

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 087 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=087>)

From: Gilbert Talbot; Mary Talbot;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: [February 1589]

Summary: Gilbert and Mary Talbot write to Mary's mother, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), thanking her for lending them her litter, which they return after a safe arrival at Dunstable. They report 'such news as on the queen's highways we have met': about the queen's appearance in parliament, appointments in parliament, and prisoners in the Tower of London. A postscript by Mary mentions a Mistress Markham whom they left at Beskewood.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (114)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Gilbert Talbot | archivist | Mary Talbot |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 087: Gilbert Talbot

Gilbert Talbot (1552-1616) was the son of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, and his first wife Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566). Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom and became seventh earl of Shrewsbury after his father died on 18 November 1590. After his father's marriage to Bess (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568 Gilbert was married to Bess's daughter from her second marriage, Mary (née Cavendish). That is to say, Gilbert was married to his step-sister, at which point Bess became both his step-mother and mother-in-law. (At the same time, his sister Grace was married to Bess's eldest son Henry.) Gilbert and Mary were known for living large and eventually relations between Gilbert and his father Shrewsbury deteriorated over what Shrewsbury saw as his son and daughter-in-law's careless spending and the resultant debt. Gilbert also became notorious for his quarrelsome disposition. His relationship with his father suffered further damage when he accused him of siding with his wife Bess during their marriage breakdown. After his father's death he became engaged in litigation with Bess over the will (a legal battle which Bess won). Then, in 1594, he challenged his brother, Edward Talbot, to a duel amidst allegations of poisoning. These and other feuds were often long-lasting and expensive and left Gilbert with many enemies and debts. Gilbert had five children with Mary. His two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore his three daughters became joint heirs to their father's titles and great estate: Mary Herbert, countess of Pembroke (d. 1650), Elizabeth Grey, countess of Kent (1582-1651) and Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel (b. After 1582, d. 1654).

Other letters associated with Gilbert Talbot:

- 4 November 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
- 28 June 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=80>)
- 14 May 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=81>)
- [October 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 October 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 20 February 1575/6 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
- 28 May 1576 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=82>)
- [July 1577?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=84>)
- 1 August 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- [30 June 1578?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- 28 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
- 11 September 1580 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
- 31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)

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31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)

[19 September 1583?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=86>)

1 July 1589 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=88>)

28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)

[November 1604] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=177>)

15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)

People Associated with Letter 087: Mary Talbot

Mary Talbot (née Cavendish; b. 1556, d. 1632) was one of Bess's daughters from her marriage with Sir William Cavendish, who died in 1557 when she was only a year old. Following her mother's marriage to George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568, when Mary was around twelve-years old, she was married to the earl's son from his previous marriage, Gilbert Talbot. That is to say, Mary was married to her step-brother, at which point the earl became both her step-father and father-in-law. (At the same time, her brother Henry was married to the earl's daughter Grace.) Mary's husband Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom, and he and Mary became seventh earl and countess of Shrewsbury, after his father died on 18 November 1590. Mary and Gilbert's two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore their three daughters became joint heirs to their father's titles and great estate: Mary Herbert, countess of Pembroke (d. 1650), Elizabeth Grey, countess of Kent (1582-1651) and Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel (b. after 1582, d. 1654). Mary was better educated than her mother Bess and is known for her strong-mindedness, intelligence and opinions, as well as for her conversion to Roman Catholicism as an adult. She was involved in the elopement and escape plans of her niece Arbella Stuart in 1610 and subsequently, when she refused to testify, was imprisoned in the Tower for several years. She spoke up for her mother, Bess, to queen Elizabeth, in 1587, during her estrangement from Shrewsbury. Despite some of their differences, Mary is said to have been genuinely distressed when her mother died in 1608 and was remembered by Bess in her will.

Other letters associated with Mary Talbot:

- 1 August 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- [1580s] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=181>)
- [1580] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=185>)
- [19 September 1583?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=86>)
- 1 July 1589 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=88>)
- 18 February [1590/1?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>)
- 28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)
- 15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)
- 8 July [1607] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=89>)
- 30 November 1607 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179>)
- 30 December [1607?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=90>)

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People Associated with Letter 087: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 087

To my Lady

Our bounden duty moste humblie Remembred/ In lyke humblenes we render your Ladyship thanks for your lytter /the laste/ tho the leste of your Infinite goodnesse towards vs & ours/ We are safely comme hither to dunstable (we thanke god) this Shrofe munday at nyghte/ And now for yat the fowle ways is paste/ we thynke beste to returne your Ladyship's lytter agen from hence./ Suche newes as on the Queenes hye wayes we have mett with/ your Ladyship shall now vnderstand/ fyrste that her majestie (royally in person) was at the parlament house/ the fyrste day of this parlament where Sir Iante Snagge was admytted for the Speker of the nether house/ My Lorde of Darby is Lord Steward duringe this cession/ That yesterday one tolde a man of myne/ that as yet nothyng of any moment hathe bene touched in the nether house nether any expectacion yat any gret matters wilbe handeled/ but yat it will shortely ende/ That a day or two before the parlament began/ the Lord chancellor the Lord Theasurer with j or ij more of the privy counsell/ and master Auturnea, & master Solicitor, were with therle of Arundell in the Towre, Synce which tyme ther hathe bene no suche speche of his araynement as ther was before/ This is all the Queenes hye wayes hathe afforded vs of newes/ Yet further we here that all your Ladishyps above are very well./ And Thus in haste, moste humblie besechinge your Ladyship's blessinge to vs & all ours/ who pray evermore to the moste hieste spedely to graunte vnto your Ladyship all contentmentes with longe lyffe we humblye seace/ tyll our nexte lettres/ which shall not be longe

Your Ladyship's moste humble & obedient lovinge chyldren

Gilb: Talbott

Mary Talbott

We haue desired your ladyship's leter men to bringe a lettre to your ladyship from beskwod wher mistress markhames earnest intrety mad vs to leue her tell the returne ther of I besech the all mighty to send your ladyship my lady Arbell and the rest of your ladyships a most hapi long life

Diplomatic view of Letter 087

[Address Leaf]

To my Lady

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(114) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

145 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

Our bounden duty moste humblie Remembred/ In lyke
humblenes we render yo^r La: thankes for yo^r lytte^r
/the laste/ tho the leste of yo^r Infinite goodneses
towards vs & ours/ We are safely comme
hither to dunstable (we thanke god) this Shrofe
munday at nyghte/ And now for y^t the fowle ways is
paste/ we thynke beste to returne yo^r La: lytter
agen from hence./ Suche newes as on the
^Queenes^ hye wayes we have mett wth / yo^r La: shall now
vnderstand/ fyrste that her ma:^{tie} (royally in
person) was at the parlam^t house/ the fyrste day
of this parlam^t where S^r Iante Snagge was
admytted for the Speker of the nether house/
My Lorde of Darby is Lord Steward duringe
this cession/ That yesterday one tolde a man
of myne/ that as yet nothyng of any moment
hathe bene touched in the nether house ~
nether any expectacion y^t any gret matters
wilbe handeled/ but y^t it will shortely ende/
That the a day or two before the parlam:^t
began/ the L.^d chans:^r the L.^d Theasurer wth j or
ij more of her the pⁱ vy counsell/ and m^r
Auturnea, & m^r Solicitor, were wth therle of

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Arundell in the Towre, Synce w^{ch} tyme ther
hathe bene ~~lyttell~~ ^{^no suche^} speche of his araynem:^t
as ther was before/ This is all the Queenes
hye wayes hathe afforded vs of newes/ Yet
further we here that all yo^r Ladishyps above
are very well./ ^{^And^} Thus in haste, moste humblie
besechinge yo^r La: blessinge to vs & all ours/ who
pray evermore to the moste hieste t^o spedely to
graunte vnto yo^r La: all contentm:^{tes} ^{^wth longe lyffe^} we humblye
seace/ tyll our nexte *lettres*/ w^{ch} shall not be longe

Yo^r La: moste humble
& obedient lovinge chyl dren
§

[significant space]

Gilb: Talbott
§

Mary Talbott

We haue desired your la: leter men to bringe
a lettre to your la: from beskewod wher mrs.
markhames ernest intrety mad vs to leue
her tell the returne ther of I besech the
all mighty to send your la: my la: Arbell
and the rest of your la:^s a most hapi long life

Version: 1.0