

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 188** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire); George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: William Cecil, Lord Burghley;

Date: 14 May 1578

Summary: Bess's husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, writes to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, expressing his trust in Burghley's good influence with the queen to show goodwill towards Bess's daughter Elizabeth, countess of Lennox, and grand-daughter, Arbella Stuart. He proposes to send lead for Burghley's building projects by midsummer. Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) adds a postscript, thanking Burghley for another instance where he spoke to the queen on Bess's daughter, Elizabeth's behalf.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3206, fol. 885

Delivery status: from Bess and Shrewsbury, or from Bess and William Cavendish, sent

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

Hands: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury | unknown scribe | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 188: 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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## People Associated with Letter 188: 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>)

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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=183>)  
[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>)  
[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>)

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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>)

## People Associated with Letter 188: William Cecil, Lord Burghley

William Cecil (1521-98), Lord Burghley, was a chief minister to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. Most importantly, he served as secretary of state (1558-71) and lord high treasurer (from 1571) and he was elected chancellor of Cambridge University. He was an especially constant friend to Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury; therefore, upon becoming the countess of Shrewsbury, Bess's own friendship with Cecil was also strengthened.

Other letters associated with William Cecil, Lord Burghley:

- 13 October 1571 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)
- 23 September 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 24 October 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=122>)
- 22 June 1579 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 28 January 1581/2 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 2 August 1584 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>)
- 6 October 1585 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152>)
- [13 June 1586] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=230>)
- 6 October 1587 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156>)
- 19 December 1590 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)
- 11 April 1591 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>)
- 21 September 1592 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>)
- 9 August 1593 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=108>)

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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>)
- 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>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)
- 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 188

To the Ryght honorabell my very good Lord the Lord burghly Lord tresorar of england

14. May 1570 The Erle of Shrewsbury to my Lord thanks.

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My very good Lord I Am Alas bold to trobell your Lordship in All my gret & weyghtys causes & fyndes your honorabell delynge every way towards me & myne to be syche that you holy bynde me to be youres. My wyfe & I Repose grete truste in your Lordship & that by your good menes hur Majeste wyll show hur gracivs goodnes to oure daughtar Lenox & hur lyttell one good my Lord so doo for vs that oure sute may have good end Afore the progresse knoinge your Lordship's honorabell mynd so well but to doo hurs & oures good I nede no furthar to presse your Lordship/ My Lord I Am to thynke sum vnkynes in you benge Abyldar & hath nede of lede & wyll nott send to me to be your purvay[or] but At mydsemar I wyll have Adosun fothar in Redynes for you to bere out from hull to teboldes/ & my wyfe desyrs your Lordship shold end that house as you have begonne so wyschenge to your Lordship as to my celf I end with my wyfes most harty commendacyons & myne to your Lordship & my Lade your wyfe & my lade of oxford Sheffeld the xiiij of maye 1578//

Your Lordship's most assured fethefull frende

G Shrewsbury

your Lordship ys not only trobeled to moue hur magysty yn the behalfe of my dowter of lenexe and letylone for ther mentenance that by hur Gracyous goodnes the mey haue werwith to mentene them selues/ but as I here your Lordship hade some what ado to perswade hur magystye beynge offendedede that my dowter lay at sente Iames, hur magystye thynkyng yt was yn some howse my brothe wynfelde hathe hade that howse xv or xvj yere to youse at hys plesure. I cane no more but thanke your Lordship and thinke my selfe mouste beould[yng] to you

your Lordship's mouste assured

EShrouesbury

## Diplomatic view of Letter 188

[Address Leaf]

To the Ryght honorabell my  
very good Lord the L  
burghly L tresorar  
of england

14. May 1570  
The Erle of Shrewsbury  
to my L.  
thankes.

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]  
885 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My very good Lord I Am Alas bold to trobell  
yo<sup>r</sup> L in All my gret & weyghtys causes &  
fyndes yo<sup>r</sup> honorabell delynge every way towardes  
me & myne to be syche that you holy bynde  
me to be yo<sup>res</sup>. My wyfe & I Repose grete  
truste in yo<sup>r</sup> L & that by yo<sup>r</sup> good menes  
hur Ma.<sup>te</sup> wyll show hur gracivs goodnes  
to oure daughtar Lenox & hur lyttell one good my  
L so doo for vs that oure sute may have good end  
Afore the progresse knoinge yo<sup>r</sup> L *[deletion]* honorabell  
mynd so well but to doo *[deletion]* hurs & oures good I nede  
no furthar to presse yo<sup>r</sup> Lordship/ My L I Am  
to thynke sum vnkynes *[deletion]* in you benge Abyldar & hath  
nede of lede & wyll nott send to me to be yor purvay...  
but At mydsemar I wyll have Adosun fothar in Redynes  
for you to bere out from hull to teboldes/ & my wyfe  
desyrs yo<sup>r</sup> L shold end that house as you have begon<sup>ne</sup>

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so wyschenge to yo<sup>r</sup> L as to my celf I end w<sup>t</sup> my  
wyfes most hartly commendacyons & myne to yo<sup>r</sup> L  
& my Lade yor wyfe & my lade of oxford Sheffeld  
the xiiij of maye 1578//

Yo<sup>r</sup> L most assured  
fethefull frende

G Shrewsbury  
§

your .L. ys not only trobeled  
to moue hur magysty yn the  
behalf of my dowter of lenexe and  
letylone for ther mentenance that  
by hur Gracyous goodnes the mey  
haue werw<sup>t</sup> to mentene them selues/ but as I  
here your .L. hade some what ado to perswade hur  
magystye beynge offendede that my dowter lay at sente  
Iames, hur magystye thynkyng y<sup>t</sup> was yn some howse ~~he-ha~~  
my brothe wynfelde hathe hade that howse xv or xvj yere to youse  
at hys plesure. I cane no more but thanke your .L. and thinke  
my selfe mouste beould... to you

your .L. mouste assured

EShrouesbury

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887 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

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