

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 023** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=023>)

From: William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 23 April 1605

Summary: William Cavendish writes to his mother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), with various pieces of news: the travel plans of Bess's stepson and son-in-law, Gilbert, seventh earl of Shrewsbury; princess Mary's godparents (among them Bess's grand-daughter, Arbella Stuart); the birth of the Spanish queen's son and the Spanish ambassador's celebratory fireworks in front of his London home; and the new pope and his expected alliance with the French.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (25)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: archivist | William Cavendish |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 023: William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire

William Cavendish, first earl of Devonshire (1551-1626), was the second son of Bess and her second husband, Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557). Upon Bess's marriage to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, William and his brother Charles (also Cavendish) were promised sums when they turned twenty-one - a promise that would later be revisited as a major source of disagreement between Shrewsbury and Bess. William married Anne Keighley in 1581, with whom he had three sons and three daughters. During the feud between Bess and Shrewsbury in the 1580s, William sided clearly with his mother and on one occasion stood armed and ready to defend Chatsworth from one of Shrewsbury's raids. Especially in contrast to her great disappointment with her eldest son, Henry Cavendish, Bess greatly favoured William and he inherited most of her property and land when she died on 13 February 1608. William gained prominence following the accession of James I (in 1603) and was elevated to the peerage as Baron Cavendish of Hardwick in 1605, and then earl of Devonshire in 1618. He managed his money and lands very well and left his son, also William, a great inheritance.

Other letters associated with William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire:

31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)

31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)

9 August 1593 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=108>)

[c. 1600] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=22>)

12 November 1600 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=20>)

4 July 1604 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)

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## People Associated with Letter 023: 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>)  
13 Oct 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=225>)  
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>)  
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# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## Normalised view of Letter 023

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My bounden dewtie most humbly remembred to your Ladyship &c/ Hauing bene but one night in towne, I can aduertise your Ladyship of little./ my lady Penbroke monday last, went as farr as the Erle of Kentes to haue mett hir father, where she reseued letters from Rufford yat the Erle of Shrouesbury was not abell to trauell, som say yat about a moneth hence he purposeth to be in towne./ yt is sayd yat the duke of holst, my Lady Arbell/ & my Lady marquesse shall christen the Queen's maiestis daughter, but which of ye Lady marquesses I know not./ ffor your Ladyships matters I shall plie them earnestly, both to quite your Ladyship of suites; and yat I may ye soner weyt of you./ The Quene of Spayne is lately brought a bed of a sonne; The Spanish Imbassador here, for ioy made many fireworkes in the street before his howse, & cast gold & siluer amongst the peple to ye value of CC.li/ Cardinall of Medices vnkell to the duke of fflorence is chosen Pope./ yt is thought he will fauor the french more then the Spanyard./ And so most humbly beseching your Ladyships blessing I most humbly ceass, with my dayly prayer to ye Almightye to graunt your Ladyship a long & happy lyfe/ ffrom London the xxijth of Aprill 1605

Your Ladyships

most humble & most bound sonn

W. Cauendysshe

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## Diplomatic view of Letter 023

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

a curious Letter.

W.<sup>m</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Son of S.<sup>r</sup> W.<sup>m</sup> Cavendish.

In 1618 he was made Earl of  
Devonshire. ~

N.B. Alexander de Medicis

was made Pope by y<sup>e</sup> Name

of P. Paul y<sup>e</sup> .V. in 1605

And Mary 3.<sup>d</sup> D.<sup>r</sup> of K Iames I

was born at Greenwich y<sup>e</sup> same

year & w<sup>ch</sup> fixes y<sup>e</sup> Date

of this Letter. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(25) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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

My bounden dewtie most humbly remembred

to yo<sup>r</sup> La<sup>p</sup> &c/ Hauing bene

but one night in towne, I can adu<sup>r</sup> tyse yo<sup>r</sup>

La.<sup>p</sup> of litle./ my la Penbroke

monday last, went as farr as the Erle

of Kentes to haue mett hir father, where

she reseued letters from Rufford y<sup>t</sup> the

Erle of Shrouesbury was not abell

to trauell, som say y<sup>t</sup> about a moneth

hence he purposeth to be in towne./

yt is sayd y<sup>t</sup> the duke of holst, my

La. Arbell/ & my Lady marquesse shall

christen the .Q. mai<sup>tis</sup> daughter, but



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w<sup>ch</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> Lady marquesses I know  
not./ ffor yo<sup>r</sup> La.<sup>ps</sup> matters I  
shall plie them earnestly, both to quite  
yo<sup>r</sup> La.<sup>p</sup> of suites; and y<sup>t</sup> I may y<sup>e</sup>  
soner weyt of you./ The Quene  
of Spayne is lately brought a bed  
of a sonne; The Spanish Imbassador  
here, for ioy made many fireworkes in  
the street before his his howse, & cast  
gold & siluer amongst the peple to y<sup>e</sup>  
value of CC.<sup>li</sup> / Cardinall of  
Medices vnkell to the duke of fflorence

[page break]

is chosen Pope./ yt is thought he will  
fauor the french more then the ~  
Spanyard./ And so most  
humbly beseching yo<sup>r</sup> La.<sup>ps</sup> blessing  
I most humbly ceass, w<sup>th</sup> my dayly  
prayer to y<sup>e</sup> Almightye to graunt  
yo<sup>r</sup> La<sup>p</sup> a long & happy lyfe/  
ffrom London the xxij<sup>th</sup> of Aprill 1605

Yo<sup>r</sup> Ladyships  
§

*[significant space]*

most humble & most  
bound sonn

W. Cauendyshe

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