MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER
Hereford Mappa Mundi

Ref N° 2006-32

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is the only complete example of a large medieval world map intended for public display. It is very different to our modern understanding of a world map as it shows not only locations of places and geographic features but also acts as a visual encyclopaedia with historical, anthropological, ethnographical, biblical, classical and theological information. The map is pivotal in our understanding of medieval cartography and sense of place and still has relevance to all peoples in helping them to understand their sense of humanity and self.

2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name: (person or organisation)
United Kingdom Permanent Delegation to UNESCO

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated:
UNESCO National Commission on behalf of the owner

2.3 Contact person(s):
Christine Atkinson
Deputy Permanent Delegate

Tim Craddock
Permanent Delegate

2.4 Contact details
United Kingdom Delegation to UNESCO
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3. IDENTIFYING AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated:
The Hereford Mappa Mundi

3.2 Description

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is a medieval map of the world, measuring approximately 1626mm x 1346mm and made up of one sheet of vellum. It has been dated on art historical, historical and palaeographical grounds to c. 1290-c1310 AD. The map was probably produced at either Lincoln or Hereford, an inscription names ‘Richard of Haldingham or Lafford’ as its maker but it is not clear who he was or if he created the Hereford map or its exemplar. The text is written in red and black ink in an English gothic bookhand. On the map are around 500 illustrations including about 420 views or symbols of cities and towns, 15 depictions of biblical events, 33 depictions of plants, animals, birds and fish, 32 pictures of the peoples of the earth and 5 images relating stories from classical mythology. The illustrations on the map are one of its most remarkable features, both in their variety and number.
Outside the boundary of the earth at the top the map depicts Christ in judgement and has the letters m,o,r,s (spelling ‘mors’ – Latin for death) around the outside, this reflects the Christian view that all earthly life is subject to death and judgement and the map is, above all, a depiction the place of humankind in the eternal, divinely-ordained order.

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is the only complete survival of a genre of large world maps intended for display which were once more common. Other examples known to have existed include the Ebstorf map (destroyed in 1943) and the Duchy of Cornwall map, which is roughly contemporary with the Hereford Mappa Mundi but of which only a small fragment survives.

It is different from other existing large medieval world maps such as the ‘Catalan world map’, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, of about 1375 as these are based on ‘portolan charts’ which depict coastlines more realistically and did not have the spiritual and didactic purpose of the mappae mundi. In this respect the Hereford Mappa Mundi is our best surviving graphical representation of the synthesis of classical knowledge with the medieval worldview.

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is world renowned as the most famous extant medieval map. Records of it having been studied date back to the seventeenth century and it continues to be a source of artistic inspiration and fascination to the present day. As the only surviving complete example of its type it is unique and as a manuscript and physical object irreplaceable.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity
The Hereford Mappa Mundi has been dated by experts in palaeography and art history to between c1290 and c1310 AD. In addition damage to the map matches the location of nails on a wooden frame in which it was housed, and possibly drawn. The frame has been dated by dendrochronology to c1300 AD.

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability
World significance – see below 4.3
Uniqueness – as established above the Hereford Mappa Mundi is the only surviving complete example of a medieval mappa mundi.
Irreplaceability – as a medieval manuscript and unique survival the Hereford Mappa Mundi is both physically and intellectually irreplaceable.

4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style
(a) Time- the Hereford Mappa Mundi provides a graphic representation of the world as understood in medieval Europe. It is based on the synthesis of classical and medieval learning
(b) Place – the Hereford Mappa Mundi is essential to our understanding of medieval awareness of other lands. The area of Africa depicted is that of North Africa, known in classical times and aside from some cities listed in classical sources it is populated by strange races. Similarly the map shows the eastern end of the world as the earthly paradise. Examples of knowledge of other real lands include the inclusion of the Seres people who lived north of the Himalayas and exported silk.
(c) Subject and theme – as the largest and most detailed surviving example of a medieval mappa mundi the Hereford Mappa Mundi uniquely represents the culmination of a tradition of mapmaking and knowledge which stretches back to the Roman period. The history of cartography after the medieval mappae mundi begins to move away from the didactic, spiritual towards an increasingly accurate depiction of the known world, relying more on seafarers’ explorations and advances in science. It is vital to our understanding of medieval cartography and of medieval perceptions of the world.
Form and style – as stated in 3.2 the Hereford Mappa Mundi is the only complete surviving example of a large ‘traditional’ mappamundi and has been described by Dr Christopher de Hamel, one of Britain’s leading experts on medieval manuscripts, as ‘without parallel the most important and most celebrated medieval map in any form’. Aside from its status as a unique survival it is also one of the most remarkable of surviving medieval manuscripts and has been described by Dr Christopher de Hamel as ‘certainly the greatest extant thirteenth century picture’.

4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

Rarity
As established above the Hereford Mappa Mundi is a unique survival from an important genre of maps.

Integrity
The map as it is today is extremely good condition, some colours have changed through fading and oxidization and patches were added to the map to cover small holes in the nineteenth-century, although these were painted to match the medieval surface it is easy to distinguish them from the original.

Threat
There is currently no particular threat to the map’s survival. For detailed information on security and conservation see the management plan (see Appendix 1).

5 LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

The Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust
c/o Mrs Julia Garlick
Baker Tilly
Elgar House
Holmer Road
Hereford
HR4 9SF
Tel: +44 (0)1432 352222

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner):

James Anthony
Hereford Cathedral Library
5 College Cloisters
Hereford
HR1 2NG
tel: +44 (0)1432 374200
fax: +44 (0)1432 374220.

5.3 Legal status:
(a) Category of ownership – owned by a charitable trust, in the event of the trust being dissolved ownership of the Hereford Mappa Mundi passes to the British Library, London
(b) Accessibility – on display to the general public and accompanied by an interpretative exhibition.
(c) Copyright status – not subject to copyright although the production of images is controlled by the Dean and Chapter of Hereford
(d) Responsible administration – the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust is required by the terms of its trust deed to care for and make available to the public the Hereford Mappa Mundi. It delegates this responsibility to the Dean and Chapter of Hereford.
(e) Other factors - none
6 MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES – see Appendix 1.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional Memory of the World committee

(a) the owner of the heritage was consulted at their December 2005 meeting.
(b) the custodian of the heritage supports the nomination.
(c) no national or regional committee currently exists. The United Kingdom Delegation to UNESCO have been consulted and the UK National Commission have been informed.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 No particular threats have been identified which are not dealt with in the management plan. The long-term future of the map is assured by the deed of trust controlling its ownership.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage (see 3.3)
As listed above the map is housed in storage which meets the recommendations of British Standard 5454:2000 for the display and storage of archival documents. The condition of the map is assessed every two years by a conservator. A detailed file is kept in the Hereford Cathedral Archives listing all events which impact on the conservation of the map, including the conservator’s reports.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:
(Please print name)…Christine Atkinson
(Signature)…Christine Atkinson
(Date) 31 March 2006
Appendix 1
Hereford Cathedral – Mappa Mundi Management Plan

Storage
The Hereford Mappa Mundi is kept permanently on display in an environmentally controlled space. The temperature is set to 17°C and the humidity at 55%RH, the environmental conditions. Light levels are kept to 25 lux with UV filtering being used on all glass.

Conservation
The Dean and Chapter retain Mr Christopher Clarkson as their conservator and the map is inspected by him every other year. No treatment of the map is carried out although some work needs to be done to remove Victorian repairs. Treatment would be carried out if recommended by the conservator, for instance to remove mould if any were found on the map.

Fire Prevention
The Mappa Mundi Chamber presents a low fire risk. Electric lights are separated from the Hereford Mappa Mundi and fibre optic cables used to provide light for viewing the map. The case used to display the map in is made of concrete which will provide some measure of protection from fire.

Emergency Measures
The Cathedral Library has a full disaster plan which encompasses the Hereford Mappa Mundi. Any emergency will be handled in accordance with the Cathedral Library’s disaster plan and advice taken immediately from the contracted conservator. A contract to provide assistance in the event of an emergency is held with Harwell Restoration and Drying who will provide equipment and salvage expertise. The greatest risk is from fire and in that event the first line of response is to contain the fire using the inert gas suppression system and fire brigade resources. Given the difficulties of access to the map and the protection offered by the case it will not normally be removed from its case until the fire has been contained.

Budget
Funding for the conservation of the Hereford Mappa Mundi is provided by the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trustees. Currently this is restricted to paying the cost of the conservator’s contract but the trustees would if necessary fund interventive conservation work. The running costs for the plant to maintain the environmental conditions are met by the Dean and Chapter of Hereford.

Access
The map is on permanent display as part of an exhibition which includes material to assist with the interpretation of the map. Material to assist scholars with research is available in the Cathedral Library and Archives. Images of the map are supplied to a wide-range of users from scholars to commercial organisations.

Known Issues
Access to remove the map is very difficult and places the map at greater risk than is necessary. The Victorian parchment patches added to the map may be distorting the medieval vellum. The height of the map from the floor can make viewing difficult for children and the disabled in particular. Extremes of weather or large numbers of visitors can cause the temperature and humidity to change more than is desirable (although the effects of the changes on the map are moderated by the case it is housed in).

Future Developments
A feasibility study is currently looking at ways of altering the map’s case to make access for inspection easier and improve its visibility for all. If possible the Victorian parchment repairs will be removed and replaced with more sensitive repairs, it is not yet clear if this is possible without posing an undue risk to the map. Consideration is being given to redeveloping the exhibition to incorporate new knowledge and improve its interpretation but no funding has been identified for this. It is hoped that a digital facsimile of the Hereford Mappa Mundi will be produced at some stage and initial investigations into cost and practicality are underway.