

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 172 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)

From: Elizabeth I (Court at Greenwich);

To: Bess of Hardwick; George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury;

Date: 25 June 1577

Summary: Elizabeth I writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) and her husband George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, thanking them for entertaining Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, at Chatsworth and Buxton; as well as for 'the charge committed to you both [i.e. Mary Queen of Scots]'. She writes that the debt owed them is 'as great as a sovereign can owe to a subject'. This letter is endorsed in Shrewsbury's hand as 'the dearest jewel'. For a significantly different, earlier draft version of this, see letter ID 221.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3206, pp. 819-22

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Other version: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=221>)

Hands: unknown scribe | George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury | archivist | Queen Elizabeth I | Nathaniel Johnston |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 172: Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I (1533-1603), queen of England and Ireland, was the only child of King Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his second wife, Anne Boleyn (c.1500-1536). Her reign is one of the most famous in British, and indeed all of European history and, as she was in her own time, she remains an icon for that age. She succeeded to the throne after the death of her half-sister, Queen Mary, in 1558. With regard to Bess's life, the latter had recently married William St. Loe when Elizabeth became queen. In 1559, St. Loe was named captain of the guard to the queen, and in the same year Bess was appointed as a gentlewoman of the privy chamber. Bess was, however, dismissed due to the queen's anger over her alleged involvement in a clandestine marriage between Katherine Grey and Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford. Nonetheless, the two women continued to have an amiable and significant relationship throughout Elizabeth's reign - evidenced by the correspondence between them. Notably, Elizabeth served as mediator between Bess and her fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, during their marriage breakdown in the 1580s and even intervened on Bess's behalf.

Other letters associated with Elizabeth I:

4 June 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=221>)

17 March 1577/8 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)

9 January 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=128>)

29 January 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=129>)

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People Associated with Letter 172: 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 172: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury

George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522-90), was the eldest and only surviving son of Francis Talbot, fifth earl of Shrewsbury (1500-60), and his first wife, Mary (d.1538). In 1538, at the age of sixteen, he took up the title of Lord Talbot, until he succeeded to the earldom after his father's death twenty-two years later. In 1539 he married his first wife, Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566/7), with whom he had seven children: four daughters and three sons. Early on he acquired a number of honours stemming from his family's well-established prominence in the north: knight bachelor (1547), member of the council of the north (1549), knight of the Garter (1561), and lord lieutenant of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (1565). Following the death of his first wife, he married Bess, then the widow of William St Loe (c.1520-65?), in 1567. At this point Shrewsbury was one of the wealthiest men in England, derived from his estates and also business adventuring in farming, shipping, coal-mining, glassworks and lead extraction and production. Soon after his marriage to Bess, however, he was appointed keeper of Mary Queen of Scots, a custodianship he would hold from 1569-84. Shrewsbury prided himself on his loyalty to Elizabeth I, but he soon found her reluctant to provide sufficient diet money to keep Mary and her retinue. This, in addition to the monies needed for expensive building projects (at Worksop and Chatsworth), and his eldest son Gilbert's debts led to serious financial anxiety for Shrewsbury. Furthermore, he was forced to remain with Mary at all times and was therefore losing his place at court. As Shrewsbury's stresses grew and he became increasingly irascible, his marriage with Bess broke down spectacularly amid quarrelling to do with family finances and the allocation of estates. Scandal and mutual bad-mouthing soon became very public and the queen herself intervened, eventually dictating that Shrewsbury pay Bess a regular income (from 1587), while the two lived apart. Shrewsbury was an ill man for many years and suffered with a severe rheumatic condition, what he referred to as 'gout', which contributed to his terrible handwriting. He died in the company of his mistress, Elinor Bretton, at Sheffield Manor, on 18 November 1590, after being administered a mercury cure. His son Gilbert Talbot succeeded him as the seventh earl of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury:

28 June [1568?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)

[December 1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)

13 December [1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=66>)

[1569?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=67>)

[1570s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=184>)

[c. 1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)

[1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)

[1570s] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=203>)

[c. 1570] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=68>)

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4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>)
4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=70>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=69>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=72>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=71>)
8 August 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
[c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=76>)
[c. 1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=75>)
[1575-7] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=245>)
7 June 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
June 19 [c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
20 February 1575/6 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
19 November [1576?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=183>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
18 May [1577?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
4 June 1577 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=221>)
14 May 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
[30 June 1578?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
2 August 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
28 December 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=193>)
13 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
28 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
22 June 1579 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
17 January 1579/80 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
13 May 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
21 June 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
11 September 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
10 October 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=79>)
8 February 1581/2 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
4 August 1584 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)
26 August [1584] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=116>)

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14 October [1585] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=229>)

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

9 June 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=176>)

4 August 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=202>)

[April 1587] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=186>)

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Other letters associated with Court at Greenwich

28 Jun 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=80>)

Normalised view of Letter 172

To our right trustie & right welbelouid Cousin and Counsellor the Earle of Shrewsburye and to our right dere and right welbelouid Cousin Countesse his wyfe./.

The queens majestes letter of the xxv of Iune 1577 to be kept As the dereste Iuell

By the Queene/

Your most Assured lovinge Cousin and Soverayne

Elizabeth R

Our very good Cousins. Being geuen tvnderstand from our Cousin of Leycester, how honorablye he was not onlie latelie receaued by you our Cousin the Countesse at Chatsworth, & his dyet by you both discharged at Buxtons, but also presented with a very rare present, we should do him great wronge (houlding him in that place of fauor we do) in case we should not let you vnderstand in how thankfull sorte we accept the same at both your handes, not as don vnto him, but to our owne self, reputing him as annother our self And therefore ye maie assure your selues that we (taking vppon vs the debt not as his but our owne) will take care accordingly to dischargd the same in such honorable sorte, as so well deserving Creditors as ye are shall neuer haue cause to thincke ye haue met with an vnthanckfull debtor. In this acknowledgement of new debtes we maie not forgett our ould debte, the same being as great as a Soueraigne can owe to a subiect, when thorough your loyall & most carefull looking to the chardge committed to you both we and our realme enjoy a peaceable gouernement, the best good happe that any prince on earthe can befaule. This good happe then growing from you, ye might thincke your selves most vnhappye yf you serued such a prince as should not be as readye gratyouslie to consider of yt as thanckfullie to acknowledge the same/ whereof you maie make full accompt to your comfort when tyme shall serue. Geuen vnder our signet at our mannor of Grenwich the xxvth day of Iune 1577. and in the sixth yere of our raigne./

Diplomatic view of Letter 172

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

The Q

21 June 1577 [Late editorial note, hand: archivist]

To our right trustie & right welbelouid
Cousin and Counsellor the Earle of
Shrewsburye and to o^r right
dere and right welbelouid Cousin
[deletion] Countesse his wyfe./.

The queens ma^{tes} letter
of the xxv of Iune 1577 to
be kept As the
dereste Iuell

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

821 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

XX [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

819 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

X [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

for the Ansure to this [^]or some other of the same time[^] fol 892 [Later editorial note, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

By the Queene/

Your most Assured lovinge Cousin
and Soverayne

Elizabeth R

Our very good Cousins. Being geuen tvnderstand from o^r Cousin

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of Leycester, how honorablye he was not onlie latelie receaued by you our Cousin the Countesse at Chatsworth, & his dyet by you both discharged at Buxtons, but also presented wth a very rare present, we should do him great wronge (houlding him in that place of fauor we do) in case we should not let you vnderstand in how thankfull sorte we accept the same at both your handes, not as don vnto him, but to o^r owne self, repu=ting him as annother our self And therefore ye maie assure your selues that we (taking vppon vs the debt not as his but o^r owne) will take care accordingly to discharge the same in such honorable sorte, as so well *deseruing* Creditors as ye are shall neu haue cause to thincke ye haue met wth an vnthanckfull debtor. In this acknowledgement of new debtes we maie not forgett our ould debte, the same being as great as a *Soueraigne* can owe to a subiect, when thorough your loyall & most carefull looking to the chardge committed to you both we and o^r realme enioy a peaceable *gouernement*, the best good happe that any prince on earthe can befaule. This good happe then growing from you, ye might thincke your selves most vnhappye yf you *serued* such a prince as should not be as readye gratyouslie to consider of yt as thanckfullie to acknowledge the same/ whereof you maie make full accompt to your comfort when tyme shall *serue*. Geuen vnder o^r signet at o^r manno^r of Grenw^{ch} the xxvth day of Iune 1577 . and in the xixth yere of o^r raigne./

Version: 1.0