

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 047 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=047>)

From: William Marchington (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 13 January [c.1560]

Summary: William Marchington, a servant, writes to Bess (Lady St. Loe) from Chatsworth with news about the children's health and education, building materials, the orchard, cattle, and other domestic matters. A postscript relates that James Crompe, another servant, is ill.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (57)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: William Marchington | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 047: William Marchington

William Marchington, alongside the trusted James Crompe, was one of Bess's principal servants at Chatsworth in the 1560s, while she was Lady St. Loe. As well as the letter he sends to Bess, he is mentioned in IDs 017, 061 and 100 and he paid rent to Bess in 1558 (Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 3, payments of £20 and £30).

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 047: 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.

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

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>)
- 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>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- 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 047

At this present mistress ffrances mistress Elezabeth mistress mary with mistress Knytons chylderen be all well amended god be prayed but I do Iudge that my lytall mistress do not prosper well in learning for that tey... ale & garrard be not ffrendes your ladyshyp doth well know ther fassyones ther is all the tymber got home ffrom hadon/ lyndoxe parte/ & par[te] from Barlow the drawghtes haue bene so occupied with leadyng of hedge wod & vj lodes of marle from assheford yat the other busynes of leadyng of tymber could not go so well forward but I trust I shall se all shortlye home/ we haue alrebye hedgit & dychet the neyther orchard & for plantes we shall I trust haue ynow to fynesse all/ cokes & newall syns before chrestemas where not here I do dowt lest Iohn Newall be syck at hys ffrendes/ halleys for this chrestemas tyme haue don lytull at ther work but now they begyn to applye it hard/ I haue sent by this carryer iiij pottes ij of them tonnes/ & ij with covers/ & for thomas alen he hath done all hys taxed work so that I wold know your ladyshypes pleaser wherin I may set hym a work by the daye or by the great syns chrestemas we haue geven all our cattell hey/ as fatte oxen kyne yong beastes & shepe and they do eat it well but as yet ther is no wast made I dar answare for ther is few days but I go to the foddering places to spye faultes but I se none thus leaving to trowbull your good ladyshyp I wysse my master & you health with encrease to honour and all my lyttull masters encrease of learning which I trust to see ffrom Chattesworthe the xiiijth of this Ianvarye

your humble seruant

Wm Marchyngton

ther is iij yong calves god send them, good spede/ at Chattesworth Iames Crompe was at derby wherin I perceyve that master more wold haue over reckened hym a pack of wolle wheras I the sheperd thomas lely doth well know that he hade from hense xxiiij packes which xvjxx stone & vj/ Iames at this wryting was somewhat syck so that he doth not wryte att this tyme for he ley swetyng in bedd/

Diplomatic view of Letter 047

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(57) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

At this p^r sent m^r s ffrances m^r s Elezabeth m^r s mary
w^t m^r s Knytons chylderen be all well amended
god be *prayed* but I do Iudge that my lytall
m^r s do not *prosper* well in learning for that tey...
ale & garrard be not ffrendes you^r ladyshyp
doth well know ther fassyones ther is all the
tymber got home ffrom hadon/ lyndoxe parte/ & par...
from Barlow the drawghtes haue bene so
occupied w^t leadyng of hedge wod & vj lodes
of ma^r le from assheford y^t the other
busynes of leadyng of tymber could not go
so well forward but I trust I shall se all
shortlye home/ we haue alrebye hedgit
& dychet the neyther orchard & for plantes
we shall I trust haue ynow to fynesse
all/ cokes & newall syns before chrestemas
where not here I do dowt lest Iohn Newall
be syck at hys ffrendes/ halleyes for this
chrestemas tyme haue don lytull at ther
work but now they begyn to aplye it
hard/ I haue sent by this carryer iiij
pottes ij of them tonnes/ & ij w^t covers/
& for thomas alen he hath done all hys
taxed work so that I wold know yo^r
ladyshyps please^r wherin I may set hym a
work by the daye or by the great

[page break]

syns chrestemas we haue geven all o^r cattell
hey/ as fatte oxen kyne yong beastes &
shepe and they do eat it well but as

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

yet ther is no wast made I dar answare
for ther is few days but I go to the
foddering places to spye faultes but I
se none thus leaving to trowbull
yo^r good ladyshyp I wysshe my m^r & you
health w^t encrease to hono^r and all my
lyttull masters encrease of learning w^{ch}
I trust to see ffrom Chattesworthe
the xiiijth of this Ianvarye

your humble *seruant*

W^m
Marchyngton
§

ther is iij yong calves god send them,
good spede/ at Chattesworth Iames Crompe
was at derby wherin I perceyve that m^r
more wold haue over reckened hym a
pack of wolle wheras I the sheperd thomas
lely doth well know that he hade from
hense xxiiij packes w^{ch} xvj^{xx} stone & vj/
Iames at this wryting was somewhat syck
so that he doth not wryte att this tyme
for he ley swetyng in bedd/

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