SIR WILLIAM CAVENDISH, MARRIAGE TO BESS AND RELOCATION TO DERBYSHIRE

By TERRY KILBURN

Four times the nuptial bed she warm'd,
And every time so well perform'd,
That when death spoil'd each husband's billing,
He left the widow every shilling …

Horace Walpole was not impressed with Hardwick Hall. It was not to his taste. Having been told he would be utterly charmed by the house, he wrote 'never was I less charmed in my life'. Referring to Bess as 'that old beldam', he determined to write her an 'epitaph'.[1] Walpole was not the first, nor would he be the last, to portray Bess as a consummate schemer. In 1672 Sir William Dugdale wrote that Bess 'became Mistriss of a very vast fortune, by her successful matching with several wealthy Husbands'.[2] In 1838 Edmund Lodge stated that Bess, 'unsated with the wealth and the caresses of three husbands finished her conquests by marrying the earl of Shrewsbury, the richest and most powerful peer of his time.'[3] These authors failed to recognise that Bess had to struggle through both common law and equity courts to secure dower from her marriage to Robert Barley[4] and when Sir William Cavendish died in 1557 Bess was said to be penniless.[5]

Despite two previous marriages Cavendish was still in need of a male heir at the time of his marriage to Bess. Shortly after the marriage he commenced his move to Derbyshire. Philip Riden has noted that both Sir William's marriage to Bess and his subsequent decision to relocate lock, stock and barrel to Derbyshire have 'never been satisfactorily explained'.[6] The first to claim that Sir William's move to Chatsworth came at the 'desire' of Bess was Arthur Collins in 1752, though without explaining what that desire was.[7] It has been suggested that the only reason to accept Collins's statement is that 'it is difficult to think of any other reason why an official at court would give up an estate conveniently close to London ... and move to a much more remote county ...'.[8] Cavendish was not alone among his rank and calling to seek to create a land-based posterity but was the choice of Derbyshire merely to satisfy the whim of his new wife, as some have supposed? Concern for her safety may have played a more important role than caprice. Sir William saw his principal estate at Northaw, Hertfordshire, become the target of anti-enclosure riots in May 1548. Local protests over Cavendish's use of common land erupted in 1544 when he attempted to enclose some 500 acres of Northaw Great Waste.[9] He was alleged to have over-stocked the commons with rabbits and sheep. The 1548 riots were a continuation of this dispute, a reaction to Sir William's grant of a royal commission granted in the king's name by the newly appointed Lord Protector, Edward Seymour. Cavendish claimed that on the 21 May around sixty rioters camped outside his house and laid siege to the property. Sir William, a heavily pregnant Bess, other members of his family and visitors to the property were trapped inside.

Cavendish alleged that numerous attempts were made to break into the house and that the rioters threatened to burn down the property and all those within if he did not come out and face them. They inflicted considerable damage at Northaw, including the use of explosives to

destroy Sir William's rabbit warrens along with around 1,000 rabbits on Northaw Common. A second attack on the warrens took place the following day resulting in the deaths of a further 300 rabbits which were slaughtered 'amidst a volley of bone-chilling cries.' Cavendish alleged that his chaplain and some of his servants were attacked during the rioting. On the nights of May 25 and 26 Sir William claimed to have been awakened by 'hallowing, cryeng and yelling' coming from outside his house, frightening his wife and family, as the rioters continued to hunt in the nearby warrens, and that during the first night the rioters stole a trotting horse and five geldings from his stables.[10] These events must have been - at the very least - unsettling for Bess. We cannot rule out the possibility that they contributed to Sir William's decision to leave Northaw but does this alone fully explain why he moved to Derbyshire? The anti-enclosure disturbances were suppressed during the late summer and early autumn of 1549. The purchase of Chatsworth and Cromford did not take place until December 1549, some eighteen months after the 1548 riots and Cavendish's move to Derbyshire was not completed until 1552.[11] The rioting at Northaw in 1544, which simmered on to 1548, reflected local grievances borne by the tenants against the activities of a relative newcomer but also presaged the more widespread and better known anti-enclosure rioting of 1549. It has been suggested that Sir William 'may have been driven out of Hertfordshire by local animosity.'[12] He was still described as being of Northaw, Chatsworth and London in 1553.[13] The anti-enclosure disturbances did, however, play a significant role in the demise of Protector Somerset, a point to which we will return.

In seeking to explain both Sir William's marriage to Bess and his relocation to Derbyshire historians may have been looking in the wrong place. Could Sir William's decisions have been influenced far more by events at the centre of government during and after Edward VI's reign than has been recognised? Can it be mere chance that his move to Derbyshire coincided with Edward Seymour's fall from power and the later attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne? Are there too many such coincidences for them to be ignored? Those familiar with the high politics of the mid-sixteenth century, a period often referred to as the mid-Tudor crisis,[14] will recognise the difficulties in acquiring a full understanding of affairs at court, the epicentre of political life during this tumultuous period. The politics of the period remain steeped in obfuscation as over the intervening centuries untruths have been told and documents distorted, destroyed or otherwise 'lost', whilst many of those involved sought to cover up their roles in the dramas that afflicted the realm at this critical juncture in English history. The easiest way to find someone guilty was to use their own words against them and a search of an accused person's private papers would be among the first stages of any investigation. Those accused would look to destroy such evidence before it could be found. As John Flower put it to Thomas Seymour in 1548, once gone such evidence 'shall tell no more tales.'[15] Shortly before his arrest in October 1549 Thomas's brother, Edward Seymour, Lord Protector, gave orders that his papers should be destroyed[16] and following his abortive revolt in 1601 the earl of Essex busied himself setting fire to his papers.[17] There are many similar examples.

Bess's first marriage to Robert Barley lasted less than two years. The notion that Bess became a wealthy woman on Robert's death is false. The family estate was inherited, not by Bess, but by Robert's younger brother, George, the ward of Peter Frescheville. Frescheville challenged the legality of Bess's marriage to Robert and refused to pay her dower.[18] As indicated in her later complaint to the Court of Chancery, early in 1545 Bess commenced proceedings for dower in the Court of Common Pleas.[19] In mid-1546, seeking a swifter

resolution, she turned to Chancery. She stated that two writs had been issued on her behalf against Freschevile but that he had deliberately prevaricated in order to 'delay and fatigue' her Common Pleas proceedings which she could no longer afford to continue. Her dower was assessed at 40 marks (£26 13s. 4d.) per annum,[20] hardly a sum on which to commence building a dynasty.

Quoting from Sir William Cavendish's pocketbook Arthur Collins informs us that the marriage of Sir William and Bess took place at 2 a.m. on 20 August 1547 at Bradgate Park, the Leicestershire home of Henry Grey, marquis of Dorset.[21] Grey's wife, Frances, was the daughter of Charles Brandon and his wife Mary, dowager queen of France, Henry VIII's sister. Frances was therefore the cousin of Henry VIII's daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, and his son, Edward. In 1551, following the death from sweating sickness of the two sons of his father-in-law, Grey became duke of Suffolk. Little is known about this period of Bess's life. There is no evidence to substantiate the claim that she entered the service of the Greys following the death of Robert Barley.[22] By 1545 Henry and Frances Grey had three daughters under five. Only six months older than Prince Edward, Lady Jane Grey was born in October 1537, her parents then being just twenty and twenty-one years of age. 1540 saw the birth of Jane's sister, Katherine, and the youngest of the Grey sisters, Mary, was born in 1545. That same year Bess commenced her dower proceedings in Chancery. Sir William's marriage to Bess took place at Grey's principal county seat. Henry and Frances and their daughters Jane and Katherine stood as godparents to one or more of Sir William and Bess's children. Henry was godfather to their sons, Henry and Charles. Their first child, Frances, was christened in honour of her godmother, Frances Grey. Their first son, Henry, was almost certainly named for Henry Grey. Along with her mother, Jane Grey stood as godmother to Sir William and Bess's second daughter, Temperance, and Katherine Grey was godmother to their daughter Elizabeth.[23] Bess was of a similar age to Frances Grey. A portrait of 'my lady Jane' listed at Chatsworth in the 1560s is believed to have been kept by Bess on her bedside table.[24] It has even been claimed that Jane and Katherine Grey were bridesmaids at Bess's marriage to Sir William.[25]

William Cavendish's career as a bureaucrat began in the 1520s. Possibly on the recommendation of his brother George, around 1530 he entered the service of Thomas Cromwell.[26] William's entry into Cromwell's service coincided with Wolsey's fall and the beginning of his new master's meteoric rise to power during the 1530s. It was likely to Cromwell that Sir William owed his introductions to both the Greys and the Seymours. Cavendish owned a picture of 'Lord Cromwell' and among the portraits in the Long Gallery at Hardwick Hall is a rare painting of Edward Seymour. This portrait was probably among those known to have been owned by Sir William at his home at Northaw.[27] Edward Seymour was the elder brother of Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour, mother of Prince Edward. Along with Edward Seymour, Cromwell encouraged Henry VIII's courtship and marriage to Jane. Cromwell's son, Gregory, became the second husband of Queen Jane's sister, Elizabeth Seymour. It was probably as a servant of Cromwell that Cavendish came to the attention of Edward Seymour, who in 1536 appointed William to the post of auditor of the newly created Court of Augmentations. William spent much of following three years in the Home Counties and the Midlands receiving the surrender of religious houses,[28] during which time he must have developed a wide network of associates and contacts. Cavendish was knighted in 1546 and sat as MP for Thirsk in the 1547 parliament. The seat was in the gift of either Cromwell's former protégé Robert Holgate, archbishop of York and President of the Council of the North, or the

borough's lord, Edward Stanley, 3rd earl of Derby. Despite his later apostasy, Holgate was at this time a supporter of evangelical reform, whereas Stanley was rightly suspected of being Catholic. It may have been Edward Seymour who recommended Cavendish to Holgate.[29] Sir William was also an associate of Seymour's steward, Sir John Thynne of Longleat, at one point seeking Sir John's help to find a plasterer for Chatsworth,[30] a request Bess repeated in 1560.[31] In 1553 Thynne became comptroller of Princess Elizabeth's household. Sir William was an associate of the Greys who, in turn, were closely allied to Seymour, to Catherine Parr's brother William, and to John Dudley. At the time of his marriage to Bess, Cavendish was renting his London house in Aldersgate from Parr.[32] Sir William's first wife, Margaret Bostock, died in 1540. Although the marriage produced two surviving daughters, Cavendish lacked a male heir. Perhaps he cast an eye over Bess at Bradgate yet it is also possible that his eye may have been pointed in Bess's direction by the Greys.

Following Henry VIII's death in January 1547 Edward Seymour used his position as the boy-king's uncle to establish himself as Lord Protector of England and Governor of the King's Person. By the end of March 1547, he had also taken for himself the title of duke of Somerset, a title with royal connotations having been held by Henry VIII's Beaufort ancestors and by the late king's illegitimate son, Henry Fitz-Roy. There were particularly close connections between the Greys and the Seymours. Henry Grey and Edward Seymour had known each other from boyhood and, along with William Parr, served in Fitz-Roy's household.[33] In February 1549 Grey and Seymour discussed a possible marriage between Lady Jane Grey, third in line to the throne, and Seymour's son Edward, earl of Hertford.[34] Frances Grey's mother died in June 1533 and three months later her father, Charles Brandon, married his ward, the 14-year-old Katherine Willoughby, and took control of her family's extensive properties in Lincolnshire and elsewhere.[35] Katherine would later become the patron and protector of bible translator Myles Coverdale.

In the early months of 1547 Edward Seymour's younger brother, Thomas, 1st Lord Sudeley, married Henry VIII's widow, Catherine Parr. Thomas resented his elder brother's influence over their nephew, Edward VI, and envied the power that came with this influence. Although promoted to the rank of Lord High Admiral, he felt strongly that the offices of Lord Protector and Governor of the King's Person should not have been held by the same person. As the king's other uncle, he took the view that the latter position rightly belonged to him. Despite the opposition of Frances Grey and the unease of her husband, shortly before Thomas married Catherine, he had persuaded Henry Grey to allow the ten-year-old Lady Jane Grey to join his household by promising to promote a marriage between Jane and the king.[36] Rumours spread that Thomas intended to marry Jane but his sights were set on a greater prize. Shortly before his marriage to Catherine, Thomas offered his hand in marriage to the king's sister, Princess Elizabeth.[37] Elizabeth rejected his proposal but following Catherine's death Thomas was suspected of seeking to renew his suit.[38] Edward Seymour had been infuriated by his brother's marriage to Catherine and thereafter relations between the brothers deteriorated further. By early 1549 intense jealousy of his brother finally drove Thomas to seek to gain control of Edward VI. Arrested on suspicion of plotting to kidnap the king, he was found guilty of treason and executed in March 1549.[39] Things also went badly for Somerset. The Lord Protector consistently ignored William Paget's warnings that many members of the Privy Council resented his autocratic style of government.[40] By October 1549 Seymour was under arrest and the Protectorate was at an end. Among those placed in the Tower for being 'principal instruments and counsellors ... in the affairs of his ill government' was Sir

John Thynne.[41] Seymour's position as Lord Protector had been ratified on the final day of the 1547 parliament. Two years later Edward VI noted in his journal that by another Act of Parliament, 'The Lord Protector lost, by his own agreement and submission, his protectorship, treasurership, marshalship, all his moveables and near £2,000 worth of land.'[42]

When Mary Tudor commenced her rebellion against Queen Jane in 1553 John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, and William Parr, marquis of Northampton, led the party sent to Norfolk to arrest her. As it became clear that the scheme to keep Jane on the throne was doomed many, including almost every member of the Privy Council, abandoned her cause and blamed the entire affair on Dudley. Cavendish certainly had affinity with those who sought to place Jane Grey on the throne and with the principals of the Wyatt rebellion. A portrait of Wyatt is listed in the Hardwick inventory of 1601.[43] Wyatt was yet another of Thomas Cromwell's protégés and Sir William is likely to have met him after entering Cromwell's service. Although there is no documentary evidence to show that Sir William was involved in the attempt to prevent Mary Tudor's succession or that he had any involvement in the Wyatt rebellion, his affinities, his circle and his position as a senior official suggest that he must at least have been aware of events. Changing sides in the interest of self-preservation was a powerful motivator in an age in which a likely alternative was losing one's head on the block. William Paulet, earl of Wiltshire, William Cecil, and Henry Grey, for example, had little hesitation switching allegiance from Somerset to Dudley,[44] and Sir John Thynne among others, found no difficulty proclaiming Mary Tudor queen on the realisation that the Jane Grey episode was at an end.[45]

During the spring of 1551 Somerset was joined by the earls of Shrewsbury, Arundel and Derby in an alleged plot to overthrow Dudley. The key aim of the plot seems to have been the assassination of Dudley. What appears to have been a botched attempt on Dudley's life led to Arundel's arrest. Shrewsbury and Derby looked to distance themselves from the affair.[46] Somerset's role in the conspiracy led to his trial and execution, although much of the evidence against him came from yet another turncoat, his former servant Sir Thomas Palmer, who was later to confess that much of the evidence he had given against Somerset had been fabricated.

Mary Tudor's successful revolt against Queen Jane resulted in pretty much the entire Privy Council abandoning John Dudley to his fate.[47] Cavendish was to claim he that had spent 1,000 marks raising men on Mary's behalf.[48] Though there is no evidence to the contrary, his Protestant leanings, close association with the Greys and members of their affinity make this seem dubious. Although it was probably Dudley who blocked his bid to become sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire in November 1552, Sir William's career was far more likely to have prospered had Jane remained on the throne rather than - as events were to prove – with Mary as queen. Lady Jane and Guildford Dudley were executed on the 12 February 1554 and her father's head placed on the execution block eleven days later. Wyatt's execution followed on 11 April. However, it was neither feasible nor indeed practical for Mary to dispose of her entire civil service in this way. Possibly because he was not known to have been a close associate of Dudley, Cavendish was among those who successfully sued for a general pardon and managed to survive in the aftermath of the Jane Grey affair.[49] Unlike several other senior officials,[50] he retained his office of Treasurer of the Chamber but in a diminished capacity receiving far fewer Privy Council warrants under Mary, suggesting that he was never fully trusted by the new Queen. It has been said that during his later years Sir William spent more time on domestic matters than professional ones.[51] In April 1557 an investigation was ordered into his accounts.[52] It was alleged that he owed the crown £5,237 5s. He admitted the debt and at the same time asked the Privy Council to show mercy to Bess and their children.[53] He died

aged 49 in October 1557, Bess praying to the Lord 'to ridd mee and his poore Children of our greate Misserie'.[54] When a bill for the recovery of Sir William's debt was introduced into parliament one of the first people Bess turned to for help was her 'very good friend' Sir John Thynne.[55]

Historians have not examined sufficiently the question of how these momentous events may have influenced Sir William's decisions to marry Bess and relocate to Derbyshire. The early stirrings of the most serious rebellion of Henry VIII's reign, the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace, began west of the Pennines in Lancashire but quickly spread into Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. In the aftermath of the rebellion the king sought to impose his authority in the north and ordered Charles Brandon to transfer the main centre of his operations from Suffolk to Lincolnshire. By the time of his death in 1545 Brandon had laid the foundations of a major aristocratic anti-Catholic affinity and his leadership role within it passed to his son-in-law, the then marquis of Dorset, Henry Grey. Composed predominantly of supporters of evangelical reform and the Edwardian Reformation, this affinity formed a substantial bloc of powerful anti-Catholic opposition in the region. Its members included the Greys (Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire), Willoughbys (Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire), William Parr, marquis of Northampton (Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Norfolk) and Francis, 5th earl of Shrewsbury (Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire). It was an affinity well represented among the godparents of Sir William and Bess's children. In addition to the Greys, these included numerous members of the Greys' Protestant circle. Katherine Brandon (neé Willoughby), dowager duchess of Suffolk, and her son the young Henry, duke of Suffolk, were two of the three godparents to Sir William's first child by Bess. The marchioness of Northampton, the 5th earl of Shrewsbury, the earl and countess of Warwick, the earl of Pembroke, and the Princess Elizabeth all became godparents to one or other of Sir William and Bess's children. Doubtless political expediency and pragmatism led to Mary Tudor and Stephen Gardiner joining Henry Grey as godparents to Sir William and Bess's fifth child, Charles, born early in Mary's reign. However, this did not deter the Cavendishes from reverting to their choice of Greys and Parrs as godparents to their sixth child, Elizabeth.[56]

Beneath the greater aristocratic affinities lay local connections. Intermarriage between neighbouring gentry families had made relatives of Leakes, Hardwicks, Leches, Boswells, Chaworths, Barleys, Markhams, Foljambes and Freschevilles. In an attempt to make sense of contemporary political coteries, a manuscript book of pedigrees, probably drawn up at Haddon in the 1560s,[57] links families together in genealogical groupings. One of these groups is 'linea leeke gray et frechvyle', and includes Bess on account of her descent via her mother from the Leakes of Cotham and the Greys of Sandiacre. Other Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire families linked in this way include the Cartwrights, Watertons, Merings, Foljambes, Markhams, Tempests, Barleys and Cliftons. Among the Catholic families of Derbyshire were the Babingtons of Dethick, the FitzHerberts of Padley and the Eyres of Hassop. The Eyres supported Catholic enclaves at Hope, Dunston, Newbold and Hathersage. From the late fifteenth century much of Derbyshire no longer came under the control of any great magnate.[58] This meant that should there be any Catholic opposition to the reformation of religion during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI north Derbyshire formed a potentially vulnerable area within an otherwise extensive central block of territory controlled by the Grey affinity. A potential weak link in the affinity was the conservative Francis, 5th earl of Shrewsbury who was known to be sympathetic to Catholicism and lukewarm towards reform.

The 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace had in part spread through Talbot's main Yorkshire territories and coincided with the dissolution of the lesser monasteries in Derbyshire and elsewhere. In addition to Brandon's relocation to Lincolnshire, in October 1537 none other than the Lord Privy Seal, Thomas Cromwell, now armed with the powers of his recently acquired offices of Vice Gerent Over Spirituals and Vicar General, was added to the Derbyshire commission of the peace, 'his first known commission outside lowland England'.[59] The dissolution of Derbyshire's greater monasteries followed between 1538 and 1540.

Was Sir William Cavendish's marriage to Bess in 1547 part of an attempt by Henry Grey to plant a trustworthy ally in north Derbyshire? If so, was Bess merely a pawn in the hands of the Greys? Marriage to the daughter of a long-established north-east Derbyshire gentry family, the niece of another, the widow of a third, and whose brother-in-law and stepfather's family had recently been the owners of Chatsworth, would have ensured that Sir William would be readily accepted in the county following his relocation to Derbyshire. Bess's mother, Elizabeth, was the daughter of Thomas Leake of Hasland, younger brother of Sir John Leake of Sutton. Bess was the widow of Robert Barley of Barlow Lees. Sometime before 1545 her sister, Jane, married Godfrey Boswell of Gunthwaite in south Yorkshire, whose four daughters all married into other Yorkshire gentry families. Another sister, Alice, married Francis Leche of Chatsworth who, in retaliation for his wife's infidelity, rashly sold the estates of Chatsworth and Cromford to Thomas Agard in 1547. Like Cavendish, Agard had been in Thomas Cromwell's service and was a client of Thomas Seymour. When Leche attempted to get back the properties he had sold, the Lord High Admiral gave his support to Agard. Leche went one better and appealed directly to Somerset who ordered that Agard could not deny the Leche family's right to inherit the properties. Thomas Agard died while this dispute was in progress and two years later his son, Francis Agard, brought the whole business to an end by selling the two manors to Sir William Cavendish and Bess.[60]

The timing of Sir William's marriage to Bess and his relocation to Derbyshire were indeed significant. Within weeks of the collapse of Somerset's Protectorate in the autumn of 1549, Sir William purchased the manors of Chatsworth and Cromford, after which he followed 'a policy of buying lands in Derbyshire on a considerable scale.'[61] Somerset was restored to the Privy Council on 10 April 1550, but he had failed to learn the lessons of 1549. He looked to regain his powers but in doing so quickly alarmed John Dudley and his supporters. Somerset was arrested on largely trumped-up charges, tried and found guilty.[62] Following in the footsteps of his younger brother, he was executed in January 1552. After the end of Somerset's Protectorate, John Dudley, earl of Warwick, took over the reins of government and the office of Grand Master of the King's Household, a role which incorporated the position of Lord President of the Council. Sir William Cavendish's parliamentary career ended in April 1552, with the close of the final session of the 1547 parliament, and just weeks after Somerset's execution Cavendish took the final steps in his move to Derbyshire. In June 1552, a mere six months after Somerset's death, Sir William sold Northaw and other holdings in southern England and a few in Wales to the Crown in exchange for mainly former monastic properties, including several in Derbyshire. His office still required his presence in the capital and he was therefore obliged retain a London residence, but he also began to hold local offices in Derbyshire.[63]

The 'planting' of Protestant families in the Midlands may have been aided by the distribution of former monastic lands. In 1546, during the minority of Henry, 2nd earl of Rutland, the Manners family surrendered their Northumberland estates in return for the

Crown writing off their debt for the purchases of the Leicestershire priories of Belvoir and Croxton.[64] In 1547 Somerset exchanged various properties with the Crown for others nearer his estates in Somerset, Dorset and Oxfordshire, building up a substantial block of territory in the west of England.[65] Such exchanges, particularly of former monastic estates, not only helped to consolidate holdings but may also have been part of a centrally driven effort to systematically redraw the political map of England. Edward VI died in July 1553, presumably in the knowledge that the terms of his 'devise for the succession'[66] would be implemented and that he would be succeeded by Jane Grey. Among many bequests, the king left £200 to Sir William.[67] Cavendish had been a good and loyal servant to both the king and his uncle, the duke of Somerset, and, furthermore, he was a member of the Grey affinity and a supporter of religious reform.[68] At the time of Edward VI's death, the establishment of Sir William Cavendish in north Derbyshire was well in hand. Although Henry Grey had been a close friend of Somerset, he recognised that he needed to be on good terms with the Lord President. Newly elevated as duke of Suffolk he distanced himself from the policies of the former Protector by playing a principal role in Somerset's trial and execution. Along with William Parr and William Herbert, now earl of Pembroke, Grey became closely associated with Dudley's government and was among the signatories of Edward VI's 'devise'. Early in 1553 Parr's wife, Elizabeth Brooke, appears to have brokered Jane Grey's marriage to Dudley's son, Guildford. In what became a triple wedding, Jane's sister Katherine married Henry Herbert, son of the earl of Pembroke, and Guildford's sister, another Katherine, married Francis Hastings, son of the earl of Huntingdon.[69]

Grey and Parr were the leading players in the attempt to place Jane on the throne.[70] Among those who were for Jane was Sir John St Loe.[71] He would have become Bess's father-in-law had he not died a few months before his son William married Bess in August 1559. Sir John was another member of the wider Grey affinity. The St Loes were also members of a West Country affinity which included the Seymours, Herberts, earls of Pembroke, the Courtenays, marquises of Exeter, the Thynnes and the Bayntons. Sir John St Loe was to become a thorn in the side of the Marian regime. He had held office under Henry VIII and in 1539 became a Groom of the Privy Chamber. Like Baynton, Sir John was a staunch evangelical Protestant. He was appointed a commissioner for the dissolution of chantries in Somerset. At the time of the Jane Grey affair, he was ordered by the Privy Council to muster forces in support of Jane. He had joined forces with Thynne at Longleat when Sir Nicholas Poyntz arrived with the news that Mary Tudor had been proclaimed queen in London. Thynne had no other option than to proclaim Mary Queen and did so at Warminster. St Loe rode to Somerset with like intent.[72] Sir John remained active in local government but no longer attended court during Mary's reign. In 1556 a group of Protestant conspirators led by Sir Henry Dudley and Edward Courtney, marquis of Exeter, sought French help to drive Queen Mary into exile in Spain and place Princess Elizabeth on the throne. Suspected of being involved in the plot, Sir John's second son, Edward, was committed to the Fleet prison. Sir John was placed under house arrest at his London home. He died in March 1559.[73]

Sir John St Loe was the father of Bess's third husband, Sir William St Loe. By 1538 William was in the service of Edward Courtenay, second cousin to Edward VI. Courtenay was yet another principal of the Wyatt rebellion for which he spent a spell in the Tower before being released in 1555 due to a lack of evidence to convict him. Knighted under Seymour in 1549, following the death of Edward VI Sir William became a member of Princess Elizabeth's household. He was involved in the Wyatt rebellion and is known to have carried at least one message from Wyatt to the princess. Sir William was arrested, placed in the Tower and in June

1554 transferred to the Fleet prison. After paying £200 as surety for his future good conduct, like Courtenay, he was released in 1555. He was to perform an important role as Captain of the Queen's Guard at Elizabeth I's coronation and became Chief Butler of England. He sat in Elizabeth's second parliament as an MP for Derbyshire and became a JP for the county. Sir William settled Bess's debt to the Crown, reduced to £1,000 by Queen Elizabeth. He died in December 1565. At the time of his death, his brother, Edward, was in London, the brothers being engaged in trying to settle the future of their father's estates.[74]

If there was a scheme to plant Cavendish in Derbyshire its continuing success was brought to a temporary halt by his death in 1557. Bess's third husband, Sir William St Loe, was himself part of the wider Grey affinity. Should Sir William die without issue, his heir was his brother but the two were firmly at odds over their father's will, from which Edward had been excluded.[75] Sir William's first wife was Jane, daughter of Sir Edward Baynton. Neighbours of the St Loes, the Thynnes and the Seymours, the Bayntons were the largest landowners in the area and supporters of evangelical reform. Sir Edward became vice-chamberlain to Anne Boleyn and a close ally of Hugh Latimer.[76] Both Sir Edward and Sir John St Loe were among the guests at the christening of Edward VI.[77] Jane died in 1549. The marriage produced no children.[78] Having conceived eight times during her ten years of marriage to Cavendish, Bess had amply demonstrated her fecundity. Perhaps St Loe hoped Bess would provide him with an heir. But, if he needed an heir, why would he have waited some ten years before his second marriage? Edward St Loe appears to have been sufficiently alarmed at the prospect of his brother's marriage to Bess producing an heir that he allegedly turned to desperate measures to prevent it. In addition to claims of the use of sorcery, in a letter to Bess dated June 1560, the brothers' stepmother, Margaret St Loe, claimed that she had been informed by an anonymous lady that shortly after St Loe's marriage Edward had attempted to poison both Bess and his brother. The accusation of attempted murder was investigated but presumably due to a lack of evidence, substance or both, Edward was never convicted of the offence. St Loe's marriage to Bess proved childless. It has been claimed that Edward's alleged attempt to commit double murder so embittered Sir William that, despite Bess's reluctance, in his will Sir William left all his lands, possessions and wealth, to her. He was free to do so because the lands had not been settled after his father's death.[79] By cutting out Edward from his will Sir William merely reaffirmed their father's will in which Edward and their sister had been left nothing.[80]

Twice widowed, with six children to bring up and a huge debt hanging over her head, Bess might not have been considered the most attractive prospect for a bride. On the other hand, William St Loe must have been an attractive prospect as a husband. In order to explain why he married Bess various authors have argued that, like Cavendish before him, St Loe simply loved her, a conclusion based mainly on the expressions of love and affection used in his letters.[81] However, caution must be exercised when interpreting such expressions as being matters of fact rather than of convention.[82] The St Loes were well known to Sir William Cavendish and Bess through his associations with Edward Seymour, the Greys, the Parrs, the Thynnes and others both inside and outside court circles. Sir William's marriage to Margaret Bostock had produced two daughters. Catherine and Anne. Catherine married Thomas Brooke, son of Lord Cobham, whose sister, Elizabeth, was William Parr's second wife. Anne married Henry Baynton, brother of Sir William St Loe's first wife, Jane Baynton.[83] William Cavendish was therefore related by marriage to the St Loes sometime before his marriage to Bess which indicates that William St Loe and Bess must have known each other long before they married in 1559. Bess faced a desperate situation at the time of her marriage to St Loe.

Possibly encouraged by Sir John Thynne, Sir William's marriage to Bess may have been little more than an act of kindness by one old friend to another. St Loe and Bess spent relatively little time together during their six-year marriage. Sir William's position at court necessitated his presence in London whereas Bess spent much of their marriage at Chatsworth. However, St Loe marriage to Bess helped to re-establish the Grey affinity's presence in Derbyshire. The wedding of Lady Katherine Grey to Somerset's son, Edward, earl of Hertford, in December 1560 took place during the period of the St Loe marriage and reflected the continuing concerns of the Grey affinity, now headed by George Talbot, 6th earl of Shrewsbury. No-one could predict how long Elizabeth might reign. Should she die without issue Katherine was a potential successor. Elizabeth's near death from smallpox in October 1562,[84] was a sharp reminder, if one was needed, that the threat of a Catholic succession had not entirely evaporated with Queen Mary's death.

This concern may also have been a factor in Bess's fourth marriage to George Talbot, whose family was closely aligned with the Greys, Willoughbys, Parrs, Herberts and other leading members of the affinity. Talbot's father, Francis, 5th Earl of Shrewsbury, was among the signatories of Edward VI's 'devise'[85] but not closely allied to Northumberland. In 1562, the 6th earl's eldest son, Francis, Lord Talbot, married Anne, daughter of William Herbert, 1st earl of Pembroke, and Anne Parr, sister of Catherine Parr. Within months of Bess becoming widowed for the third time court gossip buzzed with rumours of potential suitors, Sir John Thynne, Lord Darcy and Sir Henry Cobham, heading the list of contenders,[86] but within a few months of the death of his first wife, Gertrude Manners, George Talbot, 6th earl of Shrewsbury, married Bess. Unlike Cavendish and St Loe there can be no suggestion of the earl needing a male heir as he already had his 'heir and spare' in Francis, Lord Talbot, and Gilbert Talbot. He was vastly wealthier than Bess. Adding her wealth to his own cannot have been the sole motive for their marriage. The earl would have had control of Bess's Cavendish and St Loe estates during their marriage but Bess held only a life interest in the Cavendish lands, which had been settled mainly on Henry Cavendish in 1557, and her St Loe estates passed to Charles Cavendish. As with St Loe's marriage to Bess, Talbot's marriage to Bess served to maintain the affinity's political and religious presence in north Derbyshire that had been established in 1547 by the Greys via Sir William Cavendish's marriage to Bess. Mary, Queen of Scots, was not placed in the custody of George Talbot in 1569 solely because he was a person of great wealth, nor just because Mary would be held at properties far distant from court, but also because by that time Talbot had become the leading member of a significant Protestant affinity, the origins of which lay in the extension of royal authority following the Pilgrimage of Grace and on which Elizabeth and her government believed they could depend.

E.W. Ives dedicated his biography of Lady Jane Grey 'To my many friends who have grappled with the reign of Edward VI'. Finding one's way through the maze of high politics during the mid-sixteenth century remains challenging. Following the failure to place Jane on the throne, many of the leaders of the attempt, such as Henry Grey, escaped with their lives, at least for the time being. Shamelessly yet pragmatically, former allies abandoned John Dudley[87] to his fate on Tower Hill where he was beheaded in August 1553. Early in Elizabeth's reign an anonymous account characterised Somerset as the 'good duke' and Northumberland as his evil counterpart.[88] Dudley became a scapegoat and dead men cannot defend themselves. Inevitably, much that could have been used to convict others disappeared at the time, shortly afterwards or in the years that followed. Sir William Cavendish had witnessed first-hand the fall of powerful men such as Wolsey, Cromwell and Somerset. Men like Cavendish, operating

a tier or so below the principal members of the aristocratic affinities they served, were clever, astute, careful and cautious. They understood the dangers that letters and papers might pose in any given circumstance and they were adept at covering their tracks. Thus far, it has proved impossible to discover documentary evidence of any involvement many such men may have had in events such as the attempt to prevent Mary Tudor's accession and her marriage to Philip of Spain. We should not be surprised by this paucity of evidence and accept that much must be inferred. Conclusions reached in these circumstances are necessarily speculative yet remain worthy of consideration.

Placing Sir William Cavendish's marriage to Bess against the backdrop of the economic and political upheavals of the mid-sixteenth century makes it possible to take into account previously unconsidered factors which not only help to explain the marriage itself but also Sir William's subsequent relocation to Derbyshire. It is an explanation in which Bess can be seen not as a force for unbridled dynastic ambition but as a pawn in the politico-religious manoeuvres of powerful aristocratic affinities.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford* (London, 1798), IV, 206. My thanks are extended to Peter Foden and my friend and former colleague, Lesley. A. Bilby, and particularly to Philip Riden, for helpful comments and proof-reading skills.

[2] Sir William Dugdale, *Baronage of England* (London, 1675–6), 420.

[3] E. Lodge, *Illustrations of British History*, (London, 1838), I, p. xxviii.

[4] T. Kilburn, 'The wardship and marriage of Robert Barley, first husband of Bess of Hardwick', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 134 (2014), 197–203.

[5] P. Riden, 'Sir William Cavendish: Tudor civil servant and founder of a dynasty', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 129 (2009), 248.

[6] Riden, *ibid*, 224.

[7] A. Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle*, (London, 1752), 22.

[8] Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle*, 10; Riden, 'Cavendish', 224.

[9] D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 549.

[10] The National Archives (TNA) STAC 3/1/49.

[11] Riden, 'Cavendish', 245.

[12] A.C. Jones, 'Commotion Time: the English risings of 1549' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2003), 33–4, 40 n. 22.

[13] Riden, 'Cavendish', 247.

[14] J. Loach and R. Tittler (eds), *Problems in Focus: The Mid-Tudor Polity, c.1540–1560* (London: MacMillan, 1980) provides a useful introduction.

[15] M. Scard, *Edward Seymour, Lord Protector: Tudor king in all but name* (Stroud: History Press, 2016), 161, 266 n. 30.

[16] Loach and Tittler (eds), *Mid-Tudor Policy*, 34–5.

[17] C. Skidmore, *Edward VI: the lost king of England* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2007), 183; J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1979), 378.

[18] Kilburn, 'Wardship', 195.

[19] TNA, C 1/1101/17; Kilburn, *ibid*, 201, n. 17.

[20] Kilburn, *ibid*, 198–9.
[21] Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle*, 11, 19.
[22] D.M. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1979), 12. There is no evidence to support Dugdale's claim that Bess entered the service of the Zouches of Codnor and none to confirm her service with the Greys; P. Riden, 'The Hardwicks of Hardwick Hall in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 130 (2010), 152.
[23] Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle*, 19–20. Sir William and Bess's second son was probably named in honour of Charles Brandon and their third William, if not named after his father may well have been named for William Parr.
[24] Hardwick Drawers, H/143/6D. Ashead and D.A.H.B. Taylor (eds), *Hardwick Hall: a great old castle of romance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 73, citing Devonshire MSS, H/143/6; Durant, 52.
[25] V. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour* (London: Bodley Head, 1922), 27.
[26] Riden, 'Cavendish', 239; Bath Mss, Thynne Mss. 2, ff. 250-253v.; *History of Parliament*. Commons 1509–58, Sir William Cavendish.
[27] G. White, '"that whycheysnedefoulle and nesesary": the nature and purpose of the original furnishing and fecoration of Hardwick Hall' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2005), 293, 468.
[28] Riden, 'Cavendish', 239–40.
[29] *History of Parliament*. *Commons 1509–58*, Sir William Cavendish.
[30] Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast*, 26–7.
[31] *ibid*, 47.
[32] *ibid*, 16.
[33] Scard, *Seymour*, 17.
[34] E.W. Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: a Tudor mystery* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 43–5.
[35] S. Gunn, *Charles Brandon: Henry VIII's closest friend*, (Stroud: Amberley, 2015), 157.
[36] Ives, *Lady Jane Grey*, 184.
[37] Scard, *Seymour*, 119–20.
[38] Neale, *Elizabeth I*, ch. 2; Scard, *Seymour*, 120–5; J. Loach, *Edward VI* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 56–7.
[39] Neale, *Elizabeth I*, 29–33.
[40] D.E. Hoak, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 96–7; Scard, *Seymour*, 74, 154; S.R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer: William First Lord Paget, Tudor Minister* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), 152.
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[42] Beer. B.L, 'Edward, duke of Somerset [known as Protector Somerset] (c. 1500–1552)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25159; J. North (ed), *England's Boy King: the diary of Edward VI*, *1547– 1553* (Welwyn Garden City: Ravenhall Books, 2005), 40; Scard, *Seymour*, 124.
[43] L. Boynton, *The Hardwick Hall Inventories of 1601* (London: The Furniture History Society, 1971), p 29.
[44] Scard, *Seymour*, 230; Loach, *Edward VI*, 93; Skidmore, *Edward VI*, 207–9.
[45] *History of Parliament*. *Commons 1558–1603*, Sir John St Loe.

[46] Skidmore, *Edward VI*, 191–2; Gammon, 178–9; Scard, *Seymour*, 225.
[47] J.G. Nichols (ed.), *The Chronicle of Queen Jane and Queen Mary* (Camden Society, Old Series 48, 1850), 7, 10.
[48] Riden, 'Cavendish', 247; Durant, 26.
[49] *History of Parliament. Commons 1509–58,* Sir William Cavendish.
[50] D. Loades, *Mary Tudor* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 190.
[51] *History of Parliament. Commons 1509–58*, Sir William Cavendish.
[52] TNA, E 101/424/10, *History of Parliament. Commons 1509–58*, Sir William Cavendish.
[53] Riden, 'Cavendish', 247–8.
[54] Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle*, 20.
[55] *ibid*, 12.
[56] *ibid*, 19-20; Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast*, 20–7. It is likely that Charles was named for Frances Brandon's father. If William was not named after his father a likely candidate for this honour is William Parr whose wife, Elizabeth Brooke, stood as one of William's godmothers and was godmother to Sir William and Bess's daughter Elizabeth.
[57] I am indebted to Peter Foden for advising me that In a box labelled 'pedigrees' in the Belvoir Castle Muniments there is a book of manuscript pedigrees of c.1565. The unknown genealogist was trying to explain contemporary allegiances. Among the pedigrees is one titled 'Leeke Grey and Frechvyle'.
[58] See generally S. M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derbyshire Record Society, 1983).
[59] MacCulloch, *Cromwell*, 272–5, 435.
[60] Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast*, 18-19.
[61] Durant, *ibid*, 23; Riden, 'Cavendish', 245–7.
[62] Gammon, '*Statesman and Schemer*', 179–80.
[63] Riden, 'Cavendish', 247.
[64] I am grateful to Peter Foden for this information.
[65] Scard, *Seymour*, 82–3.
[66] Nichols, *Chronicle*, 89–91; J.G.Nichols (ed.), *Literary Remains of King Edward the Sixth*, (Roxburghe Club, 1857), 571–3.
[67] Riden, 'Cavendish', 247.
[68] White, "that whycheysnedefoulle and nesesary", Appendix One, 1540s Inventory of Northaw, 324, among Sir William's possession were at that time a mixture of items belonging to the catholic faith and a vernacular bible, probably Coverdale's 1539 Great Bible.
[69] Ives, *Jane Grey,* 185.
[70] Loades, *Mary Tudor*, 179.
[71] *History of Parliament. Commons 1558–1603*, Sir John St Loe; Sir William St Loe; P.Riden, 'Bess of Hardwick and the St Loe Inheritance' in P. Riden and D. G. Edwards (eds), *Essays in Derbyshire History Presented to Gladwyn Turbutt* (Derbyshire Record Society, 30, 2006), 80–106.
[72] *History of Parliament. Commons 1558–1603*, Sir John St Loe, 330.
[73] *History of Parliament. Commons 1558–1603*, Sir John St Loe, 260
[74] Riden, 'St Loe inheritance', 100–102.

[75], Riden, *ibid*, 95.

[76] MacCulloch, *Cromwell*, 167.

[77] https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol12/no2/320.

[78] G.W. Marshall (ed.), *The Visitation of Wiltshire, 1623* (London: Bell, 1882), 8, 44, 37, 54; Lodge, *Illustrations*, I, p. xxviii, stated that Sir William St Loe had 'daughters by a former wife' but does not say how many daughters; Riden, 'St Loe inheritance', 98, n 7. The St Loe pedigree lists Sir William as *ob. s.p.* (*obit sine prole*), that is 'died without issue'. No children are mentioned in his will. St Loe referred to Bess's children as his children. At the time of St Loe's death, two of Bess's daughters by Cavendish, Mary and Elizabeth, were yet to be married.

[79] TNA, PROB 11/48/200; TNA, C 3/170/13(2); Durant, 39.

[80] Riden, 'St Loe inheritance', 93; TNA, PROB 11/42B/241.

[81] See, for example, Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast*, 35.

[82] For 'courtly love' see E. W. Ives, *Anne Boleyn* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 77–110.

[83] Collins, *Historical Collections of the Noble Families of Cavendishe, Holles, Vere, Harley and Ogle* 18-19.

[84] J. Hurstfield, *Elizabeth I and the Unity of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 44–55; Neale, 123.

[85] Nichols, *Literary Remains*, 573 and n. 42.

[86] Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: portrait of an Elizabethan dynast*, 53.

[87] Nichols, *The Chronicle of Queen Jane and Queen Mary*, 7, 10.

[88] A.J.A. Malkiewicz, 'An eye-witness's account of the coup d'état of October 1549', *English Historical Review*, 70 (1955), 600–9; C.L. Kingsford (ed), 'Two London chronicles from the collections of John Stowe', *Camden Miscellany*, 4 (Camden Society, 3rd ser, 18, 1910), 17–43; A.F, Pollard. *England Under Protector Somerset*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1900), also presented Somerset as the 'good duke', as did W.K, Jordan, *Edward VI: the young king* (London: Allen and Unwin,1968). This was challenged by B.L. Beer in his *The Political Career of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland* (Kent State University Press, 1973) and in his 'Northumberland: the myth of the wicked duke and the historical John Dudley', *Albion*, 11 (1979), 1–14. See also D.E. Hoak, 'Rehabilitating the duke of Northumberland: politics and political control, 1549–155'', in Loach and Tittler (eds), *Mid-Tudor Polity*, 29–51; M.L. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), 160-161.