

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 026 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=026>)**

From: Hugh Fitzwilliam (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

Date: 21 September 1571

Summary: Hugh Fitzwilliam writes a long letter of news to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), including an account of events surrounding the discovery of the Ridolfi Plot: conjecture on why 'the duke [of Norfolk]' has been imprisoned in the Tower - namely to do with intercepted letters and gold meant for Scottish lords in support of Mary Queen of Scots; the discovery of letters and a cipher at Norfolk's household; and details regarding the examination and torture of those involved. Additionally, he writes of news from abroad (including harm done by 'the Turk'), and Elizabeth I's attendance at the marriage of William Cecil's daughter, Anne, to Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (29)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Hugh Fitzwilliam | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 026: Hugh Fitzwilliam

Little is known of Hugh Fitzwilliam other than that he was perhaps a relative of Bess and sent her news of the court and abroad.

Other letters associated with Hugh Fitzwilliam:

[23?] January 1568/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)

28 July 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)

31 August 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)

3 February 1573/4 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=27>)

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## People Associated with Letter 026: 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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## Other letters associated with Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 12 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=60>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 20 Nov [1565?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- 26 Feb [1566?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 2 Aug 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

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## Other letters associated with London, Greater London

- 14 Nov [1552] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 25 Feb 1558 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=112>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 4 Nov 1561 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=54>)
- 14 Dec [1564] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=50>)
- [23?] Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 13 Oct 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)
- 3 Feb 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=27>)
- 9 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=191>)
- 21 May 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=215>)
- [c.1600] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=22>)
- 12 Nov 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20>)
- 4 Jul 1604 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)
- 23 Apr 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=23>)

## Normalised view of Letter 026

[T]o the right honorable [coun]tes of Shrewsbury [t]his at Chattesworthe ...by wheare

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After my due and moost humble commendacions vnto your honorable good Ladyship may it please the same tunderstand that I cannot lerne the certaynetie of all the causes of thoccasions that the duke was committed to the tower; but thei say one was one was for sending mony to relive the lordes of the Scotishe quenes syde, as by mony and lettres intercepted it may appeare; for the Scotishe quene as thei say. sent the duke a lettre of her owne hand at good lengthe; requiring him to send ayde to her frendes in Scotland, or elles thei were hable to hold out no longer; wheare vpon presently he sent .vj.Cli in golde with a lettre to the Scotishe Quene an other to the Lordes of Scotland of her syde, and an other to Banister all his doer in the northe, to conveaye the same; the which was broughte to a marchant man to conveye with speed in the name of .l.li the marchant annswered that he wold receve it heare, and cause it to be payd immediatly there; but that cold not be but to be conveyed as it was seald vp; The marchant marveling at the earnestnes of chicford; and after he was gonne feling the waighte of the bagge, being very hevvy; brook the seales and opened the bagge, and found the lettres and the gold; wheare with being very mucche a feard; came to the court and showed the bagge and the lettres; wheare vpon, my cosen Kipwithe was sent to the duke that no man shold talke with him but in his hearing, and Chicford his Secretary was sent to the tower on Saturday at the night, and on sonday in the morning was examined by Sir Thomas Smythe and master Doctor Wilson, and his examinations sent to the court; and there vpon Sir Raufe Sadler was sent to the duke and came thither by .ix. of the clocke in the morning and discharged his howsehold and continued with him till he went to the tower; and imediatly after Sir Raufes comming; according to Chicfords confession, thei did searche; for their sifer; and he did appointe a wronge place, and found it not; but there thei found the Scotishe Quenes lettre; wheare vpon the duke was had to the tower; and chicford came from the tower to the Cherterhowse, and found the sifer in the rowfe amongst the tyle stones; whiche discovered the hole matter The laste weeke the duke sent to the Quene, that if her majestie wold send to him my Lord of Burly he wold declare the hole matter; and whan he came; he wold nauther say nor writte, but denyd probable thinges; and the same day came in to the tower Banistar his man; and there was examined, and stowtely denyd matters layd to his charge; in so mucche as chicfordes examinations was sent to the duke; and chicforde was broughte face to face before Banister; who was racked on Wednesday twysday last; and barker was going to the racked; and vpon his confession was stayed; yesterday Sir Thomas Wrothe Master Osburne, and others was sente to the Charterhowse to take an innuentory of all his goodes; and the saing is that the duke tooke vpon interest .xx.Mli but thei cannot fynde wheare abowe .vj.Ml hathe bine bestowed of it. His doing is so evident and playne to vndermyne our moost soverayne Lady that if he scape deathe yet never imprisonment as longe as she lyveth; but suerly he will hardly escape that is to be layd to charge.

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Thei say the Quene wilbe at my Lorde of Burlyes howse besides Waltam, on sonday nexte, wheare my Lord of Oxford shall marry mistress Anne Sicelle his daughter;

Chippine Vitellus is comme in to fflanders agayne out of the Spanishe court and hathe given him the Contie of Holstroughte in the Lowe Contryes; and the duke de Medena seli is comming by sea with a .xxx. sale; whereof is .viij. men of warre.

Thei say the Turke dothe muche harme bothe by sea and lande; and good newes of good conclusion is looked for out of ffraunce by the nexte messenger of the consumation of the mariages; but there is nothing spoken of the Quenes majesties mariage.

He that murderd the Earle of Linaux and he that let thennemyes in at the posterne gate be bothe executed.

And thus leaving all my matters to determyne of the almightie god, that see the wronges that is donne me; who with his mightie power will revenge my cause whan it shall please him. I moost humbly take my leave of your honorable good Lady wishing my Lord and yow all helthe with encrease of honor to godes pleasure scribeld at London the .xxj.th of September .1571. I cannot lerne Banisters confession vpon the rack, as yet, but he was put to the rack for the draying of moost manifeste trothes at the first.

Your honorable good Ladyship's ever to command during lyfe

Hugh ffitzwilliam

## Diplomatic view of Letter 026

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

Two Letters

About y<sup>e</sup> D. of Norfolk &

Mary Q of Scotts [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

M<sup>r</sup> Doctor Wilson mentioned [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

...o the right honorable

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(29) [Item number, hand: archivist]

174 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

133 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

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