

Letters and Memoranda

Correspondence: the surviving correspondence of the Bishop runs from 1665 to 1854 with one earlier exception (see interesting examples below). It tends to concern parish affairs, often from the clergy, with some petitions and a few draft letters of the Bishop himself. A handful of items, though preserved by the Bishop, were neither to nor from him.

Memoranda books: these exist erratically from 1685 to 1895, and are the books in which successive Bishops kept notes from visitations, confirmations, and other events. Most interesting are the two from Bishop Wilberforce, containing uninhibited notes on his clergy and their actions; there also exist three scrapbooks by Wilberforce on the parishes of the three Archdeaconries.

Interesting examples

The earliest surviving letter in the Diocesan archives, from the Bishop's Registrar, Gregory Ballard, to Chancellor Richard Zouche, 1 August 1635: "Sir – You have always been my adversary, as malicious as undeserved. Since I have not wronged you, nor deserved this your usage, I scorn to beg your favour. You have thrown dust in my face, you have maliciously slandered me to my betters and your own. I may chance to spatter you!... I never wore a discoloured eye, to argue me guilty of that which you behind my back accuse me of, nor my wife never called me drunkard nor base sot... I am faithful to My Lord, to whom you are perfidious in these your practices, and hence is your hatred to me." Image: Oxf_Dioc_c_650 f.1 Text Earliest letter in the Diocesan archives, 1635

From the Wilberforce memoranda books, 1857: "Longworth: The Rev Owen Jenkins. Mr James Hirsey, farmer, first writes and then, Oct 29 1857, comes to me at Clifton and charges Jenkins with adultery with his wife, now penitent and distracted; a child born and buried; he suspects foul play."

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. The correspondence of Bishop Secker 1737 to 1758 is printed in Oxfordshire Record Society Vol 57. The Wilberforce memoranda books are printed in Oxfordshire Record Society Vol 66.

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.](#)