

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 220 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=220>)

From: Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: [June 1569]

Summary: A later (nineteenth-century) copy of a letter from Mary Queen of Scots to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), in which Mary relates details of plots against her, asking Bess to send a commission.

Archive: National Library of Scotland, MS 1710, fols 23-24

Delivery status: historical copy (i.e. a copy made post-mortem, after 1608)

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

Hands: unknown scribe | John Pinkerton (1758-1826) |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 220: Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots

Mary (Stuart) Queen of Scots (1542-87), was the only surviving child of James V, king of Scots (1512-42), and his wife, Mary of Guise (1515-60). She was born in Linlithgow Palace (Scotland); however, she was betrothed to the French dauphin, subsequently Francois II, in 1548 and spent thirteen years in France. After Francois II's death in 1560, she returned (as queen) to Scotland, in 1561. She married twice more - to Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley (1545/6-67) in 1565 and then, following Darley's murder, to James Hepburn, fourth earl of Bothwell in 1567. Following her downfall in Scotland, she fled to England and was held in captivity there from 1568 until her execution in 1587. Much of her captivity (from 1569-84) was spent in the custody of Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury. Bess and the Scots Queen spent many hours embroidering together; however, during the marriage breakdown between Bess and Shrewsbury in the 1580s, the women's relationship deteriorated. By 1583 rumours were in circulation throughout London of an affair between the Scots Queen and her keeper Shrewsbury, and that she had born him at least one child. It was a ludicrous story, not least because of the poor state of health of both Shrewsbury and the Scots Queen. It was also dangerous and slanderous. Perhaps not surprisingly, a hurt and enraged Shrewsbury accused his wife Bess of starting the rumour, although there is no reason to think she had anything to do with the story. In fact, not only would it seem out of character for Bess, but it would have been directly contrary to her ongoing petitions to Queen Elizabeth and Walsingham to be reunited with her husband.

Other letters associated with Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots:

[1574] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=244>)

July 1582 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=147>)

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People Associated with Letter 220: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 220

Mary Queen of Scotts Letter

Copy of an original Letter of Mary Queen of Scotland in the possession of Robert Austen Esquire

For the Carlton House Magazine A letter of Mary Queen of Scots to the Countess of Shrewsbury never before printed

My nounge good ladi, I send this berer to you, to know off my good lord and frinde weil doing, as to impart to you both such neues as I haiff, me lord of Mara, and feyve or seix particular men for particularites, are bound to all extremity aguenst me and myn; and plenlie be oune off his men quholey yersternicht, at Doncartel, refuses the quin plenli, and her consell off ani agriment: and, be meaner the think to have in courte, thinkes to so persuad the quin, that sche schal seem angri in wourdes, but indeid been with thaym. Shewing that be my servand Thomas Fleming has send one off my servands at nicht, to adver. tise me lord off Rosse. I believe many will mislyk Morrays double dealling, til I hear wither his persuasions, or promis off the quin to defeate me, fals pleece, I kan see no man./or I heer I schal advertise you. I am to send Bog. a. bow. I prey you send me a commission off me lords: and wourd off your weil doing both. I go tomorrow to Ser Ion Souche. I prey god to preserve you both long the guever in long and happi liff. This teusday afternone in hest.

Your most assured good frind and cousines,

Marie R

(Directed thus) To me ledi my veri good frind and cusingnes the contes off Schreousberi.

Diplomatic view of Letter 220

[Address Leaf]

Mary Queen
of Scotts Letter

Copy of an original
Letter of Mary Queen
of Scotland in the
possession of Robert
Austen Esq .^r

[Letter Text]

For the Carlton House Magazine
A letter of Mary Queen of Scots to the Countess of
Shrewsbury
never before printed

My noune good ladi, I send this berer to you,
to know off my good lord and frinde weil doing,
as to impart to you both such neués as I haiff,
me lord of Mara, and feyve or seix particular men
for particularites, are bound to all extremity aguenst
me and myn; and plenlie be oune off his men
quholey yersternicht, at Doncartel, refuses the quin
plenli, and her consell off ani agriment: and,
be meaner the think to have in courte, thinkes
to so persuad the quin, that sche schal seem
angri in wourdes, but indeid been with thaym.
Shewing that be my servand Thomas Fleming
has send one off my servands at nicht, to adver.
tise me lord off Rosse. I believe many will mislyk
Morrays double dealling, til I hear wither his
persuasions, or promis off the quin to defeate ^{^me,^}

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fals pleece, I kan see no man./or I heer I schal
advertise you. I am to send Bog. a. bow. I prey
you send me a commission off me lords: and wourd
off your weil doing both. I go tomorrow to
Ser Ion Souche. I prey god to preserve you
both long the guever in long and happi liff.
This teusday afternone in hest.

Your most assured good frind and
cousines,

Marie R ~

(Directed thus)
To me ledi my veri good
frind and cusingnes the contes
off Schreousberi.

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