

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 191 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=191>)**

From: Robert Stapleton (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 9 July 1582

Summary: One R. Stapleton writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), 'craving benison against the assizes at York' and offering to be of her service in return.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Shrewsbury Papers, MS 698, fols 99r-100v

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | R. Stapleton |

Version: 1.0

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## **People Associated with Letter 191: Robert Stapleton**

Robert Stapleton was the husband of Bess's granddaughter, Elizabeth (née Pierrepont), who was the daughter of Sir Henry Pierrepont and his wife, Frances (née Cavendish; Bess's daughter from her second marriage to Sir William Cavendish).

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## People Associated with Letter 191: 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 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>)
- [23?] Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)
- 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>)
- 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 191

To the right honourable my verie good Lady the Lady of Shrewsburie give these

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May it please your honour That at this present I am to vse my good ffreindes (wherin I make especiall accompt of your good Ladeshipp) in craving benyson ageanst these assizes at York which will begin the sixt of August. at which tyme if it wolde please yow to bestow some of me, I wilbe readie with my service eny way I can to requitt the same. Thus most humblie taking my leave I committ yow to the almightie who preserve yow in honour London this ixth of Iuly 1582

Your honnors moste bownden

R: Stapleton: /

## Diplomatic view of Letter 191

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

R. Stapleton

1582 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the right honourable my verie  
good La. the La of  
Shrewsburie give these

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

9<sup>th</sup> July 1582 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

97 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

97 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

99 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

May it please yo<sup>r</sup> hono<sup>r</sup> That at this *present* I am to  
vse my good ffreindes (wherin I make especiall accompt  
of yo<sup>r</sup> good Ladeshipp) in craving benyson ageanst  
these assizes at York w<sup>ch</sup> will begin the sixt of  
August. at w<sup>ch</sup> tyme if it wolde please yow  
to bestow some of me, I wilbe readie w<sup>th</sup> my  
service eny way I can to requitt the same. Thus  
most humblie taking my leave I committ yo<sup>w</sup> to  
the almightie who *preserve* yow in hono<sup>r</sup> London  
this ix<sup>th</sup> of Iuly 1582

Your honnors moste bownden

*[significant space]*

R: Stapleton: /

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