

General Synod of the Church of England

Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England

GUIDANCE NOTE NO. 7

**CATHEDRAL INVENTORIES
DESIGNATION OF OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

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CATHEDRAL INVENTORIES: DESIGNATION OF OUTSTANDING ITEMS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Section 13 (1) of the *Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990* requires the administrative body of a cathedral church to compile and maintain an Inventory of objects of outstanding architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest in the possession of the Chapter. Special Directions and Advisory Guidelines relating to the compilation of such Inventories were issued by the Commission in April 1992 and May 1993.
- 1.2 Section 13 (2) of the *Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990* further states that 'it shall be the duty of the Fabric Advisory Committee of a cathedral church to designate those objects included in the Inventory...which the Committee considers, after consultation with the Commission, to be of outstanding architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest'.
- 1.3 In response to requests from some cathedral authorities for further guidance on the concept of 'outstanding interest', the Cathedrals Fabric Commission has sought to formulate a series of general questions and criteria (set out below) to aid designation.
- 1.4 It should be emphasised that the term 'outstanding interest' has a specific meaning within the context of the *Care of Cathedrals Measure*, and is employed in a relative rather than an absolute sense. The chief practical effect of designating an item as 'outstanding' in the Inventory is to ensure that any application for its sale, loan or other disposal must be made to the Commission under section 6 (1) (a) (ii) of the *Measure*, whereas applications in respect of all other items must be made to the Fabric Advisory Committee.

2.0 DEFINITION OF OUTSTANDING INTEREST

- 2.1 In attempting to define whether or not an item is of outstanding interest the Commission would suggest that the following initial questions be posed:
- would the proposed sale, loan or other disposal of the item from the cathedral be a matter of national concern, and should it therefore be referred to the Commission?
 - is the item of a quality such that it would be likely to be accepted by a national museum, gallery or library?
 - if the export of the item were proposed, would it come under the criteria for referral to the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art (the so-called 'Waverley Criteria' - see Annexe 1)?

2.2 With these broad questions in mind the Commission would advise that the following criteria be used to determine whether an item should be designated in the Cathedral Inventory as of outstanding interest:

- i. **any item so significantly connected with the history and life of the cathedral or diocese, or of the Church of England more widely, that its departure from the ownership of the Chapter could be regarded as a grave misfortune.**
- ii. **any item which by reason of its architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic merit is of national significance - this being measured by whether the item would warrant inclusion in a national collection.**
- iii. **any item of special significance for the study of the architecture, archaeology, art or history of the cathedral (it should be important *for* study and not merely of interest *to* study).**

3.0 USEFUL CONCEPTS IN ASSESSING INTEREST

3.1 A number of factors may contribute to the overall significance or value of an object, and thereby to its architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest. When attempting to assess whether or not an item falls into one of the categories set out in Section 2.2, it may be helpful to consider to what degree it possesses one or more of the following values:

- **Design Value:** the design value of an object (in any medium) may be of particular relevance to assessing its artistic and architectural interest. Major works of all periods by leading artists and craftsmen are likely to be of outstanding interest, as are also works of exceptional merit by lesser or unknown craftsmen.
- **Rarity Value:** in addition to design value (or even apart from it) an object may have rarity value, which must be taken into account when assessing its historic interest. Rarity value is most likely (though not exclusively) to apply to items of early date, although 'early' is in itself a relative term and will vary according to the medium and type of object. Thus, for example, most medieval figurative sculpture and stained glass that survived the Reformation are likely to have rarity value, whereas most pre-Victorian textiles and musical instruments

are likely to be rare survivals because of their fragility.

- **Local Value:** considerations of local value will be of importance in assessing historic interest. An object commissioned specifically for a cathedral is likely to be of more interest than a comparable object bought in or acquired at a date much later than its original manufacture. Value may also accrue from an object's having been made locally and being representative of local or regional trends.
- **Associational Value:** historic interest may also depend on association between an object and an important historical figure or event. Particular significance may derive from a close association with prominent ecclesiastical figures in the history of the cathedral or diocese, or with prominent secular figures in the local community. Association with figures of wider importance in the history of the Nation and of the Church should also be taken into account. The concept of associational value should not be employed too freely: there should always be clear and direct links between an object and the historical event or person (eg. a tomb or monument).

4.0 SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF OBJECT

4.1 It may appear more difficult to apply the above considerations to some categories of object than others. The following additional comments may be helpful.

4.2 **Collections of ex situ Stonework:** these may be very varied, but the following classes of object in particular are potentially of outstanding interest:

- significant figurative sculpture.
- ensembles from significant demolished monuments.
- key pieces illustrating phases in the history of the building (especially phases no longer represented by the standing fabric).

4.3 **Archaeological Collections:** collections of archaeological materials should not be assessed only on the quality of individual items within a collection. Rather the collection as a whole should be assessed in relation to the criteria under Section 2.2. above.

4.4 **Tombs and Monuments:** it has sometimes been questioned whether it is appropriate to include tombs and monuments at all within the Inventory. In most instances they form part of the fabric of the cathedral and as such

may not be permanently moved or taken down without a formal application to the Commission. However, the temporary dismantling of a monument for the purposes of loaning it to an exhibition would not be covered under this heading, and inclusion in the Inventory would be the only means of ensuring that such a potentially damaging operation was the subject of an application under the *Measure*. For this reason it is important that monuments should be considered for inclusion in the Inventory, and if the criteria and concepts set out in 2 and 3 above are applied it is likely that a substantial number of cathedral monuments will come within the outstanding interest category.

4.5 **Books and Manuscripts:** in the case of books and manuscripts, advice has already been given in the Advisory Guidelines issued by the Commission in May 1993; namely, that all manuscripts pre 1701 and all printed books pre 1501 should be designated.

4.6 **Archival Materials:** on the basis of the criteria set out in 2.0 above it will be clear that a large proportion of accessioned materials within cathedral archives, if considered collectively, are likely to be considered as of outstanding historic interest to the extent that they together form a valuable and unique historical record. Accordingly, where the entire archive is designated as a Schedule to the Inventory (under Special Direction 5.3, issued in May 1993) it will be permissible to designate the entire Schedule as of outstanding interest (in place of carrying out the process of selection provided for in Special direction 5.4).

5.0 **TERMINAL DATE**

5.1 It is extremely difficult to make sound judgements on the importance of recent works, and discretion will be needed in deciding whether to designate objects less than 50 years old as of outstanding interest. Thus, in the case of, for example, textiles, plate or works of art recently commissioned by the administrative body, their perceived artistic merit should not alone be grounds for an outstanding designation. However, for reasons given at 4.6, even the most recent cathedral archives should be regarded as of outstanding interest.

6.0 **PROCEDURES FOR CONSULTATION**

6.1 For the purpose of undertaking the consultation required under the *Measure*, the Commission would request that in each case the following

material be provided:

- i. a draft list of outstanding items with their Inventory descriptions;
- ii. a list of those persons who have contributed to its compilation, including an indication of their areas of expertise;
- iii. a list of all locations examined in the course of compiling the Inventory.

6.2 In some instances it may be helpful for representatives of the Commission to visit and discuss the Inventory on site.

ANNEXE 1

THE WAVERLEY CRITERIA

The following is an extract from the 1988-89 Annual Report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art:

29. At this point it may be helpful to repeat from an earlier Report an outline of the way in which we interpret the Waverley criteria.

30. There are today some 42 Expert Advisers appointed to survey the export of everything from arms and armour to zoological specimens. When an object is worth more than a specified amount and is not, therefore, covered by the Open General Export Licence (the 'OGEL system' to which we refer in paragraph 19) and when it is more than 50 years of age, the would-be exporter must apply to the Department of Trade and Industry for an export licence*. Unless an item has been imported within the last 50 years (in which case an export licence is normally granted), the application is referred to the Expert Adviser for the relevant item and he or she has to decide whether, in his or her view, it meets one or more of the Waverley criteria. If it does, it is referred to the Reviewing Committee. It should be emphasised that we, the members of the Committee, are not responsible for the selection of the items referred to us. The initial decision is solely that of the Expert Adviser in question.

31. The Waverley criteria which govern their choice and our decisions have stood the test of time admirably except, perhaps, in the area of collections...

32. The first criteria is whether an item is 'so closely connected with our history or national life that its departure would be a misfortune'. This was originally intended to catch such objects as the Alfred Jewel or the manuscript of Gray's Elogy but we interpret it in a somewhat wider context to include items which are of major importance for local history, or which are part of collections which are of the greatest historical significance, or which are associated with significant historical events.

33. The second criteria refers to 'outstanding aesthetic importance'. There can be no definitive guidelines for judging whether an item is aesthetically outstanding, but we do not restrict this criteria to great works of painting or sculpture. We might, for instance, conclude that an exquisite snuff box met this criteria as well as a painting by Poussin. In the case of works by great artists it may be claimed that anything from the hand of Rembrandt is outstanding. We are not always swayed by such arguments and may take into account the condition as well as the quality of the

work in question and the extent of the damage or restoration to which it may have been subjected.

34. The third criteria is whether an item is 'of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history'. Almost anything could be caught under this heading; the worst works of the best artists (just to show that Homer nods), a poet's laundry list, a collection of seaside postcards. We therefore apply this criteria with rigour to objects which, in our view, are important for the study of some significant branch of art, learning or history; they have to be important *for* study rather than merely interesting *to* study. Many object might provide attractive topics for a PhD thesis but are not of wider significance for the study of the subject as a whole.

* (paragraph 30 - update)

Applications for individual export licences for objects aged over 50 years and valued over certain monetary limits are now made to the Department of National Heritage. An EC licence is required for the export out of the European Union of cultural goods controlled by EC Regulation (EEC 3911/92) and a UK licence for intra-European Union trade.

[An application for an export licence (either EC or UK) will be referred to an Expert Adviser, although objects which have arrived within the UK within the last to years are normally granted a licence without such referral.]