

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 183 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=183>)

From: Bess of Hardwick;

To: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury;

Date: [1577]

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to her husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, about an upcoming visit from her daughter Elizabeth (countess of Lennox), granddaughter Arbella Stuart and daughter-in-law Grace Cavendish (née Talbot), which she would like to postpone due to danger of 'the infection'. She also writes of arranging a timber delivery for gates and other things, and asks for Shrewsbury's help in the matter.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3205, fols 68r-69v

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: Bess of Hardwick | unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

Copyright Information

All material is made available free of charge for individual, non-commercial use only. The copyright and other intellectual property rights in the transcribed letter text, metadata about the letters and the design of the letter display are owned by the University of Glasgow.

You are permitted to access, print and download letters from this site on the following conditions:

- use of all material on this site is for information and for non-commercial or your own personal use only; any copies of these pages saved to disk or to any other storage medium may only be used for subsequent viewing purposes or to print extracts for non-commercial or your own personal use.
- the content must not be modified in any way.
- any use of the material for a permitted purpose must be accompanied by a full source citation.

No part of this site may be reproduced or stored in any other web site or included in any public or private electronic retrieval system or service without the University of Glasgow's prior written permission. Commercial exploitation of the transcribed letters, including use by radio or television programme makers and examination boards, is prohibited without licence from the University of Glasgow.

Further information on copyright and citation can be found at:- (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=171>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 183: 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

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

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 183: 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>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

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>)
19 November [1576?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)
[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>)

Normalised view of Letter 183

To my Lorde my hosbande the erle of Shrouesbury

my ladies lettres

my none I here ther ys abrewte that my dowter lenexe my Iuwell and my dowter grace shulde come hether to morow. I cane not beleue yt for that you haue not made me to knowe yt; I prey you lette them stay ther for a shorte tyme yt wylbe the lesse dongorus for the ynfeccyone, whyche myght so hapon yf any here shulde take yt as wolde torne to owre dyscomforde, withyn a wecke you shall here frome the corte and then you may sende them two or thre dayes afore you comme, I haue wretyn to strynger, blonte. hadfelde, and perynce to help me with the caryage of my tember I wolde make gattes and other thynges with yt yf I hade yt I prey you forder them and cause others of your tenante to helpe god send my deare swete harte hys helthe. Sonday

your faythefoul wyffe

EShrouesb[ury]

I haue sente my none letes, I thanke you for the salte venyson you mete...

Diplomatic view of Letter 183

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Eliz
Countess of Sh
of Lad
Lennox [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my Lorde
my hosbande
the erle of
Shrouesbury

my ladies
lettres

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

69 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

68 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

my none I here ther ys abrewte that
my dowter lenexe my Iuwell and
my dowte s r ^{grace} shulde come hether
to morow. I cane not beleue yt
for that you haue not made
me to knowe yt; I prey you lette
them stay ther for a shorte tyme
yt wylbe the lesse dongorus for
the ynfeccyone, whyche myght
so hapon ^{yf} any here shulde take yt^{as} as wolde torne to owre
dyscomforde, w^t yn a wecke you
shall here frome the corte and
then you may sende them two

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

or thre dayes afore you comme, I
haue wretyn to strynger, blonte.
hadfelde, and perynce to help me
w^t the caryage of my tember I
wolde make gattes [^]and other thynges w^t yt[^] yf I hade yt
I prey you forder them and cause
others of your tenante to helpe all
god send my my deare swete harte
hys helthe. Sondag

your faythefoul
wyffe

EShrouesb...

I haue sente my none
letes, I thanke you for the
salte venyson you mete...

Version: 1.0