

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 037 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=037>)

From: Nicholas Kynnersley (Wingfield);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 5 November 1588

Summary: Nicholas Kynnersley, a servant, writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) with report of a lackey from Sheffield coming late at night to ask after Bess's whereabouts. He suspects the reason is 'to bring my lord [Bess's then estranged husband George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury] word of your absence here 'so that he may come upon the sudden and find you away'. Arbella (Stuart), Bess's grand-daughter, eats well but has not been to school for six days.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (44)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Nicholas Kynnersley | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 037: Nicholas Kynnersley

Nicholas Kynnersley was a servant to Bess while she was countess of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with Nicholas Kynnersley:

22 April 1589 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=38>)

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People Associated with Letter 037: 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 Wingfield

28 Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)

[1569?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=67>)

28 May 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=82>)

6 Oct 1585 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=152>)

6 Oct 1587 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=156>)

22 Apr 1589 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=38>)

11 Apr 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>)

Normalised view of Letter 037

To ye Ryght honourable me syngular good Lady & mistres ye countes off Sallop gyff the with speed.

Thes nyght after Iohn was gone with me letter ezabell told me yat gylbard dyckensson camme to hur in ye bahowsse & axed yff your honour were here & she answered no & he axed when you went away & sed yesterday he axed when you doth com agyne she answered shortly as she thought. & lat at nyght there came a boye from sheffeld in a greine coate & talked with them in ye stable & sed he moste gow very yerly in ye morninge to sheffeld agyn What you thes meanyng be ther questyons & ye lacky comyng so late & goyng so yerly in ye mornyng I knowe not except yt be to bryng me lord worde off your absence here & so yat he myght com vppon ye soden & fynd you a weay so I leve yt to your honor's wysdom to conseder off yt as you thynke beste bot I thynke good you were here. master knyveton ryd by to day to sheffeld as I was told & called not so I was told which I marvell off. me lady arbella at viij off ye clocke thes nyght was mery & eates hur meat well bot she went not to ye scolle yis vj days therefore I wold be glad off your ladyship's comyng yff there were no oyer matter bot yat so I beseke ye allmyghty preserue your ladyship in helthe & send you sonne a good & comfordable end off all your great troubles & geffes Wynffeld thes Twysday ye v off novembar at viij off ye clocke at nyght 1588

your honour's moste dewtyfull bound obedyent sarvand

Nycholas Kynnerslay

Diplomatic view of Letter 037

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Kynnersley [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To y^e Ryght ho. me syngular good La
& m^{res} y^e countes off Sallop gyff the w^t
speed.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(44) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

Thes nyght after Iohn was gone w^t me letter ezabell told me y^t gylbard
dyckensson camme to hur in y^e bahowsse & axed yff yo^r .ho. were here & she
answered no & he axed when you went away & sed yesterday he axed when
you doth com agyne she answered shortly as she thowght. & lat at nyght
there came a boye from sheffeld in a greine coate & talked w^t them in ye stable
& sed he moste gow very yerly in y^e morninge to sheffeld agyn What ^{^you^}thes meanyng
be ther questyons & y^e lacky comyng so late & goyng so yerly in y^e mornyng
I knowe not except yt be to bryng me lo worde off yo^r absence here & so y^t he
myght com vppon y^e soden & fynd you a weay so I leve yt to your ho. wysdom
to conseder off yt as you thynke beste bot I thynke good you were here. *master*
knyveton ryd by to day to sheffeld as I was told & called not so I was
told w^c I marvell off. me .la. arbella at viij off y^e clocke thes nyght was
mery & eates hur meat well bot she went not to y^e scolle y^{is} vj days therefore
I wold be glad off yo^r .la. comyng yff there were no oy^r matter bot y^t so I
beseke y^e allmyghty *preserue* yo^r .la. in helthe & send you sonne a good &
comfordable end off all yo^r great trobles & geffes Wynffeld thes Twysday
y^e v off novembar at viij off y^e clocke at nyght 1588 §

yo^r .ho. moste dewtyfull bound

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obedyent sarvand

[significant space]

Nycholas Kynn^f slay

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