

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 241 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=241>)

From: Bess of Hardwick;

To: Sir John Manners;

Date: 20 December 1602

Summary: Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) writes to John Manners to request his aid on behalf of Sir Edward Dyer, who is acting as executor of the will of a Master Beresford. In particular, Dyer suggests that 'if any person take any part of the goods away, their names may be taken and they put in bond to answer them'. For Manners' supportive reply, written the next day, see letter ID 044.

Archive: Belvoir Castle, Rutland MSS, Letters & Papers XIV, folios 128-129

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed with Bess's arms featuring the Hardwick cross (a saltire engrailed, in chief three eglantines, surmounted by a countess's coronet) Ribbon/floss – no.

Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: Scribe C | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 241: 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.

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 241: 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:

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

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>)

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>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Normalised view of Letter 241

To my honorable good Brother Masterr Iohn Manners

My verie good Brother./ Sir Edward Dier whoe is and allwayes hath ben my good frend hath written to me to further him my self and by my frendes naming your self to be one in the matter touching master Basfordes will./ I shall not need to Commend Sir Edward to you for that you knowe him your self./ I praye you let him have all the furtheraunce and frendship you can doe him in his busines and as by his letter he desireth, that they which have the goodes maye safely keep them, and that yf any person take any part of the goodes awaye, theyr names maye be taken and they put in bond to answere them./ And so desirous to heare of your good health doe Cease./ ffrom Hardwick this xxth of december 1602/

your loving Sister and assured ffrend

EShrouesbury

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Diplomatic view of Letter 241

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

125 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

To my honorable good
Brother M^r Iohn Manners
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[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

128 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My verie good Brother./ S.^r Edward Dier whoe is and allwayes hath
ben my good frend hath written to me to further him my self and by my
frendes naming yo.^r self to be one in the matter touching m^r Basfordes
will./ I shall not need to Commend S.^r Edward to you for that you
knowe him yo.^r self./ I praye you let him have all the furtheraunce
and frendship you can doe him [^]in his busines[^] and as by his letter he desireth, that
they w^{ch} have the goodes maye safely keep them, and that yf any
person take any part of the goodes awaye, theyr names maye be taken
and they put in bond to answere them./ And so desirous to heare of
yo.^r good health doe Cease./ ffrom Hardwick this xxth of december
1602/

yo.^r loving Sister and
assured ffrend

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