

# Archbishop's gift to Queen Elizabeth I at risk of leaving the UK

- Export bar is to allow time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the manuscript
- The manuscript was part of a gift from the Archbishop and was intended to impress the Queen

A manuscript which formed part of a gift from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker to Elizabeth I is at risk of leaving the country unless a buyer can be found.

The historically rich manuscript is made up of nine roundels and forms a fragment of a gift to Queen Elizabeth I in the early 1550s. The roundels were likely folded and integrated into a now-lost gold salt cellar.

The use of shell gold around the miniatures suggests that the manuscript was gifted with the intention of impressing the Queen.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

Archbishop Parker is a figure of great historical and theological consequence, and this beautiful manuscript is a significant example of Elizabethan gift exchange. I hope a buyer comes forward for this piece so it can be used to learn more about both the Archbishop and Queen Elizabeth I.

The Minister's decision follows the advice of the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#). The Committee agreed that the manuscript had enormous research value, specifically regarding Archbishop Matthew Parker's relationship to Queen Elizabeth I and material gift culture. The literary allusions on the roundels further suggested Matthew Parker's engagement with classical humanist culture that was not typically associated with the clergy and would lead to illuminating further study.

Committee Member Peter Barber said:

These evocative, obscurely-worded and miraculously preserved roundels take us back to power politics and culture at the heart of Elizabeth I's court. They are a tangible record of a vital and dangerous moment in our religious and political history when the delicately-crafted Anglican Settlement seemed to be in danger, but their wording still has to be fully interpreted and understood.

While Tudor gift lists and sometimes the gifts themselves survive, such intrinsic – but cryptic – evidence for the mentality behind

the gift -giving is perhaps unique. I fervently hope the roundels will remain in this country where outstanding collections and libraries – not least that of Archbishop Parker himself – would enable their plentiful remaining mysteries to be investigated and explained with a thoroughness that would simply not be possible elsewhere in the world.

The Committee made its recommendation on the grounds that the departure of the manuscript from the UK would be a misfortune owing to its outstanding significance to the study of Matthew Parker and gift-giving culture in the Elizabethan period.

The decision on the export licence application for the manuscript will be deferred for a period ending on 1 December 2022. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 business days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the manuscript at the recommended price of £9,450 (plus VAT of £390 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution).

The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an option agreement and will last for three months. Offers from public bodies for less than the recommended price through the private treaty sale arrangements, where appropriate, may also be considered by the minister. Such purchases frequently offer substantial financial benefit to a public institution wishing to acquire the item.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the manuscript should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the manuscript are as follows: Nine conjoined roundels. Two roundels depict agate jewels showing St George and the Dragon within the Garter and a cameo of Queen Elizabeth I respectively. A Latin inscription records Archbishop Matthew Parker's gift of the agate to Elizabeth. Seven roundels contain longer texts in Latin and French on the properties of agate. Manuscript on parchment, 1573, 127 x 127 mm. Fair condition.
3. Provenance: Archbishop Matthew Parker (1504-1575); by whom gifted to Elizabeth I (1533-1603); possibly acquired John Sharp, Archbishop of York (1645-1714); thence by family descent, certainly to Thomas Barwick Lloyd Baker (1807-1886); thence by family descent to the present owners.
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by the Arts Council

(ACE), which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

5. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. They have set out in their strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 they want England to be a country in which everyone's creativity is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invest public money from the Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. Following the [Covid-19 crisis](#), the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. They are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund.