

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 169 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=169>)

From: Baron Thomas Ellesmere (York House, Westminster, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 21 June 1605

Summary: Baron Thomas Ellesmere, lord chancellor, writes a formal letter to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), giving her notice to appear in the Chancery to answer a bill against her put forward by her stepson and son-in-law, Gilbert, seventh earl of Shrewsbury.

Archive: Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS 3205, fol. 61r-v

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

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 169: Baron Thomas Ellesmere

Thomas Egerton, first Viscount Brackley (1540-1617), was educated in law at Lincoln's Inn and served as solicitor-general, attorney general and lord keeper under Elizabeth I. On the accession of James I in 1603, he was advanced to the peerage as Baron Ellesmere and appointed lord chancellor.

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 169: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 169

Copy of my lord Chancellours lettre to my ould Lady. 1605

After my verie hartie Comendacions vnto your Ladyship whereas it is required on the behalfe of my verie good Lord the Earle of Shrewsbury that your Ladyship might be warned to appeere in the Chancery Quindecimus Michaelis to awnswear a Bill theare by him exhibited against you. I am at his Lordships instance; to giue you notice thereof by this my lettre according to the maner vsed towards such persons of honour. praying and requiring your Ladyship herby to take knowledge thereof, and to giue order vnto those whom you imploy in such your causes, for your Ladyships apparaunce, & the putting in of your awnswear to the said Bill accordinglie, whereof hoping theare shall be no default on your Ladyships part, I bid you right hartely farewell. At Yorkhouse 21:° Junij .1605.

your Ladyships verie loving frend:

T. Ellesmere. Cancellarius

Superscribed To the right honourable the Ladie Elizabeth Countesse dowager of Shrewsbury./

Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury Dowager to appeere in Cancellaria quindecimus michaelis

Diplomatic view of Letter 169

[Address Leaf]

Copy of my lo: Chancellors
lettre to my ould Lady.
1605

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

61 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

After my verie hartie Comendacions vnto y^r La:^p whereas it is required on the behalfe of my verie good Lord the Earle of Shrewsbury that y^r La:^p might be warned to appeere in the Chancery Quindecimus Michaelis to awnswaere a Bill theare by him exhibited against you. I am at his Lo:^{ps} instance; to giue you notice thereof by this my *lettre* according to the maner vsed towardes such persons of hono^r. praying and requiring yo^r La:^p herby to take knowledge thereof, and to giue order vnto those whom you imploy in such y^r causes, for y^r La:^{ps} apparaunce, & the putting in of y^r awnswaere to the said Bill accordingle, whereof hoping theare shall be no default on y^r La:^{ps} part, I bid you right hartely farewell. At Yorkhouse 21:° Junij .1605.

y^r La:^{ps} verie loving fred
frend:

T. Ellesmere. *Cancellarius*

Superscribed

To the right ho:^{ble} the Ladie
Elizabeth Countesse dowager
of Shrewsbury./

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury
Dowager to appeere in *Cancellaria* quindecimus michaelis

Version: 1.0