

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 035 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=035>)

From: William Kniveton (Mercaston, Derbyshire);

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

Date: 31 December 1607

Summary: William Kniveton writes to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) to send elaborate thanks for her good will and favours, with best wishes for the new year.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (42)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: seal, red wax, embossed featuring an eagle displayed with wings elevated

Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: William Kniveton | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 035: William Kniveton

William Kniveton (b. 1558) was the son of Thomas Kniveton and his wife, Bess's half-sister, Jane (née Leche), and therefore Bess's nephew. He later became Sir William Kniveton of Mercaston, Derbyshire, and married Matilda, daughter of John Rollesley of Rollesley. Bess's Account Books record regular payments made to him during the 1590s, which include loans of money.

Other letters associated with William Kniveton:

22 June 1607 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=34>)

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People Associated with Letter 035: 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 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>)
- 31 Jan 1604 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=161>)
- 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>)

Normalised view of Letter 035

To the Right honorable & my verie good Lady the Countesse of Shrewsbury att Hardwicke delivered

Right honourable & my very good Lady I most humbly beseech your Ladyship giue me leave to acknowledge the manyfolde bonds of dutie & loue which I owe to your honour from whom (I most humbly thanke your Ladyship for the same) I doe still receave so many honourable favors, nothwithstandinge god hath taken away the meanes wherby (& not by any defecte of myne owne I might have hoped for the least parte of that honourable bountie which yt pleaseth your Ladyship still to afforde me with the Continuance of your Ladyship most honourable favors and Countenance which I respecte aboue all the rest. & for the which I doe & will euer Confesse & acknowledge my selfe infinitely bound to your honor & I most humbly beseech your Ladyship accordinge to your accustomed favor, att this tyme to accepte of my humble prayers to god that he will preserve your Ladyshipp in healthe honour & all happines, not onely this newe yeare which I praie god may be honourable & prosperous to your Ladyship & all yours but euen as many more yeares after, as shall seeme good to his Majestie that your honour liue vpon this earthe. to the great ioye & Comforte bothe of me & many others, but of my selfe Cheifly aboue others, who must needes Confesse my selfe more bounde to your Ladyship then any other. & who will euer remayne as dutifull & seruiceable to your Ladyship as your many & honourable favors have bound me to be. which is more then I Can make showe of but not more then I am allwayes readie to Confesse & shalbe most willinge to make prooffe therof when soeuer ther shalbe any occasion offered for me to manifest the same./

And so most humbly Cravinge your Ladyships parardon for this my bouldnes and the Continuance of your honour & good opinion of me, with the remembrance of my humble dutie & service to your honour I most humbly take my leave and rest./

Your Ladyships euer most humble and readie to be Commaunded

W:m. Knyveton:.

Myrcaston this last of December 1607.

Diplomatic view of Letter 035

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

John & W^m Knyveton [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the Right honorable &
my verie good Lady the
Countesse of Shrewsbury
att Hardwicke
dd

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(42) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

Right ho: & my very good La. I most humbly beseech yo^r La.^p
giue me leave to acknowledge the manyfolde bonds of
dutie & loue w^{ch} I owe to yo^r ho: from whom (I most
humbly thanke yo^r La.^p for the same) I doe still receave
so many ho: favors, nothwth standinge god hath taken
awaye the meanes wherby (& not by any defecte of
myne owne I might have hoped for the least pte
of that ho: bountie w^{ch} yt pleaseth yo^r La.^p still to
afforde me wth the Continuance of yo^r La.^p most
ho: favors and Countenance w^{ch} I respecte aboue
all the rest. & for the w^{ch} I doe & will euer Confesse
& acknowledge my selfe infinitely bound to yo^r honor
& I most humbly beseech yo^r La.^p accordinge to yo^r
accustomed favor, att this tyme to accepte of
my humble prayers to god that he will *preserve* yo^r
La.^{pp} in healthe ho. & all happines, not onely this
newe yeare w^{ch} I prairie god may be ho: & prospe=rous to yo^r La.^p & all yo.^{rs} but euen as many
more

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yeares after, as shall seeme good to his Ma.^{tie} that yo^r
ho: liue vpon this earthe. to the great ioye & Com=^{forte} bothe of me & many others, but of
my selfe

Cheifly aboute others, who must needes Confesse
my selfe more bounde to yo^r La.^p then any other.
& who will euer remayne as dutifull & seruiceable
to yo^r La.^p as yo^r many & ho: favors have bound me
to be. w^{ch} is more then I Can make shoue of but
not more then I am allwayes readie to Confesse
& shalbe most willinge to make prooue therof when
soeuer ther shalbe any occasion offered for me to
manifest the same./

And so most humbly Cravinge yo^r La.^{ps} pardon for
this my bouldnes and the Continuance of yo^r ho:
& good opinion of me, wth the remembrance of y^{or}
my humble dutie & service to yo^r ho: I most humbly
take my leave and rest./

Yo^r La.^{ps} euer most k humble
and readie to be Commaunded
§

[significant space]

W:^m . Knyveton:.

Myrcaston this last
of December 1607.

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