

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 133 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=133>)

From: Sir Robert Cecil (Court at Richmond); Sir John Stanhope (Court at Richmond);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 21 February 1602/3

Summary: Sir John Stanhope and Sir Robert Cecil write a letter to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) to accompany the letter bearer, Sir Henry Brounker, who the queen has sent in accordance with Bess and her granddaughter, Arbella Stuart's previous requests. It is clear by Arbella's declaration (ID 141) that some 'vain humours do possess' her mind and it is therefore difficult to 'resolve precisely what should be done' until Brounker can report further.

Archive: Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 135/151, fols 197-8

Delivery status: to Bess, not sent (i.e. a draft or contemporary copy)

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 133: Sir Robert Cecil

Robert Cecil, first earl of Salisbury (1563-1612), leading administrator, politician and courtier, was the only son of William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Like his father, he held a number of important positions, including secretary of state, lord high steward to Queen Anne of Denmark (King James I's wife), lord treasurer and master of the wards.

Other letters associated with Sir Robert Cecil:

20 May 1595 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=124>)

2 June 1600 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=125>)

6 October 1600 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=126>)

28 April 1601 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=127>)

[January] 1602/3 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=136>)

18 January 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=139>)

2 February 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=130>)

6 February 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=131>)

21 February 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=132>)

3 March 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=134>)

13 April 1603 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=140>)

People Associated with Letter 133: Sir John Stanhope

John Stanhope, first Baron Stanhope (c.1540-1621), appears as a courtier at the Elizabethan court in the late 1570s. His first wife Mary (née Knolles) died in 1567 and her inheritance reverted to her sister, which may have put Stanhope in financial straits. In 1589 he married Margaret Mackwilliams (c.1565-1640), a relation of William Cecil, Lord Burghley. At the same time, he also became associated with the Cecils and was appointed master of the posts in 1590. Bess's son-in-law/stepson Gilbert Talbot, seventh earl of Shrewsbury, was thwarted by Stanhope's influence at court during his feud with the Stanhopes of Nottinghamshire. Stanhope continued to rise under Elizabeth I and was knighted and appointed treasurer of the chamber in 1596, and he became vice-chamberlain of the household and a privy councillor in 1601 (posts he remained in at the accession of James I).

Other letters associated with Sir John Stanhope:

[January] 1602/3 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=136>)

2 February 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=130>)

3 March 1602/3 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=134>)

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People Associated with Letter 133: 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 Court at Richmond

27 Feb 1596 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=16>)

14 Mar 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=137>)

Normalised view of Letter 133

21: february. 1602 To the Countess of Shrewsbury Dowager. From Master Vichamberlin and my Master by Sir Henry Broucker

Madame; Her Majesty being pleased to send downe this Gentleman Sir Henry Broucker, to whome she hath committed the trust and carriage of this busynes, which groweth from the Last Declaration which the Lady Arbella sent you, seconded with a Lettre of her owne to vs, bearing date the 6. of februarij (all which her Majesty hath seen and read) There remaineth Little more for vs to say, then this, which followeth; first, her Majesty reiterateth her gracious acceptation of your syncere and carefull dealing, wishing styll, that your vsage of the Lady may be accompanied with those circumstances, which were expressed in our Late priuit Lettre vnto you: for although it appeare, before these Laste Lettres; that some vayne humours doe possess her minde, who being yong is easily mislead with false and flattering tongues; yet her Majesty would haue you onely to vse her according to our Last Lettre, except when you shall discouer, that her actions tende to any dishonorable practises; least the world should thinke she were to be used, as a Prysonner; considering that your Ladyship keepeth a house so full of discreet servants both men and women; and hauing also Master William Cauendish who being her Vncle, and a wise Gentleman, can not but be an excellent Compagnion for her, as well as an Obseruer when any matter more then ordinarij is travelling in her Minde, or putt in practise: to whome as well as to your Ladyship her Majesty hath commanded vs, to deliure thus much; That seeing by the yong Ladys Lettres, it is almost impossible to make iugement, whome or what she meaneth (so many contrarieties appearing) and therefore that it wilbe hard, to resolue precisely, what should be done except we were vpon the place, her Majesty requireth you, and Master William Cauendish, both to geue credytt to this Gentleman Sir Henry Broucker, and when he shall haue spoken with the yong Lady, and find cause, to aduise of any course to be taken, vntyll her Majesty be aduertised, that in such case; your Ladyship or any other, to whome it may appertaine, be conformable to his advise; being that which we haue geuen him authority to signifie, as he shall shall find fytt for her Majestes honor in such a case./. And thus hauing now deliuered you as much as the present tyme requireth, wee recommend your Ladyship to Gods protection. from the Court at Richmond the 21th of februarij .1602

your Ladyships loving friendes.

Diplomatic view of Letter 133

[Address Leaf]

21: february. 1602
To the Countess of Shrewsbury
Dowager.
From M^r Vichamberlin
and my M^r
by Sir Henry Broucker

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

198 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

151 [Item number, hand: archivist]

197 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

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y^r La^{ps} : loving frendes.

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