

CAS Conference 2024



The CAS conference at High Leigh in Hertfordshire started with brief but lovely sunny weather on the Monday as delegates gathered for welcome coffee and the AGM. The first talk was by freelance architectural historian, James Crowley titled *Treasured Patrimony: Ecclesiastical Inventories and the vital role of archives in understanding our Catholic heritage*



James outlined the need for church inventories – they are a canonical requirement (canon 1283) Leeds is the only English Diocese with a complete inventory of patrimony. Throughout his talk James described what should be included in an inventory. Inventories should be standard for parishes and are essential before any closures to manage redistribution and disposal. Surplus lists should also be shared by Diocese and religious orders in the same way as the Church of England operates.

He highlighted the worrying recent increase in the sale of patrimony on secular websites and the loss of patrimony during church closures and discusses recent cases of rescued items such as the Poor Clare's of Darlington salt and a chalice and monstrance of Farnborough abbey. James also discussed the monstrance from a Lancaster parish which went on Antiques roadshow. As a result, James was requested to give a talk to priests in the diocese of Lancaster about the importance of patrimony.

James conducted an inventory on St John's seminary, Wonersh, before its closure and thus the collections were safely transferred to new homes. The research also facilitated a publication of the history of the seminary. CAS members who would like a copy free of charge should email Jenny Delves archives@rcaos.org.uk

<https://wonersh.shop/products/wonersh-book>

On the Tuesday the second talk of the conference was by Holly Fielder - *Catholic Archives in the US: Challenges and Collaborations with a highlight on Franciscan efforts*

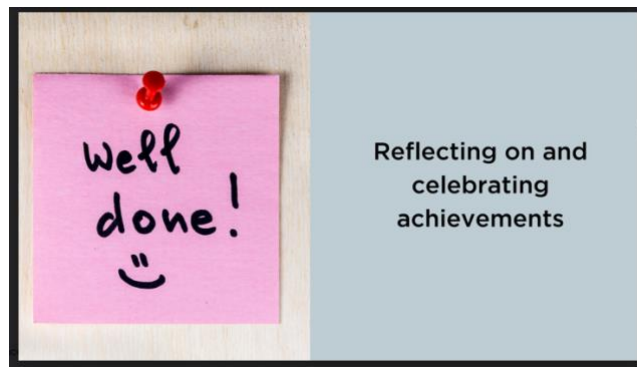
Holly reflected on the reduction in numbers of women religious and much like in the UK, the question has arisen of what to do with the archives of closed houses in the USA. Holly discussed the different centralised repositories for religious archives being set up around the USA and how this is being done. One example was the Jesuit Archives and Research Centre (JARC) <https://jesuitarchives.org/> in St Louis, Missouri, which was constructed as a new build in 2016. Holly also discussed women religious who have used Diocesan stores and University stores for storage and management of their collections and how this has worked. Particular focus was given to collaborative projects such as the Society of the Sacred Heart and Ursuline collaborative in St Louis, Missouri, <https://archivalrcc.org/repository-working-group/> The benefit of collaborative projects in terms of funding and shared resources were highlighted as grant applications looked favourably on collaborative projects and donations from the individual communities reduced long term costs. Certainly the UK is facing similar challenges and there is a lot we could learn from examples in the USA.



In the afternoon conference delegates had an outing to the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies. There, we enjoyed tours of the stores, conservation studio and research room and were presented with a display of local archives. Our thanks go to the staff for arranging an enjoyable visit.

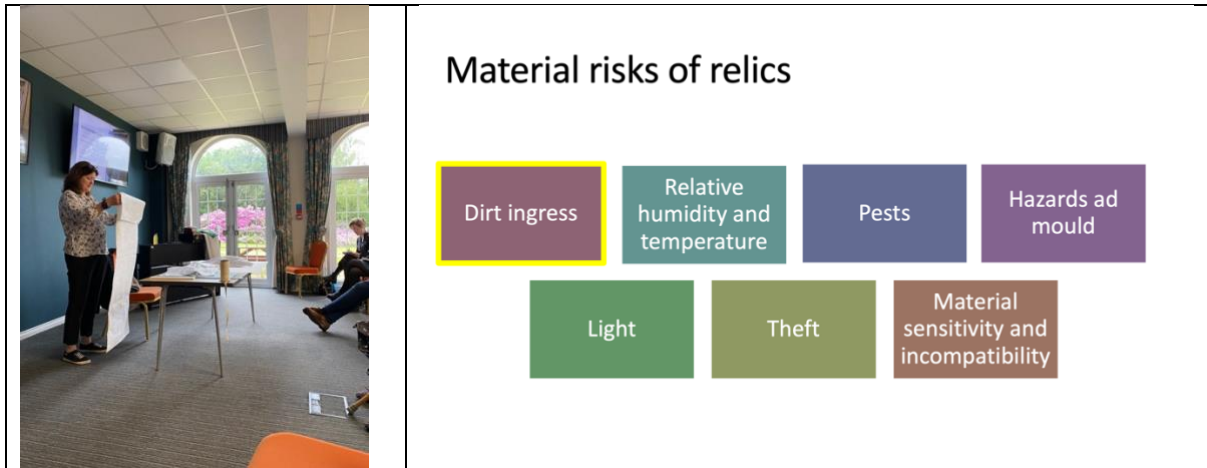


On the Wednesday, Clare Walsh, freelance archivist, presented an inspiring conversation about the need for work life balance and prioritising all the roles of an archivist. Particularly in small institutions the archivist can be in charge of multiple aspects including outreach, managing volunteers and collections care. Clare's presentation is available on the CAS website.



Clare Walsh- Beyond the stacks: prioritising, advocating and thriving in archival work

Our final talk of the conference was by Victoria Stevens ACR on *The care of Sacred Objects in a Profane World*. The focus was particularly on relics which are regularly found in archives but the best way to care for them is often unknown. Made up of various materials, relics and their reliquaries can have complex storage needs.



Victoria also demonstrated uses for different conservation materials and showed the delegates how to make an object box out of archive card. Victoria's presentation is available on the CAS website.



The conference finished with the Open Forum where we reported on current projects, ideas for the future and highlights from the interest group discussions which focussed on Diocesan archives, making exhibitions and digital records. Here was our new chair Lawrence Gregory reporting on the recent work of the National Institute for Newman Studies

Thank you to all the speakers and everyone who attended! We hope to see you again next year!

