

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING

Guidance note

from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches
2016



This short guide has been based on the paper prepared by Dr Stuart Blaylock to which the reader is recommended. This is available from the Church Buildings office on request. The information contained in this guidance note is to assist churches in understanding what is required, why such a record is needed, and how to achieve a good quality archival photographic record.

This guidance is intended to explain the background to the requirements and to provide some guidance on how to go about organising a photographic record. The guidance is also intended to allay any fears and uncertainties that the request for photographic recording might cause.

WHY DO WE NEED A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD?

Some faculties will carry a proviso that a photographic record is provided of the area for which the faculty applies, prior to the works commencing. The reason for this proviso is to ensure that future generations will have full and comprehensive information on the development of the building over its life. For example we are able to see how our churches looked in the late 19th century due to several keen photographers visiting our churches and creating postcards of the interiors.

For all Archdeacon's Permissions for Temporary Reordering (APTR), it will be a requirement that a photographic record is taken before the temporary changes are made, so that this can be used should the items which have been moved can be returned, or as part of the faculty submission to make the changes permanent.

WHEN DO WE NEED TO TAKE THE PHOTOGRAPHS?

The items or area to which the faculty applies should be photographed and this record sent to the DAC electronically well in advance of the works starting, or the object being moved or relocated. It is necessary to ensure that the quality and content of the photographs has been approved by the DAC before any alterations occur. Once approved by the DAC, printed copies should be produced. The printed photographic record must be deposited with the Diocesan Registry, for archiving with the faculty petition, and a copy should be kept in the parish.

For an APTR, the photographs should be taken before any changes are made, and sent to the Archdeacon so that they can issue the temporary permission.

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE PHOTOGRAPHS?

For the best results a professional photographer with experience in recording historic buildings should be employed. However it is understood that it may not be possible to do so. If this route is not practical, then a knowledgeable amateur using basic equipment may be used by following the widely accepted principles of good practice.¹ In any case it will be necessary to confirm that all issues with copyright have been resolved.

WHAT TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE REQUIRED?

From an archival point of view black and white film photographs are the most stable, and a long term proven technique. This is the main reason that the DAC ask for photographs to be in black and white. It is also the best medium for achieving aesthetically pleasing images (see the *Devon* volume of *The Buildings of England* (Cherry and Pevsner 1989)). Most professional and many keen amateur photographers will have the capacity to produce medium-format negatives of suitable quality for publication. However this does require the use of the single lens reflex (SLR) camera and with the growth in digital photography, such equipment may not be readily available.

Digital colour photographs should be taken to record the colours of the items or for guides, talks and presentations, and can be a very useful complement to the black and white record.

DIGITAL IMAGE MANIPULATION

In the digital age there is much that can be done to alter or improve a photograph after it is taken. Programmes such as 'Photoshop' have many clever manipulation features, such as perspective correction, correction of exposure or balance, merging light and dark images to extend the tonal range beyond what is possible with film, and so on. Nevertheless, these are no substitute for careful and thoughtful composition, and the best photography will still pay close attention to getting the image right first time rather than relying on such manipulation techniques later on.

It is possible to produce acceptable black and white photographs from a coloured digital image. Rather than 'desaturate' the colour or change the mode of the greyscale which visually flattens the photograph, the photograph should be converted using the colour controls. Methods on how to do this may be found on www.digicamhelp.com

WHAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE PHOTOGRAPH?

The photographs should show the object or area in its setting, as well as in detail. This means that if it is furniture which is to be removed or relocated in the church, such as pews for example, long views of the pews from various directions will show them in context with the interior. Close ups of the pews, their structure, and their detailed carving, etc should also be included.

- When taking the photographs ensure that there is good defused natural daylight which shows a good contrast, but that it is not so sunny that strong shadows are generated. If the natural daylight is not adequate and flash light is unavoidable, it is better to use reflected light rather than direct flash, which flattens the detail.

¹ See the 'Some useful references' at the end of this guidance note. The equipment described in some of the guides is out of date but the principles of composition and techniques are still valid.

- Always use a tripod as this helps with setting up the composition as well as allowing long exposures that are sometimes necessary when photographing interiors in natural daylight.
- A cable release is also helpful to avoid camera shake if using a timing device.
- Using a slow 'film speed' setting in a digital camera permits greater detail and diminishes 'noise' in long exposures.
- When setting up the photograph think about the composition to ensure that everything you want to include is shown and anything (such as hymn books and other loose items) which will detract from the picture has been removed. Check the edges of the image to ensure that peripheral clutter has been removed.
- In cramped locations use longer focal length lenses in preference to wide-angle to avoid distortion.
- When photographing details, place a linear scale alongside the item in order to provide a scale to the image. A colour separation chart could also be useful for colour photographs (however this would need to be borrowed, as they are expensive).

ARCHIVING

There are issues with the storage, archiving and preservation of digital photographs so it is important to note that:

- All images should be printed using a **proper photographic process**, as images on inkjet papers with water based inks have yet to prove their longevity.
- When downloading from the camera the photographs should be stored as .tif files, a universally readable format which helps ensure the image will be preserved for 20-30 years. The .jpg format may be acceptable for general use but not for specialist archives.

The photographs should also be archived onto disc. The choices are DVD, CD-ROM, and Blu-Ray which does not appear to be favoured by archivists. Research is being carried out by various national and international archives into the longevity of the latest format JPEG2000, but there is no feedback as yet regarding the suitability for archival purposes.

When using DVD and CR-ROM the following should be considered (helpful advice from www.PDFzone.com):

- Use DVD/CD-R which has a greater longevity than DVD/CD-RW.
- Buy a known and respected brand; if there is any uncertainty of what to use, seek advice from a photographic shop.
- Use polyester packaging (Melinex or Mylar), rather than the non-archival products available from stationers.
- Use CD-ROMs with a gold layer as they have greater longevity than those with a silver layer.
- To assist with future quick viewing, save thumbnails onto the DVD/CD-ROM.
- Make two copies of photographs on DVD/CD-ROMs which are from different batches just in case one DVD/CD deteriorates over time.

- Never use glued labels on the DVD/CD or write on them with solvent pens as the protective film may be damaged over time.
- Labelling the packing with the location, owner, and date is important.

If using film, the negatives will need to be preserved and as an archive medium these are often preferable to prints.

Serious consideration should be given to deposition of digital images with one of the growing number of digital archiving bodies, such as:

- the Arts and Humanities Data Service (<http://www.ahds.ac.uk>)
- the Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>)
- or, on-line digital 'vaults', which claim to provide automatic backing up and refreshment services.

It is important to remember that wherever the photographs are archived, a second party i.e. Devon Heritage Centre is made aware of their location to allow ease of internet access in the future.

Helpful Websites:

www.notesonphotography.org

www.bl.uk/blpac (Preservation Advisory Centre, London)

Some Useful References - suggested by Dr Blaylock

There is useful coverage of photography by:

- NADFAS (The National Federation of Decorative and Fine Art Societies)
- The Church Buildings Council via its 'Churchcare' website <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/> especially relating to the photography of stained glass

Reading:

Brun, R. 1999 *Guide to the Photography of Church Furnishings*, London: Church House Publishing. (ISBN: 0715175777), see the Church House Bookshop website:

<http://www.chbookshop.co.uk/product.asp?id=10406>

Buchanan, T. 1983 *Photographing Historic Buildings*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England); London: HMSO.

Cherry, B. and Pevsner, N. 1989 *The Buildings of England: Devon*. Revised ed'n, London: Penguin Books.

Dorrell, P.G. 1989 *Photography in Archaeology and Conservation*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lane, John and Walshaw, Harland 2007 *Devon's Churches: A Celebration*, Dartington: Green Books.

Sergeant, I. 2002 *Listed Buildings: Photographic Records and Archives*, Methodist Property Office, Information Leaflet.

Woolliscroft, D.J. 2010 'Thoughts on the suitability of digital photography for archaeological recording' typescript article from the University of Liverpool, accessible via

<http://www.theromangaskproject.org.uk/Pages/Introduction/Photography.html>