

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 115 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)**

From: Bess of Hardwick ([The Royal Court, London?]); Richard Cavendish ([The Royal Court, London?]); Lady Mary Sidney ([The Royal Court, London?]);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield Castle, Sheffield, Yorkshire); George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (Sheffield Castle, Sheffield, Yorkshire);

Date: 19 November [1576?]

Summary: Richard Cavendish writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), entreating her to ask her husband George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, for the use of his house at Coldharbour for Lady Mary Sidney (née Dudley). The latter adds a postscript of her own, reiterating the request. Bess forwards the letter to her husband, detailing conditions he might set for such a loan.

Archive: Longleat House, Talbot Papers, MS 2, fols 285r-86v

Delivery status: to Bess, sent and then forwarded by her

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

Hands: Richard Cavendish | Nathaniel Johnston | archivist | Bess of Hardwick | Lady Mary Sidney |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 115: 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.

## **People Associated with Letter 115: Richard Cavendish**

Richard Cavendish (c.1530-1601), was probably a long-time acquaintance of Bess through her marriage to Sir William Cavendish (d.1557). By the late 1560s he was carrying messages to the court for Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury. This service brought him into contact with the influential Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, who took a liking to him. Cavendish also carried proposals from Leicester to Mary Queen of Scots regarding her marriage to Thomas Howard, fourth duke of Norfolk, and subsequently gained notoriety during the Norfolk's trial and fall (also related to dealings with the Scots queen).

Other letters associated with Richard Cavendish:

12 July 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=12>)

## **People Associated with Letter 115: Lady Mary Sidney**

Lady Mary Sidney (née Dudley; 1530x35-86), courtier, was the eldest daughter of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, and his first wife, Jane (née Guildford). In 1551 she married Henry Sidney (1529-86), courtier and lord deputy of Ireland, and among their children were poet Sir Philip Sidney and writer Mary, countess of Pembroke.

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## People Associated with Letter 115: 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>)
- [December 1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)
- 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>)



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

# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

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>)

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## **Other letters associated with [The Royal Court, London?]**

8 Mar [1560?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=100>)

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

20 Feb 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)

28 Feb 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)

23 Mar 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=24>)

10 Feb 1606 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=48>)

7 Mar 1606 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=49>)

13 Feb 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=14>)

22 Jun 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=34>)

## Normalised view of Letter 115

To the ryght honorable hys Synguler good Lady the [countess] of Shrewsbury at Shelfeld Castell  
in hollomshyre

---

Havyng occasyon convenient to wryte vnto your Ladyshypp, I ha[ue] thought good gladly to  
attempe the same/ humbly beseechyng yow to deale with my Lord your husbnde, that where  
hys howse at cowlhar[bor] may (as I suppose (for a tyme) bee spared, for the pleasuryng of on  
of hys and your noble frendes) that yt woold please hym [to] Lend the same (vntyll owr Ladye  
day) vnto the Lady Mary Sydney/ of the condytyon of whose habyltye to requyte both your  
curtesyes heerin, as I know yow both fully resolved/, so of the redy thankfulness of hyr mynd in  
all such honorable offyces of vertue I assure my selfe ye posses no les assuraunce/ besydes the  
which ye shall as yt were whett and refresshe the memory of both my noble lordes hyr brethren  
with contynuance of my Lord's and yors lastyng frendshypp to theyr howse/ thus knowyng s...  
perswasions of myne needfull where yow bothe honor so much I... cease from larger speech  
heerin, sygnyfying only thys that the same effect I delt with Master Batman at hys last bee[ing]  
heere at the court, wher I remayne redy and gladd to d... my Lord and yow the honor and servyce  
I can/ beeyng my se... (by the carfullnes of my noble frendes of whom my la[dy] for whom I  
wryte hath beene the cheefe) farr happyer to doe yow servyce then euer I was before/ as knoweth  
god to wh[om] I pray for your Ladyship's long and glad prosperytye/ awaytyng your curtyse  
and noble answer heerof/ ffrom the court thys sixth of November./ . / / /

your Ladyshypps humble as I know ye dout [not]

R[ichard Cavendish]e

torne ouer

My very good Ladie, fyndinge my Coosen Candishe your vmble well willer and faythfull  
folowere. This well disposed in my behalf to truble your Ladyshipe I thocht good also with  
my wonted assured honoring off you, To salute you good Madame with souche comendacions  
as my hart cane Thinke no more In good Will to enny and so restinge at your Ladyships  
Comandment. with my Lyck Sute with Master [Candishe] for your Ladyships howse, I comit  
you good Madame To the almightie. your Ladyships assured yf it pleas you Madame to shew  
me this fauore. I shall think my self [bound] vnto you my Comendacions

M Sydney

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my none I se my lady sedney ys desyrus to haue your howse thys wynter. yf yett plese you that she haue yett apone ondecyone that yf you come to london your selfe that then you may haue yett apone ij dayes warnynge to be made redy for you. yett were not amesse I am of openyon you shall not come there afore ester god grante you may be ther then yn good sorte, I wyll sett my workes yn as good order as I cane and come to you of saterday come senett and soner yf you se cause, yf you lende your howse I prey you synnyfy your plesure to bylbrowe. by thys barare hare fottmane who brought me thys latter fare well my deare none thys monday nyght yours

EShrouesbu[ry]

To my lorde

## Diplomatic view of Letter 115

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

Ric: Cavendish [Later editorial note, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

Nov 19 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the ryght honorable hys Synguler  
good Lady the ... of Shrewsbury  
at Shelfeld Castell  
in hollomshyre

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

285 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

(111) [Old foliation, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

111 [Old foliation, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

25 [Old item number, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

52 [Item number, hand: archivist]

Having occasyon convenyent to wryte vnto yo<sup>r</sup> Ladyshypp, I ha...  
thought good gladly to attempe the same/ humbly beseechyng yow  
to deale w<sup>th</sup> my L. yo<sup>r</sup> husbnde, that where hys howse at cowlhar...  
may (as I suppose (for a tyme) bee spared, for the pleasuryng  
of on of hys and yo<sup>r</sup> noble frendes) that yt woold please hym ...  
Lend the same (vntyll ovr Ladye day) vnto the Lady Mary  
Sydney/ of the condytyon of whose habyltye to requyte both yor  
curtesyes heerin, as I know yow both fully resolved/, so of the  
redy thankfulness of hyr mynd in all such honorable offyces of  
vertue I assure my selfe ye posses no les assuraunce/ besydes  
the w<sup>ch</sup> ye shall as yt were whett and refresshe the memory of  
both my noble lordes hyr brethren w<sup>th</sup> contynuance of my L.  
and yo<sup>r</sup> rs lastyng frendshypp to theyr howse/ thus knowyng s...  
perswasions of myne needfull where yow bothe honor so much I...  
cease from larger speech heerin, sygnyfying only thys that  
the same effect I delt w<sup>th</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Batman at hys last bee...  
heere at the court, wher I remayne redy and gladd to d...



# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

my L. and yow the honor and servyce I can/ beeyng my se...  
(by the carfullnes of my noble frendes w of whom my la...  
for whom I wryte hath beene the cheefe) farr happyer to doe  
yow servyce then euer I was before/ as knoweth god to wh...  
I pray for yo<sup>r</sup> L. long and glad prosperytee/ awaytyng yo<sup>r</sup>  
curtyse and noble answer heerof/ ffrom the court thys  
xix<sup>th</sup> of Novembr./.

*[significant space]*

///

yo<sup>r</sup> Ladyshypps humble as I know  
ye dout ...

R...e

torne ouer

My very good Ladie, fyndinge my Coosen Candishe your vmble well willer and  
faythfull folowere. This well disposed in my behalfe to truble your L.<sup>pe</sup> I thoght  
good also with my wonted assured honoring off you, To salute you good Madame  
with souche comendacions as my hart <sup>^cane^</sup> t t Thinke no more In good Will to enny  
and so restinge at your L.<sup>ps</sup> Comandment. with my Lyck Sute with M<sup>r</sup> ...  
for your L.<sup>ps</sup> howse, I comit you good Madame To the almightie. your L.<sup>ps</sup> assured  
yf it pleas you Madame to shew me this fauore. I shall think my self  
... vnto you my Comendacions

M Sydney

[page break]

my none I se my lady sedney ys desyrus to haue  
your howse thys wynter. yf yett plese you  
that she haue yett apone ondecyone that yf  
you come to london your selfe that then you  
may haue yett apone ij dayes warnyng to  
be made redy for you. <sup>^yett were not amesse^</sup> I am of openyon you  
shall not come there afore ester god grante

# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

you may be ther then yn good sorte, I wyll  
sett my workes yn as good order as I cane  
and come to you of saterday come senett  
and soner yf you e se cause, <sup>^yf^</sup> you lende  
your howse I prey you sende synnyfy your  
plesure to bylbrowe. by thys barare hare  
fottmane who brought me thys latter  
latter fare well my deare none thys monday  
nyght  
yours

EShrouesbu...

To my lorde

[Overleaf]

## [Overleaf: Notes]

286 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]  
(113) [Old foliation, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]  
113 [Old foliation, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]  
25 [Old item number, hand: Nathaniel Johnston]

Version: 1.0