

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 074 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=074>)

From: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick; The Peak's Men;

Date: 7 June 1575

Summary: George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, writes to his wife, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), regarding the Peak's men's 'clamorous speeches' and a potential meeting with them. On a second page, he writes 'I write this because you may send my letter to them to see how little I account of their complaints'. In a postscript to the latter section, he explains that he will provide 'some place' for his son, Gilbert Talbot and the latter's wife, Mary (née Cavendish; Bess's daughter), but seeks Bess's advice in the matter. He also describes an episode in which Bess's son Charles Cavendish, along with some servants, went stealing out into the country at night, and asks her to advise him against such behaviour.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (96)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Hands: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 074: George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury

George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522-90), was the eldest and only surviving son of Francis Talbot, fifth earl of Shrewsbury (1500-60), and his first wife, Mary (d.1538). In 1538, at the age of sixteen, he took up the title of Lord Talbot, until he succeeded to the earldom after his father's death twenty-two years later. In 1539 he married his first wife, Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566/7), with whom he had seven children: four daughters and three sons. Early on he acquired a number of honours stemming from his family's well-established prominence in the north: knight bachelor (1547), member of the council of the north (1549), knight of the Garter (1561), and lord lieutenant of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (1565). Following the death of his first wife, he married Bess, then the widow of William St Loe (c.1520-65?), in 1567. At this point Shrewsbury was one of the wealthiest men in England, derived from his estates and also business adventuring in farming, shipping, coal-mining, glassworks and lead extraction and production. Soon after his marriage to Bess, however, he was appointed keeper of Mary Queen of Scots, a custodianship he would hold from 1569-84. Shrewsbury prided himself on his loyalty to Elizabeth I, but he soon found her reluctant to provide sufficient diet money to keep Mary and her retinue. This, in addition to the monies needed for expensive building projects (at Worksop and Chatsworth), and his eldest son Gilbert's debts led to serious financial anxiety for Shrewsbury. Furthermore, he was forced to remain with Mary at all times and was therefore losing his place at court. As Shrewsbury's stresses grew and he became increasingly irascible, his marriage with Bess broke down spectacularly amid quarrelling to do with family finances and the allocation of estates. Scandal and mutual bad-mouthing soon became very public and the queen herself intervened, eventually dictating that Shrewsbury pay Bess a regular income (from 1587), while the two lived apart. Shrewsbury was an ill man for many years and suffered with a severe rheumatic condition, what he referred to as 'gout', which contributed to his terrible handwriting. He died in the company of his mistress, Elinor Bretton, at Sheffield Manor, on 18 November 1590, after being administered a mercury cure. His son Gilbert Talbot succeeded him as the seventh earl of Shrewsbury.

Other letters associated with George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury:

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

[December 1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=65>)

13 December [1568] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=66>)

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

[1570s?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=184>)

[c. 1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=9>)

[1570] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)

[1570s] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=203>)

[c. 1570] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=68>)

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4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>)
4 November 1570 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=70>)
[c. 1571] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=69>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=72>)
[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=71>)
8 August 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
[c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=76>)
[c. 1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=75>)
[1575-7] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=245>)
June 19 [c. 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
20 February 1575/6 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
19 November [1576?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=183>)
[1577] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
18 May [1577?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
4 June 1577 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=221>)
25 June 1577 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=172>)
14 May 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
[30 June 1578?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
2 August 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
28 December 1578 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=193>)
13 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
28 February 1578/9 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
22 June 1579 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
17 January 1579/80 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
13 May 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
21 June 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
11 September 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
10 October 1580 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=79>)
8 February 1581/2 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
4 August 1584 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)
26 August [1584] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=116>)

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14 October [1585] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=229>)

23 October 1585 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=117>)

9 June 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=176>)

4 August 1586 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=202>)

[April 1587] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=186>)

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People Associated with Letter 074: 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.

People Associated with Letter 074: The Peak's Men

'The Peak's Men' is how Bess's fourth husband, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, referred to (what he saw as) his 'lewd', troublesome tenants of the Peak Forest (in Derbyshire). Tenants of the Peak had serious grievances with the earl, especially to do with enclosure of land for grazing livestock which had previously been used by them as 'common waste'. In fact, in 1575 and again in 1579, these tenants marched to London to present their grievances to the queen and her privy council. Much to Shrewsbury's chagrin, the council favoured the tenants.

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Other letters associated with Sheffield, Yorkshire

- 27 Aug 1567 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)
- 3 May 1571 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=29>)
- 8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
- 19 Jun [c.1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=77>)
- [Oct 1575?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 Oct 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 29 Mar 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=103>)
- 27 Jun [1576?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=110>)
- 18 May [1577?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>)
- 1 Aug 1577 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 17 Mar 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120>)
- 14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188>)
- 29 Dec 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123>)
- 17 Jan 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190>)
- 13 May 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194>)
- 21 Jun 1580 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=78>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)
- 31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)
- 28 Nov 1581 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=104>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>)
- 28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>)
- 8 Feb 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146>)
- 6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145>)
- 10 Jun 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>)
- 24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204>)

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7 Feb 1583 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=148>)

4 Aug 1584 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>)

23 Oct 1585 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=117>)

19 Dec 1590 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=231>)

14 Apr [1600?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=2>)

Normalised view of Letter 074

To my wyfe the countes of Shrewsbury

My none I havenge Resevyd your letter whereby I persev the pekes men desyres to know to morow home I wyll name to mete to talke with there men they dyd chuse before me At there last beinge here wych was master shalcroste & dacen of bely flatt/ Althow I wold be loth to putt my cappe in doinge & thereby to lose Apese/ yett consyderenge there polayte more than there desarte & nothyng weinge there clamorus spech I wold with all my harte there Intensyon shold goo forward to exebytt Abyll to the quenes majeste for I nethar have nor wyll doo that thyng I wold have withholden from hur majeste Knolege thow they Immagen otharwyes wych I wold have them putt in proffs/ nevartheles if you perseve they mene as they speke to seke my favore & good wyll in dede Apoynte my steward & one othar with him home you lyke so that he be one/ & loke what he agrees therevnto I wylbe contented withAll/ but gladdst of All wold I have bene that master chaunslar of the duche him celfe myght have harde the mattar & gyvn Iugment therein/ so I wysche you shortly to Retorne Sheffeld vij of Iune 1575/

Your fethefull husband

G Shrewsbury

torne ovar

I wrytt this because you may send my lettar to them to see how lyttell I Acomt of ther complementes I have Resevyd Alettar this mornyng from master sekretere with lettares to this queen from leyger for hur Afferes & his lettar to me is the quenes majeste cum nott in to yorkshyr this yere/ & wyddar che cvm in to shropshyr or no it is douted for helard he is Aboute your frame & it wylbe done within this iij dayes & than he shall cum to you the next weke thow I maye Ill spare him/ fare well my only Ioye

Youres

G Shrewsbury

& senge I Am constrenyd to Absent my sune gylbard I wyll provyd sum plase forr him & his wyfe which I wyll vse your advyse therein & surely I wold have you provyd for charls your sun

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ho is esely ledd to folly/ for within ij nyght Aftar you went from me his man morten Intysed his
matar blyth & my Armorar to goo Astelynge in to staly parke/ in the nyght/ & I wold wysch
you to Advyse him from those doinge lest sum myshappe myght cum thereby to his harom &
your grefe/ now the progresse Altares I mynd to Altar my wrytenge to hur majeste

Diplomatic view of Letter 074

[Address Leaf]

To my wyfe the countes
of Shrewsbury

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(96) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

133 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

My none I havenge Resevyd yo^r lett whereby
I *perseve* the pekes men desyres to know y^e to morow
home I wyll name to mete to talke w^t there men
they dyd chuse before me At there last beinge here wych
was m^r shalcroste & dacen of bely flatt/ Althow
I wold be loth to putt my cappe in doinge & thereby to
lose Apese/ yett consyderenge there ~~ernest~~ polayte more than
there desarte & nothyng weinge there clamorus spech
I wold w^t all my harte there Intensyon shold goo forward
to exebytt Abyll to the quenes ma.^{te} for I nethar have
nor wyll doo that thyng I wold have w^t holden
from hur ma.^{te} [^]Knolege[^] thow ever they Immagen otharwyes
wych I wold have them putt in proffs/ nevartheles
if you *perseve* ~~ther~~ they mene as they speke to seke my favore
& good wyll in dede Apoynte my steward & h^e one othar
wt him home you lyke so that he be one/ & loke what
he agrees therevnto I wylbe e contented w^t All/ but gladdst
of All wold I have bene that m^r chaunslar of the
duche him celfe myght have ~~detarmyned~~ harde the
mattar & gyvn Iugment therein/ so I wysche you
shortly to Retorne Sheffeld vij of Iune 1575/

Yo^r fethefull husband

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G Shrewsbury
§

torne ovar

[page break]

I wrytt this because you may send my þ lettar
to them to see how lyttell I Acomt of ther *[deletion]* complentes
I have Resevyd Alettar this mornyng from mr
sekretere w^t lettares to this q from leyger for hur Afferes
& ^{his} *[deletion]* lettar *[deletion]* ^{to me is} the quenes ma^{te} cum nott in to yorkshyr
this yere/ & wyddar che cvm in to shropshyr or no eh ^{it is} douted
for helard he is Aboute yo^r frame & it wylbe done w^t in
this iij dayes & than he shall cum to you the next weke thow
I maye Ill spare him/ fare well my only Ioye

Yo^{res}

G Shrewsbury
§

& senge I Am constrenyd to Absent my
sune gylbard I wyll provyd sum plase forr
him & his wyfe whych I wyll vse yo^r advyse therein
& surely I wold have you provyd for charls yo^r sun
ho is esely ledd to folly/ for w^t in ij nyght Aftar you
went from me he ~~Intysed~~ his man morten Intysed
his mastar blyth & my Armorar to goo Astelynge in
to staly *parke*/ in the nyght/ & I wold wysch you to
Advyse him from those doinge lest sum myshappe myght
cum thereby to his harom & yo^r grefe/ now the progresse
Altares I mynd to Altar my wrytenge to hur ma^{te}

Version: 1.0