

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 093 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=093>)

From: Anne Talbot (Earith, Huntingtongshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 29 May [1575]

Summary: Anne Talbot (née Herbert) writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) that she has little news to report due to her infrequent visits to court. She promises to write 'after my old accustomed manner' and expresses fears that 'my sister of Pembroke's good delivery [. . .] will not fall out so well as I could wish'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (122)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - accordion

Hands: Anne Talbot | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 093: 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:

8 May [1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=92>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 093: 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 093

To the ryght honorable and my assured good lady, and moucher the Countes of Shrowsbery:

Good madam, acordynge to my dewty, I would haue wrytene oftener, yf I could haue learned, any newes worthy the wrytynge, but my comeynge to the court, Is so selldome, as I knowe your Ladyshype, doth here from thensse, by othersse, a great dell more, then I can hereof, yet I truste your Ladyship wyll geue me leue, to remember my dewtye, In wrytynge, after my olde acoustemed manner. whych I wyll not slake god wyllynge, though my matter be never so small, yet my dewtyfull good wyll I hope your Ladyship wyll exepte, In as good part, as I meane yt, yf I could haue sent, any good newes of my syster of Penbrokes good delyuery, your Ladyship should haue hard of yt or nowe, but I fear yt wyll not fall out so well as I could wyshe yt had and for thys tyme, I humbly take my leue, besycheing, god to send your Ladyship your hartes desyre, From Eareth the xxjxth of Maye:

your Ladyship's assured louyng daughter to comande:

Anne Talbott

Diplomatic view of Letter 093

[Address Leaf]

To the ryght honorable and my
assured good lady, and mouther
the Countes of Shrowsbery:
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[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(122) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

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good newes of my syster of Penbrokes good delyuery, your La: should haue hard
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your La: assured louyng
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