

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 029** (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=029>)

From: Alexander Gordon, bishop of Galloway (Sheffield, Yorkshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 3 May 1571

Summary: Alexander Gordon, bishop of Galloway, writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) regarding the removal of Mary Queen of Scots' chaplain and the allowing of Gordon's eldest son to remain in Mary's presence. He has spoken of the matter with Bess's husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, but writes for her approval as 'I will have all things concerning me obtained by your Ladyship's procurement'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (32)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Alexander Gordon, bishop of Galloway | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## **People Associated with Letter 029: Alexander Gordon, bishop of Galloway**

Alexander Gordon (c.1516-75), bishop of Galloway, was a committed member of the reformed Scottish kirk (i.e. church) and active in secular politics. He was also cousin to Mary Queen of Scots and remained committed to her cause. For example, after her forced abdication and escape from Lochleven in 1568, he campaigned for her restoration for several years and was one of her commissioners to England in 1570 and 1571. His attachment to the Scots Queen and acknowledgement of her authority made his position very difficult within the kirk. In 1572 he was ordered to do public penance in sackcloth, although this was commuted and he was subsequently back in his diocese.

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## People Associated with Letter 029: 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 Sheffield, Yorkshire

- 27 Aug 1567 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=114>)
- 8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73>)
- 7 Jun 1575 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74>)
- 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 029

To my werrey good Lady.

My Lady Comptass of Shewsbury

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My werry good Lady ... That I hawe delywerit zowr ... wha hes schawin him self werry faworable ... quenis majesteis contentment, as he contenoually doth ... for zowr honoures writtyng, which I hawe schawin ... who hes hyr werry hartely recommendit, to zowr ladyship an... zowr thankis of zowr offer to come hether as hyr hynes shall... zowr honour. forder hyr majeste hes granttit to remowe ye chapelane with pleasour and is werry desyrowss that my Elder sonne remaine with hyr majeste which I hawe spokin to my lordis honour zowr howsband who fyndis ye same werry gwod, bot becauws I will hawe all thyngis concernyng me to be Obteinit be zowr ladyship's procurment, I hawe said to my Lord yat I wold wreit to zowr ladyship to stand my good freind in my swit wharof his honor was werry glaide. and to ye effect that ane warrand may be Obteinit from ye cowrt for his taryng and admission, I will request zowr honorable ladyship to wreit to my lord Bawchly, who bearris my sonne good favour and knowis him weall, makyng mention that he meteinnis dayly in ye quennis presens ye religion which hyr majeste sufferis patiently, and takis In good part, and hopis to proffet hyr majeste forder, Someway that I for that occasion hawe purchassit ye quennis majesteis licens that my lordis honour do reteine him, and of suche other caussis as zowr honour can bettir wreit then I can awyss zow. and gif zowr honor thynkis good that my Lordis Awin writtin any way help zowr ladyship will writt to my lord therin as ye thynk maist expedient. Pleas zowr ladyship resawe the copy of ye fontaine. This with my werry hartely commendations to zowr honorable ladyship I will commit zowr ladyship to god. lookyng for zowr ladyship's answer at cheffeild ye iij of May 1571.

zour honnorable/ Ledyship's lowyng frend at zwar wrycht seruice

Galloway

## Diplomatic view of Letter 029

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

Lord Galloway [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my werrey good Lady.

My Lady Comptass of  
Shewsbury ~

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(32) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

My werry good Lady ...

That I have delywerit zowr ...

wha hes schawin him self werry faworable ...

quenis ma<sup>teis</sup> contentment, as he contenually doth ...

for zowr hono<sup>res</sup> writtyng, which I have schawin ...

who hes hyr werry hartely recommendit, to zowr /I/ an...

zow thankis of zowr <sup>offer</sup> to come hether as hyr hynes shall...

zowr hono<sup>r</sup>. forder hyr ma<sup>te</sup> hes granttit to remowe ye chapelane

with pleaso<sup>r</sup> and is werry desyrowss that my Elder sonne remaine

with hyr ma<sup>te</sup> which I have spokin to my lordis hono<sup>r</sup> zowr howsband

who fyndis ye same werry gwod, bot becawss I will have all thyngis

concernyng me to be Obteinit be zowr /I/ procurment, I have said to my

Lord yat I wold wreit to zowr /I/ to stand my good freind in my swit

wharof his honor was werry glaide. and to ye effect that ane war=rand may be Obteinit from  
ye cowrt for his taryng and admission, I

will request zow<sup>r</sup> honorable /I/ to wreit to my lord Bawchly, who bearris

my sonne good favo<sup>r</sup> and knowis him weall, makyng mention that he

meteinnis dayly in ye quennis presens ye religion which hyr ma<sup>te</sup>

sufferis patiently, and takis In good part, and hopis to proffet hyr

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ma<sup>te</sup> forder, Someway that I for that occasion hawe purchassit ye  
quennis ma<sup>teis</sup> licens that hōnō<sup>f</sup>- my lordis hono<sup>r</sup> do reteine him, and  
of suche other caussis as zow<sup>r</sup> hono<sup>r</sup> can bettir wreit then I  
can awyss zow. and gif zow<sup>r</sup> honor thynkis good that my Lordis  
Awin writtin any way help zow<sup>r</sup> /I/ will writt to my lord therin  
as ye thynk maist expedient. Pleas zow<sup>r</sup> /I/ resawe the copy of  
ye fontaine. This with my werry hartely commendations to zow<sup>r</sup>  
honorable /I/ I will commit zow<sup>r</sup> /I/ to god. lookyng for zow<sup>r</sup> /I/ answer  
at cheffeld ye iij of May 1571.

*[significant space]*

zo<sup>r</sup> honorable/ Le/ lowyng  
frend at zwar wrycht seruice

Galloway

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