

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 219** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=219>)

From: John, an unknown correspondent (Longford, Derbyshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 26 September [1570s]

Summary: An unidentified author ('John') writes to advise Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) to look into the legal matter of William Vaughan's outlawry, which will result in confiscation of his lands, and thus possibly Bess's financial disadvantage. Further, he is waiting for Bess's instructions regarding proceedings with one Cole.

Archive: Sheffield Archives, BFM, 2/269

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown correspondent, John? | archivist | Nataniel Johnston |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

## **People Associated with Letter 219: John, an unknown correspondent**

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 219: 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 219

Right honorable my very good Lady Considering the duty I owe vnto my Lorde and your honorable selfe I thought it not my parte to lette passe any seruice, the omission wherof might turne either to your honors preiudice or withdrawe any proffite that may bee dewe Soe it is I am certainly lette to vnderstande that one Wiliam Vaughan of Llaurethall standeth outlawed after iudgement at the suite of one Master Ambrose griffith by reason of which outlawery the proffits of his lands and all his goods ar forfeated vnto my Lord his land and goods lyinge within your manor of Irchenfild his stocke being worthe 500 li. And yet of this your Ladyship is like to bee defrauded if your honor doe not wright vnto your officers to haue especiall care therof. and they will the rather perfourme their duties therin when they shall vnderstand that my Lorde and your Ladyship ar acquanted with the matter and doe geue directions for the honest exequution of the same.

I proceeded noe further with Cole considering I receiued noe further directions from your Ladyship vppon your receipt of my laste leter supposing your honor doth mislike of his assurance Thus being bould to trouble your Ladyship rather choosing to doe soe then to omitte any parte of my dewty in doing seruice to your honors to whome after my own ... I reste most bounden and allwais redy t[o] bee commaunded to the vttermost of my poore powre Longford  
26 September

[Iohn] ...

## Diplomatic view of Letter 219

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

2-269 [Old item number, hand: archivist]

213 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

... [hand: Nataniel Johnston]

Right honorable my very good Lady Considering  
the duty I owe vnto my Lorde and your hono-rable selfe I thought it not my parte to lette  
passe any seruice, the omission wherof might turne  
either to your honors preiudice or withdrawe  
any proffite that may bee dewe Soe it is I  
am certainly lette to vnderstande that one  
Wiliam Vaughan of Llaurethall standeth outlawed  
after iudgement at the suite of one M<sup>r</sup> Ambrose  
griffith by reason of which outlawery the  
proffits of his lands and all his goods ar  
forfeted vnto my Lord his land and goods lyinge  
within your manor of Irchenfilde his stocke  
being worthe 500 li. And yet of this your  
Ladyship is like to bee defrauded if your honor  
doe not wright vnto your officers to haue  
especiall care therof. and they will the  
rather perfourme their duties therein when  
they shall vnderstand that my Lorde  
^and^ your Ladyship ar acquancted with the matter  
and doe geue directions for the honest  
exequution of the same.

I proceeded noe further with Cole consi-dering I receiued noe further directions  
from your Ladyship vppon your receipt of  
my laste leter supposing your honor doth  
mislike of his assurance Thus  
being bould to trouble your Ladyship  
rather choosing to doe soe then to omitte  
any parte of my dewty in doing seruice  
to your honors to whome after my <sup>own</sup> *[deletion]*...  
I reeste most bounden and allwais redy t...  
bee commaunded to the vttermost of my

# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

poore powre  
Longford 26 September

... ..

[Overleaf]

**[Overleaf: Notes]**  
19590 [Old item number, hand: archivist]

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