

Visitation records

Background:

Visitation is the practice of the Bishop, the Archdeacon, or their officials visiting each parish in the Diocese on a regular basis to enquire into the state of affairs there and to correct any abuses. The Bishop himself generally visited every three years; in addition, there were two annual visitations, one by the Archdeacon or his official, but the other by the Bishop's Chancellor between 1630 and 1782.

Classes of records:

Visitation created the following records:

Call books from 1630 to 1869, listing the clergy and churchwardens summoned to attend visitation and notes of their appearance.

Churchwardens' presentments from 1784 to 1974. Before the visitor arrived, the churchwardens had to inform him of anything they considered to be wrong in the parish. Mainly they simply stated all was well, though from 1848 they had to answer specifically a printed questionnaire circulated to them.

Clergy answers to a questionnaire circulated to them before the Bishop's visitation; these cover the period 1738 to 1936 at roughly three-year intervals, but there are several missing sequences in the earlier years. The clergy could be more forthcoming about problems than the churchwardens.

Rural Deans' returns to the Bishop after visiting their deaneries, concerning church fabric, churchyards and glebe; they exist at intervals from 1832 to 1936.

Catalogue

The records themselves are not online, but the catalogue of the records is available on [Heritage Search](#). All the diocesan records have the prefix DIOC.

More information

- Oxfordshire History Centre [catalogues](#)
- [Visiting](#) Oxfordshire History Centre
- [Contact us](#) to make an enquiry about the records



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