

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 011 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=011>)

From: Henry Cavendish (Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 31 December 1605

Summary: Henry Cavendish writes to his mother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), conveying his best wishes for the new year, together with a New Year's gift from he and his wife, Grace (née Talbot).

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (11)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: seal, red wax, embossed with the Cavendish arms featuring three bucks heads cabossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: Henry Cavendish | archivist |

Version: 1.0

Copyright Information

All material is made available free of charge for individual, non-commercial use only. The copyright and other intellectual property rights in the transcribed letter text, metadata about the letters and the design of the letter display are owned by the University of Glasgow.

You are permitted to access, print and download letters from this site on the following conditions:

- use of all material on this site is for information and for non-commercial or your own personal use only; any copies of these pages saved to disk or to any other storage medium may only be used for subsequent viewing purposes or to print extracts for non-commercial or your own personal use.
- the content must not be modified in any way.
- any use of the material for a permitted purpose must be accompanied by a full source citation.

No part of this site may be reproduced or stored in any other web site or included in any public or private electronic retrieval system or service without the University of Glasgow's prior written permission. Commercial exploitation of the transcribed letters, including use by radio or television programme makers and examination boards, is prohibited without licence from the University of Glasgow.

Further information on copyright and citation can be found at:- (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=171>)

People Associated with Letter 011: Henry Cavendish

Henry Cavendish (1550-1616) was Bess's eldest son and heir from her marriage with Sir William Cavendish (d.1557). Following his mother Bess's marriage to George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568 Henry was married to the earl's daughter from his previous marriage, Grace (née Talbot). That is to say, Henry was married to his step-sister, at which point the earl became both his step-father and father-in-law. (At the same time, his sister Mary was married to the earl's second son Gilbert.) At the time of the marriage, Grace was only eight years old, and eighteen-year-old Henry was immediately sent on a tour of Europe, from which he did not return until 1572. The marriage was not a success on any level: the couple never produced a child and Henry was notorious for his adulterous affairs, numerous illegitimate children, financial debts and, in April 1605, for openly calling his wife a 'harlot'. A glimpse of these ongoing difficulties can be found in the letter from Edward Talbot to Bess in 1604 (ID 063). Henry undertook a number of expeditions and journeys during his life, and his trip to Constantinople in 1589 is recorded in the memoir of his servant Fox and mentioned in ID 008. Henry regularly served as MP and sheriff for Derbyshire, yet he was troublesome as a son and subject of England. He was poor with money, failed in his military ventures and, to Bess's shame, was involved in a plot to liberate his niece, Arbella Stuart, from Bess's care at Hardwick Hall in December 1602. Bess eventually disinherited him in her will.

Other letters associated with Henry Cavendish:

[c. 1570] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)

4 November 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>)

6 November [c. 1585] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=10>)

6 December 1605 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=207>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 011: 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 Tutbury, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

[Dec 1568] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)

13 Dec [1568] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=66>)

21 Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=107>)

[23?] Jan 1569 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)

[c.1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)

6 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=207>)

Normalised view of Letter 011

To my Lady.

Ryght Honorable, With owr most humble and dutyfull thankes, for your Ladyship's bountyfull goodnes towards vs at all tymes, my Wyfe and I haue made boulde to present your Honourable good Ladyship with shuch poore and homely thynges, for a symple newyears gyfte, as thys place can aford, beshechyng that accordynge to your Ladyship's accustomed goodnes, you Wyll vouchesafe them in good part; and we shall praye most earnestly to God almyghtty, to send your Honourable Ladyship many happy and healfull new years. And so humbly cravyng your Ladyship's dayly blessing to vs both, We most humbly take owr leave. Tutbery the last of December 1605.

////

your Ladyship's humble and obedyent soonne.

Henry Cavendyshe:

Diplomatic view of Letter 011

[Address Leaf]

To my Lady.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(11) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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

Ryght Honorable, W^t owr most humble and dutyfull
thanks, for your La. bountyfull goodnes towardes vs ^{at} all
tymes, my Wyfe and I haue made boulde to present
your Ho. good La; w^t shuch poore and homely thynges, for
a symple newyears gyfte, as thys place *can* aford, beshe=chyng that accordynge to your La.
accustomed goodnes,
you Wyll vouchesafe them in good part; and we shall
praye most earnestly to God almyghtty, to send your Ho.
La; many happy and healfull new years. And so
humbly cravyng your La dayly blessing to vs both,
We most humbly take owr leave.
Tutbery the last of Decem. 1605.

////

[significant space]

your La. humble and
obedyent soonne.

§

[significant space]

Henry Cavendysse:

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

Version: 1.0