

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 158 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=158>)

From: Henry Babington; Bess of Hardwick;

To: Henry Babington; Alexander Whyte;

Date: 25 March 1565

Summary: Bess (Lady St. Loe) writes to Henry Babington of Dethick (Derbyshire) concerning lands, postponing a meeting on Babington's holdings until she receives further information regarding the lands' values. Babington forwards the letter (adding a postscript and second superscription) to one Alexander White and gives further instructions to fulfil Bess's requests.

Archive: The National Archives, State Papers Domestic, Supplementary, 46/13, ff 298r-299v

Delivery status: from Bess, sent and then forwarded by the recipient

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: unknown scribe | Henry Babington | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 158: Henry Babington

Henry Babington (d. 1571) of Dethick, Derbyshire, was probably inclined towards Catholicism, as was his issue, Anthony Babington, infamous for his leadership in the Catholic conspiracy to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I and free Mary Queen of Scots from her captivity.

Other letters associated with Henry Babington:

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People Associated with Letter 158: 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 Henry Babington:

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People Associated with Letter 158: Alexander Whyte

Nothing is known of Alexander Whyte apart from his being a secondary recipient to one of Bess's letters to Henry Babington in 1565.

Normalised view of Letter 158

To the Ryght woorshipfull hyr louynge cosyn henry babyngton esquier

To Alysander Whyte this be delivered with spede

gentle cossyn babyngton after my very hartye comendacions you shall vnderstand that hauinge well & thoroughly consydred of the matter for which you requered a metinge to be this weke I fynde so many thinges towchinge the same to be consydred thatt without furder knolege therof had & a longer tyme to be aduysed therin yt shold be in vayne to troble the gentlemen ether to trauell or talke therof therefore I desyre you furste sende me perfyght notes of thold valwe of your landes, howe myche therof ys assygned for Ioynture or otherweys, which shall desende to your sone Imedyatly after you, which you will departe with presently to your sone which fynes & recognysances haue byne knowleged by your father & your selfe so as I may vnderstond truly your estate & which shalbe your demaunde & gyue me tyme tansure you vntyll aester next & then vppon good occasion I shall very gladly persade into furder talke as I well hope to a good ende otherweys beinge destytute of counsell for so weighti a matter I dare not talke furdur: thus I haue thought good to require of you before you for that cause trauell more therin or troble the gentlemen therwith & so wyshe you health this xxvth of marche 1565.

Your lovyng cosyn

Elezabeth Seyntloo

whyte wher you may vnderstande by thys letter that my lady sentlow wold haue the vallues off the landes and other order knowne befor the metyng off the gentyllmen/ which ys a thyng most nessessary I wold haue you to moue syr gervesse clyffton and syr Ihon sowche nere efter apou a further warnynge for so moch as ye may preseme my lady wold haue a tyme off survey with aduysed/ and as towchyng all hyr request I shall answer her reasonable In any wyse cawse with theme I may haue theme

Diplomatic view of Letter 158

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

25 March 1565 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the Ryght woorshipfull
hyr louynge cosyn henry
babyngton esquier

To Alysander Whyte
this be *delivered* w^t
spede

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

249 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

298 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

gentle cossyn babyngton aft^r my v^r y hartye comendacions yo^u shall
vnd^r stand that hauinge well ^{^&^} thoroughly consydred of the matt^r
for w^{ch} yo^u requered a metinge to be this weke I fynde so many thinges
towchinge the same to be consydred thatt wth owt furder knolege
th^r of had & a longer tyme to be aduysed th^r in yt shold be in
vayne to troble the gentlemen eth^r to trauell or talke th^r of
th^r fore I desyre yo^u furste sende me *perfyght notes* of thold
valve of your landes, howe myche th^r of ys assygned for
Ioynture or oth^r weys, w^c shall desende to your sone Imedyatly
aft^r you, w^c you will departe wth *presently* to your sone
w^c fynes & recognysanses haue byne knowleged by your fath^r
& your selfe so as I may vnd^r stond truly your estate
& w^c shalbe your demaunde & gyue me tyme tansure
yo^u vntyll aester next & then vppon good occasion I shall
v^r y gladly *persade* into furd^r talke as I well hope to a
good ende oth^r weys beinge destytute of coucell for so weighti

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a matt^r I dare not talke furdur: thus I haue thought
good to reqr^e of yo^u before yo^u for that cause trauell
more th^r in or troble the gentlemen th^r wth & ^{^so^} wyshe yo^u
health this xxvth of marche 1565.

Your lovyng cosyn

Elezabeth Seyntloo

whyte whear you may vnderstande by thys lett^r that
my lady sentlow wold haue the vallues off the landes
and other order knowne befor the metyng off the
gentyllmen/ w^c ys a thyng most nessesary I wold
haue you [*deletion*] to moue syr gervesse clyffton
and syr Ihon sowche nere eft^r apon a further
warnyng for so moch as ye may preseme my lady
wold haue a tyme off survey w^t aduyse/ and as towchyng
all hyr request I shall answer her reasonable In any wyse
cawse w^t theme I may haue theme

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[Next Page: Notes]

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