ought to haue Common of pasture for their  
Cattle w<sup>th</sup> in his Highnes seuerall demesnes of the Castle of the High Peake  
Called the Inner seuerall of the Champion The sayd petition: is altogether vntrue  
and thereby they Clayme some of his Highnes Inheritaunce to be their owne as  
by a decree vnder the Duchie Seale and by my answere and my sonne  
William Cauendishe sent you by this bearer you may perceiue. The said petitione<sup>rs</sup>  
were presently after the delyvery of their petition dispatched to Come to  
me for Answer thereof but they Came not to me vntill w<sup>th</sup> in this weeke  
at w<sup>ch</sup> tyme they desired rather some Composition in ground then any thinge  
Conteyned in their petition./ I hartily pray yo<sup>r</sup> lawfull fauour for the ~



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speedie receiuinge of the answere and dispatch of the matter resting much  
beholdinge to you and willinge in parte to requite yo<sup>r</sup> trooble as this bearer  
vpon the dispatch of the matter will further signifie vnto you to whom ~  
I pray you geve Credytt./ And soe w<sup>th</sup> my very harty Commendacions  
I Ceasse. ffrom Hardwicke this last day of Ianuary .1603./

your uery louing frend

EShrouesbury  
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