

**Church:** St Andrew, Holt  
**Interviewee:** C1 – Fr. Howard Stoker  
**Date:** Tuesday, 23 June 2015

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1. NW: Thank you very much Howard for agreeing to talk to us.
2. C1: You're very welcome
3. NW: This – basically the purpose of the interviews to, as I said in the material that I sent to you, was essentially to understand about your experience of having done a building project and your reflections on that process, the positive, the negative, you know sort of everything, the impact that it had on the community, wider community and the church community. We've got a bit a structure, but we won't follow it slavishly, you know we'll go where the interest lies really. We will be done within an hour if...
4. HS Yes, fine
5. NW: ...if that's OK. Great. Thank you. Perhaps we could start – could you tell me just how long you've been connected with the church; when did you come here?
6. C1: 16 years ago
7. NW: Right, a long time ago
8. C1: Yeah, it is a long time ago isn't it? I was instituted and installed as the rector in June 1999.
9. NW: Right OK. And when did this project come along? ... the building has been fairly recently completed?
10. C1: Two years ago
11. NW: So you came in '99 and was this sort of rumbling away on the cards for a while or...?
12. C1: The seeds had been sewn back in the 1980s. There was a chap called Stephen Gregory who was the incumbent who had sown some seeds about developing the church site and building an extension to the church and there are drawings in our filing cabinets of proposed and sort of abandoned schemes that really never got further than the drawing board. Then I think in 1906 Canon Radford who was that then rector had written a history of Holt and he said, and there been a restoration project in his time, and he said that all that's left to do is to repair the nave roof and to enlarge the vestry. And that was 1906 and it took us, what, 106 years to enlarge the vestry. So things move slowly in north Norfolk. But I suppose I guess I was the right time, right place, you know, that the seeds that were sown in the '80s came to fruition really.
13. NW: OK. And what role, thinking of the combined building, church and this extension, what role do you think it plays, perhaps an obvious question, but what role does it play for the congregation, and then for the wider community?
14. C1: OK. There was an obvious need for more space on our site. We have a church hall as well as this new development.

15. NW: How far away is the church hall?
16. C1: It's about a hundreds yards away. But we have a growing congregation, that wants to do more things, and expand, and also to open up the church to a wider constituency I guess really, a wider audience, and so really the facilities we had on site at the church really were – didn't fit our needs. There was a need for a larger vestry, there is a need for a choir vestry, there was a need for toilets...
17. NW: So were there no toilets?
18. C1: One inaccessible toilet...
19. NW: To do with the vestry presumably?
20. C1: Yes, which was attached to a boiler house, and which was only really used by the clergy. Yeah, very... very... up steps, just not accessible. So we wanted to make the place more accessible, more usable, more flexible. So say for choir, parish office, larger vestry, a multipurpose meeting room for not only the Parochial Church Council, but the subgroups, study groups, and it's also available for hire. But also it's opened up the church to that wider audience, particularly as a concert venue. So I think it's brought the church into the town, and the town into the church...
21. NW: Right, excellent
22. C1: ...because geographically we're on a no through road, we're landlocked by school playing fields, we're hidden from sight – the tower is, what, 54 foot high [but] you can't see the church from anywhere in town.
23. NW: I was looking for it when I came in; I didn't see it, yeah.
24. C1: So in itself it's not very accessible. But it really has I think transformed how the town see the church perhaps and the church see the town.
25. NW: And specifically what do you think has changed? Is it just that more people are coming through the building now?
26. C1: I think it has brought more people over the threshold, and so the building itself becomes a tool for mission, you know just by the fact that it's here it's bringing people into contact with the church. And also having the parish office here with the parish administrator three days a week, there's a buzz about the place. There's more traffic really, and so there's not a day that goes by when it's not being used. We're very much part of the arts festival in Holt which is next month and if I'd say last year with the art exhibition that was held here and the concerts that are held in church we had over 2000 people through the door...
27. NW: Brilliant...
28. C1: Yeah, which we wouldn't have had before. No way, no way. So it really has put the church back at the heart of the community I think.
29. NW: Interesting. It's interesting how churches can not physically but in people's minds migrate to the edge of the community, can't they? But if you look back at the mediaeval model everybody went through and into the church...
30. C1: Sure
31. NW: for all sorts of different things...

32. C1: ...sure, sure...
33. NW: ... because Christianity was so laced through everything, so there wasn't a secular-church divide, and subsequently the church has often migrated, and if you push it far enough it falls off the edge. And projects like this are great at, or have the potential to pull the church building and its community back into the centre ... the thick of it.
34. C1: I think that's true, but I would be the first to defend that sense of sacred, and churches as sacred space in a secular society, and that for me, primarily, it's purpose is the worship of God. But interestingly we've not had the new building consecrated, and that I think was a deliberate decision. It's dedicated, but not consecrated, and that I think is to do with, you know, you might want to do things in this building that you wouldn't want to do in a consecrated space, and I think that's important, I think for us.
35. NW: Interesting, thank you.
36. C1: I mean you could play bingo in here. I'm not sure you would want to play bingo in church, do you know what I mean?
37. NW: Yes, yes, yes. Do ... I can't remember are your pews movable, are they movable?
38. C1: With some effort.
39. NW: Right. Have you ever experimented with moving the arrangement of the church itself?
40. C1: We do occasionally. I mean you may have noticed that the nave is fairly clear, sorry the chancel is fairly clear; the choir stalls were taken out before I came. So we use that space more creatively at different times of the year and we have had worship in the round there. And also having no choir pews the nave altar is movable so it becomes that concert space for performers. Sometimes we've moved some of the pews around for different types of services, mainly for the choir so that the choir moves around church.
41. NW: So it's a church with an active musical musical element.
42. C1: Yes, yes, yes, yeah. We have a choir of probably over 20. [We're] trying to establish a junior choir, that's not as easy as you might think.
43. NW: And what's the... in terms of the numbers and demographic of the...
44. C1: ...of the congregation. I mean north Norfolk is increasingly a magnet for retirement, which is reflected in the demographics of the population. So the majority of people in Holt will be aged between 64 and 75...
45. NW: Really the majority?
46. C1: Yeah
47. NW: Wow!
48. C1: Yes, yeah, I think. There's a lot over 75. We can [offer] two services on a Sunday morning: traditional Book of Common Prayer Communion at 8:00, sung Eucharist at 10:30, Common Worship. The parish Eucharist at 10:30 could attract up to 150, average maybe 125.
49. NW: And do you do separate children's stuff, do you have...

50. C1: Well, yeah part of the use of this building is that on a Sunday morning there is always provision for children, if there are children there. So the children will now come out into this space for their own sort of Liturgy of the Word, and then come back into the Eucharist at the Peace to share what they've done. Once a month we offer an after-school activity modelled on Messy Church, but we call it 'Living Stones', so the idea is that parents and children come and engage together in a craft-based activity with a short act of worship and refreshments. Which has limited success, partly again because of the demographics of the town. I think in the 2011 Census there are 500 under 15-year-olds in the parish, so not huge amounts of children.
51. NW: Of how many total?
52. C1: About 4–4,500.
53. NW: So sort of 10%–12%...
54. C1: Yeah. The other thing that we do in here, aimed mainly I suppose at an older group is a Service of the Word called a 'Tea Service', which is a short service: hymns, prayers, short address, followed by tea. And that's part of our outreach to try to draw people into the church community who perhaps are not communicant members of the Church of England, or who are on the fringe, or you have no or little contact the Church. Again mainly elderly people, so they come for worship, for fellowship, and for some food.
55. NW: A slice of cake...
56. C1: Yeah
57. NW: And that's in here?
58. C1: That's in this new building, so that's again something new, something we do in here. We also in this building on a Monday morning we have a church-run drop-in centre on a Monday, coffee morning, which [has] taken off. There is a buzz about the place on a Monday morning. Not everybody who drops in for coffee are church members; a number of them are recently bereaved, so I've done funerals for them, and they know that on a Monday morning there is someone here, to talk to them, to meet, to make friends, new friends. And then on Tuesday mornings the church works with other professional bodies, the medical practice, Age Concern, and we run a dementia support group; so for people who are suffering with dementia and their carers. So that's held in this new building; again something that is new for us, and this building has enabled us to do that.
59. NW: Yeah, brilliant.
60. C1: So we have [become] more community-focused I suppose in a sense. I mean I'm not saying that we weren't, but it's enabled us to fulfil some of our hopes and aspirations.
61. NW: So it's a better fit for what you were trying to be already.
62. C1: Yeah, yeah. And the church hall is used, but the church hall is becoming a source of income for us in renting it out...
63. NW: OK.

64. C1: But also we use it as a church for events that this building can't accommodate. I mean unfortunately this building is not big enough for Sunday morning coffee. You get 70, 80 people staying for coffee; this room here will accommodate, what, 40, 45.
65. NW: So what do you do?
66. C1: We do to the church hall. We've got a parish barbecue coming up next month; we might be sitting 80, 90 people down for lunch, so we go into the church hall down there. I think the other thing, and I don't know whether we're the only church, we now, one of the members of our congregation is a licensee holder.
67. NW: As in pub...
68. C1: Yeah, yeah. So this building is licensed, and the rectory garden is licensed, the churchyard is licensed, the church hall is licensed, the Church Street is licensed and we can have a bar in any of those places and it is again, you know, at concert venues and things. So it's just getting transformed, what we do and provides a source of income. So we have to be a bit more businesslike in our approach, which I think this building has made as do that.
69. NW: Just a side question, does that being more businesslike, have you had to set up a trading company or anything like that?
70. C1: No, no.
71. NW: It's all under the PCC?
72. C1: It is. At the moment. If it grows we might have to look at forming a subsidiary company, a trading company, but we don't particularly want to go down that route unless we have to.
73. NW: Yeah, sure. Turning to the building as it was, or as it still is, but the main building, how would you describe its character?
74. C1: The church itself? What in tradition, or in...?
75. NW: No, the building, the architecture...
76. C1: Oh, OK.
77. NW: What's important about it, I suppose.
78. C1: It's fourteenth century, a typical Norfolk church, a lot of flint work, not over large compared to some of the other churches in north Norfolk that grew up out of the medieval wool trade; Holt never enjoyed the wealth of some of the other villages and ports on the north Norfolk coast, so Holt was the poor relation I guess and may have had a smaller population. I think it's well-proportioned, it has a village feel, a village church feel about it. It was destroyed...
79. NW: In terms of the people who ...
80. C1: Well the size of it. Some of the villages in north Norfolk have churches that feel more cathedral proportions, whereas ours I think is more of a village church proportion. Destroyed by fire in 1708, as indeed most of the town was; hence we have a Georgian town rebuilt after the fire. So the interior of the church since the 18th century has been heavily restored. I guess all the medieval interior would have been lost, so you have 18th, 19th, 20th century restoration. It's very open,

very light, quite a simple, plain interior, not over fussy, but sits within, particularly within, the Anglo-Catholic tradition. And so I think that anybody coming into the church will see from its fixtures and fittings the tradition it represents.

81. NW: If they know how to read that.
82. C1: If they know how to read the signs, yeah, yeah, sure, sure.
83. NW: And if, heaven forbid, if the church had to close, or it got kind of 'vanished' as it were, how would that change the town, do you think? Would people miss it?
84. C1: I think they would. I think they would. I think there is an enormous amount of goodwill in the town towards the church that's been built up over the years. And I've not heard, in town, any negativity or criticism to our new build. Because often it's those that don't come that shout the loudest when there's change, and I've heard none of that. You know I think if the church were to be burnt down again or to be lost, yeah, I'd like to think people would feel bereft and that they would want to restore it. Yeah, yes, I think they would, I think they would.
85. NW: When it came to this project did you have negative comment from people? Or lots of support, or mix, or...?
86. C1: The majority of people, and by that I mean 99.9% of the people, caught the vision, saw the need and went with it. Possibly one or two, and I mean literally one or two, felt that we shouldn't be building it and perhaps the money might be better used elsewhere.
87. NW: How much money was it?
88. C1: In total, probably about £760,000 including architect's fees; the cost of the build I think came in just under £600,000.
89. NW: Good value I think.
90. C1: I think so, I think so, yes. Because it looks like a £1 million project.
91. NW: Yes, yeah.
92. C1: But we built at the time of a recession and I think that worked in our favour. If we were to start again now I'm sure it would cost us more.
93. NW: Yes, I think it would. And for you personally, what's the most important thing about the building?
94. C1: I think the fact that this just seems to have, and I think in reality has, just opened up the church to the town. And I think if we see it as part of that mission of the church and enabling the church to grow; it's community building, it's... yeah. I think my driving force here has been building a community that people want to belong to. They can then catch faith; they don't have to sign on the dotted line to everything we profess and believe before they come, or in order to join. I think people come and there is a vibrancy about the community that people want to belong to. And they might come back; that warmth of welcome, that strength of community, they think this is a good group of people to belong to, we want to be part of it. So we are busy church; you know I often say that we play and pray together, we go on holiday together, we do lots of things and people want to belong to it. There then is a possibility that they might then catch faith if they've

not had it, or if they have faith they'll grow in faith. Yeah, and I think that's evident. And I think what this building has enabled us to do is to help build that community because it has given us a meeting place, and this is called the Meeting Room. It's a meeting place, a gathering place where people can meet each other, and hopefully meet God. So it has certainly brought a new dimension to church life — no doubt about that, I think.

95. NW: I think in terms of buildings that allow phased engagement. So both low thresholds but also that allow those meetings that engender conversations that build relationships ... because fundamentally people come to faith through relationship...
96. C1: Absolutely.
97. NW: ...and by stages...
98. C1: Absolutely.
99. NW: ...not principally by a mental operation and a 'kabam' sort of moment.
100. C1: There's not many people who have a Damascus Road experience.
101. NW: Yes, exactly. And even St Paul took a few days, and needed other people.
102. C1: Yes, yes. It is very much a journey, a journey of faith, and it is about accompanying people on that journey and walking alongside them and if necessary beginning where they are on that journey. The whole road to Emmaus sort of stuff. And that's what I think we do is we journey with each other, and we're all on different stages of the journey. But this place, yeah... and perhaps it is also the fact of the age profile of the congregation and the community which is retired, in that people have time on their hands, perhaps their families are not here, you know and so the church is their family. And we probably have over 80 people on rotas doing things and so you know that breaks the congregation down into smaller groups that they identify with. You know, gardeners, people who maintain the churchyard, sacristans.
103. NW: Yes, somebody was mowing...
104. C1: Oh we have a huge team of people who look after the churchyard. Social team, the choir, the bellringers, you know, within the church community these smaller groups of people.
105. NW: So by the sound of it your vision of church, not surprisingly, is about engendering community.
106. C1: Yeah
107. NW: And that this building helps you do that a whole lot more.
108. C1: Yes I think so. Yeah, I think it does, it does. And it's also about serving the wider community too, so that the community of faith is not exclusive because that's the danger isn't it, in building a community it's that it becomes exclusive and that's not what we're about. And so you know this building and the church is here for the wider community. Wasn't it William Temple who said that the church is the only organisation that exists for its non-members, and I think there's truth in that and I think we have to keep reminding that we are here for those who don't come and

and so we have an open baptismal policy, and this room may be hired and used for the party after the baptism, is what we're finding, so that the family is staying on the church site. Funeral wakes, we've had funeral wakes in here after the funeral in church they stay on the site.

109. NW: Which is a significant gesture of hospitality on the part of the church isn't it, at those very important times of life.

110. C1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So it increases the amount of contact we have with them and that openness, the fact that you know we're not just here for the religious bits. What I am trying to ... one initiative I'm trying to make happen is that this room becomes a classroom for the school.

111. NW: The school next door?

112. C1: Well, for the primary school, the community primary school as well as the independent school that's in the parish. And the idea was, and is, that we were offering this room free of charge to the local primary school twice a month on a Tuesday afternoon so that teachers could book it to bring their class down to church to do anything they wanted — you know, cross curricular art, history, english, RE, whatever, they could come and use this room as a classroom, and use the church as a resource for the curriculum. That hasn't really happened.

113. NW: It sounds like a great idea; why has it not happened do you think?

114. C1: I suspect it's because of the effort it takes to get a class of children out of school down to here, health and safety, risk assessments. And it's a 15 minute walk from school if not 20 minutes with 30 kids, 30 primary school kids, so it's not taken off in the way that I had hoped. But it's still available for the school to use if they want it.

115. NW: It probably just needs one member of staff to get it, get the relevance of it, and then you might set it off...

116. C1: But we have a Pilates group meeting in here, we have a book club that hire the room once a week, once a month, so it is beginning to be used by... And the local housing association rent it, and the Caring Society rent it for annual general meetings, and things. So it has brought, it certainly is bringing more people into church, onto site.

117. NW: Great. Can we turn to the process...

118. C1: Yeah, sure

119. NW: ...the process that you have been through in terms of particularly getting permissions. How would you describe that; you know, good process, bad process, fraught, easy...?

120. C1: I think on the whole ... a good process, but not without its difficulties. We were fortunate enough to have a churchwarden who was our project manager...

121. NW: Is that Glyn?

122. C1: ...Glyn, who you will meet, whose former life was spent in project managing buildings, large buildings like and Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre In Nottingham. So building hospitals, so this was, you know he could do this in his sleep. So I



think it is more about having the right people. I mean we went down one or two dead ends in the process...

123. NW: What sort of dead ends?

124. C1: Well I guess in design that didn't come to fruition.

125. NW: Am I right that you didn't initially have this bit of land?

126. C1: That's correct, yeah. So originally English Heritage... Well, the piece of land this building is sitting on we bought from Gresham School. Early on in our discussions that wasn't an option, really, and at the time when we first started the school really didn't want to sell any land. English Heritage also said that we could not knock down, demolish, the churchyard wall because in their opinion, and it wasn't based on any factual opinion, but in their opinion it was an ancient curtilage of the churchyard and therefore couldn't be touched. And so they would only allow us to build within the [curtilage] of the churchyard, which would have meant building a smaller building...

127. NW: Yes

128. C1: ...between here and the south aisle, possibly built onto the south aisle.

129. NW: So across those windows.

130. C1: Yeah, so like a lean to. And in the end, after exploring that, we came to the conclusion that we didn't want that, because it wouldn't have met our needs, so we didn't want that. And so we then took on English Heritage and said 'Look, we don't want to do this; we want to build out'. And one or two other things had changed: Greshams had agreed to sell the land.

131. NW: So just in terms of timeframe, the earlier scheme, what sort of time were you talking about the earlier scheme?

132. C1: Well this build probably took us about five years from beginning to end, so probably seven years, you know a couple years before that. I mean it wasn't two years wasted because I think we learned a lot, and things had changed. One... What changed goalposts? I mean in order to fund our building we had a church bungalow, church property, which we sold. The PCC decided that instead of a bungalow we could have something like this, so we sold that for £235,000, but then game changer was that we had legacy from a parishioner of £105,000, so that meant we could think bigger and better, really. And so we decided we wanted to do, as I say, something bigger, we took on English Heritage about the wall and they, er, changed their opinion, and allowed us to demolish the wall.

133. NW: So when you say 'take on' you sort of robustly said we don't think it's as old as you think it is, or...

134. C1: Well, I wrote to the Chief Executive who lives — I don't know whether he's the same, I've forgotten his name — lived in Kings Lynn...

135. NW: Yes, I know.

136. C1: ... and I said is this really what you want us to do? And he didn't; he wrote back and said if you'd like to invite your local officer back with your conservation officer from North Norfolk District Council, talk to them. And we did, and they changed

their opinion, they changed their minds, their attitude. The compromise was that the line of the building is built on the line of the wall, which is why it sits at a slightly strange angle to the church. But it works...

137. NW: It's fine, yes...

138. C1: It maintains the integrity of the curtain wall of the churchyard.

139. NW: It's a lovely space out there.

140. C1: It is.

141. NW: Absolutely fantastic.

142. C1: So once opinion had changed and the wind was blowing in our favour, things just begun to slot into place really. Our preferred architect suddenly became available.

143. NW: Right. Is that...?

144. C1: Ruth Blackman, who is our church architect, but when we'd first started talking about it she wasn't available. But then, you know, suddenly she becomes available, so she designed it, but we had to take on another architect to do the specification, the detailed specification; she hadn't designed or built anything like this before. So she had the concept of it, but I guess didn't really know how to transform that into detailed...

145. NW: Or didn't have so much track record with this type of thing.

146. C1: Yes, sure, sure, sure. And so we employed someone else to do that. And Ruth stayed on as a consultative architect at a very reasonable price for us, which was good, which was very good. So the green light, really, was given, and we set about fundraising. And I think the other thing I think people need to do it is to consult along the way and take people with you. So from the very beginning we consulted everybody that we thought needed to be consulted: you know, the town council and the other sort of bodies – they've changed their names haven't they? – the council for the preservation of the churches

147. NW: There's the Church Buildings Council which you may have had to talk to...

148. C1: Yeah, yes, yeah.

149. NW: And then the various amenity societies....

150. C1: Yes, including the Victorian Society.

151. NW: SPAB, I would imagine...

152. C1: Yeah, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, yep, yep. So all of those bodies were consulted from a very early stage. And also the town, you know, annual general meeting I think it was launched, but then plans, displays were... for people to come along and see what was going on. So we took people with us, so when the planning application went in, everybody knew what was coming, there were no surprises, so the planning application was quite straightforward.

153. NW: You'd done all the groundwork

154. C1: Yes, yeah, yeah. And I think that is hugely important to take people with you, so that they... also to catch the vision, because if there is no ownership by people, then it's not going to happen. And particularly from your congregation, but they just caught the vision, and they owned it from the beginning. And we had an

appeal to the congregation and their generosity was overwhelming. I think the congregation themselves probably gave over £100,000, by putting their hands in their own pockets...

155. NW: And that counts for a lot in terms of ownership of it, doesn't it?

156. C1: Yeah, absolutely. And then the other, we did fundraising, and we had a target and we had a time, so that this wasn't going to be something that was never-ending you know and I think again people need to know that there is an end in sight. And we also had a designated team who were chasing money too, grant-making; we didn't go to the Lottery, but we went to a number of small grant-making bodies who again produced over £100,000.

157. NW: As a matter of interest was the not going to the Lottery a question of principle, or...

158. C1: No, I think there was a feeling that, for the amount of work, time and effort that goes into putting a lottery bid together, and I think we felt the chances of being successful were, could be quite slim, given that we are a faith community building a building onto a place of worship and that primarily it might be used by the church community. So it was having to make... I'm not sure whether we could have convinced them with a strong enough argument about serving the wider community.

159. NW: Why it was good news in their terms.

160. C1: Yes, particularly when we've got a church hall and the building was seen I think first and foremost to be meeting the needs of the community of faith, which it was, you know for Sunday worship and for the management structure of the church, and bible study groups, and fellowship groups, and church meetings, and it was quite, you know... I think that was its primary purpose in many ways, but it's now opening up, opening the doors to the wider community too. It's serving both needs. So that's why we decided to go after smaller grants from smaller bodies, which proved successful.

161. NW: If you had to score people for their helpfulness, because there are all sorts of different people involved in a project like this...

162. C1: Sure.

163. NW: So on a scale of 1 to 10, from very unhelpful to amazingly helpful at 10, how would you rate the diocese, for example, your contact with the diocese, I don't know whether there was much...

164. C1: In the early days, yeah, the DAC they came, we invited them down and they came to do a site visit. They've got to be high, 8, 9, I mean they were on board. I think the diocese, yeah, I think their attitude was 'go for it'.

165. NW: Good, and Historic England (English Heritage).

166. C1: English Heritage. In the early days I guess not that helpful...

167. NW: It's Simon Thurley, isn't it?

168. C1: That's right, yes.

169. NW: Until you talked to Simon Thurley.

170. C1: Yeah, or wrote to him. And then they were more helpful, yeah. I think that the person who is best placed to answer this question would be Glyn was the project manager, because Glyn was the one that did a lot of dealings with the bodies of people really, who was responsible for it. But on the whole I look back — Glyn may say it differently — but I look back and think, it's not without its difficulties but it wasn't that stressful or fraught. Now I think Glyn would say and I would agree, I mean I think we all felt that God's hand was on it, yeah, and that there weren't too many problems. I mean one of the things we hadn't foreseen was, for an example, was the removal of consecrated soil from the churchyard...
171. NW: Yes, of course, excavation, yes...
172. C1: ... which because of the area between the new building church we had to excavate what 3, 4 layers of bricks down. And of course, consecrated soil really can't leave the churchyard. Well, there was really no way we could lose that amount of soil in our churchyard. But again, perhaps this is God's hand in it, a local church was extending its churchyard and so we could take 100 tons of soil, four or five lorry loads of soil, and put it in their new churchyard.
173. NW: Fantastic.
174. C1: Absolutely, so that was a real answer to prayer. So that's what I mean by things kind of falling into place, and things that could have been a real headache, to lose 100 tons of soil that we couldn't keep on the churchyard, and we thought what are we going to do with it. So it was really good.
175. NW: Thinking of the external stakeholders, the amenity societies, English Heritage and so on, what do you sense folk like that see as important about the building? Is it the case that what is important to you in ministry is very compatible with what they're interested in, or was it do you think just in this case that it was a convenient... it dovetailed together.
176. C1: I think they're realists, the majority of them, in that I think they realise that every generation has left their mark on a building, that they're not static, they're not conserved in aspic, they're not just stuck in a particular time. And so I think there is a willingness for a new generation to leave their mark. I think what they're concerned about perhaps is that the integrity of the building is not lost or perhaps, you know, allowing the building to tell its story, architecturally, and so are not losing any of the story as it were.
177. NW: So, just thinking, it is in that sense a whole lot easier to do with 'without' the wall, instead of within, isn't it?
178. C1: Yes, absolutely. Because we've kept the integrity of the church totally, and it's only linked by the south porch.
179. NW: Yes, yes. [interruption] Great. So, briefly, I suppose your reflections on the process. What do you think you have learned from seeing through a building project?
180. C1: Uhm
181. NW: And I suppose did you change your ideas as a result of the process?

182. C1: I think... What have I learned? In a sense to be brave, and if you've got a vision to go for it, and not to let any obstacles sort of put you off. To think big, and not to let finance dictate. You know, I think if you've got a vision, and you feel that you've been called to do a particular thing, I think you need to start with a blank sheet of paper, rather than saying we've only got x amount of money...
183. NW: Yes, we'll fit it in this box...
184. C1: Yeah, because I think what we have found is that the finances have come, you know. Not that they have looked after themselves, because it has been hard work, a lot of hard work to achieve it, but it *is* achievable is what I think we've learned really.
185. NW: The money has followed the vision...
186. C1: Yeah, yeah, and people's generosity is overwhelming if they catch the vision too, you know, and see the need and see that it's such a worthwhile project; if people get behind it then it will go, you know, and that's what we've found here.
187. NW: And was there a sense for you that it gained momentum, because that's sometimes the way it works, if you get an exciting gift, or grant or whatever, and it encourages other people because it becomes more real. Is that...
188. C1: Yeah, I think that's true because then people actual think this is achievable, this is achievable. And I think it is, isn't it, it's about setting out something that is achievable. I mean don't get me wrong about the money; I think if I had said to the congregation it's going to cost us £5 million to do what we want then I think we wouldn't have got anywhere because they wouldn't seen that it was achievable. But I think they realised that, yeah this is achievable, you know we can reach this goal, we can make it happen, for whatever reason. And I think it is about having the right people around you.
189. NW: By the sound of it, Glyn brought a lot to the process.
190. C1: Yeah. And the PCC were on board and we had a management committee, which would meet with the contractors each month and oversee it and report back to the PCC. So a small group of people rather than a big... you don't particularly want a large group of people responsible. But we were accountable to the Parochial Church Council and they would report back.
191. NW: And if you were to, let's say, go to a different parish, and be in the same position again, what would you do differently, second time round, do you think? Would there be anything...?
192. C1: I think I would make sure we had a clear vision about what you want to achieve, because I think you can waste a lot of time, and go down some dead ends, you know. I don't know how you avoid that, perhaps that's part of the process. But there's not a great deal I would do differently, no, no, no, not really. As I say, taking people with you along the way. I mean we had in the build process, you know, topping out ceremonies, or blessing of the building site before we even started after church one Sunday, cutting of the turf, as I say topping out. So people... we could mark it throughout.
193. NW: Way markers, on the journey.

194. C1: Yes, absolutely. And we kept a photographic record of the whole process, and we published a book, you know, which was part of the fundraising, a coffee table book. So... yes it's been a positive experience. It's not put me off from doing it again.
195. NW: Excellent. That's good. Last question, sort of magic bullet question. If you could change one thing about the process of changing historic buildings or working with historic buildings, what would it be?
196. C1: I'm not really sure, because this building, because as I say it doesn't impact on the church itself. I mean perhaps it would have been very different if you were trying to put toilets inside the church, or to change the interior of the church, it may have been more fraught and more difficult than building a new build on in a sense virgin land adjacent to the church. So because we didn't come across too many obstacles or too many difficulties, I'm not sure there's anything – you know from my experience – I would change, really. I mean certainly the diocese and Diocesan Advisory Committee [were] all very helpful, all very encouraging and supportive. So no, I don't think there is anything.
197. NW: Excellent. Thank you very much.
198. C1: OK. I hope that's helpful.
199. NW: That's very, very helpful indeed.