

Clergy Records

These comprise the records of the Bishop in his dealings with the clergy in pursuance of their normal functions. Relations between the Bishop and his clergy also emerge in the Court Records and the Letters and Memoranda.

The classes of clergy records are:

Ordination papers 1777 to 1940, including lists of candidates, correspondence, examination questions and sometimes nominations to curacies. Most useful are the papers candidates had to provide for the Bishop, which include baptism certificates and letters testimonial to their good conduct, giving information about their lives not found elsewhere.

Licensing records 1642 to 1924 for curates, preachers and chaplains.

Letters testimonial 1790 to 1927, this time including letters relating to incumbents.

Presentation deeds 1559 to 1863 whereby the clergy were presented to their livings (or parishes).

Institution bonds 1615 to 1758, given to the Bishop by the clergy to indemnify him if they turned out to be ineligible or unsuitable to serve.

Mandates for induction 1737 to 1740, with single mandates for 1678, 1779, 1780, 1790

Resignation deeds 1609 to 1949, whereby the clergy resigned from their benefices (or parishes).

Sequestration papers 1663 to 1956; sequestration is the taking back of the living by the Bishop, which might be simply because the incumbent clergyman had left, but could also be for debt or neglect of duty.

Non-residence papers 1801 to 1896; records relating to clergy who did not live in their parishes, including licences for those the Bishop considered to have a reason, and prosecution papers for some he didn't, under the legislation of 1803.

Parochial returns 1814 to 1827; answers to annual questionnaires on church services, incumbents' residence, and curates' stipends.

Interesting examples

Many of the clergy considered it unreasonable that they should be expected to live in their parishes. William Welchman wrote "It is true that I promised to reside

here, but I never meant by that a total, perpetual, constant residence, which is utterly inconsistent with the proper and prudent care I ought in the present distress of bad times to take of my worldly concerns. Also I desire that this house may be cleared of the present family placed here by the tenants, for the woman of the house, being a fruitful, teeming woman, bears children so fast that I am much pestered with the crying of children and their nuisances, and neither I nor my son can brook such inconvenience.”

Where to find records

The Diocesan records are all with the Oxfordshire History Centre, including those after 1836 relating to Berkshire and those after 1845 relating to Buckinghamshire. The records themselves are not online.

Catalogue

The Diocesan catalogue is unfortunately not on the History Centre's Heritage Search online catalogue, but an overview catalogue exists on [A2A](#). You will need to visit the History Centre to look at the full catalogue in printed form.

[Visiting and contacting The Oxfordshire History Centre](#)