

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 063 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=063>)**

From: Edward Talbot ([Bothwell, Lanarkshire?]);

To: Bess of Hardwick (Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire);

Date: 12 May 1604

Summary: Edward Talbot writes to his stepmother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), chiefly regarding his stepbrother and brother-in-law, Henry Cavendish's disgraceful debts and words spoken by Henry's wife, Grace (née Talbot; Edward's sister), in private to Edward's servant, who thought such speeches 'should not have proceeded from her'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (81)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Edward Talbot |

Version: 1.0

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## **People Associated with Letter 063: Edward Talbot**

Edward Talbot, eighth earl of Shrewsbury (1561-1617), was the third son of (Bess's fourth husband) George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, and his first wife, Gertrude (née Manners). In 1583 he married Jane, daughter of Cuthbert, seventh Baron Ogle. He quarrelled with his brother, Gilbert, seventh earl of Shrewsbury, who accused him of trying to murder him and challenged him to a duel in 1594. Edward sued Gilbert's physician (apparently the instigator of the murder rumour) for slander in Star Chamber in 1595 and won. Gilbert disinherited Edward while on his deathbed, and so while Edward succeeded him as the eighth earl of Shrewsbury in 1616, he did so without claim to the lands that normally would have accompanied it.

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## People Associated with Letter 063: 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 Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire

- 1 Dec [c.1564] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=30>)
- 20 Jan [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=31>)
- [1574?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=41>)
- 3 Aug [1580s?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=205>)
- 2 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>)
- 4 Aug 1584 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)
- 18 Feb [1591?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>)
- 21 Sep 1592 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>)
- 11 Mar 1593 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=160>)
- 19 Sep 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=1>)
- 20 May 1595 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=124>)
- 27 Feb 1596 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=16>)
- 11 Aug 1597 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=46>)
- 28 Feb [1598?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)
- [c.1600] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=7>)
- 2 Jun 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=125>)
- 6 Oct 1600 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=126>)
- 28 Apr 1601 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=127>)
- 21 Dec 1602 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=44>)
- 9 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=128>)
- 18 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=139>)
- 29 Jan 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=129>)
- 2 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=130>)
- 6 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=131>)
- 21 Feb 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=132>)
- 3 Mar 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=134>)

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- 10 Mar 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=135>)
- 18 Apr 1603 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=140>)
- 31 Jan 1604 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=161>)
- 18 Jun 1604 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=45>)
- 4 Jul 1604 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=21>)
- 16 Dec 1605 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=242>)
- 15 Jan [1606] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)
- 7 Mar 1606 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=49>)
- 13 Feb 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=14>)
- 25 May [1607] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=3>)
- 22 Jun 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=34>)
- 27 Jun [1607] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=4>)
- 30 Nov 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179>)
- 31 Dec 1607 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=35>)



## Normalised view of Letter 063

To the right honourable and my very good Lady and mother in Lawe the Lady Elizabeth Countesse of Shrewsbury dowager: at Hadwicke delivered

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My duty most humbly remembred to your honor may please you be aduertised that yesterday beinge ffryday, I receyued a lettre from my Servant Townrow from London, wherin he writeth that he hath not as yet got any answeere from my sister Grace; of the lettre which I writt vnto hir, which your honor knoweth of; but said yat she would writ vnto me an answeere, but as yet hath not: and he writeth further that she deliuered the lettre to my brother hir husband, who he him self did see read it, and he saith that it semeth by his speaches that he did well accept therof, and thanked me for my remembrance, and wished he had bene ther before my Comminge downe: and intreated my man in his next lettre to commeand him kindly vnto me, after which his speaches my sister spake privately vnto him, and as he writeth (said these wordes) which he thought should not haue proceded from hir, which were these: Assure my brother I am and euer wilbe, as sorry to doe any thing that may be eyther hurtfull to him, or the house wherof I came; as any sister or woman in the world, except great and extreame necessity doth inforce me thervnto, which nowe god knowes is much, and we are hardly delt with, both by my ould Lady and my Lord: Addinge further yat I should assure my self that assoone as my Lord, did move any such matter vnto hir, as she protested as yet he hath not done; I should knowe of it: which answeere accordinge to my Lettre dated from Newarke he made acquainted to master Willium Cavendishe who returned him this speech: Assure your self, she will not doe it, without a great some of money, which my Lord can not giue; without they will take ther payment in wordes, and that will pay no debtes; nor releive ther present want, but they are wise enough for that, and if my sister should, yet the Recouery will not be good vnlesse your honor consent thervnto, which I hoope you never will: and this is all he aduertiseth in those matters But he writeth that the Earles Iewells and platt are laid to pawne, and that ther is as many suters euery day at his chamber, as at the most noble men in the Court; but they come onlye to Crave ther debtes: Alsoe ther is not any thinge done by the Earle in Parliament, nor like to be that he can learne Thus with my wifes most bounden duty and my owne vnto your honor most humbly cravinge your blessinge to vs both, doe most humbly and hartely beseech the contenance of your honorable fauour, with the like humble thanks for your most honorable bounty towards vs: Soe wishinge you most long and happy yeares: doe humbly take my Leave: Bothell the xijth of Maye: 1604:

Your honours most humble and faithfully affected Sonne to be commaunded//

Edw Talbott

## Diplomatic view of Letter 063

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

Edward Talbott 4<sup>th</sup> Son of  
Geo E of Shrewsbury (by Gertrude  
his first Wife D<sup>r</sup> of Tho Manners  
E of Rutland) upon y<sup>e</sup> Death of  
his Brother E Gilb<sup>t</sup> 1616 had ye  
Title of E of Shrewsbury, died w<sup>th</sup> out  
Issue.

a Curious letter [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the right ho:<sup>ble</sup> and my  
very good Lady and mother  
in Lawe the Lady Elizabeth  
Countesse of Shrewsbury  
dowager: at Hadwicke  
*delivered*  
§

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428  
(81) [Item number, hand: archivist]  
184 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]  
169 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

My duty most humbly remembred to yo<sup>r</sup> ho:<sup>r</sup> may please you be  
aduertised that yesterday beinge ffryday, I receyued a *lettre* from  
my Servant Townro<sup>w</sup> from London, wherin he writeth that ~  
he hath not as yet got any answere from my sister  
Grace; of the *lettre* w<sup>ch</sup> I writt vnto hir, w<sup>ch</sup> your ho:<sup>r</sup>  
knoweth of; but said y<sup>t</sup> she would writ vnto me an answere,  
but as yet hath not: and he writeth further that she  
deliu<sup>r</sup> d the *lettre* to my brother hir husband, who he him self



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did see read it, and he saith that it semeth by his speaches that he did well accept therof, and thanked me for my remembrance, and wished he had bene ther before my Comminge downe: and intreated my man in his next *lettre* to commeand him kindly vnto me, after which his speaches my sister spake privately vnto him, and as he writeth (said these wordes) w<sup>ch</sup> he thought should not haue proceded from hir, w<sup>ch</sup> were these: Assure my brother I am and euer wilbe, as sorry to doe any thing that may be eyther hurtfull to him, or the house wherof I came; as any sister or woman in the world, except great and extreame necessity doth inforce me thervnto, w<sup>ch</sup> nowe god knowes is much, and we are hardly delt with, both by my ould Lady and my Lord: Addinge furth<sup>r</sup> y<sup>t</sup> I should assure my self that assoone as my Lord, did move any such matter vnto hir, as she *protested* as yet he hath not done; I should knowe of it: which answeare accordinge to my *Lettre* dated from Newarke he made acquainted to m<sup>r</sup> Willium Cavendishe who returned him this speech: Assure your self, she will not doe it, without a great some of money, which my Lord can not giue; without they will take ther payment in wordes, and that will pay no debtes; nor releive ther present want, but they are wise enough for that, and if my sister should, yet the Recou<sup>r</sup> y will not be good vnlesse your ho:<sup>r</sup> consent thervnto, w<sup>ch</sup> I hoope you never will: and this is all he adu<sup>r</sup> tiset in those matters But he writeth that the Earles Jewells and platt are laid to pawne, and that ther is as many suters euery day at his chamber, as at the most noble men in the Court; but they come onlye to Crave ther debtes:

[page break]

Alsoe ther is not any thinge done by the Earle in ~  
Parliament, nor like to be that he can learne ~  
Thus with my wifes most bounden duty and my owne  
vnto hir your ho: most humbly cravinge your blessinge to vs  
both, doe most humbly and hartely beseech the contenance  
of your honorable fauour, with the like humble thankes

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for your most hon:<sup>ble</sup> bounty towardes vs: Soe wishinge  
you most long and happy yeares: doe humbly take my  
Leave: Bothell the xij<sup>th</sup> of Maye: 1604:

Yo<sup>r</sup> hon:<sup>ts</sup> most humble  
and faithfully affected  
Sonne to be commaunded//  
§

*[significant space]*

Edw Talbott

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