

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 215 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=215>)**

From: Unknown correspondent (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 21 May 1591

Summary: A document containing several copies and/or drafts of letters: The first is from an unidentified author to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) to do with the 'woods about Alton Park as are meet to be dispended in the ironworks there'. Following this are letters from an unidentified writer to Gilbert, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (Bess's stepson and son-in-law), and from an unidentified writer to an unidentified addressee, also on the subject of 'woods'.

Archive: Nottingham University Library, Middleton MSS, Mi 5/165/30

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 215: Unknown correspondent

null

Other letters associated with Unknown correspondent:

22 October 1564 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=62>)

[December?] 1573 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=143>)

[1578] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=138>)

3 August [1580s?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=205>)

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## People Associated with Letter 215: 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>)
- 9 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=191>)
- [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 215

Vnderstandinge by this bearer Richard Weston, of the willinge mynde your Honor hath to deale with me before an other, for such woodes about Alton Parke as are mete to be dispended in the Iron woorkes there, and that your Ladyship is also contented to disburse at Midsomer next CCCCLI towarde the furnishinge stocking & repayringe of the sayd woorkes. I will therfore with what conenient speede I may cause the waters to be vewed by men of skill, to thende I may be assured whether that proportion of wood may there be dispended, as willinglie your Honor would, which done I shalbe readie to conclude the bargaine with all speed. Thus with my dutie remembred vnto your Ladyship do committ the same to the tuicion of the Allmightie. London this xxjth of May 1591. v

Your Honors to commande./

Letter to ye cowntes of Shresbury for CCCCLI./

Beinge offred a bargaine of wood nere Alton Parke, by the countesse your Mother in law to be dispended in Iron woorkes there aboutes, after the rate of fyve shillings for the woodes of euerye dozen of coles yearly to be payed, and vnderstandinge her Ladyship's estate, to be therein for terme of lyfe, haue thought it mete to make your honor acquaynted before my further proceedinges. And if in dealinge with my Ladyship I may haue your LLordship's good will & consent for the continuance of the yeares, that shalbe agreed vppon betwixt vs yeldinge yowr Lordship the lyke rate for wood if she should happen to dye before the expiration of the terme the bargaine might stande me in some steed, otherwise I would be loth to purchase your Lordship's displeasure, or to make soe vncerten a match, wherfore I humbly pray your Lordship to lett me receaue by this bearer your full resolution, the rather for that some others to whome lyke motion hath bene made seke to preuent me, wherin I shall account my selfe much behouldinge to your good Lordship My Lord cane nott tulle howe to Annsawer the Lettar ffor the Conntyneuwes of the bargynenge yf my Lady showlld dye exepe the wood be Ratted of some prysse and hye Cane nott thencke but the Colles wyle Leye yow in xs a dossene whyche is a Resonabell Ryckenng in that/ Countre so I take yt a verrye good Cowrse to have the Lettare sent as yet was ffyrst penned

yt where allso good that yowr worship showlld wrytt vnto master bentele that yf vpon the delleuere of the Lettar vnto my ... Lord/ his/ hounnar well Connsent to your barggynenge with my Lady and ffor is ovne part well daylle with yow and any other sort by alltryenge of the/ bargyne and to be payd by the dosen of Colles som sartyn propossand delleverynng then at the worckes at is ovne Charge or to be payd by the Cord of wood hye allso berenge at the Charg

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at of ffawlynge Cuttinge and Cardinge or to be payd by the Card of wood yow berynge at the Charge of ffawlynge Cuttinge and Cardinge yf his hounnare desyere to alltare the bargyne vpon any suche poynte master bentelle to knowe is prysse and to sartyffy yow there of spydaly

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about a Bargaine for Wood with my Ladie Shrewsbury./ 1591

## Diplomatic view of Letter 215

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

5/165/30 [Old item number, hand: archivist]

Vnderstandinge by this bearer Richard Weston, of the willinge mynde your Honor hath to deale with me before an other, for such woodes about Alton Parke as are mete to be dispended in the Iron woorkes there, and that your La dy : is also contented to disburse at Midsomer next CCCC<sup>li</sup> towarde the furnishinge <sup>^stocking^</sup> & repayringe of the sayd woorkes. I will therefore w<sup>th</sup> what conenient speede I may cause the watter waters to be vewed by men of skill, to thende I may be assured whether that *proportion* of wood may there be dispended, as willingl y ie your La: Honor would, w<sup>ch</sup> done I shalbe readie to conclude the bargaine with all speed. Thus with my dutie remembred vnto yo<sup>r</sup> La. do committ the same to the tuicion of the Allmightie. London this xxj<sup>th</sup> of May 1591.

v

Yo<sup>r</sup> Honors to commande./

Letter to y<sup>c</sup> cowtes  
of Shresbury for  
CCCC<sup>li</sup> ./

Beinge offred a bargaine of wood nere Alton Parke, by the countesse your Mother <sup>^in law^</sup> to be dispended in Iron woorkes there aboutes, after the rate of fyve shillinges for the woodes of euerye dozen of coles yearly to be payed , and vnderstandinge her La: estate, to be therin for terme of lyfe, haue thought it mete to make your honor acq<sup>u</sup> aynted before my further *proceedinges*. And if in dealinge with my La: I may haue your La: good will & consent for the continuance of the yeares, that shalbe agree agreed vppon betwixt vs yeldinge yow<sup>r</sup> <sup>^Lo^</sup> the lyke rate for wood if she should happen to dye before the expiration of the terme

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the bargaine might stande me in some steed, otherwise I would be loth to purchase your Lo: displeasure, or to make soe vncerten a match, wherefore I humbly pray your Lordship to lett me receaue by this bearer your full resolution, the rather for that some others to whome lyke motion hath bene made seke to p<sup>r</sup> uent me, wherin I shall account my selfe much behouldinge to your good Lo:

[page break]

My Lord cane nott tylle howe to Annsawer the Lettar ffor the Conntyneuues of the bargynenge yf my Lady showlld dye exsepe the wood be Ratted of some prysse and hye Cane nott thencke but the Colles wyle Leye yow in xs a dossene whyche is a Resonabell Ryckenng in that/ Countre so I take yt a verye good Cowrse to have the Lettare <sup>^sent^</sup> as yet was ffyrst penned yt

yt where also good that yow<sup>r</sup> *worship* showlld wrytt vnto m<sup>r</sup> bentele that yf vpon the delleuere of the Lettar vnto my ... Lord/ his/ hounnar des well Connsent to you<sup>r</sup> barggynenge w<sup>th</sup> my L  $\theta$  ad e y and ffor is ovne part well daylle w<sup>th</sup> yow and any other sort by alltryenge of the/ bargyne and to be payd by the dosen of Colles som sartyn propossand delleverynng then at the worckes at is ovne Charge or to be payd by the Cord of wood hye ~~all-son~~ also berenge at the Charg at <sup>^of^</sup> ffawlllynge Cuttinge and Cardinge or to be payd by the Card of wood yow berynge at the Charge at of ffawlllynge Cuttinge and Cardinge yf his hounnare desyere to alltare the bargyne vpon any suche poynte m<sup>r</sup> bentelle to knowe is prysse and to sartyffy yow there of spydaly

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about a Bargaine  
for Wood with my Ladie  
Shrewsbury./ 1591

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