

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 065 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=065>)

From: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury ([Hampton Court Palace, London?]);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire);

Date: [December 1568]

Summary: George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, writes to his wife, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), thanking her for her letter, and for venison and puddings she sent. He describes a conversation he had with the queen (Elizabeth I), in which she hinted at her trust in him, which he suspects to be connected with Mary Queen of Scots (for whom custodianship has yet to be determined). He hopes to be with Bess, his 'greatest joy', for Christmas. The plague rages in London and the queen therefore intends not to go to Greenwich for Christmas as was previously planned. Lady Frances Cobham wishes Bess were there. He's been up late playing cards in the Privy Chamber. In a postscript, he asks Bess to tell his daughter Mary to write to him.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (86)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 065: 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>)

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>)

4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>)

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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>)
25 June 1577 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)
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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People Associated with Letter 065: 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 Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

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

21 Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=107>)

[23?] Jan 1569 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)

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

6 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=207>)

31 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=11>)

Normalised view of Letter 065

To my wyfe The countes of Shrowsbury at tutbury yev this

my dere none havege Resevyd your lettar offe the furste of decembar whyche camme in very good tyme eles hadde I sente oune of thes few Remenyng with me to have brought me worde of your helthe whyche I dobtet offe for that I harde nott from you offe All this tyme tyll now whyche drove me in dumpes but now Revyved Agen by your wrytenge vnto me/ I thank you swete more for your podenges & venyson/ the podenges have I bestoud in this wyes dosen to my lade cobbam & As many to my Lord steward & to my Lord of Leystere & the Reste I have Resarved to my celfe to ete in my chaubar the venyson is yett At london but I have cente for it heddar I perseve nedd talbott hathe bene syke & now paste dangar I thanke god I have sych Anone that is so carfull ovar me & myne/ god cend me sone home to possesse my greteste Ioye/ if you thynke it is you/ you Arre nott desevid I wyll nott forgett to dele with the master of the Rolles for Iounge knyfton/ he semes to be myche my frende/ & is now in delynge betwext denenge & me for the lees of Abbott stoke/ Agred Apon by me & tomworthe he shuld so doo/ he holdes it At Athousande markes/ & the master offe the Rolles hathe dreven it to vc poundes whych me thynkes to myche for syche Alees yett because it lyes so as I Am informyd Amounges gylbardes landes I have made my steward to ofar iiijc poundes & to gett ... tyll the next terem because I wold hav your advyse therein/ & for that I lyve in hope to be with you before you can Reterne Answar Agen you shall vndarstande that this presente mondaye in the mornynge fyndenge the quene A in the garden At good lesur I gave hur mageste thankes that che hadd so lytell Regard to the clammurus pepull of bolsore in my absens che declared vnto what evell speche was agenste me off my nerenes/ & sclak in house keypyng/ & As mych As was told hur/ whych che inowyes beleved with As good wordes/ as I cold wysche declarenge that or it were longe I shuld well perseve che dyd so truste me As che dyd few/ che wold nott tell me wherin but doute it was About the custody of the scotes quene/ here is pryvate spech that gates & vahan shuld make sute to hav hur but this day I perseve it is Altered I thynke before senday thes mattares wyll cum to sum passe that we shall know how longe our Abode shalbe but how so evar it faules oute I wyll nott fale but be with you before kyrsemas orre eles you shall cum to me/ the plage is desparsed sore Abrode in london so that the quene kepes hur kyrsemas here & goethe nott to grenwyche As it was mente my lade cobam your dere frende wysches your presens here ho loves you well/ I tell hur I have the cause to love hur beste for that che wysched me so well to spede as I dyd & as the pene wrytes so the harte thynkes that offe All erthely Ioyes that hath happenyd vnto me I thanke god chefleste for you/ for with you I have All Ioye & contentasyon of mynde & with oute you dethe is mor plesante to me than lyfe/ if I thought I shuldb longe be from you/ & therefore good wyfe doo as I wyll doo hope shortely offe oure metenge & fare well dere swete none from hamton courte this mondaye At mydnyght for it is

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every nyght so late before I goo to my bedd beinge At play in the preve chambar At premyro
where I have loste almost Ahundereth poundes & laked my sclepe

Your fethefull husbande tyll dethe

G Shrewsbury

wyfe tell my doughter mawle that I Am nott plesed with hur that che hath nott wryten to me
with hur cystar yett wyll I nott forgett hur & the Reste & pray to god to blesse them All

Diplomatic view of Letter 065

[Address Leaf]

To my wyfe The countes
of Shrowsbury at tutbury
yev this

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(86) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

149 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

my dere none havenge Resevyd yo^r lettar offe
the furste of decembar whyche camme in very good
tyme eles hadde I sente oune of thes few Remenyng
wt me to have brought me worde of yo^r helthe
whyche I dobted offe for that I harde nott from
you [*deletion*] offe All this tyme tyll now whyche drove
me in dumpes but now Revyved Agen by yo^r wrytenge
vnto me/ I thank you swete more for yo^r podenges &
venyson/ the podenges have I bestoud in this wyes dosen
to my lade cobbam & As many to my L steward
& to my L of Leystere & the Reste I have Resarved
to my celfe to ete in my chaubar the venyson is yett At london but I have cente for it heddar
I perseve nedd talbott hathe bene syke & now
paste dangar I thanke god I have sych Anone
that is so carfull ovar me & myne/ god cend
me sone home to posesse my greteste Ioye/ if you
thynke it is you/ you Arre nott desevyd
I wyll nott forgett to dele w^t the m^r of the Rolles
for Iounge knyfton/ he semes to be myg myche
my frende/ & is now in delynge betwext denenge &
me for the lees of Abbott stoke/ Agred Apon
by me & tomworthe he shuld so doo/ he holdes
A it At Athousande markes/ & the m^r offe the
Rolles hathe dreven it to v^c poundes whych me thynkes

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to myche for syche Alees yett because it lyes so as
I Am informyd Amounges gylbardes landes I have
made my steward to ofar iiijc poundes & to gett ...
tyll the next terem because I wold hav yo^r advyse
therein/ & because I shall for that I lyve in hope
to be w^t you before you can Reterne Answar Agen
you shall vnderstannde that this presente mondaye
in the mornynge fyndenge the quene A in the gardn
At good lesur I gave hur mageste ~~thankes~~ thankes
that che hadd so lytell Regard to the clamurus pepull of bolsore in my absens che declared
vnto what evell
speche was agenste me off

[page break]

my nerenes/ & sclak in house keyynge/ & As mych
As was told hur/ whych che inowyes beleved wt As
good wordes/ & as I cold wysche declarenge that ~~o~~ or it were
longe I shuld well perseve che dyd so truste me As che
dyd few/ che wold nott tell me wherin but doute
it was About the custody of the scotes quene/ here is
pryvate spech that va gates & vahan shuld make sute
to hav hur but this day I perseve it is Altered
I thynke before senday thes mattares wyll cum to sum
passe that we shall know how longe our Abode shalbe
but how so evar it faules oute I wyll nott fale
but be w^t you before kyrsemas orre eles you shall
cum to me/ the plage ^{is desparsed} ^{sharply} sore Abrode in london
so that the quene kepes hur kyrsemas here &
goethe nott to grenwyche As it was mente my lade
cobam yo^r dere frende wysches yo^r presens here ~~hence~~ ^{ho} loves
you well/ I tell hur ^I have the cause to love hur
beste for that che wysched me so well to spede as I dyd
& as the the pene wrytes so the harte thynkes that offe
All erthely Ioyes that ~~ht~~ hath happenyd vnto me
I thanke ^{god} ~~him~~ chefleste for you/ for w^t you I have All
Ioye & contentasyon of mynde & w^t oute you dethe is mor
plesante to me than lyfe/ if I thought I shuldbe longe
be from you/ & therefore good wyfe doo as I [~~deletion~~] wyll doo
hope shortely offe oure metenge & fare well dere swete

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none from hamton courte this mondaye At
mydnyght for it is every nyght so late before I goo
to my bedd beinge At play in the preve chambar
At premyro where I have loste almost Ahundereth
poundes & laked my slepe

Yo^r fethefull husbande
tyll dethe

G Shrewsbury
§

wyfe tell my dought mawle
that I At Am nott plesed w^t hur
that che hath nott wryten to me
w^t hur cystar yett wyll I nott forgett them hur & the Reste
& pray to god to blesse them All

Version: 1.0