

From Script to Screen: Bess of Hardwick's Letters Online

www.bessofhardwick.org

Alison Wiggins

From correspondence to corpora: A seminar on digital processing of historical letter compilations, University of Helsinki, 15 November 2013

AHRC Letters of Bess of Hardwick Project people:

Project Leader: Alison Wiggins

Research Associates: Graham Williams (part-time 2009/10, full-time 2011/12); Daniel Starza Smith (part-time 2011); Anke Timmermann (full-time 2010/11); Alan Bryson (full-time 2008/09)

PhD Students: Imogen Marcus (AHRC), Felicity Maxwell (SSHRC)

Web developer: Katherine Rogers, Humanities Research Institute, University of Sheffield



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AHRC Letters of Bess of Hardwick Project: editorial decisions

- 1. Identify your subject:** *seeking Bess of Hardwick's correspondence*
- 2. Select your mode of publication:** *the wide project agenda and the advantages of editing online*
- 3. Address the ontological questions:** *what is and what is not a 'Bess of Hardwick letter'?*
- 4. Define your methodology:** *using a database catalogue to capture biographical and material features*
- 5. Refine your textual policy:** *correction, emendation and the case for an original spelling edition*



Bess of Hardwick, c. 1521/2-1608

234 letters to and from Bess, 20 repositories

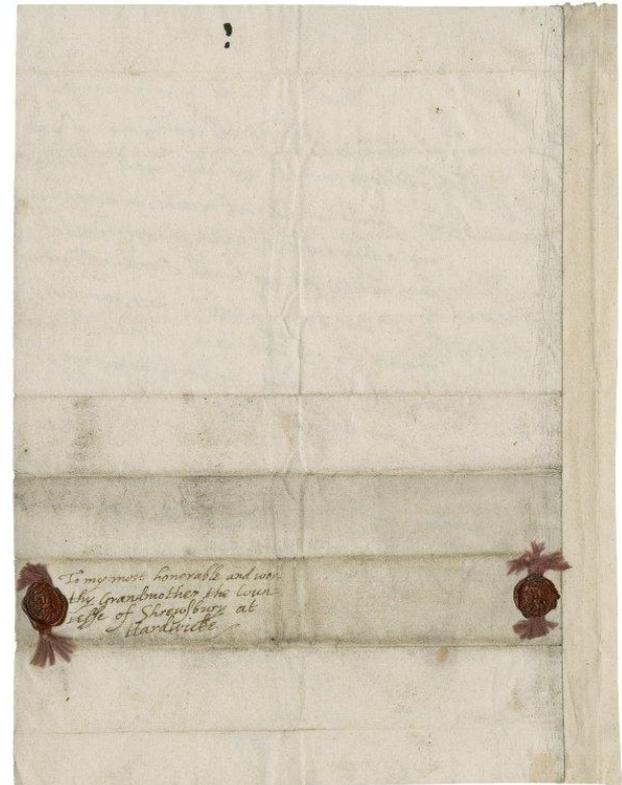
- Arundel Castle
- Belvoir Castle
- British Library
- Cambridge UL
- Chatsworth House
- Folger Shakespeare Library
- Hatfield House
- Huntington Library
- Keele UL
- Lambeth Palace Library
- Longleat House
- National Library of Scotland
- Nottingham UL
- Parker Library, Cambridge
- Pepys Library, Cambridge
- Sheffield Archives
- The National Archives

+ 2 letters at unknown locations (in private ownership, known from sale records)



Research Questions

- In what ways and to what extent does Bess' s language change and vary across her letters?
- How are material and visual features important to the communication of meaning in the letters and to gauging tone and temper?
- Can Bess of Hardwick' s life be re-interpreted in relation to the letters?
- What are the advantages of the digital environment for editing early modern manuscript letters?
- How can a single digital resource be optimised for use by multiple stakeholders?



AHRC Letters of Bess of Hardwick Project: outputs

Project duration: 36 months (AHRC Research Grants Scheme)

Print publications:

Alison Wiggins, *Bess of Hardwick: Reading and Writing Renaissance Letters, Material Readings in Early Modern Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming 2014)

Graham Williams, "'my evil favoured writing': Uglyography, Disease and the Epistolary Networks of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury', *Huntinton Library Quarterly*

Felicity Maxwell, 'Household words: Mistress-servant correspondence and record keeping at Bess of Hardwick's Chatsworth', *Lives & Letters: A Journal for Early Modern Archival Research*

Exhibition: *Unsealed* and Hardwick Hall and the TNA (2011-13)

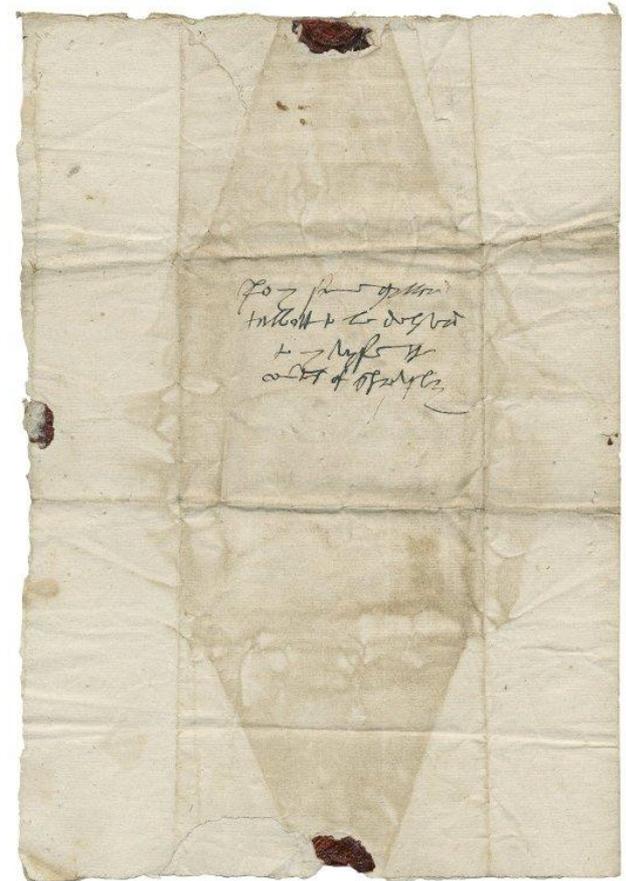
PhD theses:

Imogen Marcus (AHRC), 'An Investigation Into the Language of Bess of Hardwick's Letters'

Felicity Maxwell (SSHRC) 'Household Words: Textualising service in the Elizabethan Country House'

Web edition:

Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608, ed. by Alison Wiggins with Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Glasgow and the University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013) at www.bessofhardwick.org



LAIRAH report recommendations (2005/6)

- clear and unambiguous name, url, home page description (preferably one that relates to a popular subject of study)
- commercial-standard interface
- transparency, quality and reliability
- accessibility
- user contact: consultation with expected users, design for a wide variety of users, dissemination activities

References:

Claire Warwick, Melissa Terras, Paul Huntington and Nikoleta Pappa, 'If You Build It Will They Come? The LAIRAH Study: Quantifying the Use of Online Resources in the Arts and Humanities through Statistical Analysis of User Log Data', *LLC*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2008): 85-102

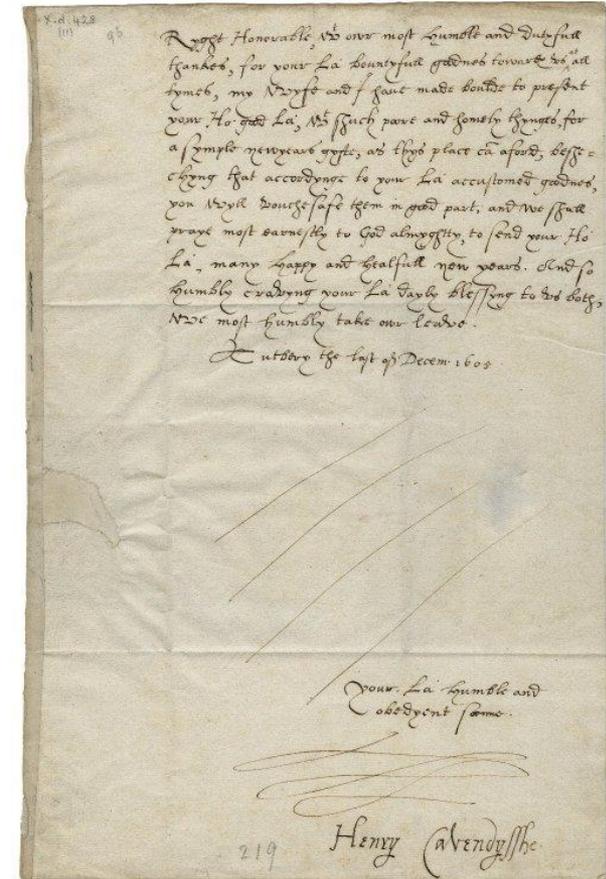
Final project report (September 2006) available in full at

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slais/research/circah/lairah/>

'The LAIRAH Digital Humanities checklist'

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/infostudies/research/circah/lairah/features/>

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Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire

Unsealed

The Letters of Bess of Hardwick

An exhibition at Hardwick Hall 2011



Feedback forms (52 volunteers, Sep. 2011 workshop).

‘As a National Trust volunteer, how do you envisage might you use the web edition of Bess’s letters?’

- *inspiration to do my own research*
- *to use as materials for answering questions asked by the public*
- *to have material to base living history characters around*
- *to create activities for children about how letter-writing was different from today*
- *to have texts to illustrate particular points and specific features around the house – objects, items, spaces in the house (e.g. showing visitors letters in the actual room when Bess wrote those letters, or showing visitors where Bess’s secretary Timothy slept and then showing them one of the letters he penned)*
- *to make Bess seem more of a real person*
- *for stories about the family which we can tell to visitors - how they related to one another and their servants, and to add ‘spice’*
- *for information about the servants who worked here*
- *for information about lifestyle and Bess’s world*
- *to explain Bess’s marriage breakdown with the sixth earl of Shrewsbury*
- *to be able to talk to visitors about Bess’s literacy, how she used it and how it helped her*
- *to know how much interest and research is generated by Bess of Hardwick*

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<u>Item:</u>	<u>Forms:</u>
PERFECT	<perfytt> (ID 120 l. 23; missing <c>?)
FRIENDSHIP	<frenshep>, <frenchepe> (ID 123 l. 7, ID 200 l. 26; missing <d>?)
BALDWIN	<balwene> (ID 182 l. 74; missing <d>?)
ENGLAND	<enlonde> (ID 122 superscription; missing <g>?)
LENGTH	<lenth> (ID 109 l. 1; missing <g>?)
THANKFULL	<thanfoull> (ID 120 l. 12; missing <k>?)
WORKSOP	<worsope> (ID 184 l. 16; missing <k>?)
TROUBLE	<trbyll> (ID 200 l. 2; missing <o>?)
CHAMBER	<chambe> (ID 099 l. 23; missing <r>?)
FRANCIS	<francy> (ID 101 l. 1; missing <s>?)

Compare to: <fren^d^e>, <lenghte>, <trobyll>, <brobeled>, <chambers>, <francys>

Bess:

HUSBAND <oubende>

BEHOLDING <beouldyng>

OTHERS <hothes>

ABLE/UNABLE <habyll>/<onhabyll>

Görlach : while not stigmatised as strongly as they were from the nineteenth-century, all the same, 'loss of initial [h] was type of dialect and "vulgar" speech'

Shrewsbury:

HONEST <onest>

EXEBYTT <exhibit>

LIKLIHOODS <lyklyoddes>

STANHOPE <stannoppe>

Types of letter packet:

Tuck and fold (121 letters)

Slit and band (38 letters)

Accordion (16 letters)

Sewn (3 letters)

Unsecured (3 letters)

+ c. 50 letters either not sent, not seen or where it is not possible to discern the folds



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Right Honorable, We owe most humble and Dutyfull
 thanks, for your La. beutyfull graces toward us, all
 times, my Wylfe and I have made bounde to present
 your Ho. good La, wth such pure and simple kyngd^m, for
 a simple newyears gyfte, as thys place caⁿ afford, besy^{ch}
 chynge that accodden^{ce} to your La. accustomed graces,
 you wyl vouchsafe t^{em} in good part, and we shall
 praye most earnestly to God almyghty, to send your Ho.
 La., many happy and healfull new years. And so
 humbly cravynge your La. dayly blessing to us both,
 We most humbly take our leav^e.

I uttere the last of Decem. 1603.

Your La. humble and
 obedyent sonne.

219 Henry Cavendyshe.

[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

[Faint handwriting, possibly a signature or date.]

To the right honorable and my
 most reuerenced lady the
 countesse of shrewsbury
 at hardwick
 these

To the right honorable and my
 most reuerenced lady the
 countesse of shrewsbury
 at hardwick
 these



X. 2. 628
1621
L13

good madame havinge no
betar meues to manifest mi thankes to your
our bet bi thes lines iumbli pra your ladi ship to accept
them and in the me mi reuerant thanckes for your
onares mani and gret fauoueres and amongst the rest that
it pleased your onar to lende your ladi ships litar whiche
bet for that i thincke i holde hardeli ^{the} end of mi
givni so dangourous was the weorkes backe
bet i besche your ^{onar} be leuone that i holde mi selve ^{prout}
bouende to your ladi ship as i wil euar inde war to deserue
bi mi duti and afekesint ^{serue} to your ladi ship
thes praunge your onar maliele mani hapi yeres with helthe
i umbli take leue

your onares ^{daughter}
most bondane

J. Harborth rauonayke



Baldwyn. I regret you must be
 have me some care taken due not
 because I was afraid of the
 would fall in his hands
 gave obtained in L. Letter
 under in the Regard but the
 the matter upon your kind
 the of my duty I am
 should I had not do
 Gorge must be done by
 far who will get a
 longer delay this
 and if it cannot be done
 postponed I am sure
 that my former
 kind of favor
 I shall need the
 of January 1599

Yours
 humble servant

if my 2
 on 14
 what
 that
 had
 in
 there
 dispatched
 done