

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 112 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=112>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (London, Greater London);

To: Sir John Thynne, Senior;

Date: 25 February 1558

Summary: Bess (widow of William Cavendish) writes to Sir John Thynne regarding a bill unfavourable to her in parliament, thanking him and hoping for his continued support in preventing its passing. Letter ID 212 is a copy of this.

Archive: Longleat House, Thynne Papers, TH/VOL/III/11

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

Letter features: the seal is now gone but the copy of this letter by Canon Jackson includes a drawing of the original seal (which he labels 'Seal of Hardwick'; i.e. Embossed with Bess's arms featuring the Hardwick cross, a saltire engrailed, in chief three eglantines, surmounted by a countess's coronet) Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: Bess of Hardwick | unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 112: 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

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

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 112: Sir John Thynne, Senior

Sir John Thynne (1512/13-1580), was the eldest son of Thomas Thynne and his wife, Margaret (née Eynns). He entered the service of Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp, in 1536 and served as his steward until 1552. Thynne also became a member of the Mercers' Company in London and allied himself with the most powerful mercer family by his marriage to Christian, daughter of Sir Richard Gresham. He married for a second time in 1566 or 1567 - to Dorothy Wroughton - and had a number of children with both wives. Thynne's connections brought him wealth, which enabled him to commence what he is perhaps best known for - his building projects, namely Longleat House in Wiltshire (one of the most important examples of Tudor architecture). Bess was directly influenced by Thynne in her own building projects, evidenced by her correspondence with him.

Other letters associated with Sir John Thynne, Senior:

15 March [1550s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)

31 March [1550s] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)

[February 1558] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=111>)

25 April 1560 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=113>)

27 August 1567 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Other letters associated with London, Greater London

- 14 Nov [1552] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 4 Nov 1561 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=54>)
- 14 Dec [1564] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=50>)
- [23?] Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- 13 Oct 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)
- 3 Feb 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=27>)
- 9 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=191>)
- 21 May 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=215>)
- [c.1600] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=22>)
- 12 Nov 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20>)
- 4 Jul 1604 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)
- 23 Apr 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=23>)

Normalised view of Letter 112

Too the Ryghte worchouppfull my uary frende syr Iohen thynne knyghte

The Lady Cavendyshe 25 February 1557

Syr I render unto you my mouste hartly thanks for your manyfolde gentelnes shewed towardes me at all tymes only of your owne good dysposyon without any cawse mynysteryd on thes behalfe theys be to let you onderstande that hetherto I haue taken no hurte by the parlamante yet do I styлле stande yn great fear and shall do untyll such tyme as the parlamente ende whych I wysse dayly for. the byll hath as yet been but once redde and y[s] so euyll lyked of the howse tha[t I] trust through the helpe [of] such [as] you and other [trewe made my frendes] yt shall take small effec[te to do] me any hurt the mater of yt selfe makyth me mo frendes then I loked for. [For] ther be fewe yn the howse but they or theyr frendes shulde smart yf the acte sholde passe mayster marston hathe shewed hym selfe so frendly unto me for your sake that more he could not do yf yt were hys owne case. I am glade that my lady hath so well spede I beseche our lorde to sende you meche commforde of your younge sone thus beynge allwayes bolde for to troble you I bede you mouste hartely fare well frome london the xxv of [Febr]ewary

your poore bound fren[d]

Elyzabeth Cauendyssh

Diplomatic view of Letter 112

[Address Leaf]

Too the Ryghte
worchouppfull my
uary frende syr
Iohen [*deletion*] thynne
knyghte

The Lady Cavendyshe
25 February 1557

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

11 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

Syr I render unto you my mouste hartly
thanks for your manyfolde gentelnes
shewed towardes me at all tymes only
of your owne good dysposyon w^t out any
cawse mynysteryd on thes behalfe ~
theys be to let you onderstande that
hetherto I haue taken no hurte by the
parlamante yet do I styll stande yn
great fear and shall do untyll such
tyme as the parlamente ende whych
I wysse dayly for. the byll hath
as yet been but once redde and y...
so euyll lyked of the howse tha...
trust through the helpe ... such ...
you and other ...
yt shall take small effec... me any
hurt the mater of yt selfe makyth
me mo frendes then I loked for. ...
ther be fewe yn the howse but they
or theyr frendes shulde smart yf
the acte sholde passe mayster marston

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

hathe shewed hym selfe so frendly
unto me for your sake that more
he could not do yf yt were hys owne
case. I am glade that my lady hath
so well spede I beseche our lorde to
sende you meche commforde of your
younge sone thus beyng allwayes
bolde for to troble H you I bede you mouste
hartely fare well frome london the
xxv of ...ewary

your poore bound fren...

Elyzabeth Cauendyss

[Next Page]

[Next Page: Notes]

12 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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