

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 164 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)

From: Hugh Fitzwilliam (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire);

Date: [23?] January 1568/9

Summary: Hugh Fitzwilliam writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) with news he has heard second-hand, as he himself has seen little of note. He writes about Bess's husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, who is now the custodian of Mary Queen of Scots; a Dutch ambassador to the duke of Alba; the duke of Alba's army; an allegiance between the kings of Sweden and Denmark; France and the 'house of Guise'; and other political news from around Europe.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3196, pp. 221-24

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Hugh Fitzwilliam | unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 164: Hugh Fitzwilliam

Little is known of Hugh Fitzwilliam other than that he was perhaps a relative of Bess and sent her news of the court and abroad.

Other letters associated with Hugh Fitzwilliam:

28 July 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)

31 August 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)

21 September 1571 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)

3 February 1573/4 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=27>)

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People Associated with Letter 164: 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 Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

[Dec 1568] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)

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

21 Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=107>)

[c.1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)

6 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=207>)

31 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=11>)

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Other letters associated with London, Greater London

- 14 Nov [1552] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 25 Feb 1558 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=112>)
- 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>)
- 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 164

To the right honorable the Countes of Shrevesbury [give] this at Tutbury or wheare./

1568 2 January To the Countess ...

My moost humble duetie remembred vnto your honorable good Lady yf it were not for my bounden duetie sake, I wolde be Lothe to write, by cause there is so smale certaynetie in occurrency but seing I am bounde to write; it is but smale that I see with my owne eyes, that is worthe writing; and therefore I am forced to supplye by that I do heare; which I write as I heare by credeble reporte; other wyse I sholde not write at all; and therefore, if I do erre, it is pardonable.

The newes is heare that my Lord your husband is sworne of the Privie Counsell; and that the Scotishe quene is in her iorney to Tutbury, something against her will, and shalbe vnder my Lordes custody there.

There is an Ambassator comme out of the Lowe cuntryes, from the duke of Alva, who is in custody (as the other is) and is not yet permitted to say his message; and sithens his arryvall is there .iiij. postes comme from thence .ij. strangers and one Inglish, whose lettres are taken and sente to the courte; and thei committed to custody;

The reporte is that the duke of Alva hathe for the Lacke of mony disarmed the moost parte of his army; and thei be not payede for that is paste, but robbeth and steleth and much molestethe the contrye; and being divers garisons at masticke of the Wallons, the duke sent to discharge them, and sent Spaniardes in their places, who hathe shutte the gates of the Spaniardes and refuseth to deliver the towne before thei be payd their due.

The saing is that now the new King of Sweden and the King of Denmarke being frendes; thei haue set out the duke of Holste with a good power of suche soldiers bothe horsemen and footemen as thei may well spare in bothe their realmes in time of peax to the number of .viij. ml horsemen and .xx. ml footemen to ayde the Prince of Orange; which is affirmed by suche credible persons as commethe from thence.

I do heare that Master Gorge is comme out of Hungary and passing by fflanders was taken prisoner, and put to his ransom if it fawle out warre. and Master Arther hall is also returned from Connstantinople.

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In ffrance there is great sturre to let the Prince of Connde to ioyne with the Prince of Orange, so that the Kinge devydeth his force. The duke of Anioy to stop the passage of the Prince of Conde; and the King is making power against the Prince of Orange, and the duke of Swebrugh which be alre dy ioyned on monday was fortent; The King is muche trobeled in pointing his generall against the Prince of Orange; for yat the duke of Alva offereth the King greate ayde and frendshipp if he will make duke Domale his generall; and the .iiij. marshalles of ffrance doth resiste it; in so muche as Monsieur Momerancy the chife of the .iiij. standeth vpon his garde in the duke of Anioyes campe, and Damvile his brother a other of the .iiij. standeth of his garde in the Kinges campe, who by right oughte to haue the bading of the army but by cause thei be cosen Germans to the Admirall thei be mistred and denyd the place; which semethe to be no smale discontentement to the King.

There came a post out of ffrance of Saterdag last an other of Munday and an other of Wednesday; by him of Saterdag it is reported he broughte worde that the Prince of Conde hade sente the great Master of the horse to the King with this message; and covenantes of peax that is to say, yf he wolde deliver his mother in to their handes, to banishe the howse of Guyse quyte out of ffrance, and to permitte and pupulise through the dominions of all ffrance the religion; et cetera on this condition he was contented to harken to peax; for that he is and ever hath bine more inclined to peaux than to warre, if he colde by any reasonable meanes optayned it.

which hitherto he colde never optayne; for he never was desirous to revenge any private iniuries, or at this present requirethe it; but godes quarrell and the publike welthe; and therefore if the King refuse this offer of peaux, he will (god permitting) comme to paris before the last day of marche nexte and reason the matter in the great pallece in paris; with .xxx.ml horsemen and .lx.ml footemen; but what message the king returned agayne I do not heare, nor what the post broughte to the courte of Monday and yesterday, but there is brutes heare that bothe quene mother and the cardinall of Lorayne be both taken in the same trappe that thei thoughte to haue taken the prince of Conde and the Admirall with, yf this be true it wilbe certaynely knowen by my nexte lettres. And thus god longe preserue my lord and your good Ladyship and sende that the lyers sons maryage take no place, that the wrathe of god falle not of the howse of Shrevesbury by the same; as the lyke hath fallen of other noble howses; that can never be withdrawn to the vtter spoile; for the iniquitie of that caterpillar his father cannot be chosen but to lighte to his issue; for yf my Lord mary with him his Lordship must maintayne all the wronges that he hath committed; for that he hath orderly and iustly gotton; is a smale porsion; for suche a noble Lady, seing he is not lyke to encrease it by nauther pollicy wit nor vertue nor any other good qualitie but only by fortune which is but a smale certaynetie to trust vnto. I heare Master Haynes dothe vse me frendly in very good wordes to my frendes; it is for your Ladyship's sake and therefor I trust your Ladyship will not forget him with your thankes as occasion may serue, and so eftsons Iesus preserue you and sende my cosen ffrances a good happe, and your honor a glad good mother scribeled at London the x...ij.th of Ianuary, 1568.

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[Hugh ffitzwilliam]

Diplomatic view of Letter 164

[Address Leaf]

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To the right honorable the
Countes of Shrevesbury
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1568 2 Ian
To the Countess
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[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

221 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

223 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

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him w^t yo^r thankes as
occasion may s^r ue, and so eftsons Iesus p^r s^r ue you and sende my
cosen ffraunces a good happe, and yo^r honor a glad good mother
scribeled at London the x...ij.th of Ianuary, 1568.

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