

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 038 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=038>)**

From: Nicholas Kynnersley (Wingfield);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 22 April 1589

Summary: Nicholas Kynnersley, a servant, sends Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) part of her 'principal jewels' from Wingfield. He assures her that all things are in as good an order as when she left, that security measures are in place and that she has authority.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (45)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: Nicholas Kynnersley | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

## **People Associated with Letter 038: Nicholas Kynnersley**

Nicholas Kynnersley was a servant to Bess while she was countess of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with Nicholas Kynnersley:

5 November 1588 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=37>)

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## People Associated with Letter 038: 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 Wingfield

28 Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)

[1569?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=67>)

28 May 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=82>)

6 Oct 1585 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152>)

6 Oct 1587 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156>)

5 Nov 1588 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=37>)

11 Apr 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>)

## Normalised view of Letter 038

To me lady.

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Besekyng ye allmyghty to preserue your honorable helthe. your honour I truste shall receive here part off your pryncypall Iuelles I truste in ye allmyghte in as good helthe & mery as ye parted from Wynffeld which was to them as mery & pleasand as ye recevyng off them wylbe Comfortable to your ladyship which I truste & daylly prefor meay contenew in lyke comford & plessure duryng all your lyffe & send all your honour's oyer great greffes torned to ye lyke comffordes so with me harty prayer for ye same I take me leaue Wynfeld this xxij of apryll 1589

your honor's obedyent seruand

your honour shall nede to take no thowght botte be merye for you shall fynd all thynges here I truste in as good order as you leafte them for we nether wyll yeld to commandment nor forsse except your honour's hand & yett we wyll lett your honour vnderstand & haue a second comandment by on off your owen men vnder your hand leaste ye fruste be counterfett

Nycholas Kynnersley

## Diplomatic view of Letter 038

[Address Leaf]

To me lady.

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(45)

[Item number, hand: archivist]

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

Besekyng y<sup>e</sup> allmyghty to *preserue* yo<sup>r</sup> honorable helthe. yo<sup>r</sup> .ho. I truste shall *receiue* here part off yo<sup>r</sup> pryncypall luelles I truste in y<sup>e</sup> allmyghte in as good helthe & mery as y<sup>e</sup> parted from Wynffeld w<sup>c</sup> was to them as mery & pleasand as y<sup>e</sup> recevyng off them wylbe Comfortable to yo<sup>r</sup> <sup>^la^</sup> w<sup>c</sup> I truste & daylly *prefor* meay contenew in lyke comford & plessure duryng all yo<sup>r</sup> lyffe & send all yo<sup>r</sup> ho *oyer* great greffes torned to y<sup>e</sup> lyke comffordes so w<sup>t</sup> me harty prayer for y<sup>e</sup> same I take me leaue Wynfeld ths xxij of apryll 1589 §

yo<sup>r</sup> ho obedyent *seruand*

yo<sup>r</sup> ho shall nede to take no thowght botte be merye for you shall fynd all thynges here I truste in as good *order* as you leafte them for we nether wyll yeld to *commandment* nor forsse except yo<sup>r</sup> ho hand & yett we wyll lett yo<sup>r</sup> ho. vnderstand & haue a second comandment by on off yo<sup>r</sup> owen men vnder yo<sup>r</sup> hand leaste y<sup>e</sup> fruste be counterfett

*[significant space]*

Nycholas Kynn<sup>r</sup> sley

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