

## Papers relating to parishioners

Although the laity, as the parishioners or non-clergy were known, were the province of the priests in the individual parishes, the Bishop did require information about matters which concerned them, particularly schools and recusants or nonconformists. In addition, he was responsible for confirmations of parishioners. The following are the main classes of records relating to them:

**Returns of Schools**, 1808 and 1815. Answers to questionnaires sent round by the Bishop. There also exist various statutes, plans, reports and circulars about schools from 1808 to 1918.

**Confirmation papers:** notes of numbers of candidates and arrangements for confirmation; there are lists of confirmation candidates for 1745, 1826, 1871 to 1877, and 1907 to 1989.

**Returns of recusants** for 1682, late 17<sup>th</sup> century, 1706, 1767 and 1780. In response to successive requests from the Bishop, the clergy provided the names and sometimes the status of the non-Anglicans in their parishes.

**Lists and Bishop's Transcripts of parish registers:** a return of 1813 from parishes as to registers held and their location, and the transcripts of registers which clergy had to send in to the Bishop regularly. For Oxford Archdeaconry the transcripts run from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Archdeaconries are added in 1836 and 1845. There are also transcripts from peculiars.

### Interesting examples

The returns of recusants of 1682 were in response to Bishop Fell instructing the clergy to debate with the recusants in their parishes to persuade them back to the Church. The clergy were often less than enthusiastic. Edward Tyrer of Clanfield replied: "I asked a Quaker why he would not come to church. I'll tell thee, says he, why I can't come to thy church. I have set my hand to the plough and I can't look back. Another told me the Church of England has erred from the truth which is in Christ Jesus, therefore they had separated themselves as a holy and pure people, as Enotch, Enotch (for so he notched the word) was a perfect man and walked with God, with a great deal of canting rabble, the pride and insolence of these filthy dreamers is intolerable."

### 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](#) .

**[Visiting and contacting the Oxfordshire History Centre.](#)**