

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 018 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=018>)**

From: James Crompe (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 26 February [1566?]

Summary: James Crompe, a servant, writes to Bess (Lady St. Loe) to confirm receipt of various books sent to him and to inform her of building works at Chatsworth, as well as other domestic matters.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (19)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed featuring a heart and cross Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: James Crompe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## **People Associated with Letter 018: James Crompe**

James Crompe was perhaps Bess's most trusted servant. He entered her service following her marriage to William Cavendish (in 1547), and later oversaw the building of Chatsworth when she was Lady St. Loe (in the 1560s).

Other letters associated with James Crompe:

8 March [1560?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=100>)

20 November [1565?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)

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## People Associated with Letter 018: 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 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 12 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=60>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 20 Nov [1565?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 2 Aug 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

## Normalised view of Letter 018

To my synguler good ladye & mestres the ladye Seyntloo delyuer these//

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I haue Receuyd the instructcyon & the bokes for master wylliam candysche with the other bokes./ brocke as I do here ys lothe to departe owt of the howse at shotell there wylbe sute made for hym there to Remayne as I take it: he hathe had warning to avoyde nowe before our ladye daye/ dyckynes shalbe with your ladyship at london god wyllng on Sondaye the xth daye of marche next with as moche moneye as I can gete ether he shall com with the caryer of derbye or with the caryer of tutburye I ame in dowte yow shall not haue your moneye of master sturle nowe to serue your turne for your payment Iohn Sotton hathe spoken bothe with Iohn sturle & with sir antony sturle there ansewers you shall haue by Iohn Sutton/ you dyd wryte that yow wolde not haue the inde of the grete galery next the grete chaumer selyd but a portall ther to be made Iamys Ioyner is in hande with the portall he had onse framyd the seleng worke someparte therof his altoryd for the portall not moche I do not vnderstande your meneng for the cornysche I am sure yow wyll haue the cornysche to be as the Rest is & of lyke heyght let me knowe your plesure farther therin in the meane seson he shall goo forewarde with the portall yow most haue a portall at the// coming in to the galery as nycolas tellyth me/ let me knowe wethur he shall do the seleng fyrst or the portall/ I shall asserten yow by dyckynes of the close yow sholde purchase of wattewodde yow most take hede howe yow dele with hym for he is acraftye yomon as I am tolde/ but for this close I shall lerne that I can/ yf it be all Redye fownede by presentment of xij mene to be consyld lande then the matter is the beter for yow to dele with/ I do nat here nothing from harry cokes wyffe I do thynge she shall Remayne quyete where she is tyll your ladyship's comyng hom I dyd sent hyr worde to com & tell me yf she were molestyd but she is not that I do herof/ I haue not harde from hyr this monyth & more I haue sent hyr worde that I wolde come & speke with the man that dothe haue the howse yf nede Requyryd/ So that harry coke shall haue no nede to trobull hym selffe for that/ your ladyship's mother mistress leneger with all the chylde be in helyth & merye thanckes be geuen to god who preserve your ladyship in helythe ffrom chatteseworth the xxvjte of ffebrarye

by your obedyent seruant

Iamys Crompe//

## Diplomatic view of Letter 018

[Address Leaf]

To my syngule<sup>r</sup> good  
ladye & mestres the ladye  
Seyntloo delyu<sup>r</sup> these//

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(19) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

I haue Receuyd the instructcyon & the bokes for m<sup>r</sup> wylliam  
candysche w<sup>t</sup> the oth<sup>r</sup> bokes./ brocke as I do here ys lothe to  
departe owt of the howse at shotell there wylbe sute made  
for hym there to Remayne as I take it: he hathe had warning  
to avoyde nowe before o<sup>r</sup> ladye daye/ dyckynes shalbe w<sup>t</sup> you<sup>r</sup> I  
at london god wyllng on Sondaye the x<sup>th</sup> daye of marche next  
w<sup>t</sup> as moche moneye as I can gete ethe<sup>r</sup> he shall com w<sup>t</sup> the  
carye<sup>r</sup> of derbye or w<sup>t</sup> the carye<sup>r</sup> of tutburye I ame in dowte  
yow shall not haue yo<sup>r</sup> moneye of the m<sup>r</sup> sturle nowe to  
serue yo<sup>r</sup> turne for yo<sup>r</sup> payment Iohn Sotton hathe spoken w<sup>t</sup>  
bothe w<sup>t</sup> Iohn sturle & w<sup>t</sup> sir antony stu<sup>r</sup> le there ansewe<sup>r</sup> s you  
shall haue by Iohn Suton/ you dyd w<sup>r</sup> yte that yow wolde  
not haue the inde of the grete galery next the grete chaum<sup>r</sup>  
selyd but a portall ther to be made he Iamys Ioyne<sup>r</sup> is in hande  
w<sup>t</sup> the portall he had onse framyd the seleng worke someparte  
therof his altoryd for the portall not moche I do not vnde<sup>r</sup> stande  
you<sup>r</sup> meneng for the cornysche I am sure yow wyll haue  
the cornysche to be as the Rest is & of lyke heyght let me  
knowe yo<sup>r</sup> plesure farthe<sup>r</sup> therin in the meane seson he shall goo  
forewarde w<sup>t</sup> the portall yow most haue a portall at the//  
coming in to the galery as nycolas tellyth me/ let me knowe

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wethu<sup>r</sup> he shall do the seleng fyrst or the portall/ I shall  
asserten yow by dyckynes of the close yow sholde purchase of  
wattewodde yow most take hede howe yow dele w<sup>t</sup> hym for  
he is acraftye yomon as I am tolde/ but for this close I  
shall larne that I can/ yf it be all Redye fownede by  
p<sup>r</sup> sentment of xij mene to be consyld lande then the matte<sup>r</sup>  
is sure I were/ the bete<sup>r</sup> for yow to dele w<sup>t</sup> /

[page break]

I do nat here nothing from harry cokes wyffe I do thyngke she  
shall Remayne quyet where she is tyll yo<sup>r</sup> l commyng hom  
I dyd sent hy<sup>r</sup> worde to com & tell me yf she were molestyd  
but she is not that I do herof/ m<sup>r</sup> I haue not harde from  
hy<sup>r</sup> this monyth & more I haue sent hy<sup>r</sup> worde that I wolde  
come & speke w<sup>t</sup> the man that dothe haue the howse yf  
nede Requyryd/ So that harry coke shall haue no nede to  
trobull hym selffe for that/ yo<sup>r</sup> l mothe<sup>r</sup> *mistress* lenege<sup>r</sup> w<sup>t</sup> all  
the chylde be in helyth & merye thanckes be geven to god  
who p<sup>r</sup> se yo<sup>r</sup> l in helythe ffrom chatteseworth the xxvj<sup>te</sup> of  
ffebruarye

by yo<sup>r</sup> obedyent *seruant* §

Iamys Crompe//

Version: 1.0