

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 081 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=081>)**

From: Gilbert Talbot (Shrewsbury Place, London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 14 May 1575

Summary: Gilbert Talbot writes to his stepmother and mother-in-law, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), but does not know what to say without repeating news in a letter already written to his father (and Bess's husband), George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, which was intended for the both of them. He writes about his sister Katherine (née Talbot), countess of Pembroke's recovery from illness; trouble with tenants, 'those lewd fellows of the Peak'; and rumours that Sir Jerome's (Bowes?) brothers, Edward and Ralph, are not in France as claimed, but still in England.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (108)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed with the Talbot dog passant (for the earls of Shrewsbury, a play on the family name Talbot) Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Hands: Gilbert Talbot | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 081: Gilbert Talbot

Gilbert Talbot (1552-1616) was the son of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, and his first wife Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566). Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom and became seventh earl of Shrewsbury after his father died on 18 November 1590. After his father's marriage to Bess (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568 Gilbert was married to Bess's daughter from her second marriage, Mary (née Cavendish). That is to say, Gilbert was married to his step-sister, at which point Bess became both his step-mother and mother-in-law. (At the same time, his sister Grace was married to Bess's eldest son Henry.) Gilbert and Mary were known for living large and eventually relations between Gilbert and his father Shrewsbury deteriorated over what Shrewsbury saw as his son and daughter-in-law's careless spending and the resultant debt. Gilbert also became notorious for his quarrelsome disposition. His relationship with his father suffered further damage when he accused him of siding with his wife Bess during their marriage breakdown. After his father's death he became engaged in litigation with Bess over the will (a legal battle which Bess won). Then, in 1594, he challenged his brother, Edward Talbot, to a duel amidst allegations of poisoning. These and other feuds were often long-lasting and expensive and left Gilbert with many enemies and debts. Gilbert had five children with Mary. His two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore his three daughters became joint heirs to their father's titles and great estate: Mary Herbert, countess of Pembroke (d. 1650), Elizabeth Grey, countess of Kent (1582-1651) and Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel (b. After 1582, d. 1654).

Other letters associated with Gilbert Talbot:

- 4 November 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
- 28 June 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=80>)
- [October 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 October 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 20 February 1575/6 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
- 28 May 1576 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=82>)
- [July 1577?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=84>)
- 1 August 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- [30 June 1578?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- 28 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
- 11 September 1580 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
- 31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)
- 31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)

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[19 September 1583?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=86>)

[February 1589] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=87>)

1 July 1589 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=88>)

28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)

[November 1604] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=177>)

15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)

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## People Associated with Letter 081: 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 Shrewsbury Place, London, Greater London**

23 Dec 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=33>)

## Normalised view of Letter 081

To my Lady

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My duty moste humbly Remembred vnto your good Ladyship

by wrytinge of my Lords letter, I becum ignorante what to wryte to your Ladyship vnlesse I shoulde declare the same over agayne, and I make none other accoumpte, but wher I wryte to one it is to bothe. This bearer Master Tyndall was at hackney, where he founde them their well, And I truste very shortely that the dregges of all misconstructions will be wyped away, that their abode their after this sorte, wilbe altered./ I studyed, accordinge vnto my duty to haue donne what in me Lay, if neede hadd bene, to haue answered thos leude fellowes of the Peake that came hither, them selves knew not wherabout, only drawne by doulthishe perswasions, of like to travell hither, & by sum of their owne confessions, promised their sute shoulde be favored & preferred by the Bowes at the cowrte, whos dishonest and folishe deling, breedeth a doble shame to them selves. And thos pore ignorante fellowes yat came, are contented to returne agayne as they came, As I thinke Iohn knyveton hathe more at Large advertised your Ladyship The creadite of Sir Ierrome and his brother is farr lesse in all others syghtes, then in their owne vayne imaginations, who by their lokes are very like to deseave straungers, I harde Sir Ierrome say, his towe brothers Edwarde & Roberte are in fraunce. but sum thinke yat they are still in Inglande. It may be it was spoken to thende yat I shoulde here it, for I was taulking with an other, harde by him, when he spake it./

My sister Penbroke is now growne meetley stronge agayne, and paste all daunger, her majestie sendeth to her continually, she hathe prayed me to doe hir humble and very hartie commendacions vnto your Ladyship./

of other thinges I humbly crave pardone of your Ladyship because of my Lord's lettre ./ I truste not to tarry here passing a weeke, but woulde be gladd before my cumminge to vnderstande sum sertayntie of the progresse, wherof I am in great doubte. And Thus I moste humbly crave your Ladyship's daly blessynge, & pray to god for your Ladyship's lonnge continuance in all honor & perfyte healthe from shrewesbury place this xiiijth of may .1575

Your Ladyship's most humble, and obedient Lovinge sunne

Gilbert Talbott

## Diplomatic view of Letter 081

[Address Leaf]

To my  
Lady  
§

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(108) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

201 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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