

BATH AND WELLS DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SILVER AND OTHER TREASURES

The safekeeping of silver and other treasures of historic and/or artistic value remains of paramount importance. The Tredington Judgement 1970 remains the vital benchmark in considering such treasures. Sale may be considered only as a last resort. The following considerations apply:-

1. The churchwardens may have a legal right to consider sale, but as custodians rather than as owners of these treasures they have a moral obligation to safeguard them.
2. The treasures will have been dedicated, if not consecrated, either by the Bishop or by Sacramental use, and therefore secular use is entirely inappropriate. Consecration is not however a bar to sale.
3. Many treasures will have been given to the church on the understanding that they are gifts in perpetuity. The donor's family's wishes must be respected since the gifts of donors are not lightly alienated.
4. Sale would not significantly, in most cases, help the church in question because the capital acquired must be retained by the church and invested. Only the income may be used.

In reality there are two major categories of treasure - items of historic and/or artistic value and silver of modest value as defined below:-

1. Treasures (especially artefacts used for sacramental purposes) of historic and/or artistic quality and above average monetary value include gold, silver, pewter, paintings, sculptures, monuments, stained glass and other items eg chairs, chests, textiles and so on.

These must be kept by the churchwardens properly and securely. In the case of silver, at least in a baize bag in a safe, and other treasures made secure in situ in the church. Advice on security may be obtained from the DAC, the CCC or the church's insurers. A record of the contents of the church with good photographs is of paramount importance - this should be done by completing the CCC Church Property Register. The deposit of valuable items on loan to a museum on the authority of a Faculty may be considered.

2. Silver of modest value (without local or historical importance), usually patens and chalices, which have been consecrated for use at the Lord's Supper. **NB** Ordinary items of furniture, paintings and so on do not fall within the scope of this paper.

Such items, surplus to requirement, may, if the parish wishes (assuming it has a sufficient supply remaining) be put into a Diocesan Register, with relevant details including description, professional valuation and a photograph, for potential transfer either on loan or by sale to another parish within or without the Diocese. Pending transfer, the silver will remain in the custody of the

parish, unless the Chancellor directs otherwise. If there is a sale the donor parish will receive recompense. If, after a passage of time, say 5 years, there is no transfer, the sale of an item may be considered, either in its present state, or perhaps more appropriately, after it has been melted down.

All enquiries about the Diocesan Register should be sent to Mrs Sarah Davis, Assistant DAC Secretary, Diocesan Registry, 14 Market Place, Wells, BA5 2RE (Tel. 01749 674747).

In all cases of sale or other disposal a faculty will be needed. As part of the faculty process the Chancellor will give any necessary directions about valuation.

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