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VISITATION OF WARRINGTON DEANERY
BY THE BISHOP OF CHESTER,
IN THE YEAR 1592.

THE following abstract of the Visitation of the Bishop of Chester in Warrington Deanery for 1592, is given as an example of a class of documents which is frequently neglected by parish historians. These Visitations were undertaken triennially by the Bishop, and the results entered in large quarto volumes of about 360 pages, though in some cases two consecutive Visitations occur in the same volume. Unfortunately, there is not now remaining at the Diocesan Registry, in Chester, a complete set of these books, but from the year 1554 they are fairly regular.

In the following abstract will be found all the entries as in the original, except that I have given a translation of the Latin phrases, the document being a curious medley of Latin and English. The translated passages are distinguished by being printed in italics. A large number of the cases dealt with were sins against chastity, but as it would have simply been a repetition of legal verbiage to have printed all these, they have been omitted, with the exception of two instances, which will serve as examples of this class of entry.

WM. FERGUSON IRVINE.

Decanatus Warrington
1592.

ACTA HABITA ET GESTA
CORAM VENERABILI VIRO
DAUIDO YALE LEGUM
DOCTORE ETC, PRO RE-
FORMACCIONE CRIMINUM
INFRA DECANATO DE
WARRINGTON . . JX DIE
OCTOBRIS 1592.

[115]

AUGHTON PARISH.

Against the Churchwardens there:—there bible not sufficient they want the first tome of homilies, Mr Juells Replie and Apologie; noe perambulations; noe collectors for the poore. *Richard Wolfull and Henry Martindale the two churchwardens appeared ant the Judge enjoined them that they buy a sufficient bible and certify having done so on the next opportunity thereafter.* To levy xij^d of the absents, and that they go the perambulations.

Against Eleanor the wife of Richard Holden gentleman:—had a child not baptized at her parish church, but supposed to bee baptized contrary to her Majesties lawes. *Excommunicated.*

CHILDWALL PARISH.

Against the Churchwardens there:—the Church wanteth reparacon. *Excommunicated.* [Subsequently erased.] ¹*On which day and in which place they [the churchwardens] appeared, and because it appears from [the information of] John Whittle that the Church is sufficientlie repaired sins the presentment, he [the Judge] decreed that they are to be absolved [from the sentence of excommunication] by the Vicar there.*

Against Mr Anderton of Lostocke farmer [of the advowson] *there*:—The chancell oute of reparation. *Let him be cited.*

Against Henry Hale of Leuerpoole and Ralph Whitfield:—for pipeinge uppon the Saboath day etc. in the Churchyarde. *Excommunicated.*

Against James Claighton:—for pipinge uppon the Saboath daie in Waretree [Wavertree]. *Excommunicated.*

[116] *Against William Plombes of Great Lawton and Ralph Wainwrighte de Darbie*:—for standing in the churchyarde and talkinge at service and sermon time and [sic, for on] the xxv^o daie of June last. *Because it appeared from a letter from Edward Hopwood the Vicar there that the said Plombes is an*

¹ From this point the entry is evidently later. Probably the churchwardens did not appear when cited, and were excommunicated; they then appeared by John Whittle on the following court day, with the above result.

honest man, that he frequents the Church and behaves well there, the Judge enjoined the said Plombes by John Whittell the apparitor never in future, etc., under pain, etc. [Wainwright] excommunicated.

*Against Thomas Mercer of Darbie:—for standinge in the church-
yarde and talking at service and sermon time, i.e., Namelie the
xxv^o day of June last. Excommunicated.*

*Against William Lathom of Alerton and Thomas Greaves of
Waretree:—for talkinge in the church at sermon time.
Thomas Greaves appeared whom the Judge enjoined that he
shall confesse his fault in his parish church xxij instant.
[Lathom] excommunicated.*

²*Against William Rathbon of Great Wolton and Thomas Plombe
of Garston:—for talkinge in the churchyarde at service time
xx^o day of Januarie 1592. William Shurlock, clerk, curate of
Hale appeared for the said Thomas Plombe, and the Judge
derreed the absolution of the said Thomas [to be pronounced] by
the said William and that he should be restored to his Church,
and admonished the said Thomas through the said William
that hee shall [not] offend in the like any more, under pain of
the law, etc. Whereupon, later, he appeared and was restored
and absolved and was enjoined to confess his fault in the parish
church of Childwall before two or three honest men, and to
certify within two months. [Rathbone] excommunicated.*

*Against William Wood of Halewood:—a common hawnter of
alehouses at service time. Woddes appeared, whom the Judge
enjoined to publicly confess his fault in his parish church on the
xxij instant and to certify before the Feast of All Saints.*

*Against Henry Capper and Henry Whitfield smith:—for being
in the Alehouses at the time of Devine service. Excommu-
nicated.*

*Against John Plumpton and William Ather of Waretree:—for
being in the alehouses at time of Devine service. Excom-
municated.*

[117] *Against James Woswall:—His children come not to bee
catechised. Excommunicated.*

[ST.] ELLEN'S CHAPEL.

*Against the Wardens:—The chappell wanteth reparation and all
bookes mentioned in the article.*

[Note.]—*John Rutter, Reader there, excommunicated.*

Against the Curate there:—Not known whether licensed.

² It will be seen from the date that this is a later entry. The culprits did not appear, and were excommunicated; subsequently, however, the curate of Hale appeared for Plombe, with the above result.

HALE CHAPPEL.

Against the wardens:—The wardens appeared and the Judge enjoined them that they shall provyde a sufficient Register Book, a convenient chest, etc., and to levy xij of the absents, etc., under pain, etc.

FARNEWORTH CHAPEL.

Against John Linecar Elizabeth his wife and Katherine wife of Thomas Marsh utterlie refuse to come to Devine Service.³ On the xx day Januarie 1592 before Dr. David Yale John Linecar appeared and took an oath to obey the law in future whereupon he was absolved from the sentence of excommunication and admonished by the Judge to frequent his church in future diligently under pain of the law. And his wife Elizabeth was, it was decreed, likewise to be absolved by Wm. Shurlock Curate of Hale and ordered to do the same as her husband and both to certify, etc., before Easter.

[Katharine Marsh] *excommunicated.*

[118]

HALSALL PARISH.

Against the Rector:—gave noe monitions for choice of collectors according to Statute. To repair ommission in future.

HUITON PARISH.

Against Wm. Brereton of Hareford Esquire:—to repair the chancell ruined. Let him be cited.

Against Hamnet Dichfield gentleman, and Elizabeth wife of Wm. Dichfield gent.:—Non-communicants for a yeare or more. Excommunicated.

xvij day of January 1592. *John Whittle appeared for Hamnet Dichfield gent. and the Judge, because the said John asserts that the said Hamnet and Elizabeth do now regularly come to church, decreed that they should both be absolved, if the Vicar will certify to their frequenting the church. The certificate to be lodged before the Feast of the Purification next.*

Against Margaret the wife of John Dichfield gent., Mary Wofall widow, and Isabella her maid:—Non-communicants for a yeare or more. Margaret Dichfield as in the case above. Wofall and Isabella excommunicated.

[119] *Against Elizabeth wife of Michael Tildesley of Huiton gent. [Similar charge.] Excommunicated.*

Against the wife of Thomas Ballard of Robie and Isabella Rilance of Knowesley Spinster. [Similar charge.] [Result to the wife of Thomas Ballard, same as in the Dichfield action above.] [Rilance] excommunicated.

KERKBIE CHAPEL.

Against the Wardens:—They wante collectors for the poore. Edward Leadbeater one of the wardens appeared and the Judge enjoined him to levy xij^d of the absents under pain, etc., to provide collectors for the poor.

LEVERPOOLE PARISH [sic].

Against the Wardens there:—[Blank.] *Excommunicated.*

LEIGH PARISH.

Against the Wardens there:—There church wanteth reparation. Noe perambulations gone. *George Withington* one of the Wardens appeared, and the Judge enjoined him to have the church repaired before the Feast of *St. John Baptist* and to certify.

Against Mr. Eaton, Vicar there:—weareth nott the surples but refuseth to weare the same. The youth not instructed by him in catechizinge sins Easter laste. *Mr. Eaton* appeared and promised that hee will not offend in the like anie more and that hee will diligentlie catechize his parishioners and goe the perambulations orderlie.

[120] *Against Gervaise Low, curate there*:—Did weare the surples but once sins Xpemas laste and sins that time hath nott catechized the youth. *Mr. Eaton* appeared for the said *Low*, and *Mr. Eaton* took upon himself to promise that the said *Low* shall hereafter weare the surples orderlie and also bee diligente in catechizinge the parishioners.

Against Simon Mather of Culcheth in the parish of Winwick, Webster, and John Mather of Astley husbandman:—For standinge gazinge walkinge and talkinge in the churchyarde and gave badd wordes to the Churchwardens upon their admonition. *Excommunicated.*

Against John Chowl ats Speakman of Shakerley, Nailor, and James Woodworth of Westhoughton, Parish of Deane, Tailor. [A similar charge.] *Excommunicated.*

Against Thomas Grundie of Astle, husbandman, and Gilbert Mather son of James Mather of Aderton, husbandman. *Excommunicated.*

Against George Grundie:—For talkinge in the Church. *Excommunicated.*

Against William Stirrop, schoolmaster. *Not licensed. Excommunicated.*

[121]

MAGHULL PARISH.

[Nil.]

MELLINGE CHAPEL.

Against the Wardens:—The churchyarde wall nott made upp, they wante a Communion Booke. *John Pooley appeared and the Judge enjoined him to provyde a Communion Booke before Xmas next, and to make upp the churchyaide wall before the Feast of S. John Baptist next and to certify and also to provide a pulpitt before Xmas nexte.*

NORTHMEALES.

Against Ralph Cleaton and Stephen Cleyton, Executors of the will of the last Rec'or there; to repaire the chancell ruined in his time. *Excommunicated* [for non-appearance]. [Later.] The church in repaire. Ytt appeareth the Chancell is repaired by the Executors sins the presentment and farther by the relation of Mr. Wierden. [Sentence of excommunication recalled.]

Against the Wardens:—the churchyard wanteth reparation, they wante a bible and communion booke. *Excommunicated* [for non-appearance].

ORMISCHURCH.

[122] *Against Richard Leyland, Robert Hunter, Robert Halsall, and Thomas Moundaie, Churchwardens*, have not accompted as yet [rendered their yearly accounts]. *Excommunicated* [for non-appearance].

Against Thomas Wainwright [?], Robert Haslegreave, Robert Harrison, Thomas Whitstone, Miles Barton, John Mellinge, and Ralph Berchwood:—for departing and not exhibitinge there presentements. *Excommunicated.*

Against Humfrey Sesbridge and Gilbert Wasse:—for standing in the streete at service time and gevinge the churchwardens evell wordes. *Excommunicated.*

Against James Ascrofte of the Parish of Aughton, Wm. Haworth, and John Penketh. [Similar charge.] [All] *excommunicated* [for non-appearance]. [Later.] *On the same day Ascrofte appeared and begged to be absolved from the sentence of Excommunication and obtained his request and was enjoined to abstain from like evil conduct in future under pain of excommunication.*

Against Judith Whetstones:—for praieing upp on Beades.

[123] Contra Thomam Weasthead tanner et Margaretam Wesley. Fornicatores. Respectus est idem Thomas in festum Nativitatis Domini proximum, comparuit idem Thomas et Dominus injunxit ei penitencias publicas pro tres dies dominicos in Ecclesia de Ormeschurch in lineis v xij et xix diebus Novembris 1592, et ad habet certificandum citra festum Nativitatis Domini proximum. Deinde comparuit idem Thomas et submitit se juri humiliter petens quantum hujusmodi penitentie in penam pecuniariam commutaretur. Unde Dominus commutavit hujusmodi penitentie in penam pecuniariam viz. in summam xij^s iij^d solvendam vicario de Ormischurche et guardianis ibidem, ante xij Novembris prox. per eos distribuendam inter pauperes et in alios pios usus per dictum vicarium et gardianos appurtinandos et habet ad certificandum citra festum Nativitatis Domini prox. Mulier excommunicata.

PRESCOTT PARISH.

Against Henry Coney. Liveth from his wife and keepeth one Isabell Bowker. *Cite afresh because they are parishioners of Huiton.*

Against the Wardens. They want a faire linnen cloath for the communion table. Noe perambulations. Noe adulterie presented. *Thomas Wooddes and Henry Rothwell the two Wardens appeared,* and the *Judge enjoined them to provyde a faire linnen cloath for the Communion table before the Feast of All Saints next and to certify,* and hereafter to use the perambulations and also to provyde a decent communion table before Xmas. And [margin] to make a full presentment within 3 weeks.

Against the Vicar and Curate. Do not catechize the youth. Mr. Meade [?] the Vicar appeared and stated that every Sondaie and holidaiie he doth interpret upon some parcell of Scripture before and after noone. *The Judge enjoined him that hee shall hereafter catechize and to certify the names of such as refuse.*

[124] *Against Henry Lathom of Rainford and Alice Wood,* John Leicester and Anna Bell. *Married without banns. Excommunicated.*

Against Thomas Carter senior, Richard Cowper and John Davies. For plaieing at cardes in James Dichfield's howse att eveninge prairer uppon the Saboth daie. *The Judge enjoined him openly to confess his faulte in the parish church at time of Divine Service on the xxij instant.*

*Against the said James Dichfield:—*For suffering them in his house. [Judgment as in above.]

[125] *Against Wm. Leigh of Middleton*:—Had a child christened, not known where. *Excommunicated.*

Against John Leigh. [Similar charge] and his wife not churched. *Excommunicated.*

Against Thomas Jackson. Bie reporte hath ij wives liveinge. *John Whittle appeared for the said Jackson, and the Fudge enjoined him to exhibit a perfecte certificate of death of one of his wives before the Feast of the Annunciation.*

Against Elizabeth Denton and Edward Bradshaw. Suspected of suspitious companie. *Excommunicated.*

ST. ELEN'S CHAPEL.

Against John Rutter, Reader there. Married Humfrey Matley and Alice Arrowsmith without banns. *Excommunicated.*

[126]

RAINFORTH CHAPEL.

Against Henry Lathom and Margaret his wife. Absent themselves from church. *Excommunicated.*

Against the Curate. Gave noe monitions. *Excommunicated.*

SEPHTON PARISH.

Against Ralph Williamson. Had a child xpened and his wife churched, not known where. *Excommunicated.*

WINWICKE PARISH.

Against the Wardens of Trinitie and of Newton:—Want Surplesses and Trinitie wanteth a Table cloath. *Henry Devias and Matheus Grene [?] appeared and the Fudge enjoined them to provyde a surples and a decent communion cloath before xpemas next, and to certify, etc.*

Against Xpofer Bodon and his wife. Do not live together. *Excommunicated.*

Against Thomas Grimsford, tailor, and Margery his wife. Do not live together. *Excommunicated.* [Later.] *The man appeared and states that his wife hath plaied the naughtie packe and dyd rounde awaie with another man and is banished out of Newton, and that shee hath putt hym in feare of his liefe. Whereupon the Fudge having regard to the poverty of the man absolved him and admonished him to live with his wife or to show just cause why he should not in future treat her as wife. The woman excommunicated.*

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Against Lawrence Pendleburie, Thomas Aynsworth, and Agnes Culchet. Married without banns. Aynsworth appeared and stated that he was married to the said Agnes in the Chapel of Ashton by Richard Winstanley Rector of Weskerbie without licence or banns being read, and he gave him 2s. 4d. and brought as witness Ralph Litherland, who swore that he was present with others. Wherefore because it appears that the woman is dead, the Judge absolved Aynsworth, restored him to the Sacraments of the Church, and so dismissed him. He decreed that the Rector [of West Kirby] should be cited. [Pendleburie] excommunicated.

WARRINGTON PARISH.

Against the Rector there:—The chancell in greate decaie. Noe perambulations. Noe monitions for collectors. The Rector appeared and the Judge enjoined him to cause the chancell bie hym selfe or the fermor to be sufficientlie repaired before the Feast of the Nat. of S. Fohn Baptist next under pain of sequestration of fruits and to certify. Also to publish monitions for collectors.

Against the Wardens there:—They wante the Bible, the Communion booke, Juell's Replie and Apologie, A comely table coveringe and table cloath and a surples. Noe perambulations. Noe monitions geven for collectors. George Swanne [?] and Thomas Bullen the wardens appeared and affirm that they have bought a newe Bible. Whereupon the Judge enjoined them that they shall provide a Communion booke, Juell's Replie and Apologie, a comelie table coveringe and surples, a Register Booke and Cheste before Xmas nexte and to certify. Thereafter to use the perambulations.

Against Hamnet Motley. Married not known where. Excommunicated.

[129] *Against Peter Holebroke and Susan Middleton:—Fornicators. Excommunicated. [Later.] The man appeared and confessed his fault and saith hee is to marrie the woman presentlie, and that the time is appointed. Wherefore the Judge absolved him and also the woman, and in case the marriage be duly solemnized, the Judge decreed that they confess their fault before the Rector of Warrington and the wardens there, and in case they are not married to do the usual penance, and to certify before the Feast of St. Bartholemew next concerning the solemnization of the marriage and also of the confession.*

Against Geffrey Page and his wife:—Do not live together. The Judge referred the man to the Lord Bishop.

WALTON CUM DERBIE.

Against Isabella Glest. A scholder swearer and disquieter of her neighbours. *Ordered through the Wardens of Walton, Thomas Smith and John Bolton, that on the xxij instant she shall publicquely confesse her faulte in her parish church.*

Against Isabella Martin, widow. A recusant. *Because it appeared from a letter of Thomas Wainwright, Curate of Derby, brought by John Whittle apparitor, that the said Isabell was at devine service at Derby chappell the first of October last and resorteth often unto Derby chappell, the Fudge enjoined her that she shall hereafter dutiefully repaire to Walton church or Derby chappell upon Sondaie and Holiedaies, at time of Divine service and to exhibit certificate hereof and of her behaviour to Mr. Chancellor, before the Feast of St. Andrew next, under pain, etc., under the hands of the Curate, Vicar, and Churchwardens.*

WIGAN.

*Against Nicholas Lowe of Wigan, tailor, and Elizabeth Haslam of Bolton, spinster:—*Married in the howse of Roger Haslam bie Richard Winstanley, clarke, without banns having been published. *Excommunicated.*

*Against William Wood of Wigan, girdler, and Emma Parre:—*Married without banns or licence. *Excommunicated.*

*Against the Rector:—*They wante a Chancell, the parson weareth noe surples, hee and the Curate doe not catechize and instructe the youth. *On which day he appeared and the Fudge enjoined him to weare the surples and to catechize dutifullie and orderlie.*

[130] *Against John Lowes of Wigan, webster:—*A notorious blasphemmer of the name of God. *Excommunicated.*

Against Nicholas Low tailor. A comon swearer. *Excommunicated.*

Against James Sherington. A cursed speaker. *Excommunicated.*

[131] *Against Hamnet Greene and Jane Underwood:—*Live suspiciouslie in howse together. *Hamo Greene appeared and denied any crime. The Fudge enjoined him to purge himself by the oaths of 6 honest men, in his parish church on the 29th instant.*

[133] *Against Richard Fraw of Scoles, pewterer.* Oute of charetie. *Excommunicated.*