

Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700

Case 8: Hue and Cry for a Stolen Shirt

Case type: Theft

Summary: While Thomas Cullyn is drinking excessively in Joane and William Friend's (ale)house, a shirt goes missing, raising the hue and cry.

Source: Devon Heritage Centre, QSB-Easter1620

Original Spelling Transcription

Deposition 1

Devon.

The Informac[i]on of Joane Frend the wife¹ of William Frend of Brixhamlabourer² taken before me Ambrose Bellott Esq[ui]re¹¹ &c. the 4th daie of Februarye 1619¹⁰

She saith that yeasterdaie about twelve of the Clock att Noone there came to this Ex[aminan]ts house a poore walkinge man of Berrypumereye and requested this Ex[aminan]t: to rost a cople of pilchardes³ the w[hi]ch she granted him, and he beinge there a while intreated a litle maide w[hi]ch this Ex[aminan]t had in her howse to fetch him two potts of beere⁴, and not contented w[i]th that sent for two potts more; and continued there tiplinge⁵ till night (this Ex[aminan]t havinge oftentimes intreated him to departe out of her house but could not gett him awaie) untill her husband came home from worke, who then by violence thrust him fourth of ye doores, but the next morninge (this Ex[aminan]ts husband beinge gonn to worke) he came to her house againe and would have her to send for more beere, w[hi]ch she did, and he havinge dranke up that, would have her to fetch him yet more, the w[hi]ch she refused to doe, havinge occasion to goe to her neighbours house to buy faggotts of woode⁶, she leavinge noe bodie in her house but a litle maide and the poore man, who (whiles this Ex[aminan]t was wantinge) sent the litle maide for two potts of beere more⁴, and in the meane while (this Ex[aminan]t saith) that the said poore man stole awaie her husbandes shert⁷ the w[hi]ch she found about him in the afternoone of the same daie upon hue & crye.⁸

Am Bellott⁹

Deposition 2

Devon.

The Examinac[i]on of Thomas Cullyn of Berrypumerey, laborer² taken before me Ambrose Bellott esq[ui]re¹¹ the 4th daie of Februarye 1619¹⁰

He confesseth that he came to the house of William Frend in Brixham about twelve of the Clock att Noone beinge the third daie of Februarye last and intreated his wife to rost some fishe pilchards for him³ and to fetch him two potts of beere⁴ and further saith that he came to her house againe the next daie (her husband beinge gonne to worke) and sent for two pots of beere more⁴, and whiles he staid there drinkinge of it, he agreed w[i]th Friends wife for a shert of her husbands and gave her eightene pence for it⁷, and so departed

Am Bellott⁹

Modernized Spelling Transcription

Deposition 1

Devon.

The information of Joane Friend, the wife¹ of William Friend of Brixham, labourer², taken before me, Ambrose Bellott, Esquire¹¹, etc. the 4th day of February 1619.¹⁰

She says that yesterday about twelve of the clock at noon there came to this examinant's house a poor walking man of Berry Pomeroy and requested this examinant to roast a couple of pilchards³, the which she granted him. And he being there a while, entreated a little maid which this examinant had in her house to fetch him two pots of beer⁴, and not contented with that, sent for two pots more. And continued there tippling⁵ til night (this examinant having often times entreated him to depart out of her house but could not get him away) until her husband came home from work, who then by violence thrust him forth of the doors. But the next morning (this examinant's husband being gone to work) he came to her house again and would have her to send for more beer, which she did, and he having drank up that, would have her to fetch him yet more, the which she refused to do, having occasion to go to her neighbour's house to buy faggots of wood⁶, she leaving nobody in her

house but a little maid and the poor man, who (whilst this examinant was wanting) sent the little maid for two pots of beer more.⁴ And in the meanwhile (this examinant says) that the said poor man stole away her husband's shirt⁷, the which she found about him in the afternoon of the same day upon hue and cry.⁸

Am Bellott⁹

Deposition 2

Devon.

The examination of Thomas Cullyn of Berry Pomeroy, labourer², taken before me, Ambrose Bellott, esquire¹¹, the 4th day of February 1619.¹⁰

He confesses that he came to the house of William Friend in Brixham about twelve of the clock at noon being the third day of February last and entreated his wife to roast some fish pilchards for him³ and to fetch him two pots of beer.⁴ And further says that he came to her house again the next day (her husband being gone to work) and sent for two pots of beer more⁴, and whilst he stayed there drinking of it, he agreed with Friend's wife for a shirt of her husband's and gave her eighteen pence for it⁷, and so departed.

Am Bellott⁹

Notes

¹ (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.

² (technicalities of the court) 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.

³ (interpretation) Cooking: evidence of women's work. It is likely that this took place in an alehouse and that the pilchards were to be sold, rather than consumed by the household.

⁴ (interpretation) Serving beer: evidence of women's work. Although it is not recorded, it is likely that Joane and William Friend's house was an alehouse.

⁵ (gloss) 'Tippling' is a contemporary term for drinking longer than one should simply for sustenance.

⁶ (gloss) A faggot is a bundle of wood. Women were engaged in commerce, buying commodities for the house from their neighbours.

⁷ (interpretation) As these are court records, it is common to find two parties telling different stories. It is plausible that Thomas Cullynn stole the shirt but equally plausible that this is an example of a legitimate work activity (the buying and selling of a shirt).

⁸ (gloss) Hue and cry was a form of community policing and a key part of law enforcement when something was stolen.

⁹ (technicalities of the court) Signature of the Justice of the Peace.

¹⁰ (technicalities of the court) Until the Gregorian Calendar was adopted in 1752, the English New Year began on 25th March. According to our modern dating system, this case actually took place in 1620.

¹¹ (technicalities of the court) Occupational or social status descriptors (e.g. baker, joiner, yeoman) were typically recorded for men.

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