

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 028 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=028>)

From: Edward Foxe (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 8 December [c. 1565]

Summary: Edward Foxe, a servant, writes to Bess (Lady St. Loe) in response to a letter from her, refuting accusations that he is frequently absent and negligent in his work. In particular, he relates details of his diligence in looking after the rabbit warrens and protecting them from local dogs.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (31)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Edward Foxe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 028: Edward Foxe

Edward Foxe was Bess's gamekeeper at Chatsworth while she was Lady St. Loe.

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People Associated with Letter 028: 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 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 12 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=60>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 20 Nov [1565?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)
- 26 Feb [1566?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 2 Aug 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

Normalised view of Letter 028

To the Ryght worshipfull & my very good lady & mistress the lady sentlo gyue this

Thus

Ryght worshipfull my very good Lady thys shall be to Lett your good Ladiship vnderstand that I receued A letter frome your good ladyship the whych dyd dyscoreg me verry sore Although yat were not tre[w] And wheare As your ladyship sayd that your frendes therabout dyd let your ladyship vnderstand that I weare muche Abrode Abowte me pleasuer be iij dayes to gether yt ys not true for I were neuer Absent ij dayes then iij neuer syns your ladyship went but at my fathers At wakes that me father & serten of my frendes met me there & I went of sundaye in the mornynge After I had bene in the warene & came Ageyn of mondaye at nyght & last one to walke the warden when I were Absent And wheare your ladyship sayd that your nebores dyd tell you that I were neclygent in lowkyng to the warden/ But I dyd woll know that the had not so lyttell honesty to wryte to your ladyship any such vntruth but And yf dycons wold not haue had yt known he showld not haue Rejoyced & sayd to my frendes yat yt were hys letter that mayd me to be so Rebuked At your Ladyships hand wherfor I thynk my selffe very vnfortunat to haue such one As he ys to make me to haue Rebukes vnworthy And I do not care what any can wryte agaynst me so that I do my duty vnto my offes that I haue charge vppon that when the that hath knowleg shall see my doynge the whych I trust shall be fatles And when your ladyship were At chatsworth your selffe the were yat towld you yat there were not xx copeles of conys in the grownd but lyke as ther knowleg were so the spake & now ye maye see ther selffes Ahundereth copel at a tyme & doth saye there ys conys very great plenty And yf the Report of theym that hath no knowleg ys better to be credyt then myne I Ame not mete to be in An offes/ for there ys no mane that hath Anoffes but he can tell how to behaue hym selffe yn hyt or ell[s] he ys not fyt to be in hit/ And as for birrowes making we haue taken Anorder that thenext workadaye After crystenmas holydayes we wyll haue a great sort of serten of our nebores to cast borowes & in the men tyme we wyll be doynge As we maye for I haue mayd ij borowes my selff & couered theme with thornes & now I must make trapes euery daye As I may cum to & I haue taken syns I wryt to your ladyship both doges & fornash... & of wedensday beyng the vij daye of desembr in the mornynge then came ij copell of hownd[s] in to the warden & huntyd the conies & I ran vp & downe the wod & were Angary At theym be case I had Runn so sore at them & At lenth I wyth my byll cut iij of them very sore that I thynke ye wyll not lyue & then came one & sayd the were his maysteres master fyharbartes & I sayd I dyd not care whos the were for yf the hunntyed ther I wold kyll them & there master wer by & yf he wryt to your ladyship of hit this the truth As All the howse knoth & the conys be gynneth to make ther nestes Ready now for I haue fond deueres holes stoped close vp after them yat ye may be Ready Agaynst

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marche thus I praye Ihesus preserue your ladyship long in your prosperytie ffrom chatsworth
the viij daye of desember//

Be your ladyships faythfull servand

Edward ffoxe

Diplomatic view of Letter 028

[Address Leaf]

To the Ryght worshipfull & my very good
lady & m^r s the lady
sentlo gyue this

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(31) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

Thus

Ryght worshipfull my very good Lady thys shall be
to Lett your good Ladiship vnderstand that I receued
A letter frome your good ladyship the whych dyd
dyscoreg me wery sore Although y^t were not tre...
And wheare As your ladyship sayd that your
frendes therabowt dyd let your ladyship vnder=stand that I weare muche Abrode Abowte me
pleasuer be iij dayes to gether yt ys not true
for I were neu^r Absent ij dayes then iij neu^r syns
your ladyship went but at my fathers At
wakes that me father & serten of my frendes
met me there & I went of sundaye in the
mornyng After I had bene in the waren
& came Ageyn of mondaye at nyght & last
one to walke the waren when I were Absent
And wheare your ladyship sayd that your
nebores dyd tell you that I were neclygent in
lowkyng to the waren/ But I dyd woll know
that the had not so lyttell honesty to wryte
to your ladyship any such vntruth but And yf
dycons wold not haue had yt known he
showld not haue Rejoyssed & sayd to my frendes

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y^t yt were hys letter that mayd me to be
so Rebuked At your Ladyships hand wherfor
I thynk my selffe very vnfortunat to haue such
one As he ys to make me to haue Rebukes
vnworthy And I do not care what any can
wryte agaynst me so that I do my duty vnto
my offes that I haue charge vppon that
when the that hath knowleg shall see
my doynge the whych I trust shall be fatles
And when your ladyship were At chatsworth
your selffe the were y^t towld you y^t there were
not xx copeles of conys in the grownd but
lyke as ther knowleg were so the spake & now
y^e maye see ther selffes Ahundereth copel at a tyme
& doth saye there ys conys very great plenty

[page break]

And yf the Report of theym that hath no
knowleg ys better to be credyt then myne
I Ame not mete to be in An offes/ for there
ys no mane that hathe Anoffes but he can
tell how to behaue hym selffe yn hyt or ell...
he ys not fyt to be in hit/ And as for
birrowes makynge we haue taken Anorder that
the ^{ne}xt workadaye After crystenmas holydayes
we wyll haue a great sort of *serten* of ou^r
nebores to cast borowes & in the men tyme
we wyll be doynge As we maye for I haue
mayd ij borowes my selff & couered theme
w^t thornes & now I must make trapes eu^r y
daye As I may cum to & I haue taken syns
I wryt to your ladyship both doges & fornash...
& of wedensday beyng the vij daye of desembr
in the mornynge then came ij copell of hownd...
in to the warden & huntid the conies & I
ran vp & downe the wod & w were Angary
At theym be case I had Runn so sore at them
& At lenth I wyth my byll cut iij of
them very sore that I thynke y^e wyll not

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lyue & then came one & sayd the were his
maysteres m^r fyharbartes & I sayd I dyd not
care whos the were for yf the hunntyed ther
I wold kyll them & there m^r wer by & yf he
wryt to your ladyship of hit this the truth
As All the howse knoth & the conys be
gynneth to make ther nestes Ready now for
I haue fond deueres holes stoped close vp
after them y^t y^e may be Ready Agaynst marche
thus I praye Ihesus p^r serue your ladyship
long in your prosperytie ffrom chatsworth the
viiij daye of desember//

Be your ladyships ~
faythfull *servand*

Edward ffoxe §
§

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