

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 006 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=006>)**

From: Sir Charles Cavendish (Coldharbour, London, Greater London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 18 June [c. 1600?]

Summary: Charles Cavendish reports to his mother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), on a visit he and his brother William Cavendish paid to Mistress Dales regarding a marriage arrangement for the latter's daughter (the man in question is not specified). William bought a jewel for the daughter and presented it in Bess's name; however, it was refused as both the mother and father wish Bess to come to them herself before they proceed. Furthermore, Mistress Dales thinks Bess ought to approach the queen for her consent of the match, as Bess is 'fittest and best able to attain it soonest'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (5)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed with the Cavendish serpent nowed (knotted) on a cushion Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Hands: Sir Charles Cavendish | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 006: Sir Charles Cavendish

Charles Cavendish (1553-1617), knighted in 1582, was Bess's third and youngest son from her second marriage to Sir William Cavendish (d.1557). He was educated at Clare College, Cambridge, after which nothing is known of him until 1582, when he asked Mary Queen of Scots to write a letter on his behalf, although she refused the request (see ID 147). In 1582 he married Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson of Hengrave, Suffolk, but she died the same year. Later, in 1592, he married Catherine, daughter of Cuthbert, Baron Ogle, of Ogle Castle, Northumberland. He was a life-long close friend and supporter of his step-brother and brother-in-law Gilbert Talbot (son of Bess's forth husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, who succeeded his father as seventh earl in 1590). Until 1590 he spent a great deal of time at court, from where he wrote regular letters with news to his mother. He became MP for Nottinghamshire in 1593, sponsored by Gilbert Talbot (he stood in the election against Sir Thomas Stanhope, with whom Gilbert was engaged in a fierce feud). Gilbert had transferred Welbeck Abbey to Charles soon after the 1593 election to ensure he met the property qualification and, with his landed status in the county, Charles stood as MP again in 1601. Charles had some interest in the arts: he was patron of madrigalist George Wilbye and shared his mother's passion for architecture. In 1599 his building works at Kirkby were partly financed by Bess. In 1608 he acquired Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire, from Gilbert Talbot, which, with Robert Smythson, he re-built as a miniature medieval castle. With his second wife Catherine, Charles had three children: the first died in infancy, but the second and third, both sons, survived to adulthood. His heir William Cavendish, who continued his building project at Bolsover Castle, became first duke of Newcastle (bap. 1593, d. 1676).

Other letters associated with Sir Charles Cavendish:

July 1582 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=147>)

6 November [c. 1585?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=5>)

[1587] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=209>)

[c. 1600] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=7>)

1 October 1607 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=208>)

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## People Associated with Letter 006: 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 Coldharbour, London, Greater London**

6 May 1568 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=238>)

17 Jan 1580 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)

6 Nov [c.1585] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=10>)

## Normalised view of Letter 006

To my Lady./

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My humble duty rememberd./ This daye I was at Master Dales and my brother William with me who had conference with the ould gentelwoman and she sayes that she vtterly mistook Master Talbott when he reported your Ladyship's offers for she thought it had bin doble as much as now she perceaues it is but not with standynge she sayes she doubtes not but your Ladyship will deale well if the matter take effect but gladly she would haue that your Ladyship did com vpe for she and hir husbände had rather agree in consent with your Ladyship then talk by any frendes./ agayne she hath promised hir Magesty not to conclutt any maryage with out makinge hir priuy vnto it soe that for that espetiall cause she wisheth your Ladyship's presence for that she thinketh your Ladyship fittest and best able to attayne it sonest./ my brother bought a Iuell and presented it in your Ladyship's name, humble thanks was giuen vnto your Ladyship but the mayd would receaue non with out hir mothers consent, then hir mother was tould how your Ladyship had sent hir daughter a token and wished that she myght weare it as a well wysing from your Ladyship; and that you ment not to receaue it agayne nether to bind hir to any inconuenience by the receatt of it, lik thanks was giuen but she would not admitt hir daughter to take it with thes wordes that vntill some further sartanty weare hir daughter shuld not receaue any thinge. Soe that [except] I perceau the only hope of your Ladyship comminge./ thus most humbly crauinge your Ladyship's dayly blessinge I seace./ Cooldharber this xvij of Iune./

your Ladyship's most obedient and louinge sonne./

Charles Cauendysshe./

## Diplomatic view of Letter 006

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

A curious Letter [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my Lady./

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(5) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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

My humble duty rememberd./ This daye I was at M<sup>r</sup> Dales  
and my brother William w<sup>t</sup> me who had conference w<sup>t</sup> the  
ould gentelwoman and she sayes that she vtterly mistook M<sup>r</sup>  
Talbot when he reported your La. offers for she thought it  
had bin doble as much as now she perceaues it is but not  
with standynge she sayes she doubtes not but your La. will deale  
well if the matter take effect but gladly she would haue  
that your La. w<sup>d</sup> did com vpe for she and [*deletion*] hir husbände  
had rather agree in consent w<sup>t</sup> your La. then talk w<sup>t</sup>  
by any frendes./ agayne she hath promised hir Magesty  
not to conclutt any maryage w<sup>t</sup> out makinge hir priuy  
vnto it soe that for that espetiall cause she wisheth  
your La. presence for that she thinketh your La.  
fittest and best able to attayne it sonest./ my brother  
bought a Iuell and presented it in your La. name, ~~but~~  
humble thankses was giuen vnto your La. but the mayd  
would receaue non w<sup>t</sup> out hir mothers consent, then hir mother  
was ~~maud~~ ~~mad~~ [*deletion*] tould how your La. had sent hir  
daughter a token and wished that she myght weare <sup>it</sup> <sup>it</sup>  
for as a well wysching from your La.; and that you r  
ment not to receaue it agayne nether to bind hir to  
any inconuenience by the receatt of it, lik thankses

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was giuen but she would not admitt hir daughter to  
take it w<sup>t</sup> thes wordes that vntill some further sartanty  
weare hir daughter shuld not receaue any thinge. Soe that  
... I perceaue the only hope of your La. *comminge.*/ thus  
most humbly crauinge your La. dayly blessinge I  
seace./ Cooldharber this xvij of Iune./

your La most obedient and  
louinge sonne./

Charles Cauendysse./

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