

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 214 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=214>)

From: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 23 November 1586

Summary: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, writes to let Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) know that the queen thinks her and her husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury's servant Marvin should be removed from their household because of his suspicious behaviour. Note: A reply to this letter (also a copy), by Bess's husband, exists adjacently in the same manuscript volume.

Archive: Arundel Castle, Autograph Letters 1585-1617, No 114

Delivery status: to Bess, not sent (i.e. a draft or contemporary copy)

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

Hands: 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>)

People Associated with Letter 214: 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>)

2 August 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)

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>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 214: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 214

my good lady & systar as I have wrytten to my lord so muste I sygnifie vnto yow hir majestes late commandment vnto me which was to lett both my lord & you vnderstand that you have one marvyn attendant about yow who doth not vuse him selff the best in yat house & her majesty wylled me to put yow in ramembrances of the charge yow have I men my lord your husband & what yow promysed towchyng the shunyng of al manner of occasyones to gyve hyr cawse to susspet that she ye rather caused you to absent my lord's children & youres that ye lest ocasionesshould be offred she hoped yow wold be as vygyllant for all your sarvantes & yet ashuredly she heareth thys marvyn your man & my lord doth or hayth geven some speshyall cause of susspycione & I parceave hir majesty doth look he shold be presently removyd frome that howsse thus hir commandment I can do no lese than sygnify accordyngly and so beyng somewhat trobled in one of myne eys doe hartely byd my good lady & systar fare well this wensday the xxij of novembar

your ashured lovyng brother

R laycestar

ashuredly systar I fynd hyr majesty very earnest in thys matter not havyng delt with me of long tyme befor of ane thes mattares

the copy of my lord of laystar lettar to my layde

Diplomatic view of Letter 214

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

114 and

115 [Item number, hand: archivist]

12 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

1586 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

1586 Turn Over [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

6 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

my good la & systar as I have wrytten to my l so muste I
sygnyfie vnto yow hir ma^{tes} late eomād commandment vnto me w^{ch}
was to lett both my l & you vnderstand that you have one marvyn
attendant about yow who doth not vuse him selff the best in y^t house &
her ma^{ty} wylled me to put yow in ramembrances of the charge yow have
I men my l yo^r husband & what yow promysed towchyng the shunyng
of al manner of occasyones to gyve hyr cawse to susspet that
she y^e rather caused you to absent my l children & yo^{tes}
that y^e lest occasyones shold be offred she hoped yow wold be
as vygyllant for all yo^r sarvantes & yet ashuredly she heareth thys
marvyn yo^r man & my l doth or hayth geven some speshyall cause
of susspycione & I parceave his hir ma^{ty} doth look he shold
be presently removyd frome that howsse thus hir commandment
I can do no lese than sygnyfy accordyngly and so beyng somewhat
trobled in one of myne eys doe hartely byd my good la &
systar fare well this wensday the xxij of novembar

yow ashured lovyng ^{^brother^}

R laycestar

ashuredly systar I fynd [*deletion*] hyr ma^{ty}
very earnest in thys matter not havyng
delt wth me of long tyme befor of ane thes
mattares

the cobby of my lord of laystar

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

lettar to my lord layde

Version: 1.0