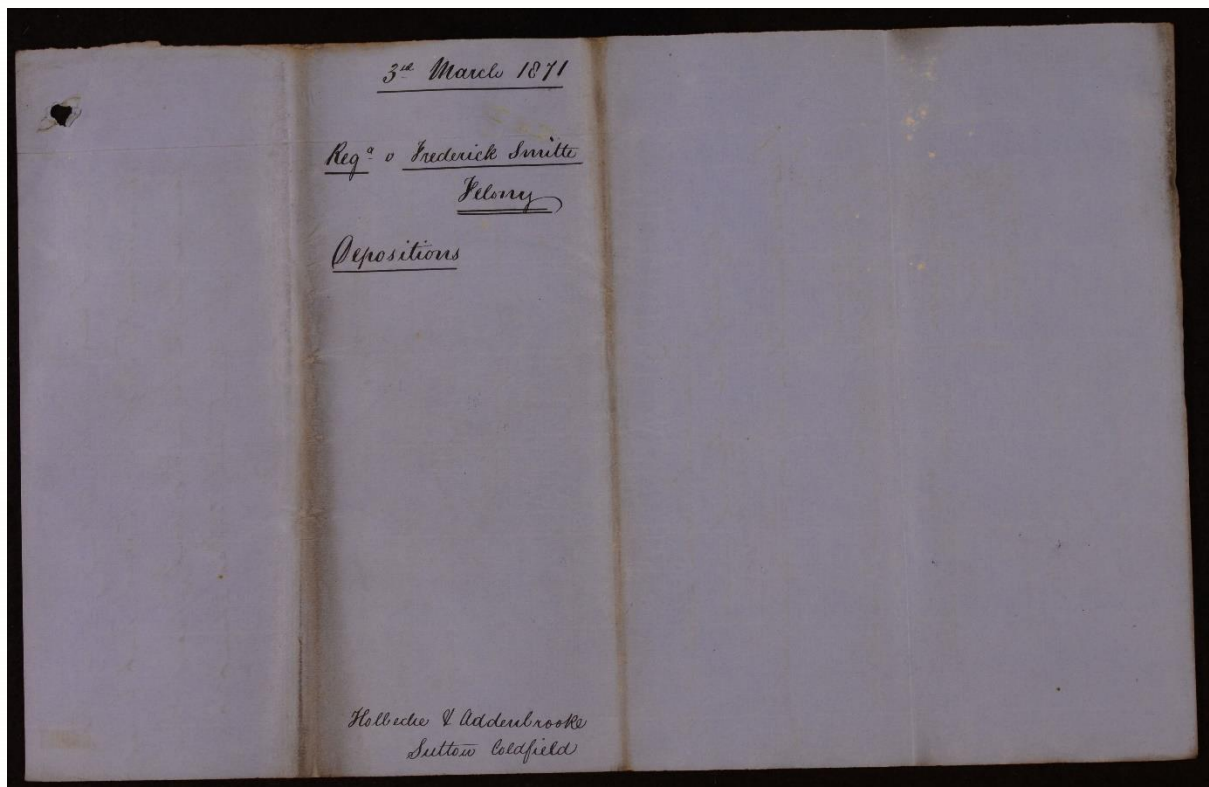


A case of felony between Frederick Smith and the Reverend William Kirkpatrick
Riland Bedford, QS30/48/2/6

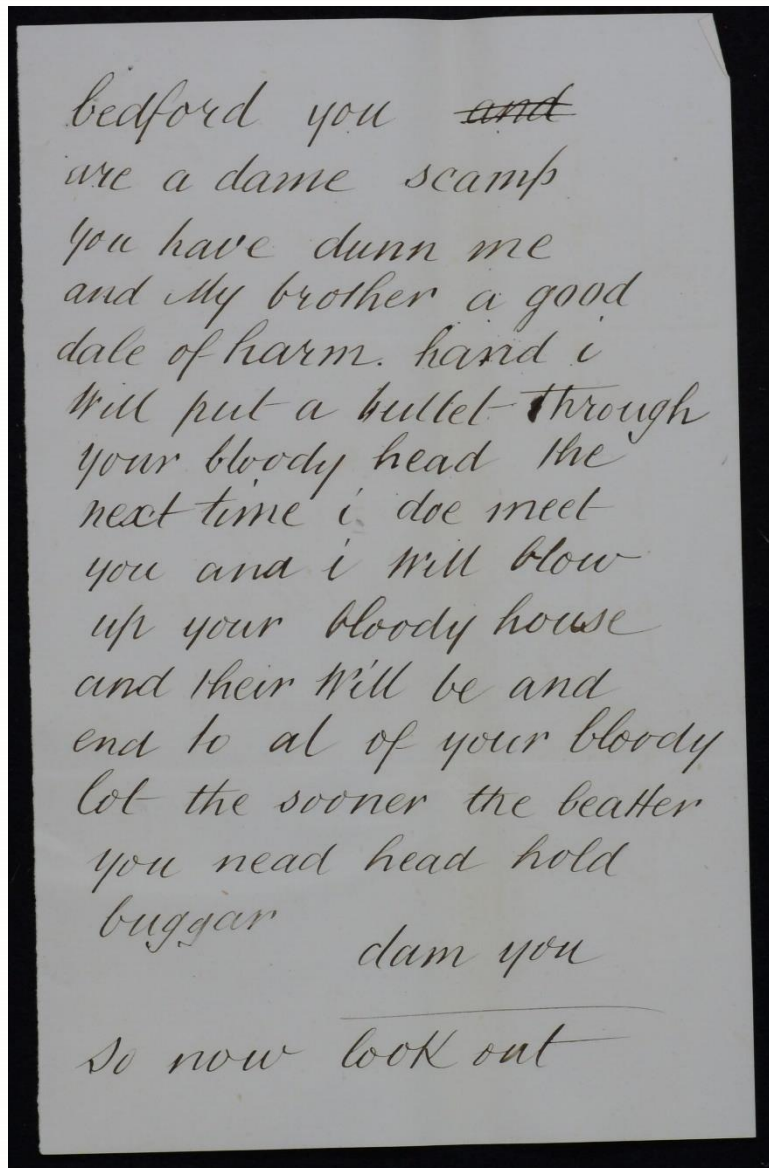
For July's Document of the Month, we have chosen this document from our collection of Quarter Sessions depositions.



Front cover of deposition, QS30/48/2/6

It's a selection of witness statements for a case which involved Frederick Smith and the Reverend William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford, rector of the parish of Sutton Coldfield. The case dates from 1871 and is about a letter allegedly received by the Reverend Bedford from Smith, in which he threatens to murder him. Enclosed amongst the statements is a copy of the letter received by the Reverend Bedford. We have provided a transcription of the letter separately. In it, Smith remarks "you [Bedford] have dunn me and my brother a good dale [deal] of harm"¹. He then curses Bedford and tells him to "look out".

¹ Quarter sessions depositions, Warwickshire County Record Office, QS30/48/2/6.



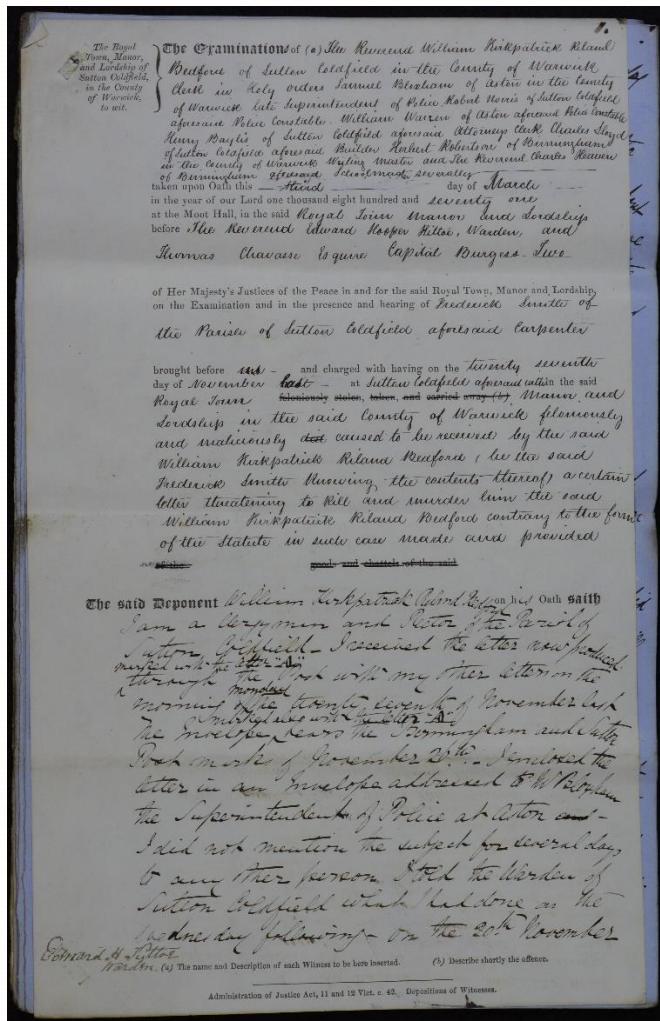
bedford you ~~and~~
are a dame scamp
you have dunn me
and my brother a good
dale of harm. hand i
will put a bullet through
your bloody head the
next time i doe meet
you and i will blow
up your bloody house
and their will be and
end to al of your bloody
lot the sooner the beatter
you nead head hold
buggar dam you
so now look out

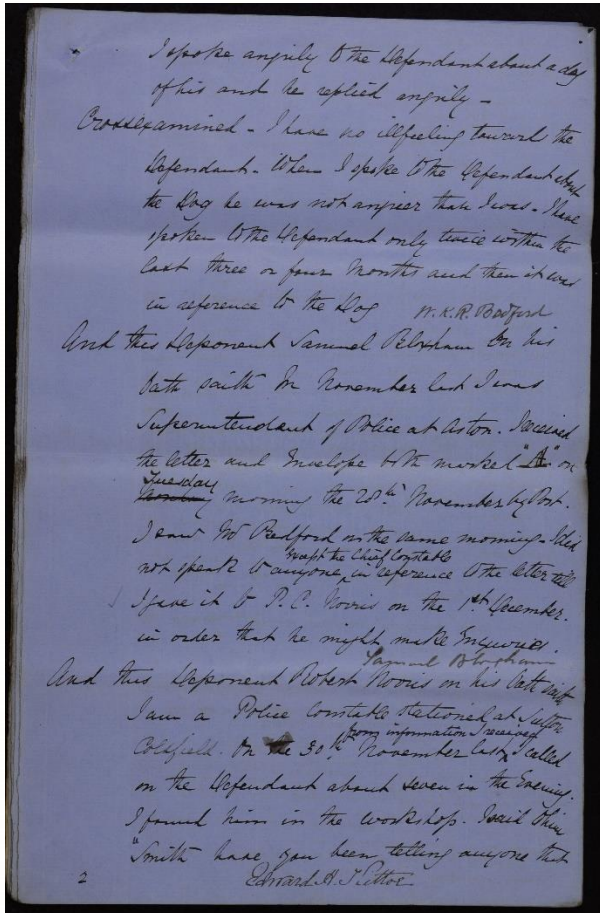
Copy of the letter received by Reverend Bedford, QS30/48/2/6

The deposition starts with a statement from the Reverend Bedford, who remarks that he received the letter with his usual post on the morning of 27th November 1871. "I enclosed the letter in an envelope addressed to W. Bloxham the Superintendent of Police at Aston"². In the letter Smith threatens to shoot the Reverend and blow up his house. He goes on to say that he then said nothing more of the matter to anyone. He explains that on the morning of 20th November, he had confronted Smith about his

² Quarter sessions depositions, Warwickshire County Record Office, QS30/48/2/6.

dog, and Smith had replied angrily. This is the probable reason for the letter being sent.





I spoke angrily to the Defendant about a day
of his and he replied angrily -
Cross-examined - I have no illfeeling toward the
Defendant. When I spoke to the Defendant about
the dog he was not angrier than I was. I have
spoken to the Defendant only twice within the
last three or four months and then it was
in reference to the dog. W.K.R. Bedford
And this Defendant Samuel Bloxham on his
last visit to me in November last I was
Superintendent of Police at Aston. I received
the letter and Envelope to the marked ~~on~~
^{on Tuesday} morning the 20th November by Post.
I saw Mr Bedford on the same morning. He
did not speak to anyone in reference to the letter ~~to~~
I gave it to P.C. Norris on the 1st December
in order that he might make inquiries.
And this Defendant Peter Norris on his last visit
I am a Police Constable stationed at Sutton
Coldfield. On the 30th November last I called
on the Defendant about seven in the evening.
I found him in the work shop. I said this
"Smith have you been telling anyone that
Edward B. Little"

Reverend Bedford's statement, QS30/48/2/6

We then hear from Samuel Bloxham (Superintendent of Police at Aston), Robert Norris (police constable), William Warren (police constable), Henry Baylis (attorney's clerk), Charles Lloyd (builder), Herbert Robertson (writing master) and the Reverend Charles Heaven in regards to the letter.

Frederick Smith did not reply to the evidence, and he then called two witnesses of his own, William Stewart and Thomas Bond.

Smith was committed for trial and bailed, but it is not known what happened to him after this. There is a match for a Frederick Smith living near the Rectory in Sutton Coldfield on the 1871 census, but it is unclear whether this is the same Frederick Smith.

Reverend William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford

William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford was born in Sutton Coldfield in 1827. According to Crockford's Clerical Directory, he became the Rector of Sutton Coldfield in 1850. He is still listed in the directories until 1885, where it is also noted that he became Chaplain to the Bishop of Gibraltar in 1881. He can be found on the census in Sutton Coldfield until 1901 with his wife Maria and their children and servants. He died in 1905 at the age of 78³.

Quarter Sessions

The Quarter Sessions were set up in 1371 and tried more serious non-capital crimes (crimes not punishable by the death penalty)⁴. They met four times a year, hence the name. These were referred to as Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer and Michaelmas respectively. They were presided over by the Justices of the Peace for the County⁵. Quarter Sessions were replaced by the Crown Courts in 1972⁶.

Typical crimes which were dealt with by the Quarter Sessions courts were divided into felonies and less serious misdemeanours. Punishments for these varied from public whipping to transportation and death by hanging⁷.

The Warwickshire Quarter Sessions minutes (catalogue reference QS39) survive from 1625 and are currently being indexed by some of our volunteers. The depositions, or witness statements (catalogue reference QS30), cover the period 1824-1958 and are currently in the process of being digitised and indexed. If you wish to find out more about the depositions project, then email bytes@warwickshire.gov.uk for more information.

These records provide a wealth of information for family historians.

³ Information gathered from Ancestry, Ancestry.com (accessed 02/06/2020)

⁴ Anne Langley, *Warwickshire Quarter Sessions*, Our Warwickshire, <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwickshire-quarter-sessions-introduction>, (accessed 02/06/2020).

⁵ Information gathered from *Heritage and Culture Warwickshire: Calendar of Prisoners Database Further Information*, <http://heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/warwickshire-county-record-office/county-record-office-resources-and-catalogues/county-record-office-calendar-of-prisoners-database/county-record-office-calendars-of-prisoners-aliases-and-abbreviations/>, (accessed 01/06/2020)

⁶ Richard Ratcliffe, *An Introduction to Quarter Sessions Records*, Family History Books Online, <https://www.familyhistorybooksonline.co.uk/hints-tips/an-introduction-to-quarter-sessions-records/>, (accessed 01/06/2020).

⁷ Information gathered from Anne Langley, *Warwickshire Quarter Sessions*, Our Warwickshire, <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwickshire-quarter-sessions-introduction>, (accessed 02/06/2020).

