



CATHOLIC BISHOPS'
CONFERENCE

PATRIMONY COMMITTEE and PATRIMONY SUB-COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Meetings: Three Committee meetings have been held during the year, in February, July 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 almost 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 of the Department of Christian Life and Worship regularly attends meetings and gives invaluable 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 or issues 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:

The illustrated book 'A Glimpse of Heaven: Catholic Churches of England and Wales' is being printed and will be launched on 30th November. This book is being published by English Heritage. The Patrimony Committee has raised a substantial sum from charitable trusts to cover the cost of special photography. All the illustrations in the book have been taken specially for it.

The Patrimony Committee made a significant contribution to the new Directory 'Consecrated for Worship' to reflect the need to respect the fabric of historic churches when contemplating liturgical arrangements. The Committee also advised on publications by East Anglia HCC (on redundant churches) and Birmingham HCC (on the Care of Churches).

HCC Conference:

For the first time this year's Conference was held in May, which proved very popular. Liverpool was an excellent venue and numbers attending rose by a third to 80 delegates. Much positive feedback was received and it was broadly agreed to have been the best Conference to date. Besides members from the majority of HCCs, there were representatives from Diocesan Archivists, Financial Secretaries and Property Managers/Surveyors. Other organisations represented were: Cadw; Council for the Care of Churches; Catholic Churches Insurance Association; Churches Conservation Trust; Department of Heritage and Local Government (Eire); Dublin Civic Trust; English Heritage; Methodist Property Division;

Liverpool City Council; United Reform Church; The Victorian Society and a number of architects.

Illustrated talks on the English Heritage Funded Reports on the architectural significance of diocesan churches in Lancaster and Arundel and Brighton were given by their authors. Comments on the strategic significance of the work followed. Ian Sergeant then spoke about 'The Methodist Approach'. After lunch Trevor Cooper of the Ecclesiological Society gave a very informative talk on 'How do we keep our Parish Churches?' English Heritage's Richard Halsey concluded the day with information on their new 'Inspired!' campaign. Delegates were then able to visit nearby St Clare, a Grade I listed church. The exteriors of two other nearby Grade I churches, Unitarian and Anglican, were also viewed. About 30 delegates had enjoyed a visit and guided tour of the Metropolitan Cathedral the evening before.

Working Party:

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

The Audits of Places of Worship in the Dioceses of Arundel & Brighton and Lancaster, funded by English Heritage had been completed and had been very well received. Part funding was now available from EH for further audits. So far Portsmouth, Middlesbrough, and Liverpool were undertaking joint projects with EH with Leeds and Clifton likely to follow. In October Sophie Andreae attended the Financial Secretaries Conference in Leeds and gave an illustrated talk about the challenge of finding appropriate uses for historic churches that may face closure. The talk included case histories about churches of other denominations as well as illustrating Catholic examples. She drew attention to the restoration of St. Francis Xavier, Liverpool and St. Francis Xavier, Hereford. Both these churches had been faced with closure at one time but were now happily back in full use.

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. The Committee is informed of initiatives both in England and Wales and abroad.

Vatican Documents:

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

Endangered Churches: There continued to be concern about the Grade II* listed church at Amlwch on Anglesey. It was hoped that a decision to repair the church would be forthcoming.

Central Register for Contents of Closed Churches: It was agreed that the Liturgy Office would establish and maintain a central register for contents needing to find a new home which would be made available to dioceses on a regular basis.

Other Denominations:

Sophie Andreae had been invited to be the Catholic representative on English Heritage's new Places of Worship Forum. The role of this committee is to advise on matters concerning the work of EH as it relates to historic places of worship. Bishop Thomas gave the address at the Annual General Meeting of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust in the summer, the first time a Catholic Bishop has been invited to do this. Following an approach to the Cardinal by Frank Field MP, Chair of the Churches Conservation Trust, Sophie Andreae attended a meeting at the CCT to explore areas of mutual concern.

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 3rd May 2007 in London.

Other matters will continue to be dealt with as they arise and when requests are received from HCCs and other bodies. The government's White Paper on the heritage protection is expected before the end of the year. The broad aim of the proposals in the White Paper is to modernise the existing consent regimes by unifying them. Whilst Ministers have indicated that the Ecclesiastical Exemption will remain and that the benefits of Exemption are understood, it is clear that any new system of designation and resultant consent regimes will have some implications for how denominations operate the Exemption in the future. The Committee will play an active part in the consultation process.