

Protestation Returns

Introduction

The protestation was an oath of allegiance to the King and the established church. A bill was passed in Parliament in July 1641 requiring those over the age of 18 to sign the protestation. In practice, this meant all men; women were not usually asked to sign. No one was allowed to hold office in the church or the state unless they signed. A letter was sent by the Speaker of the House of Commons to the sheriffs instructing them to take the protestation with the justices of the peace in their county, and then the incumbent of each parish was to read the protestation to his parishioners and they were all to sign. This took place in February and March 1641/2. The Protestation Returns were then sent back to Parliament.

Surviving Returns are kept at the Parliamentary Archives.

Protestation Returns for Devon were transcribed by A.J. Howard, indexed by T. L. Stoate, and published in 1973. This publication can be found on the library shelves in the Devon Heritage Centre search-room at Sowton, Exeter, as well as in North Devon Local Studies Centre, Barnstaple, and other university and public libraries outside Devon.

The Devon Returns in the Parliamentary Archives include 412 out of 468 parishes; the rest are missing. Some copies of the returns have survived locally in parish records; for example where they have been copied into the parish register. The Uffculme parish list, found in the parish register, was published in the periodical "Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries", vol X, pp. 253-256.

Printed References

All of the following references are held in the local studies collection at Devon Heritage Centre:

Devon Protestation Returns, Howard & Stoate (1973)

The Protestation Returns 1641-42, Jeremy Gibson and Alan Dell, Federation of Family History Societies Publications Ltd.

Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries: the following issues -

- Vol XIII *The Protestations of 1641*, G. Jasper Nicholls
- Vol X *The Protestation Oaths 1641* R.B.M.
- Vol XXXIII *The Population of Exeter in 1641-2*, W. B. Stephens
- Vol XXXV *The Population of two Exeter Parishes in 1641-1642*, T. J. Falla and M. M. Rowe

Protestation returns for the city of Exeter February-March 1642, transcribed from the originals in the House of Lords Library. Typescript, 1964.

Devon Heritage Centre
Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Exeter
EX2 7NL

01392 888700

devonarchives@swheritage.org.uk

Website: www.swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives