

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 060 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=060>)**

From: Sir William St. Loe (Master Man's house in Red Cross Street, London);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

Date: 12 October [c. 1560]

Summary: William St. Loe writes to his wife, Bess (Lady St. Loe), in reply to a letter of hers, describing his suits in London and anticipating that he will be with her in the next week. He adds a flirtatious subscription.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (76)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Sir William St. Loe | Bess of Hardwick | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 060: Sir William St. Loe

Sir William St Loe (c.1520-65?) was Bess's third husband and the two were probably married in 1558 or 1559, right around the time Elizabeth I succeeded to the crown. In that same year, St Loe was appointed captain of the guard to the queen. St Loe seems to have had genuine affection for Bess; however, due to his duties at court (the queen did not like him being away), the two spent most of their marriage apart, he in London and she at Chatsworth (where she undertook considerable building works). Bess's marriage to St Loe undoubtedly brought her closer to the queen and she was named a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber in 1559. The marriage also improved her finances and when St Loe died Bess inherited most of his estate.

Other letters associated with Sir William St. Loe:

4 September [1560?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)

24 October [c. 1560] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

## People Associated with Letter 060: 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 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 20 Nov [1565?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- 26 Feb [1566?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 2 Aug 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

## Normalised view of Letter 060

To my owne good wyff att chatsworth delyvar thys,

and

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my happe ys evyll my tyme worse spentte for that my rewarde as yett ys nothyng more then fayre wordes wyth the lyke promysys take all in good parte/ and yff I schowlde vnderstande the conterarye yt wolde troble me more then my pen schall expresse/ I have leave to cvm and wayte apon the I and my brother clement wyth towe or thre good felloes more had beyn wyth the by thys daye yff ytt hadde nott beyn for owre checkar mattar the whyche I wyll nott leave over rawlye I wyll forbear the anseryng off all partycvlarytes in thy last lettar wryten vnto me for that god wyll yng I wyll thys nextt weke be the messyngar my seyllff/ maestar man kame home the nyghtt before the date hereoff he pvtyth me in great hope off the mattar yow wote off thys trvstyng that god provydeth for vs althyns for the beste I ende commytyng the and all thyne whyche ar myen vnto hys blessyd wyll and ordenans/ farewell my owne swete besse from maestar mans howse in redcrosse strete the xijth off octobar/

by hym who dareth not so nere hys commyng home to terme the as thow artt yett thyen/

Wyllyam Seyntlo/

my cosyn clarcke salvteth the who was by me at the wrytyng hereoff/

## Diplomatic view of Letter 060

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

curious [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my owne good wyff  
att chatsworth delyvar thys,

and

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(76) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

1 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

my happe ys evyll my tyme worse spentte for that my  
rewarde as yett ys nothyng more then fayre wordes wyth  
the lyke promysys th take all in good parte/ and yff I schowlde  
vnderstande the conterarye yt wolde troble me more then  
my pen ñe schall expresse/ I have leave to cvm and wayte  
apon the I he and my brother clement wyth towe or thre  
good feloes more had beyn wyth the by thys daye yff  
ytt hadde nott beyn for owre checkar <sup>^mattar^</sup> the whyche  
I wyll nott leave over rawlye I wyll forbear  
the anseryng off all partycvlarytes in thy last lettar  
wryten vnto me for that god wylling I wyll thys  
nextt weke be the messyngar my seyllff/ maestar man  
kame home yeste the nyghtt before the date hereoff he  
pvttyth me in great hope off the mattar yow wote off  
thys trvstyng that god provydeth for vs althyngs for the  
beste I ende commyttyng the and all thyne whyche  
ar myen vnto hys blessyd wyll and ordenans/ farewell  
my owne swete besse from maestar mans howse  
in redcrosse strete the xij<sup>th</sup> off octobar/

# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

by hym who dareth not so  
nere hys commyng home to  
terme the as thow artt thyn  
yett thyen/

Wyllyam Seyntlo/

my cosyn clarcke salvteth the who  
was by me at the wrytyng hereoff/

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