

Church: St Laurence, Brundall

Interviewees: B1, David Cozens B2

Date: Friday, 10 July 2015

1. NW: Could you each tell me how long you've been involved with Brundall church.
2. B1: Since 1982, so 33 years now.
3. NW: And in what capacities, B3?
4. B1: Well, first of all I was just a resident in the village. We'd moved over to this side of the village from the County of Norwich, from Heathersett, and we started to use this as the parish church. We were encouraged to come. There was a young rector in the parish at that point in time, as there is now, and it was said to support your local church, so we did come in at that point in time. I was a parishioner since that point in time, and went onto the PCC probably around about that point in time, and then became treasurer around 1995 I would think, and went through to 2010, 2011 time.
5. NW: Thank you. And B2?
6. B2: I've been associated with the church since about 1995, just after we moved to the village. Initially just as a church member, and then at about the time you became treasurer I joined the PCC, and I was on the PCC up till last year. So I worked with Bob Baker, and with Linnet Smith, and just latterly of course with Peter Leech.
7. NW: Thank you. So I'm aware that there was an attempted building project, but I don't know anything about it in terms of what it was aiming to do.
8. B1: There's *always* been a building project. When I joined and become involved with the PCC back in 1990 there was a building project which was ongoing at that point in time, and all the time that Bob Baker was here it was being moved forward, but only with architect's plans, we never ever formalised anything or really agreed anything to move forward to asking for planning consent or anything of that nature, to my memory. And it wasn't until Linnet Smith came – when did Linnet join us, she's been gone about four years now, since...
9. B2: Yeah, she was here five [years]...
10. B1: So it would have been about early 2000s wouldn't it?
11. B2: Yeah, yeah.
12. B1: Bob was here 25 years, so he was '79 to... It would be about 2004 I should think, that Bob moved out, and Linnet would have then become the incumbent in 2005. She had a desire to move it forward, to actually fulfil the project, and actually build an extension at that point in time. And that's when it really started I think, from my memory, to move it forward. I may not have got the dates exactly right, but that was roughly the chronological order I can remember.
13. NW: And what was it that you were trying to do? What were you hoping to add to the church?

14. B2: Well, during Bob Baker's time here, he set up the committee to actually look at perhaps what the church family would like, and what the PCC would like, and what would help meet some of the needs in the village. So he formed a sub-committee, which I helped on. And it developed into a worship centre, that it wasn't just a case of 'Is the existing church big enough', it was a case of 'Well, does it meet all the needs that we would like as a church. And of course that's like opening Pandora's box [laughs]. You could build something to fill this whole site. So it was a case of trying to highlight the gems from that, and to sift through what might be a feasible project that would try and meet all those aims. But we never really finalised that, it was still pretty much a wish list, with some high profile points on that wish list, and others perhaps likes and dislikes and that. We did engage a little bit with the neighbours...
15. B1: Yes.
16. B2: ...and they proved to be very anti anything at the very outset, but Bob handled that side of it pretty much himself. But it was aiming towards a worship centre...
17. B1: Yeah.
18. B2: ... a Christian centre as much as anything.
19. B1: My memory tells me that we never... It was going to be a costly project to do everything we would have desired would have been very costly. And we never really resolved the chicken and egg issue which should come first: should it be the space for worship, or should it be the space for the community need, etc. We never really ever resolved that during Bob Baker's incumbency I don't think.
20. NW: So did it get as far as specific architect's plans or not?
21. B2: No, only very general plans. And the architect, who was our quinquennial architect at the time, I forget his name...
22. B1: Terry Norton.
23. B2: Terry Norton, worked with us without charging us, actually, because it was just ideas. There were several outline plans, weren't there?
24. B1: And he made one or two models, didn't he?
25. B2: Yeah. So he did put some real effort into it. But we never did crack it, we never did really resolve that. I think what it really lacked, quite frankly... Bob was a very good rector, but I think it was getting towards the end of when Bob was going to be here, which he knew, and I think he was more inclined to leave it to the next incumbent to actually bring it all together. He never said that, but that was my impression. So he was quite happy to leave a wish list and some general ideas, and let the next person run with it I think. I'm sure that was... I mean you might disagree with that, but...
26. B1: No, I think that's a reasonable assessment, Dave. I have heard it said that Bob possibly, just possibly, didn't actually ever really want to get involved with moving it forward. He was quite happy to get the ideas, and then as Dave said leave it to the next incumbent to actually positively move it forward. And I think when Linnet came in that was one of the things that was probably actually raised with her,

wasn't it, with the diocese in actual fact, that that was one of the things that the diocese possible saw, the extension of the worship area and the community needs area within Brundall church, and she was quite happy to take that on board.

27. NW: With Linnet it progressed...?
28. B1: It progressed further than it did with Bob.
29. B2: Oh yeah, much much further.
30. B1: It moved forward, it started to move forward. And people were saying, somebody made a comment to me 'At last I really believe the extension and the increases in size is actually going to happen'.
31. B2: We engaged an architect, who took it on board.
32. NW: This is a different architect?
33. B2: A different architect who was part of the partnership at that time with Terry...
34. B1: She was.
35. B2: And I can't remember her name...
36. B1: I can't remember her name, but the firm was Reynolds Jury, and they were at Aylsham. And as well as being a partner with Terry, she had a background of doing work in churches, for churches. And in fact we drew up a shortlist, I mean it's coming back to me now, and we went through the shortlist of architects to decide who might suit our needs, and we invited her along for an interview. By now Linnet had resurrected the small committee, or the working party, and we interviewed the architect, and she showed us some of the designs that she had put through and worked through with other places. And so we were impressed, and we said 'Yeah', and we signed up with her.
37. NW: So that would have been 2007 perhaps.
38. B1: It's difficult, isn't it, when you're trying to think back in timescales. It must have been about that time.
39. B2: It was fairly quick on the heels of Linnet being here...
40. B1: Linnet picked it up, got her feet under the table, and started to run with it almost immediately, didn't she?
41. B2: Yeah, that wouldn't be far out I think. About that time, yeah.
42. B1: I was still treasurer at that point in time, so it was certainly prior to 2010, well before that. Yeah.
43. NW: And did this other architect get as far as specific proposals?
44. B1: Yeah.
45. B2: Yeah. She worked with us. Linnet was a very strong chair woman, and was able to focus people's minds very clearly about the need, or the wish list if you like, so we discarded some of the more fanciful ideas, concentrated on what we felt would make a good worship centre, and I hesitate to call it an amenity, but certainly a complex that would once again put the church at the heart of the village, in that we could hold functions here, and encourage people onto the site. And become a Christian centre. And through people coming onto the site in association with the

church, it might encourage more people to become Christians, or reawaken their Christianity. So we did progress quite rapidly, and quite detailed about just what we wanted, together with costings.

46. NW: Do you remember what sort of a cost you were thinking it might be?
47. B2: I think £2.5m strikes about...
48. B1: I can't remember exactly what it was, but we were looking at a large amount of money. I don't know if it was as large as £2.5m, but it was certainly a large seven figure amount.
49. B2: We'd been talking about the £1m mark with Bob I think.
50. B1: The £1m mark actually came to mind Dave. I must admit with timescales I can't remember if that was with Bob.
51. B2: That was with Bob. And once the full time architect became involved and we began to put things together, we began to get a clearer idea of just what the ultimate costs might be. And of course we then had to... It was a chicken and egg thing. Once we got into that, it was then that we formally approached the diocesan people to get them involved, which we knew was a process we'd have to go through, but we weren't too sure what that process would be. And we wanted them on board. So that was when we then made the approach to them as well, to encompass some of their ideas.
52. NW: So I imagine they came and met you and looked at what you were proposing?
53. B2: They did, they sent representatives along. I don't know if you were still involved?
54. B1: I wasn't involved on the planning committee, I was on the finance side, so I wasn't actually part of those meetings Dave.
55. B2: They sent representatives along to speak to us, and then they eventually virtually the whole committee, or most of the committee came for a site visit to have a good look round at what we were intending and why. So that they could see it in their mind's eye, rather than just general descriptions. And so we had to answer some very general questions, and then a correspondence was entered into about what they felt we should have or not have. So there was a fair bit of toing and froing in terms of what we would in fact come up with. They came up with ideas: 'Why are you attaching it to this building? Why aren't you building it all there towards the lychgate there,' and things like that. 'Why is it round and not square?' [Laughs] And have you thought of this, and have you thought of that, and so on. So there was quite a radical look at what we were trying to do, and we had to justify, I guess, what our outline plans were at that time, not final plans. So there was a fair bit of toing and froing, and they also introduced us to their process, their procedure, I don't know what it's called, but it's quite a detailed process that you have to go through. So then we began to get a good look at what we needed to do. And the architect had been through similar situations anyway, so she was reasonably au fait with that side of it. But it was a lot of initial toing and froing before it got even more serious if you like. And I'm not sure how long... that took a year I should think of that sort of preliminary general discussion.
56. B1: It was quite a while.

57. B2: It was quite a while, because you've got to line up with when they're available, and when they've got a full agenda, and indeed when the architect is available and when we can also get together with the PCC, because they were having a big say in which direction we were going, and whatever we came up with of course eventually you need the PCC and the church family's approval before you start spending big money. So that was quite a lengthy process before we actually got into the official process, if you see what I mean.
58. NW: And the idea was to extend out to the north here, is that right?
59. B2: Yes.
60. NW: Because you've got a hexagonal brick building and a temporary building; were they both going?
61. B1: And this.
62. NW: The north aisle.
63. B2: And this is Victorian, isn't it?
64. NW: So was the idea to take away the north aisle, or to add onto it?
65. B2: Take it away. And there, where those arches are, would have become glazed. We would have kept the body of the church in there...
66. NW: The nave, yes.
67. B2: ... but take all of this away and join straight onto it. So I think where we're sitting would have been an enlarged vestry, and things. It actually started from there onwards, and embraced, and took out those other buildings, yeah.
68. B1: The old church would have remained for small services, perhaps the midweek communion, almost like a chapel of ease.
69. NW: So the extension, so a substantial extension on a reduced version of the church, because you're taking the north aisle away. So the extension would have dealt with your church space, and also your community space all together.
70. B2: Yes, the main part of it was a new enlarged worship centre, without fixed seating. The shape of it was... hexagonal.
71. B1: It was hexagonal, I'm sure it was.
72. B2: More of that style, so it was much more open plan if you like. So that yes, you could have café style services, you could have traditional services, and you could also use it for social events. You could use it for concerts.
73. B1: There was going to be a kitchen wasn't there?
74. B2: Yeah, around it would have been kitchens, two smaller meeting rooms, different toilets, male, female, disabled (or whatever you wish to call them these days) toilets, provision for children, and it also had a balcony actually.
75. B1: It did.
76. B2: So that you could turn... actually the total seating at one time went up to... 150–200 I think, excluding anything that went on in here. So it would have been quite a big worship centre, and there are certain services we have, such as the one I regularly attend which is Tuesday morning communion, we would have been lost in there, but it would have been great in here. And the style of communion that we

have at that particular thing is well-suited for a more traditional layout. So it wouldn't have been abandoning the old church, it would have been still using it, but more selectively I suppose, if you like.

77. B1: Yeah. It wouldn't have been the main worship centre; the main worship centre would have been the [new] building. And the rainbow room would have gone...

78. NW: That's the hexagonal one?

79. B1: No, it's not, it's the mobile, the temporary one. But the Church Room would have gone as well. I don't think it was going to be incorporated, was it?

80. B2: No.

81. B1: No, it was going to go.

82. B2: In fact it was going to be on the edge, and some of it would have been incorporated, and [some of] it was going to be a memorial garden.

83. B1: Yes, it was.

84. B2: And because we don't have a play area for the children if there's a crèche, a tot thing, and you do need outside space, so part of that would have been a little walled place in the garden, where they could play, sand pits as well, that sort of thing. So the area would have been used but not within the building.

85. B1: Not within the building, no, that's right.

86. NW: Just for context, do you know the population of Brundall?

87. B1: It's about 4,500-5,000 for the parish council.

88. NW: And this is the main church, is it?

89. B1: This is a benefice in actual fact. It's Brundall, Braydeston and Postwick, and within what's known as Brundall, the civil Brundall, there are two parishes, there's Braydeston and there is Brundall. The east end of the village is Braydeston, the west end of the village is Brundall. So how it splits down for numbers of people who actually live within the ecclesiastical parish I'm not sure, but the civil parish is 4,500-5,000 people. And people mingle quite easily; I live in Braydeston, I've always worshipped in Brundall. I go occasionally to Braydeston church, and that's normally the way it is. Braydeston is a smallish church with a very small congregation sat out in the middle of the fields, very nice.

90. NW: And in terms of the life of the church here, what typical numbers do you have for your main services?

91. B1: We have had, in years gone by, back in the '80s, we probably were getting on a Sunday morning service getting 70 or 80 people regularly sort of filling the main body of the church to the extent that we were having to use the extension at the back of the church on a regular basis. Probably in later years that dwindled what to 40, 50 people on a Sunday morning.

92. B2: I would have thought during Linnet's tenure I would have thought about 50, 60, I would think. But special services, events, funerals, investitures...

93. B1: Invite service.

94. B2: ... we had to put speakers, well audio-visual into the small hexagonal building, because the church was absolutely crammed full. When Peter came we had to do that.
95. B1: Yes.
96. B2: You just can't seat the sort of [numbers of] people that you need to get in here. So we were not just looking at a worship centre to cater for the church family plus. We were looking that if we were successful... And of course it was only part of Linnet was about anyway, and what Peter is about, it was about taking the church into the village. And we wanted this as I say as a worship centre for the village, and we were looking to try to move the congregation way beyond that, and to have events that would take it way beyond that.
97. NW: So you were thinking about being church in a different way.
98. B2: Yeah. Well, having a building that would allow you to be a church in the way we wanted to be a church. Peter of course has had to take a slightly different approach, in that he doesn't have the building, so he chops it up, what he's doing into bite-size chunks throughout the week. Where he gets the energy I just don't know, but he is working around the facilities we have in that way, whereas the other way, although you could do that, you could also embrace much bigger events as well.
99. NW: What does the building in its current form stop you doing then?
100. B1: It stops us possibly from increasing to the size that we would like to be in actual fact. Linnet was always of the view that if your congregation actually achieved 75–80% of the capacity of the church, you would actually start to reduce in numbers rather than increase in numbers from that point in time because people would not be able to come to church, feel comfortable, find a seat easily, and things like that; they would feel that they were intruding. And there was always a feeling that with the size that we had and what our hopes were, that we would not be able to increase our numbers sufficiently.
101. NW: What's the capacity of the building.
102. B1: It's probably to seat... when my daughter had her wedding here we had, because she was married, we had 100 people in church at that point in time, and that was full, pretty full, well it was full.
103. B2: I think we were conscious of the fact that people's expectations these days are much greater, that especially with the younger generation, they are not happy – some of them are – but they're not happy to come to a traditional situation, sit in a pew and hear the preacher. What they like is café style meetings, they like good audiovisual, they like to hear good music. We had a band at that time, didn't we?
104. B1: Yeah we did; we still have one.
105. B2: So it was a case of actually offering facilities that people would feel comfortable with. And also, as I say, other facilities that we would have had a café in the lobby. The lobby would have been more than a lobby. It would have been a drop in centre for tea, coffee, cakes, that sort of thing, where people could come in and chat. Not necessarily great Christian activities, but we would put Christian things

within the lobby, so that people could get interested, and say 'Well yeah, I like the look of this, and I wouldn't mind bringing the children along to this situation.' So it was really, I think taking the facility into what churches were originally, in that in medieval times, and certainly later the biggest building was the church, so if you wanted an event, a market even, you went to the church. It was the centre of the village, and that's what we were trying to put back. It's not just a quaint little church that looks twee, and takes a nice photo, and which nobody ever comes to, or very few people come to. We want it to be the heart of the village again in that sense. So that's what we were trying to encompass.

106. NW: What do you think the wider community, how do you think they see the church now? Because from what you say it's not as the centre of the community.
107. B1: I think the wider community now are getting more involved with the church than they ever have, in actual fact. There have been some very successful initiatives which Peter has started where the community is actually coming more to the church and there are people coming to church who haven't been to church on a regular basis, or we haven't seen in church. So he is attracting new people, particularly the younger people; Dave's right, they don't want to come into a formal setting, but on a Friday evening there's an after school club for youngsters from the Thorpe School and the senior years of the Junior School here in Brundall. And 30-35 youngsters regularly come in for an hour and a half from 3.30-5.00 pm. Some are brought by their parents, some aren't...
108. NW: And where does that take place?
109. B1: That takes place in the Church Room, as it is at this point in time. Moving out into the village, no we haven't used any other facilities out in the village at this point in time.
110. B2: We did at one time have a once a month service in the Memorial Hall.
111. B1: We did. And we had used the school on occasions, years back...
112. B2: Yeah. But no, there aren't really the facilities in the village apart from the Memorial Hall, which is more of a sports centre, isn't it, although they do have stage shows and that there. But we did have café style services in there at one time, but we're not doing it at the moment.
113. B1: No, no.
114. NW: You mentioned that the neighbours were quite opposed, at least to the first generation of ideas; did they remain opposed to...
115. B2: Vociferously so, yes.
116. B1: Yeah. Quite effectively so as well in some ways, didn't they?
117. NW: In what way 'effectively'?
118. B1: That they possibly organised themselves better in some ways than we did in getting their message, a message, across – whatever that message was...
119. NW: To the wider community?
120. B1: ... To the wider community.
121. B2: They would take some of our proposals and embellish or mis...

122. B1: Misrepresent.
123. B2: ...misrepresent them. One of the things we wanted to incorporate was an immersion baptism [pool], under the floor type of thing, so that became a 'swimming pool' as far as the...
124. B1: Yep, or 'a jacuzzi'.
125. B2: Or a jacuzzi, and things like that. And we'd worked with them constantly throughout the process. We originally were going to have a bell tower, a proper bell tower, and they objected to the fact that there would be bells, so we didn't do that. Basically they were afraid that with more people coming on site it would become a noisy central attraction which would disturb I suppose what they know. They live next to a very nice, twee village church with a graveyard, and they like it that way. So we just couldn't get them on board, we just couldn't get them on board.
126. NW: And did that spread out into the community then?
127. B2: Yeah. We had open days where we laid out what we were attempting to do that could people could come along on a Saturday and a Sunday.
128. B1: Yeah, yeah.
129. B2: And they came along, and they actually parked cars outside, and put all sorts of banners and statements in. And they came into the church, and tried to monopolise the architect and myself and others who were here, Linnet, who were here to talk to people. So if they monopolised you, you couldn't then talk to other people. And they were well, well organised.
130. B1: They were well organised.
131. B2: Yeah. At the end of the day we did get the Parish Council on board, with a split decision, a very split decision. So it wasn't all one-sided, there were people in the village [in favour], and we did ask people to write in with their comments, and to leave comments, so that we could take on board what they were saying. And what we were saying was 'Look, the existing church stays, it's still there,' and in fact from the south even though the new building was much, much bigger you couldn't see it, it was actually hidden behind the existing church. We were very careful about the footprint in order to do that. So anybody who still wanted to come and see that... And of course the churchyard itself was still there.
132. B1: It was an emotive issue, as to what happened to this church building. A lot of people liked the church as it is, nostalgic, whatever the word is. It's what they're used to, they think it's been like this since time immemorial, when it hasn't. This was built in 1900, the extension was built in 1959. It was probably a single cell church, and if you look underneath this church you'd find the Saxon church and the pole holes for that, things like that. But people wanted it to remain, or some people wanted it to remain as they had always known it.
133. B2: Part of the opposition was that this church has been here since Saxon times, and they were [implying] that that's a Saxon church. And we were trying to say well, part of that wall is a flint, goes back, and that corbel up there in fact they think is from Roman [times] which was excavated in the village and was incorporated into

this, so that's actually the oldest part of the church, which probably never was part of the church, but was part of some sort of temple. And the rest of it, you know, it hasn't been here since [Saxon times], the site has been used since Saxon times but the building hasn't, and when you actually look outside you actually go to the south face, you'll see what the Victorians did when they took the thatch off, and you've got brickwork above the flint, I mean disgraceful [laughs]. So what's good about that. We weren't going to touch that. So the church never is what it was, no church is, well very few.

134. NW: So there were two very different ideas about change...

135. B2: Yeah.

136. NW: ... One view that you shouldn't change something like this because it had always been like it...

137. B2: That's right.

138. B1: Yeah, the perception was, for some people, that it has *a/ways* been like this. They didn't recognise the genesis of change that it would have actually gone through over the years.

139. B2: And our problem is, and another thing that was uppermost in our mind, was that nothing ever stands still, not just in the building but in the church community. You either move forward, or you fall back. And that's just a fact of life. And the church family is getting older, was getting older; if you're not careful you get to a point of no return. You know, you just fade away. which is alright for oldies like me. I don't mind; I can gently fade away with the church. But as a true Christian, I'm thinking of those that come on, or ought to follow on, you know. It's not about me, and people of my age, being happy with what we've got. But that's no way to be a Christian, I don't think. You've got to look beyond that, otherwise it'll just go, it'll just disappear.

140. B1: I think the Archbishop of Canterbury's said fairly recently that it's possible, if the trend continues, in 60 years time there won't be a Church of England.

141. NW: I think that was the last Archbishop of Canterbury.

142. B1: Was it the last Archbishop of Canterbury...

143. NW: The last one, or a previous one. It was George Carey, I think, that said that. We're a generation away from extinction.

144. B1: That's right, a generation away from extinction. And as such if people are still Christians, and they go to a different form of worship, then that's fine, but the church is actually here not for the congregation that's here always, it's here for the community. And when the community actually come to the church, I think the church should actually be what they expect to... what they expect to see, what they expect to find here in some ways. That's the importance of it.

145. B2: The diocesan people, if we get into that process, hated the hexagonal building. 'Whoever allowed that!' But it's a good job it was allowed, because we'd be lost without that.

146. B1: Yes, we would.

147. B2: And the temporary building, which was – well I won't go into the background of that – [laughs] but it should have been long gone. And we'd be lost without that. So, the fact that people did put the effort into doing that and saw the need, we're very grateful for, and we should be doing the same for them that come on after us.
148. NW: And doing it in a way that's not a temporary solution...
149. B1: That's right.
150. B2: No, that's right. They're long term needs, yeah.
151. NW: Because it's still a temporary solution.
152. B1: Yeah.
153. B2: The diocesan people I don't think were particularly helpful in that. The point being is that you have to satisfy that group on certain issues, and all the way through at the end of it when we got to a stage when we were going to the District Council, Linnet asked them, will you, now that you've given your go ahead, can you write a letter that we can actually use to help us at the District Council, and the answer was 'No'. And also, throughout the process Linnet had been to meetings with the architect, with the diocesan people, and one of them, one of the chaps fell asleep which is not very encouraging. We had to go through all their pro-formas at considerable expense, it took a long time – I reckon it put 18 months on the project time – and we had to put it together in quite a hefty document which was justifying what we were doing, contained everything that would meet all the requirements, bat surveys, English Heritage, the Society for the Prevention [sic]...
154. NW: Protection of Ancient Buildings...
155. B2: Yeah, not Prevention [laughs]. We'd done all that, and then when Linnet went along with the architect she was being asked questions that were all clearly answered and laid out in this document. So how much effort had they put into actually going through it before they went? I mean she came back fuming, she came back really upset by this, because we'd gone through, jumped all through their hoops, gone through all that process, which [involved] considerable time and expense, because architects are not cheap, are they, and for what? And at the end of the day, in my opinion, I would question why they're there. You have a department in the Church at the Cathedral, that works for the bishop, that's there to look after buildings of some sort, there must be, well there is, isn't there? As a parish, if we come up with an idea that we want to do something, we're the ones that are going to have to pay for it; we're the ones who have to justify that need to ourselves and to the... If we get it wrong, we're the ones who are going to have to stand the cost of it. So why don't you liaise with a central building department who will talk things through with you, and perhaps have handouts, process[es], procedures, that you've got to think of this, you've got to think of that, But really it's up to you as a parish to actually jump through all the hoops with English Heritage, with all the other organisations which you know of, that you have to meet; why don't you meet them direct? Why do you have to go through this

central group, who were not reading the information we were sending through anyway. I mean, what are they there for?

156. NW: Did you find the other groups like the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, English Heritage, did you find them helpful?

157. B2: Yeah, yeah. Dealing with them direct, they were helpful and useful. They came along, they talked to us, we talked to them, we had specific meetings with them, and it was useful. They told us what we must bear in mind, what we were doing. They would give a sharp intake of breath [laughs], you know they steered you in the right direction. And we had to justify to them what we were doing.

158. NW: Did you get as far as getting their agreement to it?

159. B1: Yeah, yes.

160. B2: Yeah, we jumped through *all* the hoops, everything. Everything we had to do, bat surveys. The only... we didn't get as far as doing an architectural [archaeological]... what do they call it, an excavation.

161. NW: Oh, an archaeological...

162. B2: Archaeological. Because we hadn't got that far. But we'd got them lined up, and we'd done some trial trenches and what have you. So we'd gone through all the hoops with all these other bodies which sit on that group anyway I think, but we'd dealt with them individually to get to the stage where they were happy with what we were doing. We'd submitted plans to them as well, so we'd lined up all the right bodies and organisations before we actually went to the Diocesan [Advisory Committee]. And at the end of the day, I question why do we have to go to them as well. We've lined everybody else up. We've explained what we're doing. I just do not understand the function of the diocesan group. I mean, what is their function, what do they do? Why? Would be my... because you've got to deal with all these other people, and at the end of the day, once you've satisfied English Heritage and all the others, the expense is ours and we've got to go to the local authority, with which they wouldn't help us anyway. So if it meant we'd got to spend £2m, and it never actually worked out, it's down to us, isn't it?

163. NW: And did you get as far as a planning application?

164. B1: Yes.

165. B2: Oh yeah. We submitted, yeah.

166. NW: And when was that submitted, do you remember... Sorry!

167. B2: It was almost the last year of Linnet's tenure wasn't it.

168. B1: Yeah, it was about 2010/2011 that would have been.

169. NW: And what was...

170. B2: That was four or five years ago, that must have been about right.

171. NW: And what was the outcome of the application?

172. B2: Well they refused. If we had a major fault in the process, it was you must line up all the ducks up before you sit down [laughs]. You need to have the key people on board before you go into that final process, and we didn't do that well enough.

173. NW: So in this case, which key people did you not have on board?

174. B2: Well, it was the chairman, who actually lives in the village...
175. NW: Of the planning committee?
176. B2: Yes. There was another one, who was also the local district councillor, Snowling was it?
177. B1: It could have been. I didn't go to the meeting, Dave, so I don't know who was sitting on it.
178. B2: Yeah, they were the key players and they were against us. So we didn't line the ducks up properly. Whether we would have still got through is a moot point, there's no way of telling, is there? But they were against it, and spoke against it in the meeting. And the problem is with the planning committee, most of them will put up their hands in accordance with what the chairman and the main spokesman will want. And they said 'No', and so it was rejected.
179. NW: Do you remember what the argument was behind them saying 'No'?
180. B1: We didn't present our case, I don't think, over well. We had the very unfortunate incident that we actually... When you go to planning committee, I think the applicant has got five minutes in which they actually put their case...
181. NW: Three minutes, yes.
182. B1: Three minutes, a very short period of time, wasn't there. And we had an expert who was [brief interruption]... We had an expert lined up who was going to give the evidence on our behalf, not a member of the church, but somebody who was used to the process, and it got cancelled didn't it, that first meeting, for whatever reason.
183. B2: The architect hadn't submitted something in time, or got it wrong, one of the architect's people, in fact he finished up leaving the company I believe, but... through that.
184. B1: And the expert wasn't available for the next meeting, so the person who took over took over at very short notice, and hadn't been fully briefed, or wasn't able to be fully briefed, and wasn't able to give the evidence and say what would have been said otherwise. And that didn't go down I don't think too well, because he wasn't confident in what he was saying.
185. B2: You have to line up your ducks before you sit down, and that meant... it has to be decided before they meet. You have to have people on board. You're not going to convince anyone in three minutes; they've already made up their mind. So it achieves nothing. If you've not got them on board before they sit, you're not going to get it. And we didn't have them on board. We didn't line the ducks up properly beforehand. Whether we would have still got it through of course is a moot point.
186. NW: And is it that at that point the project stopped?
187. B1: That's when... we started retrospectively at that point in time as to what had gone wrong and the whole project did actually come to a stop at that point in time. Whether it was going to be temporary or not, that was the intention; let's review where we are, let's review what's happened, let's take a little bit of time to reflect on everything and *then* we'll decide whether we're going to move forward or not.

And we never actually reached that point of making a decision as to whether we were going to move forward, but I think we probably... The feeling was that we weren't going to go through all that, what had been a tortuous process, again in a very short period of time. And in any event Linnet then decided...

188. B2: And at a major cost, as well. And it was a case... And we had a budget, and we were pushing up against that. We could've found more money, obviously, but we had reached pretty much our budgetary limit, and it was a case of where do we go from here? Are we going to invest a lot more money into this, and what can we do that would meet the objectors?
189. B1: It cost us over £30,000 to go to the planning committee, because that triggers various payments to people like the quantity surveyor, the architect, a percentage of their fee, and all the rest of it. And we had to raise £30,000, and we did that in very short order in actual fact. So the money was there. but to go through that again I'm not sure the same amount of money would have been there [laughter] quickly after that. And you're then thinking ahead to say, 'Well we've got to raise £2.5m now on top of that £30,000, even if we get planning permission.
190. NW: Coming back to I think B2's point earlier about churches needing to change, do you feel that you're stuck with the building in some sense, or the building is stuck?
191. B1: No.
192. B2: Personally, I do. We're going to do some work on the hexagonal building. We can't enlarge it other than for a kitchen and toilets, but you're always on the back foot. Peter is working his way around it by chopping the week up.
193. NW: So doing activities in a different pattern.
194. B2: Yeah, that's right, to try and meet it that way. But if Peter and we are very, very successful, we're going to run up to the fact we don't have the facilities anyway, so it'll be back to the Memorial Hall I think. So there are other facilities in the village. But it's a question of... it's a chicken and egg, isn't it really? And people have expectations these days. About toilets, about café facilities, etc etc. And if you don't meet those expectations... you can't stand still. And the way that we can move on is very, very limited. And I think we'll always limit our[selves] in how successful we will be. So I think it's a great shame. And that temporary building is way past its sell-by-date anyway, which would have to be replaced. And what do you replace that with? I don't know.
195. B1: I don't think we're stuck with the building in the sense that we don't need the buildings in the same way that we did previously.
196. NW: And why is that?
197. B1: Because we're operating now, Peter is operating, in a completely different way. His vision of the church, and how the church operates, doesn't actually include to a large part this particular building. The Church Room is a more important centre, and people's homes, and things like that, and home groups, building those up. It hasn't got to be a centralised worship within a church building as such.
198. B2: Well I tend to disagree with that up to a point. You can get things to a bite size chunks up to a point, but having 30 teenagers in there is not an ideal situation. It's

hardly big enough with our expectations. And the modern expectation of a worship centre, you're limited with what you've got anyway. And I think unless you do go into a modern situation, and meet people's modern expectations, I think you'll just be a twee church that no matter what you do is going to fade away, personally. I mean that's my personal opinion.

199. NW: So a bit of a difference of view between you.

200. B2: Well, you're going to get that with any church, aren't you?

201. NW: Of course, yes.

202. B1: And you had that difference within the church over the experience that we went through. Not all members of the church family were supporting the actual building of a church extension. A number of people within the church family, I was surprised to find out there were a number who were actually against the redevelopment of this church building; they wanted it to stay. And they were in some ways possibly actively talking against, organising against, any change.

203. B2: Obviously, what we were on was retaining the old building for people who like to worship in that style, and suits their needs, and they tend to be an ageing population, and a decreasing population. If you look at thriving churches, not necessarily Church of England churches, if you look at what they do in King Street, Wensum Street...

204. B1: The King's Centre.

205. B2: A major, a major Christian development there, where they have, they've got their own coffee shops, they've got their own worshipping facilities, it becomes a hub, and a very thriving hub, and you're always going to be limited here. How can this be the centre of the village? I mean, look around you. What do young people see? What have we got to offer them? And I think ultimately, yeah, we can cope up to a point, and as I say the Rainbow Room is past its sell-by-date, maybe you can incorporate something. You're always going to be hamstrung. How many people are going to be in this church in 50 years time? 20, 30 if you're lucky. People's perceptions have changed. People expect something different.

206. B1: But to make that change you're going to have to have mega money. You're talking about, it was £2m five years ago, it's going to be £2m plus plus plus...

207. B2: Yeah.

208. B1: ...now. We're trying to raise about £100,000 to improve the Church Room. Some of that has been raised, and some of the improvements have been made, but it's not proving easy to raise that amount of money. Where do you find the additional seven digit figures which you've got to find to actually extend this church building. So therefore I think you have got to find other ways of getting round that, other than the church building, to actually communicate with the church and the village the Christian message as such. But you need a church here, of some form, because the community needs a church, people need a church at odd times, at individual times of their lives. Non-specific times. They may not be regular attenders of this church, but it's got to be somewhere that they can come to and

recognise that they have come to a Christian, or a religious, centre, somewhere that gives them comfort at times. And that's what I see a church as.

209. B2: You see I see the church as being one of the central focuses of the village. I know we've got a community centre, which has its limits, but if you're really going to function to the wider community, and people outside the community coming in, you need the facilities. People's expectations these days are totally different. If you don't meet those expectations they'll go where their expectations can be met. Which is fair enough if they, you know... so they don't come here they go somewhere else. But I think you need to encourage people on site so they get used to the site, they can see what we're doing, they like what you're doing, and they want to be part of it.

210. B1: Yeah.

211. B2: And I think the modern way, how many modern young families want to be part of [this]... I don't see it. So, I think it's going to fade away. Unless we can have other facilities that will help that. And you're always going to be limited by what we've got. As the village increases in size, how are we ever going to respond to that? I don't think we... only in a very, very small way. I think that's a great shame.

212. B1: I just see this as the bottom of the pyramid in actual fact. This is where people's Christian lives actually start, within a parish church, or within a church, within a parish, and then as they develop this church may not actually suit their needs. It may be right that they move away from this church into another church, perhaps part of the Free Church movement, or whatever, as they develop. Perhaps some we will be able to cater for, and we will be able to move them forward, and they will have their needs always met here. But that won't always be the case. You've got to be here, the church has got to be here.

213. B2: The village is growing, isn't it?

214. B1: Because somebody has got to start that first touch of the Christian message. And you never how it's going to start; it could be a baptism, it could be a funeral, it could be someone having an individual special need, where they just come in here and they just wish to sit quietly, and somebody else speaks to them.

215. NW: So in terms of the cost of the project not succeeding, it's that you can't take people from that beginning... you'll still be here to do the beginning bit, but you can't take them on into more rounded community.

216. B1: Some you will, but not all of them. It is difficult.

217. B2: I would love the church to be a central function in the village, not just a church where you come and worship. I would see it as being a valuable asset in general to the village. Not in competition with the Memorial Hall, but sharing that role with the Memorial Hall. And that once you get people on site and begin to familiarise them with the Christian way, you can then build on that basis, and I don't think we've got the facilities, we'll always be hampered by that. It's an old building. It's alright to come and take a photo of it, it's alright if you're my age, it'll see me out, but what of the youngsters, where are they, how many will come, a few, but not many. Do they want to come and sit in a pew? I don't see that.

218. NW: So thinking about the process, is there one thing that you would change about the process?
219. B2: I'd line the ducks up a bit better [laughs].
220. NW: But in terms of the process, of the hoops that you have to jump through, as you described.
221. B2: When you've got no option but to jump through the hoops, I mean I would be radical and say why are those hoops there anyway. They're not a help, they're an added cost. And that centrally there should be a department that is there to actually help you forward. Not a committee, but a department that says 'Well, what are you trying to do? Yeah, that sounds good. Here are some useful papers to help you, these are the people you've got to contact. Good idea; get on with it. If it doesn't work out that's your cost, but we'll be helpful to you.' But it only takes a very small department, it doesn't take lots of committees, so I don't see why the Diocesan [Advisory] Committee needs to sit in judgment on it. To me, that's an unnecessary process, because you've got to talk to English Heritage, and you've got to talk to all these other people anyway. And you just need guidance on how to do that, and it's up to you to do it. So I would see a big chunk of that process actually coming out. But you've still got to do your homework, you've still got to finish up at the District Council with a viable proposal. And we needed to spend more time lining them up, to getting alongside them and listening to what they were saying, and that's where we failed. And I think that if we ever did anything like that again we'd have to get alongside the District Council people very, very quickly, and very early, and involve them from the very start, not just at the end. We tried to get the diocesan people lined up. We tried to get a complete package, that you'd go along, this is so good, they must approve it. And they didn't. And that's where we fell down.
222. B1: Yeah, I think that was probably right. We thought the case was so obvious that it would almost automatically I think go through. And we didn't always listen to what people were saying who weren't in complete agreement with the project. Some of them you'll never get on board, I don't think, the people who live over the other side of the fence. And I don't mean individual people, I mean the group, on Chancel Close as such. I don't think that they're ever going to be in favour of plans where we might extend our buildings for the use of this particular area. But there are others who, if we'd have listened to what they said, and taken on board some of the things that they were saying, we might well have been able to actually move it forward perhaps a little bit further than we did.
223. B2: The church family lost heart in the end. That's why we never took it any further.
224. B1: We'd had enough, I think...
225. B2: Yeah, yeah. I think that in general it was decided that those who were in favour felt it was a polished, final article that was good, and those that were opposed were opposed, not because of little things, but I think for major differences. Regardless of the cost aspect, I mean that's another issue. And some people like what's here; it's always been here (which it hasn't) but in their mind it's always been like that. 'I

was married here' etc. etc. You know, 'It's alright for me'. But what we've got to think about as Christians is not what's alright for me, but what's alright for the community, and generations to come. And a lot of people unfortunately are not prepared to take that on board. How you win them over, I just don't know in that sense. We tried, but... And I think we lost heart, quite frankly.

226. B1: But it's interesting now, I would say that this church is thriving as much, if not more, than at any time in my 30 years of actually living here. Under the leadership of Peter.

227. NW: That's very encouraging.

228. B1: I hope so!

229. B2: Yes, he's tackling it, I feel, with one hand behind his back. But he doesn't tackle it in that way. He's as enthusiastic and go-getting as ever, in that sense. But I still think that you're ultimately hampered by what the facilities are. That must ultimately... People's concepts and perceptions and needs are radically different from when we were young, it's totally changed. And you've got to get those people on board.

230. B1: But it does come down to money, as well at the end of the day. We've had thoughts over the years of taking on a property more in the centre of the village. This church is actually hidden away from the street. People pass down Brundall Street and they don't even notice Brundall Church because it's set back, and [there's] no tower, and it's low. And we never have... Because suitable buildings have come up on the market, but then you haven't got the money at that point in time, and you have to raise the money first so that when a building comes up, you're ready to move.

231. NW: But then what would be the future of this building?

232. B1: It wouldn't be, as such, a worship centre that we were looking to build, or thought about buying. So you could set up an office facility, a café facility. You've got to have something in the centre of the village where you can headline Brundall church, make the community aware that the church is at the centre of the community, rather than hidden away behind a couple of hedges and a rectory.

233. B2: This building, for the younger generation, and for times to come, will be a hindrance. It's nice to visit, and come and take a photo...

234. NW: But for the life of the church it's a hindrance you mean?

235. B2: No. As we older ones die out it offers nothing to what the younger people's expectations are. We've always got one hand tied behind our back. And if you have a Christian centre, and I still hold on this, that it's got to be the centre of people's expectations in general. Somewhere which will have a children's club, where a crèche, where you can drop in for coffee and all that. Because it's out the way you're hindered by that. We don't have a more central function, but it's got to become part of the heart of the village, more than just somewhere that you come and sit in a pew and worship, because that's going, you know people's expectations, that's going to die out to a large extent with us. It is, it is.

236. B1: So the community aspect will be based on the Church Room for the time-being. Which is being redeveloped.
237. B2: But it's so small.
238. B1: It is small, but it will be slightly larger than it is at the moment.
239. B2: [Laughs] We're going to be hampered by this building.
240. B1: Yeah.
241. NW: I think we've got to the end of our time. I'm very grateful to you. Can I just ask before we stop, are you both retired?
242. B1: Yes
243. B2: Yeah.
244. NW: And before you retired, what was your line of business?
245. B2: I worked in insurance for Norwich Union as such, on the business administration side, and then took a change of direction. For the last 15 or 20 years I went into IT.
246. B1: And I was the fleet business manager for Yorkshire Water, but I am a local lad, and when I retired I moved back here.
247. NW: Thank you very much for your time, I'm very grateful.
248. B1: Thank you.