

Records of Benefices

These are records relating to the livings of the clergy: their possessions and incomes, and issues depending on or affecting those. They include the Orders in Council for Oxford Diocese from 1836 to 1915, which themselves include such matters as the annexing of Berkshire Archdeaconry to Oxford Diocese in 1836, and the order of 1855 which closed the Oxford City church burial grounds.

They also include papers relating to the valuation of livings and Queen Anne's Bounty from 1675 to 1827. Queen Anne's Bounty was a fund established in 1704 to provide additional income for poor clergy.

This class of documents contains the Benefice Papers, which consist of:

Terriers from 1662 to 1856, though the majority are 19th century; these list the property of benefices, generally from visitations. Most 17th century terriers are found in the [Archdeaconry records](#)

Mortgage papers from 1787 to 1849, relating to the borrowing of money to repair parsonages under Gilbert's Act (1776).

Augmentation papers from 1750 to 1847, relating to the conveying of property from impropriated rectories to augment vicarages or curacies.

Exchanges of glebe (Church lands) between incumbents and private individuals from 1690 to 1849.

Purchases and gifts conveying glebe or houses to benefices, 1819 to 1849.

Miscellaneous papers relating to endowments of benefices, 1633 to 1847.

After 1850, papers relating to individual benefices or parishes are usually found in the [Diocesan parish boxes](#)

Interesting Examples

Following the Reformation and even earlier, many lay landowners (known as impropriators) had got hold of Church property and were keeping as much of the revenue as they could. In 1636 the curate of Cogges petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury: "This parish of Cogges is now of the yearly value of £200 and upwards and for a long time concealed, whereby there have been curates who heretofore have had a house convenient and £10 a year pension (stipend) allowed; the rest of the profits have been and still are swallowed by the impropriator. And now your petitioner having no house assigned nor anything but merely his small pension with which he cannot maintain himself and perform

his cure doth for his relief herein and augmentation of his pension wish the rights appropriate to the vicarage to be assigned to him.” The impropiator was forced to increase the pension by £8.

Where are these 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.

Where is the 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](#)