

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 225 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)

From: William Cecil, Lord Burghley (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 13 October 1571

Summary: William Cecil, Lord Burghley, writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) to report that one 'Hersey Lassels' has been implicated in dealings with Mary Queen of Scots and claims to have been doing so with Bess's knowledge. Cecil asks Bess 'to let me understand the truth of such matter'.

Archive: Arundel Castle, Autograph Letters 1585-1617, No 50

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | William Cecil, Lord Burghley |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 225: William Cecil, Lord Burghley

William Cecil (1521-98), Lord Burghley, was a chief minister to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. Most importantly, he served as secretary of state (1558-71) and lord high treasurer (from 1571) and he was elected chancellor of Cambridge University. He was an especially constant friend to Bess's fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury; therefore, upon becoming the countess of Shrewsbury, Bess's own friendship with Cecil was also strengthened.

Other letters associated with William Cecil, Lord Burghley:

- 14 May 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 23 September 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 24 October 1578 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=122>)
- 22 June 1579 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 28 January 1581/2 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 2 August 1584 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>)
- 6 October 1585 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152>)
- [13 June 1586] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=230>)
- 6 October 1587 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156>)
- 19 December 1590 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)
- 11 April 1591 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>)
- 21 September 1592 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>)
- 9 August 1593 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=108>)

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People Associated with Letter 225: 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 London, Greater London

- 14 Nov [1552] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 25 Feb 1558 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=112>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 4 Nov 1561 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=54>)
- 14 Dec [1564] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=50>)
- [23?] Jan 1569 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- 3 Feb 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=27>)
- 9 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=191>)
- 21 May 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=215>)
- [c.1600] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=22>)
- 12 Nov 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20>)
- 4 Jul 1604 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)
- 23 Apr 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=23>)

Normalised view of Letter 225

To the right honourable and my very good Lady the [Co]juntesse of Shrewsbury. haste haste haste

It may please your Ladiship, where of late Bryam and Hersey Lassels hauing bene before my Lordes of her majestes counsell, it appeerith dyrectly by the lettres both of the Queene of Scottes and of the duke of Norffolkes allso, that Hersey (as he confessith also himselfe) hath bene a dealer so in lynnes with the Queene there by the meanes of his brother being in seruyce there, And yet that his dealing was nott without knowledge of your Ladiship to the end (as he sayth) that the same might be allwais knowen, I haue thought good to aduertise your Ladyship therof, And with all to pray you to lett me vnderstand the trowth of suche matter as your Ladiship doth know of the said hersey lassels dealinges from tyme to tyme as particulerly as your ladiship can remember, And so I take my leave of your Ladiship, from London the xijth of October .1571.

Your Ladyship's at Command

W. Burghley

Diplomatic view of Letter 225

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Oct. 13. 1571 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the right hono^r able and
my very good Lady the
...untesse of Shrewsbury.
haste
haste
haste

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

Printed in Lodge II. 59. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

50 [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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

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and Hersey Lassels hauing bene before my Lordes
of her ma^{tes} counsell, it appeerith I dyrectly that by the
lettres both of the Queene of Scottes in and of the duke
of Norffolkes allso, that Hersey (as he confessith
also himselfe) hath bene a dealer so in lynnes with
the Queene there by the meanes of his brother a
being in seruyce there, And yet that his dealing
was nott w^t out knowledge of yo^r Ladiship to the end
(as he sayth) that the same might be allwais
knownen, I haue thought good to aduertise
yo^r Ladyship therof, And w^t out all to pray you
to lett me vnderstand the trouth of suche matter
as yo^r Ladiship doth know of the said hersey lassels
dealinges from tyme to tyme as particulerly as your ladish.
can remember, And so I take my leave of your Ladiship,
from London the xiiijth of October .1571.

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Your Lad. at Com:

W. Burghley
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Version: 1.0