

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 104 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=104>)**

From: Bess of Hardwick (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Lord Thomas Paget;

Date: 28 November 1581

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to Lord Thomas Paget on behalf of 'Master Duport of Bretby', who has been 'molested by some of your lordship's tenants', with 'diverse suits between them'. She asks that Paget intercede in order to restore peace.

Archive: Keele University Library, Paget Papers, MS 7, ff. 77- (D603K/1/7/47)

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Bess of Hardwick |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 104: 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 104: Lord Thomas Paget**

Thomas Paget, fourth Baron Paget (c.1544-1590), was a Roman Catholic layman and exile (from 1583 until his death).

Other letters associated with Lord Thomas Paget:

[1570s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)

29 March 1576 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)

10 June 1582 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)

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## Other letters associated with Sheffield, Yorkshire

- 27 Aug 1567 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)
- 3 May 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=29>)
- 8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
- 7 Jun 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
- 19 Jun [c.1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
- [Oct 1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 Oct 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 29 Mar 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)
- 27 Jun [1576?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=110>)
- 18 May [1577?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
- 1 Aug 1577 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 17 Mar 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)
- 14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 29 Dec 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123>)
- 17 Jan 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
- 13 May 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
- 21 Jun 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 8 Feb 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)
- 10 Jun 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)
- 24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204>)

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7 Feb 1583 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=148>)

4 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)

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

19 Dec 1590 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)

14 Apr [1600?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=2>)

## Normalised view of Letter 104

To the right honorable my very good Lord the Lord Pagett

The Countesse of Shrewsbury toching Master duport 28<sup>o</sup> November 1581

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My verie good Lord I am made to vnderstand that Master Duport of Bretby whome I haue knowne manie yeres of verie quiet behaviour is nowe greatlie molested by some of your Lordship's tennautes of your Mannor of Winisell, wherein (as yt is said he hath receiued very hard dealing. There hath bene moved by this occasion diuers sutes betwene them, as indictmentes vpon the statute of periury & and allso in the starre chamber, which maye to the further trouble and great Charges of eyther partie, and yet (as your Lordship knoweth) the same must haue end according to the equitye thereof. ffor that this poore gente is one that I would gladlie quiet & relieve in his reasonable and iust causes, my request is that yt would please your Lordship, that your tennautes may cease the sute, lyke as he for his part is very willing to doe, as one desirous of your Lordship's favour, and hath often (as he saieth) dutifully made sute for the same, And that all matters depending in Controversie betwene them may be referred to the iudgement and determinacion of some indifferent gentlemen in thos parties, who vpon the examinacion and hearing thereof may determine the same as the equitie of the Cause requireth Wherein your Lordship shall do a very good dede, in making peace and appeasing thos troublesome sutes, by which I thinke in thend neyther partie will gaine, but the lawiers enriched and they (besides their gret disquietnes and trouble) gretlie impoverished and hindred thereby And I shall thinke my self beholding vnto you for the same. And so with my hartiest Commendacions I take my leave of your good Lordship Sheffeld the xxvijth of November.1581

your Lordship's assuryed louynge frend

EShrouesbury

## Diplomatic view of Letter 104

[Address Leaf]

To the right honorable  
my very good Lord  
the L. Pagett  
§

The Countesse of  
Shrewsbury toching  
M<sup>f</sup> duport 28<sup>o</sup> No  
1581

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

77 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]  
PAG VII/47 [Item number, hand: archivist]

My verie good Lord I am made to vnderstand that M<sup>f</sup> Duport of Bretby whome I haue knowne manie yeres of verie quiet behaviour is nowe greatlie molested by some of yo<sup>r</sup> L tennautes of yo<sup>r</sup> Manno<sup>r</sup> of Winisell, wherein (as yt is said he hath receiued very hard dealing. There hath bene moved by this occasion diuers sutes betwene them, as indictmentes vpon the statute of periury & and allso in the starre chamber, which maye to the further trouble and great Charges of eyther partie, and yet (as yo<sup>r</sup> L. knoweth) the same must haue end according to the equitye thereof. ffor that this poore gente is one that I would gladlie quiet & relieve in his reasonable and iust causes, my request is that yt would please yo<sup>r</sup> L, that yo<sup>r</sup> tenautes may cease the sute, lyke as he for his part is very willing to doe, as one desirous of yo<sup>r</sup> L favour, and hath often (as he saieth) dutifully made sute for the same, And that all matters depending in Controversie betwene them may be referred to the iudgement and determinacion of some indifferent gentlemen in thos parties, who vpon the examinacon and hearing thereof may determine the

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shall do a very good dede, in making peace and appeasing thos  
troublesome sutes, by w<sup>ch</sup> I thinke in thend neyther *partie* will  
gaine, but the lawiers enriched and they (besides their gret  
disquietnes and trouble) gretlie impoverished and hindred thereby  
And I shall thinke my self beholding vnto you for the  
same. And so w<sup>th</sup> my hartiest Commendacions I take  
my leave of yo<sup>r</sup> good L Sheffeld the xxviiij<sup>th</sup> of  
November. 1581

your .L. assuryed  
louynge frend

EShrouesbury

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78 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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