



## PATRIMONY COMMITTEE and PATRIMONY SUB-COMMITTEE

### ANNUAL REPORT 2008

**Meetings:** Three Committee meetings have been held during the year, in June, October and November. The meeting scheduled for February was taken up with a viewing of the rough-cut of the DVD of 'Glimpse of Heaven' to enable committee members to see how the film was developing and to comment on the content. The Patrimony Committee and Patrimony Sub-Committee continued to be run in tandem.

**Membership:**

The membership of the Committee remains the same: Bishop Thomas McMahon (Chairman); Sophie Andreae (Vice-Chairman and Chairman Sub-Committee); Emma Bassett; Fergus Brotherton; John Cowdall; Andrew Derrick; Martin Goalen; Canon Alan Griffiths; Fr Peter Harris; William Salvin; Mike State; Abbot Geoffrey Scott and Tricia Brooking (Hon. Secretary). Michael Fitzgerald QC - Secular Planning Lawyer and Mgr Richard Moth - Canon Lawyer, give legal advice as necessary. Fr Allen Morris joined the committee in November. His former position in the Department of Christian Life and Worship remains to be filled, therefore there has been no Department representative at meetings. Martin Foster has given advice and support upon request and copies of the minutes are sent to him.

**Help and Advice:**

This is given on request to HCCs. Where necessary additional advice is sought from other professionals with regard to problems or issues relating to specific churches or other more general issues. HCCs are circulated with any relevant information that comes to the Committee from outside bodies such as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), English Heritage and the like. English Heritage has been keen to encourage more applications for repair grants from Catholic cathedrals and churches and the Committee alerted HCCs accordingly.

The Committee welcomes initiatives from individual HCCs (e.g. the paper on Church Organs produced by Birmingham in 2007) and is always willing to offer advice.

**Publications:**

Following the great success of the illustrated book *A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales*, the author, Christopher Martin, produced a DVD based on the book. This DVD makes use of many more of Alex Ramsay's outstanding photographs. The DVD was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, London, and is being distributed by the Catholic publisher, Gracewing. It is very much hoped that this will be of interest to parishes and to individuals interested in the heritage of the Church. English Heritage is publishing a paperback version of the book in the spring.

**HCC Conference:**

This year's Conference was held in April at the Wheeler Hall in Leeds. There was the biggest attendance to date. Of the 93 delegates, 61 were HCC and Patrimony Committee members. Others were from different Catholic organisations and representatives of bodies with an interest in the future of historic churches in England and Wales. The theme was 'Looking to the Future'. Speakers included John Minnis whose new book, *Religion and Place in Leeds*, had just been published by English Heritage. Sarah Brown outlined English Heritage's emerging policy for churches following the successful Inspired! Campaign. This campaign has led directly to increased government funding being made available to English Heritage for the churches sector. Andrew Derrick, a member of the Patrimony Committee, reported on the progress of the Taking Stock initiative (see below).

During the afternoon there was a discussion about the major refurbishment and reordering work that has recently been completed at St Anne's Cathedral. This was led by Richard Williams, the architect of the scheme and by Ken Powell, the architectural writer and critic who is also a member of the Leeds HCC. They discussed how the plans had evolved, the challenges that had emerged and how the HCC had helped to guide and support the scheme through to its final implementation. A tour of the Cathedral followed. All agreed that the refurbishment and reordering was exemplary and had significantly enhanced this important cathedral.

**Taking Stock Projects:**

These are the studies which are being jointly funded by individual dioceses and by English Heritage. The studies provide a detailed assessment of the architectural and historic value of all churches and chapels in a particular diocese. The aim of these studies is to provide decision-makers in dioceses with the necessary information in order to 'factor in' heritage considerations into their deliberations. In addition to the first two studies carried out in Lancaster and Arundel and Brighton a few years ago, Taking Stock studies have now been completed in the following dioceses: Portsmouth, Middlesbrough, Leeds and Liverpool. Further dioceses have contacted English Heritage to discuss support funding namely Plymouth, Northampton Westminster, Clifton, Shrewsbury and Southwark. It is very much to be hoped that the remaining dioceses in England (similar funding is not available in Wales unfortunately via Cadw) will also submit applications. Having authoritative information about the heritage value (or not, as the case may be) of all churches and chapels in a particular diocese together with an indication, in the case of listed churches, of the scope for adaptability provides dioceses with an essential tool for future planning. Dioceses - and in particular diocesan Trustees - increasingly need to understand the wider policy context in which issues, particularly in relation to possible church closures, are likely to be considered by the statutory authorities as this will inevitably impact on the quality of decision making.

**Archives:** Abbot Geoffrey Scott continued to keep the Committee informed of the work of the Catholic Records and Archives Societies and other issues relating to archives.

**Vatican Documents:**

The Vatican Information Service continues to be monitored for relevant information.

### **Endangered Churches and related patrimony matters:**

The future of a number of historic churches is causing concern following closures. This is particularly an issue in the north west of England. There have been a number of articles in the press, both in the Catholic press and the national press.

There is increasing public criticism of the perceived lack of meaningful consultation by the Church prior to some church closures. The Patrimony Committee is increasingly concerned that dioceses may not fully grasp the implications of closing listed churches both in terms of the impact on parishioners but also in terms of the future of the buildings themselves. Failure to engage with the statutory authorities and other interested parties at an early enough stage has to some extent fuelled this criticism. Also, the difficulties of seeking appropriate alternative uses for churches no longer needed for worship presents real challenges because if listed, demolition is these days unlikely to be a realistic option. In addition, a closed church is a building at risk and dioceses need to appreciate that there can be significant costs involved in protecting closed church buildings as they can become a magnet for vandals. Derelict and vandalised churches give the impression that dioceses do not take their responsibilities for their heritage assets seriously.

There is also the issue of churches which have been closed in the past which have since been converted to uses which many people feel are inappropriate. One of the oldest churches in Liverpool, St Peter's, Seel Street, is now a restaurant. Many artefacts with religious connotations remain, however, inside the building making many Catholics who go there feel distinctly uncomfortable. The restaurant itself actively promotes a 'religious' feel as part of its marketing, filling the place with ecclesiastical style candles and at Halloween this year promoting "Dracula's Wedding" style events. This unease was articulated by Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, in his major heritage speech given at English Heritage's launch of their 2008 Heritage Counts report at the end of October.

The Patrimony Committee is increasingly concerned at the level of criticism the Church is receiving about church closures. The Patrimony Committee is itself always available to offer help and advice to dioceses. It is also keen to encourage dioceses to apply for the new funding stream that English Heritage is making available for Support Officer posts. This is a three year grant programme to help fund new posts in dioceses to help, support and advise dioceses on all areas on all matters concerning heritage but most particularly to advise on problem churches or on churches threatened with closure, to build positive relationships with statutory and grant making bodies and with local communities. The background to this new initiative were the pilot projects run in a number of Anglican dioceses (Manchester, London and Chichester) a few years ago. In each case the posts proved so successful and the dioceses themselves felt the investment in the posts provided such good value for money that each diocese has continued with the posts after the initial pump priming public funding ended. The Patrimony Committee believes there is enormous scope within Catholic dioceses for similar Support Officer posts and is keen to see dioceses taking up the English Heritage offer of 50% funding. Whilst recognising that many dioceses are very stretched financially at the present time, investment in such posts is more than likely to prove a sound investment (as the Anglicans have found) both in terms of sound advice on difficult issues, in bridge building with the statutory authorities and other partners and thus in the unlocking of new funding streams for church buildings.

### **Heritage Protection Bill:**

This anticipated Bill was not included in the Queen's Speech and thus will not come before Parliament this session. However, the Secretary of State has written to reassure interested parties that the Government remains committed to the Bill. Some of the changes proposed,

including the proposed changes to the Ecclesiastical Exemption, do not require primary legislation and it is likely that these will be taken forward by the DCMS. On behalf of HCCs the Patrimony has expressed its concern at the possibility of additional costs if new procedures are introduced that add to the bureaucratic load and will be keeping the situation under review.

**Other organisations:**

Sophie Andrae continued to be the Catholic representative on English Heritage's Places of Worship Forum. This committee advises EH on policy matters relating to the heritage of both Christian and non Christian places of worship. She is also the RC representative on English Heritage's new Working Party that is currently reviewing the fabric needs of Cathedrals in England and Wales.

**Planned Work:**

**HCC Conference.** The 2009 Conference will be held at St Paul's Cathedral in London on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May.

**Other matters** will continue to be dealt with as they arise and when requests are received from HCCs and other bodies.