

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 145 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Sir Francis Walsingham;

Date: 6 May 1582

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to Sir Francis Walsingham, concerning her orphaned grand-daughter, Arbella Stuart's financial welfare, reiterating her suit to the queen that the annual £400 previously granted to Arbella's mother (Elizabeth, countess of Lennox) now go to her, in addition to £200 for 'her maintenance during her minority'. Letter ID 146 is a contemporary copy of this.

Archive: The National Archives, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I, 12/153, fol. 84r-84v (item 39)

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no.

Hands: Scribe A | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 145: 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 145: Sir Francis Walsingham

Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590), was a principal secretary and an intelligencer to Elizabeth I. During the reign of Queen Mary, he lived in exile in Europe. Then, having returned to England following the accession of Elizabeth I, he married Ursula (née St Barbe; with whom he had two daughters); and backed by powerful figures at court (such as Cecil and Leicester) he was initially appointed as an ambassador to France in 1570. In 1573 he was appointed as principal secretary and a privy councillor. By the early 1580s he was one of the queen's key advisors and intimates - evidenced by her nickname for him, her 'Moor'. Walsingham is known to posterity mainly for his complex coordination of intelligence operations - most famously for the discovery of the Babington Plot in 1586, which ultimately led to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, previously held in the custodial charge of Bess and her fourth husband, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with Sir Francis Walsingham:

8 June 1576 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=234>)

29 December 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123>)

28 January 1581/2 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>)

6 May 1582 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146>)

7 February 1582/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=148>)

6 April 1584 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=149>)

2 December 1585 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=153>)

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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>)
- 1 Aug 1577 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 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>)
- 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 145

To my very frend Syr Frances Walsyngham knyght prencepall secretary to her majesty

good master Secretorye with my ryght hartye comendatyons, I pray you take in good parte my Lyke desyar that yt wyll please you to prefare my humble sute vnto the quenes majesty in the behaulfe of apore ynfant my Iuyll arbella who ys to depend wholly vpon her majestys bounty and goodnes being in her tender age depryued of her parrents. whos Late mother in her extreme sycknes and euen at the approching of her end (which I cannot without great grefe. remembar) dyd most earnestly sundrye tymes recommend to her majestys gracyous goodnes and fauor that poore infant her only care with hartye desyar and confedence that her majesty myght inioy a Long and prosperous raigne and be a gracyous patrone and soufarigne to that her innocent chyld as her majesty had hetherto ben to them both./ and forasm[uch] as the foure hondryth poundes yerely graunted to my sayde daughtar ys by her death at the quenes majestys dysposytyon; my humble sute ys that her hyghnes whos manyfould gracyous fauors and bountye haue so much bound me as no subyecte can be more to a most worthy soufraise wyll vouchesaffe to graunt the same foure hondryth poundes yearly with the other tow hondryth pounds to arbella for her mayntenance duaring her mynorytye, which ys but for a few yeares, whereof I dout not but her majesty wyll fauorable accepte as hetherto she hath don of all my sutes, and conseder that her brenging vp euery way as appartayneth, and so as she maybe able the sonar in seruice to attend vpon her majesty (which I chefly desyar) wyll hardly be parformed with syxe hondryth pounds yearly in mony and more commodetye ys not to be made of thos Lands being as they are in Lesse. I do not Lyke she should be now here as she was with her mother in her Lyfe tyme, nether can I be conte[n]ted she be in any place wher I may not somtymes se her and dayly here of her well doing, and therfore at great chargs to kepe her in house with such as are fytt to attend vpon her and be in her compeny and being neare well towards vij yeares ould she ys of very greate towardnes to Learne anytheng, and I very carefull of her good educatyon as yf she were my owne and only chyld, and agreat deale more for the consanguynitye she ys of to her majesty whos happye raigne ouer vs I dayly with most zealous mynd pray the allmeghty gouernor of all thenges Long to contenew, and now craueing most hartelye your frendshap in mouing thys sute to her majesty I refare the same to your wysdom being better able to conseder therof then I am at this present who can not so sonne enter into any thought of thes causes but that I am ouercharged with gryefes, and so make an end of this my vnconsederat Letters trusting her hyghnes wyll accepte of my Loyall dutye and seruice which I desyar you wyll commend vnto her royall mayesty./ Sheffield this vjth of may

your very Louing frend

EShrouesbury

Diplomatic view of Letter 145

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

(1582) May 6

Domestic [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my very frend Syr
Frances Walsyngham
knyght prencepall
secretory to her ma^{ty}

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

39 [Item number, hand: archivist]

84 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

88 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

(39.) [Item number, hand: archivist]

good m^r Secretorye wth my ryght hartye comendatyons, I pray you take in good parte my Lyke desyar that yt wyll please you to prefare my humble sute vnto the quenes ma:^{ty} in the behaulfe of apore ynfant my Iuyll arbella who ys to depend wholly vpon her ma:^{ty}s bounty and goodnes being in her tender age depryued of her parrents. whos Late mother in her extreme sycknes and euen at the approching of her end (w^{ch} I cannot wth out great grefe. remembar) dyd most earnestly sundrye tymes recommend to her ma:^{ty}s gracyous goodnes and fauor that poore infant her only care wth hartye desyar and confedence that her ma:^{ty} myght inioy a Long and prosperous raigne and be a gracyous patrone and soufarigne to that her innocent chyld as her ma:^{ty} had hetherto ben to them both./ and forasm... as the foure hondryth poundes yerely graunted to my sayde daughtar ys by her death at the quenes ma:^{ty}s dysposytyon; my humble sute ys that her hyghnes whos manyfould gracyous fauors and bountye haue so much bound me as no subyecte can be more to a most worthy souf^{^r^} aigne wyll vouchesaffe to graunt the same foure hondryth poundes yearly wth the other tow hondryth pounds to arbella for her mayntenance

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your very Louing frend

EShrouesbury

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