

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 173** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=173>)

From: Arthur Curzon;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 11 August [1570s?]

Summary: Arthur Curzon writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) concerning a warrant dormant (i.e. a blank one to be filled out with names and/or particulars when needed) he had been given by her husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, which the latter now withholds. Curzon had given to Shrewsbury a gown in tawny cloth lined and trimmed with 'lukkes velluet' (i.e. velvet from Liège in Belgium), and also lent him money in a card game, and asks Bess to now help him claim his due.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3206, pp. 895-98

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Arthur Curzon | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

## **People Associated with Letter 173: Arthur Curzon**

Little is known of Arthur Curzon. However, from his one surviving letter to Bess it would appear he was a courtier during the 1560s and/or 70s.

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## People Associated with Letter 173: 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.

## Normalised view of Letter 173

To ye Ryght honourabyll & my verey good lady my lady off Schrewssbery

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My most honourabyll good lady off Screwssbery./ ye name off yowr goodnes dothe provoke me to oppyne my hart./ seyng my good lord yowr hussband. dothe nott ye best intreatt me ffor my warrant dormant. whyche ffrely he gaue me. & now witholldes ye same/

ffyrst. When my lord was lord talbott I cam in to ye Kynges cowrt in a new gown off breed tawny taffata lyned with lukkes velluet gardyd with ye same whyche my Lord praysyd/ I sayd yff he wolde gyff me as good a gown when he was erle off screwssberi/ I wolld send ytt hym./ so ye nexte day. I dyd send it to hym/ a grett whylle affter my lord beyng erlle. dyd gently remember thys promes to me & wolld haue sent me certayn yerdes off sylke ffor hyes promes/ I dyd gyff thanks to my lord. & requyred hys warrant dormant./ whyche most hartly he gaue me/ & affter I dyd delyuer ye same a warrant. to Master blythenal to schew ytt to the Kepares. ye ffyrst yere/ & he to take ye one hallff & to send to me ye other/ & in ye mean tyme he dyed/ & hys clerke seyng the warrant dormant/ dyd slyely bryng ytt to my lord/ off my ffaythe here ys yet trewth & yowr ladyschypes promes. to help me ys ye verey cawse yatt oonlly by yowe I thynke to rekeuer my warrant/

ffurther beyng att cardes in Maseter tresureres chamber I dyd lend to my lord beyng att cardes. fforthy angelles ffor xxli/ I the... beyng a lozer above xxxli/ att Chellssey my lord dyd bryng ytt to me off in y... garthyn/ wude hyes gown/ Sir Antonye neffy[le] beyng bye/ I dyd asske my lord whether he hade nede off money or noo/ he say[d] agaynn yatt yff I wolld fforbere ytt then/ he wolld thankefully pay me in yorkeschyre I sayd yff he wolld haue a C.li. more he scholld haue ytt/ so then he gaue me grett thanks/ & now I dessyre yowr ladyschip to remember me/ yn thes two matteres/ as ye thynke ryght/ & yff I lyue I schall nott be unthankfull to your ladyschype/ ydes xj off Awgust youres to command

Arthur Curzon

## Diplomatic view of Letter 173

[Address Leaf]

**[Address Leaf: Notes]**

To my Lady Sh

...

11 Aug [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To y<sup>e</sup> Ryght hon<sup>r</sup> abyll  
& my verey good lady  
my lady off Schrewssbery

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[Overleaf]

**[Overleaf: Notes]**

897 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

**[Letter Text: Notes]**

895 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My most hon<sup>r</sup> abyll good lady off  
Screwssbery./ ye name off yowr goodnes  
dothe *provoke* me to oppyne my hart./ seyng  
my good lord yowr hussband. dothe nott  
ye best intreatt me ffor my warrant  
dormant. whyche ffrely he gaue me. &  
now w<sup>th</sup> olldes ye same/

ffyrst. When my lord was lord talbott  
I cam in to ye Kynges cowrt in a new  
gown off breed tawny taffata lyled  
w<sup>th</sup> lukkes velluet gardyd w<sup>th</sup> ye same  
whyche my Lord *praysyd*/ I sayd yff he  
wollde gyff me as good a gown  
when he was erle off screwssberi/  
I wold send ytt hym./ so ye nexte  
day. I dyd send it to hym/ a grett  
whylle affter my lord beyng erle.

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dyd gently remember thys promes to me  
& wolld haue sent me certayn yerdes  
off sylke ffor hyes promes/ I dyd gyff  
thankes to my lord. & requyred hys  
warrant dormant./ whyche most  
hartly he gaue me/ & affter I dyd  
delyuer ye same a warrant. to M blythenal  
to schew ytt to <sup>the</sup> Kepares. y<sup>e</sup> ffyrst yere/ &  
he to take ye one hallff & to send to

[page break]

me ye other/ & in ye mean tyme he  
dyed/ & hys clerke seyng the warrant  
dormant/ dyd slyely bryng ytt to  
my lord/ off my ffaythe here ys yet trewth  
& yowr ladyschypes promes. to hellp me  
ys y<sup>e</sup> verey cawse y<sup>tt</sup> oonlly by yowe I  
thynke to rekeuer my warrant/

ffurth beyng att cardes in M<sup>r</sup> tresureres  
chamber I dyd lend to my lord beyng att  
cardes. ffurty angelles ffor xxli/ I the...  
beyng a lozer above xxxli/ att Chellssey  
my lord dyd bryng ytt to me off in y...  
garthyn/ wude hyes gown/ Sir Rye <sup>Antonye</sup> neffy...  
beyng bye/ I dyd asske my lord whether  
he hade nede off money o<sup>f</sup> noo/ he say...  
agaynn y<sup>tt</sup> yff I wolld fforbere <sup>ytt</sup> then/ he  
wolld thankefully pay me in yorkeschyre  
I sayd yff he wolld haue a C.li. more he  
scholld haue ytt/ so then he gaue me grett  
thankes/ & now I dessyre yowr ladyschip  
to remember me/ yn thes two matteres/ as  
ye thynke ryght/ & yff I lyue I schall nott be  
unthankfull <sup>to yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshyppe</sup> / yds xj off Awgust youres to com

Arthur Curzon  
§

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