

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 197 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire); George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

To: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester;

Date: 2 August 1578

Summary: Bess's husband George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, writes to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and describes how he and Bess have received alarming news (in a letter which is enclosed) that the king of Scotland (James VI) and his court are 'determined altogether to defeat our little Arbella of her right to the earldom of Lennox'. He and Bess hope for Leicester's influence on queen Elizabeth I in this matter. The letter is written in Shrewsbury's own hand but signed by both he and Bess (countess of Shrewsbury).

Archive: British Library, Cotton, MS Caligula C. iii, fols. 561r-62v

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

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no.

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

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 197: 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.

People Associated with Letter 197: 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>)
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>)
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 197: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester

Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (1532/3-88), courtier and magnate, was a childhood friend of Elizabeth I and her earliest favourite as queen. He was appointed to the privy council in 1562 and played a very significant role in English politics. Given his prominence in the period, it is not surprising he was a frequent correspondent of Bess and her fourth husband, earl and countess of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester:

21 January 1568/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=107>)

[1570s?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=167>)

27 June [1576?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=110>)

18 May [1577?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)

16 July [1580?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=118>)

12 July 1585 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=151>)

23 November 1586 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=214>)

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Other letters associated with Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 12 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=60>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 20 Nov [1565?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- 26 Feb [1566?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

Normalised view of Letter 197

To therle of Leycestere

2°. Augusti .1578. Erle and Countesse of Shrewesburye, touching the lady Arbella.

My very good Lord I & my wyfe have Resevyd Ansure out of Scotland from master bowes wyche herein closed I have cent vnto your Lordship. whereby the more fully you may vndarstande how that kynge & late councell there Arre detarmyned Altogeddar to defete oure lytt[le] Arbella of hurre Ryght to therledom of lynoxe & Lordship of darnely and as we both Acknolege oure celves gretly beholdenge to your Lordship for your most favorabell lettares to master bowes wyche hath proqured this his wyes & frendly delynges still we hartely praye your Lordship to contynwe A patron to the Infante by erneste Intarsessyon to hur majeste for hur & vnles hur hyghnes wold vochesafe hur gracus lettares. my most earnest ... sorte to that kynge. onne her lyttell wardes behalfe & hur commaundement to master bowes to follo[w] the mattar effectually we can nott but be in sum despere of the prevelyge herein. Agenste consyens & [iu]gmente as we take it./ for if the worst chaunce it semethe to me that kynge can notte Revoke his first gyfte done in his mynorete before ... cum to lawfull eres. & that it wold ples your Lordship to bestow your oune lettares partykularly to homme [so] evare you thynke it nedefull. & to master bowes to the formore effecte The beshepp of Katnes to home it semethe that kyng hath graunted the erledum is Avery old man. sekely. & without Achyld & I can nott but thynke this is only composed for him to the ende. daubigney in fraunce beinge his nexte ere male shuld soksede him/ for I well Remembar that the duke of guyes & d. demene hathe wryten sondry lettares to the scotes quene in daubigneys behalfe with Assurans of daubygneys sarves to hur whereby it apperethe that this is wrought out of fraunce besydes I have harde my wyfe saye the old lade lynox told hur long agoo of this daubygnes sekenge to prevente the Infante. wych I wylle leue to hur hyghnes consyderacion Apon your Lordship's Informenge her thereof. We havege no othar hope but holly in hur majestie evare beinge Assured of your care & helpe to bettare effect than partykularly we can Intrete/ & where master bowes wrythe of sum hope for the Recovere of the Rereges of the land for As myche as the olde Lady lynoxe before hur dethe sayd that che was yerly satesfyed of All that was due to hur sunne charles late erle of lynoxe we wyll nott seke furthare for so smawle amattare/ & so wyschenge to your Lordship as to oure celfes we most hartely take oure leve longenge to here how you have desgesed your penauns At buxtons/ chatsworthe this ij of August 1578/

Your Lordship's moste fethefull cosun

G Shrewsbury

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EShrouesbury

Diplomatic view of Letter 197

[Address Leaf]

To therle of Leycestere

2°. Augusti .1578.

Erle and Countesse of
Shrewesburye, touching
the la. Arbella.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

Scotland ~

1578

2 Aug [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

(514) [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

552 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

561 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

561 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My very good L I & my wyfe have Resevyd ~~ansur~~
Ansure out of Scotland from m^r bowes wyche herein
closed I have cent vnto yo^r L. whereby the more fully
you may vnderstande how that kynge & late councell
there Arre detarmyned Altogeddar to defete oure lytt...
Arbella of *[deletion]* hurre Ryght to therledom of
lynoxe & Lp of darnely and as we both
Acknolege oure celves gretly beholdenge to yo^r L for
yo^r most favorabell lettares to m^r bowes wyche
hath proqured this his wyes & frendly delynges
still we hartely praye yo^r L to contynwe A
patron to the Infante by erneste Intarsessyon to hur
ma.^{te} for hur & vnles hur hyghnes wold
vochesafe hur gracus lettares. my most earnest ...
sorte to that kynge. onne her lyttell wardes behal
behalf & hur commaundement to m^r bowes to follo...
the mattar effectually we can nott but be in sum

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despere of the prevelyge herein. Agenste consyens &
...gmente as we take it./ for if the worst chaunce
it semethe to me that kynge can notte Revoke
his first gyfte done in his mynorette before ...
cum to lawfull eres. & that it wold ples yo^r L
to bestow yo^r oune lettares partykularly to homme ...
evare you thynke it nedefull. & to m^r bowes to the
formore effecte The beshepp of Katnes to home
it semethe that kyng hath graunted the erledum is
Avery old man. sekely. & wtout Achyld & I can
nott but thynke this is only composed for him to
the ende. daubigny in fraunce beinge as ^{his} nexte
ere male shuld soksede him/ for I well Remembar
that the duke of guyes & d. demene hathe wryten sondry
lettares to the scotes quene in daubigneys behalfe

[page break]

w^t Assurans of daubygneys sarves to hur whereby
it apperethe that this is wrought out of fraunce
besydes I have harde my wyfe saye the old lade
lynnox told hur long agoo of this daubygnes sekenge
to prevente the Infante. wych I wylle leue to hur
hyghnes consyderacion Apon yo^r L Informenge her
thereof. We havenge no othar hope but holly in
hur ma.^{tie} evare beinge Assured of yo^r care & helpe
to bettare effect than partykularly we can Intrete/
& where m^r bowes wrythe of sum hope for the Recovere of
the Rereges of the land for As myche as the olde La
lynnox before hur dethe sayd that che was yerly
satesfyed of All that was due to hur sunne charles
late erle of lynnox we wyll nott seke furthare
for so smawle amattare/ & so wyschenge to yo^r
L as to my ^{oure} celfes we most hartely take oure
leve longenge to here how you have desgesed
yo^r penans At buxtons/ chatsworthe this ij
of August 1578/

Yo^r L moste

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fethefull cosun

G Shrewsbury
§

EShrouesbury

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

(515) [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

562 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

553 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

562 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

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