



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

PATRIMONY COMMITTEE and PATRIMONY SUB-COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Meetings: Three Committee meetings have been held during the year, in March, June and September. A further meeting is scheduled for November. The Patrimony Committee and Patrimony Sub-Committee continued to be run in tandem. Members of the Committee are in regular email contact.

Membership:

The membership of the Committee remains the same: Bishop Thomas McMahon (Chairman); Sophie Andreae (Vice-Chairman and Chairman Sub-Committee); Emma Bassett; John Cowdall; Andrew Derrick; Martin Goalen; Canon Alan Griffiths; Fr Peter Harris; William Salvin; Mike State; Abbot Geoffrey Scott and Tricia Brooking (Hon. Secretary). Financial Secretaries, Fergus Brotherton and Simon Thorington attend meetings alternately. Michael Fitzgerald QC - Secular Planning Lawyer and Mgr Richard Moth - Canon Lawyer, give legal advice as necessary. Fr Allen Morris of the Department of Christian Life and Worship regularly attends meetings and gives a great deal of support to the Committee.

Help and Advice:

This is given on request to HCCs. Where necessary additional advice has been sought from other professionals for problems relating to specific churches. HCCs are circulated with any relevant information that comes to the Committee from outside bodies such as DCMS, English Heritage etc.

Publications:

Work is progressing on the illustrated book on Catholic Architecture. Christopher Martin and Alex Ramsay have visited over 100 churches and chapels in England and Wales. Christopher has written the text for the book and Alex has taken many excellent photographs.

The Patrimony Committee has produced the following leaflets: an updated 'Reference List of Sources of Information' (providing contact details for a very wide range of subjects relevant to HCCs); 'Guidelines for making a Church Inventory' and 'Archaeology and Churches'.

HCC Conference:

This year's very successful Conference was held at the Brompton Oratory in February. Over 60 delegates attended. Besides members from all HCCs, there were representatives from Diocesan Art & Architecture Committees, Archivists, Financial Secretaries and Property Managers. Other organisations represented were: Catholic Archives Society; Dublin Diocesan Heritage Commission; Cathedral and Church Building Division of the Church of England; the Church in Wales; Department of Culture Media and Sport; Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Eire); English Heritage; Kensington Society; Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and The Victorian Society.

An illustrated talk was given by Christopher Martin and Alex Ramsay about the churches they have visited, researched and photographed in preparation for the forthcoming book on Catholic church architecture. This was followed by the opportunity to raise other HCC concerns. During the afternoon session, the keynote address was given by Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, on 'How can our churches raise their profile in order to secure higher levels of government financial support towards their long-term survival?' Tours of the Oratory, including sight of their treasures, completed the day. It was a day much enjoyed by all.

Ecclesiastical Exemption:

Following last year's submission to the DCMS Consultation Paper, the Government's response, entitled The Way Forward, appeared in July. It stated that the Government is content to allow exempt denominations to continue to operate their own systems of control under the Ecclesiastical Exemption. This document is part of the Heritage Protection Review programme that is being undertaken by English Heritage and DCMS. The concept of using voluntary Heritage Protection Agreements is suggested in the paper as an option for some exempt buildings. English Heritage is currently undertaking a series of pilot projects to test the applicability of HPAs amongst a range of building owners. The Patrimony Committee has offered to participate in a pilot but this offer has yet to be taken up.

A separate review of Ecclesiastical Exemption in Wales was undertaken for Cadw by Peter Howell. During the year, the Committee responded to this report and to its recommendations.

Working Party:

Members of the Working Party are Simon Thorrington; Fergus Brotherton; Sophie Andreae, John Cowdall, William Salvin, Mike State and Tricia Brooking.

The Audits of Places of Worship in the Dioceses of Arundel & Brighton and Lancaster have been carried out. These have been funded by English Heritage. Working Party members, representatives of the dioceses, English Heritage and their contractors have met several times in Hove and in Lancaster. Draft reports have now been received and are being reviewed.

Archives: Abbot Geoffrey Scott keeps the Committee informed of the work of the Catholic Records and Archives Societies and other issues relating to archives. The Committee is informed of initiatives both in England and Wales and abroad.

Consecrated for Worship:

Members of the Committee worked closely with Fr Allen Morris on the text of this document to ensure that historic buildings issues are given adequate coverage and that reference to the Ecclesiastical Exemption were also covered.

SPAB Questionnaire:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Heritage Lottery Fund are developing plans for a national scheme for training volunteers who are maintaining historic churches in England and Wales. The Committee encouraged HCCs to complete and return the SPAB questionnaire.

Vatican Documents:

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

Other Denominations:

Documents on the work of other denominations have been received and studied during the year. Contacts with representatives of other denominations are maintained, particularly with regard to the Ecclesiastical Exemption Review.

Bishops' Conference Meetings:

Reports from the Patrimony Committee were presented to the Bishops at their Low Week meeting.

Planned Work:

HCC Conference. The next Conference will be held in on 11th May 2006 in Liverpool.

Publications. Work will continue to enable the book on Catholic architecture to be published. The 'Sources of Information' will again be updated and any other relevant documents produced for the HCC Conference.

Audits of Places of Worship. The dissemination of these reports will be discussed in consultation with the dioceses and English Heritage.

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