

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 002 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=002>)

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Walter Bagot;

Date: 14 April [1600?]

Summary: Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) writes to Walter Bagot, asking him to evict a widow Bagshaw who holds a farm unlawfully in Wetton and 'has used herself very disorderly and will yield to no reason'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Bagot Family Papers, L.a.844

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 002: 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 002: Walter Bagot

Walter Bagot (bap. 1557, d. 1623) was the son and heir of Richard Bagot. Based on his father's good reputation with Elizabeth I (due mainly to services rendered to Bess, countess of Shrewsbury and her husband George, the sixth earl of Shrewsbury) Walter was appointed sheriff (1599-1600 and 1603-4), and also served as a member of parliament and justice of peace.

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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>)
- 14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 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>)

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24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204>)

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>)

Normalised view of Letter 002

To my very Loving frend Master Bagott Sheriff of Staffordshyer

Good Master Bagott. Wheras one wedow Bagshaw of wetton detaineth contrary to right a farme in the same towne/ and will not by eny resonable meane be avoyded/ I am bould of small acquaintancye earnestly to crave your favor/ that yow will cawse a privy Sessions to be, for the better avoyding of her yt towcheth my very neere frend, whose case I accomt as my owne/ therfore your gentle and frendly dealing shall bynd me to be as redy to shew yow or eny frend of yours what pleasure I may as eny frend yow have. and I pray yow make that accomt. Thus trusting of your favor and furtherance, and that yow will creditt this bearer/ with most hartly commendacions I bid yow farewell. Sheffield the xiiijth of Aprell

Your very Loving frend.

EShrouesbury

thys womane hathe yoused har selfe vary disorderly and wyll yelde to no resoune as my saruante thys barare cane declare vnto you therfor I ones agene I prey hartely grante me all your fauorabyll forderance and you shall fynde me neuer onmyndfall to requyat you

Diplomatic view of Letter 002

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

274 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

L.d Shrewsbury

to R^d Bagot [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my very Loving frend

M.^r Bagott Sheriff

of Staffordshyer

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

L.a.844 [Item number, hand: archivist]

271 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

Good M^r Bagott. Wheras one wedow Bagshaw of wetton detaineth contrary to right a farme in the same towne/ and will not by eny resonable meane be avoyded/ I am bould of small acquaintancye earnestly to crave yo^r favor/ that yow will cawse a p^r vy Sessions to be, for the better avoyding of her yt towcheth my very neere frend, whose case I accomt as my owne/ therfore yo^r gentle and frendly dealing shall bynd me to be as redy to shew yow or eny frend of yo^{rs} what pleasure I may as eny frend yow have. and I pray yow make that accomt. Thus trusting of yo^r favor and furtherance, and that yow will creditt this bearer/ wth most harty commendacions I bid yow farewell. Sheffield the xiiijth of Aprell

Yo^r very Loving frend.

EShrouesbury

thys womane hathe

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yoused har selfe vary
dysorderly and wyll yelde
to no resoune as my saruante
thys ear barare cane declare
vnto you therfor I ones agene
I prey hartely grante me all your
fauorabyll forderance and you
shall fynde me neuer onmyndfall
to requyat you

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

272 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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273 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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