

*how do we keep our*  
**PARISH CHURCHES?**



Trevor Cooper

# *How do we keep our* PARISH CHURCHES?

Trevor Cooper

with speeches by

the Rt Hon & Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

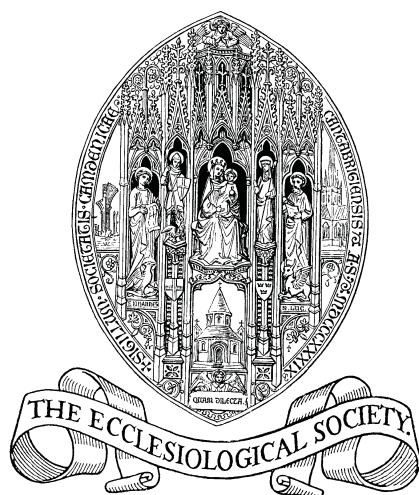
*and*

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive, English Heritage

The Ecclesiological Society • 2004

John Piper: *Why do you suppose that we all like churches so much?*

John Betjeman: *Because they're there whatever happens, aren't they?* \*



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The **Ecclesiological Society** is the society for all those who love churches. It was founded in 1879, acting as a successor to the Cambridge Camden Society of 1839. The Society has a lively programme, including lectures, an annual conference, and visits to a range of locations in Great Britain. Members receive the Society's periodical, *Ecclesiology Today*, three times a year. From time to time the Society publishes monographs, of which this volume is an example. Membership is open to all, and new members are always welcome. For further details, see our website, or write to us at PO Box 287, New Malden, KT3 4YT.

### Cover illustrations

**Front cover** The front cover shows **All Saints, Hereford**. This medieval building, listed Grade II\*, is a dominant presence in the townscape, the church spire and the cathedral facing each other down Broad Street. The church preserves important furnishings, including a fine set of stalls with misericords. The interior has undergone a dramatic and exciting conversion, introducing a restaurant at the western end and in a gallery, but the new elements not only respect the historic fabric and furnishings, but also maintain the sense of a building still dedicated for worship. The cover photograph looks south across the nave, with the restaurant gallery above. (RRA Architects <<http://rra-arch.com>> (website includes other photographs of the church); cover photograph by kind permission of Martine Hamilton Knight <[www.builtvision.co.uk](http://www.builtvision.co.uk)>.)

**Rear cover** The two illustrations on the first row of the rear cover are of the **Church of the Good Shepherd, Carshalton Beeches**, south London. This 1930 building, which is Grade II listed, was designed by Martin Travers and T. F. W. Grant in the style of a Spanish mission chapel. Betjeman had a strong affection for it, one of his poems referring to 'the Travers baroque lime-washed in light'. This is a lively and energetic church, and to provide room for its wide range of activities it has added an extension whose style and detailing match the original work, as can be seen from the first photograph. Inside there is a lobby/lounge (second photograph), small garden courtyard (glimpsed in the second photograph), kitchen, toilets, chapel, and a range of meeting rooms. (Architect: Carden & Godfrey; photographs by kind permission of the church.)

On the second and third row are three church buildings described on page 42: **Holy Trinity, Haddenham**, new meeting room screened off in the north aisle (by kind permission of Dr Digi); **St Aidan's, Cleethorpes**, computer training room on an upper storey (by kind permission of the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber); two photos of **St Paul's, Walsall** (now **The Crossing**), showing retail outlets on the ground floor level and the 'Upper Room' worship area (by kind permission of the church).



# How do we keep our parish churches?

## Summary

*The following is a summary of 'How do we keep our parish churches?', which will be found in full on page 13. The author, Trevor Cooper, is currently Chairman of the Council of the Ecclesiological Society, but his views should not be taken to represent those of the Society or its officers.*

**T**HERE ARE ABOUT 16,000 CHURCH OF ENGLAND churches – more churches than petrol stations. More than 12,000 are listed, with two-thirds of these being in the highest grades, Grade I or II\*. This is by far the largest estate of listed buildings in the country.

This huge portfolio of buildings is kept by the efforts of church congregations: in essence small, independent, groups of volunteers. Between them they have been spending more than £80m a year on repairs, only about £30m of which has come from grants – the remainder is from their own pockets or their efforts at fund-raising. How well does this work? And will it – can it – continue?

A word of explanation. This article is about Church of England (CoE) churches, so the word 'church' will be used to refer to Anglican parish churches, parochial chapels, mission churches, etc. in England. Greater churches, such as abbeys and cathedrals, fall outside our scope, as do churches of other denominations.

Some CoE congregations are thriving. In 2001 some 2,600 parishes (20%) had over one hundred adults attending Sunday services. On the other hand, roughly 800 parishes (6%) had ten adults or fewer worshipping on Sunday, representing an estimated 1,000 church buildings (there are five church buildings for every four parishes).

The CoE continues to plant new churches, and provide church buildings for growing centres of population, and in the last thirty years approximately 530 new churches have been built. However, in common with almost all Christian denominations, Sunday attendance has been falling significantly. During the same thirty-year period, all-age attendance at CoE churches has dropped by about 40%, though the overall number of church buildings has been cut by much less than a tenth. The option taken by other networks, such as pubs and banks, of simply closing under-used buildings is not so easily available to the CoE.

In one diocese, for which we happen to have figures, only 37% of church seats are used on a Sunday. If this is typical, then across the board the CoE could remove four thousand church buildings from use, one quarter of its stock, and its average usage of seats on a typical Sunday would still only rise to about 50%. This is, of course, a grossly over-simplified calculation, but it gives some measure of the extent to which the CoE has more buildings than it needs to house its regular Sunday worshippers.

Many church buildings serve very thin populations. Almost two-thirds of those attending church (61%) do so

in just one fifth (21%) of church buildings. Given that the location of approximately two-thirds of churches was decided before the Industrial Revolution, it is not surprising that many church buildings today are not close to centres of population. The 2000 smallest rural parishes have an average population of about 200 people each, so that 12% of church buildings are today in communities with less than 1% of the population.

In urban areas, the population served by each church building can be much greater, but levels of churchgoing are lower, so that inner city and city centre churches have average levels of support only two or three times greater than rural areas, despite their much larger and more expensive buildings.

Despite these difficulties, CoE congregations spend about £80m per year on repairs, an average expenditure of about £5,000 per parish church per year. Is this enough? The evidence is weak, but may indicate that there is currently a degree of underspend, though many churches overall are probably in reasonable or good condition. More research is needed on this important topic.

Although the average spend on repairs each year is approximately £5,000 per church, in 2001 nearly four fifths of churches either spent nothing at all or spent less than £5,000. Only 2% of churches spent more than £50,000 in that year. It is this very small number of high-spending churches in any particular year who raise the average to £5,000 per church. Any one church may go for years on end without needing to spend much on repairs. This pattern of occasional, unpredictable, very expensive events must be difficult for small voluntary organizations (congregations) to handle: should they hire a youth worker, or put aside money for unknown future repairs which may never be needed?

Of the £80m spent on repairs, more than half (60%), representing some £50m per year, is found by parishes themselves, rather than from grants. State funding is mainly available in the form of VAT refunds and repair grants. English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund dominate the field, granting £21m in the most recent full year. Their grants are oversubscribed by a factor of about two. Any withdrawal by these bodies would have a major impact.

The CoE is not rich; indeed, many dioceses are in difficult financial circumstances. How do parishes find the money for their share of repairs? As expected, parish incomes differ enormously. About 1,500 parishes have unrestricted ordinary income of less than £5,000 per annum. For these parishes, and for many others, paying large repair bills from income is not possible.

In order to organise large repairs, congregations need to be able to raise money directly, to organise themselves to apply for grants – not made easier by the variety of application methods – and to manage the repairs. One limiting factor is therefore organisational capacity, which is less likely to be found in smaller congregations.

Looking ahead, the available information suggests a rate of closure ('redundancy') of at least 60 churches per year on average for the foreseeable future – at least equal to the previous highest rate, seen for a few years only in the 1980s. Many of these new redundancies will be buildings of the highest quality. With its grant reduced by 5% in real terms, the Churches Conservation Trust, which was set up to preserve such buildings, will be unable to absorb them.

More positively, there is evidence (mostly anecdotal) that congregations are increasingly receiving support of one type or another, as they continue to reach into their wider communities, though some of these activities are less practicable for smaller congregations.

For example, many church buildings are used for purposes other than worship, to provide income or as a means of serving the community. A majority of the general public support this type of use. Indeed, more than eight million people say they have been to a concert or similar event in a church or other place of worship in the past year, about the same as attendance at West End theatres by UK residents. One half (49%) of rural church buildings (about 4,000) host such events (note that most rural churches do not have church halls). Congregations are adding facilities to church buildings, but it is a slow process: at the current rate, it will be the end of this century before all rural churches have toilets. Urban churches have better facilities.

Church volunteers of all denominations make a very large contribution – probably worth between £500m and £750m per year – to community activity, much of which benefits those who do not attend church services.

Buildings are an integral part of this activity, but it is not clear the extent to which historic church buildings benefit from the available funding streams. Some churches, particularly in urban areas, are converting their premises in active support of local regeneration.

Another source of support is tourism, driven by the growing interest in heritage. It seems likely that church buildings play both a direct and a supporting role in the tourism industry, and this may have significant economic value, though no-one has yet carried out the necessary analysis. However churches are probably not capturing their fair share of the value they are generating.

Friends groups can also lend support to church buildings. About 3% of churches have set up separate Friends groups, and the number is increasing. There is no full-time national officer for church tourism or for Friends groups.

The Government has not articulated an explicit policy towards church buildings, but it does place value on the historic environment in general, especially when utilised for social and economic well-being. Public opinion values church

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buildings: in a recent poll, six out of ten people (63%) said that they would be concerned if their local church or chapel were no longer there, and four out of ten (42%) thought the government should support the buildings.

Overall, there may be room for developing the partnership between government in all its aspects and religious groups, including the CoE. For example, listed church buildings both contribute to tourism and (along with unlisted ones) provide the base for community activity and the creation of 'social capital'; these are important aspects of government policy. Unfortunately, however, it is the church buildings with the smallest congregations which are most at risk, and would also find it hardest to develop new partnerships.

It is not the purpose of this paper to make recommendations, but it is suggested that focused research is needed to understand some specific issues better. Additionally several ways to help churches have emerged directly from the facts presented here. Most of these require funding, though in some cases the amounts are relatively small.

However, these suggestions alone are by no means sufficient to resolve all the issues. Indeed, my personal view is that there is a real risk of large-scale church closure in the medium term, and we should begin now to explore new approaches to avoiding redundancy, and new ways of handling it when it occurs. If we wait, I fear we may be taken by surprise.

Recently the CoE agreed a significant policy statement, *A Future for Church Buildings*, which will lead to specific proposals for action. In the foreword of this policy statement the Bishop of London alludes to 'a new way forward'. The time is surely ripe.

# Building bridges

## A speech by the Bishop of London

*The following speech was given by the Bishop of London, the Rt Hon and Rt Revd Richard Chartres, on 9 September 2003, at the annual conference of Diocesan Advisory Committees (DACs). The Ecclesiological Society is grateful for permission to publish this speech. Its inclusion should not be taken to indicate agreement by the Bishop with the other contents of this booklet.*

**W**E LIVE AT A TIME OF CONTRADICTION and opportunity. An uncritical deference to the idea of modernisation and scepticism about the value of past experience co-exists uneasily with a museum and heritage culture which sometimes seeks to freeze-frame what survives from previous generations.

Both these attitudes pose a problem for those who serve on DACs and who are charged with the responsibility of caring for our buildings, respecting the memories which they store and working with local partners in fulfilling the first office of a church which is to be, as the Measure states, ‘a local centre of worship and mission’. DACs are interpreters and bearers of tradition.

This critical tradition is an authentic third way between the two fashionable positions which although superficially opposed, both proceed from a disengagement from the conversation between generations. This disengagement is obvious in the taste for modernisation unrelated to any of the co-ordinates which might tell us whether we are making progress or not. But disengagement from the living stream of human and spiritual experience is also at the root of trying to preserve some expression of the past as it was the day before yesterday, without the benefit of the conversation between generations which has been characteristic of previous cultures. This critical tradition which informs the work of DACs is light years away from any uncritical traditionalism which privileges the past over the present.

In the most successful realm of modern culture, there is a strong sense of tradition. Science is not individualistic and to talk of the scientific community transcending political boundaries is not entirely sentimental.

Tradition is a living stream which animates church buildings and gives them a different quality from the deserted shrines of dead religions.

We are all involved at present in an effort to help our partners and critics to understand the nature of our work and to appreciate the extraordinary achievements of thousands of volunteers, not least those who serve on the DACs of the country in cherishing, for the whole community, our ecclesiastical buildings. As a result they must be in a better state of repair today than they have been for a Millennium.

I do not underestimate the sheer sacrifice which many members of DACs make, to contribute to our common effort from their particular expertise. Our own DAC has 200 active cases which certainly belies the common

perception of a moribund church. I know one DAC member who frankly says that he is only able to serve because of the tolerance of his business partners. I have seen the professionalism of DACs, all through the country, advance markedly throughout the last decade, inspiring a new professionalism in many parishes. Parishes now often prepare for the visits of DAC envoys with meticulous care. So realistic was the cardboard mock-up of some proposed new seating in one church that one DAC representative was induced to try it out unaware of its ersatz character and was cast to the ground amidst cries of alarm from the model makers.

Conferences like this are opportunities to share discoveries and good practice, to marvel at fresh uses for the new technology like Southwark’s admirable use of the web to show off its stock of churches.

It is clear, however, that we need to explain ourselves more clearly and to seek for new allies in making our contribution to the health of the community as a whole. We are rightly sad when an individual loses their memory because individual identity seems to be impaired with that loss. Any society that loses its memory faces disorientation and a real confusion about what it is to live well.

Let me brief you about the contribution which the bodies I chair are making to a campaign which I hope you will actively support.

I have the privilege of being involved in two groupings, the Church Heritage Forum and the Cathedrals and Churches Division. The latter brings together the staff and representatives of the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission. The former involves in addition partners from the Redundant Churches Division of the Church Commissioners, the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches, the Churches

Conservation Trust and also representatives of the Registrars, Ecclesiastical Judges, Diocesan Secretaries, Archdeacons with the Secretary of the Churches Main Committee which is an ecumenical body charged with monitoring government legislation and representing the common interests of the church on matters like tax and charity law. We all seem to get on very well.

These bodies shaped a document entitled *A Future for Church Buildings* which was debated by the General Synod at one of the less contentious debates in July. The reference number is GS1514 and it is available from Church House Bookshop.

The debate was very encouraging and the vote to endorse our report was 262 to 2. This was a modest beginning to a campaign with the particular aim of helping everyone in positions of responsibility within the church to speak with one

voice. Bishops in the past have sometimes been suspected (unjustly in most cases) of being fully paid up members of the Goth and Vandal tendency. There was a time when one campaigner suggested that more lethal than the Luftwaffe to the future of the churches of the City of London was the Bishop. It is vital that we both value the huge achievements of previous generations, celebrate the work of countless volunteers and in contemporary circumstances look to how we can make common cause with other stakeholders potential or actual in securing the future of such an important community asset, the supreme treasury of English vernacular art and memory.

It is extremely encouraging to see among the participants in the Conference, allies from English Heritage and the Amenity Societies. English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund have between them pledged £30 million for repair grants this year. This is the highest total ever and we are very grateful. Discussions on a fresh approach have already begun with a number of Government Departments with an interest in the matter. The spirit of those discussions has been constructive but I do not underestimate the craginess of the mountain we have to climb.

There is hardly a parish in the entire country where this is not a pressing issue and not only among church attenders. The response to the long running VAT campaign and the concern expressed, more recently, following the proposal to introduce a new and onerous licensing regime for church buildings, show that those who care actively for our church buildings enjoy support, not only from the 37 million people in the country who described themselves as Christians in the recent census, but also from those who, while not necessarily believers themselves, appreciate the contribution made by our buildings to the artistic and cultural life of the country.

We are responsible for an inheritance of Churches and Cathedrals, which are part of the living history of England and properly belong to the whole community.

Among our 13,000 listed ecclesiastical buildings we care for about a half of all Grade I buildings in England.

There are many individuals and bodies beyond the church, which have a proper interest in how we discharge our responsibilities. We operate in a highly regulated environment under close scrutiny and we are often regarded in some sense as a public utility. In reality of course we are financed as a charity largely from voluntary donations.

The Eckstein report (1999), which was produced to provide some statistical basis for the VAT campaign, did a survey of the average annual cost of repairs to church buildings at that time. This evidence corrected by more recent enquiries like the Archdeacon of Middlesex's articles for 2002 suggest that the cost of repairing church buildings over the coming five years will not be less

than three-quarters of a billion pounds. We have indications that grants from various public sources may be as much as two hundred and fifty million leaving us with a contribution of half a billion to find from private donations, principally of course the faithful.

We have to communicate the fact of the cost-effective way in which the Church of England cares for such a large part of the community's cultural inheritance, the huge achievements of tens of thousands of volunteers and the generosity of worshippers. The results of this effort can be seen in the state of most of our cathedrals and churches, which can challenge comparison with the more lavishly funded regimes on the Continent of Europe.

I have said it before and I shall continue to say it until every child in the land acknowledges it as an evident fact that the Church of England is in financial terms the most disestablished church in Western Europe.

I had the privilege of joining German partners at the Berlin Kirchentag recently and was handed an analysis prepared by the Evangelical Church in Germany of how that church is financed. In 2001 no less than 4 billion euros was derived from church tax while there were further subsidies to reflect the confiscation of church lands in the early nineteenth century and other sources of direct state aid. This is not of course the total yield from church tax; just that element which goes to the Evangelical Church. This level of support enables the church to do a great deal of useful work of course and to employ approaching 800,000 in a variety of social projects.

In France, as is well known, despite the total divorce between church and state, all ecclesiastical buildings before 1904, are maintained by Paris or municipal authorities.

Are we jealous? Are we whinging? No, I hear you roar. We are proud of our voluntary character and we know that the effort of looking after our churches and cathedrals can often bring benefits in quickening church community life.

**The Church of England is in financial terms the most disestablished church in Western Europe**



But facts must be faced. The historic asset base of the Church of England administered by the Church Commissioners is restricted to a modest contribution to the joint church-state Churches Conservation Trust, which looks after churches no longer needed for regular worship.

The financial revolution through which we are passing, in which increasing responsibilities are falling to dioceses and parishes, makes a re-assessment of the asymmetrical relationship between church attenders and the wider community with respect to maintaining such a vital part of the nation's inheritance of art and culture, urgent.

No one would argue that Christian work, the propagation of the gospel or the care of the clergy should fall as a charge on the public purse. Although I was fascinated to note that the Italian State has just agreed to pay clergy pensions on the basis of the public service the clergy give to the wider community in that country. I do think, however, that a re-adjustment of responsibilities for maintaining the historic fabric of such a vital aspect of English popular culture is just and reasonable.

Churches have a key part to play in various aspects of the present Government's agenda. There is clearly an educational role and many places like Southwark Cathedral and Canterbury have recently completed new educational centres.

There is a role in urban regeneration. St John's Hoxton in Hackney, one of Britain's poorest boroughs, has received a good deal of publicity as it brings together new facilities for the community including an employment project for the disabled and a facility for families under stress. This has been accommodated in a building refurbished with English Heritage advice and assistance. A somewhat genteel Edwardian Apocalypse painting on the ceiling has been restored. The activity itself together with superb leadership from priest and lay people alike has re-vivified the worshipping community, which has been enabled to re-engage with its neighbours.

Tourism is one of the most significant economic activities in the country and a huge employer. In a recent debate in the House of Lords, I was able to say some very obvious things about the contribution of places like York Minster to the regional economy. I was puzzled by the suggestion from other speakers that this was a novel perspective. There was no denying the goodwill however, and the minister replying to the debate drew attention to the meeting between the officers of the Cathedrals and Churches division and representatives of a number of Government departments, which happened earlier in the summer.

We are going to need Government understanding and support and never more so than in the next few months. I have already referred to the long running VAT campaign. We are especially grateful to the Chancellor for the scheme he announced in 2001 which has yielded now

£11 million in repayments of VAT to parishes undertaking repairs on listed buildings. This was only ever meant to be an interim measure while the European Commission reviewed the sixth VAT Directive. The Commission's proposals have now been published and the news is not good. They have rejected pleas for a reduced VAT regime on repairs and even worse, they have noted that the UK alone among member states has zero rated alterations to historic buildings. They argue that it would be logical to end this exception, making the standard rate the norm. Churches and other historic buildings under these proposals would face a 17.5% tax on alteration schemes, often vital to enhanced community use.

The Government has already said that the interim VAT scheme will continue until the VAT rate review is completed. The decision will ultimately be taken by the Council of Ministers and it is up to us in conjunction with other allies to demonstrate what a depth of feeling there is about this subject countrywide.

VAT reform is one part of the general funding picture and money as we all know from our experience with schools and other public institutions is very tight.

Entering into new arrangements is going to require imagination and will be very difficult. Expectations will have to be managed. Our cause will be immeasurably strengthened if we speak with a common voice and if we are prepared for adventurous solutions.

I do not believe that there are any quick fix, one size fits all global solutions which have any hope of being successful. We need to be clear sighted about the huge task of changing perceptions. We need to educate ourselves so that we can present the case sympathetically to potential allies who are nearly always astonished when the facts are relayed to them. We need to be prepared for experiments. I think that the brief we are considering needs to be developed further in devising fresh vehicles which can help us in appropriate places to enter into partnerships with other potential stake holders. It could be that we need to think seriously about building on the work done by some of the present church conservation bodies to create a National Trust for Churches which could enlist other partners and sponsors and give them real power with responsibility as an alternative to redundancy. The Churches Conservation Trust has done hugely important work since its inception but it is obvious with the freezing of its Government funding and the difficulties in finding more money from the Church Commissioners sources that the Trust's capacity to absorb further churches in any numbers is severely limited.

It is very encouraging to see how many dioceses are engaging with this challenge in an imaginative way. The diocese of Manchester led a few years ago with a project undertaken in conjunction with English Heritage, looking at the historic and architectural significance of each church building within a designated area and assessing them with

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reference to their role in the pastoral strategy of the church. Unsurprisingly there was not a complete fit between heritage and pastoral considerations but understanding was deepened and the problems to be addressed were crystallized. Chelmsford has recently completed a careful audit and Norwich is in the process of a similar exercise which has revealed both realism and enthusiasm for the task ahead.

In parallel with these local initiatives the review of the Pastoral and Dioceses Measure is underway. One of the clearest messages from the consultations has been the preference for extended use rather than redundancy and the imperative of simplifying procedures which can lead to change.

This was a message which was echoed in the July Synod loud and clear. We are operating in the context of a Government Review of the legislation affecting the historic environment

generally. Churches are not specifically included at this stage although the Government has made it clear in line with the response to John Newman's examination of the Ecclesiastical Exemption in 1997, that it does propose to have another look at the separate church system. We need therefore to scrutinize particularly carefully the operation of our own controls.

In July there was a debate initiated by the Archdeacon of Malmesbury's motion proposing legislation to achieve a radical revision of the faculty system, to remove controls on any matters which would not require listed building consent had the churches concerned been secular buildings. There was considerable support for this motion which expressed a degree of frustration in the Synod over the operation of the present system. In the event the proposal was defeated but only by one vote.

Your Chairman, the Dean of Carlisle and now Bishop designate of Sodor and Man, mitres off to him, put forward some alternative proposals which the Division

will be pursuing, to respond positively to the demand for simplification. In particular within the boundaries of existing legislation, there is work on the more consistent use of *de minimis* lists and negotiation with those with a statutory right to be consulted about the kind of cases that are really significant to them.

The detailed work is vitally important and it is good that we have officers at every level who combine knowledge with commitment to the spiritual task of the church. The success of the campaign, however, will depend on changing perceptions about the huge contribution already

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being made by thousands of volunteers to the cultural life of the nation and the imperative of sustaining their achievements in new financial and social circumstances. This will require boldness is devising new ways in which we can invite other stakeholders to take their share of responsibility for the ecclesiastical heritage on the

basis in appropriate places of yielding exclusive control. With the closure of so many other public buildings and not least places of worship especially in the countryside, the parish church is very often left as, what it was in the beginning, the place where the community gathers. To realize this vision will need more ecumenical seriousness, an openness to other groups who share our passion for a cohesive and flourishing local community life and new legal vehicles for sharing responsibility.

I hope and pray that your meeting together will be an opportunity to promote our common concern, to pool ideas for the campaign ahead and to emerge strengthened by the formidable sight which greets any speaker in this hall, a conclave of the learned and talented members of the nation's DACs.

# Speech

by Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage

*The following speech was given by Dr Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, on 11 September 2003, at the annual conference of Diocesan Advisory Committees (DACs). The Ecclesiological Society is grateful for permission to publish this speech. Its inclusion should not be taken to indicate agreement by Dr Thurley with the other contents of this booklet.*

*Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest;  
it crieth against me, therefore have I hated it.*

JEREMIAH WAS NOT, OF COURSE, ACTUALLY talking about what we now know as our ‘heritage’, but I thought it sounded like the exasperated sentiment expressed by some church people today. Yet, as we all know only too well, this frustration is more than evenly balanced by a huge amount of sympathy and love for historic places of worship within and beyond congregations, that can become equally vociferous in defending the preservation of England’s parish churches.

But why do people care about preservation so much? Is it an innate conservatism, a deep-seated respect for the past combined with a fear for the future? Is it theological respect for the beauty of holiness? Is it sentimentality? Do we actually agree on what the ‘heritage of places of worship’ really means? Or should we accept that it can mean different things to different people?

I think it is vital that we make an effort to find out, or at least create the means to define, such significance, because that must be the starting point for managing the precious stock of historic churches that have come down to us. As nearly everyone here works within the Church of England, I shall drop the politically correct term ‘places of worship’ and say churches, but I am actually thinking of the entire range of ecclesiastical buildings, including those of the non-Christian faiths and modern, yet-to-be listed buildings. For although the urge to protect more recent buildings might be differently motivated to that used to defend the ubiquitous medieval rural parish church, the outcome is the same. It is what I have termed the virtuous circle. If people understand their building, they will value it; by valuing it, they will want to look after it; in caring for it, they will help others enjoy it. From enjoyment of the historic environment comes a greater thirst to understand it and the circle begins again.

We already have a great army of carers – including of course all of you sitting here – as well as a great wealth of knowledge that ranges from experts on specific aspects of churches, right through to the kind soul who will sit in the church on a Sunday afternoon to give whoever enters a potted history of the building. But what about using the church and so ensuring its future?

My starting point is a personal and a professional belief in the fundamental importance of England’s churches. These buildings are frequently at the geographical,

spiritual, visual and historic centre of our towns and villages. With their graveyards, rectories, vicarages and parish halls they embody the social memory of communities. They are the only place where the lives of ordinary people are celebrated in gravestones, monuments and the registers of births marriages and deaths. They are buildings created by the communities in which they lie for the people who live there. They are also of course frequently the most beautiful buildings in their locality displaying craftsmanship in wood, stone and metalwork of a quality that few secular buildings can aspire to. Their artistic worth is almost as important as their social and historic value. But most of all they are living communities of like-minded people practising an ancient faith that is still a powerful force in the modern world. They are buildings put up over the last thousand years still broadly used for the same purpose; there are few structures that can claim to have had such continuous use. I probably didn’t need to say all that as I guess that most of you will agree with my views . . . but I wanted to make it clear where I was coming from.

I also hardly need to say that these precious buildings are under threat. Much of what the Archbishops’ Commission on Redundant Churches, the Bridges report, said in 1960 sounds familiar today. I am not quite convinced of the Churches Conservation Trust’s view, expressed in its last annual report, that the next wave of redundancies will lead to ‘the loss of outstanding ecclesiastical buildings second only to that which occurred during the Reformation’. But I am certainly convinced by their wish to start to discuss it now. That debate should not be about what to do with churches that have become redundant, but more importantly what is needed to be done now to keep living parish churches alive and used, to prevent them becoming surplus to requirements.

This is an important debate for the Church of England and of course conservation bodies like us. We put huge resources into churches. Not only the £10m from our grants budget and the infrastructure needed to distribute the £20m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, but the expertise of our inspectors, architects and engineers. It is a multi, multi million pound investment, and we at EH need to be clear where taxpayers money is going and what we are trying to achieve with it.

I would guess that most parishes come into contact with English Heritage through faculty applications rather than grants and, if we are lucky, through pre-application discussions.

Too often we (and sometimes yourselves) are then accused of blocking the real work of the church, its pastoral care, worship and mission, by insisting on the retention of some furniture or wanting to preserve intact specific aspects or spaces of the listed building. English Heritage staff in turn are sometimes bewildered by the arguments congregations put forward about their perception of worship and mission. We have been told that lowering the tower parapets, which would omit some fairly expensive stonework, was ‘pastorally necessary’ and that although they have managed not to dissolve in the rain to get to church, parishioners cannot walk a few feet in the open air to reach their coffee after the service in an adjacent, but unlinked, hall. We need to know more about each other’s motives for adopting the arguments that we make. The revised Faculty Rules requiring Statements of Need and Significance are, we believe, a welcome step in the right direction. They are taking time to bed in and I would like to hear your views on their usefulness and effect on your work. Our impression is that surprisingly, the Statement of Need is often weak on facts but strong on contentions – “we think it is necessary, so it must be”, whereas the Statements of Significance are good at listing facts – “this is 13th century, that is 1892” – but poor on synthesis and certainly poor on assessing just what is significant, what really matters to the congregation about their church.

To some extent we have ourselves to blame. The actual grading of listed churches is pretty accurate, but the list description is hopeless at telling the owner why it is listed and at that grade. Yes, there are long established criteria, and their fairly consistent application makes the system reliable. But who has read those criteria and even more to the point, who has read a list description and understood from it the value and significance of the church it describes in such dry detail?

I recently visited a Church at Wigmore in Herefordshire. It is a Grade I church, handsomely sited and at the heart of a village with a ruined castle. A perfect English vision. But entering it there was virtually nothing inside, no monuments, pews, hardly a pulpit and no stained glass. The significance of that building was its

landscape value and the authenticity of its external walls, not in its internal arrangements. As far as heritage is concerned, the interior could bear considerable alteration and re-ordering despite its designation as Grade I.

The Heritage Protection Review currently being undertaken by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with our assistance is looking to create a system of designation that gives more than a technical description and begins to focus on significance. I want English Heritage to work out with the Church how we can create a planning tool of real use to us to work with in the future. But more importantly, we need to work out how we can actually help the daily worshipper and

user of the church to understand just what it is about the building that they cherish and enjoy – what drives them to care for it. Only then can we hope that the changes that they aspire to will enhance what they value and not destroy it. We are looking to start some pilot schemes shortly, which will need to involve some of you at diocesan level, as well as in the parishes. If we can develop a new kind of description and designation, then Statements of Significance should not just be easier to write, but they will actually become an essential part of the parish’s own thinking, to belong to them. We will need to hold training events to harness all that interest and knowledge as well, because although our staff at English Heritage might be the architectural or archaeological experts, there is a lot of localised interest and value that we cannot know about and need to be told. Those early twentieth-century pews might not look too special to us in artistic terms, but because they were made by a particular person or family locally, they have real significance within the parish – and all hell would be let loose if someone suggests they get replaced.

By describing statements of significance as a ‘planning tool’, I mean that we want a document of value to you and all those charged with statutory duties of care and something that will be an aid to strategic planning within the area or even within the diocese. As I have already suggested there are many highly-graded churches that could have quite major changes made to them without affecting their essential significance. On the other hand, we should remember that there are many Grade II churches with really valuable or complete interiors that are the reason for listing and so they should not be lightly done away with. Alongside the re-evaluation of the intrinsic merits of a church, its context within the community it serves needs to be established, whether its origins are lost in the mists of time or it is designed by the same architect who created the housing immediately around it. The wider value also needs stating and English Heritage is looking to research at least a few of the most contentious areas in the near future to better inform assessment and conservation planning.

**Alongside the re-evaluation of the intrinsic merits of a church, its context within the community it serves needs to be established . . .**

Richard Giles wrote in 1999 in his influential book *Re-pitching the Tent* 'the vast majority of our parish churches will require radical re-ordering to refurbish and re-equip them for service in the next century. . . . re-ordering is a continuous process and not a one-off event'. Surely this must be true. Even looking at the post-Reformation history of parish worship our churches bear physical witness to Laudianism, Puritanism, the ecclesiological movement and evangelicalism, to name but a few. We cannot expect a congregation to have the same needs today as they did in the 1840s. Liturgy, like any other form of etiquette is always in a state of subtle change. Today's ordering certainly wasn't yesterday's and is very unlikely to be tomorrow's. Assuming we accept this assertion, what does it mean for our most important churches? Well it means that we must act from an informed base. We must understand what we have and avoid sweeping it away in an attempt to

accommodate the latest fad. There are big gaps in our knowledge. Where are the most important interiors of the post-medieval period in particular? Just how many eighteenth-century box pews survive and where are the best furniture ensembles of the major nineteenth-century architects? To answer these sorts of questions we need research and I would like to know from you what you think our research priorities might be. We don't have endless resources – none of us has – but we want to use what we have in the way of money and staff to its greatest advantage.

Flexibility like 'reversibility' has become something of a weasel word in conservation circles, implying that any change can be justified. But it is the right word to describe an approach that is looking for creative solutions to managing change, which is what I want to see English Heritage doing in its approach to the whole of the historic environment. We must continue to defend what should be defended with all the vigour and expertise we can muster and there are clearly some churches that can only tolerate very limited change. That should not mean that they are shunted into the Churches Conservation Trust as museums. We all must help them develop their own 'worship and mission' to suit their circumstances. By refining the designation system and creating a wider range of management regimes in its wake, we might hope to avoid the conflict that such cases often cause and promote the responsible use of historic churches. But this has to be done by us working together, on a strategic level, and not piecemeal as now.

Defining the significant is also vitally important to the strategy that the Archbishops' Council is embarking on in the next year or so. *A Future for Church Buildings* successfully demonstrates something that is perhaps obvious to all of us who are working with churches, that they are core buildings to their communities, for a

wonderful variety of reasons. If they are not now, then they could be with a little vision and development. The care and conservation of churches has perhaps become too wrapped up in itself and needs to be integrated back into the mainstream of parish and diocesan life as a positive rather than a negative blocker of the 'real' work of the church. There are so many examples already of how 'saving' a church on the brink of extinction can galvanise a community and re-vitalise its use. What *A Future for Church Buildings* promotes is not just relevant to the care of historic churches, it is really about the re-establishment of church buildings into community life. That is where the

churches started and that is how they must be perceived if they are to survive, and dare I say it, if the church in this country is to survive. And crucially church buildings are an important part of the mission of the church – the fact that they raise such heated debate amongst those wanting to be rid of them surely demonstrates that. It is

**There are so many examples already of how 'saving' a church on the brink of extinction can galvanise a community and re-vitalise its use**

going to be essential to change perceptions of the value of the church's architectural heritage within parts of the church – though it will not be easy and will require a change in culture as well as widespread good examples.

Secular authorities, especially those with money to spend on infrastructure like the Regional Development Agencies, need to be convinced that the projects they are being approached about really do benefit everyone and are not simply helping a few. Remember that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown justified the introduction of the scheme to refund VAT paid on church repairs with the argument that churches were benefiting their wider community and so should have greater help from the nation. It has to be said that the ecclesiastical exemption has, until quite recently, divorced churches from the community's elected representatives in the local authorities. Politicians may be wary of interfering with religious matters, but the result of the exemption is that they and their staff in planning departments know far too little of the needs of parish churches. Churches might argue that their decisions are better than those made by local authorities, and made by people with a higher level of knowledge, but what chance do local authorities have to understand and participate in your decisions, when they have been shut out of the process for so long? There are lots of good examples of co-operative working, and some of the case studies in the Synod paper demonstrate that. But the anti-local authority culture is still very prevalent within the churches, sometimes based on experience but too often based on perceptions that have gained their own momentum over the years. English Heritage also despairs of some decisions made by some local authorities, just as we despair of some decisions made by some DACs. But both systems have much to commend them, not least the enthusiasm of the devoted staff involved. English Heritage is in the position to act as an honest broker, to make you



more familiar with each other, and we are prepared to work with you on this and the Strategy.

It remains to be seen what changes will be made to the ecclesiastical exemption following the DCMS review of designation. Whatever is done must promote closer working between churches and planning authorities. This is particularly important for the Church of England as it promotes the role its buildings play in the community at large. Any external agency with regional, national or European government money to spend will want to be assured that the democratically elected local authority is behind a project and happy with its environmental impact. The designation review must also make sure that decisions are taken by well-trained and properly resourced people that understand archaeological and conservation issues and the needs of a worshipping community. Currently that cannot be said of many, if any local authorities. Certainly, in my view, the time is not ripe to dismantle exemption entirely, the skills to work it simply don't exist.

Putting churches back in the heart of their communities underpins the concept of extended use. This concept emerging in the review of the Pastoral Measure is very welcome, but complicates the legal status of churches in use and will make your work on DACs more complicated. If more churches are to have 'extended uses' then dioceses will need to have good access to professional planning advice. That ought not to be on a voluntary or delegated basis, but come from dedicated employed staff. The Church has been reluctant to engage conservation-trained planning staff, for understandable financial reasons and because it feels it has enough expertise in its voluntary DAC membership and by training of the existing DAC secretaries. English Heritage still believes that there is a need for dedicated professional staff perhaps shared by dioceses, to help you, as the work load and the complexities of the statutory systems increase. I am sure this is another area where we should work together and I want to have that debate with you again.

However, we do have confidence in the faculty system working and will shortly be writing to all of you, the Archdeacons and Diocesan Registrars, withdrawing the so-called 'future approval' grant condition completely. Our predecessors rightly insisted on that grant condition, that requires parishes in receipt of grant aid to seek our approval of major alterations in addition to any faculty, because we were not part of the faculty processes and substantial sums of public money were involved. The latest revision of the Rules and the much better working relationships that have developed between DACs and English Heritage regional offices encourage us now to abandon that separate approval process. We very much hope that it will remove a perceived barrier in parishes about applying for grants from us. There is of course legal protection for taxpayers' money built into the contract we use for the current church grant scheme, that places the onus on the parish to ensure that they do not do anything to their church that will infringe that contract.

We believe that we can still protect that public investment through our participation in the faculty

jurisdiction process, but that will require your continued co-operation. Grant-aided parishes should still involve us at an early stage of their planning for alterations, they will still need to answer the questions that accompany their faculty petition and DACs will still need to advise the Chancellor in the DAC Certificate on whether the proposals affect the character of the church as a listed building. I think we should also be looking at how we can improve our working relations with you, in particular the role of the DAC member appointed by the Bishop after consultation with English Heritage. Let me have your views later please.

Finally, English Heritage as the sector leader must do more to educate and train both practitioners in the historic environment sector, and the wider public as owners and users of England's ecclesiastical heritage. Many of you already produce guidance notes, and the Council for the Care of Churches has an admirable series of technical information (some written by English Heritage staff). Today I am launching the second edition of *New Work in Historic Places of Worship*, that sets out English Heritage's principles and reasoning behind our actions and advice. It is deliberately short and we hope sufficiently non-technical to allow the average churchwarden or clergyman to understand our likely position on changes to historic churches. The emphasis as in the first edition ten years ago, is on understanding what you have and establishing what you really need, before getting down to the design. Perhaps more explicit than ten years ago is our recognition of the importance of keeping church buildings in use, and of the inevitability of changes, possibly unpalatable to us, that continued use is likely to bring. It has taken a little while for this guidance to emerge and I would be interested to hear what you have to say about its usefulness and what can be done to spread its messages wider. It will become available on the English Heritage website and be regularly updated.

I am very conscious that there is a lot to be done in the next few years to ensure the future of England's parish churches, but where to start? There is huge enthusiasm, interest and sympathy for the cause, but too few of us and too little resources to draw on at present. I am confident that more money and in time, more trained people will become available and I am equally confident that English Heritage has a big role to play in ensuring this happens. But we must work with you and your equivalents in the other denominations and especially, we need to win round the people in the pews to understand what it is about their church buildings that they want to keep and to enhance. Seminars, training days, leaflets and other educational material will no doubt go some way to help and the changes in designation and control systems will start to change the culture of statutory controls. But, as we formulate our own plans for the future, work out what part we are to play in the partnership that is needed to nurture our ecclesiastical heritage, we need to stop talking and start listening. And that is what I propose to do now.

# How do we keep our parish churches?

Trevor Cooper

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PEOPLE'S MINDS MAY DIFFER, AND SOME THINGS I RECOMMEND  
P may be right in themselves without being wise or practicable, and  
some that are wrong perhaps cannot be got rid of without more  
harm than will come of letting them be as they are; . . . above all, it is easy  
for *me* to say “this is right”, and “that is wrong”, who have nothing to do  
with it, and can come by no blame or discredit by my advice . . . [perhaps]  
what I may *talk* about very safely as ‘Nobody knows who’, I should be very  
sorry to *do* if I happened to be an Archdeacon.

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J. M. Neale in somewhat subdued vein in the opening pages of his much-reprinted *A Few Words to Churchwardens* . . . , 8th edition, (Cambridge 1846), pages 3–4 (repunctuated), republished in Christopher Webster (ed.), *‘temples . . . worthy of His presence’: the Early Publications of the Cambridge Camden Society*, (Reading, 2003, ISBN 0954361520).

# I. Introduction

## Purpose of this report

Recently the *Economist* ran a short piece, 'Tithing trouble' (8 Nov 2003), on the Church of England (CoE). It pointed out that, during the last ten years, Sunday attendance at CoE churches fell by about 17%, and the number of clergy dropped by a similar amount. Yet the number of church buildings fell by less than 2%. Thus fewer people are supporting the same number of church buildings.

A more anecdotal piece in the *Financial Times*, 'Church changes but the churches stay' (29 Nov 2003), explored what this meant in a rural setting. The author described how a number of magnificent churches, their towers dominant in the West Country landscape, were being cared for by small congregations. He took the view that this was not sustainable in the longer term: the government should step in.

These articles are serious journalism, yet the picture they paint is impressionistic, based necessarily on limited evidence. I say 'necessarily', because there has not been, so far as I know, any recent attempt to collect together the key facts and figures regarding the upkeep of parish church buildings. That is the purpose of this paper.

It is intended to be factual and objective, and not to promote a particular point of view, except for the underlying assumption that many church buildings are of intrinsic value. It is not my intention to make recommendations: rather to contribute to a debate.

**The views expressed are my own, and should not be taken as representative of those of officers or members of the Ecclesiological Society.**

## Scope

For practical reasons, the report is limited to Anglican churches in England. It rules out larger church buildings, such as abbeys and cathedrals. It also excludes places of worship of other denominations. I have used the word 'church' to mean 'Anglican parish church, parochial chapel, mission church, etc. in England', except in a very few places where I have made clear that it has a different meaning.

## Urban and rural churches

Urban churches differ from rural ones, for example in typical size of congregation, role in the community, age and size of the church building, and average grade of listing. For various reasons, I found more detailed

evidence about rural churches than urban ones.

Unfortunately, this may give the impression that the former deserve more attention, when this is not the case.

## Corrections, comments and further information

**I actively welcome comments and corrections.** These should be sent to me c/o the Ecclesiological Society either by email or by letter, using the addresses on the rear of the title page. I am particularly interested in any evidence which conflicts with that presented here, answers any of the questions I have raised, or introduces new aspects. Individual anecdotes are of less interest, unless they raise general issues.

**Corrections and new material will be published on the Society's website, <[www.ecclsoc.org](http://www.ecclsoc.org)>.** The website also links directly to source material on the web, and it has background statistical data and graphs which there was not room to publish here.

## Acknowledgements

I could not have pulled this paper together without the help of a large number of people, who gave generously of their time and expertise. For the most part, they are not mentioned by name, to avoid any confusion between the assistance they gave me privately and the public stance of their organisation. They know who they are: I hope they know how grateful I am. Needless to say, any errors which remain are my responsibility.

I also acknowledge the kindness of those who allowed their work or publications to be extensively quoted, including various anonymous contributors, the *Church Times*, and Leslie Francis, Jeremy Martineau and Acora publishing, authors and publishers respectively of *Rural Mission*. I apologise if there has been any unintentional breach of copyright; if notified, I will put the matter right in any future edition.

## The larger picture

In preparing this article, I have been humbled by the struggle of those who every day have to balance pastoral needs with those of stone and mortar. I hope my somewhat cold-blooded focus on buildings will not lead anyone to suppose that I am ignorant of, or unconcerned by, the larger picture.

**Anonymous comments in boxes** All anonymous comments are from different people, except in the case of two individuals, one appearing under the pseudonym of 'A student of rural churches', the other as 'A frequent visitor to churches', each of whose comments are split between two different boxes.

**Approximations and costs** Figures in tables are rounded, where this makes it easier to see the overall pattern, so there will be rounding errors in some totals. The Building Index has been used to bring historical costs up to 2002 money.

**Sources** Notes at the end of each section normally give short references only; fuller bibliographic detail will be found in the Bibliography. Where statistics are not referenced, they are from *Church Statistics 2001*, details of which will be found in the Bibliography.



## 2. Church buildings and their carers

### 2.1 The network of churches

#### A large network

The Church of England (CoE) possesses about 16,000 church buildings. This is one of the largest national networks in England (Table 2.1). These buildings are spread over about 13,000 parishes.

There are more than 8,600 stipendiary parochial clergy. In recent years the number of *other* people licensed to take church services has risen to overtake this, and now stands at about 10,500.

Many distribution networks of comparable size are shrinking to meet changing circumstances. For example, it is estimated that some 250 pubs close every year.<sup>1</sup> Rural post offices have also been shutting down, more than 600 during a recent two year period (2000–2002); to help safeguard their future, the government has now introduced a support package worth £150m per year.<sup>2</sup>

National networks of churches are also facing pressures. For example, between 1990 and 2000, some 1,000 Methodist churches closed, with the decline greatest in city centres. As we discuss later, the CoE is also under strain, though it has shut only about 250 buildings over the last ten years (fewer than 2% of its buildings). In the same period, it opened about 70 new buildings, and planted about 200 new congregations.<sup>3</sup>

#### Listed buildings

Approximately 8,000 church buildings are medieval, and probably some 6,000 date from the nineteenth century. (Here, as throughout, I am referring to CoE buildings, unless stated otherwise.) More than 12,000 are listed (Table 2.2). This is far and away the largest estate of listed buildings in the country. The number of listed buildings maintained by English Heritage (EH) and the National Trust combined is probably fewer than one thousand.<sup>4</sup>

More than 4,000 church buildings are Grade I listed, meaning that they are 'of exceptional interest' (see Table 2.2). This is about 45% of the country's stock of buildings at this grade. A similar number are Grade II\* ('particularly important buildings of more than special interest') and something under 4,000 are Grade II ('special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them'). (There are a small number of churches listed at Grades A, B, C, an older version of the listing system, which I have included with the more modern grades in the table.)

The percentage of listed churches probably understates the importance of church buildings. They often have local significance over and above their historical and aesthetic quality, and in addition they are probably under-listed.<sup>5</sup>

#### Who is responsible?

It is easy to overlook two other remarkable facts. First, that church buildings are still in use for their original purpose.

Secondly, this huge portfolio of listed buildings relies on the efforts of small, independent, groups of

Table 2.1

Number of outlets of networks in the UK (1999)

Type of network	Approximate number of outlets in 1999
Pubs	41,800
Cash machines	28,200
Primary Schools	23,100
Post offices	18,000
<b>Anglican churches</b>	<b>16,300</b>
Banks and building societies	14,400
Petrol stations	13,700
General practitioners' surgeries	11,000
Libraries	4,900
Police stations	2,000
Benefit agency and Job Centres	1,400
Hospitals with A&E facilities	250

Source: *Counter Revolution* (PIU Report, 2000) available from <[www.dti.gov.uk/postalservices/pdf/piu\\_report.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/postalservices/pdf/piu_report.pdf)>

volunteers, in the form of church congregations, with formal responsibility lying with the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

The upkeep of these listed buildings is thus in the hands of some 12,000 independent voluntary groups. No attempt at a diocesan strategy for church buildings will be fully effective unless parishes accede to it.

#### Deciding to close a church

In considering the future of church buildings, there are two factors which sometimes affect the behaviour of parishes and dioceses. First, parishes do not pay the salaries of their stipendiary clergy directly. Instead, they are asked to make an assessed contribution to a central fund

Table 2.2

Estimated number of CoE church buildings of each grade of listing (2003)

All figures rounded

Grade	Estimated number of church buildings at given grade		% which these churches represent of all listed buildings (both secular and religious)
	number	%	
I or A	4,200	26%	45% of 9,300
II* or B	4,200	26%	20% of 21,400
II or C	3,800	24%	
Not listed	4,000	24%	
Total	16,200	100% = 16,200	

Source: first two columns, Appendix F (pro-rated up to allow for missing dioceses as described there); final column, listed buildings database (March 2004)

### VOLUNTARY LABOUR

There are over 32,000 churchwardens with direct responsibility for the care of church buildings. If these churchwardens alone spend one hour per week (an underestimate) in caring for churches, this amounts to over 1.5 million hours per year.

The Diocesan Advisory Committees and the other faculty authorities draw on around 1,000 individuals to serve as members and advisors. Many are experts of national, some of international, standing. Based on the time spent in preparing for and attending meetings, site visits and for other professional advice given, the benefit in kind from their time is conservatively estimated at £6m per annum (based on RIBA scale of June 1999 for a senior architect and simple project to indicate 'typical' professional fees).

The National Trust has 38,000 volunteers who contribute over 2 million hours of their time each year.

Sources: First two paragraphs almost verbatim from *A Future for Church Buildings*; final paragraph, National Trust website <[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)>

from which salaries are paid. If a parish is unable or unwilling to fulfil this obligation, the diocese is restricted in the enforcement action it can take, especially in those cases (previously the norm, now rather more than a half) where the minister has tenure ('freehold'), and can stay until he or she wishes to leave. Thus parishes are not always forced to face financial reality. This situation is changing as more and more clergy are appointed under contract ('priests-in-charge'), rather than vacancies being filled with freehold appointments.

Secondly, when a church becomes redundant, the diocese takes over responsibility for keeping the building wind and watertight, thus adding to its cost base, while it works through a time-consuming statutory process to remove the building from its books.

Diocese may ultimately receive some of the sale proceeds from disposal of the church (discussed later, Section 2.3), but the amounts are relatively small and may well have required the expenditure of significant management time, together with money on repairs, insurance, marketing and legal expenses. Many dioceses are in difficult financial circumstances, and are short of management resources, and may therefore sometimes feel inclined to stand back and allow very weak congregations to soldier on.<sup>6</sup>

The statutory requirements for redundancy are currently under review, and some changes may be made to the process, though I suspect they will not affect the points made above.

As we shall see in the following section, congregations have been shrinking. As a result, although a good many churches are full of life, some church buildings now have a small and sometimes diminishing band of volunteers to maintain them

### REDUNDANCY CASE STUDY from ESSEX

*By no means all cases of redundancy are as tricky as this one, where the church is a local landmark by an important architect. But the case does indicate the effort which is sometimes involved in seeing a church through the redundancy process.*

A church built in 1850 in a small village on the outskirts of one of our major towns ceased to be used for worship in 1988. A Pastoral Scheme declared redundancy in 1990. The building was in a severe state of disrepair and repair costs were around £250,000. A marketing campaign produced no interest from prospective purchasers, the local borough council considered it too isolated for community use, the Church Commissioners did not consider it of sufficient merit for the Churches Conservation Trust, but English Heritage, Essex County Council and the local borough council jointly commissioned a feasibility study by a practice of architects. This examined a range of possibilities including residential conversion, workshops and community purposes. Costs ranged from £800,000 to over £1m. There were no applicants to take this further.

Then a local Arts Trust came forward with proposals for conversion of the church into artists' studios and exhibition/teaching facilities. While applications were made to various funding authorities, maintenance was still required from the diocese. This application eventually came to nothing. However, in the meantime the Diocesan Board of Finance had spent over £10,000 on essential repairs, had spent 70 working hours on the case, the Church Commissioners' staff time was 54 hours and the annual insurance premium is over £1,000 per year.

It is still possible (2003) there may be a public enquiry, the cost of which will fall on the Diocesan Board of Finance. As we write, the Victorian Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage, and the National Buildings Preservation Trust, are all urging further consideration to prevent demolition of this church – and all this fifteen years after the church building was closed for worship!

Source: extracted from Chelmsford, *Review*, amended slightly

Since the above was written there have been further developments. There is currently a proposal for residential conversion tied in with enabling development on adjoining land which it is hoped will at long last secure the future of the building.

Source: Church Commissioners, personal communication

## 2.2 How many people feel responsible for church buildings?

### Measuring commitment

What is the level of routine commitment to the church building. How many people give time or money to support and maintain it on a regular basis?

Not surprisingly, existing measures were not designed for our purpose. In particular, all of them refer to *parishes*,

not *buildings*. This matters, because a large number of parishes have two buildings or more. There are approximately five church buildings for every four parishes. A sensible guess might be that there are about 8,000 or 9,000 parishes looking after just one church building, and 3,000 or 4,000 parishes looking after two or more.

In a multi-church parish, effort must be divided over more than one building. The available figures do not allow for this and we cannot correct for it, because we do not know which parishes to apply the correction to.

There are other issues with the measures, discussed in Appendix G.

### Scale of commitment

In what follows, I concentrate on adults rather than children, as it is the former who provide the time and money needed to support church buildings.

One indication of commitment to a church building is attendance at Sunday worship. In 2001, the average Sunday attendance over the whole country was 75 adults per parish, 60 per church building. Many churches had more than this: some 20% of parishes, some 2,600 in all, had average attendances on Sunday of more than 100 adults (Table 2.3). Of these, 500 parishes had attendance of more than 200 adults (not shown in the table).

On the other hand, 6% of parishes (approaching 800) had average Sunday attendance of ten adults or fewer. As discussed in Appendix G, it is possible that this understates the number of parishes with this level of average Sunday attendance.

Attendance figures for a typical Sunday are indicative, but do not tell the whole story, because many churchgoers do not attend on every Sunday. The number of people feeling responsibility for the church building will therefore normally be greater than the number present on a typical Sunday.

We have two other useful measures of commitment (discussed in Appendix G). Making certain assumptions, these imply that there are a minimum of 500 church buildings (and probably more) with ten or fewer committed adults. On the next rung of the ladder, there are probably about 1,600 churches which will obtain routine support from between eleven and twenty adults.<sup>7</sup>

Depending on the size and condition of their church buildings, it will typically be the smaller congregations which are less likely to be able to maintain their church building in good repair over the longer term, and to be most susceptible to redundancy.

Many (but certainly not all) of the smaller congregations are rural. One 1998 survey suggests that the average size of Sunday congregation in the estimated 5,700 churches in rural areas (which excludes commuter rural areas) is about 14 people of all ages, much smaller than elsewhere (Table 2.4).<sup>8</sup>

### Recent trends in attendance

How do the attendance figures compare with those in the past? Although there is room for discussion about the detail of the statistics, and our information is limited, the

Table 2.3

#### Adult average Sunday attendance (ASA) in CoE parishes (2001)

(12,951 parishes; total adult ASA 868,000)  
All figures rounded

Adult ASA	Parishes with this attendance	
	%	Number
1–5	1	130
6–10	5	650
11–20	19	2500
21–30	14	1800
31–50	17	2200
51–100	24	3100
over 100	20	2600
Total	100% = 12,951	12,951

Source: CoE, personal communication

general pattern is clear: in common with almost all church denominations, Sunday attendance has been falling significantly. In the case of CoE churches, in the last thirty years Sunday attendance has dropped by 40% overall (Graph 2.1).

In the late 1960s, about 3.5% of the population, 1.6 million people of all ages, worshipped in an Anglican church on a Sunday. By 2001, that proportion had dropped by 40%, to 1.9% (940,000 people). (See Graph 2.1, which shows all the information available to me. Note that for reasons explained in Appendix G, this uses a slightly different measure of Sunday attendance from the one used in Table 2.3.)

For the most recent twenty years, we have data which distinguishes between adults and those under sixteen years of age. About 40% of the under-sixteens disappeared from typical Sunday services in the twenty years following 1980, and they appear not to have returned as they grew older. The decline amongst adults has been slower than this,

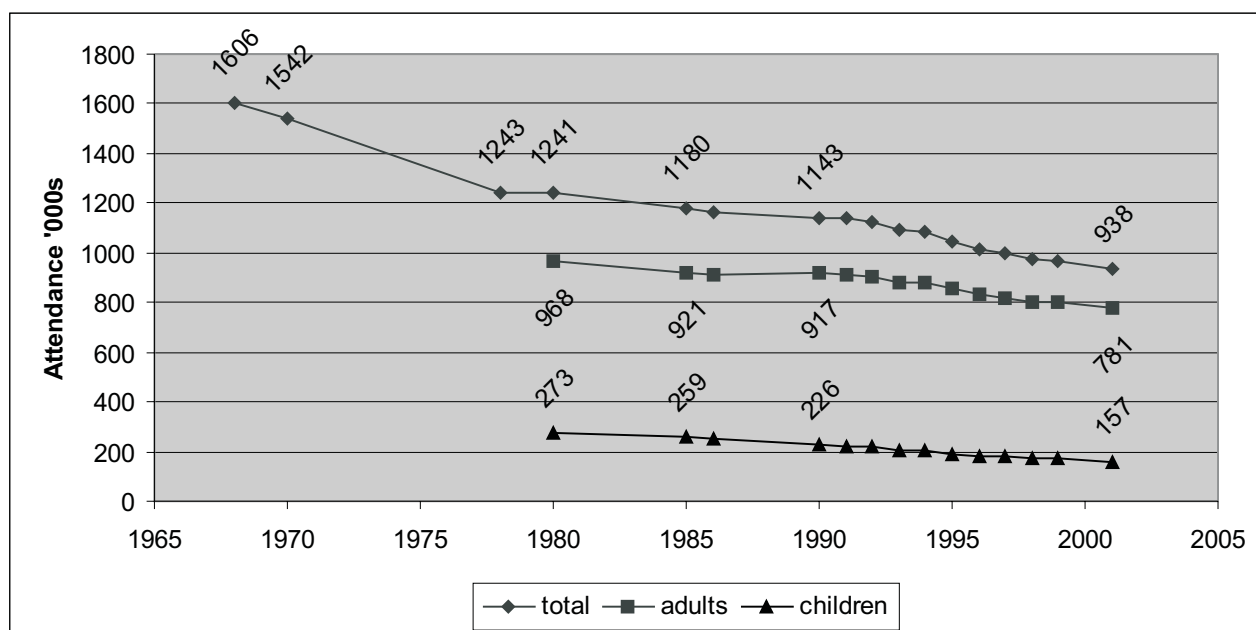
Table 2.4

#### Sunday attendance at CoE churches, all ages, by location (September 1998)

Location of church	Number of church buildings	Average Sunday attendance per church
Separate town	1100	140
Suburban / urban fringe	2900	130
Other built up area	500	100
Inner city	1000	80
Council estate	700	60
Rural: commuter dormitory	3400	50
City centre	1000	40
Rural: other areas	5700	*14
Total = 16,281		Overall average = 60

\*See discussion in text

Source: English Church Attendance Survey, reported in Brierley, *Religious Trends*, 3, Tables 2.24.1, 2.24.2 (my calculation, all figures rounded)



Graph 2.1 Usual Sunday attendance (uSa), 1968–2001

Source: *Church Statistics 2001*, Table 15; Brierley, *Religious Trends*, 2, Table 8.5

attendance falling about 20% during the same twenty-year period, with three-quarters of the drop occurring in the second half of that period, implying a recent acceleration in the loss of adults.

As a result of the loss of younger people, one survey (1998) suggests that congregations are now biased towards the elderly. According to this survey, the average age of worshippers in 1979 was 36; by 1998 it had become 46. In that year, of every ten adults over the age of twenty attending CoE churches, four (37%) were past normal retirement age.<sup>9</sup>

Some observers argue that churchgoers are generally attending Sunday service less frequently than they used, and that some are attending more frequently on weekdays. Whether or not this is the case (and it is outside the scope of this report to review the data), the estimates of *current* levels of support, given in the previous sub-section, would stand.

### Long term trends in participation

The fall in the percentage of adults attending Sunday service is part of a trend which some have traced back 150 years.

There are other downward trends which stretch some way back: for attendance at Easter communion, for baptisms (see Graph 2.2), for confirmation, for marriage in church, and for joining the electoral roll (Graph 6.1).<sup>10</sup> There are differing views as to whether this downward trend will continue.

This is not the full story, of course. Within the context of declining public participation and commitment, there are some significant developments – for example, the rise of non-stipendiary leadership, the emergence of culturally relevant models for evangelism, the increase in giving per church member, a sharper focus on the role of the church in the community – which many would see as strengthening the CoE in its mission.

But these developments are well outside our scope. From the limited viewpoint of sustaining church buildings, a crucial factor is the long-term downward drift in participation and commitment, which may in recent years have accelerated.

### Use of church buildings

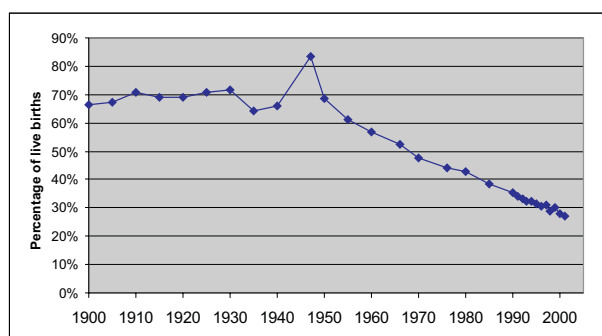
Despite all this, church buildings themselves are still visited, for one reason or another, by a high proportion of the population.

More than four out of five adults (86%) say they visited a church or place of worship during the year (Table 2.5). One quarter (24%) of city centre and inner city dwellers reported that they used these buildings to find a quiet space.

Furthermore, as we will see later (Section 6), church buildings are valued for their historical associations, and as local landmarks. They provide a focus for community activities, and are widely recognised as doing this (Table 6.3). Nearly two-thirds (63%; Table 4.1) say they would be concerned if their local church or chapel were

Graph 2.2 CoE baptisms (infant and other) as percentage of live births

Source: *Church Statistics 2001*, Table 13





## VIEWPOINT

If the disengagement from institutional religion continues apace, a significant new wave of outstanding churches may be left high and dry as the tide of faith ebbs away from their foundations. . . . [unless a new contract is forged between taxpayers and the Church] we may find ourselves totally unprepared for what might prove to be the loss of outstanding ecclesiastical buildings second only to that which occurred during the Reformation. That is how fast events may turn in the next decade. . . . Thinking what has never been thought before must soon commence if a whole slice of our history is not to disappear for future generations.

Source: Frank Field, Chairman of the CCT, in their *Annual Report*, 2002

no longer to be there. Four out of ten (42%) would see a role for central government funding.

Can this diffuse support be converted into something more tangible? – this question nags away in the background for much of the rest of this paper.

## 2.3 How is the network developing?

### Opening and closing churches

Since 1970, the CoE has built approximately 530 new church buildings (see Graph 2.3), and in the same period has closed about 1630, approximately one tenth of its stock of churches. Naturally, this paper concentrates on the risk of closures, but it must be remembered that this is part of the story only, as the CoE continues to plant new congregations, and provide church buildings for growing centres of population.

Table 2.5  
**Adults visiting church / place of worship during previous year**  
(adults, Great Britain, October 2003)

Purpose	Who?	
Visited, any reason	all	86%
..	Christians	89%
..	other faiths	75%
..	no religion	80%
Funeral	all	59%
Wedding	all	49%
Christmas period	all	39%
Find a quiet space	all	19%
..	city dwellers*	24%
..	non-churchgoers	9%
Concert or theatrical performance	all	17%
Walking past and felt the need to go in	all	13%
	city dwellers*	28%

\*city centre / inner city dwellers

Source: CoE, from ORB survey carried out on behalf of EH and CoE, October 2003. Sample size: 1004. See Bibliography.

Churches were being closed through much of the twentieth century, though the rate undoubtedly increased in the latter years. Although in 1949 the CoE identified more than 300 churches which were by then surplus to requirements, between 1945 and 1957 only about 125 churches were demolished, of which almost all were nineteenth-century. There was a growing realization that new redundancy procedures were required, and by the time they were introduced in 1969, there was something of a backlog, with about 370 churches already effectively redundant.<sup>11</sup> I have therefore started the graph at that point, to give a clearer idea of new redundancies since then.

The rate of redundancies peaked in the mid 1980s at around 60 churches per year, and dropped sharply in the following decade; the current underlying rate is in the low thirties per year.<sup>12</sup>

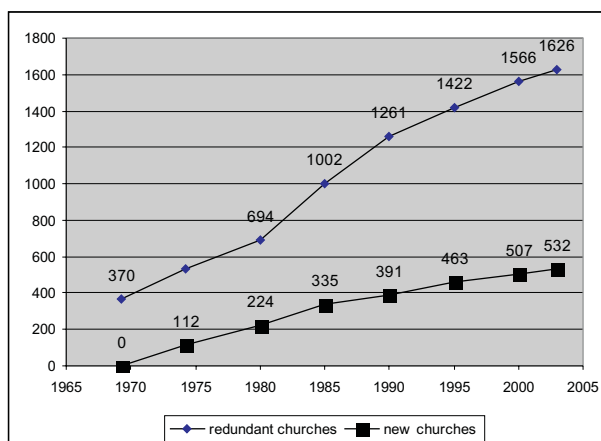
Why did redundancy slow down at a time when typical congregations have been shrinking as fast as ever? One possible reason, discussed later, is that small congregations may not have not shrunk as fast as others. Another is that, in rural areas, after the loss of pub, shop, school and post office, there is a feeling that 'the Church is the last bastion of village life'. This may lead to a growing desire by rural communities to hang on to the building, especially as 'there is no outside agency that can impose closure on the church'.<sup>13</sup>

Of the approximately 1630 churches made redundant since 1969, roughly one fifth (about 340) have been preserved, almost all by being placed in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) (see box). Just over a fifth of redundant churches (about 360) have been demolished and the site disposed of, and of these, only about 85 buildings were listed: this represents a lower proportional rate of loss of listed buildings than for secular buildings.<sup>14</sup> Almost all the remaining redundant churches, nearly three fifths (925), were converted to alternative use. (For details, see Appendix D.)

Except when a new church building is being funded from the sale, one third of any sale proceeds from redundant churches supports the CoE's funding of the CCT, and the remaining two-thirds goes to the diocese.

Graph 2.3 **Total redundant and new churches since 1969**

Source: Church Commissioners Redundant Churches Committee, Report, 2002



## CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST (CCT)

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) is a statutory body, set up in 1969 as the Redundant Churches Fund, changing its name in 1994. In its care are vested redundant church buildings which are deemed too important to demolish, and for which no suitable new use can be found. It now looks after some 330 churches 'in the interests of the nation and the Church of England': it thus has as many church buildings as a small diocese.

The churches remain consecrated, and are used for occasional services. Many of the buildings are used from time to time

for a variety of concerts and festivals (more than 200 such events in 2001).

The CCT's estate includes many buildings of great beauty and character, well looked after, and often watched over by a local volunteer. It has a policy of making its buildings accessible, and a history of producing information of a high quality to guide visitors, of which (excluding school-children) there are about one quarter of a million per year. There is an active educational programme, with approaching 170 school visits per year, mostly concentrated in about half a dozen particular churches.

In a number of cases, the CCT is participating in schemes to encourage urban and rural regeneration and community building. It has recently recruited a Development Director, no doubt a sign that it is keen to progress such activity.

The CCT is primarily funded by a grant, agreed every three years. Of this, the State pays 70%, via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The other 30% is paid for by the Church Commissioners, some of this being provided by the sale of redundant churches or their sites.

## CCT FUNDING

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) estimated that it would require grant income of £4.9m per annum for each of the three years beginning April 2003.

This included about £800k per annum for the vesting of additional churches into the trust, at the rate of four or five churches per year, the typical recent rate.

The Church Commissioners accepted the estimates, and were prepared to fund their share (30%) of the requested amount. However, government spending pressures meant that the grant provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was lower than asked for.

The overall grant was set at £4.2m per annum, which is £700k (14%) per year less than was requested. In cash terms, it is close to being a standstill on previous years, so is a reduction in real terms (that is, after allowing for inflation) of some 5% or 6% from the previous three years. If building costs continue to rise at their current rate, which is faster than general inflation, then the new grant would represent a 10% cut in the CCT's ability to carry out repairs and maintenance compared to the previous three years.

This is bound to have an impact on the CCT's ability to accept more churches and it is hard to see the anticipated 'four or five churches per year' being in any way affordable. (The long time lags in the process may mean that this is not immediately noticeable.) Raising more income may be difficult, as the CCT had previously described its original budget for non core grant income as 'very ambitious'.

The Redundant Churches Committee of the Church Commissioners are 'concerned that this [standstill grant] is an

indication of reduced Government priority for heritage issues'. Because of the reduction in the CCT grant, and an increase in the number of redundant churches coming forward, it will now 'not be possible to vest [in the CCT] every church that qualifies'. The Committee's points system 'will be fully tested by the situation'. There will be 'hard choices'. They say that 'other solutions' will have to be found for some highly-listed redundant churches.

Examples of these 'hard choices' may already be appearing. For example, in this context the Ancient Monuments Society has drawn attention to the Grade I listed medieval church at Benington in Lincolnshire as being offered for sale, rather than vested with the CCT. It seems inevitable that others will follow.

An optimistic view might be that over the longer term this financial pressure will encourage the CCT to develop innovative forms of partnership and funding, given that the organisation will be unable to afford the simple vesting of churches into the trust. An example is the flagship project at St Paul's, Bristol, a redundant church which is being turned into a circus school as part of an urban regeneration project. Frank Field, the Chairman of the CCT, has said that 'we must think well beyond the bounds that the trust has sought to maintain up to now in carrying out its functions'.

From 2003, the government will measure the success of the CCT in three ways, in addition to the effectiveness of its use of resources: in terms of the access it provides to children, its success in 'targeting those who would not normally visit a church', and the extent to which the

CCT has maximised its economic contribution to local communities.

This set of measurements is in line with the Government's commitment 'to see the full potential of the historic environment harnessed as a lifelong learning resource for all and made accessible to the whole of society'. Thus in announcing the grant, the Minister of State for the DCMS said that: 'In line with departmental objectives, the trust aims as far as it can to invest in churches in Government priority action areas'.

The emphasis on people benefiting from these preserved buildings is surely to be welcomed: the need for them to be enjoyed was one of the themes of the Wilding report of 1990. I wonder, though, whether there is a tension emerging between regarding important historic buildings as instruments of social and economic policy, for which purpose, presumably, one need only preserve what one might call 'useful' examples; and believing that their value lies to a large extent in the individual sense of place which they create, so that one preserves as many as one can afford to enjoy?

But I have allowed myself to speculate: which is not at all the point of this paper.

Sources: Church Commissioners Redundant Churches Committee, *Report*, 2002; *Newsletter* of the Ancient Monuments Society, Summer 2003; CCT, *Annual Report*, 2001 and 2002; *Financing the Churches Conservation Trust*; Sixth Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, 26 February 2003; *Funding Agreements, 2000–2003* and *2003–2006*. Details of these latter items will be found in the Bibliography.

### A RURAL GROUP OF PARISHES

Sir, — The report on diocesan giving implies that many rural areas are lacking in generosity. Did the surveys take into account the amount of money raised to repair and insure medieval buildings?

These buildings are maintained by the efforts of a few. In my own parishes, nine churches are supported by a population of 1800. Of these people, only about 160 are committed worshippers, despite what the electoral rolls may say.

Much of the faithful's fund-raising is split between the parish share (met in full) and repair costs. It is no help to the diocese to make any of the churches redundant. Maintenance costs would then come out of the diocesan budget, unless the building could be sold. . . .

Source: letter to the *Church Times* from an East Anglian vicar, 1 August 2003, reproduced by kind permission

### CHURCH BUILDING IN 2003

Provided they get or have pledged the £2 million needed (and they are confident they will), the Revd David Price tells me that it should be possible to start building the new church on Elvetham Heath next year. That will enable a congregation of Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and URC, plus a variety of other denominations, to move in a year later. Elvetham Heath is a new development . . . The interdenominational church services are held on Sunday mornings [at the community centre], "though we have to be out sharp by 12 noon because the martial-arts class moves in". . . . The 150 members of the congregation need their own church because special occasions mean standing in the aisles.

Source: extracted by kind permission from the *Church Times*, 12 September 2003

The amounts received by dioceses do not seem particularly large – each diocese received an average of £12,000 per year in the five years up to 2002, and three or four times more than this in the mid 1980s (in money of the time).<sup>15</sup>

### Are there too many church buildings?

Despite these efforts, there are still many more churches than are necessary to seat today's worshippers.

Some of the recent blame for this can be placed on the Victorians, who were over-enthusiastic in building and enlarging churches, a good number of which were becoming empty as early as the end of the nineteenth century. Today we have some 2,200 more church buildings than we had in 1851, but our all-age attendance over the whole of Sunday (940,000) is around half the estimated 1.8 million people who attended Sunday morning service alone in 1851.<sup>16</sup>

One way of estimating the current overcapacity would be to look at the number of seats provided. This is not known nationally. However figures are available for some dioceses. One such is the diocese of Chelmsford, a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas (see Section 5.3) There are wide variations between churches in the diocese, but the average usage of seats on a Sunday is 37%. In fact, this overstates the usage of seats, as the measure of attendance includes *all* Sunday services: at any one service the average seat utilisation will be less than 37%.

It is notable that in some deaneries in Chelmsford (mainly the rural ones) the average seat usage is less than 20%; in other deaneries, typically the urban ones, more than 50%. Some – roughly one half – of this difference is caused not by different churchgoing rates, but by variations in the number of seats per head of population.

If the diocese of Chelmsford is taken as typical, then across the board the CoE could remove 4,000 church buildings from use, one quarter of its stock, and its average usage of seats on a typical Sunday would still only rise to about 50% (on the overstated measure). Carol services might then be somewhat overcrowded at the busier churches (based on the figures in Appendix G, the average

church would then be 125% full – some would be less, some more) but where necessary these exceptional congregations could be accommodated by doubling up carol services, as happens at some churches already. This is, of course, a grossly over-simplified and rather foolish calculation, but it gives some measure of the extent to which the CoE has far more buildings than it needs to house its regular Sunday worshippers.

Recent proposals for closure reflect the above figures, though in all cases these are under discussion and the actual number of redundancies may well be less.<sup>17</sup>

- Of the approximately 40 church buildings in the City and Deanery of York (which includes the suburbs of York), it was suggested that some seven (roughly 17%) church buildings should be made redundant.
- There are about 350 churches in the diocese of Manchester. In the late 1990s, about 60 (roughly 17%) of these were thought to be surplus to requirements.
- In the recent report on the deaneries of Brighton and Hove, some fifteen (27%) of the 56 churches have been suggested for closure, with a further seven being proposed for alteration or partial redevelopment; this relatively larger proportion may have resulted from the diocese of Chichester having fewer closures in the past, and from Brighton's unusual ecclesiastical history.

It must be remembered that the option taken by other denominations, and by secular distribution networks, such as pubs and banks, of simply closing under-used buildings is not so easily available to the CoE, which has a historic commitment to be universally accessible; pastoral concerns of individual congregations to consider; many listed buildings; and a complex and expensive process to go through when a church is closed.

### The location of churches

Not only are there more church buildings than are needed to seat congregations, but many church buildings are not close to where the majority of worshippers live. As a result, a small number of buildings serve the majority of

Table 2.6

**Number of church buildings supported by the smallest rural parishes, by population of parish (2000)**

Some figures rounded

Which rural parishes (by population)	Population of largest of these parishes	In these parishes, average population	How many churches supported by these parishes*	% of English population in these parishes	% of English churches in these parishes*
smallest 200	76	50	200	0.0%	1.2%
smallest 500	126	80	500	0.1%	3.1%
smallest 1000	197	120	1000	0.2%	6.2%
smallest 1500	271	160	1500	0.5%	9.2%
smallest 2000	346	200	2000	0.8%	12.3%
smallest 3000	571	280	3000	1.7%	18.5%
smallest 4000	1084	410	4000	3.2%	24.7%
smallest 5000	2620	660	5000	6.6%	30.8%

\*Figures in this column understated. All of these parishes support at least one church building (I omitted those that did not). Some support more than one, so the final column understates the number of church buildings supported by these communities.

Source: National Parish Questionnaire returns used for Countryside Agency *Rural Services in 2000* report, my analysis of summary returns available on Countryside Agency website <[www.countryside.gov.uk/EvidenceAndAnalysis/dataHub/rural\\_services\\_survey\\_data/index.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/EvidenceAndAnalysis/dataHub/rural_services_survey_data/index.asp)>

churchgoers. A survey in 1998 suggested that approaching two-thirds of those attending church (61%) are concentrated in just one fifth (21%) of church buildings.<sup>18</sup> From Table 2.3, we can estimate that one quarter of parishes (25%) provide seats for less than 6% of adults attending church on Sunday.

But this is not surprising, given how long ago the position of many churches was decided. The location of about 6,000 churches had been fixed within one hundred and fifty years of the Norman Conquest. A further 4,000 (approximately) had their site chosen over the next three hundred years. Another 6,000 or so were first positioned in the nineteenth century, more than half in a building boom between 1840 and 1875. Even as late as 1851 it was said that people would not walk more than a mile to church, influencing the pattern of building in rural areas in a way which is now often inappropriate. Given the various population shifts since the Norman Conquest, and the more recent move away from horse and cart towards the motor car, it is not surprising that many church buildings are in areas where there is a small population and not many worshippers.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.4 How evenly spread is the task?

Because many rural churches are no longer near centres of population, the task of keeping them is not evenly spread.

For the tiniest rural communities (Table 2.6), the task of care is disproportionately heavy – I estimate that the 500 smallest rural parishes with churches in England (representing 3.1% of all churches) have an average population of 80 people, together representing just 0.1% of the population. The 2000 smallest rural parishes have an average population of about 200 people, representing 12% of churches being in communities with less than 1% of the population.

So a number of very tiny rural communities are supporting significant numbers of churches. Many of these will be listed: Map 2.1 confirms that it is rural areas which tend to have the highest proportion of listed

churches (though Map 2.2 shows that some urban areas can more than match them in listed buildings per square mile, because of the greater density of building).

As would therefore be expected, rural dioceses have far fewer members of the general population per church building than do other dioceses (Graph 2.4). London, for example, has nearly ten times as many people per church buildings as Hereford diocese.

In fact, just four dioceses (Hereford, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Norwich and Carlisle) have nearly 12% of English parish churches, but only a little over 4% of the population of England. Thus people in these dioceses each have something approaching three times the average share of parish churches to maintain. If a further four dioceses are included – Lincoln, Salisbury, Bath & Wells and Gloucester – then all eight dioceses between them look after one quarter of parish church buildings (25%) with hardly more than one tenth of the population (11%).

But great caution is needed with this form of analysis, *because not all church buildings are equal*. A small, rural, Norman church in good condition will cost much less to repair than an urban Victorian monster which has been suffering from neglect. Only looking at the population per church building, without taking account of the different kinds of problems found in different locations, may be misleading.

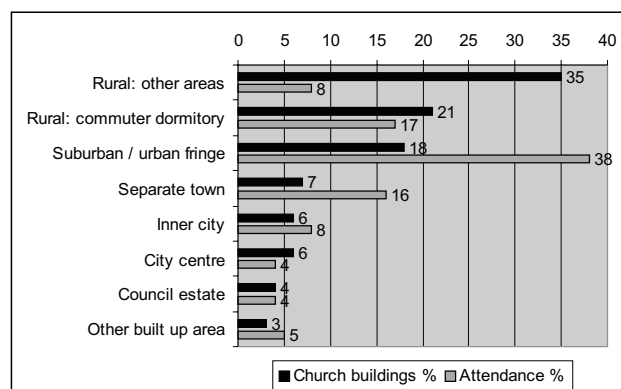
Furthermore, looking at the *general* population per church ignores the fact that it is committed churchgoers who pay the bills. On average, 2.8% of the population (2001) are church ‘members’ (on the electoral roll of a parish). But this varies enormously: in some dioceses it three times this proportion, in others as low as half. As a rule of thumb, urban dioceses tend to have lower proportional membership than rural ones. The impact can be seen in Graph 2.5, which shows the electoral roll per church building. Hereford diocese still has amongst the lowest support per church building, but London only has about three times as many members per church building as Hereford, far smaller than the times-ten factor we saw in the earlier graph. Urban congregations tend to have



larger and more expensive churches to keep up, and are doing so with levels of churchgoing support only two or three times greater (on average) than those found in rural areas.

The picture is confirmed in Graph 2.6, where it can be seen that rural areas are estimated to support 35% of churches with only 8% of church-goers: thus they have more than four times the average number of buildings to look after per churchgoer. Inner city and city centre churchgoers have roughly the average number of buildings to care for – that is, the percentage of churchgoers looking after these buildings is approximately equal to the percentage of church buildings they look after – but they will often be caring for the biggest, and quite probably most expensive, buildings. In contrast, churchgoers in suburban areas and on the urban fringe each have only about half the average number of churches to upkeep (38% of churchgoers keeping 18% of church buildings).

It is time to summarise. Through all the detail, the general picture is clear. There has been a general decline in church attendance. Although a good many congregations are thriving, some are tiny. Some church buildings have closed (and new ones have opened) but the overall reduction in the size of the network has not been as large as the reduction in churchgoing. There are still a *very* large number of listed buildings being cared for by



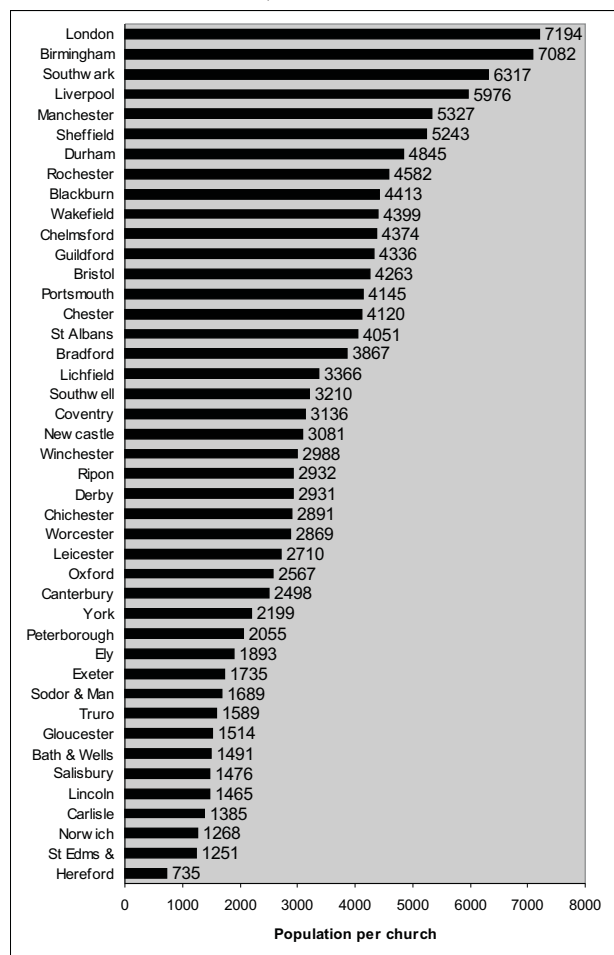
Graph 2.6 Proportion of all church buildings in England and proportion of overall Sunday attendance in England (all ages) found at each type of location (1998)

Source: Brierley, *Religious Trends*, 3, 2.24.1 and 2.24.2

church congregations – small groups of volunteers. For historical reasons, many rural church buildings serve (and are potentially supported by) a relatively small number of inhabitants; whilst in urban areas the level of churchgoing is lower as a proportion of the population, putting pressure on those who care for larger buildings. Given these pressures, we must now ask, what is the condition of our church buildings?

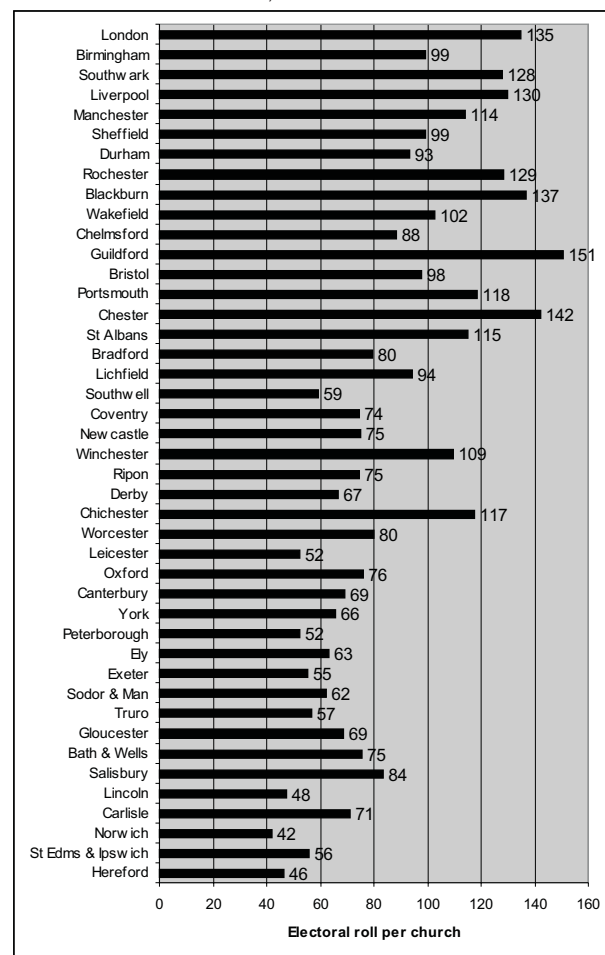
Graph 2.4 Population per church building, by diocese (2001)

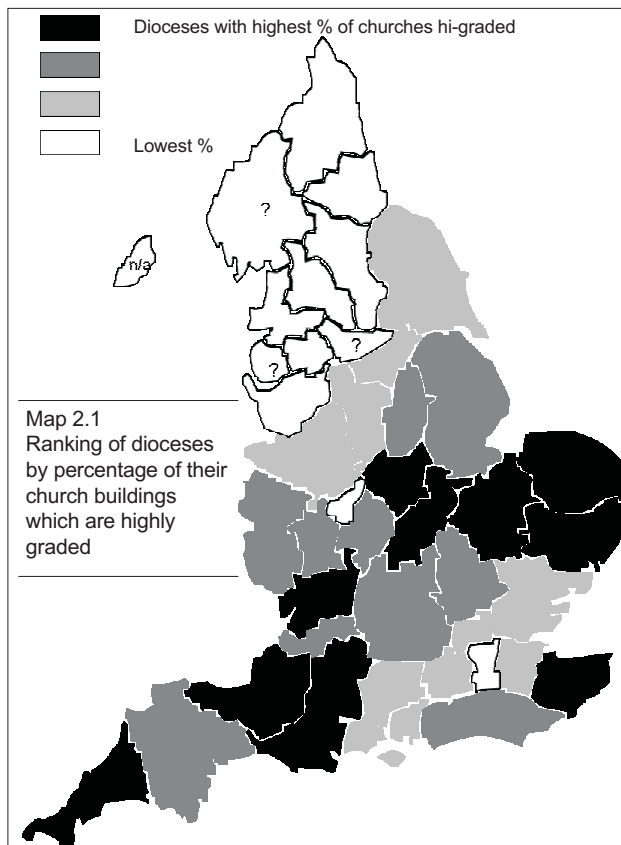
Source: *Church Statistics 2001*, Table 1



Graph 2.5 Electoral roll per church building, by diocese (2001); dioceses shown in same order as Graph 2.4

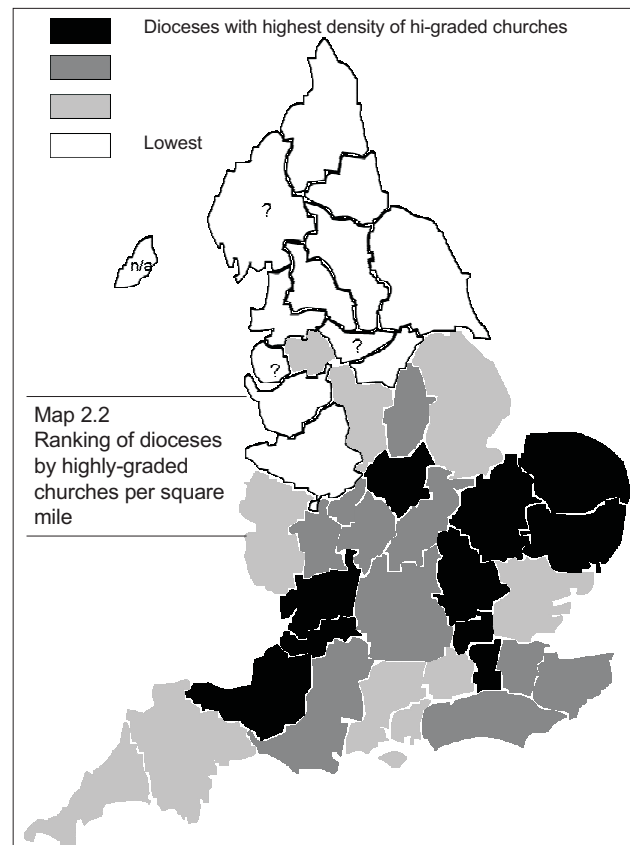
Source: *Church Statistics 2001*, Tables 1 and 11





**Map 2.1** ranks dioceses according to the percentage of their church buildings which are highly-graded (Grades I, II\*, A, B)

Source: Appendix F



**Map 2.2** ranks dioceses according to number per square mile of church buildings which are highly-graded (Grades I, II\*, A, B)

Sources: Appendix F; *Church Statistics 2001*, Table 1

**Maps 2.1 (left) and 2.2 (right)** Both these maps divide the 43 dioceses into four groups, omitting Sodor and Man (not comparable with the others) and Carlisle, Liverpool and Wakefield (information not available, shown with question marks). The right hand map includes more urban dioceses: although they tend to have a smaller proportion of listed buildings than rural dioceses, their concentration on the ground means that there are more per square mile. (Map software by kind permission of the CoE.)

## Notes

1. Ian Loe, Campaign for Real Ale, personal communication.
2. Rate of rural post office closure from Postwatch *Annual Report 2002–3*, available at <[www.postwatch.co.uk/pdf/policydocs/Annualreport03.pdf](http://www.postwatch.co.uk/pdf/policydocs/Annualreport03.pdf)>; support package for rural post offices announced 2 Dec 2002 (DTI website <[www.dti.gov.uk/postalservices/2\\_dec\\_2002.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/postalservices/2_dec_2002.htm)>).
3. For Methodists closure and Anglican church planting, see George Lings & Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Past, Present and Future* (Grove Books, Cambridge, 2003, ISBN 1851745246), pages 7 and 8. For church closures and openings, see Section 2.3 above.
4. Nineteenth-century count from Appendix 2 of *The Preservation of our Churches*, and see also Robert Currie *et al.*, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford, 1997), pages 213–6. Listed church buildings count from Appendix F, below. Number of listed buildings owned by National Trust and English Heritage, personal communication; the number is hard to obtain precisely, because many of their listed buildings are part of larger complexes.
5. For under-listing, see Appendix B.
6. For use of redundant buildings, see Appendix D, below. For sale proceeds, see note 15 below. For financial position of dioceses, see the *Church Times*, 25 July 2003 and other items listed in the Bibliography.
7. For this paragraph, see Appendix G.
8. A survey of 1994 suggests that the figure was somewhat higher than this, standing at that date at perhaps 17 people for the 3,600 rural communities with fewer than 400 inhabitants, and rising to an average of 22 for the 6,000 communities with fewer than 900 inhabitants. Some of the difference is accounted for by the drop in attendance between 1994 and 1998. See Appendix E for the 1994 survey, but note that some of the communities included in those churches with an average attendance of 22 may be ‘commuter rural’ areas, shown as a different category in Table 2.4.
9. Brierley, *Tide*, Table 31.
10. See Brierley, *Religious Trends*, 2, 8.4 and 8.5.
11. Findlay, *Protection of our English Churches*, pages 53, 110.
12. Church Commissioners, personal communication.
13. Peterborough, *Setting God’s People Free*, page 12; Jackson, *Hope for the Church*, page 110.
14. English Tourism Council, *The Heritage Monitor*, 1999, page 24.
15. *Financing the Churches Conservation Trust*, Appendix 1, page 11.
16. Currie *et al.*, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford, 1997), pages 214, 216. The 1851 census counted 2.5 million attendees (adults, children and Sunday scholars) at morning service. To subtract Sunday School children, I obtained Sunday School membership from Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church*, Table 6 and then took account of typical rates of attendance at Sunday School (page 24), concluding that the 1851 figure for attendance should be reduced by six or seven hundred thousand Sunday School attendees to obtain a figure for adult and child attendance. For the broad reliability of the census, see Gill, *passim*.
17. See Bibliography for diocesan reports.
18. English Church Attendance Survey, 1998, as reported in Brierley, *Tide*, Table 10, some figures corrected (personal communication).
19. For dates of location of churches see e.g. Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (1989), page 147; see also his ‘The church in the countryside’, pages 51–3, in Della Hooke (ed.), *Medieval Villages* (Oxford, 1985). For Victorian building see Currie *et al.*, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pages 213–6, and the Bibliography, below. For walking one mile to church, see Alasdair Crockett, ‘Variations in churchgoing rates in England in 1851’ (University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History, number 36 (August 2000)), available at <[www.nuff.ox.ac.uk/Economics/History/Paper36/36Crockett.pdf](http://www.nuff.ox.ac.uk/Economics/History/Paper36/36Crockett.pdf)>.

## 3. Keeping church buildings in good repair

### 3.1 Spending on parish churches

#### What is the current position?

Despite the pressures described in the previous section, large sums of money are being raised by these voluntary groups (congregations) to keep their church buildings in good repair. In each of the four years up to 2001, expenditure on repairs has been running at an average of about £82m per year (in 2001 money), an average expenditure of about £5,000 per church building per year. On top of this is the cost of routine maintenance (insurance, heating, small repairs, etc.), about another £16m per year.<sup>1</sup>

Is this average figure of £5,000 per year enough? How much ought to be spent? Are churches being maintained in good condition? Or are future problems being stored up?

To understand properly whether churches were being adequately maintained, we would need three pieces of information (see diagram ‘The repairs pipeline’):

- the rate at which new deterioration will be occurring and new needs discovered;
- a snapshot of the current state of the churches – their outstanding repairs;
- the rate at which repairs are carried out.

Anecdotal evidence about the second of these, the current state of churches, is not in short supply (see box), and suggests that the majority of church buildings are in reasonable or good condition. A systematic view is much harder to obtain. The national Buildings at Risk register does not normally include churches still in use, so there is no central source of information about listed church buildings with major problems.

All the information I could find is discussed in Appendix A. My best estimate – an informed guess, really – is that 50% of listed churches – some 6000 buildings –

#### ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE ON THE CONDITION OF CHURCHES

*An experienced archdeacon (north of England).* In my experience, churches have never been in such good condition as they are now.

*Student of rural churches, carrying out a systematic survey, visiting many hundreds each year.* The condition of churches is generally good. Structurally I have come across only a few that are closed as being dangerous buildings. That doesn’t mean to say they don’t have problems if you look closely, but very few are actually falling to bits.

*Frequent visitor to churches, in the South-East and elsewhere, both for purposes of study and with professional responsibilities.* The basic condition seems fine. However, cosmetically they could be better. Many need a bit of tender loving care.

*Trustee of a county Churches Trust, the county containing hundreds of rural churches.* Churches in this county are in much better condition than twenty years ago. I would say that only about one in fifty of them give cause for real anxiety.

Sources: personal communications

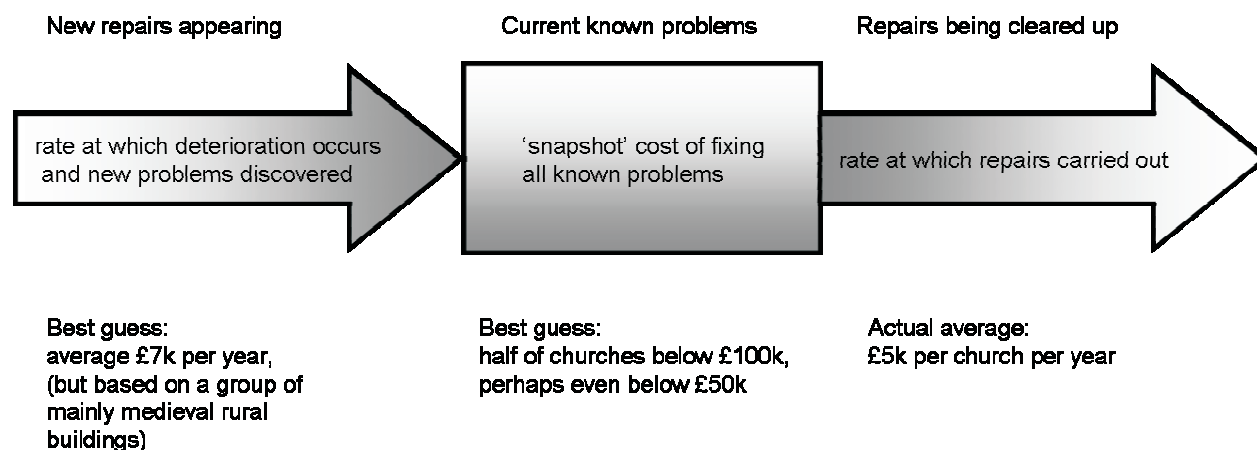
In the diocese of Chelmsford, which surveyed its parishes in 2003 (see Section 5.3), 85% of churches were said by churchwardens to be ‘in good condition’.

Source: Chelmsford, *Review*

In the diocese of Manchester in the mid 1990s, 21% of churches were said to be ‘needing attention’ and 9% in ‘poor’ condition.

Source: see Appendix A

#### The repairs pipeline



have outstanding repairs less than £100k. Indeed, these 6000 buildings might all have known repair needs less than £50k. The next 3000 (25%) of listed churches probably all fall below £200k, perhaps well below. As for the final 3000 listed churches, the sky is the limit, but our evidence does not help us to guess how many, or how few, actually require very large sums of money. It probably depends on how many very large Victorian churches there are, and their state of disrepair, about which I have no solid information.

Perhaps 10% of churches were in 'poor' condition in the mid to late 1990s, but how many needed urgent work, or were in a serious state, we do not know. As to the overall cost of known repairs, for listed churches it would not surprise me if it fell between £1000m and £3000m, though this is not a very useful figure unless one knows how quickly these repairs need to be carried out, which we do not.

One line of evidence suggests an *average* spend of £8,000 per church per year might *on average* clear the existing stock of known repairs at a safe rate (though new ones would be following behind). But this figure takes insufficient account of the repair costs of large Victorian churches. The actual rate of spend is £5,000 per year. As far as I can tell, some of the difference may be at the top end: some CoE parishes may not be carrying out very big repairs – larger than (say) £50k – quite as often as they ought to. As Jeremy Eckstein suggested in 2001, it is likely that 'all too often financial constraints cause congregations to adopt a knee-jerk, reactive response to the fabric needs of their churches' – that is, that the most pressing needs are perhaps being dealt with, but larger non-urgent repairs are put off as long as possible, and smaller preventive work is being neglected. But these are very tentative conclusions, and an up to date review is needed.

On balance then, *and with a high degree of uncertainty*, the evidence suggests that despite everyone's best efforts, there is some annual underspend on church repairs.

If there is an underspend, does it matter? These are robust buildings, and it may be that they can continue for decades without being put in perfect order, so long as key repairs are carried out, and they are kept weatherproof. We simply do not know.

## Inspection and maintenance

A number of years ago the CoE led the way with the introduction of five-yearly (quinquennial) inspections of its buildings. These play a crucial role in alerting parishes to developing problems. It is known that quinquennial reports vary both in their quality and their usefulness to parishes (one diocese will soon be carrying out a study on this), but there is no doubt that they have had a major impact on the care of churches.

However, all those I have spoken to who have experience of church repairs say that a high proportion of congregations are poor at routine maintenance – cleaning out gutters, fixing loose tiles, and dealing with small problems quickly. In conversation, people have suggested to me that anything between one third and two-thirds of churches do not carry out maintenance well.

The only systematic evidence for the present situation is the report by Geoffrey Claridge. He said that 'there was probably only a minority of cases where it could be said in all honesty that gutters were clean, gully traps were free and ground drainage worked satisfactorily'. Overall he found that nearly a quarter (22%) of churches were inadequately maintained. However, he pointed out that 'of those judged inadequate, relatively few were considered to be seriously neglected'.<sup>2</sup>

Some dioceses have been energetic in training churchwardens in basic maintenance, and it may be that there is less of a problem in these dioceses: I do not have the evidence.

This is not a new issue. In a much-reprinted guide to churchwardens of 1841, great stress was laid on keeping the church dry: 'the great cause of almost all the ruin and unhealthiness that are found in our parish churches may be told in one word, DAMP'. A century later, the 1952 report *The Preservation of our Churches* devoted several pages to what it saw as a significant problem and the need for training of ordinands and of churchwardens.<sup>3</sup>

As I understand it, there are currently no grants available for maintenance. For example, English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund (EH/HLF) grants are generally only available for urgent repairs (needed in the next two years), and costing more than £10,000. Nor does the system of grants easily provide money for emergency repairs. One grant-making trust estimates that it receives one phone call a day from churches needing emergency repairs, a demand it is quite unable to meet. Work may therefore be delayed for some years and become much more expensive in consequence – I have been told by several people that they believe that much repair expenditure is due to delay.

A recent pilot initiative, Maintaining our Heritage (see box), may prove a useful way forward. In addition, EH is exploring with at least two dioceses the possibility of supporting a maintenance/small repair function, either through direct action or small, quick grants to meet immediate need. Furthermore, the grant scheme jointly funded by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund (EH/HLF) now insists on the production of a maintenance plan, and annual certification of compliance with it, as a condition of making a grant.

### GUTTERS

Some time ago, a friend and I spent a day clearing knee-deep rotting leaves from the parapet gutters of St Botolph's, Aldersgate, in the City of London. The churchwardens had done nothing to clear the gutters for five years, as a result of the long-threatened redundancy of the church.

Our work was, unfortunately, in vain. The leaves had caused rainwater to overtop the guttering and penetrate the building, causing an outbreak of dry rot which has cost £500,000 to repair. It might all have been prevented by regular attention from one man with a brush and a bucket, costing about £200 a year.

Source: George Allan, 'Preventive maintenance, the way forward?', in *Context*, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, September 1999. Available at <[www.maintainourheritage.co.uk/context\\_ga.htm](http://www.maintainourheritage.co.uk/context_ga.htm)>.



## INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE

### MONUMENT WATCH

Perhaps one way to encourage better routine maintenance of church buildings would be to have a specialist team of people arriving once a year at the church porch to do the job?

To a certain extent, this is what happens in the Netherlands, where a significant proportion of owners of listed buildings pay to have an annual inspection of their buildings carried out by a team from Monument Watch (Monumentenwacht). This organization has been operating in the Netherlands since the early 1970s, and there are now more than fifty teams in operation, each of two people. A similar organization was started in Flanders in the early 1990s.

However, the main purpose of Monument Watch is not to carry out work, but to report on what preventive work is needed. To some extent this has been misunderstood in the UK, where the service is sometimes portrayed as a highly-trained version of the odd-job man, fixing problems on the spot. In fact, the emphasis in the Netherlands is on reporting, *not* on fixing, and the owner of the building is then responsible for specifying and commissioning any necessary work from the supplier of his choice (not Monument Watch). However Monument Watch do patch up immediate problems. For example, they might replace a slipped tile, clear a gully, or temporarily repair a leaking gutter.

These annual inspections are subsidised by the Dutch government, to the tune of approximately 60% of running costs. In addition, heavy subsidies and tax breaks (of the order of 60% or 70%) are available for owners carrying out work on these buildings, regardless of whether the works are big or small, prevention or cure.

### PREVENTION *versus* CURE

In essence, then, the Dutch subsidise annual inspections by craftsmen, aiming for prevention rather than cure, with heavy subsidies for both small and large work. The English philosophy for church buildings is rather different: five-yearly inspections by architects or their equivalents, with large urgent repairs being grant-aided.

It may seem 'obvious' that the Dutch approach of prevention rather than cure is cheaper in the long run. But it is not easy to prove. Furthermore, some of the savings may take more than half a century to come through, for example by making a roof last 80 years rather than 50 years. Nor are preventive measures always cheap.

We have seen in the body of this report that, on average, churches will go for twenty years without significant repairs. The business case for preventive maintenance in churches says, in essence, that a church should increase its annual expenditure *today* by carrying out work in areas which are not yet causing a problem, in order to reduce the likelihood of a large repair *which anyway may not appear for twenty or more years*. Such an argument may be less than persuasive to those congregations already strapped for cash. It may be especially unconvincing when, as now, the

once-every-twenty-years major repair is grant-aided whilst any annual expenditure on prevention is not.

### MAINTAIN OUR HERITAGE

To explore further the issues regarding maintenance, in the UK an organization called Maintain our Heritage (MOH) has been set up, supported in different ways by a number of bodies, including EH, HLF, the Department for Trade and Industry, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Bath Preservation Trust.

One of the aims of MOH is to sponsor a programme of research into maintenance as currently practised, its economic consequences, and the role it might play in future. Some very useful papers have been produced (see website, details below), though the research does not address the special needs of church maintenance.

The second aim of MOH has been to run an experimental scheme in the Bath area from Summer 2002 to Autumn 2003, along the lines of Monument Watch. The intention was to gain practical experience, and to understand better the level of demand that might arise. The prices were heavily subsidised: for example, inspection of a church was finally priced as low as £50 to stimulate demand, whereas the direct cost, ignoring overheads, was several hundred pounds. This was a completely new service, and uptake was low during the year that the pilot ran. Across all listed buildings in the area, around 1% took advantage of the service, and only a handful of churches.

From the point of view of churches, I suspect that there may have been too much emphasis on *inspection and reporting*, rather than immediate maintenance and on-the-spot work. For example, the published report on South Stoke church, undertaken as part of the research project, listed some work which should be done within the next year (costing an estimated £6,000) but also provided a list of works to be carried out over the following ten years (costing another £8,000).

This follows Dutch practice. However churches in England already have an inspection once every five years, and may feel (rightly or wrongly) that they would learn little new by paying for an annual inspection between times. They are perhaps more interested in paying for any newly-emerging issues to be put right immediately, so that they can relax for another year.

A scheme is being considered covering two dioceses in the Cotswold region, putting more emphasis on immediate work. Some form of service providing routine maintenance for churches might fill a need that has been felt for at least the past fifty years. If this could be combined with a gradual shift in grant-aid from cure to prevention, it might prove a powerful combination.

Sources: the website of Maintain our Heritage <[www.maintainourheritage.co.uk/](http://www.maintainourheritage.co.uk/)>; their final report; and personal communication. See also Stefan Binst 'Monument Watch in Flanders (and the Netherlands)' available on the website of the Heritage Council (Ireland) at <[www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications/ecclesiastical/monwatch.html](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications/ecclesiastical/monwatch.html)>. For pictures, see Flanders' Monument Watch on <[www.monument.vlaanderen.be/mowav/en/taak.html](http://www.monument.vlaanderen.be/mowav/en/taak.html)>, and Netherlands' Monument Watch on <[www.monumentenwacht.nl/index.html](http://www.monumentenwacht.nl/index.html)>.

Table 3.1

**Actual spending on major repairs to church buildings, by amount of spend (2001)**

Total repair spend during period was £86.4m

<i>Amount spent</i>	Parishes (actual)		Churches (estimate)		
	% of parishes	No. of parishes	% of churches	No. of churches	£m spent on repairs
zero	42	5440	50	8100	0.0
up to £1k	9	1170	8	1300	0.6
£1k – £5k	24	3100	20	3250	8.1
£5k – £10k	10	1300	9	1460	10.9
£10k – £20k	8	1040	7	1130	17.0
£20k – £50k	5	650	4.3	700	24.4
More than £50k	2	260	1.7	280	25.5
	100% = 12,951 parishes	12,951	100% = 16,220 churches	16,220	£86.4m

Source: first column, CoE, personal communication; remaining columns, see Technical note.

Technical note: the figures in the first column refer to parishes. Many parishes have more than one church, and I have estimated the effect of this in the remaining column. I did this by considering how multi-church parishes might have behaved. At one extreme, multi-church parishes undertaking repairs might have only repaired one of their church buildings, and never more than one. At the other extreme, multi-church parishes undertaking repairs might have repaired *all* their church buildings. These assumptions gave a maximum of 54% and a minimum of 42% of church buildings *not* undergoing repairs. I chose an approximately central point of 50% for this figure, and scaled the remaining figures to add up to 100%. None of this affects the fundamentals of the argument made in the text.

## 3.2 What is the pattern of repairs?

### Large repairs are unusual

What is the pattern of repair expenditure over time for an individual church?

To obtain some idea of this I looked at repair expenditure over a period of 25 years for five randomly-chosen churches from the CCT portfolio. Three features stood out, none of them helpful to a group of volunteers trying to budget ahead.

First there were many years (very approximately, one half) where the necessary repair expenditure (on top of routine maintenance) was zero. Secondly in those years where repairs were required, the cost varied greatly, and was only occasionally particularly large. Finally, the five individual CCT churches varied from each other in the total required over the 25-year period. A key question is whether this was predictable at the beginning of the period, but I suspect in some cases it was not: that is, that the scale of repairs was not foreseeable at the beginning of the quarter century.

We can approach the pattern of expenditure another way. In 2001 the total spent on church repairs was £86m, and the average per church was approximately £5,000. However – and this is crucial – nearly four fifths of churches (an estimated 78%) either spent nothing at all or spent less than £5,000 (Table 3.1). Nearly nineteen out of twenty churches spent less than £20k, and for these churches the average spend was approximately £2,500. It is the very small number of high-spending churches who in any one year raise the average to £5,000 per church.

It is important to appreciate how unusual is a repair spend above £50k: only approximately 2% of churches, roughly one in fifty, spend this much in a given year. To put it another way, based on this data, any average church building might reasonably hope to go for twenty years spending an average of £2,500 per year, and fifty years without having to find a repair bill of more than £50k.

Many of us are so used to appeals for major funds that this pattern of expenditure may be a surprise.

This erratic requirement for repairs cannot be easy for churches, many of which are, after all, relatively small voluntary organisations. When deciding between a youth worker or new toilets or putting aside money for unknown possible future repairs, it must be tempting to take the chance that when the next repair bill does come in a few years' time it will be one of the smaller rather than larger ones, and to hope that over the longer term this church is going to be one of the less expensive ones.

Unfortunately, I have no information as to how expenditure is broken down between different classes of church – urban versus rural, for example, or medieval compared to Victorian. Urban Victorian churches are said to be considerably more expensive, but I do not have the data to demonstrate that.

### Incentives

In other situations, the occurrence of occasional, unpredictable, very expensive events is often solved by pooling risk, through a commercial or government-funded 'insurance' scheme (two examples are the NHS and private household insurance). In this case, the grant agencies provide something similar, but in two different ways there is 'moral hazard'.

First, there is no incentive to spend money on routine maintenance, because grants do not depend on having been careful in this respect.

Secondly, the largest grant-making body (EH/HLF) reduces grants in line with any repair money previously put aside, a clear disincentive to save for repair work. This is not a trivial issue to resolve: in previous years, when the grants did not take account of savings, it might have been argued (and probably was – I have not investigated) that more money was being given to some churches than they required, and was therefore not being directed to the areas of greatest need. Possibly some form of taper-relief would be an appropriate way to encourage saving, whilst concentrating on the most needy.

Table 3.2

**Major sources of grants and similar funds for church repair (excluding cathedrals), England and Wales (2002) (some figures estimated and to be treated with caution)**

Source of funds	Amount granted £m
EH/HLF/Cadw	21.0
Garfield Weston	3.5
VAT reclaimed	6.0
Landfill	*2.0
HCPT	1.5
County Trusts	1.4
Total	approx £36m

\*The amount received from Landfill is particularly difficult to ascertain. Some observers expect it to fall in the near future.

Source: HCPT analysis, EH personal communication

### 3.3 Where does the repair spend of £86m per year come from?

#### Parishes find most of the money

Surprisingly, there is no formal study of where churches find the money to carry out repairs. However, the Historic Churches Preservation Trust (HCPT) has recently carried out some useful analysis, summarized in Table 3.2. Some of the figures were not easy to obtain, and are estimates only, and should be treated with caution.

The total repair spend in 2001 was £86m. Some £36m of this is estimated to have come from the very large grant-making bodies. Thus approximately £50m, nearly 60%, is found by the congregations themselves, some (an

Table 3.3

**EH/HLF grants to churches (excluding cathedrals) by size (2002/3)**

Size of Grant	Grants of this size		
	Number	% of grants	Amount (£m)
up to £20k	21	8	0.3
£20k – £40k	52	19	1.5
£40k – £60k	61	23	3.0
£60k – £80k	37	14	2.6
£80k – £100k	23	9	2.0
£100k – £120k	25	9	2.7
£120k – £140k	25	9	3.3
£140k – £160k	7	3	1.0
£160k – £180k	7	3	1.2
£180k – £200k	4	1	0.8
over £200k	8	3	2.3
Total	270 grants	100% = 270 grants	£20.7m

Source: EH personal communication

#### THE ROCHESTER SCHEME

One model for helping churches help themselves has been in existence in the diocese of Rochester for over fifty years. In essence it is a **savings scheme**. Churches save routinely, putting aside enough money to pay for their own foreseeable repairs, based on their quinquennial inspections. In return for saving regularly, they receive various benefits, such as soft loans for repairs, a free annual electrical survey, and a free quinquennial inspection. Parish savings do not count as part of their annual income in assessing their contribution towards the diocese, so there is no disincentive to cut back on raising money for the building.

Current savings average about £2,500 per year per church building. This is broadly in line with what one might expect from our analysis, which showed that parishes find about 60% of the cost of repairs themselves (from their savings in this case), and receive grants for about 40%.

Although there is no sharing of risk between churches, the scheme does smooth out the cost of repairs. Would it be worthwhile to review the strengths and weaknesses of this model, with a possible view to pump-priming more such schemes, perhaps with significant financial incentives?

Source: diocese of Rochester, personal communication

unknown amount) provided by smaller grant-making bodies.

The perception of grant-making bodies may be that they provide a much higher proportion than this. For example, on average EH/HLF provides around 65% of the cost of repairs when it makes a grant.<sup>4</sup> But these grants are mostly for larger projects (Table 3.3). As discussed earlier, repair spend for most churches in most years is quite small and below the EH/HLF theoretical threshold (£10k), and certainly below their practical threshold (almost all EH/HLF grants are for more than £20k). It is important to appreciate that grant applications are made to EH/HLF and to HCPT by the rather small number of churches facing particularly large bills in any one year.

This probably means that the majority of smaller repairs are quietly being funded by congregations without recourse to significant grants. As a sweeping statement, we

**Graph 3.1 The total cost per year of all church repairs above a specified size (2001)**

Source: Table 3.1

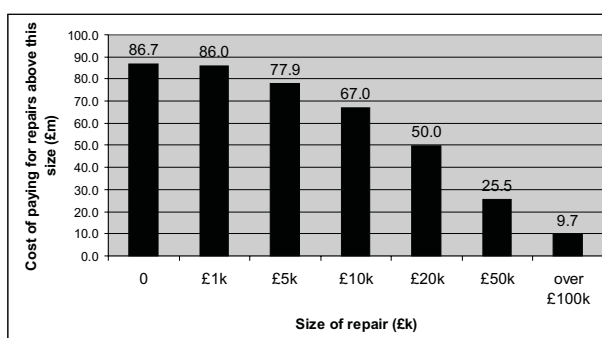


Table 3.4

**English Heritage, grant expenditure, by type of grant, 2002/3**

Type of grant	Grant expenditure
Secular buildings and monuments	24%
<b>Places of worship grants</b>	<b>19%</b>
Conservation areas	18%
Archaeology	14%
Aggregates Levy Historic Environment	13%
Heritage Grant Fund	7%
Cathedral grants	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100% = £39m</b>

Source: EH Annual report and accounts, 2002/3

may say that repairs up to £20k (which cost a total of about £36m), are entirely funded by congregations. Repairs larger than this cost around £50m, of which about £14m (roughly one quarter) is found by congregations.<sup>5</sup>

As can be seen from Table 3.2, funding from the State is mainly available in the form of a VAT refund and grants, totalling an estimated £28m pounds in 2002. As the Bishop of London has pointed out, for example in the speech reprinted at the front of this booklet, in financial terms 'the Church of England is the most disestablished church in Western Europe'.

What would it cost to fund all repairs? Graph 3.1 shows the annual cost to a fairy godperson who decided every year to pay for all repairs above a certain size. For example, if the fairy decided to fund all repairs costing more than £20k, then the bill would be some £50m per year.

**EH/HLF are the 'superpowers'**

The largest single provider of grants is English Heritage with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The jointly administered EH/HLF grant aid scheme may be regarded as the

Table 3.5

**Heritage Lottery Fund, analysis of grants awarded under grant programmes relevant to regeneration, 1995 – 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Grant programme	Number of projects	Funding (£m)	% to deprived areas <sup>3</sup>
Heritage grants	3511	1,600	38%
Parks	394	310	62%
Townscapes	266	99	47%
<b>Places of worship<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>675</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4846</b>	<b>£2.1bn</b>	

**Notes**

1. Grants awarded by HLF between 1 January 1995 and 3 October 2003, except Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England, which are to April 2003. Monetary values are actual grants awarded and not Stage 1 offers. HLF has other grant programmes: only those relevant to regeneration are shown here.

2. Grants to places of worship apply to England only up to 2002 (via the JPOW scheme), thereafter to the UK (via the RGPOW scheme). For more details of these schemes, and annual breakdowns, see Appendix C.

3. Proportion of funding to deprived areas, defined (for England) as the 50 most deprived local authorities. See text for discussion.

Source: *New Life: Heritage and Regeneration*, HLF, 2004. See note 6 below.

'superpower' in this sector, and has been for many years. These two bodies dominate the field. Any withdrawal would have a major impact.

Since 1986/7 (see Appendix C), a period of some seventeen years, EH with (more recently) HLF have granted about £313m in today's money. This is approximately £1,500 per listed church per year, in today's money, when averaged out over all CoE listed churches. (This average is a simplification, because Grade II churches have not always been eligible, the HLF money was for a time targeted on deprived areas, and some grants are made to non-CoE places of worship.) Assuming that listed churches have repair bills no higher than unlisted ones (on which we have no reliable information), then in recent years this source of grants has been paying for about a quarter of repairs to listed churches, which, as we have seen, run at an average £5,000 per church per year.

EH/HLF allocate grants on a demand-led basis, distributing their limited funds according to the level of applications in an area. The exception was a three-year period, from April 1999 to March 2002, when HLF grants (but *not* EH grants) were focused on deprived areas. As a result, since 1995 more than £40m (71%) of the £61m funds which HLF have provided for repairs to places of worship went to such areas (Table 3.5). Five of the nine

**A VICTORIAN COMPARISON**

Between 1840 and 1875 more than 7,000 existing parish churches (many of them medieval) were restored, repaired or enlarged. This is more than double the number of new churches built during that period. This is the time widely regarded as having brought the bulk of churches up to excellent physical condition, leaving them in good shape for the next hundred or more years.

The details are provided in a report of 1876, which gives the cost of works for nearly 2,200 cases, spread over twelve dioceses. These have been analysed by Chris Miele. The average total cost of this repair and enlargement was £2,400 per church over 35 years, about £70 per year. Today's rate of expenditure on *repairs alone* (not including enlargement) is £5k per year per church (on average). In addition we spend an additional amount each year on extending and improving churches: I suspect this could be half as much again (on average), making £7,500 per year per church.

How can we compare the Victorian with today's figures? One way is to look at the mandays they would buy. The Victorian £70 would, I think buy about one manyear of manual labour, very roughly twice what £7,500 today would buy.

So we are probably spending less than the Victorian figure. But we can perhaps achieve more with less effort, through the use of technology.

There is one definite difference between now and then. A very high proportion of the cost of the Victorian work was born by rich individuals, with the rather small remainder made up by parishioners. Today, most (about 60%) of the cost is borne by parishioners and their fund-raising.

Main source: Chris Miele, 'Their interest and habit', in *The Victorian Church*. See Bibliography.



regions of England have received about £12m of HLF grants (East Midlands, East of England, North East, South East, and South West) and the other four regions have received the rest, almost £50m. As HLF no longer follow this policy, future grants are unlikely to show this pattern.<sup>6</sup>

Currently, in deciding which grants to accept, EH/HLF assess applications (amongst other things) according to the urgency and nature of the repairs, and the financial status of the parish. If further prioritisation is needed, then regional priorities are considered – preference is given to geographical areas which have benefited less in the past, and areas of economic or social deprivation.

In the year 2002/3, EH devoted about one fifth (19%) of its entire grant budget to the repair of places of worship (Table 3.4); this proportion may be lower than normal, due to special circumstances obtaining during the year. For HLF, the percentage is lower: since 1995 the proportion of its regeneration grants devoted to places of worship has been about 3% (Table 3.5). Both organisations have made other grants to churches not included in these figures, but they would be unlikely to change the general proportions in a significant way.

In addition to grants, EH devote considerable management resource to churches. Not long ago they appointed a senior member of staff to head up research for places of worship, and I understand they have recently created a new post devoted to policy in this area. This is a significant commitment. Given the very large number of listed churches, and the homogenous pressures faced by this type of building, I wonder whether there is a case for having a single person responsible full-time for overall policy and practice for places of worship.

Last year's allocation of EH/HLF funds was over-subscribed by about a factor of two.<sup>7</sup> This year's increased funding has been widely welcomed, though there is some concern whether matching funds can be found within the time available (one year); in response, EH/HLF have

recently extended the take-up period by a couple of months to provide churches with a little longer to raise the money (see box, '2003 – the year of the grant').

### Multiplicity of grant agencies

According to the Funds for Historic Buildings directory of grant-giving agencies (<www.fhfb.org>), there are 73 bodies which may provide help to church buildings still in use. This number of grant-making bodies probably adds flexibility to the system; for example, some of them will give grants to parishes in difficulty, or to unlisted churches, or will have a particular local interest. Despite this, it has been suggested that it is easier for churches to find money for big projects than for smaller ones.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence that the multiple form-filling and the variety of dates and deadlines irritate parishes enormously, and add to the effort required.

### Expertise

In addition to giving grants, both EH and the CoE provide considerable expertise regarding the physical fabric of church buildings, and their use both for worship and other purposes. In the case of EH, this includes significant expenditure on primary research. In the CoE, in addition to a dedicated central group, much voluntary time and effort is put in by experts on the Diocesan Advisory Committees (DACs).

This is well outside the scope of this report, but should not be overlooked.

## 3.4 How easy is it for congregations to find their share of repairs?

We have seen that about 40% of the cost of repairs is provided by grant making bodies, of which more than half is provided by the EH/HLF scheme. The remaining 60%,

### EXPERIENCE IN LINCOLNSHIRE

In my village, there are about 200 souls and few of them, if any, worship at the parish church. It's a fairly typical small Lincolnshire church; greenstone, mostly Perpendicular, a lot of late seventeenth-century repair work, nothing special about the interior but there's a nice fourteenth-century monument to a former incumbent. It has a service about once a month, taking turn with a group of other parishes.

Its little band of worshippers seem to spend most of their energy running events at the village hall, raising funds for the church's upkeep . . . currently they're budgeting for disabled access! As a going-concern, it's a liability. But what a shame if it disappeared.

Their [the worshippers'] enthusiasm would be better spent on spreading the gospel . . . good job for the rest of us that it isn't though.

I hate to see this heritage simply eroding away before our eyes. The government's definitely not going to pick up the bill . . . so who?

Source: posting on Churchcrawler forum <www.churchcrawler.co.uk>

Table 3.6

**Proportion of parishes with various ranges of unrestricted ordinary annual income (2001)**

Unrestricted ordinary income*	Parishes with this income	
	%	Number
£0 – £1k	1	130
£1k – £2k	2	260
£2k – £5k	9	1150
£5k – £10k	17	2180
£10k – £20k	22	2820
£20k – £30k	13	1670
over £30k	37	4740
	100% = 12,951 parishes	12,951

\*On average, parishes receive an additional 8% of non-recurring unrestricted income (source: *Church Statistics 2001*)

Source: CoE, personal communication

representing some £50m per year, is found by parishes. How easy is it for parishes to raise this money?

Parish giving has been rising for many years, despite membership falling. In the ten years up to 2001, voluntary income in the parishes rose by 36% in real terms (that is, after allowing for inflation).

Nevertheless, as would be expected from the variation in church membership, parish incomes differ enormously. About 12% of parishes (about 1500) have unrestricted ordinary income of less than £5,000 per annum (Table 3.6). Some of these parishes will have more than one church building. These parishes will not be able to pay the typical annual repair bill of £2,500 out of their income, let

alone fund the occasional much larger repair. They rely on grants and special fund-raising.

To do this, congregations need to be able both to raise money directly and also to organise themselves to apply for grants, liaise with amenity societies and other groups, and manage the repairs. One limiting factor is therefore organisational capacity.

To understand the time, energy, commitment and capabilities required, read 'The Fabric Officer's Tale' and '2003 – the year of the grant', in the boxes. One vicar confided to me that one of her two parishes relied on an 85 year old ex-Civil Servant to do all the form-filling and liaison for repairs, and she didn't know who would replace him when he died.

### 2003 – THE YEAR OF THE GRANT

**Urgent work** We have two areas of the church roof held up with scaffolding for fear of collapse. Community population: just under 1,000. A good share of retired professional folk, and we are well-organised.

1. Grant awarded by EH mid January 2003. Grant subject to replacing copper roof-covering with lead. We have to have all documentation and the money in place within 12 months to get the Stage 2 grant of approximately £100k.

2. We get moving immediately.

3. The immediate Stage 1 grant from EH covers, amongst other things, the cost of surveys, an accessibility audit, a maintenance plan and – crucially – the non-destructive testing of roof timbers to ensure they can take the added weight of the lead. Surveyor finishes his preliminaries by end March and by mid June the non-destructive testing specialist contractor has provided the report, which shows that lead will be OK. He is one of very few people in the country qualified to do this work, hence the delay.

4. In the meantime we have made applications to all the major grant-making trusts, and a large number of minor ones, about fifty in all. All their application procedures are different. We discover that some of these trusts are not prepared to consider applications until we have an approved specification and two tenders, which of course we cannot yet have. So we will have to go back to them after we get tenders, and hope their grant-giving timetable allows them to respond by year end, so that we can demonstrate to EH we have got enough money.

5. By accident (through applying to them for a grant) we discover that the local authority is unhappy about the change from copper to lead. They point out that we need planning permission. We make the application to them in July but they tell us that they are going to fight us. EH still insisting that they will not give a grant unless the change to lead is made.

6. We arrange meetings between our architect, EH and the local authority in September. Another meeting in October. Getting nowhere.

7. A member of our congregation visits the diocesan records office and discovered that the roof had been lead until 1954. With some difficulty, we persuade the local authority by this evidence to change their mind (but very reluctantly and slowly). By now it's November.

8. We then pull out all the stops – get the specification drawn up, and approved, and issued, and receive tenders – all done by Christmas.

9. A wealthy member of our community has offered to underwrite with a soft loan the more than £100k deficit in our fund-raising, so that we will be able to prove to EH that we have the money by year-end. Not that we'd even think of claiming the grant and starting work without the money – imagine the horror of running out of cash half-way through.

10. Just about to select a contractor – but now EH are insisting that an old (and untraditional) area of slate on the south side of the roof must be replaced with lead, and once again the local authority are arguing.

11. Fortunately EH have given all churches a one-off extension to the end of February. Will we make it? – we are praying the latest issue will be resolved before the end of February, and that we do not need separate planning permission for this.

**Fund-raising** We have been successful at fund-raising, in that we have raised approaching £100k despite not being able to tell donors exactly what the project will look like or cost. It's amusing (mildly) that one of the major grant-giving bodies cannot hear our case until June 2004 because of the earlier delays – so if we are not ready to go by the end of February we lose the EH grant, but if we start work before June this grant-making body will rule us ineligible.

However, the costs are higher than the EH original estimates (total project cost now more than £300k). If we hadn't had the soft loan, we would not have been able to demonstrate to EH that we had the money, and would have lost our EH grant at the end of February. And we will still lose it if we can't get the local authority to change their mind in the next three weeks. If we lose our grant, we will effectively lose a minimum of 18 months, and the costs will go up again – and with no guarantee that EH will offer us a grant next time round.

## A FABRIC OFFICER'S TALE by Peter Bowles

My first sight of the quinquennial report which started it all was something of a shock. It looked as if we were facing bills of some £40,000, which seemed like an awful lot in 1988. However we were fortunate enough to secure the services of the late Barry Hastings. It is important to have an architect who will talk to you, will explain and discuss and involve the PCC, rather than talk at you and dictate. Together we prioritised all the work that we had been told was necessary. After a while it began to look possible, even though it appeared that virtually every feature of the church from the walls, inside and out, to the tower, the bells, the pews, the wall paintings and the rood screen, even the lych gate, needed work.

I should say at this point that Edingtonthorpe itself is tiny and the church Electoral Roll even tinier, at that stage about 25 people. But we had a relatively large and very enthusiastic PCC. We discussed at every stage what was needed and we turned fund-raising, so often a drudge, into fun. It would undoubtedly have been impossible to approach a task like this without the whole-hearted voluntary support of the PCC, the congregation and indeed of the parish as a whole.

It soon became clear that the one factor common to a lot of the basic problems was damp, aggravated by a concrete apron which had been built several years before all around the base of the outside walls of the church. The problem was that it had shrunk away from the church over the years, and damp was getting into and being trapped in the 'foundations'. The removal of the concrete and the digging of a french drain has alleviated, though not cured, the problem.

The rest of this first stage of work was largely running repairs which should have been done over the preceding years, wood treatment for beetle etc., and plaster replacement necessitated by damp. A building like this never stands still, as it were. Anything that looks as if it might need to be done, should be done as soon as possible. If put off, it will invariably take longer, be more complicated and cost more as a result.

The other problem, while we are on the subject of time, is that it takes at least twice as long as one might expect to get all the permissions, quotations, etc., in place before work can commence. Couple this with the fact that, particularly if one is dealing with plaster repairs, because of the weather there is probably only a six month window every year for work to be done. This is particularly true if, like us, you are a mile and half from the coast and the wind is, therefore, salty and damp.

Another limiting factor is the availability of experts. They were in such demand when we needed them that the process inevitably started running over from year to year.

The rood screen was a relatively straightforward job, and the first to be done. At a time when frustrations were beginning to accumulate, the sight of the screen cleaned, sensitively restored and fixed, made it quite obvious to all of us that it was all going to be worth it in the long run!

Talking of frustration, the wall paintings were a case in point. We had obtained a report on their condition, had

got English Heritage's approval for treatment, and had nearly all the money in place. Then I decided to approach a Trust in London who funded projects like this, just to make sure we had enough money. They were very helpful, but wanted a report from an academic institution, which when it came through said almost exactly the opposite of the report we already had. On the one side the practical folk, on the other the academics; on the one side the non-interventionists, on the other, those who could see the necessity of a certain amount of intervention. We were tossed back and forth for over two years, during which time the paintings were visibly deteriorating, and we were trying to please everyone. We only ever got anything done, because it finally occurred to us that, since we had accepted their aid before, we had to get English Heritage's approval for this work too, although they were not actually funding it. [*This condition is no longer being imposed. TC*]. Therefore the only opinion that mattered, in practice, was theirs.

So we eventually went ahead with almost exactly what we had intended in the first place. The paintings were cleaned and fixed to the wall, from which they were becoming separated due to damp getting in between the flints outside and a wax coating inside. At the same time we undertook a search for more paintings on the other walls; it was, I have to admit, with some relief as well as a little sadness that we heard that it seemed there were none.

All this time, an incredible (and invisible) job was being done restoring the pews as well as making a new North door. The old one had gradually been eaten away from the bottom up by damp and we felt that after more than 500 years, it deserved an honourable retirement.

While the pews were away, the plaster had to be replaced to window-sill level on the north side and on a large part of the west wall. I had a very nervous-sounding call from the builders, saying they thought I had better come and look – a euphemism for “you ought to hurry, because there might not be a west wall here for long!” They had found a crack, starting at roof level at about two feet wide and tapering down to nothing about six feet from the floor. It was full of dead mortar and old flints. The whole thing needed clearing out and rebuilding and then back-filling with grout.

Anyway, after fifteen years or so, close on £100,000 raised and spent, we are done with the major works. The first impression on entering the church now is that it is in good heart for succeeding generations of Fabric Officers and that, I suppose, would have been my target if I had had time to think about targets all those years ago. But then, if I had had time to think about it all, I'd probably never have taken it on anyway! To all of those who were involved with the work on All Saints, Edingtonthorpe go my undying thanks and admiration.

Source: abbreviated from an original article in the *Round Tower*, Vol. XXX No.4 (June 2003), by kind permission. The Round Tower Churches Society may be visited at <www.roundtowers.org.uk>.

### AN IMPORTANT VICTORIAN CHURCH

Recently I paid my first visit to a well-known nineteenth-century church, built by a famous architect. It is a stunning building.

It is also large. Far, far larger than the typical Sunday congregation of about 25 actually needs. In fact, the building has not been anything like full on Sundays for at least fifty years. It may never have been.

Over the last decade or so, large sums of money have been spent on it, totalling somewhere in the very high six figures. Another six figure sum is now required.

What should we do with the building? It has wonderful acoustics: but concerts do not draw sufficiently large attendances to make them worthwhile. Thought is being given to creating a meeting room by enclosing a space at the west end. Will this spoil the interior? – I am not qualified to say. It may indeed be the best solution, providing a useful space for local folk whilst helping keep the building alive.

But I am left with the feeling that for buildings of this importance we need different mechanisms, which will allow the congregation to continue worshipping there without pretending that they are going to be able to maintain the building themselves; and will, perhaps, make more of the potential to attract visitors.

Trevor Cooper

It seems likely that, on average, small congregations will be the ones which are least able to raise funds for large repairs, or to carry out routine maintenance.

In addition, the smaller the congregation, the more likely they are to have to share clergy with other congregations, diluting an important source of leadership. Looking at the rural situation, in 1994 more than one third (36%) of very small rural communities – those with fewer than 200 inhabitants – had a vicar who looked after five or more churches (Table 3.7). Overall, I estimate that there were approximately 1,700 rural communities in England sharing their vicar with at least four other churches. Since then the number of clergy has dropped faster than the number of church buildings, so there are presumably even more clergy and churches in this situation today.

The clergy in this position will have less time to devote to each of their church buildings. In one study, done in

### FINANCIAL PRESSURES ON PARISHES

*These are quotes from churches responding to Jeremy Eckstein's questionnaire, undertaken as research for his 2001 report. These have been selected as representative of those churches finding it difficult to fund all recommended repairs. Each of these cases represents a set of worries for real people looking after a historic building with inadequate funds. We do not know what proportion of churches found themselves in this position.*

- Work on guttering and downpipes was not attended to, mainly because of unanticipated need for re-wiring, heating and lighting (£10,000) and redecorating (£8,000).
- No major work was identified as being required. However there is currently a requirement for £15,000 for organ repairs, £11,000 for re-wiring and £6,000 for stonework on gables – £32,000 in all, for which we have available funds amounting to £12,000.
- Following massive water penetration, work was carried out to repair/replace sections of roof, at a total cost of £12,000 – of which £8,500 was raised locally. Medium plan is now to carry on improving water run-off/roof. Funding is now a problem, as total cost was estimated at £50,000 and grant-aid is no longer available. We are trying to complete fund-raising for a new hall, so efforts to continue with repairs will have to cease until that is done.
- [After a major fund-raising initiative for urgent repairs.] The fund-raising team was exhausted by the end of Phase II, and were given five years to recuperate and enjoy what they had achieved.

Source: Eckstein (2001)

1989, about 150 multi-church clergy were asked to list up to five disadvantages of having multiple church buildings. Unprompted, more than half mentioned the pressures of looking after several buildings, often Grade I, and the associated financial strains. "Fabric takes a disproportionate time," complained one minister. Another said that one result of having many church building was that it meant "getting to know a lot of architects!"<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, one third of rural vicars (32%) are aged over sixty (1994 study), and this may also have an impact on the energy they are able to devote to organising large-scale, long-term fund-raising and church repairs (though the opposite might also be true: their experience may mean they find the process less of a struggle).<sup>9</sup>

In the light of these considerations, I was somewhat surprised by my analysis of last year's grants by EH/HLF to small rural congregations. I found that grants were *awarded* to smaller rural communities in more or less the same proportion as those communities occur. That is, small communities were not under-represented. I have not had the opportunity to analyse grant *requests*, to see if they show the same pattern. It is possible that they are under-represented in applications, but that they are more likely to make it through the selection process, which allows for urgency and financial need.

These problems are not limited to rural churches, but similar data for urban churches is less easily available. We badly need a review of the difficulties which parishes of all

Table 3.7

**Number of rural churches with vicar who has care of five or more churches, by population of community (1994)**

Population of community	Churches with vicar caring for five or more churches	
	%	Number
Up to 200	36	590
200–399	27	550
400–899	17	390
900–3000	8	180
Overall	21	Total = 1700

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 3. For number of churches, see Appendix E.



### A VIEW FROM THE WELSH BORDER

Our small town in the Welsh Marches used to support a church and three chapels. Now just one chapel and the parish church are left, and both have dwindling, ageing populations. The church's grandeur delights tourists, but imposes burdens, not only in monetary terms but in administration and time, that regular worshippers cannot meet.

The town is by no means home just to the retired; it has as many young families, as many teenagers, and as many primary school children as ever. The church's mission and ministry in the town is as vital as ever, but who is to fulfil it except the same people who are already carrying the burden of the building? If we had to choose, we should probably opt to dispose of the building and put our effort into the mission; but the town would see that as culpable betrayal. It values its church building – provided it is kept open by somebody else; the church's mission is harder to appreciate.

Our salvation in both material and mission terms may be the growing tide of newcomers now discovering the Marches as a fashionable place to live. It will be touch and go whether we last long enough to reap the benefit.

Source: personal communication

shapes and sizes face in finding money, both through their own circumstances and the complexities of liaising with multiple agencies with different timetables.

There is, incidentally, no central source which churches can turn to for fund-raising or steering the overall process of applying for grants and managing building work, though dioceses are often willing to provide informal advice, and some dioceses provide assistance to churches which need help planning for the future. In particular, EH and the CoE are jointly funding dedicated posts in London and Manchester dioceses, to help congregations develop and put into practice a medium and long-term plan, including fund-raising. In London diocese, for example, more than twenty churches are in various stages of receiving such assistance and there are an approximately equal number who would also value help, but cannot yet be accommodated. Similar posts in other dioceses may be being considered.

In summary, the typical repair spend averages £2,500 per year, but occasional very much larger sums make the overall average about double this, at £5,000 per year. About 60% of this is found by the parishes themselves, and by their direct fund-raising. To put this in context, about 1500 parishes have annual income of less than £5,000. These churches may rely particularly heavily on external funds, yet may also be the ones which find it hardest to organise themselves through the process of applying for grants and seeing through repairs.

Fifty years ago churches were in poor repair after the war, and the problem to be solved was primarily a financial one.<sup>10</sup> Today, there is significant money available, and churches are in much better condition, though continually needing repairs to keep them that in that state. The shortage, in some churches, is of people.

### REPAIRING ST CHAD'S, KYNNERSLEY

When the quinquennial inspection found much of St Chad's Church, Kynnersley, in need of repair, the PCC faced a £130,000 bill. The church is twelfth-century but, with its circular graveyard, could have Saxon origins. Kynnersley is a farming village in the Wealds of Lichfield diocese, with no more than 60 households, and the congregation was down to four. There is no pub, shop or surgery, and everybody shops in the nearby towns.

The Rector, the Revd William Ward, tells me he played the devil's advocate with his PCC, asking how they could justify keeping the church open. But the PCC were adamant, and the village determined to keep their church and its hall as their only public buildings. Members of the PCC called on every household and received regular weekly or monthly pledges amounting to nearly £4,000 a year, "enough to pay our bills". Then they started serious fund-raising with auctions, pudding evenings, sponsored walks and calendars, and raised such a respectable £30,000 that English Heritage chipped in with 75% of the total cost.

The new Bishop of Lichfield, the Revd Jonathan Gledhill, has just been to re-open the church, packed to bursting point by villagers and members of Mr Ward's other five churches. The regular congregation has gone up to eleven, and there are more plans to open up St Chad's for use by the community.

Source: extracted by kind permission from the *Church Times*, 19/26 December 2003

Churches do not exist in isolation, but have a significant role in the wider community. The next section looks at this, and at the part that church buildings play.

### Notes

1. *A Future for Church Buildings*, derived from table page 35. During each of the previous few years, the figure was very similar (CoE, personal communication). In a given diocese the average amount spent on repairs per church can fluctuate from year to year. Statistical analysis of the data for four years, which I was kindly allowed to inspect, suggests that much or all of this variation may be due to randomness, because very expensive repairs occur unpredictably, and have a large influence on the diocesan average. Thus the single year's figures published in *A Future for Church Buildings* should not be used to compare individual dioceses.
2. Claridge, *Survey*, pages 14 and 10 (Table 7).
3. Anon. [J. M. Neale], *A Few Words to Churchwardens . . .*, 8th edition (Cambridge, 1846), page 6, republished in Christopher Webster (ed.), *'temples . . . worthy of His presence': the Early Publications of the Cambridge Camden Society* (Reading, 2003, ISBN 0954361520); *The Preservation of our Churches*, pages 61–4.
4. EH, personal communication.
5. This split is in broad correspondence with an analysis of 273 grant applications analysed by the HCPT, for repair work averaging £100k per church (HCPT, presentation to County Trusts, 8 May 2003).
6. HLF, *New Life: Heritage and Regeneration* (n.d. [2004]), available on <www.hlf.org.uk/dimages/New\_Life\_04/New\_Life\_2004.pdf>.
7. EH, personal communication.
8. Peter Brierley, *More than One Church* (MARC Monograph Number 27, MARC Europe, London, 1989) (now published by Christian Research, Eltham, London). This reports a self-selected survey of 155 ministers responsible for 585 churches.
9. Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 3.
10. *The Preservation of our Churches*, *passim*.

## 4. Using church buildings

### 4.1 Not just for worship?

#### Uses other than worship

In this section we discuss the use of churches for purposes other than public worship. This has implications for the facilities which the building needs to provide, and the income which it can generate. It also raises questions about the mission of the church, but these are well outside our scope.

There is a wide range of possible uses to which church buildings can be put, as can be seen from the examples in the box on page 42 and our cover photographs. At one end of the spectrum, a major conversion may be required. Typically the shell of the building will be retained, but the interior partitioned off for multiple uses, such as offices or a café, including a space reserved for worship. Quite often this involves the introduction of another storey into the building.

Sometimes the scheme will include the leasing out of space to unrelated third parties on a continuous, day-in, day-out, basis. There may be legal and procedural complications in this area, to do with the need to make the church building partially redundant, required when some of the building is to be used for a purpose which ‘conflicts with the sacred uses implied by consecration’.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped these difficulties will be at least partly resolved in the relatively near future (it is outside my scope to go into details: as I understand it, in broad terms the proposal is to allow part of the building to be leased for such purposes, provided the primary use of the building remains ecclesiastical). This may well encourage more churches to convert part of their buildings for long-term occupation by others: indeed, if I were to revisit the subject of this paper in ten years time, I would expect to find churches up and down the country leasing out part of their space.

Other schemes are equally substantial, but because the new uses are part of the mission of the church, permission for relatively complex structural changes can be obtained without going through a process of partial redundancy.

At the simpler end of the spectrum – and much more commonly – there are changes such as the provision of basic catering facilities in the church (e.g. at the rear of the nave); the opening up of space by removing pews (often at the rear or in an aisle); the use of screens to create new rooms (for example, enclosing a transept); or the building of an extension, attached or unattached.

Not only does this type of change allow worshippers to congregate more easily after the service (outside the scope of this section), but also allows the church building to be used for a wider variety of purposes, such as a mother and toddlers group or occasional concerts. Some churches have been more imaginative: one holds a regular Farmers’ Market in the nave of the church building, and another has a village shop in the vestry.

Our focus is on the church building. The use of church halls and other ancillary space is outside our scope, though

Table 4.1

**Attitudes towards local church/chapel**  
(adults, Great Britain, October 2003)

Should be used for activities other than worship	75%
Should be social meeting place	68%
Concerned if no longer there	63%
Should be funded by central taxation / national government	42%
Believe (wrongly) central taxation / national government currently assist funding	23%

Source: CoE, from ORB survey carried out on behalf of EH and CoE, October 2003. Sample size: 1004. See Bibliography.

I should say that there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that income from these premises is important to churches. It seems, too, that in many cases these halls are near the end of their life, and the sites are being sold by churches to release the capital, or are being renovated under a shared scheme. I have not looked into any of this, though it is probably an important aspect of churches’ finances.

#### Public attitudes

Public attitudes appear to support the social use of church buildings. More than one half (56%) of adults in Britain already think of their local church or chapel as a social or community venue (Table 6.3). Three-quarters (75%, see Table 4.1) think it should be used for activities other than worship.

Indeed one in six adults (17%) attended a concert or theatrical performance in a place of worship last year (Table 2.5). That is approximately eight million people, roughly the same number of UK residents who attend performances in London’s West End (foreign tourists add another three or four million).<sup>2</sup> If there were, say, 150 people at each concert, this might imply that churches are hosting more than 50,000 such events per year.

#### STOCKHOLM

In Stockholm it was a delight to find most churches open, often with a small open-plan office area with computer and phone manned by members of the congregation or students. In return for this free office space, people sold postcards and answered queries from visitors and took messages for the clergy. It is a bit odd to hear a phone ring inside a church but better than being locked up six days out of seven. Every Stockholm church I went in had at least one other person in it, and often many more. People with armloads of shopping sat down for five minutes, taking a break from the retail experience.

Source: personal communication

## 4.2 Simple additional uses

### Churches in rural areas

To understand the way in which churches are used in rural areas we are fortunate to have the Rural Churches Survey, reported in the book *Rural Mission*. This survey was carried out in 1994, and looked at a sample of nearly 1000 communities with populations of 3000 or less. Although some of its findings may have drifted out of date, its coverage is, I think, unique, and it makes an invaluable contribution towards understanding what is happening to rural church buildings. More about this survey, and some detailed findings, will be found in Appendix E.

The survey confirmed that there is a high level of social and community involvement by Anglican rural churches. For example, one in four (26%) rural communities had some form of children's group for the under twelves run by the local CoE church, considerably higher than secular provision in this area (see Appendix E for details). However, much of this activity would not take place in the church building, and for our purposes is therefore not strictly relevant.

In common with other research, the survey found that rural church buildings themselves are commonly used for non-religious community purposes. The most common such use is for musical entertainment, which take place in almost half (49%) of rural church buildings (Table 4.2). This implies that up and down the country there are approximately 4,000 rural church buildings being used to host musical occasions.

Even in very small parishes, those with fewer than 200 inhabitants, one quarter (26%) of church buildings hosted musical entertainment (Appendix E). The figure rises to nearly two-thirds (62%) of church buildings in larger rural communities, those between 900 and 3000 strong.

Table 4.2

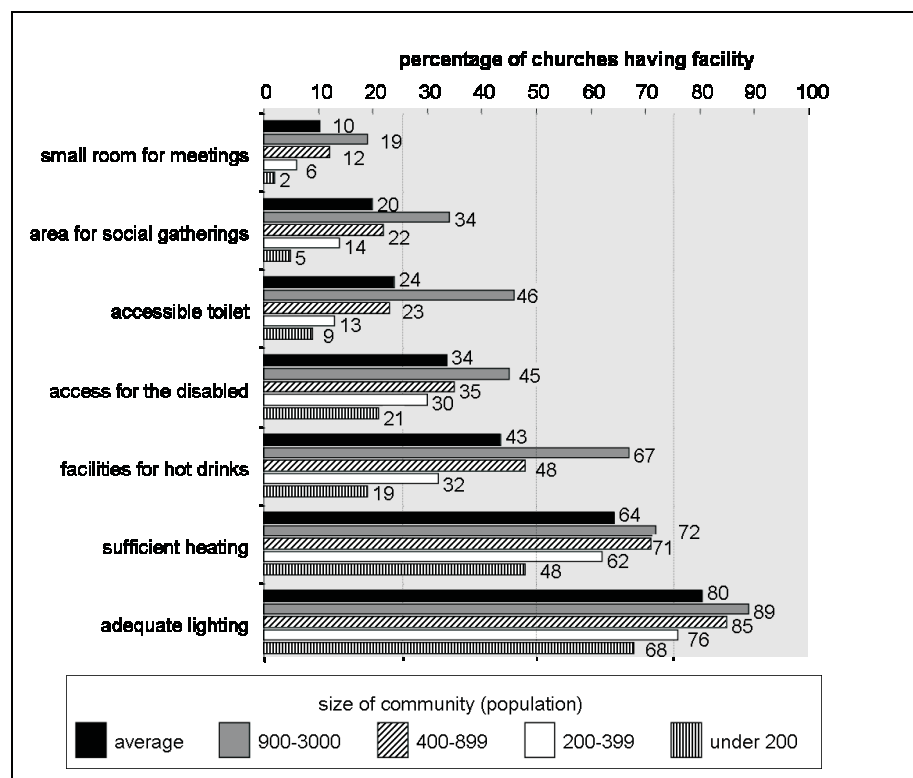
**Number of rural church buildings used for specific community-related activities (1994)**

	%	Number
Musical entertainment	49	4000
Dramatic performances	12	990
Art exhibition	12	940
Coffee mornings	7	610
Evening social activities	7	570
Tourist information	6	460

Source: Francis & Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 20. For number of buildings, see Appendix E.

Despite this wide use of rural church buildings, a significant number did not have adequate facilities (Graph 4.1). Only about six out of ten (64%) reckoned to have adequate heating, and eight out of ten (80%) adequate lighting. In the very smallest rural communities, the figures are lower (48% and 68%). As for toilets, only a quarter of church buildings overall (24%) had accessible toilets – in the smallest communities, hardly one out of ten (9%). In even the largest rural communities (between 900 and 3000 inhabitants), only one half of church buildings (46%) had toilets. Interestingly, more churches had facilities for hot drinks than had toilets, four out of ten (43%) overall.

The churches are not standing still. Within the five years prior to the survey, rather more than one in ten rural churches had upgraded their heating or lighting systems (16% and 12% respectively; see Table 4.3). Far fewer, about one in twenty, had provided social space inside the church or removed pews (6% in each case, quite possibly the same churches responding positively to both questions).



Graph 4.1 **Percentage of rural church buildings providing specified facilities, by community population (1994)**

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural mission*, Table 17. The calculation of the average is discussed in Appendix E.

**TOILET PROBLEM SOLVED . . .**

One of the problems using village churches [for performances] is that there are no toilets. I have solved this problem by erecting a 6ft by 4ft shed in the churchyard, the sort of shed in which a mower could be stored. In it there is an Elsan and washing facilities. Total cost £150. It has been a great success . . .

**. . . BUT OTHER DIFFICULTIES REMAIN**

‘puddles and mud, cold church, hard seats’  
‘in the middle of nowhere’  
‘lighting poor, heating very expensive’  
‘no loos, no kitchen or water, no electricity’  
‘not easily lent to other uses; remote, large, cold, draughty’

Source: Diocese of Norwich, *Church Buildings*

The survey does not appear to have asked general questions about extensions to the church building. But it does establish that fewer than one in thirty (3%) had provided toilets or a kitchen in the last five years. At this rate of progress, it will be the end of this century before every rural church building has a toilet.

Churches in smaller communities had made fewer improvements than those in larger communities (for details, see Appendix E), probably because of more limited resources. Church buildings in smaller communities start with less, and are adding less.

Of course, church halls and village halls may already provide facilities (toilets, kitchen, a meeting place), though often these are physically some distance from the church building, a major point of difference between CoE church buildings and those of other denominations. But in rural communities with populations less than 3000, more than eight out of ten churches (82%) did *not* have church halls (Table 4.4). In the smaller communities, there was very often not a village hall either. (The data in Table 4.4 is in broad agreement with the more recent figures published by the Countryside Agency, though they did not distinguish between village and church halls.)<sup>3</sup>

What is the level of unsatisfied demand for this type of conversion? It seems, from the evidence available, that

Table 4.4

**Number of rural communities lacking halls, by population of community (1994)**

Community		Lack village hall		Lack church hall	
Population	No.	%	No.	%	No.
under 200	1600	59	960	92	1500
200–399	2000	29	590	88	1800
400–899	2300	15	340	83	1900
900–3000	2200	18	400	68	1500
overall	8100	28	2300	82	6700

Source: Francis & Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 8. For number of communities, see Appendix E.

parishes do wish to enhance the facilities in their church buildings, perhaps in considerable numbers. In the diocese of Chelmsford, for example, more than 80 parishes (of 530) have *already* (2003) made improvements to their church building (not counting the twenty or so major redevelopments of church premises). Table 4.5 gives a breakdown of the some of the changes which have been made ‘in recent times’: nearly 50 are extensions to the church building, more than twenty have created social or functional space within the building, and another eight involve detached premises of one sort or another. Even so, as discussed in Section 5.3, in this diocese a further 30 parishes have plans to improve their church buildings, and about one third of the remaining parishes (approximately 200), are looking forward in general terms to further development and use of their building.

It has been said that ‘to adapt a church to provide toilets, heating, kitchens and meeting spaces costs about 20%–25% of the cost of building a new village hall’, so in many villages such expenditure does provide good value, though heritage considerations can be an issue.<sup>4</sup> It is notable that the one-off, millennium ‘Rural Churches in Community Service’ scheme, which provided grants to 100 churches to adapt their premises for community use, was very significantly oversubscribed. In this case, fund-raising by the churches themselves tripled the base funding from £2.5m to £7.5m.<sup>5</sup> (See box on page 42 for

Table 4.3

**Number of rural church buildings where specified changes have been initiated ‘within the past five years’ (1994)**

	%	Number
New heating system	16	1300
New lighting system	12	1000
New organ	8	660
Removal of pews	6	520
Repositioning of altar	6	490
Social space inside church	6	450
Provision of toilet	3	240
Provision of kitchen	3	220
Access for disabled	2	190

Source: Francis & Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 18. For number of buildings, see Appendix E.

Table 4.5

**Diocese of Chelmsford: number of church schemes implemented ‘in recent times’, by type (published 2002)**

<b>Internal</b>	<b>21</b>
Part of church screened off	10
Major reordering / new room / kitchen	9
Gallery	2
<b>Extension</b>	<b>49</b>
Small	5
Typical size	31
Large	10
Larger than church	3
<b>Detached building</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Other solution (e.g. buying adjacent building)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>

Source: *The Changing Church*, appendix



**SPEAKER IN GENERAL SYNOD**

“Our church buildings are often the only public building now left in the smaller villages, apart from woefully inadequate village halls. Let us be willing to take the pews out and replace them with chairs, if necessary, so that the building can be used for a variety of purposes.” (*Applause.*)

Source: Debate in General Synod on the countryside, July 2001

**GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER**

Around a third of all villages have no shop and the loss of banks, garages and pubs in rural areas has continued. . . .

**The future – what we want to see . . .** Community initiative to share use of village facilities, such as the church, school, hall or pub, and to re-establish basic services. . . . We are acting to support the community role of churches in rural areas.

Source: *Our Countryside, the Future* (Government White Paper, 2000) at <[www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralwp/whitepaper/default.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralwp/whitepaper/default.htm)>

**THE ARCHDEACON OF MANCHESTER**

Church buildings used to be the focus for fairs and festivals but in the last two centuries they’ve been used more exclusively for worship. I think the pendulum is swinging back.

Source: website of the diocese of Manchester, November 2003, at <[www.manchester.anglican.org](http://www.manchester.anglican.org)>

an example, Holy Trinity, Haddenham.) If a similar core grant were again made available to (say) one half of the 8,000 rural church buildings, the cost would be less than £100m.

One feature of rural church life is its overlap with other activities. As pointed out in a recent report, *Angels and Advocates*.<sup>6</sup>

In the countryside, churches may often be more central to the community than in the towns, but church social action may be less obvious. This is because in smaller communities churchgoers are more likely to join up with other local people in joint social action (often using church premises), rather than in separate church-run activity. None the less, the amount of church-run activity may be extensive.

The question left in my mind is whether this fluidity makes it harder to achieve the changes to rural church buildings for social purposes which might be desired by those involved? Or easier?

**Urban churches**

I have not located an equivalent survey to the Rural Churches Survey to provide an overview of facilities provided by urban CoE church buildings. It is therefore difficult to obtain an overview across the country, particularly as it is the places where new things are happening which get written up, and this may give an exaggerated idea of their frequency.

However, systematic research carried out by churches in greater Norwich and Hull probably gives a fair idea of the facilities provided by urban churches, though in Hull, at least, only a handful of these are historic buildings (see

box page 41.)<sup>7</sup> Facilities are generally reasonable, as can be seen from Table 4.6. Some of these facilities will be on site, perhaps part of the fabric of the church building itself, and some will be on separate premises. In Norwich, of the 55 (out of 60) churches of various denominations which responded to the survey, 34 have rooms and space available for hire, and the total number of rooms available is 189, roughly three per church. Rooms for hire provide a significant community resource, and a source of income for the church.

Churches in Norwich do a good deal of community work, as shown in Table 4.7. As we will see in a moment, this is typical. Across the denominations, the 60 Norwich churches are doing direct voluntary work equivalent to 67 full-time equivalent people, worth at least £540,000 per year. Some of this is one-to-one work such as debt counselling, or support for ex-offenders. More importantly for our discussion, many activities require a good-sized public room, as can be seen in Table 4.7. For example, four out of ten Norwich churches (40%) are organising over-60s clubs, with an average attendance at each of 22 people. In order to have this level of social impact, access to suitable buildings is crucial.

We do not know whether, in general, those churches which possess historic buildings feel restricted in their community activity by potential heritage considerations.

**4.3 Major conversions and regeneration**

At the other extreme from these examples are major conversions (for two examples, see the box on page 42). This scale of work is mainly appropriate for urban churches, which can be very large, and are near to large numbers of potential users. Major conversions to churches will sometimes take place as part of a deliberate attempt at social regeneration. In general, funding can come from a wide range of organisations, many of them secular.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4.6

**Facilities provided by premises belonging to urban churches (all denominations), Greater Norwich (20 churches, 2003) and Hull (82 churches, 1999)**

Facility	Percentage of churches with this facility	
	Norwich	Hull
Male/ female toilets	89%	97%
Kitchen	87%	95%
Disabled access	78%	77%
PA &/or Loop system	75%	73%
Car parking	67%	
Disabled toilets	64%	40%
Baby changing facilities	47%	27%
Modern business standard audio visual equipment	27%	

Sources: *Norwich City/Church Dialogue, Presentation*; SEARCH, *Count us in*

Table 4.7

**Greater Norwich: community activities (involving groups of people) directly provided by churches (2003)**

Excludes Christian activities not directly attached to churches

Activity	Proportion of churches providing this activity		Average attendees per session
	All denominations (55 churches)	CoE (21 churches)	
Mums and toddlers groups	44%	43%	16
Youth clubs for up to 15s	40%	48%	18
Over 60s clubs	40%	48%	22
Lunch clubs	36%	38%	28
Drop in facility /café	29%	29%	65
Holiday schemes for children	27%	29%	36
Sporting activities	24%	14%	19
Scout/beaver/guide groups	16%	33%	30
Before- or after-school clubs	16%	5%	24
Youth clubs for 16–18s	16%	14%	20
Parenting support or classes	9%	5%	8
Pre-school nursery age 2–5	7%	10%	23

Source: *Norwich City/Church Dialogue, Presentation and Directory*

Although a good number of individual examples of this sort of conversion have been published, overall facts and figures have eluded me, together with any feel for how much of this is happening in listed buildings. The recent annual report of the Church Urban Fund reported 41 grants to capital projects, of which I understand (personal communication) that some at least were for works involving the church building as well as ancillary buildings. This may provide some indication of the number of such projects being undertaken at present.

In Hull, a city with much deprivation, it was said a few years ago that about one third of churches had plans for building refurbishment to allow greater community access and involvement,<sup>9</sup> and a number of such developments are now afoot (see box).

In general, is the funding of community activities going to make the preservation of historic church buildings a lighter task for urban church congregations? Or are those congregations that have historic buildings going to see them as an unnecessary fixed cost, putting a brake on the things they really want to do?

#### 4.4 The financial impact

So far, I have skirted round the question of how and why any of this helps pay for repairs and maintenance of

#### HULL

Hull is a city with extremely low church attendance (around 2%), where half of the wards are in the top 10% most deprived in England. Post-war, there was a considerable building programme of social housing in the area and the construction of a large number of outer estates. These were mostly poorly planned, without adequate community facilities such as health centres, community centres etc. Fortunately the mainstream churches had the foresight to build churches in almost all of these communities when the estates were built.

Some churches have already developed the use of their buildings. Others are at different stages of the process. For example, three Anglican churches have recently completed participatory appraisals of their communities and are now looking at the most effective ways of using their buildings in response to what the local communities are saying. A further three churches (one Anglican, one Methodist and one Roman Catholic) have had plans drawn up and are currently sourcing funding to put the plans into action.

Source: SEARCH, personal communication

church buildings. From our limited perspective, it can help in the following direct ways.

- It can extend the network of people who have a stake in the continued existence of the church building, and may be prepared to support it financially when required.
- It will often provide a direct source of income to the church, by renting out space, or running paid-for activities in the building.
- It may attract public funding for community activities taking place within the church building.

I have no hard data on the financial impact of any of these. Nevertheless, I would like to explore the third one, as it is rising up the political agenda.

We have already seen how much is going on in Norwich. It turns out that this level of church social activity is perfectly normal.<sup>10</sup> (Other faiths are also active, but are outside our scope.)

For example, the 3,600 churches of all denominations in Yorkshire and the Humber are estimated to provide social action worth between £55m and £75m per year (Table 4.8). If this is scaled up to the approximately 38,000 churches in England<sup>11</sup> – and all the evidence suggests that this level of activity is not uncommon – then the value of social action undertaken by churches in England is between £500m and £750m per year.

The growing understanding of the extent of this activity is now affecting government policy-making at all levels. Funding is following policy. It is increasingly considered acceptable to funnel taxpayers' money through religious voluntary groups for social purposes, if the social purposes themselves are desirable.

For example, the Government's *National Strategy Action Plan* states that:<sup>12</sup>

Faith groups may offer a channel to some of the hardest-to-reach groups. A pragmatic approach will be taken to funding faith groups, recognising that they might

## THREE EXAMPLES OF THE ADDITIONAL USES OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

*Photographs of these churches will be found on the rear cover, briefly described on the reverse of the title page*

**Holy Trinity, Haddenham, Cambridgeshire**

Haddenham is a village lying between Cambridge and Ely. The parish church, Holy Trinity, is a Grade I listed medieval building, mainly of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It has transepts, aisles and a west tower.

A meeting room and kitchenette have recently been introduced into the north aisle, assisted by the Rural Churches in Community Service, amongst others. The new room is separated by glass partitions from the nave, 'to stunning effect'. The room can seat up to 24 people theatre style or 15 in a more informal seating arrangement. Toilet facilities within the church for people with disabilities are also included within the scheme.

Sources: *Open All Hours*; church website at: [www.ely.anglican.org/parishes/haddenham/index.html](http://www.ely.anglican.org/parishes/haddenham/index.html)

**St Aidan's, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire: Serving the community project**

The church, by C. Hodgson Fowler, was consecrated in 1906. The area surrounding the church is officially described as being 30% deprived.

The old church hall was sold, and the alteration of the church to dual use with a new Church Community Centre was completed in April 1983. Two thirds of the nave was converted to an upper sports hall with toilets, changing rooms and storage; and a lower hall with kitchen, storage, toilets, boiler room and community centre office. A lift was added ten years ago, and there were further capital improvements at the end of the 1990s. In early 2004 a second floor was inserted, forming an office suite for the 'Sure Start' initiative, with computer suite, kitchen and toilet facilities, and a new lift.

There are three full time workers on the *Serving the Community* project and some 50 volunteers. The building is open daily, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. On average, the project attracts 360 users a week on various courses, including painting, introduction to counselling, computer skills, first aid, money management, drugs awareness, English, maths, local history, keep fit, and kick boxing. Advice is provided on dealing with debt, receiving benefits, securing housing, employment and job-seeking techniques.

There are luncheon and friendship clubs, parent and toddler groups, and a 'Gingerbread' group. There are six uniformed organizations ranging in age from 6 to 16 years. The local MP holds a monthly clinic here.

This is not to forget the midweek communion service, and a range of services on Sunday. The main worship areas seats 150 comfortably, and a separate Lady Chapel is used for some services.

Sources: *Angels and Advocates*; personal communication; church website at: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/%7Ehjansma/homepage.html/homepage.html>

**St Paul's Church, Walsall, West Midlands – now *The Crossing***

*From the church website:* The architect of St Paul's [listed Grade II] was John Loughborough Pearson. The church was consecrated in 1893. Since then, the area around St Paul's has largely changed from residential to commercial. To meet this change the church was re-ordered during 1994–5 and the whole building is now known as *The Crossing at St Paul's*.

The ground floor consists of seven retail units which celebrate arts and crafts, fashion and flowers, books, gifts and music. The Day Chapel is open to all from Monday to Saturday, 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., for private prayer and quiet reflection.

The first floor includes a restaurant and Coffee Shop, which provides quality food at competitive prices in an uplifting, smoke-free environment. Frequent exhibitions by local artists around the balcony seating area provide an attractive and stimulating environment. This level also includes the office of Walsall Carers' Trust, the Centre Manager's Office and the offices of St Paul's Church, where a Church of England priest is often available.

The second floor is used for worship by St Paul's Church every Sunday. The meeting area and ancillary rooms are also used for a wide variety of functions, including conferences, training events, exhibitions and concerts. The main worship area – The Upper Room – is situated at this level and is where church services are held.

Source: verbatim from the church website at: [www.lichfield.anglican.org/walsall/walsall/stpaul/crossing.htm](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/walsall/walsall/stpaul/crossing.htm)

be the most suitable organisations to deliver community objectives.

There is an appreciation that buildings are important. One research report on church use made the obvious but important point that 'the churches' buildings are a valuable resource for social action and community involvement'. Another said that 'community use of church buildings, in whatever capacity, is highly beneficial

to the individual and the community'. A report investigating activity across a range of faiths agreed that 'access to buildings is often key' for this type of activity, and another describing a range of faith projects concluded that 'faith groups, through the use of their buildings and other activities, add value to community regeneration and the neighbourhood renewal process'. A survey of secular funding of faith groups commented that 'in all of our

Table 4.8

**Yorkshire and the Humber: the extent of church social action, all denominations (report published c. 2002, based on evidence collected 1995 onwards)**

Number of churches in region	3,600
Number of social action projects	6,500
Number of churchgoers regularly involved in church social action	50,000 – 70,000
Number of staff involved in church projects	3,000
Number of people benefiting regularly from church projects	143,000*
Economic value of church social action per annum (i.e. if wages were paid to volunteers)	£55m – £75m

\*Of whom 75% are likely not to be part of the church's congregation

Source: *Angels and Advocates*, pages 15–17

study areas, faith-related buildings constitute a significant proportion of the space available for community use'.<sup>13</sup>

The note by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Involving Faith Communities* confirms that government recognises the importance of buildings:<sup>14</sup>

Faith communities also have a role in delivering partnership or programme outcomes. . . . they can be better resourced than other comparable bodies: . . .

- They usually have their own premises – frequently centres for community activity and members voluntary work. . . .

But – and for our purposes it is a big 'but' – a good deal of church social activity takes place in ancillary space, such as a church hall, not in the church building itself. If an ancillary building is being used for the activity, then any funding streams are not providing direct support for the church building itself, which is the focus of our interest. (However, they may take pressure off the church budget, and make upkeep of the church building easier for the congregation.)

The fact is, that after much casting-around, I am better informed about the sort of activities which can and do take place in church buildings, and the means by which they can provide financial support. But I have not obtained any firm idea of how much extra income can be generated from these uses of the building, nor the extent to which they will support historic church buildings. As regards

## Notes

1. Akker and Passmore, *Opening our Doors*, page 21.
2. London Tourist Authority, personal communication, based on *The Economic Impact of London's West End Theatres* (1998).
3. The Countryside Agency, *Rural Services in 2000*, page 24, available from <www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/articles/Publication\_tcm2-4210.asp?>.
4. Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, page 128.
5. The Revd Jeremy Martineau, personal communication.
6. *Angels and Advocates*, page 24; the point is reinforced in *Sowing the Seed*, pages 29–30.
7. For Norwich, *Norwich City/Church dialogue*; for Hull, see *Count us in*.
8. For this and the following paragraph, see Bibliography.
9. SEARCH, *Who do we serve*, December 2003, page 2.
10. See Bibliography for references to community and social activity.
11. For number of churches, see Brierley, *Religious Trends*, 4, Table 2.21.1.
12. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *National Strategy Action Plan* (2001), page 52, available from <www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/pdfs/action\_plan.pdf>. See also Local Government Association, *Faith and Community* (2002, ISBN 1840492783), e.g. pages 8 and 18; available from <www.lga.gov.uk/documents/publication/faith.pdf>.
13. *Angels and Advocates*, page 7; *Church Buildings in the Community*, page 8; *Faith in action*, page 19; *Building on Faith*, page 63; Farnell *et al.*, 'Faith' in urban regeneration?, page 21. Details in Bibliography.
14. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Involving Faith Communities* (n.d.), unpaginated [page 1], available from <www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\_urbanpolicy/documents/page/odpm\_urbpol\_607931.hcsp>.

## HOW TO OBTAIN FUNDING

It might be helpful if faith groups were more able to describe the impact of their own activities in terms of social capital. Funding bodies are likely to be more open to applications that are couched in these terms.

Source: *Faith in Action*

## A DISTRICT COUNCIL

It is very difficult to obtain funding when the group applying for funding is a church group, no matter what the project is.

Source: letter from a District Council, quoted in Diocese of Norwich, *Church Buildings*

## THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Decisions on whether to fund a particular organisation should be made in terms of the nature of the case the organisation is making, rather than on whether it has a religious or secular culture.

Source: *Faith and Community*, published by the Local Government Association, 2002. For details, see note 12, below.

## THE BISHOP OF ST ALBANS

I sometimes think if we called the mother and toddler groups – which just about every parish in the country runs – women's empowerment units instead, we'd get financial support left, right and centre. We don't want special support – but we don't want to be discriminated against either.

Source: *The Guardian*, 4 June 2003

major conversions, although I have come across some fascinating examples, I am still more or less in the dark as to how many church buildings are currently being maintained in this way, or what the potential is in future.

So far our discussion has been general, using data for the whole country wherever this was available. In the next section we explore three dioceses in more depth.



## 5. Case studies: three dioceses

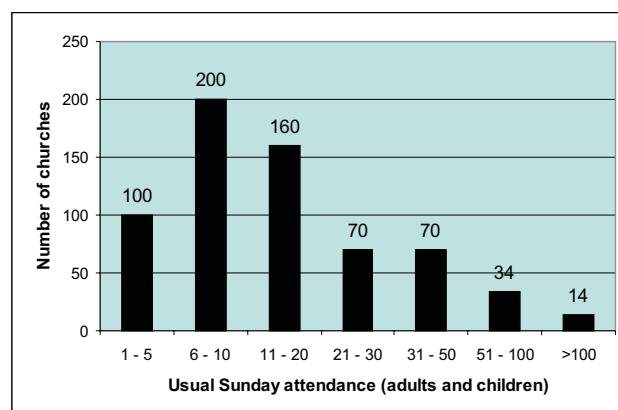
This section looks at three dioceses in more detail: one rural diocese, one largely urban one, and one with a mix of environments. These dioceses were chosen because relevant information is available, and for no other reason. Sources for this section are given in the Bibliography.

### 5.1 A rural diocese: Lincoln

The diocese of Lincoln has 647 church buildings (not counting more than 100 redundant ones, some of which have been demolished). About two-thirds (65%) of these buildings are listed Grade I or II\*; fewer than one in ten (9%) of the churches are unlisted.

These churches are served by about 200 full time parochial clergy, averaging more than three church buildings per cleric. To cope with its particular pressures, Lincoln has developed innovative forms of non-stipendiary leadership and ministry. There are a large number of people with such roles, including nearly 200 people accredited to minister at church services, and a further 230 lay readers, organised by deanery groups.

Although the average number of church buildings looked after by each stipendiary minister is about three, this hides considerable variation (Table 5.1). Approximately 180 church buildings are under the aegis of clergy who have at least seven buildings each. These 180 buildings each have usual Sunday attendance of no more than eight people, and in many cases just five or six. This



Graph 5.1 Diocese of Lincoln: number of churches by usual Sunday attendance (adults and children) (2003)

Source: *Diocese of Lincoln Directory*, 2003; for multi-church parishes, I assumed attendance was split equally between buildings, which may slightly compress the true range of attendance.

is an example of the general fact that multi-church ministers tend to have smaller church congregations, which may thus intensify the difficulties in looking after their buildings.

There is a wide spread of attendance (Graph 5.1). I estimate that about 300 church buildings (roughly one half) have usual Sunday attendance of ten people or fewer; most of these will be listed, many Grade I or II\*. Most worshippers are concentrated in a small number of church

Table 5.1

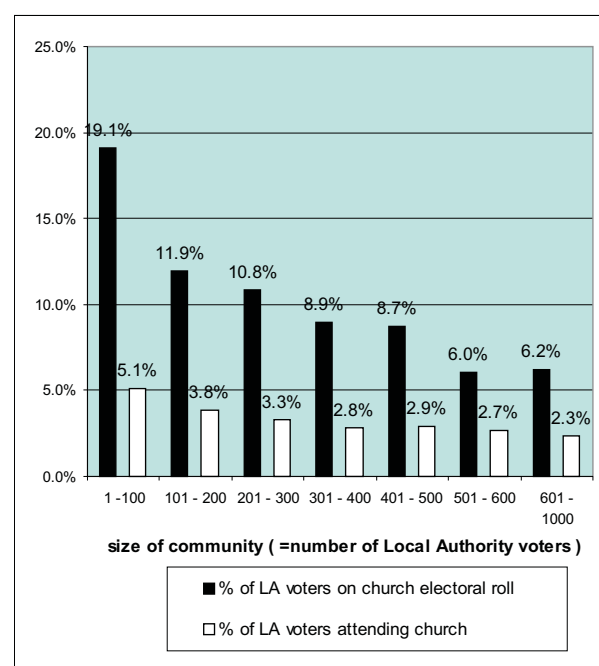
Diocese of Lincoln: estimated number of church buildings looked after by stipendiary clergy (if all vacancies filled) (2002)

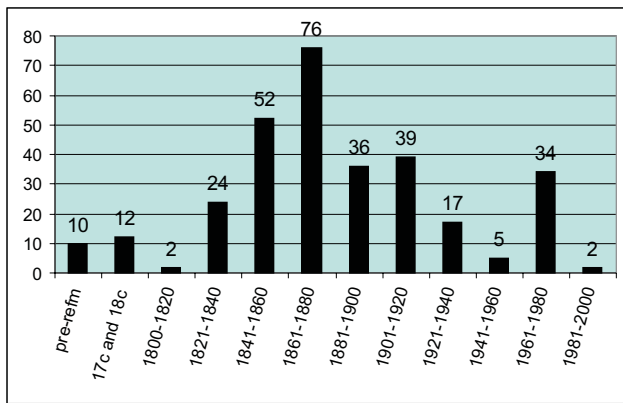
Number of church buildings per stipendiary cleric (if all vacancies were filled)	Number of stipendiary clerics with this many churches	Average usual Sunday attendance at each of these churches (estimated)	Cumulative number of churches
11	2	6	22
10	5	5	72
9	4	5	108
8	2	5	124
7	8	8	180
6	17	12	282
5	16	10	362
4	12	13	410
3	29	21	497
2	50	32	597
1 or fewer	67	79	647
Clergy posts = 212			Churches = 647

Source: *Diocese of Lincoln Directory*, 2003

Graph 5.2 Diocese of Lincoln: percentage of Local Authority voters who are on the church electoral roll or make up the usual Sunday attendance, by size of community (2002)

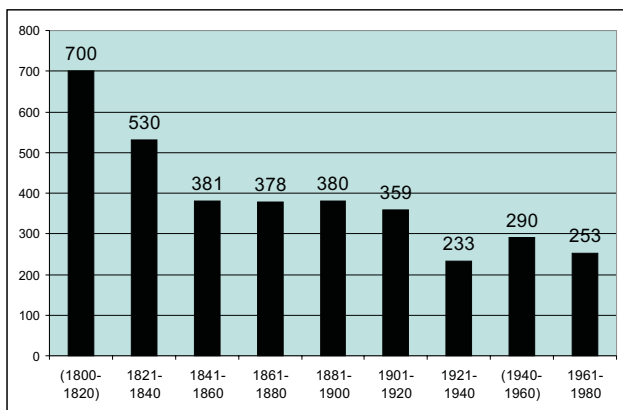
Source: *Diocese of Lincoln Directory*, 2003





Graph 5.3 Diocese of Manchester: number of surviving churches, by date of build (1997)

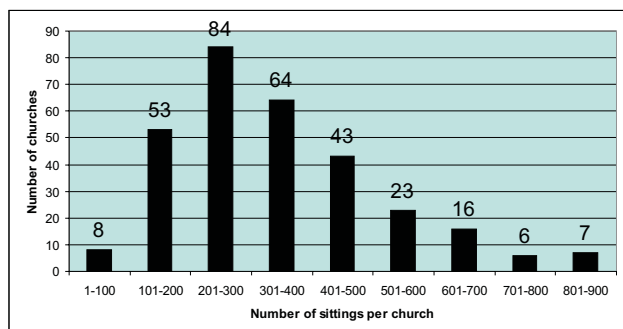
Source: Manchester, Survey



Graph 5.4 Diocese of Manchester: present average number of seats per church, by date of build (2001)

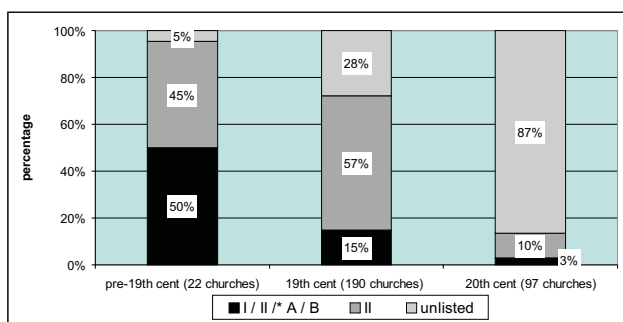
Note: small sample of churches for 1800–20 and 1940–60

Source: Manchester, Survey; Manchester Diocesan Yearbook, 2001/2



Graph 5.5 Diocese of Manchester: number of churches of various sizes (size indicated by number of seats) (2001)

Source: Manchester Diocesan Yearbook, 2001/2



Graph 5.6 Diocese of Manchester: proportion of listed churches, by date of build (1997)

Source: Manchester, Survey

buildings, and if, for example, some terrible disaster wiped out the 500 church buildings in the diocese with the lowest congregations, leaving about 150 churches, then well over half of Sunday worshippers would still be able to go to their normal church building.

The figures for Lincoln provide confirmation that smaller communities tend to be more publicly committed to their church. Graph 5.2 shows the percentage of Local Authority (LA) voters who commit themselves to join the electoral roll (that is, become 'members') of their church, or make up usual Sunday attendance. The percentage is shown for different size of community. For example, communities with between 101 – 200 Local Authority voters per church building have an average of 11.9% of people joining the electoral roll, and about 3.8% attending church. In contrast, the proportion becoming a 'member' in a larger community with between 601 and 1000 LA voters is only approximately half as large (6.2%), and only 2.3% attend on a given Sunday.

## 5.2 A largely urban diocese: Manchester

The second case study is the diocese of Manchester, consisting of the Archdeaconries of Manchester, Bolton and Rochdale. It is based on a very thorough report produced in 1997 by EH and the diocese, to which further material was added later.

As the diocesan website point out, the diocese covers a relatively small but densely populated geographical area which consists mainly of a large part of Greater Manchester. Historically, the cities and towns of the area grew during the period of the industrial revolution and throughout the Victorian period. In terms of the pattern of settlement, this is largely an urban diocese. There are a few rural parts of the diocese, with many of the small communities on the edges of the large towns developing from what were originally industrial villages.

Whereas the population density of Lincoln diocese is about 350 people per square mile, that of Manchester diocese is about 4500. There are about 350 churches in the diocese. Of the churches surviving to 1997, the great majority – more than 90% – are said to have been built since 1820: of these, almost exactly one third are twentieth-century (Graph 5.3) and two-thirds nineteenth-century.

There are too many church buildings. Today, the usual Sunday attendance in the diocese is about 27,000, but it has seating for more than 110,000 people. Furthermore, some very large churches were built during the nineteenth century (Graph 5.4). After 1840 the *average* size of church was approaching 400 seats. Here it remained until the twentieth century, in the latter part of which, on average, churches were built to hold about 250 people. There are some thirteen churches with sittings of 700 people or more, and more than 80 with sittings of between 400 and 700 (Graph 5.5).

On the whole, these large churches do not serve current needs for worship (though they can provide opportunities for additional uses). Whereas the average

Table 5.2

**Diocese of Manchester: electoral rolls, for those churches where data available (2002)**

Size of electoral roll	Churches	
	%	Number
1–10	-	0
11–20	-	1
21–30	3	8
31–40	6	19
41–50	7	22
50–70	13	39
71–100	18	55
101–200	38	119
over 200	15	47
TOTAL	100% = 310 churches	310
	Average electoral roll: 128	

Source: *Manchester Diocesan Yearbook*, 2001/2

usual Sunday attendance per church in the diocese is of the order of 80 people, the average church building holds more than 360. There are about 50 churches where the church can seat 400 more people than appear on the electoral roll.

It must be emphasised that we are using averages for this discussion. There are a number of large church congregations in the diocese and a common problem with such churches is lack of room. But, on average, the diocese has much more seating than it requires. This may well cause pastoral problems, as many people find acres of empty pews unwelcoming. In addition, much of the cost of maintenance and repairs is spent on empty space.

There is often no relationship now between the physical size of church and the population of the parish (analysis not shown here). This is not surprising. Not only have there been large movements of population in the last two hundred years, but the Victorians often built churches larger than the parish needed, sometimes assuming that a popular church would attract those from outside the parish. (The Victorians were not the first to build more grandly than was required: many medieval churches are far larger than can ever have been needed.) Indeed one can start to question the whole notion of a parish in today's urban environment, and some dioceses are looking at ways of creating more fluid geographical groupings. Not surprisingly, there are legal implications . . .

My analysis of churches' electoral rolls (not shown here) indicates that there is no particular date range of churches in the diocese which are especially struggling to find congregations. It is not the case, for example, that mid-nineteenth century church buildings attract smaller congregations than those of different date.

Approximately half of the churches in the diocese were listed at the time of the 1997 report (Graph 5.6). Of the nineteenth-century churches, approximately one in seven (15%) were Grade I/II\*, more than one half were Grade II

### MANCHESTER DIOCESE: QUOTES

The second major problem facing the diocese [of Manchester] relates to the care of a certain number of historic churches which, though they may still have small congregations, are now ill adapted to suit the needs of their parishes. The most obvious course of action, in such cases, would be for the diocese to make these churches redundant but, were it to do this, the chances of the buildings finding a new use would be remote. In Manchester, redundancy is all too often the prelude to vandalism, dereliction and, finally, demolition.

\* \* \*

Given the serious problems the church of [...] has had with dry rot, and the deprivation of the surrounding neighbourhood, you might have expected it to be demolished years ago. But no, funds have been found to deal with the rot, and the parish is seeking a Lottery grant to adapt the church for a wider range of activities. This is a remarkable achievement.

Source: *Manchester, Survey*

(57%), and one quarter (28%) unlisted. Is it typical of urban churches of this period? – I do not think anyone knows.

One surprise is that for churches built during the nineteenth century, higher grades of listing tend (on average) to be associated with larger churches. Grade I and II\* churches of this date have an average of about 490 seats, Grade II average approximately 430, whilst the average for unlisted churches is about 320 seats. On reflection this is perhaps not surprising, but everything else being equal may mean that nineteenth-century listed buildings are more expensive to maintain and repair than unlisted ones. A more surprising finding is that for nineteenth-century churches, the higher the grade of listing, the higher the average size of membership: Grade I church buildings attract an average electoral roll of some 235, Grade II\* of 175 whilst Grade II have an average 145. Unlisted churches had the smallest average roll, at 130.

How easy is it for church members to keep their churches in good repair? The electoral roll of an urban church probably needs to be considerably larger than that of a rural church to be able to maintain the building, given the average size of the buildings. In this case, approximately 15% of churches have 'membership' of 200 people or more (Table 5.2). At the other end of the scale, 9% of churches have an electoral roll of 40 people or fewer, which (on average) might imply typical Sunday attendance of 25 or fewer.

Thus many of Manchester's church buildings have large congregations, but a significant number are smaller and perhaps struggling. Taken across the board, there are too many churches, and too many seats in those churches. Given these pressures, the state of the church buildings in 1997 is not surprising: 21% were found to be 'needing attention', and 9% were found to be in 'poor' condition.

It was not the purpose of the 1997 survey to make firm proposals for the future. Nevertheless, of the listed buildings it was suggested that ten (including three of Grade I or II\*) might be made redundant and that eleven others should have efforts directed to solving the problem caused by the building, usually by attempting to obtain grants – the unstated implication being that otherwise the building might be difficult to sustain in use. A further 25 listed buildings were identified as being in need of repair to continue with their work. Of unlisted church buildings, the diocese at that time were looking seriously at the future of about forty.

Thus in 1997 about 30% of churches were not in satisfactory condition, regardless of grade. Thought was being given to making as many as 12% of the listed churches redundant, and perhaps one quarter of the unlisted ones.

### 5.3 A mixed diocese: Chelmsford

The diocese of Chelmsford, which covers much of Essex, is a mix of rural and urban communities, including five London boroughs. In this respect it is a microcosm of the wider CoE. The diocese has recently carried out a review of its church buildings, on which this case study is based. This is available on the internet, and provides a useful study of the issues and opportunities arising from the CoE's historic stock of church buildings. Although providing an overview of the situation, the report emphasises that the future of church buildings lies with local communities.

There are in the diocese some 530 parishes looking after rather more than 600 church buildings, of which 61% are listed. The total seating capacity is 105,000, averaging 175 seats per church building, roughly half that of Manchester. Usual Sunday attendance (at all services) is 39,000, giving a seat utilization of some 37%.

Here as elsewhere the CoE has responded to changing needs. Since 1968 more than 60 churches have been declared redundant; conversely, since 1975 there have been ten or more new church buildings, with six more under discussion. Some congregations now worship in schools or other rented premises, and there are many cases of church buildings being shared with other denominations, either formally or informally.

As discussed in Section 4.2, since the early 1990s, some twenty other major redevelopments of existing church premises have been, or are being, carried out, most or all of them in urban areas. In total, more than one hundred of the churches in the diocese have already introduced adaptations, extensions and re-orderings of the buildings for wider community use, and a further 30 or so have specific plans in hand. In this context, one third of the parishes (33%) look forward to further development and use of their building.

One worry is that in some places church halls are now reaching the end of their useful life, thus removing a source of income which is important to many parishes.

#### CHELMSFORD DIOCESE

Despite the energy of the faithful few, the tears of the local population, and the indignation of the preservationists, it seems inevitable that many of these church buildings [with rural congregations less than twenty people] will close for worship in the next twenty years. This will probably happen with a depressed resignation rather than a positive approach to re-grouping and renewal, which is a tragedy.

\* \* \*

The huge restoration programme . . . is bringing back into use the Norman church of [...] . . . The struggles with the heritage bodies, the huge fund-raising, and the vision for community use and outreach are quite simply enough for any deanery, let alone a single congregation!

Source: Chelmsford, *Review*

The extent of this is not quantified, but anecdote suggests this is repeated elsewhere in England.

As stated above, the average seat usage on Sundays is 37%. But this hides very wide regional variation within the diocese, which can be explored by looking at the 27 deaneries, each of which usually has around twenty churches. Some deaneries, typically the urban ones, have average seat usage of well above 50%, whilst others, in more rural areas, have an average seat usage as low as 15%. Some 104 churches are in deaneries where the average seat usage in their deanery is less than 20%. On the other hand, 123 churches are in deaneries where average seat usage is higher than 50%. In other words, parts of the diocese are more 'over-churched' than others, when measured by seat utilisation. This can be seen in Graph 5.7, which shows the average seat usage for the fifteen deaneries in West Ham (the most urban archdeaconry) and Colchester (the most rural). For example, churches in the urban deanery I have called 'WH1' have average utilisation of 51%, whereas at the other extreme, those in 'COL10' average only 15%.

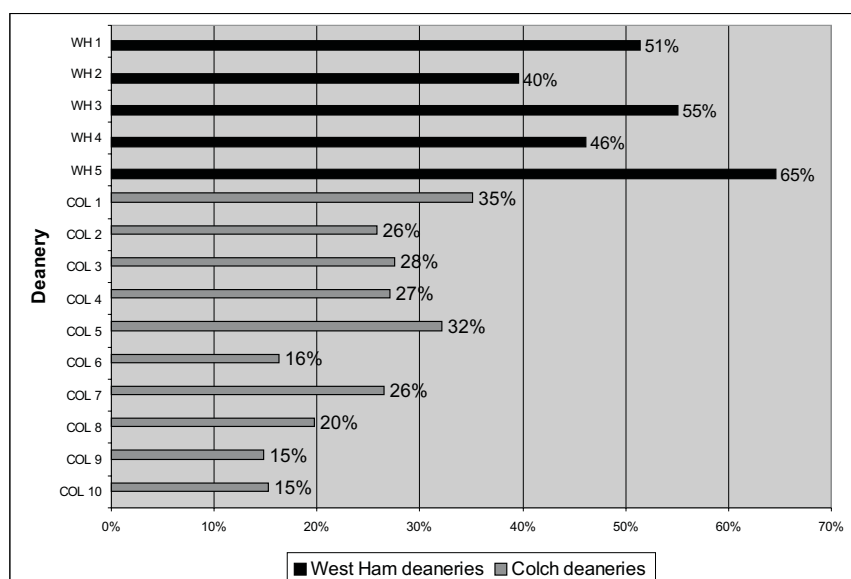
One of the main reasons for this discrepancy is simply that for historical and other reasons, some areas have fewer church seats per head of population, and thus find it easier to fill them.

For example, the five London boroughs making up the West Ham archdeaconry have the fewest seats per head of population, with roughly 2% as many seats as there are people living in the area. Here there are 126 church buildings amongst a population of more than one million.

In contrast, in the more rural archdeaconry of Colchester the number of seats per head of population is about four times as great (8%), with nearly twice as many churches (227) as the London boroughs despite having only half their population (half a million people).

Although to a certain extent the excess of rural seats is cancelled out by the tendency for people in rural areas to be more loyal in attendance, this is not enough to make up for the underlying difference in number of seats per head of population. As a result, the London boroughs have fuller churches than those in the Colchester area. Graph 5.8 demonstrates this for each deanery. The urban





Graph 5.7 Diocese of Chelmsford: average utilisation of seats on Sunday, by anonymised deanery (Archdeaconries of West Ham and Colchester only) (2002)

Source: Chelmsford, *Review*

deanery WH1 has seats for only 1.7% of the population, so despite attendance as low as 0.9%, its churches, as we saw earlier, have average utilisation of 51%. Compare this with COL10: much higher attendance rates (3.1%) but a huge number of seats – enough for 20.3% of the population – mean that, as discussed, the average utilisation of seats is only 15%.

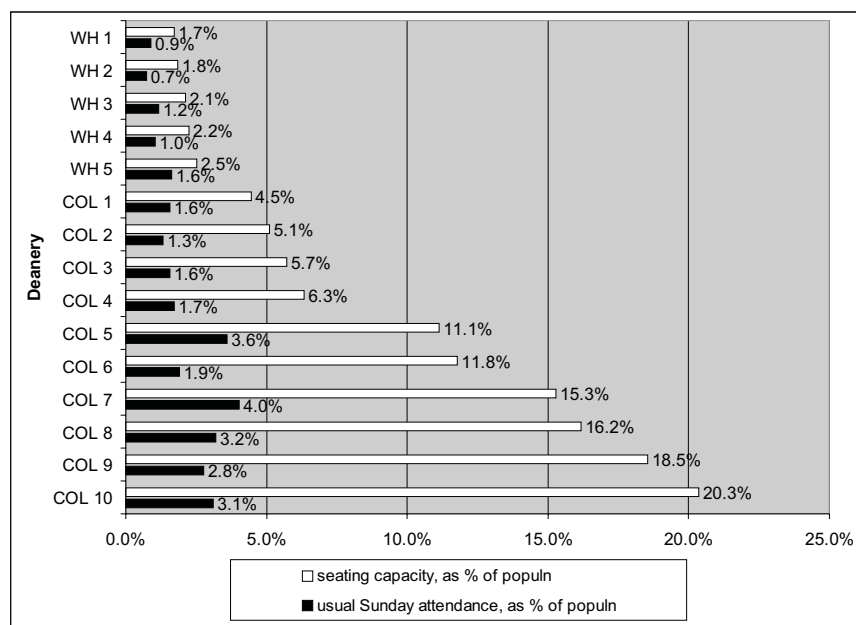
The underlying differences here are worth exploring. The London boroughs have a high proportion of Victorian buildings, with fewer listed buildings than the rest of the diocese. Churches were lost during the war, and some daughter churches have been sold. A number of the giant Victorian churches have been converted into multi-functional complexes, or new church centres have been built, replacing the original church. As a result of this reconfiguration, much of which has required many years of dedicated effort, the number of seats is now perhaps realistic: average attendance on Sunday is 95 people per church building.

In contrast to the London boroughs are the more rural areas. The most rural is the archdeaconry of Colchester,

where the average attendance on Sunday is 45 people per church building, about half of that in the boroughs. As always there is considerable variation. There are 33 churches (14%) in the archdeaconry who have 10 people or fewer attending on Sunday, and a further 61 (27%) with between 11 and 20 people – thus 94 churches (more than 40%) have congregations of 20 people or fewer.

In this archdeaconry, 88% of the 227 churches are listed, with nearly half being Grade I. This, plus their rural situation, and relative distance from each other, makes it far harder for parishes to be flexible and creative in the use of their buildings to meet changing circumstances.

The report shows imagination in considering ways in which some isolated and under-used rural buildings can be developed for mission, but there is no escaping the fact that many of these listed rural churches find themselves in a difficult position, and with less scope for shaping the future than in urban areas. The report takes the view that in this archdeaconry many of the 94 churches with congregations fewer than twenty people may find themselves deciding to close within the next two decades.



Graph 5.8 Diocese of Chelmsford: usual Sunday attendance and seating capacity as proportion of population, by anonymised deanery (Archdeaconries of West Ham and Colchester only) (2002)

Source: Chelmsford, *Review*

## 6. Keeping church buildings in future

So far, I have attempted to describe the current position. In this section we look at the future, beginning by discussing the future of very small congregations, and then moving on to consider how the future is being shaped, and the view of government.

### 6.1 Expectations of the future

It is very difficult to predict the future of small congregations, particularly when there is a lack of detailed evidence about age-profiles. In the diagram 'The redundancy funnel' I have summarised the available evidence, which I discuss in the following paragraphs.

One difficulty is that smaller congregations often have a determination to keep going, and maintain the church building in use. Indeed, there is evidence that tiny congregations do not necessarily decline, but can grow, and in fact are more likely to do so than large congregations. One survey looked at churches which had ten people or fewer in 1989; by 1998, nearly 60% had grown, and just over 30% had shrunk. (We do not know how many had disappeared.) On the other hand, the best predictor of growth or decline in this period was the age profile of the congregation. Congregations with more than a quarter of their people over the age of 45 were (on average) more likely to decline than grow, and the likelihood of decline rose as the proportion of this age group grew larger.<sup>1</sup> Although I could find no formal

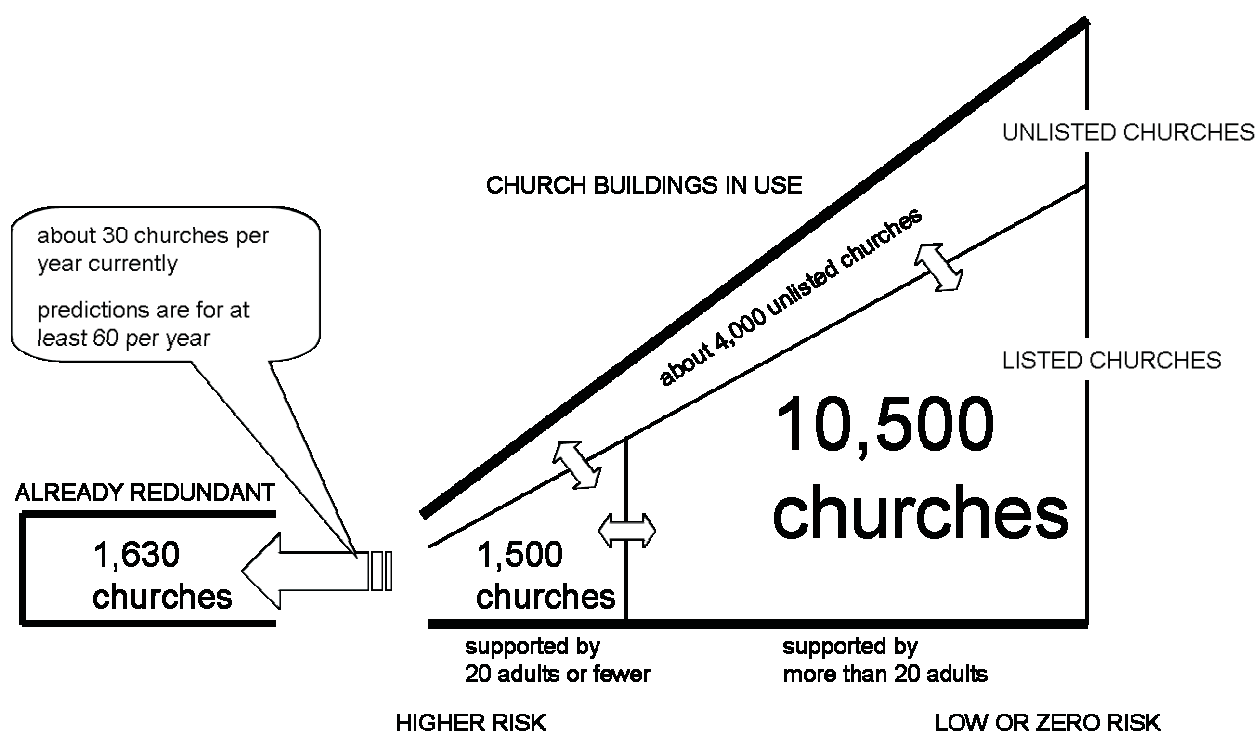
evidence, anecdotal evidence suggests that many small CoE congregations do have a high proportion of elderly folk.

It may be that it is only when a particular difficulty strikes – such as the death or departure of a key individual, or a major repair – that a tiny congregation gives up the struggle. Even then, in the early stages of redundancy, local folk may realise how much they value their church building, an effort is made, and it is withdrawn from the redundancy process.

As a final difficulty in predicting redundancy, it has been suggested to me that the redundancy pipeline itself has quite a small capacity at the diocesan level, and can only cope with a limited number of new cases per year, and that this is a further disincentive to dioceses from starting the redundancy process. If true (and I have no formal evidence) this is, of course, a two-edged sword: should redundancies ever surge, it is an important question how well this part of the pipeline would cope.

No wonder the overall rate of redundancy is hard to predict, and that attempts in the past to make long-term forward estimates of redundancies by aggregating diocesan estimates have not been completely accurate. The Bridges Commission (1960), underestimated the number by one third, the Wilding report (1990) over-estimated by one half. However, these long-term estimates were not wildly wrong, and have been useful for putting appropriate mechanisms in place.<sup>2</sup>

#### The redundancy funnel



The best forecasts will probably come from those with local knowledge of individual churches, including the churches themselves. A figure of 300 redundancies over the next five years has been suggested on the basis of informal soundings of a large sample of archdeacons.<sup>3</sup> This would suggest a rate of some 60 buildings per year, equal to the highest rate of the 1980s, and considerably higher than the current underlying rate, which is now in the low thirties.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, to date the CCC have noted no increase in the number of churches entering the early stage of the redundancy pipeline. On the other hand, the Church Commissioners have recently noticed some uplift in the number of cases, though not yet to levels seen in the 1980s. One diocesan officer commented that 'redundancy is mentioned much more often than it used to be'.

Congregations have their own idea about their prospects. Chelmsford diocese recently asked parishes about their hopes and dreams for the future:<sup>5</sup>

- more than one half of churches (57%) said *growth*;
- At the other extreme, nearly one tenth of parishes (9%) listed *survival* as one of their hopes and dreams (if applied across the country, this would apply to about 1,200 parishes, containing perhaps 1,500 church buildings).

Another survey (1998), which had responses from a stratified sample of one quarter of Anglican churches, indicated that across England, three-quarters (76%) of Anglican church congregations expected to have grown by 2010. (The commentator believes that churches were optimistic in their responses.) On the other hand some 4% expected to have closed by 2010 (if true, this would represent about 650 churches) and a further 7% (1100 churches) expected to have declined. Unsurprisingly, the smallest churches were the ones most likely to have a negative view of their future.<sup>6</sup>

In summary, we have three views about future rates of redundancy: the views of the archdeacons over the next five years, those of the Chelmsford parishes over an unspecified period, and the survey of 1998 which asked parishes to look forward ten years. None of these suggests a rate of redundancy less than about 60 churches per year for the medium-term future, and some of the responses suggest a rather higher rate. That is, the rate going forward is predicted to be at least equal to the previous highest rate, seen for a few years only in the early and mid 1980s.

Many of these new redundancies will be buildings of the highest quality, but with its current level of grant, the Churches Conservation Trust will be quite unable to absorb them (see previous discussion, box on page 21).

Perhaps the time is right for a properly stratified, anonymous, formal survey of parishes' own view of their future, possibly also asking them what changes would improve their prospects.

## 6.2 Shaping the future

### Support and pressures

To some extent, the future can be shaped. Churches are under pressure, but also receive support. The question is

Table 6.1

Some current pressures on churches: a personal view

Pressure	Affects which churches?		Policy?
	Urban	Rural	
Ageing, declining churchgoing	yes	yes	
Ageing church halls	yes	yes	
Health and safety, insurance, increase in litigation	yes	yes	
Disability requirements	yes	yes	yes
Effort for fund-raising, liaison with amenity societies, repair planning & management	yes	yes	yes
Archaeological costs	yes	yes	yes
Child / elderly protection compliance	yes	yes	yes
Risk of loss of VAT 'reduction'	yes	yes	yes
Reduction in available grants from Land Fill tax	yes	yes	yes
Legal restrictions on multi- use	yes	yes	yes
Preservation of pews <i>in situ</i>	yes	yes	yes
Price of repairs (skills shortage)	yes	yes	??
Pressures on full-time leadership	??	yes	
Matched-funding pressures	yes	yes	yes
Deterioration in rural economies	-	yes	
Increase in 'weekending'	-	yes	
Theft / vandalism / insurance	yes	yes	
'People rather than buildings'	yes	yes	yes
Statements of significance, future management plans	yes	yes	yes

which of the pressures on church buildings can be reduced, and what can be done to increase support.

One interesting development has been the growing appreciation by dioceses that church buildings can be seen as an asset. This is particularly the case when they are viewed on an area basis, with different church buildings playing to their strengths, one supporting another.

Table 6.1 lists some of the pressures of which I am aware. The extreme right hand column indicates whether these could be ameliorated by changes in policy. Many could.

Conversely, there is evidence, some of it already discussed, that congregations are increasingly receiving support of one type or another, as they continue to reach into their wider communities. I have listed some of these means of support in Table 6.2.

However, smaller churches may not possess the organisational capacity to take up some of the available support, and may anyway require more radical intervention. In general, policy development in this area should perhaps distinguish between general support for congregations, and policies targeted at churches very close to redundancy.

The remainder of this section discusses some of these general means of support.

## VIEWS FROM THOSE WHO VISIT MANY RURAL CHURCHES

*I asked three people who study church buildings, and who visit them in large numbers, to give their personal opinions, based on their discussions with the many vicars, churchwardens and church members with whom they have come into contact.*

*Although they believe that the current physical condition of church buildings is good (see box on page 26), I am afraid that their views of the likely future of these buildings were negative.*

### **A student of rural churches, carrying out a systematic survey, visiting many hundreds each year**

I've just come back from visiting a group of churches. I met several old people cutting the churchyard grass – two of them pondered what would happen once they died as no-one else wants to do the job . . .

While churches have always struggled along, they've managed because they could pretty much do what they liked with respect to repairs. Unfortunately I think that conservation bodies are now making things far more difficult. If churches are to exist and function then these tight guidelines need to be relaxed.

It's not just outside bodies though. Another problem is that many PCCs won't relax the use of church buildings. Some have – realising that the only way to keep the church alive is to have it open and to have it used for functions other than the one-hour Sunday service. Others shut their doors and have the Sunday Club mentality – at their peril.

Based on talking with the people who use these buildings every day, I believe overall that the Anglican church will continue to shrink and within 50 years we will see huge numbers of churches disappear forever. Unless there is some radical re-think or change of circumstances, the future is very bleak indeed.

We need to get away from the 'static' mentality – one should not try to preserve buildings in some time bubble where they never change and yet have to be used as working buildings. While conservation bodies fear that we may lose these buildings because of some Victorian holocaust of 'restoration', we risk losing them anyway.

This may sound like scaremongering, but I've reached these conclusions having talked to many people. Seven years ago I started my survey thinking everything was fine and these buildings would always be here. Many, many hundreds of country churches later, I really can't say that they will.

### **A view from Suffolk**

Let me give you a breakdown of the ground here in Suffolk. We have 505 medieval churches, of which 464 are still in the care of the Church of England. There are about 40 more nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglican churches (fewer than in other counties of similar size) so lets call it just over 500.

There are something over 22,000 Anglicans in church on Sunday in Suffolk. I make that about 45 churchgoers per church. But the problems begin to appear when you are on the ground. Those 22,000 worshippers are actually

concentrated in a surprisingly small number of churches, mainly in the big four towns.

According to the Suffolk Rural Development Council, Suffolk has more than 250 settlements with less than 100 people. Almost all of these have a medieval parish church. Some of these churches are very significant; nationally significant; indeed, internationally so. One such church I can think of has a seven-sacrament font with original coloured gesso work, carved roof with original colouring, screen with painted saints, etc., etc. – population 100, average congregation twelve. Another church, home to glorious thirteenth- and fourteenth-century wall paintings: congregation now seven and the youngest person is 73.

You visit churches in apparently wealthy, lively villages, where the church is declining and decaying, windows broken, locked from one Sunday to the next.

Balanced against the lack of income is the amount of voluntary work provided by churchwardens, treasurers, PCC members, and the like. This is invaluable, and they are wonderful, tireless, tolerant people.

One churchwarden I recently spoke to said she volunteered because she felt she had a pastoral role to play; within a week she found herself having to spearhead a drive for tens of thousands of pounds. She raised the money within a year, by the way.

But the churchwarden at another church, a parish with a recent history of raising very large sums of money, tells me that they are now down to twelve people. "We will carry on as long as we can", he said.

We would appear to be at the edge of an abyss . . .

### **A frequent visitor to churches**

Often there is no-one to fight for the individual church as the incumbent has a handful to look after, and anyway they get no training in the care or use of historic buildings. And not much on church history.

Where someone *is* interested in the building they can usually drum up resources from the local and wider community.

Compare one church I know where money is no object (they are even building a thatched loo) with another church nearby where there is a major wealthy landowner, but where I would not give the church more than a few years because there is so little money spent on it.

I suspect that within 20 years a large percentage of churches will be closed – possibly as high as 25% – and people who think as I do will no longer be encouraged to raise money for what seems a hopeless task.

*We do not know whether these views reflect a new trend, or whether similar opinions would have been expressed by previous generations, but have not in fact come to fruition. The death of the rural church has certainly been forecast before. But these comments do make uncomfortable reading.*



Table 6.2

**Some current areas of support for church buildings: a personal view**

Support	Supports which churches?		
	Urban	Rural	Small?*
EH/HLF grants	yes	yes	yes
Expert support for grant application and fund-raising	yes**	-	yes
'Maintain our heritage' roll-out and EH piloting of smaller grants	yes	yes	?
Friends groups	yes	yes	-
Church tourism	?	yes	yes
Government interest in rural communities	-	yes	yes
Funding for heritage / education / community use	yes	yes	-
Small-scale additional use (kitchens etc.)	yes	yes	-
Large-scale additional use (major conversions)	yes	-	-
Urban regeneration	yes	-	-

\*Available (in practice) to small congregations?

\*\*Limited to two urban dioceses only at present

## Friends Groups

There is no central register of 'Friends' of churches. A search of the Charity Commission website reveals several hundred such groups, representing perhaps 2% or 3% of churches. I cannot tell how many other Friends groups there are which are not separately registered but operate under the control of the Parochial Church Council.

Of the groups registered with the Commission, nearly one half (47%) were founded in the 1990s and a further 20% in the last three years, suggesting a sharp rise of interest in this form of involvement (the alternative, which I think unlikely, is that most groups only last a few years, and the results are due to survival bias).

The income of these groups is not large, typically being a few thousand pounds per year. Nevertheless, this sum is comparable to the typical annual spend on repairs of many churches. Friends groups may thus provide a steady income stream to help with the more routine repairs, and (possibly) a body of people inclined to respond to appeals for more major work. Of course, it is likely that only the more go-ahead congregations will form such groups.

I carried out a small-scale survey of Friends (see box). Such a small number of self-selected responses is not representative, but may be indicative of the range of responses to be found from a more systematic survey. The key points to emerge were:

- There is no central help point for Friends groups.
- Some Friends groups hold very frequent activities and are clearly a force for social cohesion in their own right.
- The relationship with the Parochial Church Council and clergy needs to be handled carefully.
- Friends groups are seen as a way of allowing the local community to play a part in the maintenance of the church, without overt religious commitment.

Table 6.3

**How do you think of your local church/chapel? (adults, Great Britain, October 2003)**

Place of worship	83%
Quiet place or sanctuary	73%
Local landmark	59%
Social / community venue	56%
Historic place	53%

Source: CoE, from ORB survey carried out on behalf of EH and CoE, October 2003. Sample size: 1004. See Bibliography.

One group explicitly stated that an advantage of the arrangement is that funds held by the Friends are not necessarily assessed when grants are being allocated. Conversely, one archdeacon mentioned to me the undesirable possibility that Friends groups could be used to minimise the church's contribution to the central diocesan fund, thus harming less well-off churches.

In general, there would seem to be room for this form of voluntary self-help to be encouraged.

## Interest in heritage

There is evidence that the heritage and townscape value of churches is appreciated by the general public. In a recent survey, nearly six out of ten (59%) said they see their local church or chapel as a local landmark and, more than five out of ten (53%) as a historic place (see Table 6.3).

Thus the decline in public religious observance has happened in parallel with another major social shift, the growth of interest in 'heritage'. This can be seen by comparing the trends in National Trust membership and membership of church electoral rolls (Graph 6.1). The figures are not directly comparable, as one includes adults, one does not: but the difference in *trend* is clear.

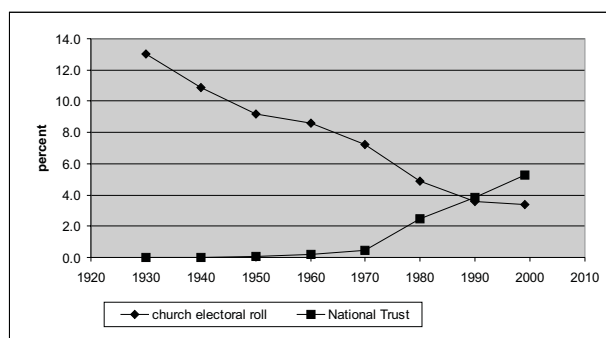
Can this shift in public attitudes be harnessed to resolve the issues raised by the large CoE network of historic buildings? There are some encouraging signs: for example, the Local Heritage Initiative has made more than one hundred grants to church-centred activities, about one fifth of the total grants awarded.<sup>7</sup>

Another way forward may be via tourism.

Graph 6.1 **Church electoral roll and National Trust membership as proportions of their respective candidate populations**

Sources: *Church Statistics 2001*; National Trust

Candidate population for electoral roll is over-sixteen English population; for National Trust is all-age English, Welsh and Northern Irish population



## A QUESTIONNAIRE TO FRIENDS GROUPS

*A search was carried out on the Charity Commission website for Friends groups, using the search phrase 'Friends of St'. Of the several hundred groups found in this way, some 46 provided an email address. A questionnaire was emailed to these groups; eighteen responses were received. Such a small number of self-selected responses can make no claim to be representative, but the answers may indicate the range of responses which would be received from a more representative sample.*

*Below, my comments are in italics, verbatim replies are prefaced by a bullet.*

**Question:** Please give some indication of the total number of adults who attend services on a typical Sunday (add up attendance at all services).

*Answers ranged from single figures up to several hundred. Most were between 20 and 80.*

**Question:** Was there some particular event which led to the Friends being set up?

*Somewhat to my surprise, there was not always such an event; groups had sometimes been founded simply because there was felt to be the need for wider support.*

- The church organ needed replacement.
- The decline of membership of the church and possible closure in the 1980s.
- No, we just felt that we should maintain our church.
- Falling numbers attending church out of the tourist season means lower funds for church maintenance. The church is at the very centre of the village, which together with the literary connections in the village leads to it being a tourist focal point. Business people within the village recognise the importance of the church to the tourist industry – if the church were to fall into disrepair then their business would soon disappear!
- Only the normal one of the constant upkeep of a medieval church. Desperation at the financial burden of a very old but splendid building on a dwindling population and recognition that the church as a building is a focal point of the village.
- People of all beliefs outside the regular and ageing congregation want to retain the last community building in the village.

**Question:** In setting up and running the Friends, did you or do you receive help (formal or informal) from any other body? If so, who, and what sort of help?

*In setting up, a few received help from their local cathedral's Friends, or praised the Charity Commission for the help received on charity law and practice. There was positive mention of the book on Friends produced by Canterbury diocese (details in the Bibliography).*

**Question:** In practice, are the people who administer and run the Friends largely the same people who are involved in the life of the church?

*The groups had committees which included ex officio church members, but they were keen to be seen as separate entities. For example:*

- About half and half. The secretary/treasurer is an atheist. Two of the other six members are regular churchgoers and the other four go now and again.
- We see ourselves as a mainly heritage organization and we think that this fact, together with our wide spectrum of trustees [only three out of twelve *ex officio* from the church] will encourage wider support.

**Question:** As well as subscriptions, what other fund-raising do you carry out?

*As expected, there is a wide range of fund-raising events; more surprising was the level of activity of some groups, which are clearly a force for social cohesion in their own right.*

- We try and have one fund-raising event per month including concerts, talks, barbecues, drinks evenings, old car shows and quizzes.
  - Annual trip to place of interest, talks, entertainment by external players.
  - A Wild West evening, medieval banquet, 'Bond' night. Twice-weekly bonus-ball lottery for members. Great group for social life in the village.
  - An annual lecture.
  - Suppers, open gardens, coffee mornings, fêtes, sales, concerts, parish barbecue, sell postcards of the church.
  - Visit to a local stately home, visit to theatre, donated Christmas tree lights, circle of people making kneelers (which are sponsored), ran raffle at Harvest Festival. Started the village helpline (there is no shop or surgery in the village) and provide transport in an emergency.
  - We run the usual range of quiz nights, concerts, merchandising T-shirts, postcards, limited edition prints of paintings of the church and the village. The single most successful event is a sponsored abseil of the tower of the church. We also have a good take up for day excursions to cathedrals and stately homes in the area. This helps us to recruit outside the membership of the congregation.
- Question:** Please tell us anything else, positive or negative, which you think would help us to understand the potential of Friends groups, and the practical difficulties they face.

*The answers here were almost entirely to do with the need to reach out beyond the church congregation, and to maintain good but arms-length relationships with those formally responsible for the church.*

- We have to take great care to keep good relations with the PCC whilst protecting our independence. This is so that we are seen not as a Church organisation but as a group interested in the preservation of our wonderful church and its environment which is so important to the village as a whole. This broadens our membership base. The PCC requests our help when needed and we decide independently whether to help or not.
- Responsibility for running the parish rests with the parishioners – the Friends merely give a little help.
- Clergy possibly don't understand a 'Friends' that is set up with the charitable objective of restoration of the church building, instead of supporting the life of the church (the remit of the PCC really) and feel resentful, without understanding that members have specifically chosen to support that aspect of the church and are not the faith group.
- Some antagonism from people who think we are raising money to pay the diocesan quota.
- The objective was to tap a wider catchment than the church itself, yet membership remains principally concentrated among the congregation and those living near the church. Perhaps wider membership must be built over the years. [These comments from a group less than three years old.]
- We had a grand launch in the church with a video/slide show and a children's painting competition. This was organised through the primary schools and was a good vehicle for getting people into the church.
- Our group tries to act as a link between the church and the village. The whole idea is to link the congregation with the community. There is a difficult balance. Who decides and how do we decide what we should buy for the church? We are one step away from the congregation and this suits some people but we have to ensure that we are not the 'opposition'. The only community centre in our village is the church room. If we lost the church, we would lose the church room.

## CHURCH TOURISM INITIATIVES

There are a number of initiatives for promoting tourism to local churches, both CoE and those of other denominations.

The oldest scheme is the **Church Tourism Network in the diocese of Lincoln** (<[www.churchtourism.org](http://www.churchtourism.org)>) which has been running in one form or another since the early 1990s. It produces various publications and runs training sessions. Churches which participate in the scheme (about 70 of all denominations) have been clustered into geographical groupings, so that tourists can choose the area which takes their fancy, and are not overwhelmed by a seemingly endless list of possibilities. Modern and urban buildings are included, as well as medieval rural ones. A revised scheme, involving around 300 churches, comes into operation in early 2004. Starting from the cathedral, visitors will choose one of nine larger churches to visit next, and from there will have further choices, as they explore the churches in a local area.

Another initiative is more recent. The **North Yorkshire Church Tourism Initiative** (<[www.yorkshirechurches.com](http://www.yorkshirechurches.com)>) started work in 2002. It took longer than expected to put everything in place, but is now fully under way, with initial funding for three years. There are approximately 250 churches

participating, organised into seven areas. Initially 4000 leaflets were printed for each area, and demand was such that they had to be reprinted within six weeks. The aim of the initiative is to increase church tourism by 25%, with one half of the increase coming from outside North Yorkshire. To learn more about visitors, church visitors' books are being analysed, and those using the area leaflets are encouraged to fill in a short questionnaire.

A rather different scheme is **Go West**, launched in 2002. This has a linear pattern, following the River Teme (<[www.temevalley.org.uk](http://www.temevalley.org.uk)>) as it flows eastward through the dioceses of Worcester and Hereford, passing through Knighton and Ludlow. About ten years ago an earlier scheme in this area got off to a false start, and the latest scheme has learnt the lessons of this. It is more focused, with a heavy emphasis on involving local churches and communities. Local Support Teams concentrate on particular parts of the valley, and there is an overall Steering Group formed of professional volunteers. A pack of promotional leaflets called 'Wanderer's Companions' have been produced, describing different sections of the valley. The overall vision has a different flavour to some other schemes, aiming to 'develop sustainable tourism

activities that enhance the visitor's understanding and enjoyment of the countryside', as well as contributing to local economic and social well being. One of the elements is the use of historic church buildings as 'places of shelter, reflection, prayer and discussion'.

These are just three initiatives. There are around a dozen others listed on the website of the Churches Tourism Association (<[www.churchestourismassociation.info](http://www.churchestourismassociation.info)>). These are mostly in the form of packs of 'church trail' leaflets, often produced in cooperation between church and secular agencies. Many of these schemes are funded from secular sources, reflecting the view that encouraging people to visit churches benefits tourism in general. Alongside the development of these trails has been a growing appreciation of the need to have better explanatory material in the churches.

So there is a significant and growing range of activity at a local level, though not of the scale of Scotland's churches scheme, where church tourism is supported centrally, with 800 participating churches.

## Tourism

Major churches and cathedrals are amongst the top tourist attractions in the land. In the year 2000, York Minster, Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey were second, third and fourth in numbers of visitors to historic properties, beaten only by the Tower of London. In that year, 19 of the 50 most visited historic properties were churches or cathedrals.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of these high-volume sites is appreciated by the tourist authorities, who monitor attractions with more than 20,000 visitors per year. In the past less attention has been paid to the tourist potential of the parish church, because of the relatively low volumes at each church. Yet the contribution which historic churches make to tourism is perhaps the most powerful economic argument for their preservation – although I am not aware that anyone has yet done the sums.

There is now growing activity in this area (see box), with best practice being promoted by the Churches Tourism Association (though it has no full-time national officer). Many dioceses now have a designated Church Tourism officer. The role is often part-time, sometimes very part-time indeed. However in a number of cases it is a full-time post, often funded externally with the diocese contributing in kind, though one problem with this form of funding is its limited timescale, often only three years,

and the emphasis on innovation rather than continuity, the opposite of what is required in this case.

In deciding whether and how to make their church buildings available for visitors, churches face significant questions of theology and mission. These are well outside our scope: but, in passing, I cannot resist pointing out that one survey of rural church visitors showed that nearly seven in ten (69%) of those visitors who filled in the questionnaire thought that having somewhere quiet to pray was important for their visit, and that this was many more than those (48%) who regarded a toilet as important.<sup>9</sup>

How much money does tourism bring directly to churches? For most churches it would not be economic to charge entrance fees because of the relatively low volumes and the low fee that could be charged. Many churches, anyway, would want not want to charge for admission.

Revenue from visitor donations is another source, but is likely to be low, running at 20p per visitor according to a 1999 survey.<sup>10</sup> This can be boosted by selling guidebooks, candles, and small gifts. Some churches sell refreshments, or market their concerts proactively. I have not managed to find out how much income may be obtained on average from each visitor in these ways. (The research must surely have been done, and I would welcome information on the point.)

More fundamentally, how much do church buildings contribute towards the tourist industry?

It is instructive to compare the position of churches with that of privately-owned historic houses (see Table 6.4). The Historic Houses Association has argued that the eleven million visitors that they generate bring business worth £1.6bn pounds per year to the wider economy – that is, businesses outside the historic house itself. As it happens, the figure is based on a misunderstanding (which has unfortunately been transmitted quite widely), and overstates the case – my

amateur estimate (to be treated with suspicion) is that the benefit to the wider economy might be £700m per year.<sup>11</sup> But this is still a substantial amount. Given that the number of visits to churches is likely to be more than to historic houses – in the box ‘Visitors to Churches’ I argue that there are probably between ten and fifty million visits to parish churches a year – then the contribution of church tourism is also likely to be substantial, even though the time spent at each church is no doubt less than at each historic house.

## VISITORS TO CHURCHES

### How many visitors?

We do not have any reliable figure for the number of visits made to parish churches each year. Various figures are quoted – for example 36 million visitors per year – but they are all in the nature of informed guesstimates.

This is not surprising. Counting visitors is very difficult, because the great majority of churches do not have any mechanism for monitoring the number of people coming in and out. The normal proxy is to count signatures in the visitors’ book, and multiply by ten, or a similar number. This method is certainly better than nothing, though it will become increasingly unreliable if churches are encouraged to ask visitors to sign.

As is to be expected, there is enormous variation in the number of visitors received by churches. For example, in Lincoln diocese, a count was taken of the number of signatures in visitors’ books in a sample of nearly 40 churches for the year starting February 2001. Multiplying by ten, more than half of the churches had between 200 and 1,000 visitors during the year. (This assumed that where a family signed there were four individuals, and where a group signed there were six individuals.) The least-visited church had 50 visitors (over the entire year), the most-visited had 2,500. Of the nearly forty churches, the busiest eight (20%) had one half of the visitors. The average was about 700 visitors per year, but the sample may not have been representative, and not too much attention should be paid to this. The figures do indicate the very large range of visitors which may be expected (and perhaps also the different degrees of prominence afforded the visitors’ book!).

In the North Yorkshire Church Tourism Initiative, interim figures for a nine-month period suggest an average of about 4000 visitors per church per year (after multiply the signatures by ten and

correcting for seasonality).<sup>\*</sup> This is considerably higher than the Lincoln figures, but the Yorkshire churches may have included a different mix of churches.

Finally, the CCT estimates it has about one quarter of a million visitors to its 330 mostly rural buildings, implying an average of about 750 per building.

At this stage, all we can say is that the average number of visitors per year to the average parish church is probably something between 700 and 4000. If this applies across all listed churches, this implies (approximately) between 10m and 50m visitors per year.

<sup>\*</sup>I corrected for seasonality using the Lincoln seasonal pattern. Full-year figures for Yorkshire will be available later in 2004. Figures represent those three-quarters of churches who have provided data so there may be some self-selection towards the more-visited churches. In addition, some emphasis has been placed on making the visitors’ book easily available, so the times-ten multiplier may exaggerate.

### Who are the visitors?

One survey of visitors to rural churches (see note 9 to this section) threw up three interesting features. (The survey was a self-selected sample, so the results need to be treated with caution. There were 12,700 questionnaires returned, with 165 churches taking part.)

First, visitors are far more likely than the general population to be regular churchgoers. Some 56% of church visitors attend church at least once a month, as against a figure of perhaps 10% for the whole population. The challenge must be to widen the support base for church tourism amongst those who are not regular church goers.

Secondly, six out of ten visitors (62%) came from more than 30 miles away, and another one in ten (12%) from outside the UK. This confirms that church tourism is attractive to some people as a way of

spending holiday time, and is therefore likely to have economic value.

Finally, and to my surprise, a very high proportion of people visiting a church will have already visited, or be going to visit, other churches within a seven day period (for purposes other than worship). That is, many church tourists are taking their church tourism seriously. My interpretation of the statistics<sup>\*\*</sup> is that only about 2 out of ten (20%) people will be visiting one and only one church during a seven day period, and many of the others will be visiting four or more. This deserves further investigation.

<sup>\*\*</sup>The statistics show that two out of ten people (18%) had already visited three or more other churches during the preceding seven days (not counting visits for worship), one out of ten (12%) had already visited two others, and another two out of ten (21%) had already visited just one other. The questionnaire was taken at a random moment in people’s church visiting, and some of those filling in the questionnaire would go on to visit other churches, and I have allowed for this in my interpretation of the figures.

### Do visitors pose a risk to the church buildings?

There is not the space to discuss fully here the risks of opening a church. One current view is that leaving a church open reduces the likelihood of vandalism and theft, by a factor which is variously quoted as being between three and six. An open church is more frightening to a potential thief, who fears he may be disturbed in action. I believe that one major insurer charges equal premiums whether churches are locked or unlocked during daylight hours.

Sources: personal communications, and *Rural Visitors* (referenced in note 9, below), pages 17, 20, 21. See also the Bibliography.



Table 6.4

Tourism to private historic houses and CoE listed churches (2001/2)

	Number of attractions	Time spent at attraction, minutes	Number of visitors, millions	Annual contributor to wider economy from visitors
Private historic houses	700 <sup>1</sup>	133 <sup>2</sup>	11	£1.6bn <sup>3</sup>
CoE listed churches	12,000 <sup>4</sup>	?? 20 <sup>5</sup>	10 – 50 <sup>6</sup>	???

Sources: HHA, 2001: 'Briefing paper from the Historic Houses Association: June 2001' available at <www.hha.org.uk/downloads/concerns\_and\_proposals.doc>; *Key facts for visitor attractions 2002*: available at <www.staruk.org.uk/default.asp?ID=674&parentid=512> (note '//' after 'uk')

## Notes

1. England, Wales and Scotland. Of these, only about one half (332) open regularly to the public; a further 355 provide some form of public access (HHA, 2001).
2. From *Key facts*, 2002.
3. From HHA, 2001. Probably an over-estimate. See text.
4. England. See Section 2 of this paper.
5. An estimate. At greater churches, the average time spent is 66 minutes (*Key facts 2002*).
6. My estimate. See box 'Visitors to churches'.

Furthermore, an enjoyable visit to a church, and the sense that there is more to see, may lead to the visitor returning to the area. So there is a multiplying effect. As the North Yorkshire Church Tourism Initiative puts it (personal communication):

As churches are rarely the catalyst for a visit to a particular area it is extremely difficult to quantify the direct economic benefits for the local economy of promoting church tourism. We feel, however, that by welcoming visitors into churches we will add value to their stay and that this will encourage longer and repeat visits as well as potentially encouraging a niche market of church visitors to North Yorkshire.

In addition, churches help tourism indirectly by contributing to the quality of the environment. That is, even for those who do not visit churches, the presence of attractive churches and churchyards may be a factor encouraging them to visit an area (see Map 2.1). Based on recent research, the National Trust has estimated that 'some 40% of employment in tourism depends directly on a high quality environment', rising to between 60% and 70% in a rural context, the 'environment' here referring both to countryside and the built environment.<sup>12</sup> It could well be argued that many churches, and the churchyards surrounding them, contribute significantly to the quality of the environment, so that churches are assisting tourism even when they are not the destination of visitors.

So if churches help tourism, *how does tourism help church buildings?* If church buildings are bringing general benefit – if, to put it crudely, the pub sells more lunches, and more people stay for bed and breakfast – how are churches to capture their fair share of this, to reward the voluntary time and effort they are putting in, and the fact they spend money maintaining the building?

I understand that one church tourism scheme is thinking that churches might become actively engaged in running heritage tours. Another development has been that of 'Hidden Britain Centres', presenting local assets in a coherent way to the tourism market; some of these are being developed around or by the parish church.

In general, however, from what I have seen and heard, I am not convinced that churches do receive a decent return for their endeavours. At the local level, and to a limited extent, the mechanisms are in place. A Friends group can provide a route for businesses to channel money into the church building on a goodwill basis; but the number of such groups, though growing, is still small. In rural areas, parish councils (the secular bodies) could take a role; but I

am not sure that in practice they do very often help fund church buildings, over and above any funds they give to maintain the churchyard. It is unlikely that the wider environmental value of churches in encouraging tourism would be captured in these ways.

In short, it seems to me that churches could benefit more than they currently do from their contribution to tourism. But I may be wrong, and would welcome correction.

### Wider use – a quandary

Section 4 described the large number of community activities which churches undertake.

These activities are valued to the extent that some receive public funding. The quandary is this: for many CoE congregations (far more than for other denominations and faiths) one of the largest fixed costs – and biggest headaches – is their historic, listed church building, which acts as home base, and from which springs much of their activity. *But unless the church building itself is converted for community use, it will not directly benefit from funding for church activities.*

## 6.3 The view of the Government and its agencies

What of the Government's view, and that of its agencies? I have no inside track, and can only report on those aspects which have come to my attention. This section may not, therefore, provide a balanced overview, and I would welcome further information.

In general terms, in its policy statement *A Force for the Future*, the Government has recognised the value of the historic environment. The ministerial foreword says that:<sup>13</sup>

England's historic environment is one of our greatest national resources. But it is about more than bricks and mortar . . . something from which we can learn, from which our economy benefits and which can bring our communities together in a shared sense of belonging. . . . [The historic environment] can be a force for regeneration and a powerful contribution to people's quality of life.

Later it acknowledges the value of church buildings, saying that 'at a more local level a historic church . . . can help define a neighbourhood and create a sense of cohesion'.

The Government has also accepted that facilities provided by churches play a part in community life. When announcing the licence exemption for entertainment in churches (February 2003), Dr Kim Howells, then a minister at the DCMS, said:<sup>14</sup>

I recognise that church and community halls are integral to community life and provide a social hub in a great many rural and urban areas. I am determined to enable them to continue to play this essential role.

The Countryside Agency's *State of the Countryside 2003* report values the presence of a church equally with that of a pub or primary school in helping create 'community vibrancy' in rural areas.<sup>15</sup>

As we saw in Section 4.4, various arms of Government are showing increasing interest in the value of churches as supporters of community, and there is some appreciation of the importance of buildings in that process.

However, as far as I am aware, the Government has not articulated an explicit policy towards historic church buildings.

On the negative side, one disappointing aspect is that the grant to the CCT has been reduced in real terms, curtailing its ability to take on new churches (see earlier discussion, page 21). Furthermore, the comparatively tiny grant to the Victorian Society for a churches case-worker has also not been renewed by EH.

More positively, the Government has introduced a temporary VAT-reclaim scheme for repair work to listed places of worship, and is hoping to negotiate a permanent arrangement within the context of European VAT reform. In his budget speech announcing the scheme, the Chancellor said that 'in both urban and rural areas, our churches are essential centres for civic life and are at the heart of our rich heritage as a nation'.<sup>16</sup>

The EH/HLF grant schemes continue to devote large and growing sums of money to expensive urgent repairs. Revised guidance from EH on *New Work in Historic Places of Worship* explicitly takes account of changing patterns of use.<sup>17</sup>

In general, it may be that there is room for a more powerful argument to be made to government about the extent to which the tourist trade depends on accessible, well-kept church buildings. This, coupled with the

growing appreciation of the value of church community activity, the role they play in building social capital, and the evidence that churches create a sense of place which is valued, might help develop an agreed economic and social framework within which to discuss support for church buildings.

But even without this, it seems that many adults in Great Britain already support the idea of central government assistance for maintaining church and chapel buildings (see Table 4.1). The positive public attitude demonstrated in this survey – even although the issue is not one which has yet aroused general public concern – should, perhaps, encourage us to search for innovative ways, perhaps at local level, of ensuring that historic church buildings continue to be available for public use and enjoyment, underpin tourism, and act as a base for community activities.

## Notes

1. Jackson, *Hope for the Church*. For the 1989/1998 comparison, see Figure 11.1 (It is not clear whether the churches were all Anglican or of mixed denominations); for small congregations, see chapter 11, *passim*; for impact of age on growth, see table 13.1.
2. Wilding, *Redundant Churches*, pages 7 and 22, and compare actuals.
3. Personal communication.
4. This and following paragraph: personal communications from: Church Commissioners, CCC and diocesan officers's observation.
5. Diocese of Chelmsford, *Review*.
6. Brierley, *Tide*, Tables 66 and 71.
7. Based on my analysis of projects listed on the Local Heritage Initiative website, November 2003, <[www.lhi.org.uk/projects\\_directory/index.html](http://www.lhi.org.uk/projects_directory/index.html)>.
8. English Tourism Council, *The Heritage Monitor*, 2000/1, Table 7.4.
9. Francis and Martineau, *Rural Visitors*, pages 84 and 108. Note that in this survey the sample of respondees was self-selected, so must be treated with caution. There has also been criticism of the ranking system on the questionnaire. For further breakdown of the desire to have a space for prayer, see Keith Littler and Leslie Francis, 'What rural churches say to non-churchgoers', *Rural Theology* 1 (1) (Issue 61, 2003), pages 57–62.
10. Referred to in Francis and Martineau, *Rural Visitors*, page 10.
11. The Historic Houses Association quoted research on *international* travellers, indicating that 4% of visitor expenditure went to attractions, 96% to businesses in the wider community. They then uplifted their entrance-fee income (presumably around £60m) by the ratio 96/4 to obtain an estimate of £1.6bn. However *domestic* tourists have a different expenditure profile from international tourists; a quick search of the data to hand (on <[www.staruk.org.uk](http://www.staruk.org.uk)>) suggests that the appropriate figure for domestic tourists staying more than one night is 8% / 92%, and for day trippers (1998 survey, the most recent I could easily obtain) 9% / 91%. However I have not investigated this carefully, and these figures should be treated with caution. (Briefing paper from the Historic Houses Association: June 2001, available from <[www.hha.org.uk/downloads/concerns\\_and\\_proposals.doc](http://www.hha.org.uk/downloads/concerns_and_proposals.doc)>.)
12. National Trust, *Valuing our Environment : Summary*, available from <[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/policy/valuingenvironment.html](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/policy/valuingenvironment.html)>. The definition of 'environment' is clear from the detailed reports, available at the same web address.
13. Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future* (2001), pages 4 and 7, available from <[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)>.
14. Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Press Notice 3 February 2003.
15. The Countryside Agency, *The State of the Countryside 2003*, page 17, available from <[www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/)>.
16. Budget speech, 7 March 2001.
17. English Heritage, *New Work in Historic Places of Worship* (2003), available from <[www.english-heritage.org.uk/Filestore/publications/pdf/free/PLACES\\_OF\\_WORSHIP\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/Filestore/publications/pdf/free/PLACES_OF_WORSHIP_WEB.pdf)>.

### CONVERSATION WITH TAXI DRIVER

*After the normal chit chat, conversation moved on to hobbies. I explained that I was fascinated by church buildings.*

*Me:* At the moment, I'm writing an article about the upkeep of church buildings.

*Driver:* Oh aye.

*Me:* If congregations can't keep them up, a lot of them will have to close.

*Driver:* I'd be sorry to see them go. They make a difference to the town [large northern mill town].

*Me:* And the countryside?

*Driver:* Uh huh.

*Me:* Would you be prepared to pay a special tax to keep them? Ten pounds a year say?

*Driver:* Yes, well it'd be a lot better than some of the things they do with our money . . .

## 7. And so . . . ?

### Purpose of this section

*A summary of the report will be found on page 3*

My purpose in this paper has been to inform the debate about our parish church buildings. I did not intend to make recommendations; and on the whole I think I have resisted the temptation (not always without difficulty).

However, some of the facts which I have presented do of themselves suggest possible actions, which may be worth further consideration; these are discussed in this section. Most of these require funding, though in some cases the amounts are relatively small.

I am most certainly *not* implying that the suggestions made here are sufficient to resolve all the issues. They are merely the ones which arise more or less mechanically from the evidence.

### Need for research

It is clear that in some important respects, we do not know what is going on. There is an urgent need for focused research in the areas shown in the box (my apologies if work is already being carried out in these areas of which I am ignorant).

The appointment by English Heritage of a full-time Head of Research for Places of Worship is encouraging, and will help take matters forward. An appropriate balance will need to be struck between academic and policy research.

### Reducing the pressures

From the evidence presented in the earlier sections, it seems that the pressures on churches could be reduced in several ways.

First, if seed-corn funding could be found, then a relatively small number of dedicated, specialist staff might make a real difference, as shown in the box.

Secondly, it would be helpful to parishes if the various grant-giving bodies could reach an agreed view as to policies, timetables and processes. In general, the end-to-end ‘customer experience’ should be reviewed to see if life can be made any easier for their customers, the congregations.

Thirdly, the moral hazard associated with some grant schemes could usefully be re-examined, to see if ‘reward for virtue’ cannot be introduced into the system. As pointed out earlier, this is not a simple issue.

Fourthly, there is the problem of poor routine maintenance (clearing gutters and so forth). This has been with us for at least fifty years, and so far attempts to deal with it by education have not solved the problem. Perhaps it is time for a more direct approach, with a gradual shift of funding towards routine maintenance. To put this in financial context, if 12,000 listed parish churches each had maintenance carried out without direct charge to them, at £500 per year per church, the total cost would only be £6m, much less than the annual EH/HLF grant budget.

#### RESEARCH AGENDA: A PERSONAL VIEW

1. What are the **expectations** of parishes about their own future and that of their church buildings? What changes would most improve their prospects.
2. How many people are providing **routine support for church buildings** (see Appendix G)?
3. What is the **repair gap**, between what a parish ought to spend on repairs, and does spend? What is the current outstanding repair bill, and how urgent are the outstanding repairs?\*
4. What is the economic impact of churches on **tourism**? Are churches capturing a fair share of the value they are generating?
5. How do parishes raise **funds**? What has been the trend in parish fabric reserves? What is it like to go through the cycle of applying for grants, dealing with the amenity societies, obtaining a faculty, raising money and seeing through repairs?
6. What is the underlying demand for **new facilities** in church buildings (for example, kitchens, toilets, disabled access, extension)? What benefits accrue to the wider community?
7. How successful have **major conversions** been in preserving fine buildings. What works? What does not work?

\*We will know more on this next year, as the CoE is asking parishes to report on their outstanding repair bill.

More than this might be saved in catching repairs very early.

Fifthly, it could be useful to improve the supply of grants for emergency repairs, to deal with them before they become too expensive. (I believe that possible pilot schemes are being explored in two dioceses, in collaboration with EH). This type of grant needs to be handled pragmatically, taking individual account of each situation, rather than having formalised equity of treatment.

Finally, there is a matter much discussed on the ground, but on which I have not presented any formal evidence: the question of pews – a type of seating which is good at packing people in, but (in its normal form) makes the building inflexible in use. Although pews are sometimes valued by parishes for their associations or aesthetic qualities, I suspect that many other parishes would like to remove some or all of them, but are nervous about lengthy discussions with the authorities. Another complication is the requirement of fire officers for fixed or locked seating if concerts are regularly held. I understand (personal communication) that EH are considering a

### USE OF SEED-CORN FUNDING ON STAFF: A PERSONAL VIEW

#### Make champions and expertise available in the following areas:

**Tourism**, to promulgate best practice and raise the profile of church tourism

**'Friends of churches'**, to provide central advice and encouragement, and speed up the spread of ideas

**Grants**, to negotiate nationally with the grant-giving bodies on their policies and practice, and to channel experience and expertise into the parishes

**Additional use of church buildings**, to disseminate ideas and learning quickly into dioceses and parishes

**Fabric advice** (as already in Manchester and London), to assist parishes in utilising their assets and planning ahead

research project on the historic and architectural importance of church seating, to inform their future advice on the subject. A strong and co-ordinated lead on this matter from EH and the CoE could be very helpful, perhaps taking into account what has happened where pews have already been taken out.

### Limitations of the above proposals

The above suggestions might provide general support for churches, although I do not claim they will be sufficient.

However, they are not targeted at struggling churches, close to redundancy. It is the churches with the smallest congregations (relative to the cost of maintaining the building) which are most at risk, yet which may find it hardest to take action to benefit from any of these proposals. An emerging theme of this report has been the need to take into account the rather different needs of very tiny congregations in formulating policy.

Nor does any of this explore new ways of handling redundant buildings. In both these cases, more innovative thinking is required.

### Overlapping agendas?

To an external observer, there does seem room for a developing and perhaps more explicit partnership between faith groups (such as the CoE) and government in all its aspects. In some important respects their agendas overlap, as church communities, making use of their buildings, play a part in building voluntary involvement, community capacity and 'social capital'.

Furthermore historic CoE church buildings can and do provide opportunities for tourism – a major industry – as well as education, cultural and social events, the awareness of heritage, the sense of place and a focus for regeneration, many of which are matters of concern to government. Here, perhaps, are the bare bones of a social and economic framework for discussing the roles of the various parties.

### Time for something new?

Finally I should like to add a personal view. From the evidence to hand, we cannot predict what will happen next. However, the formal evidence, backed up by anecdote, leads me to believe there is a real risk we will see a sharp increase in the rate of redundancy in the next five to fifteen years, quite possibly to levels never seen before. Under current arrangements I believe we would see many fine buildings, in both town and countryside, facing a bleak future.

Because of the uncertainty about the level of threat to church buildings, I believe we should begin *now* to explore new approaches to avoiding redundancy, and new ways of handling it when it occurs. In this way we will learn in good time what works and what does not.

If we wait, I fear we may be taken by surprise.

### A future for church buildings

Recently the CoE has agreed a significant policy statement, *A Future for Church Buildings* – an essential read for anyone interested in this area – and has put in place dedicated resource to develop this strategy. As a result the CoE will soon be submitting to Government specific proposals for action, founded on partnership between various stakeholders. In the foreword of this policy statement the Bishop of London alludes to 'a new way forward'. The time is surely ripe.

*This paper reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of the Ecclesiological Society or its Council*

For those interested in pursuing the topic, the Ecclesiological Society website, <[www.ecclsoc.org](http://www.ecclsoc.org)>, will post corrections to this paper, together with new information and informed comment.

### IN PRAISE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

*From a discussion website:* I am sceptical of the ability of the alternatives suggested [i.e. suggestions for state-funding of church buildings]. Would they be:

- Capable of engaging the same commitment in their supporters
- As free or more free of bureaucracy
- As effective in protecting buildings
- As accountable
- As effective in opening buildings
- As cost-effective
- Capable of withstanding changes in political fashion – that is, can work for centuries not decades

Source: abbreviated from posting on Churchcrawler forum  
<[www.churchcrawler.co.uk](http://www.churchcrawler.co.uk)>



# Appendix A: The cost of church repairs

## A1 Introduction

This appendix provides:

- a snapshot of the current outstanding repair needs of churches
- an estimate of how fast new deterioration occurs and new needs are discovered
- information about annual expenditure on repairs
- some technical comments.

The results are used in Section 3.1.

## A2 Snapshot

The state of repair of churches is not normally centrally collected or monitored, though I understand the CoE is planning to collect data on this in its next annual round of reporting. The diocese of Sheffield is also running a trial to collect breakdowns of the cost of outstanding

repairs on a routine basis, though finding some difficulties with the need to obtain estimates. We are therefore reliant on four sources, discussed below and summarised in Table A1. Full references will be found in the Bibliography. More detailed figures are available on the Ecclesiological Society website (<www.ecclsoc.org>).

**Manchester** EH and the diocese of Manchester carried out a survey of the diocese's churches, reporting the results in 1997. For *listed* churches, a quick attempt was made to assess obvious repairs, and to put their likely cost into one of three bands – zero (120 churches in this category), £15k – £100k (22 churches), over £100k (24 churches); all in money of the time (converted to 2002 money in Table A1). Thus 85% of listed churches were estimated to have necessary repairs less than £100k. We do not know how

many of the 15% of churches with outstanding repairs above £100k were close to this figure and how many a long way above. The figures must anyway be treated with caution, as the report emphasized that they were a very broad estimate, made quickly, and that the person making this estimate was not an architect.

The report also assessed every church (not just listed ones). Those not in good condition were classified as 'poor' or 'needing attention'. Neither of these terms are defined in the report, but in the context of listed buildings, 'poor' always coincides with an estimated repair spend at that date of over £100k, and 'needing attention' churches had this level of spend indicated about one third of the time. Approximately 9% of churches were said to be in 'poor' condition, and 21% 'needing attention'. The figures by grade were: Grade I/II\*, 6% poor, 26% needing attention; Grade II, 12% and 21%; unlisted, 8% and 20%.

**Claridge** In 1994, Geoffrey Claridge visited 119 CoE churches and 18 non-Anglican places of worship, and assessed their condition by inspection. The observable outstanding repairs averaged just under £80k per church (2002 money). The sample was selected to contain a good mix of buildings, though it did contain a number of non-Anglican buildings. We do not know how fully representative it was. When Jeremy Eckstein contacted some of the churches a few years later, in a number of cases the cost of repairs had been underestimated: which will be a surprise to no-one, but needs to be borne in mind with this approach.

Claridge regarded roughly half (£40k) of this average of £80k outstanding repairs as work which should be carried out within five years. From this he concluded that the churches should spend an average £8k each over the next five years. At that point they would be left with non-urgent repairs costing £40k, plus any new discoveries of repair needs from the input side of the repairs 'pipeline' (page 26); he did not attempt to estimate this.

Claridge did not publish the spread of outstanding repairs, but Eckstein (2) did for a sample of 53 of the churches. Half of these 53 churches had outstanding repairs estimated to cost less than about £50k in 2002 money. One third had repairs estimated to cost more than £70k. In some

Table A1

### Four sources of evidence for the value of outstanding repairs to church buildings<sup>1</sup>

All figures in 2002 money and rounded. Blanks indicate 'not known'

'<' means 'less than', '>' means 'more than'

	Man- chester	Claridge	Arch- deaconry	CCT
Number of churches in sample	166	137 <sup>2</sup>	59	31
Date	1997	1994	2002	mid 90s onwards
Predominant type of church	Urban	Mixed	Urban	Medieval village
Listed?	All	Some	Some	Hi-listed <sup>3</sup>
<b>Distribution of repair costs<sup>4</sup></b>				
Lower quartile	-	-	£20k	£50k
Median	-	£50k	£50k	£100k
Upper quartile	< £140k	> £70k	£175k	£200k
<b>Proportion of churches with repairs equal or above a given cost</b>				
Repairs at least £100k	>15%	-	34%	54%
Repairs at least £200k	-	-	24%	26%
Repairs at least £500k	-	-	12%	3%
Repairs at least £1m	-	-	8%	0%
<b>Average repair cost</b>				
Entire sample	-	£80k	£230k	£150k
Omitting all costs of £1m or more	-	-	£95k	£150k
Omitting all of £500k or more	-	-	£75k	£130k

### Notes

1. See text for the four sources of evidence.

2. The average was based on 137 churches; the median and upper quartile data on a sub-sample of 53 which may not have had exactly the same distribution as the full sample of 137.

3. Mostly listed Grades I and II\*.

4. A quarter of the churches have repair costs below the 'lower quartile', one half of them below the 'median', and three quarters fall below the 'upper quartile'.

Sources: see text. The data is presented in detail on <www.ecclsoc.org>.

cases it must have been considerably more than this (to give the correct average overall), but we do not have data on this.

It may be worth pointing out that Claridge's uplift from his sample of churches to estimates of total cost for all churches was understated, because it did not allow for the fact that some parishes have more than one church.

**Urban archdeaconry** One urban archdeaconry (personal communication) recently (2002) collated its estimated outstanding repair costs for nearly 60 churches. There is a very high proportion of Victorian churches in this archdeaconry, including some giant ones. Half of the churches believe they faced bills of £50k or less. A quarter of churches expected to pay some £150k or more. At the very top end, five churches (nearly 10% of them) had anticipated repairs of more than £1m. These five are very large Victorian buildings. Without these five, the average was something under £100k per church; with them, rather more than £200k. Is this archdeaconry typical of Victorian town churches? – I do not know.

**Churches Conservation Trust** The CCT brings all its churches up to a reasonable condition within a few years of acquisition. I analysed the initial costs (in 2002 money) for the most recent churches for which a full five years data is available, 31 in all. Most of these are medieval village churches, with just four Victorian buildings, three of those in villages. The cost of bringing the churches up to scratch varies greatly between churches. About a quarter of the churches come in below £50k, and about a half below £100k. The top quarter of the churches cost more than £200k. The average is about £150k, raised by the impact of a few large repair bills – if one omits the four churches with bills over £300k, the average is around £100k. The three Victorian village churches are spread across the cost range; the single urban Victorian church cost rather more than £250k, and was thus one of the more expensive ones.

Can the CCT experience be generalized? No – these churches are not a random sample, not least because they are predominantly medieval and rural, they are often under-maintained and neglected, and the churches have not infrequently been vandalised in advance of vesting. But the figures may give a clue to the condition of typical rural churches.

**Discussion** The evidence presents three difficulties. First, of the four pieces of evidence, only one (the CCT results)

was based on actual costs, rather than estimates. Secondly, we do not know how representative these churches are of the entire population of churches. Finally, the small number of churches means that averages are not reliable; this is because averages are greatly affected by a small number of very large repairs, and there is no guarantee that our samples have not accidentally included too many or too few of these large repairs. The results therefore need to be treated with caution.

It is notable that the CCT figures are higher than the figures in the other samples. Are the CCT churches more expensive because they have been neglected? Or because the CCT figures are the only ones reflecting actual rather than estimated costs? We do not know. The exception to this is at the very top: the CCT does not have as many very expensive repairs (more than £1m, say) as the sample from the urban archdeaconry; this is probably because of the lack of Victorian churches in the CCT sample.

As regards the proportion of repairs above £100k, the Manchester study is well below the other two samples for which we have figures. This may be because the Manchester estimates were made by a non-architect as part of a wider study, and some necessary repair work was therefore not identified.

The Claridge report has the lowest average cost. Perhaps there were not many large Victorian churches in the sample, or they happened to be in reasonable condition. The average of the Claridge sample is roughly equal to that of the

other samples if their most expensive repairs are stripped out.

What overall conclusions can we draw about the generality of churches? None with any certainty. We might guess that 50% of listed churches – some 6000 buildings – have outstanding repairs which are less than £100k. Indeed, these 6000 buildings might all have repair needs less than £50k. The next 3000 (25%) of churches probably all fall below £200k, perhaps well below. As for the final 3000 listed churches, the sky is probably the limit, and our evidence does not help us to guess how many might require very large sums of money. As to the *average* size of outstanding repair, one might hazard a guess that it lies between £80k and £250k, the actual result depending heavily on how many very large Victorian churches there are, and how many are in a state of serious disrepair. This would imply a total outstanding repair bill of between £1000m and £3000m. This is not terribly helpful, as we do not know how quickly the repairs need to be carried out.

### A3 Rate of deterioration

It would be useful to know the normal rate at which new deterioration will be occurring and repair needs discovered, as this would provide a figure for 'steady-state' repair expenditure per year.

The only data I could find on this is the expenditure of the CCT, which tends to catch repairs fairly early. This body began life in 1969 and now has more than three hundred churches, mainly rural medieval. Omitting recently acquired churches, where large sums are sometimes spent bringing the churches to a good condition, my analysis of recent years' expenditure suggests that repairs for each of their churches – which are mainly medieval village buildings – accumulate at an average of about £7,000 per church per year, in 2002 money. I have not analysed whether there is any trend over time for an individual church.

### A4 Annual expenditure

The actual annual expenditure on repairs of CoE churches is about £5,000 per church per year, as discussed in the body of the report. (This figure should be used in preference to the Eckstein(1) results, which, we now know are underweight in churches with zero expenditure, due to the sampling difficulties which he identified. If the Eckstein figures are corrected for zero expenditure, they are comparable with the figures in Table A2.)

Table A2  
**Actual spending on church repairs in the CCT and CoE**  
Omitting recently acquired churches

Spend on repairs	CCT (2002)	CoE all parishes (2001)
	% of Churches	% of Parishes
zero	38	42
up to £1k	14	9
£1k – £5k	20	24
£5k – £10k	7	10
£10k – £20k	11	8
£20k – £50k	6	5
£50k – £100k	3	2
Over £100k	1	
	100% = 305 churches	100% = 12,951 parishes

Source: CCT, *Annual Report*, 2002; CoE, personal communication

How much do churches *want* to spend? The applications for EH/HLF grants for listed churches in the most recent year totalled roughly double the approximately £20m which was available. This might suggest that the desire for repairs to listed churches is higher than actual repairs by £30m (allowing for matched funding of half the £20m core grant) for the type of urgent, large repairs funded by EH/HLF. If so, this would mean (estimating the number of listed churches) that the demand is greater per listed church by £2,500 than the £5,000 actually spent. This may also be true of unlisted churches (who are not eligible for these grants). However, we do not know if this is a recurring annual demand or a one-off need.

The CCT spends an average of £7k per year on repairs, and the CoE about £5k, suggesting the CoE is underspending, particularly given the CoE's portfolio of Victorian buildings, not matched by the CCT. However, as discussed, averages can be misleading. It is better to look at the

profile of expenditure, as in Table A2. This compares the CoE spend with that of the CCT. (The CCT figure is for all churches in the CCT portfolio except those acquired within the previous five years, which may be undergoing initial repairs and are thus not representative.) Because the CoE data is for parishes and the CCT data for churches, they are not strictly comparable, but the broad picture is clearly the same, with most expenditure at the low end of the scale. However the impression is given that fewer CoE than CCT churches are spending at the top end of repair expenditure, and this may explain the difference in average spend between the two.

## A5 Technical notes

Because of the impact of a few churches with exceptionally large repairs, it is impossible to calculate robust averages without having very large sample sizes. Any future research should not expect to obtain reliable average figures. Instead,

information should be presented as profiles – for example, by providing deciles (10% bands) of expenditure.

When trying to assess the condition of churches by using a sample, in theory the sample should be representative of churches of all sizes, styles, ages, materials, and climatic conditions. Ideally churches should also be segmented by the amount spent on repairs in the recent past, as this will affect the current condition. This complexity of sampling is probably unachievable, but careful thought needs to be given to samples.

There has been some attempt (Eckstein (1) and more systematically Eckstein (2)) to calculate the costs of repairing listed buildings, as against unlisted. (Claridge did not attempt this, but used a single average figure of repair for listed and unlisted buildings.) This information would be helpful in understanding the notional cost to the CoE of not being allowed to abandon listed buildings, release the sites, and run modern, cheaper

*Continued at foot of opposite page*

# Appendix B: Churches requiring regrading

This appendix uses two sources of evidence to estimate the number of churches which might require regrading: the EH study in Manchester (about 330 churches), and the joint EH/CCC Claridge study of a mixed sample of 137 churches. The results of these two studies are shown on the left of Table B1.

EH has recently carried out a study of religious buildings in Liverpool, and this may result in a number of churches being considered for a change in listed status. No results have been published, nor

formal discussions taken place. However I understand (EH, personal communication) that early indications are that the proportion whose listing status may need to be reconsidered is of the same order of magnitude as was found in the Manchester and Claridge studies.

If the average of the Manchester and Claridge studies is taken to be representative of all English churches, then of the order of 1,750 churches would need regrading (1,250 + 500, bottom right of table). This figure must be treated with

considerable caution: the Manchester sample is almost entirely urban, so not representative, and the Claridge sample of 137 churches is small (and whether it is representative is not known). Furthermore, it is suspected that the quality of listing varies across England.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that criteria for listing alter over time, as different facets of the historic environment are given changing weight, so the task of grading is unending.

Table B1

### Estimated number of churches requiring regrade

All figures rounded

Claridge and Manchester estimates of percentage of churches deserving regrade					Estimated churches requiring regrading, using average of Claridge and Manchester percentage estimates		
% of original grade suggested could be moved UP		% of original grade suggested could be moved DOWN		Number currently in each grade	Estimated number deserving to move:		
Claridge	Manch'r	Claridge	Manch'r		UP	DOWN	
I	-	-	12%	4200	0	250	
II*	-	14%	-	4200	290	210	
II	26%	9%	-	3800	670	40	
unlisted	13%	2%	-	3900	290	0	
				total =	total =	total =	
				16200	1250	500	

Source: Claridge *Report* (1998); Manchester, *Survey*; Appendix F

## Appendix C: EH/HLF Grants

This appendix shows, in Table C1, the annual size of grant made by EH/HLF to churches (excluding cathedrals) since 1987. Grants were made to churches by English Heritage in the years preceding 1986/7, but this information is not shown in the table. The information is summarised in Section 3.3.

In October 1996, English Heritage (EH) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) launched the *Joint grant scheme for churches and other places of worship* (JPOW). Apart

from a single offer by HLF in 1996/7, no offers were made under the scheme until the financial year 1997/8. From then on, offers to places of worship were made under the scheme, apart from those to CoE and Roman Catholic cathedrals under EH's separate scheme.

In 2001, EH was asked by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to make a contribution to the Government's new grant scheme to reimburse VAT costs incurred in repairs

and maintenance to listed places of worship. This contribution by EH was agreed at £2m in 2001/2 and £4m in the following year, a total of £6m. EH decided to fund this by reducing offers to places of worship under the JPOW during 2001/2. This explains the lower figure for that year.

In April 2002 the scheme was relaunched as *Repair grants for places of worship in England 2002 to 2005* (RGPOW).

Table C1

**Annual grants for church repairs (excluding cathedrals) awarded by English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund under various schemes, from year ending April 1987**

£m money of the time (except final column, 2003 money)

£m money of the time (except final column, 2000 money)								
Year-end (April)	EH grants awarded			HLF grants awarded		Total (money of time)	Total (2003 money)	Notes
	£m			£m		£m	£m	
	Scheme			Scheme				
	<i>pre-JPOW</i>	<i>JPOW</i>	<i>RGPOW</i>	<i>JPOW</i>	<i>RGPOW</i>			
1987	5,300					5,300	10,969	1
88	6,100					6,100	12,046	2
89	7,100					7,100	13,289	1
90	8,200					8,200	14,234	1
91	9,100					9,100	14,728	3
92	10,700					10,700	16,451	3
93	11,200					11,200	16,626	4
94	12,500					12,500	17,938	4
95	14,100					14,100	19,581	4
96	10,800					10,800	14,262	4
97	9,900			967		10,867	13,923	4
98		10,023		7,790		17,813	22,292	4
99		12,202		13,268		25,470	30,800	4
2000		9,994		5,488		15,482	18,210	4
01		13,747		10,506		24,253	27,332	4
02		3,170		16,528		19,698	21,633	4,5
03		4,886	5,899	2,080	14,779	27,644	29,026	4
04			10,000		20,000	30,000	30,035	4,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>54,022</b>	<b>15,899</b>	<b>56,627</b>	<b>34,779</b>	<b>266,327</b>	<b>343,376</b>	

Notes

1. Source: *Heritage Monitor* 2. Source: *Heritage Monitor* (status unclear) 3. Source: *Heritage Monitor* (acceptances)  
4. English Heritage records 5. See text 6. Budget

### Appendix A, continued from previous page

buildings. This is a valid attempt to cost the ongoing 'heritage burden'. However, I do not believe that the sampling methodology used to date has given robust results.

It is tempting to try and answer a rather different question – how much extra does the fact of listing add to the cost of repairs. This could validly be answered on an input basis, by considering the extra cost

of materials and workmanship, and the time and cost taken to deal with the regulatory burdens. It should *not* be answered simply by comparing actual spend on listed and unlisted churches, unless one is using a matched sample of listed and unlisted buildings. Without a matched sample, one would largely be identifying the cost differences between rural medieval and second-rate urban

Victorian buildings, rather than listed and unlisted buildings.

Note that unlike commercial property, for a church there is no market heritage premium attached to being listed. However, such church buildings do benefit from the effectively reduced rate of VAT, and from access to EH/HLF grants.



## Appendix D: The number and destination of redundant churches

This appendix summarises the destination of church buildings made redundant since 1969, discussed briefly in Section 2.3.

The number of church buildings made redundant in each five year period is shown in Graph D1. As explained in the body of the report, however (Section 2.3), some 370 were effectively redundant at the beginning of the period, meaning that the initial surge exaggerates the underlying rate. Note also that the second five year period was actually 5 years and 9 months, as the year-end was changed. The fall in the annual number of redundancies in recent years is clearly seen.

When a church is made redundant, it has to go through a formal process which includes reviewing future possible uses. Some churches are then demolished and the site re-used, some are preserved, and some are converted for alternative use.

The destination of all the churches made redundant since 1969 is shown in Table D1, and there is a five-yearly breakdown of the proportions falling into each main category in Graph D2.

No further breakdown of the figures is available, though I understand that the Church Commissioners are working on a database which will enable other cross-comparisons to be carried out, such as the grades of the churches, their location, and their date of build.

*Below left* Graph D1 **Number and destination of churches made redundant 1969–2002, by five-yearly period**

Source: Church Commissioners Redundant Churches Committee, *Report*, 2002

*Below right* Graph D2 **Proportion of redundant churches to various destinations, by five-yearly period**

Source: Church Commissioners Redundant Churches Committee, *Report*, 2002

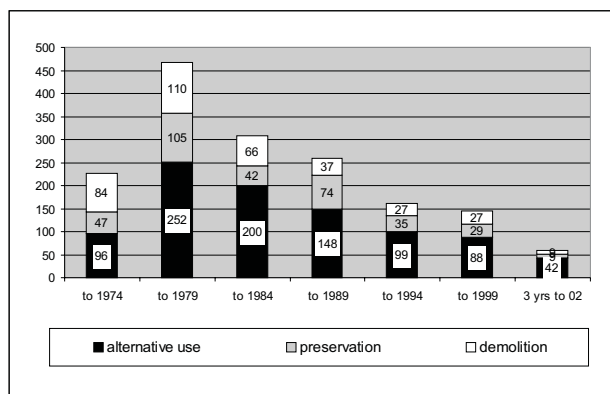
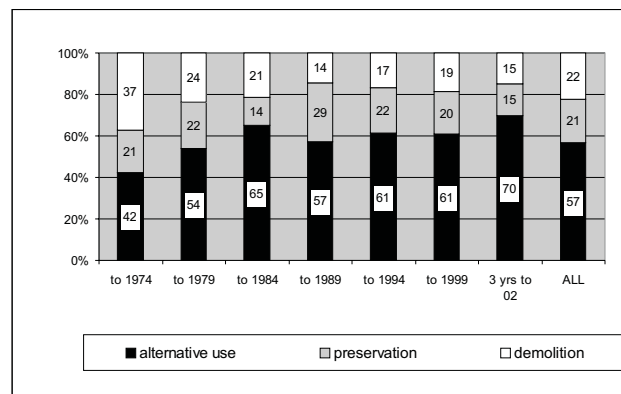


Table D1

**The destination of redundant church buildings, 1969–2002**

	Number	%
<b>Alternative use (details below)</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>57</b>
civic cultural or community purposes	229	14
residential use	204	13
monuments	137	8
worship by other Christian bodies	119	7
light industrial/office/shopping	57	4
arts & crafts, music or drama centres	36	2
storage	35	2
private school chapels	25	2
educational purposes	24	1.5
museums	16	1.0
adjuncts to adjoining estates	10	0.6
sports use	13	0.8
masonic halls	3	0.2
worship by non-Christian faith	2	0.1
restored to parish use / chapel of ease	15	0.9
<b>Demolition and site disposal (details below)</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>22</b>
to housing associations	69	4
to local authorities	48	3
for other community purposes	23	1.4
for new places of worship	60	4
as additions to churchyards	46	3
to other purchasers	111	7
undecided	3	0.2
<b>Preservation (details below)</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>21</b>
by Churches Conservation Trust	331	20
by Diocesan Boards of Finance	6	0.4
by Department of the Environment	4	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1626</b>	<b>100% = 1626 churches</b>

Source: Church Commissioners Redundant Churches Committee, *Report*, 2002



# Appendix E: Statistics for rural churches

## The Rural Churches Survey

Some important results from the Rural Churches Survey (1994) are reported in Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission* (details in Bibliography). They are reproduced here by kind permission.

The survey looked at a sample of 956 CoE churches in rural communities with populations of 3000 or less.

Details of the sample are shown in Table E1. This table also shows my estimate of the number of parishes of each size in England, based on the raw spreadsheet data supporting the Countryside Agency *Rural Services in 2000* report. Note that the survey was of *churches*, and my estimate is of the number of *parishes*. Some parishes will have two or more church buildings, so the numbers in the final row of Table E1 may understate the number of church buildings.

The averages in Tables E2–E5 are weighted averages, using my estimate of the number of rural parishes in England as the weights. They therefore differ slightly from the averages published in *Rural Mission*, where the averages were weighted by the number of churches in the sample.

This count of the number of communities, and the weighted averages, are used in the following tables elsewhere in the report: 3.7, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, G3; and in Graph 4.1.

## The Tables

Tables E2 and E3 show attendance at special services. Table E3 concentrates on the traditional marks of commitment to the CoE – taking part in a communion service at Easter or Christmas. At most of these services, attendance is greater than at normal Sunday services (the exception being the Good Friday service), although the very smallest communities appear to have smaller attendance at some of these events – do worshippers travel to a larger church for this sort of occasion? The three best-attended services are Easter Sunday, Harvest Festival and the Christmas Carol service, where attendance is in most cases greater than the electoral roll, this being more pronounced the smaller the community. These two tables are summarised in Table G3 in Appendix G.

Table E4 shows how rural church buildings are used as the venue for various community-related activities. Church buildings in even the smallest communities are used for this purpose.

Table E1

**Sample size of Rural Churches Survey, and number of rural parishes in England, by population (2000)**

	Population			
	Under 200	200–399	400–899	900–3000
Number of communities in the Rural Churches Survey sample	260	246	218	232
Number of rural parishes in England*	1600	2000	2300	2200

\*My estimate of number of rural parishes of this population in England. See text.

Sources: first row, Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, page 8; second row, National Parish Questionnaire returns used for Countryside Agency *Rural Services in 2000* report, my analysis of summary returns available on Countryside Agency website:

<[www.countryside.gov.uk/EvidenceAndAnalysis/dataHub/rural\\_services\\_survey\\_data/index.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/EvidenceAndAnalysis/dataHub/rural_services_survey_data/index.asp)>

Table E2

**Average attendance at special services for rural churches, by population of community (1994)**

Day of service	Population of community				Avg
	Under 200	200–399	400–899	900–3000	
Christmas carol service	37	64	78	100	72
Harvest Festival	44	59	75	96	71
Easter Sunday	28	40	60	99	59
Remembrance Sunday	13	26	45	88	46
Mothering Sunday	13	33	43	75	43
Christmas midnight	9	26	44	78	42
Christmas Day	20	28	38	57	37
<b>Usual Sunday attendance</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>31</b>
Good Friday	8	10	19	30	18

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 12

Table E3

**Average 'membership' statistics for rural churches, by population of community (1994)**

Using long-standing indicators of 'membership'

	Population of community				Avg
	Under 200	200–399	400–899	900–3000	
<b>Usual Sunday attendance</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>31</b>
Electoral roll	21	39	58	96	56
Christmas communicants (all services)	22	40	54	95	55
Easter Day communicants	19	34	48	79	47

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 11

With the interesting exception of Art Exhibitions (does this include Flower Festivals?), the amount of such activity grows with the size of community. The average figures from this table are reproduced in Table 4.2 in Section 4.

Table E5 shows the extent of change in rural churches. Churches in larger communities tend to have carried out more changes than those in smaller communities. Smaller communities have been more active at introducing organs, but the numbers are small enough for this to be a random effect: or it may be that the smaller communities can no longer afford to maintain their pipe organ and are replacing it with an electronic instrument. This table is summarised in Table 4.3 in Section 4.

Table E4

**Proportion of rural church buildings used for specific community-related activities, by population of community (1994)**

Community-related activity	Population of Community				Avg
	Under 200	200–299	400–899	900–3000	
	%	%	%	%	%
Musical entertainment	26	47	54	62	49
Dramatic performances	3	9	15	19	12
Art exhibition	6	14	15	10	12
Coffee mornings	2	2	8	16	7
Evening social activities	4	4	6	13	7
Tourist information	4	5	5	8	6

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 20

Table E5

**Proportion of rural church buildings where specified changes have been initiated 'within the past five years', by population of community (1994)**

	Population of community				Avg
	Under 200	200–399	400–899	900–3000	
	%	%	%	%	%
New heating system	10	15	18	19	16
New lighting system	9	11	17	11	12
New organ	10	10	6	7	8
Removal of pews	1	4	9	10	6
Repositioning of altar	2	6	6	9	6
Social space inside church	2	4	8	7	6
Provision of toilet	0	2	2	7	3
Provision of kitchen	0	1	2	7	3
Access for disabled	1	1	1	6	2

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*, Table 18

## Appendix F: The number of listed churches

This appendix shows (Table F1, opposite) the number of listed churches in England, by diocese.

The table is based on figures provided by the dioceses in late 2003, except Chelmsford (from Chelmsford, *Review*), and Southwell (website, November 2003). Most dioceses were able to respond to my request in the time available, and I am grateful for their ready help. Of the approximately 16,200 church buildings, all but about 850 are included in the table, and this enables us to be confident in the overall picture.

Although the figures in the table are likely to be broadly correct, they will not be precise, for a number of reasons. One reason is that in some cases I did not ask the dioceses to provide the number of

*unlisted* buildings, and I subsequently calculated this number by subtraction, using the total number of churches published in *Church Statistics 2001*. The latter may have become out of date since publication, causing small errors. The total number of churches in the 'Total' column of the table is about 130 short of that given in *Church Statistics 2001*, not a material concern.

Another difficulty is the possible mistaken inclusion of listed buildings which are not normal, operating churches – such as partially destroyed buildings, and mausoleums in churchyards. These may inadvertently have been included, particularly when I was working from lists provided by the diocese. This was a particular problem with London diocese,

where the number of churches in the table may therefore be a little too high.

Finally, many dioceses pointed out that the numbers may have slipped out of date as they are not always notified when the grade of listing is changed. An advantage of listing is that it requires no activity until a parish wishes to make a change to a building; it may only be at this time that a diocese will update its records.

I have used this data in Table 2.2 in Section 2. For that table, I assumed that Wakefield had the same proportion of listed churches as York, Carlisle as Newcastle, and Liverpool as Manchester. Even if these assumptions are wrong, the relatively small number of churches involved mean that the overall proportions are not much affected.

Table F1

**The approximate number of listed churches, by diocese, where provided (2003)**

	I	II*	II	A	B	C	Not listed <sup>1</sup>	Total <sup>1</sup>	Percent hi-grade <sup>2</sup>	Percent listed
Bath & Wells	199	221	105				(45)	(570)	74%	92%
Birmingham	16	29	43	7	7	5	88	195	30%	55%
Blackburn	14	38	95		2	5	(134)	(288)	19%	53%
Bradford	20	15	64	1	2		(64)	(166)	23%	61%
Bristol	57	50	40				53	200	54%	74%
Canterbury	135	51	16	8	26	21	(72)	(329)	67%	78%
Carlisle <sup>3</sup>										
Chelmsford	150	117	106				241	614	43%	61%
Chester	39	61	142				(133)	(375)	27%	65%
Chichester	179	82	65		20	8	(162)	(516)	54%	69%
Coventry	50	63	49	6	14	7	22	211	63%	90%
Derby	60	73	95				109	337	39%	68%
Durham	38	21	112				127	298	20%	57%
Ely	131	135	37				23	326	82%	93%
Exeter	188	185	222				22	617	60%	96%
Gloucester	142	127	77				39	385	70%	90%
Guildford	33	41	57		3	4	76	214	36%	64%
Hereford	88	127	79	1	45	14	(86)	(426)	61%	83%
Leicester	61	160	65				(42)	(328)	67%	87%
Lichfield	62	130	164		13	5	(211)	(585)	35%	64%
Lincoln	256	159	168				56	639	65%	91%
Liverpool										
London <sup>4</sup>	84	96	133	4	12	11	161	501	39%	68%
Manchester	12	41	135				147	335	16%	56%
Newcastle	40	23	86				(98)	(247)	26%	60%
Norwich	318	255	(38) <sup>5</sup>				(37) <sup>5</sup>	648	88%	94%
Oxford <sup>6</sup>	216	291	143				162	812	62%	80%
Peterborough	163	155	34	1	3		27	383	84%	93%
Portsmouth	30	35	62				(46)	(173)	38%	73%
Ripon & Leeds	37	37	93				(97)	(264)	28%	63%
Rochester	43	43	26	2	28	13	(108)	(263)	44%	59%
St Albans <sup>6</sup>	133	101	84				(93)	(411)	57%	77%
St Edms & Ips	233	184	40				21	478	87%	96%
Salisbury	181	174	105	11	27	9	67	574	68%	88%
Sheffield	36	29	66				77	208	31%	63%
Sodor & Man <sup>7</sup>	5	5	6				28	44	23%	36%
Southwark	29	49	78	1	12	18	181	368	25%	51%
Southwell	109	74	74				57	314	58%	82%
Truro	130	80	54				49	313	67%	84%
Wakefield										
Winchester <sup>8</sup>	82	103	106	3	12	12	95	(413)	48%	77%
Worcester	44	68	47	4	25	16	65	269	52%	76%
York	153	115	172				165	605	44%	73%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3996</b>	<b>3843</b>	<b>3383</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>3693</b>	<b>15242</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>77%</b>

## NOTES

1. The figures for 'Total' and 'Not listed' were not always requested from dioceses. If 'Total' was extracted from *Church Statistics 2001*, it is placed in brackets; similarly if 'not-listed' has been calculated by subtracting the number of listed buildings from the 'Total' figure, it is placed in brackets.

2. 'Hi-grade' means Grade I or II\* or A or B.

3. Carlisle figures currently being revised.

4. For London, see text.

5. The number of Grade II / unlisted buildings in Norwich was estimated by halving the number of buildings which were not Grade I or II\*.

6. The figures for St Albans and Oxford combine grade A with I, B with II\* and II with C.

7. The churches in Sodor & Man are not listed, they are 'registered', and there are no grades

within registration. Sixteen churches are registered, and I have assigned them equally between the three main grades of listing.

8. The number of unlisted churches for Winchester is broadly correct. The listed numbers are pro-rated up from work in progress, a tabulation of churches which covered about three-quarters of the churches in the diocese.



# Appendix G: Measuring support for Church of England church buildings

## G1: Introduction

For the purposes of this paper we would like to know how many individuals regard themselves as responsible for maintaining church buildings, especially in those cases where the number of people is small, and the building therefore at greater risk.

I first discuss each of the available measures and then the actual data, concentrating on small church communities. The results are used in Section 2.2.

## G2: Existing measures

### Parishes not buildings

A fundamental difficulty is that the measures collected centrally by the CoE refer to parishes, not buildings.

With our focus on buildings, this causes us problems, because a large number of parishes have two buildings or more. There is no national breakdown of this: all we know is that there are about five church buildings for every four parishes (16220 church buildings, 12,951 parishes, in 2001). A sensible guess would be that about 8,000 or 9,000 parishes are looking after just one building, and between 3,000 and 4,000 looking after two or more.

For a parish with more than one building, any measurement of income or number of people should be divided by the number of buildings, in order to understand how much support each individual building receives. We cannot do this, because we do not know which parishes to apply the corrections to.

Many multi-church parishes are those with relatively low levels of support. The available figures will therefore mask the pressures and difficulties which are faced by some of the more vulnerable church buildings, because they hide the fact that limited resources are split between two or more buildings.

### Usual Sunday attendance

For nearly 40 years, attendance in the CoE has been measured using Usual Sunday Attendance (**uSa**). This an estimate, made by the parish, of the typical number of people attending church on Sundays.

There are several difficulties with the uSa, the last three of which involve its

failure to reflect current patterns of churchgoing.

a) It is not a well-defined measure, relying on the common sense of the parish. Different parishes and dioceses do it differently.

b) There may be direct financial incentives for the parish to report lower rather than higher figures.

c) The measure takes no account of the monthly cycle of services. In particular, family services once a month often attract very many more people than other services.

d) It ignores attendance at services during the week.

e) It ignores the fact that many churchgoers do not attend church every Sunday. This is discussed in the following two paragraphs.

### Attendance at some Sundays

The uSa measures typical attendance on a Sunday. This means that it understates support. For example, there may be 80 people at a church Sunday after Sunday, but it will not be exactly the *same* 80 people – the number of individuals who attend the church on some but not necessarily all Sundays (and thus support the church on a more or less regular basis) will be more than 80.

The number of individuals who attend worship regularly, but not every Sunday, is significant. Various surveys have provided percentage uplifts which can be applied to typical Sunday attendance to allow for those who do not attend every Sunday.<sup>1</sup> However it is not safe to use that approach here, because we are particularly interested in small congregations, and we do not know if small congregations show the same patterns of attendance as larger ones.

### New measures of routine attendance

To mitigate the difficulties listed in points a) to e) above, the CoE introduced in the year 2000 a new way of measuring attendance. The older measure, uSa, continues to be collected. The new method is properly defined, and does not have direct financial implications for the parish.

During a four-week period in October, attendance at each and every service is counted (in the year 2000, this included weekday weddings and funerals, but they were not included in subsequent years). Parishes are instructed to count just once any individual attending more than one service during a particular week, so double counting should be small.

As regards Sunday, this means that the number of people for each of four Sundays in October is known for each church. From this the highest, the lowest and the average Sunday attendance are recorded for each church.

Similar figures are recorded for entire-week attendance at each church (known, perhaps confusingly, as 'weekly' attendance).

This gives six figures per church: average Sunday attendance (**ASA**) and average weekly (i.e. entire-week) attendance (**AWA**); lowest Sunday attendance and lowest weekly attendance; highest Sunday attendance and highest weekly attendance (**HWA**). The emboldened figures are shown in Table G1.

A four-week period in October is not ideal, as it may contain Harvest Festival, a particularly popular service (and in some years it may not contain it, thus making the measurement more variable). But no month is without problems, and in

Table G1  
**Recent levels of adult commitment to the CoE**

Units: thousands of people

For definitions of measures, see text

	Year		
	2000	2001	2002
<b>uSa</b>	n/a	781	765
<b>ASA</b>	878 <sup>1</sup>	868	835
<b>AWA</b>	1031 <sup>1</sup>	976	937
<b>HWA</b>	1451 <sup>1</sup>	1332	1291
<b>Electoral roll</b>	1377	1372	1206 <sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

1. The figures for ASA, AWA, and HWA included weekday weddings and funerals in 2000, but not in subsequent years.

2. The Electoral Roll was pruned in 2002, and shows the sharp drop which normally occurs when this is done.

Source: *Church Statistics 2001*, and CoE provisional statistics, 2002

Table G2

**All-age attendance per church building (all churches, averaged) at special services, compared with usual Sunday attendance (2001)**

Christmas Day / Eve attendance	161
HWA	105
Easter attendance	98
Christmas communicants	76
Easter communicants	70
ASA	64
<b>Usual Sunday attendance</b>	<b>58</b>

For definitions, see text

Source: *Church Statistics 2001*

ecumenical discussions this was felt to be the best choice.

The measure which is closest in meaning to the old uSa is 'average Sunday attendance' (ASA). Overall, the adult ASA is about 10% higher than the adult uSa, perhaps for reasons a), b) and c) above; but no-one knows for sure.

The nearest one can get to the size of the regular worshipping community at the church – the number of individual people who attend once or more per month on some day of the week – is probably to use the highest weekly attendance (HWA); that is, using the figures for that week in October which had the greatest number of individuals attending services at that church on one or more days over the entire week. Of course, this is not perfect, as some regular attenders will have attended in a week different to that in which the highest attendance occurred,

and this will depress the numbers (and some very rare attenders may happen to have turned up during the busiest week, which will inflate them). But it is probably the best that can be done. Overall, the adult HWA is about 70% higher than the adult uSa, and about the same size as the electoral roll.

### Electoral Roll

The 'electoral roll' for a parish church is a list of people over the age of 16 who have registered for the roll and are thus entitled to vote in the election of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for that parish church. Residence in the parish is common but is not a requirement of registration (if not resident, one must be a habitual worshipper at the church). An individual may be on more than one electoral roll; I do not know how common this is.

As enrolment is a voluntary step, it implies some form of commitment to the church, and is thus the closest the CoE has to 'membership'. The electoral roll is pruned once every six years, when it drops sharply in size before starting to grow again as people ask for their names to be added.

In considering how to allocate funds, the CoE has sometimes found it useful to define 'membership' as Sunday attendance (uSa up to 1999, thereafter ASA) plus one third of the difference between the electoral roll and Sunday attendance.

### Occasional attendance

A final set of indicators of commitment is attendance at special services, such as Easter Day or Harvest Festival. Tables G2 (for all churches) and G3 (rural churches only) show that all-age attendance at the most popular of these can be about two and a half times the typical Sunday attendance, about half as high again as HWA.

However, although turning up once or twice a year may provide an indication of the level of support to be expected if the church building were under threat of redundancy (and may even understate this), it probably tells us little about the routine level of support, which is what interests us.

### Four measures of support

In summary, we have four measures of routine support for an individual church, as shown in Table G1:

- **Usual Sunday attendance (uSa)**, the traditional method, for which we have many years data;

- **Average Sunday attendance**

(**ASA**), a new measure (the average attendance on four Sundays in October), which captures the typical number of individuals attending on Sundays;

- **Highest weekly attendance**

(**HWA**), a new measure (the highest entire-week attendance occurring in a four-week period in October), which is probably the nearest we can get to the number of individual people who worship at the church at least once per month; and

- **Church electoral roll**, for which we have many years data: it does not imply attendance, but does indicate some level of commitment.

### Difficulties

We have already discussed the fact that all these measures refer to parishes, not church buildings. All of the measures will exaggerate the support for church buildings in multi-church parishes.

In addition, there is a difficulty in those cases where services are held in a rota by neighbouring parishes, as sometimes happens in rural areas.

To see this, imagine the case where two neighbouring parishes share services on alternate Sundays. Suppose ten people from each parish attend; then there will be twenty people at each service. The new measures will show an average attendance of twenty for *each* parish, thus exaggerating the degree of support for each of the church buildings. Note that this measurement problem only occurs if individuals attend service regardless of which church building is being used.

This problem arises because, for each parish, only those Sundays when a service is being held are included in the measure. If a service is not held, it does not affect the measure. So the same person can be counted as attending in two different parishes. The traditional measure (uSa) does not have this 'rota' problem, because it counts *all* Sundays, recording zero attendance at non-service Sundays, so would show a uSa of ten people at each parish (at least, this is how it is done in some dioceses).

How big a problem is this? I am told (personal communication, CoE) that the potential problem was discussed when the new measures were introduced, and not expected to be significant. All of this does emphasise the difficulty of measuring levels of support for smaller congregations who do not conform to the traditional pattern of services every Sunday.

Table G3

**All-age attendance per rural church (averaged) at special services, compared with usual Sunday attendance (1994)**

Christmas carol service	72
Harvest Festival	71
Easter Day	59
Christmas communicants <sup>1</sup>	55
Easter Day communicants	47
Remembrance Sunday	46
Mothering Sunday	43
Christmas midnight	42
Christmas Day	37
<b>Usual Sunday attendance<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>31</b>
Good Friday	18

## Notes

1. Over all Christmas services

2. We do not know whether 'usual Sunday attendance' was interpreted by respondents in the same way as in their annual returns to the CoE used elsewhere in this appendix.

Source: Francis and Martineau, *Rural Mission*; see Appendix E for details

Table G4

**Adult attendance (various measures) and size of electoral roll in CoE parishes (2001)**

(12,951 parishes; all figures rounded)

For explanation of measures, see text

Number of adults	Percentage of parishes				Electoral roll
	Adult attendance (different measures)				
	<i>uSa</i>	<i>ASA</i>	<i>AWA</i>	<i>HWA</i>	
1 to 5	1	1	1	0	} 3
6 to 10	9	5	5	3	
11 to 20	21	19	17	11	9
21 to 30	13	14	13	10	10
31 to 50	16	17	16	15	} 78
51 to 100	24	24	24	26	
Over 100	16	20	24	35	
For each column, total 100% = 12.951 parishes					

For each column, total 100% = 12,951 parishes

Source: CoE, personal communication

### G3: Church buildings with low levels of routine support

In this sub-section, we will look at the various measures of adult support for churches with low attendance.

How does ASA compare with the older measure, uSa, for small congregations? As can be seen from Table G4, the uSa measure shows more parishes with attendance of ten adults or fewer than does the ASA measure (10% as against 6%, all figures rounded). Similarly there are more parishes with uSa of eleven to twenty adults (21%) than have an ASA of this size (19%).

This is probably for two reasons. First, as discussed above, ASA is normally a little higher than uSa simply because of the way it is counted. This causes no problems.

Secondly, the ASA may exaggerate attendance, because of the 'rota' effect discussed above. However, the broad correspondence between HWA and the electoral roll for these parishes – matching the global correspondence between these figures – might suggest that ASA is being more or less correctly measured at the lower end. All we can say is that the number of parishes with very low ASA attendance might be greater than shown in Table G4.

It is helpful that we can cross-check the Sunday attendance figures with another source. This is a stratified survey of 25% of Anglican churches carried out in September 1998 (the English Church Attendance Survey). These figures, which include both adults and children, are shown in Table G5. Note that those filling

in the returns were asked to count only once any individuals attending more than once on Sunday. This data suggests that there are rather more tiny congregations than indicated by the figure for ASA, with 8% of churches having attendance of ten people or fewer *including* children.

We can conclude that *at least* 6% (800) of parishes have a typical Sunday attendance of ten adults or fewer, and the figure is probably higher than this. This figure is for parishes; it will be higher for church buildings, but we do not know how much higher with the data to hand. The broad picture is clear, and for our purposes the precise figures hardly matter.

How many people have a sense of routine commitment to the building? For

small congregations, the figure for AWA is more or less the same as for ASA, no doubt reflecting the fact that there are few services during the week at these small churches (as confirmed by the Rural Churches Survey).

The figures for the electoral roll and HWA in Table G4 are similar to each other, and perhaps provide the best measure of support. They show that about 3% of parishes (nearly 400) can count on ten adults or fewer to support their church building, or buildings. Something between 9% (electoral roll) and 11% (HWA) of parishes, approximately 1,300 parishes, can count on the support of between 11 and 20 adults.

On average there are five church buildings for every four parishes. If the average applies across these smaller parishes, it implies a minimum of 500 church buildings (and probably more) with ten or fewer committed adults. On the next rung of the ladder, there are probably about 1,600 churches which will obtain routine support from between eleven and twenty adults.

Table G5

**Sunday attendance at CoE churches, all ages (September 1998)**

Attend- ance (all ages)	Churches with this attendance	
	%	number
1 – 10	8.0	1300
11 – 25	21.5	3500
26 – 50	25.4	4140
51 – 100	23.6	3840
101 – 150	11.0	1790
151 – 200	4.6	750
201 – 300	3.5	570
301 – 400	1.5	240
401 – 500	0.6	100
500+	0.3	50
	100% =	16,280
	16,280	

Source: English Church Attendance Survey, Christian Research (personal communication)

#### Note

1. See e.g. Brierley, *Tide*, page 73 and following; *Statistics: a Tool for Mission* (Church House Publishing, 2000).



# Abbreviations, glossary, bibliography

## Abbreviations

**CCC:** Council for the Care of Churches;  
**CCT:** Churches Conservation Trust;  
**CoE:** Church of England; **DAC:** Diocesan Advisory Committee; **DCMS:** Department of Culture, Media and Sport; **EH:** English Heritage; **HCPT:** Historic Churches Preservation Trust; **HLF:** Heritage Lottery Fund; **PCC:** Parochial Church Council.

## Glossary

In this report, **church** is used only of Anglican buildings, or their worshipping communities, in England. It excludes other denominations. It includes parish churches, daughter churches, chapels, mission chapels and so forth, but excludes cathedrals and other greater churches.

A **diocese** is a bishop's area of responsibility, split into several **archdeaconries**, which are themselves split into a number of **deaneries**. A diocese will normally have several hundred **parishes**, each deanery perhaps twenty or thirty. A parish may have one or more church buildings.

The **Diocesan Advisory Committee** (DAC) is a statutory body which advises whether proposed changes and repairs to church buildings should proceed. Permission to proceed is called a **faculty**.

The church **electoral roll** is a list of people over the age of 16 who have registered for the roll and are thus entitled to vote in the election of the **Parochial Church Council (PCC)** for their parish church. See Appendix G.

**Listing**, carried out by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, indicates that a building is of particular interest. There are three **grades** of listing. Grade I means that the building is 'of exceptional interest'. Grade II\* indicates a 'particularly important building of more than special interest'. Grade II buildings are of 'special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them'. An older categorisation, still applying to a few churches, is into Grades A, B and C, which do not map precisely onto I, II\* and II.

A **redundant** church building is one no longer required for use for regular worship. To become redundant, a church has to move through a statutory procedure. See Section 2.

**Stipendiary** clergy are clergy who are paid (receive a stipend). They are usually full-time.

**Usual Sunday attendance** and **Average Sunday Attendance** are discussed in Appendix G.

## Bibliography

**Church of England policy** The recently-agreed policy for church buildings is described with valuable supporting material in *A Future for Church Buildings* (2003), issued by the General Synod of the Church of England (ref: GS1514), available from the Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BN, <www.chbookshop.co.uk>.

**Raw attendance and financial statistics** The CoE issues *Church Statistics* each year. Copies can be downloaded from the CoE website <www.cofe.anglican.org/about/frame\_statistics.html> or obtained from Church House Bookshop, address above. For background, see *Statistics: a Tool for Mission* (Church House Publishing, 2000). Christian Research publish a wealth on statistics on all aspects of religious observance in their series *UKCH Religious Trends*, ed. Peter Brierley, 4 volumes published to date (volume 4 published in 2003, ISBN 1853211494), available from Christian Research, 4 Footscray Road, SE9 2TZ. Figures relating to rural churches will be found in Leslie Francis and Jeremy Martineau, *Rural Mission* (Acorn Publishing, 2002, ISBN 0954076613), available from the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LZ (<www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk>). Data on the financial situation of the CoE can be found in *Financial Overview 2003* (ref: GS1516, issued 2003); *Forthcoming Financial Issues* (ref: GS1433, issued 2001); and *First to the Lord* (fourth impression, issued 2000), all issued by the CoE, available from Church House Bookshop, address above. For a summary of diocesan finances, see 'Digging deeper, cutting further', in the *Church Times*, 25 July 2003. The ORB survey of attitudes towards churches is at <www.cofe.anglican.org/about/statistics.html>.

**Interpretation of trends in church participation** Of the considerable literature on levels of participation in church life, the following have been used directly. Peter Brierley's *The Tide is Running Out* (Christian Research, 2000, ISBN 1853211370), address above, uses data from the 1998 Church Attendance Survey and previous surveys to explain

what is happening to church attendance, and to argue for new ways forward. Bob Jackson's *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (Church House Publishing, 2002, ISBN 0715155512), uses statistical evidence to analyse attendance patterns and suggest how churches can grow. *The Myth of the Empty Church* (SPCK, 1993, ISBN 0281046433), by Robin Gill, shows that the decline in the proportion of the population attending church stretches back a long way, and that the Victorians built more churches than were required (a revised version is now available, *The "Empty" Church Revisited* (Aldershot, 2003, ISBN 0754634620), published by Ashgate). More controversially, he argues that empty buildings are a *cause* of the decline in attendance. In Callum Brown's *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000* (Routledge, 2001, ISBN 0415241847) the author also takes the long view, though argues for a more recent cause for secularisation, related to the socialising role of women; he argues that public Christian observance in Britain will see further decline.

**Victorian activity** For church restoration and building in Victorian times, see Gill, *Myth* (details above), and the excellent articles in Chris Brooks & Andrew Saint (eds.), *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester, 1995, ISBN 0719040205), particularly (for our purposes) the articles by Saint, Brooks, Miele, and Cherry, and the Introduction.

**Reports on the overall condition of churches** An old but fascinating study is the 1953 report, *The Preservation of our Churches* (Church Information Board, 1952). More recent are the *Churches Needs Survey*, written by Geoffrey Claridge, and issued in 1998 by EH and the CCC; and two reports by Jeremy Eckstein Associates. The first was *The Impact of VAT on Church Properties*, commissioned by the Churches Main Committee, published in 2000, and available on their website at <www.cmainc.org.uk/reports>. The second, issued in 2001, is *An Assessment of the Needs of Listed Places of Worship in Use across the UK*. I comment on these three reports in Appendix A. For the maintenance of historic buildings, see the Maintain our Heritage website <www.maintainourheritage.co.uk>.

**Reports by individual dioceses** The **Manchester Survey of Churches in the Diocese of Manchester** (c. 1997) was



commissioned jointly by English Heritage and the diocese of Manchester. It has valuable insights into an over-churched urban setting. In **Chelmsford** the *Review of the Church Buildings of the Diocese* (March 2003), <[www.chelmsford.anglican.org/churchbuildings/](http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/churchbuildings/)>, sets the scene in a useful way. The **Peterborough** report *Setting God's People Free* (2002), <[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/Useful%20Information/Downloads/Setting%20God's%20People%20Free.doc](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/Useful%20Information/Downloads/Setting%20God's%20People%20Free.doc)> is also of interest. In **York**, the *Report of the Archbishop of York's Commission on Pastoral Provision for the City and Deanery of York* (September 2002) reviews needs systematically, and makes proposals for redundancy (still being discussed); a summary is on <<http://209.68.34.145/diocese/cgi/news/news.cgi?a=126&t=template.htm>>. For **Chichester**, the report of the Brighton and Hove Deaneries pastoral strategy review group entitled *Strengthening the Church for God's Mission* (2003), makes radical proposals; this is available at <[www.diochi.org.uk/content/review/brighton-hove/Final-Consult.pdf](http://www.diochi.org.uk/content/review/brighton-hove/Final-Consult.pdf)>.

**Redundant churches and the CCT** For summary statistics on all redundancies, see the annual report of the Redundant Churches Committee of the Church Commissioners. The CCT publishes an excellent annual report, which lists repair expenditure on each church, and a description of each church it has acquired. The CCT website includes a gazetteer of all its churches at <[www.visitingchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitingchurches.org.uk)>. A useful discussion of the finances of the CCT is *Financing the Churches Conservation Trust in the Triennium 2003–2006* (ref: GS1472, issued 2002), issued by the CoE, available from Church House Bookshop, address above. An old but useful survey of the first twenty years of the CCT (then called the Redundant Churches Fund) can be found in Richard Wilding, *The Care of Redundant Churches* (HMSO, 1990, ISBN 0117523046). Background data on redundancy before 1969 will be found in Donald Findlay, *The Protection of our English Churches* (CCC, 1996, ISBN 0715175750). The current and previous *Funding Agreements* between the government and the CCT are on the website of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, buried at <[www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/e6cfvyk4lcupjmdoiugtktmrv3x3xsea564qduf7wxwz7ai4weqlasnlckliydjlqljzqcalgvcknau7y5tm35e2e/FACCTTrust.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/e6cfvyk4lcupjmdoiugtktmrv3x3xsea564qduf7wxwz7ai4weqlasnlckliydjlqljzqcalgvcknau7y5tm35e2e/FACCTTrust.pdf)> and <[www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/eayu7kwxtluzdaze2mxgciemqfjzsngrms26yj6vvg22vxsxcgovb2m57v3heejpwwn3badax2zt](http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/eayu7kwxtluzdaze2mxgciemqfjzsngrms26yj6vvg22vxsxcgovb2m57v3heejpwwn3badax2zt)

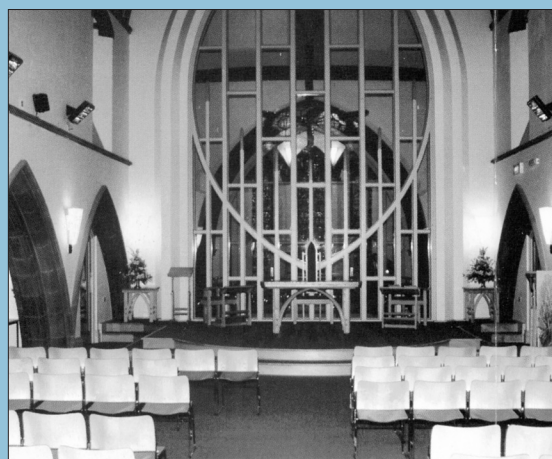
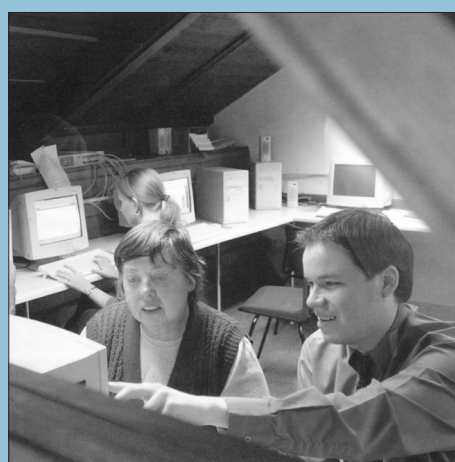
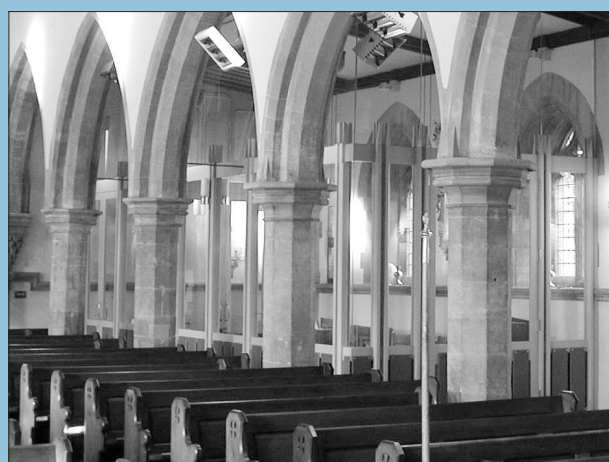
4l3zcawafxhw7qlg/dcms\_churches+cons.PDF>. The Sixth Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, 26 February 2003, which discussed CCT funding, is on <[www.malcmoss.easynet.Co.uk/speeches/committee/022603churchconservationcommitteedebate.htm](http://www.malcmoss.easynet.Co.uk/speeches/committee/022603churchconservationcommitteedebate.htm)>.

**Churches involvement in community activity and regeneration** There is a growing literature on the social value of faith communities. The following is a sample only; most of these have good bibliographies. *Angels and Advocates: Church Social Action in Yorkshire and the Humber* (2002, ISBN 9780954) and *Sowing the Seed: Church and Rural Renaissance in Yorkshire and the Humber* (n.d. [c. 2003], ISBN 9780954395117), both published by the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, 20 New Market Street, Leeds, LS1 6DG (<[www.yorkshirechurches.org.uk](http://www.yorkshirechurches.org.uk)>). Both have a useful mix of statistics and case-studies: the statistics rely heavily on three previous studies (for which they give bibliographic details), in Leeds, Hull and Sheffield – in Section 4 above I touch on the Hull research, issued under the title *Count us in* (n.d. [c. 2000]) by SEARCH, c/o St Michael's Church, Orchard Park Road, Hull, HU6 9BX. In London, there are statistics on community projects run by different religious groups in *Regenerating London: Faith Communities and Social Action* (2002), issued by the London Churches Group for Social Action and Greater London Enterprise, available on <[www.gle.co.uk/downloads/GLE%20Faith%20Communities.pdf](http://www.gle.co.uk/downloads/GLE%20Faith%20Communities.pdf)>. For churches in Greater Norwich, see the *Norwich City/Church dialogue*, available on <[www.churchinnorwich.org.uk](http://www.churchinnorwich.org.uk)>. For the diocese of Norwich, see *Church Buildings: A Source of Delight and a Cause of Anxiety* on <[www.norwich.anglican.org/pdf/church\\_buildings.pdf](http://www.norwich.anglican.org/pdf/church_buildings.pdf)>. For qualitative research on the social activities of a few faith communities in the Luton/Bedford areas, see *Faith in Action* (2003), issued jointly by the East of England Development Agency and the East of England Churches Network, available from the latter at Unit 37, St John's Innovation Centre, Cowley Road, Cambridge, CB4 0WS, or at <[www.eefaihcouncil.org.uk/inact.htm](http://www.eefaihcouncil.org.uk/inact.htm)>. For a survey of faith groups' interaction with secular agencies, see R. Farnell, R. Furbey, S. Hills, M. Macey and G. Smith, *'Faith' in Urban Regeneration?* (Bristol, 2003, ISBN 186134516X) available from Policy Press, Fourth Floor, Beacon House, Queen's Road, Bristol, BS8 1QU.

**Adapting and extending church buildings** For practical handbooks, see: Derek Akker and Michael Passmore, *Opening our Doors: a Practical Guide to the Wider Use of Church Buildings* (Children's Society, 1996, ISBN 0907324630) – an excellent introduction to the possibilities and pitfalls; *The Changing Church: a Guide to Developing and Adapting Church Buildings* (2002), a short, pithy and practical guide, issued jointly by Essex County Council and Chelmsford DAC, available from the former at Information Resource Centre, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH; *Church Extensions and Adaptations*, 2nd edition (Church House Publishing, 2002), available from Church House Bookshop, address above, which is far from anodyne; and *Open all Hours: a Way Forward for Church Buildings in the 21st Century* (Acara publishing, n.d. [c. 2002], ISBN 0951687174), address above, based on the work of the Rural Churches in Community Service Fund in adapting rural church buildings. For a brief but helpful study of how fifteen churches in the east of England use their various buildings for community purposes, see *Church Buildings in the Community* (n.d. [c. 2000]), issued jointly by the same groups as *Faith in Action*, above. Interesting case studies will be found in Doreen Finneron and Adam Dinham (eds.), *Building on Faith: Faith Buildings in Neighbourhood Renewal* (Church Urban Fund, n.d. [c. 2003], ISBN 1903251044), available from 1 Millbank, London, SW1P 3JZ, though much in the book is not directly relevant to the CoE. For an American perspective of some interest, see *Sacred Places at Risk*, a report on the use of urban church buildings for communities, available at <[www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)>.

**Friends** For setting up a Friends scheme see Susan Rennison, *'A Friends' Scheme' for a Parish Church*, 2nd edition (Canterbury, 1999, ISBN 0902765094), published by Canterbury diocese.

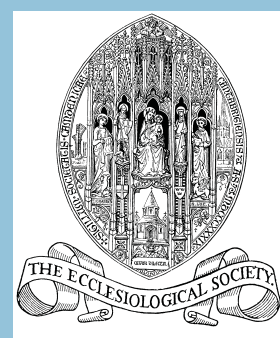
**Church tourism** There is plenty of material about major attractions, but it is largely irrelevant for our purposes. For parish churches, there is much useful material on the Churches Tourism Association website <[www.churches tourismassociation.info](http://www.churches tourismassociation.info)>. For the Rural Church Visitors survey (1994), see Leslie Francis and Jeremy Martineau, *Rural Visitors* (Acara publishing, 2001, ISBN 0954076605); Acara's address as above. See also the Open Churches Trust <[www.openchurchestrust.org.uk](http://www.openchurchestrust.org.uk)> and National Churchwatch <[www.nationalchurchwatch.com](http://www.nationalchurchwatch.com)>.



There are about 16,000 Church of England churches – more churches than petrol stations. More than 12,000 are listed, with two-thirds of these being in the highest grades, Grade I or II\*. This is by far the largest estate of listed buildings in the country.

This huge portfolio of buildings is kept by the efforts of church congregations – in essence small, independent, groups of volunteers. Between them they have been spending more than £80m a year on repairs, only about £30m of which has come from grants – the remainder is from their own pockets or their efforts at fund-raising. How well does this work? And will it – can it – continue?

*Details of the cover photographs will be found on the reverse of the title page*



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