

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 027 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=027>)

From: Hugh Fitzwilliam (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 3 February 1573/4

Summary: Hugh Fitzwilliam writes to ask Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) what her wishes are regarding a secret meeting between 'two parties'; also sending various news items, including how the 'queen mother is sick and in a frenzy' on account of her son the king of Poland's imprisonment, peace in Scotland and uproar in Ireland.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (30)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Hugh Fitzwilliam | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 027: Hugh Fitzwilliam

Little is known of Hugh Fitzwilliam other than that he was perhaps a relative of Bess and sent her news of the court and abroad.

Other letters associated with Hugh Fitzwilliam:

[23?] January 1568/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=164>)

28 July 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)

31 August 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)

21 September 1571 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)

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People Associated with Letter 027: 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>)
- 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 027

To my Lady of Shrovesbury her good Ladyshipp.

My moost humble duetie remembred vnto your honorable good Lady may it please you tunderstand that I loked to haue had somme determination of the meting of the parties by your last lettres. but I perceve you had in remembraunce the same by my cosen Cavendishe, but Master Sutton doth[e] say that he had none to me; It is requisite your pleasure be knowen betwyme by cause now my Lady's grace and Master Bartewe goethe shortly into the contry, and so wold vnderstand your full pleasure therein as sowne as might be; I was yestersday with Master Bartewe and he told me, my cosen Anthony Wingefeld was with her grace and talking of the matter; her grace lyked of my cosens comming to her howse in the contry; the which I told masetr Bartewe wold be to publike, considering bothe sydes requirethe secresy; he thoughte it best as I writte be fore; that she mighte comme vp to my cosen Wyngefeld, and a sighte to be had with great secresy; divers wayes without speeche; and thus once agayne, I thoughte to put you in remembrance and to do as your Ladyship dothe thinke the best; the yonge gentill man is comme now to Grayes Inne; and I haue bothe spoken to the father and to him to be acquainted with my cosen William Cavendishe, with which after sighte and the lyking of the parentes, may further the matter much, but there is no speche to him as yet by the earnest request of his father, in the matter till sighte be past; good madame send some speciall lettre of your determination of their meting whan and wheare with speed Newes heare is never certayne; but as thei be moost credebely reported, be thies that followes.

That quene mother is sicke and in a frensy for her son the King of Poland that hathe bine Kepte prisoner in Germany till now of late that he is released by composition.

That Rochell standethe vpon their gard and hathe receved monsieur Delano in the towne with many lustie gentilmen for their defence; and that the protestantes of langwidock provence dolfyne and Navarre doth withstand the king; and continuethe in armes.

That Conte Montgomery is gonne to sturre vp the Protestantes in Brayne wheare his land dothe laye.

That the Prince of Orange hathe gotten the porte of Midellbrugh that no vitalles cannot comme in by no meanes and is very stronge vpon Zeland;

That the newe Governor makethe as great a power as he can of the contry, and with shippes and ayde out of ffraunce; the which is thoughte shall not be able to succurr Medelbrugh.

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That Scotland is quiete and Ireland full of great disquietnes; for this day the quene dothe heare all their opinions that hath bine in Ireland in service and to resolve what is best to be donne there in.

That the Busshopp of Roos is gonne in to ffrance Who thei say is lyke to bride muche inconveniences

And thus moost humble I take my leave of your honorable good Ladyship scribeled at London the .3. of ffebruary .1573.

Your honorable Ladyship's ever to command during lyfe

Hugh ffitzwilliam/

Diplomatic view of Letter 027

[Address Leaf]

To my .L. of Shroves=bury her good Ladyshipp.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(30) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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

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by yo^r last lettres. but I perceve yo^u had in remembrance
the same by my cosen Cavendishe, but M.^r Sutton doth...
say that he had none to me; It is requisite yo^r pleasure
be knowen betwyme by cause now my .L. grace
and M.^r Bartewe goethe shortly into the contry, and
so wold vnderstand yo^r full pleasure therein as
sowne as might be; I was yestersday w^t M.^r Bar=tewe and he told me, my cosen Anthony
Wingefeld
was w^t her grace and talking of the matter; her
grace lyked of my cosens comming to her howse in the
contry; the ^{w^{ch}} I told m.^r Bartewe wold be to
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