

Extracts from the Bishop of Chester's Visitation for the year 1665, relating to Friends.

The volume from which the following entries are transcribed is not precisely the record of the Visitation itself, which seems to have taken place in the early autumn of 1665, but is the record of the cases subsequently presented, as an outcome of the Visitation, and afterwards tried before two Commissioners in December.

It is worthy of note that practically no Quakers appeared to answer the charges. They seem to have ignored the Court in a wholesale manner, and I expect in the next Visitation (of 1668) we ought to find the bulk of these duly excommunicated, preparatory to being handed over to the Secular arm.

The records are a curious jumble of compended Latin and English, but for the sake of simplicity I have translated the whole.

During the middle ages, and down until the Act of Toleration began the breaking of their spell, the Bishops through their courts exercised jurisdiction over a very wide area—chastity, slander, usury, licensing of Doctors, midwives, behaviour in public places, drunkenness, gaming, in fact all moral offences, in addition to questions relating to Church polity and structures.

The Bishop "visited" his Diocese once in every three years—his Archdeacon the other two years—and his visit consisted in the issuing of an immense string of questions addressed to the Churchwardens, Sidesmen, Rectors, Vicars, etc., ordering them to tell of any breaches of ecclesiastical discipline, that came within their knowledge. They returned their answers, "presenting" that so and so was guilty of such and such an evil practice—hence, these Quaker presentments. All the Bishop could do to the delinquents was to solemnly excommunicate them; if they disregarded this terrible weapon, the Bishop sued out a writ of "*de excommunicato capiendo*," and the civil authorities then appeared on the scene and imprisoned, fined, and so on. See Hallam's *Constit. Hist.*

DEANERY OF WIRRAL : Co. CHESTER.

Nil.

DEANERY OF WARRINGTON.

Visitation held 11th December, 1665, at Wigan.

FARNWORTH.

Against Robert Barton & his wife, Gilbert Holt, Thomas Kukid [?] & his wife, John Barnes & his wife, Savage Mason, Richard Goose, Thomas Barnes, senior & his wife, Thomas Barnes, junior, Peter Barnes, William Barnes & his wife, Samuel Barrowe, John Minshall & his wife, Elizabeth Minshall, Eleanor Minshall, Mary Minshall, & Samuel Minshall, quakers. The said Savage Mason is a notorious, seduceinge Person.

Against Thomas Earle & his wife, Margaret Massey, Mary Shaddocke, Richard Lancaster & his wife, Richard Holden & his wife, [*blank*] the wife of Thomas Tankerfield, & Thomas Taylor & his wife, for the same.

Against Richard Lancaster, junior, Richard Earle, Isabel Earle, Margaret Earle, & Ellen Barnes, for the same.

HUYTON.

Against Peter Lathwood & Alice his wife, William Bootle & Margaret his wife, William Hatton & Alice his wife, James Fletcher & Mary his wife, & Richard Biseley, for Quakers.

HALSALL.

Against Thomas Barrowe, for being a Quaker.

Against Roger Letherbarrow & Jane his wife, George Pye & Margaret his wife, Margaret Underwood & John her son, for the same.

MELLINGE CHAPPELLRY IN THE PARISH OF HALSALL.

Against Thomas Hickocke, schoolmaster, a Quaker, for teaching a private schoole in William Martin's house.

Against Alice Tyrer, & the aforesaid Thomas Hickocke, for Quakers.

ORMSKIRKE.

[Loose scrap of paper on which is a letter as follows.]
Gentlemen.

Wee, the Churchwardens of the pish of Ormskirke, humbly offer these things to yor consideraçon :—

Impr: whereas in our presentmts to this Court wee did present Rich: Mosse, of Skersmosdell, dyer, among

Recusant Papists, hee is now put amongst Quakers in the Citaçon, wch : wee pray may bee amended.

* * * * *

Silvester Sutch, }
James Swift, } Churchwardens.

Against Isaac Ashton & Margaret his wife Anne Kenobye & Anne her daughter, Peter Leadbeater, Mary the wife of Richard Taylor, Thomas Kilshowe & his wife, George Burrowes & Dorothy his wife, John Dicke & Jane his wife, Anne Atherton,¹ Gotterell Atherton, Richard Cubbon² & Anne his wife, George Showe & Margery his wife, Thomas Fearnese & Jane his wife, & Richard Webster, Quakers.

Against Margaret Kendell, widow, Mary Kendale, Catherine the wife of George Endowe, Lawrence Underwood, Mary Johnson, widow, Henry Fostart & Mary his wife, & Thomas Crosby, for the same.

Against Thomas Crosby, of Ormskirke, Quaker, for openinge his shop & exposinge his wares to sale upon hollidays.

Against Henry Fostart [see above], for not paying the rate assessed on him towards the repair of the Church, 4d.

Against Isaac Ashton, & Anne Kenoby, both of one house, for the like betwixt them, 1s. 1d.

Against James Barton & Elizabeth his mother, for the same, 1s. 3d.

Against James Barton, junior, 1s. 3d. & William Barton, 1s. 3d., the same.

Against Elizabeth Halsall, widow, 10d. & Catherine Lathom, 4d. ob., for the same.

Against Gotterell Atherton & her mother, for the same, 10d.

Against Richard Cubbon, 8d. Peter Leadbetter, 10d. & Edward Lyon, 6d. for the same.

SEPHTON.

Against Richard Johnson, Anthony Wetherby, Edyth wife of John Hulton, John Smallshowe & Ellen his wife, Quakers.

¹ The persecution of Oliver Atherton, of Bickerstaff; which resulted in his death in prison in 1663, is mentioned by George Fox in his *Journal* (ii. 25, 26). There is a long letter in D., written by O.A., to M. Fell, from Shrewsbury Gaol in 1660.

² Richard and Anne Cubban (Cubham), of Bickerstaff, are also referred to in the *Journal* (i. 381, ii. 25, 26). Anne Cubban died in 1703, and her husband in 1709.

WALTON.

Against Richard Much, of Bootle, Thomas Rose, of Kirkdale, & Margaret Kirks, of Bootle, for Quakers.

WEST DERBY CHAPPELLRY IN THE PARISH AFORESAID.

Against Roger Watmough, & James Tarleton, for Quakers.

WARRINGTON.

Against John Barrowe, Samuel Dunbabin, John Crowchley, Susan Crowchley, Jeremiah Thomlinson, Brian Sixsmith³ & his wife, Thomas Cocker & his wife, of Warrington, Quakers.

Against John Pickeringe, & John Barrowe [see above], of Warrington, for not buryinge their dead att the Parish Church.

WINWICK.

Against Geoffrey Flitcroft & Dorothy his wife, Richard Pickeford, alias Cooke, of Houghton & Culcheth, Quakers.

WIGAN.

Against George Bradshawe, Peter Bradley & his wife, Mrs. Boore, widow, James Gregory & his wife, Ralph Pemberton, Alice Pemberton, & Henry Winstanley, Quakers.

WM. FERGUSSON IRVINE.

To be continued.

³ The names of Brian (Bryan, Bruen, Brewen) Sixsmith (Sixsmith) and of his wife Hester, occur occasionally in the records of early Friends. They were the parents of William Sixsmith, whose testimony entitled, *Some Fruits brought forth through a Tender Branch in the Heavenly Vine, Christ Jesus, named William Sixsmith*, was written by his father in 1679, and to which were added some short pieces in verse. In 1660, B.S. was imprisoned at Shrewsbury with Benjamin Boulton and others, for visiting Friends in prison at that place, and in the next year he suffered in the same way in Denbighshire. (Besse, i. 744, 748.) Patience Sixsmith is mentioned by Besse (i. 327) in connection with Warrington. William Sixsmith died in 1677, aged twenty-one, and his father died in 1679. See *Piety Promoted*.