

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 221 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=221>)

From: Elizabeth I;

To: Bess of Hardwick; George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury;

Date: 4 June 1577

Summary: This is a draft letter from Elizabeth I to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) and her husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury regarding their hosting of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (particularly to do with how much food and drink they are to allow him). For the heavily revised, final sent version of this, see Letter ID 172.

Archive: The National Archives, State Papers Scotland, Mary, Queen of Scots, 53/10, f 84 (item 84). 4 folios.

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

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

Other version: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Elizabeth I |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 221: Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I (1533-1603), queen of England and Ireland, was the only child of King Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his second wife, Anne Boleyn (c.1500-1536). Her reign is one of the most famous in British, and indeed all of European history and, as she was in her own time, she remains an icon for that age. She succeeded to the throne after the death of her half-sister, Queen Mary, in 1558. With regard to Bess's life, the latter had recently married William St. Loe when Elizabeth became queen. In 1559, St. Loe was named captain of the guard to the queen, and in the same year Bess was appointed as a gentlewoman of the privy chamber. Bess was, however, dismissed due to the queen's anger over her alleged involvement in a clandestine marriage between Katherine Grey and Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford. Nonetheless, the two women continued to have an amiable and significant relationship throughout Elizabeth's reign - evidenced by the correspondence between them. Notably, Elizabeth served as mediator between Bess and her fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, during their marriage breakdown in the 1580s and even intervened on Bess's behalf.

Other letters associated with Elizabeth I:

25 June 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)

17 March 1577/8 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)

9 January 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=128>)

29 January 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=129>)

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People Associated with Letter 221: 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.

People Associated with Letter 221: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury

George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522-90), was the eldest and only surviving son of Francis Talbot, fifth earl of Shrewsbury (1500-60), and his first wife, Mary (d.1538). In 1538, at the age of sixteen, he took up the title of Lord Talbot, until he succeeded to the earldom after his father's death twenty-two years later. In 1539 he married his first wife, Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566/7), with whom he had seven children: four daughters and three sons. Early on he acquired a number of honours stemming from his family's well-established prominence in the north: knight bachelor (1547), member of the council of the north (1549), knight of the Garter (1561), and lord lieutenant of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (1565). Following the death of his first wife, he married Bess, then the widow of William St Loe (c.1520-65?), in 1567. At this point Shrewsbury was one of the wealthiest men in England, derived from his estates and also business adventuring in farming, shipping, coal-mining, glassworks and lead extraction and production. Soon after his marriage to Bess, however, he was appointed keeper of Mary Queen of Scots, a custodianship he would hold from 1569-84. Shrewsbury prided himself on his loyalty to Elizabeth I, but he soon found her reluctant to provide sufficient diet money to keep Mary and her retinue. This, in addition to the monies needed for expensive building projects (at Worksop and Chatsworth), and his eldest son Gilbert's debts led to serious financial anxiety for Shrewsbury. Furthermore, he was forced to remain with Mary at all times and was therefore losing his place at court. As Shrewsbury's stresses grew and he became increasingly irascible, his marriage with Bess broke down spectacularly amid quarrelling to do with family finances and the allocation of estates. Scandal and mutual bad-mouthing soon became very public and the queen herself intervened, eventually dictating that Shrewsbury pay Bess a regular income (from 1587), while the two lived apart. Shrewsbury was an ill man for many years and suffered with a severe rheumatic condition, what he referred to as 'gout', which contributed to his terrible handwriting. He died in the company of his mistress, Elinor Bretton, at Sheffield Manor, on 18 November 1590, after being administered a mercury cure. His son Gilbert Talbot succeeded him as the seventh earl of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury:

- 28 June [1568?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [December 1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)
- 13 December [1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=66>)
- [1569?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=67>)
- [1570s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=184>)
- [c. 1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)
- [1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- [1570s] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=203>)
- [c. 1570] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=68>)

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4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>)
4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=70>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=69>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=72>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=71>)
8 August 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
[c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=76>)
[c. 1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=75>)
[1575-7] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=245>)
7 June 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
June 19 [c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
20 February 1575/6 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
19 November [1576?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=183>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
18 May [1577?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
25 June 1577 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)
14 May 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
[30 June 1578?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
2 August 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
28 December 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=193>)
13 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
28 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
22 June 1579 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
17 January 1579/80 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
13 May 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
21 June 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
11 September 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
10 October 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=79>)
8 February 1581/2 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
4 August 1584 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)
26 August [1584] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=116>)

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14 October [1585] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=229>)

23 October 1585 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=117>)

9 June 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=176>)

4 August 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=202>)

[April 1587] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=186>)

Normalised view of Letter 221

4 Iunii. 1577 memorandum of her majestes lettre to the Erle and Countesse of Shrewsbury. of thanks for the good vsage of my Lord of Leicester/

Ryght Trvsty &ct. being geven to vnderstande from owre cosyn of Leycester howe honorably he was lately receyved and vsed by you owre cosyn the Cowntesse at Chatswoorth and howe his dyet is by you bothe dyscharged at Bvxtons we shoold doe him great wronge howlding him in yt place of owre favor we doe in case we shoold not let you vnderstande in how thankefoll sorte we accept the same at bothe your handes which we doe not acknowld to be don vnto him but to owre selves and therfor doe mean to take vppon vs the debt and to acknowledge you bothe as credytors so you can be content to accept vs for debter wherin is the daynger vnles you cvt of some parte of the large allowavnce of dyet you geve him. lest otherwyse the debt herby may growe to be so great as we shall not be able to dyscharge the same and so become banke rowte and therfor we thinke yt meet for the saving of owre credyt to proscribve vnto you a proportyon of dyet which we mean in no case you shall exceed: and that is to allowe him, by the daye for his meate two ounces of fleshe referring the qualytye to your selves so you exceed not the quantytye and for his drynke the ... parte of a parte of a pynte of wyne to comphorte his stomocke and as myche of St Ames sacred water as he lvtethe to drynke On festyvall dayes as is fyt for a man of his qualytye we can be content you shall enlarge his dyet by allowng vnto him for his dynere the showlder of a wren and for his svpper a leg of the same besydes his ordenary ounces. the lyke proportyon we ... you shall allowe vnto ovr brother of warwycke saving yt we thinke yt ... in respekt that his boddye is more replete then his brothers yt the wrens legg allowed at svpper on festyvall dayes be abated for that lyght svppers agreeth best with rvles of physyke. This order owre meanyng is you shall inviolably observe and so may you ryght well assvre your selves of a most thankfull debter to so well deservng credytors.

Diplomatic view of Letter 221

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

June 1577 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

4 Iunii. 1577 m. of her ma^{tes} *lettre* to the Erle and Countesse of Shrewsbury. of thankes for the good vsage of th my L. of Leic^r /

[Letter Text]

Ryght Trvsty &ct. being geven to
vnderstande from owre cosyn of Leycester
howe honorably he was ^{^lately^} receyved and vsed
by ^{^you^} owre cosyn the Cowntesse at Chatswoorth
and howe his dyet is by you ^{^bothe^} dyscharged
at Chatswoorthe Bvxtons we shoold
doe bothe him ^{^great^} and you wronge ^{^howlding him in y^t place of owre favor we doe^} but
chefely owr selves in case we shoold not
let you vnderstande in how thankefoll
sorte we accept the same at bothe
your handes w^{ch} we doe not acknowled
to be don vnto him but to owre selves
and therfor doe mean to take vppon vs
the debt and to aaccept ^{^acknowledge^} you bothe as
credytors so you can be content to accept
vs for debter wherin is the daynger
vnles you cvt of some parte of the
large allowavnce of dyet you geve
him. w^{ch} maye lest ^{^otherwise^} the debt herby may
growe to be so great as we shall not
be able to dyscharge ^{^the same^} and so become banke
rowte and therfor we thinke yt meet ^{^for the saving of owre credyt^}
to p^r scribe vnto you a proportyon of
dyet w^{ch} we mean in no case you shall

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exceed: and that is ~~two ownnes~~ to allowe
him, by the daye ^{^for his meate^} two ownnes of fleshe
referring the qualytye to your selves so you
exceed not the quantytye ^{^and for his drynke^} the ... parte
of a parte of a pynte of wyne to comphorte
his stomocke and as myche of St Ames
sacred water as he lvstethe to *[deletion]* drynke
On festyvall dayes ^{^as is fyt for *[deletion]* a man of his qualytye^} we can be content you shall
enlarge his dyet by allowng vnto him for his dyner

[page break]

^{^ besides his ordenary owncce ^} the showlder of a wren and for his svpper
a leg of the same besydes his ordenary
ownnes. the lyke proportyon we ... you
shall allowe vnto ovr brother of warwycke
saving y^t we thinke yt ... in respekt
that his boddye is more replete then
~~others~~ his brothers y^t the wrens legg
allowed at svpper on festyvall dayes be
abated for that lyght svppers agreeth
best w^t rvles of physyke. This order
owre meanyng is you shall inviolably
observe and so may you ryght well
assvre your selves of a most thankfull
debter to so well deservng credytors.

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