

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 162 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: William Cecil, Lord Burghley;

Date: 28 January 1581/2

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, following the death of her daughter Elizabeth Stuart (née Cavendish). She asks Burghley to 'recommend' her suit to the queen that the portion of money previously bestowed on Elizabeth will now go to the latter's daughter, Bess's granddaughter, Arbella Stuart. She also requests that Burghley 'give my son William Cavendish leave to attend on your lordship about this matter'.

Archive: British Library, Lansdowne, MS 34, fols 4r-5v

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: Scribe E | unknown scribe | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 162: 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 162: 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>)

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>)

9 August 1593 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=108>)

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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>)
- 29 Mar 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)
- 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>)
- 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 162

To the Righte honorable my verry good Lorde the Lord Burghley Lord Treasoror of England/

28 Ianuary 1581. The Countesse of Shrowesbury to my Lord

That ye yonge Lady Arbella, may haue yat land yat ye late Countesse hir mother had assigned hir.

My honorable good Lord your Lordship hath harde by my Lord howe it hathe pleased god to visit me but in what sorte soeuer his pleasure is to laye his hevye hande on vs we muste take ytt thankefullie It is good reason his hollye will should be obeyed, My honorable good Lord I shall not nede here to make longe resittall to your Lordship howe that in all my greatest matters I haue bene sigularelie bounde to your Lordship for your Lordship's good and especiall favour to me and howe muche your Lordship did bynde me the pare woman that is gone and my swete Iuell Arbella att our laste beinge at Courte, neither the mother duringe her Lyffe nor I can ever forgett but most thankefullie acknowledge Itt And so I am well assured will the yonge Babe when her Ryper yeres will suffer her to knowe her beste frendes, And nowe my good Lord I hope her Majestie vpon my moste humble suitt will lett that portion whiche her Majestie bestowed on my doughter and Iuell Arbella remayne wholie to the Childe for her better education her seruantes that are to loke to her, her Masters that are to trayne her vpp in all good Learninge and vertue will require no small charges, wherefore my earneste request to your Lordship ys so to recomend this my humble suitt to her Majestie as ytt maie sonest & easiliest take effect, And I beseche your Lordship to gyve my sonne William Cavendishe leave to attend on your Lordship about this matter, And so referringe my self my swete Iuell Arbella and the whole matter to your honorable and frendlie consideracion I take my leave of your Lordship besechinge your Lordship to pardon me for that I am not able nowe to wryte to your Lordship with my owne hande Sheffeild this xxvijth of Ianuarye/

your Lordship's most assury[d] louynge frend

EShrouesbury

Diplomatic view of Letter 162

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

1581/2 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the Righte honorable
my verry good Lorde the
Lo Burghley Lo: Treasoro^r
of England/

28 Ian: 1581.

The Countesse of Shrowesbury
to my L.

That y^e yonge ^{^La^} Arbella, may
haue y^t land y^t y^e late
Countesse hir mother had
assigned hir.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

N 2. [Item number, hand: archivist]

4 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My honorable good Lo yo^r Lo: hath harde by my Lo howe it hathe
pleased god to visit me but in what sorte soeuer his pleasure is
to laye his hevy hande on vs we muste take ytt thankefullie It is
good reason his hollye will should be obeyed, My honorable good Lo
I shall not nede here to make longe resitall to yo^r Lo: howe that
in all my greatest matters I haue bene sigularelie bounde to yo^r Lo:
for yo^r Lo: good and especiall favo^r to me and howe mucche yo^r Lo:
did bynde me the pare woman that is gone and my swete Iuell
Arbella att o^r laste beinge at Co^r te, neither the mother duringe her
Lyffe nor I can ever forgett but most thankefullie acknowledge Itt
And so I am well assured will the yonge Babe when her Ryper

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yes will suffer her to knowe her beste frendes, And nowe my good Lo:
I hope her Ma^{tie} vpon my moste humble suitte will lett that
portion whiche her Ma^{tie} bestowed on my daughter and Iuell
Arbella remayne wholie to the Childe for her better education
her seruantes that are to loke to her, her M^{rs} that are to trayne
her vpp in all good Learninge and vertue will require no small
charges, wherefore my earnestest request to yo^r Lo: ys so to recomend
this my humble suitte to her Ma^{tie} as ytt maie sonest & easiliest
take effect, And I beseche yo^r Lo: to gyve my sonne Willm
Cavendishe leave to attend on yo^r Lo: about this matter, And
so referringe my self my swete Iuell Arbella and the whole matter
to yo^r honorable and frendlie ~~Carefull~~ and consideracion I take
my leave of yo^r Lo: besechinge yo^r Lo: to pardon me for that I
am not able nowe to wryte to yo^r Lo: wth my owne hande
Sheffeld this xxvijth of Ianuarye/

your .L. most assury...
louynge frend

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