

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 147 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=147>)

From: Sir Charles Cavendish; Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: July 1582

Summary: This letter consists of copies of two extracts taken from two letters written to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury). The first extract is from a letter by Charles Cavendish to his mother, Bess, in which he asks that Mary Queen of Scots write a letter on his behalf to acknowledge she knew an unspecified person ('him') 'in the duke's time'. The second extract (which is described as a 'secret letter') is by Mary Queen of Scots and is written to Bess in response to Charles's letter. The Scots Queen begins by saying she is glad to hear of 'my little niece' (Arbella Stuart) and by emphasising how much she would like to help Bess's son Charles, before going on to refuse Charles's request to write the letter he has asked for. The Scots Queen explains that for her to admit an 'acquaintance with the old man which I never had' would do more harm than good in this 'time full of jealousy and suspition' and risks putting both Charles and Bess 'in hazard by my lettres'.

Archive: The National Archives, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I, 12/154, f 122r-122v (item 71)

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 147: Sir Charles Cavendish

Charles Cavendish (1553-1617), knighted in 1582, was Bess's third and youngest son from her second marriage to Sir William Cavendish (d.1557). He was educated at Clare College, Cambridge, after which nothing is known of him until 1582, when he asked Mary Queen of Scots to write a letter on his behalf, although she refused the request (see ID 147). In 1582 he married Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson of Hengrave, Suffolk, but she died the same year. Later, in 1592, he married Catherine, daughter of Cuthbert, Baron Ogle, of Ogle Castle, Northumberland. He was a life-long close friend and supporter of his step-brother and brother-in-law Gilbert Talbot (son of Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, who succeeded his father as seventh earl in 1590). Until 1590 he spent a great deal of time at court, from where he wrote regular letters with news to his mother. He became MP for Nottinghamshire in 1593, sponsored by Gilbert Talbot (he stood in the election against Sir Thomas Stanhope, with whom Gilbert was engaged in a fierce feud). Gilbert had transferred Welbeck Abbey to Charles soon after the 1593 election to ensure he met the property qualification and, with his landed status in the county, Charles stood as MP again in 1601. Charles had some interest in the arts: he was patron of madrigalist George Wilbye and shared his mother's passion for architecture. In 1599 his building works at Kirkby were partly financed by Bess. In 1608 he acquired Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire, from Gilbert Talbot, which, with Robert Smythson, he re-built as a miniature medieval castle. With his second wife Catherine, Charles had three children: the first died in infancy, but the second and third, both sons, survived to adulthood. His heir William Cavendish, who continued his building project at Bolsover Castle, became first duke of Newcastle (bap. 1593, d. 1676).

Other letters associated with Sir Charles Cavendish:

6 November [c. 1585?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=5>)

[1587] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=209>)

[c. 1600] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=7>)

18 June [c. 1600?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=6>)

1 October 1607 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=208>)

People Associated with Letter 147: Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots

Mary (Stuart) Queen of Scots (1542-87), was the only surviving child of James V, king of Scots (1512-42), and his wife, Mary of Guise (1515-60). She was born in Linlithgow Palace (Scotland); however, she was betrothed to the French dauphin, subsequently Francois II, in 1548 and spent thirteen years in France. After Francois II's death in 1560, she returned (as queen) to Scotland, in 1561. She married twice more - to Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley (1545/6-67) in 1565 and then, following Darley's murder, to James Hepburn, fourth earl of Bothwell in 1567. Following her downfall in Scotland, she fled to England and was held in captivity there from 1568 until her execution in 1587. Much of her captivity (from 1569-84) was spent in the custody of Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury. Bess and the Scots Queen spent many hours embroidering together; however, during the marriage breakdown between Bess and Shrewsbury in the 1580s, the women's relationship deteriorated. By 1583 rumours were in circulation throughout London of an affair between the Scots Queen and her keeper Shrewsbury, and that she had born him at least one child. It was a ludicrous story, not least because of the poor state of health of both Shrewsbury and the Scots Queen. It was also dangerous and slanderous. Perhaps not surprisingly, a hurt and enraged Shrewsbury accused his wife Bess of starting the rumour, although there is no reason to think she had anything to do with the story. In fact, not only would it seem out of character for Bess, but it would have been directly contrary to her ongoing petitions to Queen Elizabeth and Walsingham to be reunited with her husband.

Other letters associated with Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots:

[June 1569] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=220>)

[1574] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=244>)

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People Associated with Letter 147: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 147

Extract of a secret Lettre sent to my Lady Shrewsbury with another dated in Iuly by Master Charles Cavendishe .1582.

If the Quene then wold lykwise wryt in my behalf, and tak vpon her to having knowen him in the dukes tyme by his report; I verely think it wold draw him vnto gratify her and if he shold not receave the Lettre, yet it wold procure silence in him and cause him not to disclose it or Escape us in aide by it in respect of his owne particulare

I thank yow right effectuously for your good newes and am right glade to see how well yow and my litle nice have taken those that I have had of my Sonnes I pray yow beleve that in all I may help to youre I wold Employ my self with very good harte and specially in this caise full of compassion do all the good offices that I might But the principal point that I see your Sonne desyreth being a testimony of my acquaintaince with the old man which I never had, me think in the tyme full of Ialously and suspition that I shold putt him & yow both in hazard by my Lettres rather then to do him therby any good at all, yow may your self consider of it and in what yow shall fynd good that I can do I shall do it with as good will as I pray God to kepe yow. & to bliss my nice & Goddaughters with all youre This twisday.

Diplomatic view of Letter 147

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

984 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]
170 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]
71 [Item number, hand: archivist]
122 [Foliation, hand: archivist]
149 [Foliation, hand: archivist]
(71.) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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dated in Iuly by M^r Charles Cavendishe .1582.

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I thank yow right effectuously for your good newes and am right glade to see how well yow and my litle nice have taken those that I have had of my Sonnes I pray yow beleve that in all I may help to youre I wold Imploy my self wth very good harte and specially in this caise full of compassion do all the good offices that I might But the principal point that I see your Sonne desyreth being a testimony of my acquaintaunce wth the old man w^{ch} I never had, me think in the tyme full of Ialously and suspition that I shold putt him & yow both in hazard by my *Lettres* rather then to do him any therby any good at all, yow may your self consider of it and ⁱⁿ what ⁱⁿ yow shall fynd good that ^I can do I shall do it wth ^{as} right good will as I pray God to *[deletion]* kepe yow. & to bliss my nice & Goddawghters wth all youre This twisday.

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

982 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]
1582
July
Dom: [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

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