

Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700

Case 7: Unrequited Love in Bath

Case type: Defamation

Summary: Richard Meredith v Alice Morgan: rejected widow Alice claims she has been aiding Richard in committing adultery with her sister-in-law.

Source: Somerset Heritage Centre, D/D/Cd/40

Original Spelling Transcription

Depo[s]ic[i]ones testis de et super Libello all[ia]s ex parte ex parte et per partem Rich[ard]i Meredith Civitatis Bathon con Aliciam Morgan¹ de eadem Civitate in quadam ca[usa] diffamationis sue convicii dat et oblat capt et fact sequitur./

Repetit coram Mro Methwin clico surrogato etc.3 Junii 1607

Deposition 1

[...]Steevens Civitate Bathon Tapstor⁵ ubi mor[am] trapit per xxx annr[e]s ult annos etats xxxix ant de circit[er] test test ort ap[u]d Corslye in Com Wilts. testis product jurate et primo examinat & dicit q[uo]d Rich[ard]um Meredith per 6 annos ult preterit ant de circiter et Aliciam Morgan p[er] 30 annos ult p[re]terit ant de circiter respective bene novit./

Ad primum et ii ar[ticu]los Libelli predict deponit et credit co[n]tenta ar[ticu]lor esse vera referend se ad lura./

Ad 3 et 4 ar[ticu]los deponit et dicit that uppon a certaine Saturdaye nighte in the Lent season² nowe Last past and as he beleiveth and nowe remembreth it was on the Saturdaye night next going before MidLent Sondag last² this exam[inan]t being at the house of the ar[ticu]lated Alice Morgan in St Michells parishe neere Bathe, w[i]th the saide Alice to whome he then had brought certaine herbes³ (she being an herb gatherer⁴ for the Apothecaries) she asked of this examinant howe henrie moore and his wiffe did agree to whome this examinant repleing sayed well god be thanked. Then q[uo]d she I thought Richard Meredith (meaning & naming

Rich[ar]d Meredith ar[ticu]lated) had used my house in goodewell towards me, but nowe I perceave it is not soe, it was more for Love of my sister in Lawe Moore, then for any Love towards me. I have entertayned them (meaning the saide meredith and moores wiffe) heere at my house manye tymes, & they have had my house, & my victualls⁸ at command, And I have byn their bawde⁹ (the Lord forgive me for it) manye tymes, & I have penned them up into my Chamber together and they have byn naught¹⁰ together there manye tymes, and nowe I will noe Longer forbear it, I will tell my brother of it and will make him carrye her Coate & make her wastcoate of another cullour before Wednesdaye next. And (q[uo]d she farth[e]r) when my brother hath com[e] into my house & asked for them whiles they have byn in the s[ai]d Chamber together, I have sent him awaye poore foole as he came & told him they weare not there./ Et hec dicit et deponit de s[ui]s propriis visu auditu et intellectu present none but her self & a maide s[er]vant of hers of [...] in this deponents understanding, the saide Alice morgan by her above recyted speches (w[hi]ch weare delivered w[i]th greate vehemence & in angrie spiritt) did meane that the said Richard meredith had lived an incontynent¹¹ or adulterouse liffe w[i]th her sister in Lawe the said henrie moores wiffe named John Moore, & that she had byn their Bawde⁹: By w[hi]ch wordes he holdith the said Richard to be much grieved, discredited and slandered. Et al[ite]r nescit depon[er]e

Ad 5 refert se ad iura

Ad 6 dicit ar[ticu]lu[m] esse veru[m]

Ad ult deponit et dicit p[re]depo[s]ita per eu[m] fuisse et esse vera./

^his mark¹²

Deposition 2

Repetit coram vicarii gen[era]lis surrogato viz Mr Anton Methwyn clico arti[cul]um mro. 23 Junii 1607

Super Libello pred

Johannes Saige de Stanton drew in Com Somers[e]t agricola¹⁴ ubi moram trapit a na[tivita]te ib[um] ort annor[es] etate Lix ant de circiter Libere ut dicit condic testis producte etc deponit et q[uo]d partes litigan per annu[m] et ultra respective bene novit

Ad primum et secund[um] ar[ticu]los deponit et credit eosdem esse veros referendo se ad iura etc./

Ad tertium ar[ticu]lu[m] Libelli pred in vin iuramenti sui prestiti examine deponit et dicit, that this exam[inan]t being an acquayntance of the ar[ticu]lated Alice morgan, was uppon a certaine daie hapning about the feast daye of thannunciation of o[u]r Ladye Last past², uppon som[e] occasion of busynes at the house of the saide Alice situate w[i]thout the north gate in Bathe as he sate eating and drinking in her house, hapned to ask of her, where Richard meredith was, and howe he did, (meaning and naming the ar[ticu]lated Rich[ar]d Meredith) whooe answered in effecte as followith viz / It is noe matter where he is, whie q[uo]d this exam[inan]t, then q[uo]d she, he was wont to com[e] to my house but it was more for Love of my Brother mores wiffe (meaning [...] henrie moores wiffe) then of me, she hath byn often sent for to my house by his [...] procurement, but I perceave it was more for her sake then for myne, and there they have byn as I think naught¹⁰ together, (meaning by those her words as this exam[inan]t did then understand them that theye the saide Richard Meredith and henrie Moores wiffe [...] had lyved incontynentlye¹¹ together in her house). Et hec deponit de suis propriis visu auditu et intellectu Present then and there in the saide house heering & noting the premisses Joane Baylie an inhabitant in Bathe and neighbor of the said Alice Morgans Et al[ite]r nescit deponere./

Ad.4.credit that the saide wordes doe tend to the discredit of the saide Richard Meredith

Ad.5.ar[ticu]lum refert se ad iura

Ad 6 dicit ar[ticu]lu[m] esse ver[u]m

Ad ultimu[m] deponit p[re]deposita per enn fuiste et de vera Et al[ite]r deponere nescit

John Sage¹²

Deposition 3

Super Libello p[re]d

Joanna Stannton al[jia]s Bailie p[ar]oc S[an]cti Pretri Civitatis Bristolluxor⁶ Jo[h]n]is Stannton al[jia]s Baylie de eadem Curryer⁷ ubi moram trapit p[er] sex dies ult p[re]terit et antea ap[u]d Bathe in com Som[er]s[e]t p[er] spaci[u]m duoru[m] annor[es] ant de circiter et antea ap[u]d Bristoll p[re]d p[er] duodecem annos ant de circiter oriund in p[ar]oc S[an]c[t]i Michaelis in com hereford Annoru[m] etate xxx s[ui]s ant de circiter testis p[ro]duct admiss iurat et primo exa[m]i[n]at de noticia p[ar]t[iu]m litigant dicit se Richardu[m] Meridith p[ar]tem ea[m] p[ro]ducen p[er] unu[s] annu[m] ult p[re]terit ant de circiter et Alicia Morgan p[ar]tem con qua[m] p[ro]ducitur p[er] idem tempus novisse ut dicit

Ad primu[m] ar[ticu]lum Li[bel]li p[re]d sive ar[ticu]lorum p[re]d deponit et dicit eandem de veru[m] referendo se ad iura./

Ad secund ar[ticu]lum deponit q[uo]d refert se ad iura et ad constituc[i]onem provinc ar[ticu]lat./

Ad 3 ar[ticu]lum ar[ticu]lorum p[re]d in vin iur[amen]ti sui deponit et dicit That upon a certen daie happeninge about senight¹⁵ before the fest of the feast of the An[n]un[cia]c[i]on of o[ur] Lady the Virgin Marie last past² before this her examynac[i]on as shee remembreth the time otherwise shee cannot call to mynde this deponent haveing an occasion to goe to the house of the said Alice Morgan in the fore noone chanced to find one Sage her p[re]contest¹³ in the s[ai]d howse and the said Alice Morgan talking together when this exa[m]i[n]ate came in unto them [...] time and place this exa[m]i[n]ate saith shee hard the said Alice Morgan to saie that q[uo]d shee Richard merideth came to my house and resorted hither as thoughe he had come for the love of me But I p[er]ceave he came for the love of my sister Joane Moore and I am made a cloke for them bothe meaninge thereby as this deponent doth construe yt as thoughe the said Ric: Merideth and the said Joane Moore lived incontynentlie¹¹ and the said Alice Morgan being a wydowe woman had ben a bawde⁹ to cloke their Lewdnesse in suffering them to keepe company in her house. And this was spoken in the presence sight & hearing of this deponent and the said Sage her p[re]contest¹³ maliciouslie & angrilie against the s[ai]d Ric: Meredeth and the s[ai]d Joane Moore. Et al[ite]r nescit deponere

Ad.4.ar[ticu]lum deponit eade[m] ar[ticu]lum de veru[m]

Ad 5.ar[ticu]lum deponit q[uo]d refert se ad iura

Ad 6 ar[ticu]lum deponit eade[m] ar[ticu]lum de veru[m]

Ad ult deponit q[uo]d p[re]depo[s]ita p[er] eu[m] fuerent et sunt vera &c /

Joane ~ Stanton al[ia]s Baylie her signe ^her mark¹²

Modernized Spelling Transcription

Witness depositions and statements concerning the libel on the part ~~on the part~~ of Richard Meredith of the city of Bath against Alice Morgan¹ of the same city in a certain case of defamation, given and offered in manner following:

Repeated before Mr Methwin, clerk etc. on 3 June 1607.

Deposition 1

[...]Stevens of the city of Bath, tapster⁵, where he has lived for 30 years, age 39, test and born in Corsley in the county of Wiltshire. The witness produced and first examined says that he has known Richard Meredith for about six years and Alice Morgan for about 30 years and knows them well.

To the first and second articles of the libel aforementioned he deposes and believes that the contents of the articles are true and refers himself to the law.

To Articles 3 and 4 he deposes and says that upon a certain Saturday night in the Lent season² now last past and as he believes and now remembers it was on the Saturday night next going before Mid Lent Sunday last², this examinant being at the house of the articulated Alice Morgan in St Michael's parish near Bath with the said Alice to whom he then had brought certain herbs³ (she being an herb gatherer⁴ for the apothecaries) she asked of this examinant how Henry Moore and his wife did agree. To whom this examinant replying said 'well, God be thanked.' Then said she: 'I thought Richard Meredith (meaning and naming Richard Meredith articulated) had used my house in good will towards me, but now I perceive it is not so, it was more for love of my sister-in-law Moore, than for any love towards me. I have entertained them (meaning the said Meredith and Moore's wife) here at my house many times, and they have had my house, and my victuals⁸ at command. And I have been their bawd⁹ (the Lord forgive me for it) many times, and I have penned them up into my chamber together and they have been naught¹⁰ together there many times. And now I will no longer forbear it, I will tell my brother of it and will make him carry her coat and make her waistcoat of another colour before Wednesday next'. And (said she further) 'when my brother has come into my house and asked for them whilst they have been in the said chamber together, I have sent him away, poor fool, as he came, and told him they were not there'. This, he says and deposes, he saw, heard and understood of the perpetrator. Present none but herself and a maid servant of hers of [...] In this deponent's understanding, the said Alice Morgan by her above recited speeches (which were delivered with great vehemence and in angry spirit) did mean that the said Richard Meredith had lived an incontinent¹¹ or adulterous life with her sister-in-law, the said Henry Moore's wife named Joan Moore. And that she had been their bawd.⁹ By which words he holds the said Richard to be much grieved, discredited and slandered. And otherwise he knows nothing.

To 5 he refers to the law.

To Article 6 he says it is true.

To the final he deposes and says that what he has already deposed is true.

^his mark^¹²

Deposition 2

Repeated before the Vicar General viz. Mr Anton Methwyn, clerk. on 23 June 1607.

On the above libel.

John Sage of Stanton Drew in the county of Somerset, husbandman¹⁴, where he has lived since birth and was born, age 59. The witness produced and first examined says he has known the litigant parties for one year and more and knows them well.

To the first and second article he deposes and believes the same is true and refers to the law etc.

To the third article of the libel on oath examined and deposes that this examinant being an acquaintance of the articulated Alice Morgan, was upon a certain day happening about the feast day of the annunciation of our Lady last past², upon some occasion of business at the house of the said Alice, situated without the North Gate in Bath as he sat eating and drinking in her house, happened to ask of her where Richard Meredith was and how he did (meaning and naming the articulated Richard Meredith). Who answered in effect as follows viz: 'It is no matter where he is'. 'Why?' said this examinant, then said she 'he was wont to come to my house but it was more for love of my brother Moore's wife (meaning [...] Henry Moore's wife) than of me, she has been often sent for to my house by his [...] procurement, but I perceive it was more for her sake than for mine, and there they have been as I think naught¹⁰ together' (meaning by those her words as this examinant did then understand them that they the said Richard Meredith and Henry Moore's wife [...] had lived incontinently¹¹ together in her house). He testifies to his own sight, hearing and understanding. Present then and there in the said house, hearing and noting the premises, Joan Baylie, an inhabitant in Bath and neighbour of the said Alice Morgan's. And otherwise he knows nothing.

To 4 he believes that the said words do tend to the discredit of the said Richard Meredith.

To Article 5 he refers to the law.

To Article 6 he says it is true.

To the final he deposes and says that what he has already deposed is true. And otherwise he knows nothing.

John Sage¹²

Deposition 3

On the above libel

Joanna Stanton (alias Baylie) of the parish of St Peter of the City of Bristol, wife⁶ of John Stanton (alias Baylie) of the same, currier⁷, where she has lived for six days, and before that in Bath in the county of Somerset for the space of two years and before in Bristol for 12 years. And she was born in the parish of St Michael's in the county of Herefordshire, around 30 years old. The witness produced, admitted and sworn and first examined says she knows the litigant parties, the said Richard Meredith, the party producing her, for about one year and Alice Morgan, the party against whom she is produced, she has known for the same time.

To the first article of the libel or the said articles she deposes and says that it is true and refers to the law.

To the second article she deposes that she refers to the law and the articles established.

To Article 3 on her oath she deposes and says that upon a certain day happening about sennight¹⁵ before the feast of ~~the feast~~ of the Annunciation of our Lady the Virgin Mary last past² before this her examination as she remembers (the time otherwise she cannot call to mind), this deponent having an occasion to go to the house of the said Alice Morgan in the forenoon chanced to find one Sage, her precontest¹³, in the said house and the said Alice Morgan talking together when this examinant came in unto them. [...] time and place this examinant says she heard the said Alice Morgan to say that, said she, 'Richard Meredith came to my house and resorted here as though he had come for the love of me. But I perceive he came for the love of my sister, Joanne Moore and I am made a cloak for them both', meaning thereby, as this deponent construes it, as though the said Richard Meredith and the said Joan Moore lived incontinently¹¹ and the said Alice Morgan being a widow woman had been a bawd⁹ to cloak their lewdness, in suffering them to keep company in her house. And this was spoken in the presence, sight and hearing of this deponent and the said Sage, her precontest¹³, maliciously and angrily against the said Richard Meredith and the said Joan Moore. And otherwise she knows nothing.

To Article 4 she deposes it is true.

To Article 5 she deposes she refers to the law.

To Article 6 she says it is true.

To the final she deposes and says that what he has already deposed is true etc.

Joane ~ Stanton alias Baylie her sign ^her mark¹²

Notes

¹ (technicalities of the court) This is a dispute between private parties, known in the church courts as an instance suit.

² (interpretation) In describing when a particular event had taken place, witnesses often reported the time in relation to the liturgical calendar (e.g. referring to church seasons and feast days).

³ (interpretation) Both men and women were engaged in commerce (buying and selling).

⁴ (interpretation) It is unusual for female occupations to be recorded. Alice Morgan's occupation as a herb gatherer, shows women's engagement in the provision of medicine.

⁵ (gloss) A tapster was a keeper of an alehouse or tavern. Male depositions: occupational or social status descriptors (e.g. baker, joiner, yeoman) were typically recorded in the brief biographical statement at the beginning of the deposition.

⁶ (technicalities of the court) Female depositions: marital status descriptors (e.g. singlewoman, widow, wife) were typically recorded in the brief biographical statement at the beginning of the deposition.

⁷ (gloss) A currier is a colourer of leather after it is tanned. Male depositions: occupational or social status descriptors (e.g. baker, joiner, yeoman) were typically recorded in the brief biographical statement at the beginning of the deposition.

⁸ (gloss) Victuals are food or provisions.

⁹ (gloss) A bawd is one who keeps or runs a house of prostitution (or a 'bawdy house').

¹⁰ (gloss) 'Naught' meant being naughty. The term was usually used to describe those who engaged in extra-marital sex.

¹¹ (gloss) Behaving 'incontinently' meant to behave immorally. The term was usually used to describe those who engaged in extra-marital sex..

¹² (technicalities of the court) Witnesses were asked to sign their depositions: signatures range from full names to simply initials or marks (sometimes images linked with trades).

¹³ (technicalities of the court) The words 'contest' or 'precontest' were used to refer to someone who was also witness and had given a testimony in the same case.

¹⁴ (gloss) A husbandman is an agricultural worker. Male depositions: occupational or social status descriptors (e.g. baker, joiner, yeoman) were typically recorded in the brief biographical statement at the beginning of the deposition.

¹⁵ (gloss) Sennight is a period of seven nights (one week).

Prepared as part of the Womens Work in Rural England project.