

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 045** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=045>)

From: Sir John Manners (Haddon);

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

Date: 18 June 1604

Summary: Sir John Manners writes to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) to thank her for her good wishes in relation to the birth of his grandchild (John, later eighth earl of Rutland), mentioning that his son (George Manners) is awaiting 'to know your pleasure about the christening'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (55)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: Sir John Manners | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 045: 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>)

20 December 1602 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=241>)

21 December 1602 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=44>)

16 December 1605 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=242>)

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## People Associated with Letter 045: 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>)
- 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>)
- 31 Dec 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=35>)

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## Other letters associated with Haddon

21 Dec 1602 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=44>)

## Normalised view of Letter 045

To the right honorable my singuler good Ladie the, Countesse of Shrewsburie dowager at Hardwick./

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Good Madam I receiued a very kynd lettre from your Ladyship by my Sonne Georges seruant which was much to my comforth to vnderstand theirby your honorable and naturall affection for the birth of this child/ whom I pray god almighty to blesse and prosper with all good giftes yf it be his wyll/ and because my sonne now doth waite vpon your Ladyship him self to know your pleasour about the christenyng I rekon it a part of my duty to geue your Ladyship most humbble thanks for the honourable faouours shewed both to me and myne which I haue many waies receiued from your good Ladyship I wold in deed haue bene parsonally at the christenyng my self but that I fynd my body not ablle well to trauaill and so ready to be commaunded by your Ladyship for my small porcion of power I pray god almighty euermore to preserue you in all honour and felicitye/ from haddon this xvijth day of Iune 1604./

Your Ladyship's humbly allwais to commaund

John Manners

## Diplomatic view of Letter 045

[Address Leaf]

To the right hono<sup>r</sup> able my  
singuler good Ladie the,  
Countesse of Shrewsburie  
dowager at Hardwick./

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(55) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

185 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

Good Madam I receiued a very kynd *lettre* from yo<sup>r</sup> La. by my  
Sonne Georges seru<sup>ch</sup>ant w<sup>ch</sup> was much to my comforth to vnderstand theirby  
yo<sup>r</sup> honorable and naturall affection for the birth of this child/ whom I  
I pray god almighty to blesse and prosper w<sup>th</sup> all good giftes yf it be  
his wyll/ and because my sonne now doth waite vpon yo<sup>r</sup> La.  
him self to know yo<sup>r</sup> pleasour about the christenyng I rekon it a part  
of my duty to geue yo<sup>r</sup> La. most humblle thanks for the honourable  
fauours shewed both to me and myne w<sup>ch</sup> I haue many <sup>waies</sup> receiued from  
yo<sup>r</sup> good La. I wold in deed haue bene parsonally at the christenyng  
my self but that I fynd my body not ablle well to trauaill  
and so ready to be commaunded by yo<sup>r</sup> La. for my small porcion of  
power I pray god almighty euermore to preserue yo<sup>u</sup> in all honour  
and felicitye/ from haddon this xvij<sup>th</sup> day of Iune  
1 5 604./

[*significant space*]

Yo<sup>r</sup> La. humbly allwais  
to commaund

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John Manners

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