

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

GUIDANCE NOTES ON PRODUCING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS OF STAINED GLASS FOR REPAIR AND ARCHIVE PURPOSES

By the very nature of the material of which they are made, stained glass windows are particularly vulnerable. There are two typical sorts of damage which occur to church windows: either vandalism, in the form of stone-throwing etc. or calculated destruction, as part of breaking-and-entering the church.

A stained glass window, whilst having a vital architectural function, is also a valuable and unique work of art. Experience has shown that faithful repairs to windows following damage can be carried out more effectively if good photographs of the windows exist. Stained glass of all periods, including mediaeval and 19th and 20th century, must be given equally serious consideration and specialised conservation treatment.

Both the Diocese and the E.I.G. are now strongly recommending that it is in the interest of all concerned for photographic records to be made of these important items of ecclesiastical art, of which the P.C.C. is the custodian.

P.C.C.s may wish to employ a professional photographer or stained glass studio to carry out the photography (enquiries to the D.A.C. Administrator) or may prefer to undertake this "in house". Below are some notes drawn up for the guidance of (amateur) photographers which may be helpful in producing slides which will serve the purpose of providing a reference point from which accurate repair work can be undertaken. A "preferred course of action" is given, and/or a suggested "best option":-

PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION BEST OPTION

	PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION	BEST OPTION
PLAN OF CHURCH	Make a simple plan of the church with window numbers marked on it.	Use the CVMA numbering system which is being more widely used (details from the D.A.C. Administrator).
FILM	Transparencies (slides) are preferable to negatives and prints. Use a slow (low ASA) film.	Film such as Kodachrome 25. There are others, so seek professional advice.
PROCESSING		Use a reliable developer, either postal service or High Street shop. Special instructions may help to achieve best results.
LABELLING	Mark each slide with a waterproof pen; include index no., name and place of church, window number, date of photograph and name of photographer.	Establish an index which includes a brief description of each window.
NUMBER OF COPIES	Make at least two complete sets, stored at different locations.	The best and cheapest way to obtain two copies of a colour slide is to press the shutter twice, rather than have duplicates made.

TRIPOD	Use a tripod with a cable release or time delay.	
LENS	Use long-focus rather than wide-angle lenses to reduce perspective distortion. Do not set up camera near the window, but some distance away.	Lenses in the range of 75mm - 300mm.
OBJECTIVES	The object of the exercise is to record fine detail and capture the style of the artist so that the work can be recreated in the case of need. Close-up shots are particularly helpful in cases of facial features, lettering etc.	Record wording, text, epitaphs etc. exactly as depicted in the window to accompany slides.
FRAMING THE SHOT		Take overall shots <u>and</u> separate lancets, panels and details.
LIGHTING	Turn off all church lights. Do not use a flash. Do not use photographic lighting.	
WEATHER CONDITIONS	Choose a day or time of day when there is not direct sunlight, but when it is not too gloomy!	Bright but overcast.
APERTURE, SHUTTER-SPEED AND METERING	This is a complex matter if first-rate results are wanted. As a guide, for darker windows, give a shorter exposure than the automatic camera suggests, and for brighter windows give a longer exposure than it suggests. Use bracketing if unsure (i.e. several alternative exposures).	Use a separate specially-calibrated hand-held spot meter.

STORAGE Store one set of slides and the index where they are readily available for parish archives, say the church safe (cool and dark for longest life). The second set of slides should be located elsewhere.

At present enquiries are being made with Kent County Council and the National Buildings Record Office concerning the bulk storage of our diocesan archives on stained glass. Until further information is available, alternative local arrangements may need to be made.

SURVEY Ideally a full survey of the stained glass should be undertaken. Individual reports on each window would include attributions, dimensions, iconography, condition, protection, assessment, proposals and identification using the CVMA numbering system. Enquiries should be made to the D.A.C. Administrator.