

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 092 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=092>)

From: Anne Talbot (Baynard's Castle, London);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 8 May [1575]

Summary: Anne Talbot (née Herbert) writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) apologising for not writing sooner. Her 'sister of Pembroke' has been very ill, but is now recovering. The queen has come to visit her sister twice - both times late at night. On one occasion the queen didn't leave until 10 o'clock at night because 'the barges and boats that waited of her lost their ways, and landed in wrong places' due to a great mist.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (121)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band

Hands: Anne Talbot | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 092: Anne Talbot

Anne Talbot (née Herbert) was the daughter of William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke (1507-1570). She married Lord Francis Talbot (c.1550-1582), eldest son of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, in 1563 (although Francis pre-deceased his father and never succeeded to the earldom).

Other letters associated with Anne Talbot:

29 May [1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=93>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 092: 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 092

To the ryght honorable and my asurred good lady and moother the Countes of Shrowsbery./

Good madame, I am to craue pardon of you for not wryteinge by my lordes man Harry Grace, the cause I wylled hym to declare to your Ladyship whych was the extremty that my syster of Pembroke was In, at that tyme whych hath contened till theursdaye Laste, sethensse that daye she hath ben out of her soundyng, but not able to stand or gooe, her greatest gryf Is nowe want of slepe, and not able to away wyth the syght of meat, but consederynge her estat befor, we thynke our selves hapy of thys change, hopenng that better wyll followe shortely, the Quynes Majesty hath ben here wyth her tywss, very latt both tymes, and last tyme, yt was x of the cloke at nyght or ever her Majesty whent hensse, being so great a myste, as ther were dyueres of the barges and Boottes that wayted of her loste ther wayes, and landed In wronge plases, but thanks be to god her Majesty came well home wythout colde or feare, for the holdyng of the Prograce, I am ssure your Ladyship hereth for my part I can wryt noe sertaynte, but as I am In all other matteres, as I haue alwayes professed and as dewtye doth bynd me, ready at your Ladyship's comandement, and In any thyng I maye showe yt ether at thys tyme, or when occassyon seruet[h] yf I be not as wyllynge therto as any chylde of your owne, then lett me be condemened accordyng to my desertes, otherwyss I humbly craue your Ladyship's good openyon of me not to decrease, rememberynge your Ladyship's comandement here to for to wryt to you as often as I coule, whych nowe In thys plase I shall haue better meanes then I haue had In the country, and ther vpon pressumyng, to lengthen my letter vpon any occassyon, although I count thys of my syster very evell newes yet consederynge, her recouery, I hope my longe scryblynge, wyll the lesse trouble your Ladyship and so wyth my moste humble dewty to my Lorde and your Ladyship I humbly take my leue From Baynardes Castell the vijth of Maye:

your Ladyship's assured loueing daughter to comande

Anne Talbott

My syster of Pembroke hath wylled me to remember her humble dewty to my lorde and you, wyth desyre of hys dayly blessyng assoune as she Is able she wyll dowe yt her selfe/.

Diplomatic view of Letter 092

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

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

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[Letter Text]

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X.d.428

(121) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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