

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 033 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=033>)

From: John Kniveton (Shrewsbury Place, London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 23 December 1579

Summary: John Kniveton, a servant, writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) to confirm that he has 'delivered the venison [pies] according to your ladyship's letter'; however, some of the pies were mouldy and 'not worth the giving'. He has also spoken with Master Sackford who, having heard 'evil speeches' about the earl of Shrewsbury (Bess's husband, George Talbot) in court from tenant 'inhabitants about the forest', plainly told Kniveton how 'hateful a thing it was before God and men to distress the poor'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (39)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: John Kniveton | 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 033: John Kniveton

John Kniveton was in the service of Bess and her fourth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury. He may have been kin through the marriage of Bess's half-sister Jane (née Leche) to Thomas Kniveton, although the relation, if any, is not known. In the 1570s, Bess called him 'knave' when he asked her for rent money; he also sent a letter to Shrewsbury, forwarded to Bess, containing news (IDs 072 and 071). He was still on the scene in the 1590s when he received payments of 20 and 40 shillings, recorded in Bess's Account Books (6 May 1592 and 17 August 1595, Chatsworth House, Hardwick MS 7).

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 033: 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.

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

Other letters associated with Shrewsbury Place, London, Greater London

14 May 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=81>)

Normalised view of Letter 033

Lady

My Dutie to your Honor most humbly vsed, I delyuered the venison accordinge to your Ladyship's lettre, to master Attorney, master Sackeford Master fletewod master Solicitor master Osborne and master ffowler. many of the pies that were made longe wayes were both so moulded and so litle as they were not worth the gyvinge, yt were good that better order were taken herafter that suche as shuld be sent hether might be newe baked, and also might be made of some reasonable bignes and well handled/ the rounde pies were not moldye but muche better to see to then thothers./ Thei were very thanckefully taken of them all./ Master Sackeford telled me that he wished yat my Lord and your Ladyship wold see that the inhabitantes abowt the fforrest were well vsed, and said that he wold not haue geven his opynion in lawe against them (although he thought yt to be a clere case) but that he trusted your honors wold deale well with them, and when I answered hym that my Lord and your Ladyship meant bothe to deale so for them as thei shuld haue more comoditie then thei had or could haue if the forest shuld lye open to be vsed by them as thei desyred./ he said he wold speake to me more then to others. and telled me that he hard very evill speaches of my Lord in the courte so as yt was doubted he wold not deale well with any, and that he had put owte a greate number of tenantes lately to their vtter decaye, and demanded of me whether I knewe any suche matter, which when I denyed, he said yf yt were not true, he marvayled howe any durst rayse suche tales against a noble man of his callinge, but said the matter was made so playne in speche in court that yt was thought there was some greate cause of that brute./ And said that if he might advise my Lord & your Ladyship he wold wishe above all thinges that you wold refreyn to do any thinge that might be grevous to a multitude aswell for honor and conscience as to avoyde obloqie & clamorous complayntes./ with muche talke howe hatefull a thinge yt was bothe before god & men to distresse the poore/ and telled me he wold somethinge wryte to your Ladyship albeyt he might not vse that playnnes in as in wordes./ master Browne telleth me that master attorney of the duchie is perswaded to take agayn thoffice he had of my Lord if the same be offrede vnto hym in good soerte./ and consideringe his place and credite and his brvthers likewise who as yt is comenly reported ys like to be lord Keper very shortly me thincke yt were very necessary to kepe hym a frend./

as I wryt to your Ladyship last I haue reseved from my Lord towards paynge of my Ladies grace CCLI which his Lordship sent by Tymperly, and he wryteth that he will take order by the next messenger howe I shall take vp so moche as to make vp CCCCLI and that he wyll sende one Cli more after crystemas This is all that I yet hard from his Lordship therof./ Thus I humbly praye for the longe contynuance of your Ladyship's health and prosperitie./ At Shrewesbury place this xxijth of December 1579/

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

Your honors most bounden seruante

John Knyveton

Diplomatic view of Letter 033

[Address Leaf]

Lady

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(39) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

My Dutie to yo^r Honor most humbly vsed, I delyuered
the venison accordinge to yo^r L. *lettre*, to m^r Attorney, m^r
Sackeford M^r fletewod & m^r Solicetor m^r Osborne
and m^r fowler. many of the pies that were made
longe wayes were both so moulded and so litle as ^{^they^} ~
were not worth the gyvinge, yt were good that better
order were taken herafter that suche as shuld be sent
hether might be newe baked, and also might be
made of some reasonable bignes and well handled/
the rounde pies were not moldye but muche better
to see to then thothers./ Thei were very thanckefully
taken of them all./ M^r Sackeford telled me that
he wished y^t my Lord and yo^r La. wold see that
the inhabitantes abowt the fforrest were well
vsed, and said that he wold not haue geven his
opynion in lawe against them (although he thought yt
to be a clere case) but that he trusted yo^r honors
wold deale well wth them, and when I answered
hym that my .L. and yo^r La. meant bothe to deale
so for them as thei shuld haue more comoditie then
thei had or could haue if the forest shuld lye
open to be vsed by them as thei desyred./ he said
he wold speake to me more then to others. and
telled me that he hard very evill speaches of my

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Lord in the courte so as yt was doubted he wold
not deale well wth any, and that he had put
owte a greate nomber of tenantes lately to their
vtter decaye, and demanded of ^{me} whether I knewe any
suche matter, w^{ch} when I denyed, he ^{said} yf yt were not
true, he marvayled howe any durst rayse suche
tales against a noble man of his callinge, but said
the matter was made so playne in speche in court
that yt was thought there was some greate cause
of that brute./ And said that if he might advise
my Lo & yo^r La he wold wishe above all thinges
that yo^u wold refreyn to do any thinge that might
be grevous to a multitude aswell for honor and
conscience as to avoyde obloque & clamorous
complayntes./ wth mucche talke howe hatefull a
thinge yt was bothe before god & men to distresse
the poore/ and telled ^{me} he wold somethinge wryte
to yo^r La. albeyt he might not vse that playnnes in

[page break]

as in wordes./ m^r Browne telleth me that m^r
attorney of the duchie is *perswaded* to take agayn
thoffice he had of my Lord if the same be offrede
vnto hym in good soerte./ and consideringe his
place and credite and his brvthers likewise
who as yt is comenly reported ys like to be lord
Keper very shortly me thincke yt were very
necessary to kepe hym a frend./

as I wryt to yo^r La. last I haue reseived from
my Lord towards paynge of my Ladies grace
CC^{li} w^{ch} his .L. sent by Tymperly, and he wryteth
that he will take order by the next messenger
howe I shall take vp so moche as to make vp CCCC^{li}
and that he wyll sende one C^{li} more after crystemas
This is all that I yet hard from his .L. therof./
Thus I humbly *praye* for the longe contynuance
of yo^r La. health and prosperitie./ At Shrewesbury

Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

place this xxiiijth of December 1579 /

[significant space]

Yo^r honors most bounden *seruante*

[significant space]

John Knyveton

Version: 1.0