

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 050 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=050>)**

From: William Moulso (London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 14 December [1564]

Summary: William Mouslo, a servant, writes to Bess (Lady St. Loe) to inform her that her friend Lady Frances Cobham has delivered a son; gives details of the christening; and suggestions for a pair of gowns to be prepared for Bess's husband, William St. Loe, for Christmas.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (61)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: William Moulso | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## **People Associated with Letter 050: William Moulso**

William Moulso (or Mowsall) was a servant to Bess's third husband, William St Loe (c.1520-65?). St Loe's Account Book for the period 8 August - 31 December 1560 (when he attended the Queen at Court; now held at Chatsworth House), shows Moulso as one of St Loe's eight personal servants. His main responsibilities were for buying clothes and food and he worked alongside Buck (the valet, responsible for laundry, mending clothes and preparing rooms at lodgings), Cooch (accounts), Cottesmore and Greves (buying food and taking letters to and from the Carrier), Griffin (delivery of letters and giving out tips and rewards), Burton (replaced by Falke, whose roles are not specified), each paid 12p per day, and the horse-keepers Michell and his assistant Thomas Knoll, paid 6p per day. In the accounts, we find Moulso going to London on horseback to have St Loe's clothes furred; taking the boat to from Blackfriars to Westminster with a coat and cloak; mending St Loe's jerkin and russet doublet and buying points; we also find him taking cheese to St Loe's chamber at night; buying butter, pepper, a shoulder of mutton, eggs and rabbits; and giving alms to two poor children on St Loe's behalf. Moulso is mentioned ID 061 as having packed supplies in a sheet for St Loe at Chatsworth, that included hand-towels and shirts.

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## People Associated with Letter 050: 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>)
- [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>)
- 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 050

To the Ryght Worshypfull & hys verye good lady & mysterys the lydy sentlo//

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my bownden dewte most humbly remembred plesythe your ladyshyppe to undarstand that my lady Cobham was brought to bedde of a son wythe in ij or iij days aftar I wryte to you my lord of huntynghton and my lord darleye crystenyd the same my ladye// marquys lyethe at the cowrt/ my master and master/— controlar Is become frendes thys last weke but they haue kepte but lyttell companye togethurs neuar syns what they do here aftar your ladyshyp shall undarstand mastar clarke hathe thought good that my mastar shuld haue ij gowns made agenst crystmas whyche Is a nyghtgowne of ueluyt & a short gowne of damaske thus wysshyng your ladyshyp moste prosperys helthe I tacke my leue/ from lundon this xiiij of desembar

your ladyshyppes most bownden saruant//

/ Wylliam Moulso//

## Diplomatic view of Letter 050

[Address Leaf]

To the Ryght  
Worshypfull & hys verye  
good lady & mysterys  
the lydy sentlo//

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(61)

[Item number, hand: archivist]

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

my bownden dewte most humbly remembred  
plesythe yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshyppe to undarstand that my lady  
Cobham was brought to bedde of a son wythe in  
ij o<sup>r</sup> iij days aftar <sup>^I wryte^</sup> to you my lord of huntyngton and  
my lord darleye crystenyd the same my ladye//  
marquys lyethe at the cowrt/ my mast<sup>r</sup> and m<sup>r</sup> /—  
controlar Is become frendes thys last weke but they  
haue kepte but lyttell companye togethurs neuar  
syns what theye do here aftar yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshyp shall  
undarstand masta<sup>r</sup> k clarke hathe thought good that  
my mastar shuld haue ij gowns made agenst crystma<sup>s</sup>  
whyche Is a nyghtgowne of ueluyt & a short gowne  
of damaske thus wysshyng yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshyp moste prosperys  
helthe I tacked my leue/ from lundon this xiiij of  
desembar

yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshyppes most bownden saruant//

/ Wylliam Moulso//

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