

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 085** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=085>)

From: Gilbert Talbot (Sheffield, Yorkshire); Mary Talbot (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 1 August 1577

Summary: Gilbert Talbot writes to his stepmother and mother-in-law, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), with news about his father and Bess's husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury's movements. He also reports conversations between he and his father, mostly to do with Bess. Gilbert has told his father that Bess thinks he (George) is better pleased with her absence than with her presence - an allegation that the earl denies. The letter is also signed by Gilbert's wife, Mary (née Cavendish; Bess's daughter), and the postscript concerns Gilbert and Mary's son George, who asks adamantly after Bess, his grandmother.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (112)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Gilbert Talbot | archivist | Mary Talbot |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 085: 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>)  
14 May 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=81>)  
[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>)  
[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>)

## People Associated with Letter 085: Mary Talbot

Mary Talbot (née Cavendish; b. 1556, d. 1632) was one of Bess's daughters from her marriage with Sir William Cavendish, who died in 1557 when she was only a year old. Following her mother's marriage to George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568, when Mary was around twelve-years old, she was married to the earl's son from his previous marriage, Gilbert Talbot. That is to say, Mary was married to her step-brother, at which point the earl became both her step-father and father-in-law. (At the same time, her brother Henry was married to the earl's daughter Grace.) Mary's husband Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom, and he and Mary became seventh earl and countess of Shrewsbury, after his father died on 18 November 1590. Mary and Gilbert's two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore their 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). Mary was better educated than her mother Bess and is known for her strong-mindedness, intelligence and opinions, as well as for her conversion to Roman Catholicism as an adult. She was involved in the elopement and escape plans of her niece Arbella Stuart in 1610 and subsequently, when she refused to testify, was imprisoned in the Tower for several years. She spoke up for her mother, Bess, to queen Elizabeth, in 1587, during her estrangement from Shrewsbury. Despite some of their differences, Mary is said to have been genuinely distressed when her mother died in 1608 and was remembered by Bess in her will.

Other letters associated with Mary Talbot:

- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- [1580s] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=181>)
- [1580] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=185>)
- [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>)
- 18 February [1590/1?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>)
- 28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)
- 15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)
- 8 July [1607] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=89>)
- 30 November 1607 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179>)
- 30 December [1607?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=90>)

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## People Associated with Letter 085: 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 Sheffield, Yorkshire

- 27 Aug 1567 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)
- 3 May 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=29>)
- 8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
- 7 Jun 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
- 19 Jun [c.1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
- [Oct 1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 Oct 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 29 Mar 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)
- 27 Jun [1576?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=110>)
- 18 May [1577?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
- 17 Mar 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)
- 14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 29 Dec 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123>)
- 17 Jan 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
- 13 May 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
- 21 Jun 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)
- 28 Nov 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=104>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 8 Feb 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)
- 10 Jun 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)
- 24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204>)

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7 Feb 1583 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=148>)

4 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)

23 Oct 1585 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=117>)

19 Dec 1590 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)

14 Apr [1600?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=2>)

## Normalised view of Letter 085

My duty moste humblie Remembered Right Honorable my moste Singuler good Lady This day my Lord intendethe to goe to Worsopp, to morow to Rufford, and on Saturday hither agayne/ He was not so Inquysatyve of me touchinge your Ladyship synce my laste beyng at Chatesworthe as he was the tyme before, only he hath asked me dyvers tymes when I thought your Ladyship wolde be heare, wherto I have answered sum tymes that your Ladyship was so evell at ease with Reumme as you knew not when god wolde make you able, other tymes, that I thoughte when your Ladyship were well you wolde desyre respette to stay for sum mo[net]hes, if he wolde gyve you leave, for yat you assuredly thoughte my Lord was better pleased with your absence then presence, Whervnto he replyed very earnestly [t]he contrarye in suche sorte as he hath done heretofore, when I have toulde him the lyke/ I founde ... occasion to tell him that your Ladyship mente not to houlde owen as your growme any longer, seyng it was his pleasure to be so offended with him, howbeit (I sayde) your Ladyship toulde me that you knew not what offence he hadd commytted, nor other by him at all then that he was a symple trewe man, & yat you wolde be glad to vnderstand sumthyng to lay to his charge whye you sholde turne him oute of your servise, but he answered no other then that it was his wille for dyvers causes yat he wolde not vtter/ further I sayde your Ladyship toulde me you mente to take sum wyse fellow to your growme yat sholde not be so sympl[e] as owen was, but one yat had bene in servise heretofore ... and knew what were fytted & belonged for him to doe i[n]... yat service, (quothe he) I beleave she will tak[e n]one of my puttinge to her/ Synce yat tyme he gave no occas[ion] of speche of your Ladyship and in deede I have not ben[e] very mucche with him thes iiij or v dayes, for he hadd[e] mucche busynes with others, he is nothyng so merrye in my Iugement as he was the laste weeke, but I assure your Ladyship I know not any cause at all, nor other thyng I know worthy your Ladyship's knowledge at this pressente. therefore with moste humble desyre of your Ladyship's blessinge to me & myne and our prayer for your Ladyship's Continuance in all honor moste perfyte helthe & felicitie I ceace Sheffeld this present thursday .i. Auguste 1577

Your Ladyship's moste humble and obedyent Lovinge chyldren.

Gilbert Talbott

M: Talbot

George is very well I thanke god, he drynkethe every day to Lady grandmother, rydethe to her often, but yet within the courte, and if he have any spyse, I tell him, Lady grandmother is comme and will see him, which he then will ether quyckly hyde or quyckly eate, and then askes where Lady Danmode is.

## Diplomatic view of Letter 085

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(112) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

My duty moste humblie Remembered R. Ho.<sup>r</sup> my moste Singuler good La:  
This day my L. intendethe to goe to Worsopp, to morow  
to Rufford, and on Saterdag hither agayne/ He was not  
so Inquysatyve of me touchinge yo<sup>r</sup> La. synce my laste beyng  
at Chatesworthe as he was the tyme before, only he  
hathe asked me dyvers tymes when I thought yo<sup>r</sup> La.  
wolde be heare, wherto I have answered sum tymes that  
yo<sup>r</sup> La. was so evell at ease w<sup>th</sup> Reumme as yo<sup>u</sup> knew  
not when god wolde make yo<sup>u</sup> able, other tymes, that  
I thoughte of when yo<sup>r</sup> La. were well yo<sup>u</sup> wolde desyre  
respette to stay for sum mo...hes, if he wolde gyve yo<sup>u</sup>  
leave, for y<sup>t</sup> yo<sup>u</sup> assuredly thoughte my L. was better  
pleased w<sup>th</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> absence then presence, Whervnto he Whervnto  
he replied very earnestly ...he contrarye in suche sorte  
as he hathe done heretofore, when I have toulde him  
the lyke/ I founde ... occasion to tell him that yo<sup>r</sup> La.  
mente not to houlde owen as yo<sup>r</sup> growme any longer, seyng  
it was his [*deletion*] pleasure to be so offended w<sup>th</sup> him, howbeit  
(I sayde) yo<sup>r</sup> La. toulde me that yo<sup>u</sup> knew not what offence  
he hadd commytted, nor other by him at all then that he was  
a symple trewe man, & y<sup>t</sup> yo<sup>u</sup> wolde be glad to vnderstand  
w<sup>th</sup> sumthyng to lay to his charge whye yo<sup>u</sup> sholde turne  
him o<sup>ut</sup>e of yo<sup>r</sup> servise, but he answered no other then  
that it was his wille for dyvers causes y<sup>t</sup> he wolde not  
vtter/ further I sayde yo<sup>r</sup> La. toulde me yo<sup>u</sup> mente to take  
sum wyse fellow to yo<sup>r</sup> growme y<sup>t</sup> sholde not be so sympl...  
as owen was, but one y<sup>t</sup> had bene in servise heretofore ...  
and knew what were fytted & belonged for him to doe i.....  
y<sup>t</sup> service, (quothe he) I beleave she will tak...one of

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my puttinge to her/ Synce y<sup>t</sup> tyme he gave no occas...  
of speche of yo<sup>r</sup> La. and in deede I have not ben...  
very muche w<sup>th</sup> him thes iiij or v dayes, for he hadd...  
muche busynes w<sup>th</sup> others, he is nothings so merrye in  
my Iugem<sup>t</sup> as he was the laste weeke, but I assure  
yo<sup>r</sup> La. I know not any cause at all, nor other thyng  
I know worthy yo<sup>r</sup> La. knowledge at this p<sup>r</sup> ssente. therefore  
w<sup>th</sup> moste humble desyre of yo<sup>r</sup> La. blessinge to me & myne and  
o<sup>r</sup> prayer for yo<sup>r</sup> La. Continuance in all honor moste p<sup>r</sup> fyte helthe &  
felicitie <sup>^I ceace^</sup> Sheffield this p<sup>r</sup> sent thursday .i. Auguste 1577

Yo<sup>r</sup> La. moste humble and obedyent  
Lovinge chyldren.

Gilbert Talbott

M: Talbot §

George is very well I thanke god, he drynkethe every  
day to La. grandmother, rydethe to her often, but yet w<sup>th</sup> in the courte,  
and if he have any spyse, I tell him, La grandmother is come and  
will see him, w<sup>ch</sup> he then will ether quyckly hyde or quyckly eate, and  
then askes where La. Danmode is.

Version: 1.0