
From: Bess of Hardwick (Court at Windsor); William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Court at Windsor); William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire (Court at Windsor);
To: Bess of Hardwick; Sir John Manners;
Date: 9 August 1593
Summary: William Cecil, Lord Burghley, writes to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), commending the marriage between Bess's granddaughter, 'Mistress Pierrepont', and George Manners. He also advises her to 'visit your friends and children, and not live so solitary as it seems you do there in Chatsworth amongst hills and rocks of stones'. This letter is a copy sent from Bess, via her son William Cavendish, to John Manners. William writes that once Manners has perused the copy, Bess desires him to 'return it again'.
Archive: Belvoir Castle, Rutland MSS, Letters &Papers XII, folios 131-132
Delivery status: from Bess and Shrewsbury, or from Bess and William Cavendish, sent
Hands: unknown scribe | William Cavendish |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 108: 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. 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
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.
People Associated with Letter 108: William Cecil, Lord Burghley

William Cecil (1521-98), Lord Burghley, was a chief minister to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. Most importantly, he served as secretary of state (1558-71) and lord high treasurer (from 1571) and he was elected chancellor of Cambridge University. He was an especially constant friend to Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury; therefore, upon becoming the countess of Shrewsbury, Bess's own friendship with Cecil was also strengthened.

Other letters associated with William Cecil, Lord Burghley:

23 September 1578 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121)
2 August 1584 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150)
6 October 1585 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152)
6 October 1587 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156)
11 April 1591 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159)
People Associated with Letter 108: William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire

William Cavendish, first earl of Devonshire (1551-1626), was the second son of Bess and her second husband, Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557). Upon Bess's marriage to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, William and his brother Charles (also Cavendish) were promised sums when they turned twenty-one - a promise that would later be revisited as a major source of disagreement between Shrewsbury and Bess. William married Anne Keighley in 1581, with whom he had three sons and three daughters. During the feud between Bess and Shrewsbury in the 1580s, William sided clearly with his mother and on one occasion stood armed and ready to defend Chatsworth from one of Shrewsbury's raids. Especially in contrast to her great disappointment with her eldest son, Henry Cavendish, Bess greatly favoured William and he inherited most of her property and land when she died on 13 February 1608. William gained prominence following the accession of James I (in 1603) and was elevated to the peerage as Baron Cavendish of Hardwick in 1605, and then earl of Devonshire in 1618. He managed his money and lands very well and left his son, also William, a great inheritance.

Other letters associated with William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire:

31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228)
12 November 1600 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20)
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People Associated with Letter 108: 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:

2 April 1597 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=239)
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)
Sir my Lady desireth you after yat you haue perused this inclosed to retorne yt ageyn to hur Ladyship/

yours assured to command

W Cauendysshe

My honorable good Ladie I hartlie and humblie thanck yow that yt pleasethe your Ladyship to acquainte me with the marriage of your granchilde Mistris Parpoint with Master George Manners whome his ffather would needes commende to my seruice, although I did rather like to vse him as my frend, and truly to my knowledge the younge gent is to be liked and loued for his good condicions which he hathe naturally from his good father by birthe, and I doe perswade my self that your Ladyship shall take muche comfort of thir matche; so as betwixt his father and your Ladyship the twoe younge folkes may be prouided for, to lyve without want, and so I wishe to your Ladyship to take more Comfort by stirringe abroade to visit your frendes and children, and not to lyue so solitory as yt semeth yow doe there in Chattesworthe amongst hills and Rockes of Stones. ffrom the Court at Wyndsore the ixth of August /1593.

Your Ladyship's bounden assured frend

Will: Burghley./

To the right honorable my verie good Lady the old countesse of Shrewsbury
Diplomatic view of Letter 108

S’ my Lady desireth you after yt you haue perused this inclosed to retorne yt ageyn to hur La.’n /

yours assured to command

W Cauendysshe

My hono’ able good Ladie I hartlie and humblie thanck yo’ that yt ~ pleasethe yo’ La: to acquainte me w’th the marriage of yo’ grandchild Mr Parpoint w’th Mr George Manners whome his ffather would needs commend to my service, although I did rather like to vse him as my frend, and truly to my knowledge the younge gent is to be liked and loued for his good condicions w’th he hathe naturally from his good father by birthe, and I doe perswade my self that yo’ La: shall take muche comfort of thi’ matche; so as betwixt his father and yo’ La: the twoe younge folkes may be prouided for, to lyve w’th out want, and so I wishe to yo’ La: to take more Comfort by stirringe abroade to visit yo’ frendes and children, and not to lyue so solitary as yt semeth yo’ doe there in Chattesworth e amongst hills and Rockes of Stones. ffom the Court at Wyndsore the ix’th of August /1593.

Yo’ La: bounden assured frend

Will: Burghley./

To the right hono’ able my verie good Lady the old ~ countesse of Shrewsbury