ENGAGING WITH THE PAST TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

THE EXPERIENCE OF BUILDING ON HISTORY: THE CHURCH IN LONDON
Foreword

“He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.” [Psalm CVI] The Bible unfolds a historical drama whose author is ultimately God and the community of faith continually rehearses its story as a way of discerning the deep structure of the theo-drama and gathering energy for fresh adventures. The story of Jesus Christ himself is repeatedly related in the New Testament to previous actors in drama, notably Moses.

Now is the time when the contemporary community of faith needs to refresh its understanding of the way the church has travelled or we shall lurch between unreasonable optimism and unwarranted despair. The past does not teach directly applicable lessons but it rhymes and serves to reveal perennial themes and temptations. A sense of the history in which we are involved can help us to see more clearly the contemporary roles we are being called to play.

It is often said that “mission and ministry should be under girded with theology” but the understanding of what constitutes “theology” is frequently thin and a-historical. Theology is also distilled from the narrative of God’s dealings with the people he has called throughout the history of the church and the cultures in which she has been set. In my experience the church has lacked candour and sophistication in reflecting on and evaluating its own fashions and strategies.

This project has been a powerful contribution to enhancing the character of the Church in the Diocese as a learning organism. Myths have been challenged, for example in the work Arthur Burns has done on Bethnal Green, and there is a methodology in this report which can be applied by any community which is seriously concerned to shape the future in the light of past experience.

The person who has a sense of history and no sense of destiny is doubtless a very tedious fellow. But the person or community with a sense of destiny and no sense of history is very wasteful and even dangerous.

I am very grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for making this work possible. I hope that the methods and experiences embodied in the project will be a resource for other parts of the Church as we seek to play our full part as citizens at a time when the ground is shifting beneath our feet in an increasingly multi-polar world whose future is equally open to promise and peril.

Richard Londin
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1. Introduction: the Building on History project

This report offers a short account of the experiences and resources of the project Building on History: the Church in London. It hopes to convey something of the excitement and future potential of the project to senior staff in the Church of England. This highly original project was funded by a Knowledge Transfer Fellowship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council between January 2009 and October 2011. It brought together academic historians from The Open University and King’s College London and the staff of Lambeth Palace Library (the chief archive of the bishops of London). These worked in partnership with the Anglican Diocese of London to explore the potential of the modern religious history of the capital city as a resource to inform the work and life of London’s churches today.

Such partnerships, aimed at promoting a productive sharing of expertise and knowledge between, on the one hand, private, public and third-sector bodies and, on the other, academics engaged in relevant research, have become increasingly common. They represent a concerted and deliberate effort to increase the flow and impact of cutting-edge research in the arts and humanities to and for those outside the academy. Building on History was none the less distinctive in seeing historians team up, not with a cultural organisation such as a museum or gallery, but with the Church of England, as a key social as well as religious organisation which plays an active role in the lives of local communities.

With the active support of the Bishop of London and senior leaders within the diocese, the project worked with a wide range of people from the diocese – from senior diocesan staff and experienced, new and prospective clergy, to regular churchgoers, school teachers, and the wider community - through a comprehensive programme of seminars, workshops and consultation and by the development of online resources now available at www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory.

Over the life of the project the Building on History team employed this variety of strategies and venues to make available much highly original and as yet largely unfamiliar research into religious history which has the potential to enhance and enrich the self-understanding, identity and mission priorities of the Diocese of London. In particular, the team drew attention to the religious and social history of London during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period offering striking parallels with the current situation of the London churches. It was an age of rapid population increase; of extensive urban development and regeneration; of widespread migration into and across London; of concern about social and economic exclusion; and a time in which Christians came to terms with a growing diversity in the religious life of the city. What could the contemporary church, facing similar challenges, learn from the church’s responses in the past and their historical context?
2. Who needs History?

The project has also aimed to encourage across the diocese both active participation in historical enquiry and a sense of ‘ownership’ of the recent history of the Church in London as a resource of immediate use to Anglicans today. For example, it has been shown that there is great potential for using history and heritage to assist church engagement with local communities beyond the congregation. The project itself worked with schools to develop educational projects around churches; organised seminars for local historians on parish history; and arranged a major, successful event involving a range of faith communities to promote understanding of religious diversity.

The project highlights both the concrete and intangible benefits for churches in engaging with history. Importantly, its experiences in the Diocese of London are transferable to the wider Church of England, and also to other denominations and faith groups. This report sets out the themes and issues it has identified, the resources it has produced, and the new approaches it has piloted. Above all, it hopes to indicate the exciting future directions it has identified.

*Building on History* demonstrates the ways in which history can be a powerful, constructive and relevant tool for the present and future.

2. Who needs history?

The contemporary relationship between the public and ‘history’ is in some ways unclear. On the one hand, it seems that there is an unprecedented popular interest in history. There is a steady stream of television programmes (for example, the BBC’s *Who do you think you are?*) as well as entire channels devoted to popular history; ‘celebrity’ historians like Simon Schama, David Starkey and Niall Ferguson are regarded by some as household names; and historical literature, both factual and fictional, is widely read. However, on the other hand, as fascinating as history might be on its own terms, history cannot quite escape a reputation for being of little public value or contemporary relevance. This is partly the fault of historians, who sometimes have not adequately communicated this value and relevance. The question ‘who needs history?’ is still one that requires a response.

Within the Church of England there is often a sense of ambivalence about the history of the church. Clergy sometimes have a strong sense of history, and many have previously studied the subject at university. However, there is relatively little deliberate and critical engagement with history at a training and grassroots level. History has struggled to maintain its position in theological and ministerial education, and fields of enquiry such as congregational studies and practical theology rarely include an historical component. This stands in contrast to some other major institutions and organisations: for example, the British Army, where modern military history forms a key part of the curriculum for officers.

However, there is a growing wider feeling that history has significant public value; and that if historical research is purposefully presented, it can inform decision making, contemporary debates and self-understanding. The *Building on History* project team have made the case that the life and identity of every diocese, deanery and parish is bound up with its history. In the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams in a project podcast: ‘We often take for granted that things have always been like this. But actually, of course, to understand the past is to understand how things change’.

History can provide valuable context and practical wisdom for informing the contemporary mission and ministry of the church. For church leaders, historical awareness might build confidence, give inspiration, challenge assumptions, teach lessons, constructively caution and provide both a sense of proportion and perspective, as well as preventing the repeat of past mistakes. A shared consciousness of history in the church has the potential to contribute to the meaningful formation of identity and the effective building of community.
3. The value of history

The following pages use snapshots from the project to highlight the practical value for the church in engaging with history today.

- **Reflecting on mission pp. 6-8**
  
  Is the history of religion in modern Britain simply a story of decline? The reality is far more complex, and understanding historical approaches to mission and trends and fluctuations in modern religious adherence can better equip contemporary church leaders to provide a strong lead.

- **What is good about / wrong with a parish? pp. 8-10**
  
  A sense of history can help an individual church understand why it is the way it is. The ‘history audit’ process can help dioceses as they seek to promote contextualisation and awareness of the influence of the past in parishes.

- **What should you do with the church building? pp. 10-12**
  
  Church buildings can sometimes seem like a burden on an active, worshipping congregation. Here, we see ways in which historical understanding can assist churches to appreciate the importance of a building and unlock its potential.

- **Leading the Church pp. 12-14**
  
  While in most cases history will not offer easy answers or straightforward models for the present, it can provide valuable insights into contemporary themes, challenges and controversial issues for senior leaders.

- **Engaging communities pp. 14-16**
  
  Religious congregations and sacred spaces form an important part of many local community histories and heritages. Here we discuss some ideas which might encourage parishes to ‘look outwards’ and engage with the wider community.

3. The value of history

3.a) **Reflecting on mission**

*Building on History* has aimed to show that history can provide significant insights on mission. Knowledge of history can allow leaders to develop realistic and informed ambitions; boost morale; and provide models from the past for consideration.
3. The value of history

Decline and growth

In recent years academic research has increasingly challenged the idea that the history of the churches in Britain is a simple story of strength followed by decline.

Assumptions about church decline have often presupposed a starting point of a previous religious ‘golden age’. However, the reality is that churchgoing was never close to universal in the nineteenth century. Church planting in this period, despite its many successes, often lacked a strategic rationale, being driven by motives such as party conflict or the interests of landowners and property developers. Too many Anglican churches were built during this period – which may have contributed to ongoing problems, such as financial pressures, thinly-spread congregations and over-stretched clergy. The idea of a past ‘golden age’ can increase the perception amongst contemporary clergy that they are ‘failing’.

On the other hand, historians have also questioned the widely accepted idea of linear secularisation. While, of course, outward signs of Christian practice have declined considerably in the twentieth century, there is also considerable evidence for variation and fluctuation. Historically, in the modern period some churches have always been able to buck wider trends - and leadership and agency have been important factors in the success or failure of individual churches.

Engaging with the parish

Clergy often find that their parishioners have different levels of ‘commitment’ to church, with attendance varying from the regular, via the sporadic to ‘special occasions only’. Recent academic research on the relationship between church and parishioner suggests that historically churches have experienced similar variations and have sought to recognise opportunities for engagement on different levels and through different channels.

- Research by Sarah Williams on nineteenth-century ‘popular religion’ has shown the importance of ‘occasional conformity’ through rites of passage and New Year services. In urban contexts there was a dynamic and vibrant belief system based around these practices, where popular ‘folk’ belief could combine powerfully with Christian ideals and reaffirmation of personal faith. Those who attended on this basis had a surprisingly strong sense of loyalty to the church and clergy, often regarding both as ‘theirs’. Here, history suggests that the church’s ‘lifecycle’ role is far from insignificant, and that even unconventional church going can have deep meaning for members of the local community.

- Other studies, particularly work by Jeffrey Cox, indicate that during the Victorian and Edwardian period the most ‘successful’ churches were those most integrated with the parish. For many, ‘church work’ was day-to-day engagement with the community through welfare provision, thrift and saving societies, medical services and education. Such links could encourage high overall church attendance. Charles Booth’s contemporary investigation records that at St John’s, Isle of Dogs, in 1897, while attendances were 250-300 in the morning and 400 in the evening, it was estimated that some 2,000 in the parish occasionally attended church.

- The late Rex Walford’s research on interwar church planting in London’s suburbia has suggested a model of concentric circles for understanding engagement with church life (p. 9). The provision of rites of passage, church-related organisations and parish magazines are identified as important ways of maintaining links with the parish.
What to do next?

The Building on History project is informing new research and also aims to promote relevant existing academic research. In particular, look out for the following reading material:


- Forthcoming research on financial giving towards mission activities in London in the late nineteenth century. A PhD, which is linked with the Building on History project, is currently being completed by Sarah Flew at The Open University.


3. b) What’s good about / wrong with a parish?

No two parishes are the same: each has its own unique story, context and culture. Building on History has aimed to show that a congregation and leadership with an understanding of its past should be better equipped for facing the present and the future.
A congregation’s own ‘story’ about the past can form the basis for its self-perception. Furthermore, an understanding of the history of a congregation can contribute to the formation of an informed narrative, and challenge and deconstruct sometimes unhelpful and widely-accepted myths.

By looking at the past we can uncover past patterns of leadership and ministry which can inform our understanding of contemporary church life. Congregations often have specific characteristics, recurring themes in their experience and issues which have their roots in the past. Historical perspective can allow a congregation to be more self-aware and provide tools to deal with unresolved problems.

The History Audit

The Revd Neil Evans (Director of Ministry, Diocese of London) shares how his diocese has been encouraging parishes to explore their historical context.

In partnership with Building on History, in the Diocese of London we have developed a History Audit model, which helps individual congregations explore their past in a strategic and time-effective manner. The Audit is designed to assist congregations in the diocese in their wider process of contextualisation for contemporary mission and ministry. (And remember that a church doesn’t need to be ‘old’ to have a history! Even congregations established in the last twenty years have been shaped by their immediate past.) What follows are some examples of a History Audit in action.

- One congregation had a crisis of identity – it was unclear about its purpose and its mission. When it explored its foundation in the Victorian era it found that the church was built on the one piece of land that was left over by the property developers. A significant issue could be named: the church was built as an afterthought in the community, and in a less than ideal position. In the long-term this had prevented the development of a healthy identity and sense of purpose. The identification of this historical issue contributed to a self-awareness that allowed the congregation to face up to the challenge of considering more deliberately how it might define itself and seek out a new mission agenda.

- On arriving at a church in a comfortably-off part of suburbia, I discovered that relative to congregation size and electoral roll we were paying the lowest common fund in the deanery. I raised the issue at a PCC meeting and was told ‘the diocese charges us too much - they don’t understand the problems of maintaining a listed church building’. I was puzzled, especially as many of the churches in the area were also listed. When I spoke to a few long-serving members of the PCC and examined previous PCC minutes I discovered an attitude which went back over twenty years which said ‘poor us, no-one understands us; we’re poor and insignificant and we need supporting’. By naming this problem and finding evidence to the contrary the congregation was able to begin to resolve the issue.

- A congregation had spent some years in developing and articulating its core values and ways of working as well as developing priorities for mission and ministry in its current situation. One of the members of the congregation had a particular interest in reading old documents about the church and developing and writing up further the existing history of the life of the church. It was found that the key current areas of mission and ministry in the present were essentially unchanged from the vision 100 years ago. This led to a renewed sense that this was the mission of God in the congregation and community, and that the present church members were stewards of that vision, called to receive that vision and ministry and pass on to the next generation.
3. The value of history

What to do next?

How could you use the History Audit process in your diocese?

- It could be part of the diocese’s Mission Action Planning strategy.
- An Audit could inform a parish profile in preparation for the appointment of a new incumbent. This can help a congregation to evaluate its identity, needs and mission priorities. It could also help inform the selection process!
- A new incumbent or curate might undertake a History Audit to familiarise themselves with a parish.
- Ordinands could be encouraged to undertake an Audit of a parish as part of their training.
- An Audit could be included in IME 4-7 and CMD training.

For more information and for resources to promote the History Audit in your diocese, Building on History has produced a range of resources providing inspiration, ideas and models:

- The Building on History website (www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory) includes bite-size information on how to conduct a History Audit and is a gateway to a wide range of accessible historical resources for local congregations.
- For a more in-depth guide to the audit process, see Neil Evans and John Maiden. What can churches learn from their past? The parish history audit (Grove Booklets, forthcoming).

3.c) What should we do with our church building?

All church buildings have histories, but of differing lengths. It is widely said that a building is both a blessing and burden on a congregation. They can be beautiful and evocative spaces, but they may seem to place their own conditions and limitations on the worshipping congregation. Building on History has promoted ‘out of the box’ thinking by pointing towards the potential for congregations and the local community to relate to the building in exciting new ways.

Engaging heritage

The history of a building can be an inspirational resource for ‘outreach’, allowing a congregation to contribute to the education, well-being and identity of the wider community.
3. The value of history

*Building on History* has encouraged congregations to consider what a church building might tell them about its people and community. The interior of a church – the memorials, plaques, commemorative tablets, flags and other unique objects - will often tell stories with a strong human interest. Many churches have been the centre of a community in the past, and a place reflecting a shared identity. This means that the building might be used to illuminate the story of the local community – for example, its trades, professions or industrial past; social hierarchy; wartime history; or schools and youth.

Alongside *Building on History*, a range of other organisations and projects are resourcing and reassessing the links between building, congregation and community. For more information, see ‘what to do next’ below.

**Raising awareness**

The exteriors, interiors and furnishings making up a church building are often of historical importance, but place financial pressures on a congregation. In London we have found that creative engagement with the history of a church building can help local communities recognise its significance and stimulate not only a sense of wider ‘ownership’, but also financial support.

- **St Mary-at-Finchley**, an ancient parish church, has been able to make community learning part of its appeal for the refurbishment of its Willis pipe organ. As a way of raising awareness, the congregation have put together an oral reminiscences project, in which volunteers interviewed local residents about their memories of the church and the organ. This information will be made available through a listening post in the church, a booklet, visits by local schools and a community lecture.

- **St Mary Magdalene, Tottenham**, is engaging the community with its efforts to restore its fine Victorian chancel paintings by staging a play scripted by a local historian, exploring the foundation of the church and its subsequent history.

**Statements of Significance**

Many involved in church leadership tremble on hearing these words when they apply to the DAC and for a Faculty for a repair, alteration or extension to the church building or churchyard. However, *Building on History* encourages congregations to see developing a Statement as an opportunity to take stock of their church’s historical significance, as the Statement is required to show appreciation of both the material and social history of a church. This document can serve as a basis for informing all kinds of activities, including those mentioned above.

*Building on History* has provided resources which guide congregations on how to explore this history and development.

**What to do next?**

There are now a range of organisations and accessible resources which provide innovative ideas for congregations on how to make more of their building and its history. It is important for dioceses to raise awareness of this, either by providing links through their website or keeping church leaders informed through training and development. For more information see:
The experience of Building on History: the Church in London

3. The value of history

- The Building on History website – www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory - which includes resources on how to interpret a building, uncover stories about its past and engage with the local community. It also includes historical resources for Statements of Significance.

- Divine Inspiration, funded by English Heritage and based in the Diocese of Coventry, is an organisation which aims to encourage churches to think creatively about ways in which they can open up the building to the community. Visit www.divine-inspiration.org.uk for more details, or contact helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk.

- The National Churches Trust advocates the use of church buildings as places of social, cultural and education activity for the wider community. Visit www.nationalchurchestrust.org.

- Christianity and Culture produce educational resources which enable a range of audiences to engage with Christian buildings. Their English parish church through the centuries DVD is an excellent, accessible guide to ecclesiastical buildings.

3.d) Leading the Church

Men need the experience of the past to help them in practical endeavours, to enable them to understand the position of actual questions with which they and their age are engaged - Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London, 1897-1901

A seminar at the Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham, for church leaders in the Midlands

The Building on History project has pointed towards the ways in which historical awareness can better equip senior clergy and diocesan policymakers to make good strategic decisions. The project chose to focus primarily on the nineteenth century because of the striking comparisons between the social context then and now, and also because of the extent to which the contemporary church has been shaped by this phase in its history.
3. The value of history

In seminars and workshops we have pointed to the legacies and lessons of the nineteenth century, exploring the following:

- *The ways in which the modern Church of England has been shaped by significant institutional and administrative reforms in the past.* For example, the creation of new dioceses and the growth of new diocesan representative bodies and societies were important innovations in the structure of the church with important consequences for mission and support of the ministry. Understanding the historical development of Church organisation and administration can provide leaders with useful perspectives for evaluating the present and developing strategies for the future.

- *The development of church parties and the sharpening of party conflict.* The nineteenth century saw the rise of Anglo-Catholicism; increasing *esprit de corps* among Evangelicals; and later the emergence of a ‘modernist’ or ‘Broad Church’ group of Anglicans. Awareness of the tensions that resulted - and not only the stresses and strains they imposed on the church, but the creative energies they unleashed without ultimately dividing the communion - can provide perspective and a sense of proportion for those reflecting on current church issues and controversies.

- *Emerging approaches to mission.* The nineteenth century saw an explosion of church planting and parish sub-division (for example, some 200 churches were consecrated in London during the episcopate of Bishop Charles Blomfield between 1828 and 1856). The spiritual and social challenges of the Victorian city also saw churches and clergy seek to connect with their parishes in innovative and often radical ways, with a purposefulness that is perhaps comparable with the *Fresh Expressions* movement. Critical appraisal of these approaches to mission can provide inspiration, instruction and sometimes cautionary tales for contemporary leaders.

**What to do next?**

One of the key aims of *Building on History* has been to highlight the accessible and exciting historical research done on the Church of England in recent years. The following three case studies show examples of this kind of historical perspective in action:

- In the space of a decade, early Victorian Bethnal Green saw ten new Anglican churches erected on the back of an intense fund-raising effort. Today, only two remain open for worship, and by 1900 the district was already identified as demonstrating the shortcomings of pastoral strategies based on bricks and mortar. There are indeed lessons to be learned from the failings of the scheme. However, recent research suggests that subsequent commentators both overestimated the naivety of the project and underestimated its initial success in answering the district’s pastoral problems as understood by contemporaries, who focused less on church attendance than on changing the moral character of a district prone to public disorder and organised criminality. Closer investigation of the Bethnal Green experiment thus raises important questions about what constitutes a realistic timeframe for assessing the success or failure of pastoral initiatives, not least as understandings of the very challenges faced can subtly evolve in ways that render initial strategies redundant.
3. The value of history

- In 1850, as the suburb of Cricklewood in north London was developing along the arterial road now known as the A5, the then Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield, suggested to the Vicar of Willesden that he should think about building a new church for the area. The bishop pointed out that, as the road itself marked the parish boundary, it might be a good idea for the vicar to liaise with his neighbour, the Vicar of Hendon, in order to achieve a coherent pastoral strategy for the new settlement. However, in the event, new parishes were created by independent division of the two existing parishes, meaning that the main road, the commercial heart of the community of Cricklewood, continues to this day to divide it into separate parishes, archdeaconries and episcopal areas. In the light of current plans for major development in the area, this historical legacy would seem ripe for reassessment.

- In South Kensington after 1842, landowners and developers favoured evangelical designs and incumbents to enhance the value of their newly-built houses - at St Paul’s Onslow Square, St Peter’s Cranley Gardens, St Luke’s Redcliffe Gardens, St Stephen’s Gloucester Road, and St Jude’s Courtfield Gardens. Entrepreneurial high church clergy, with financial backing from rich members of their congregations, also began promoting new churches. St Philip’s Earls Court Road was sponsored by the vicar of St Barnabas Addison Road in 1857-8. The first vicar of St Philip’s established St Matthias Warwick Road in 1869-70 and St Patrick’s Kenway Road in 1872, and bought a site close to St Jude’s where he began to promote a new church, although the Bishop warned him he would not consecrate it. In the early 1880s a curate from St Matthias’s began promoting a new church, in Philbeach Gardens, St Cuthbert’s, to which again the Bishop unsuccessfully objected. Church planting, then, could be driven by local and party concerns, sometimes resulting in an over-provision of buildings. Contemporary leaders might find it useful to reflect on examples of historical tensions between local initiatives and central strategy.

Similar case studies are available on the Building on History website (www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory) where resources are also available which facilitate the carrying out of strategic and purposeful research.

To discuss the possibility of members of the Building on History team speaking to senior leaders in your diocese, see our ‘making connections’ page.

3.e) Engaging communities

A key message of Building on History has been that the past can be a resource for enabling churches to look outwards and contribute to the well-being and identity of local communities.

Engaging a local school

Katy Forsdyke, Head teacher of Christ Church School in Hampstead Village, Camden, describes a recent innovative history project.

The London Diocesan Board for Schools suggested that we get involved with the Building on History project in summer 2009. Following a meeting with the project team and the priest of Christ Church, we identified some interesting aspects of the history of the relationship between the church, school and wider community, and discussed ways in which the children could explore this.
3. The value of history

We are fortunate that the parish church is next to the school and easily and safely accessible. We asked each class teacher to plan one lesson which made use of the church building in order to teach and learn something about the history of the church. We also made accessible all the school archives for careful use by teachers and children.

Each class from reception to year six carried out a learning activity, many over a series of lessons spent in the church, in spring 2010. Children recorded their findings in a variety of ways (pictures, writing, tables of data etc) and went on to interpret and respond in several different areas of curriculum (e.g. diary entries in literacy, graphs in maths, maps for geography etc.). Finally, each class contributed to a ‘sharing assembly’ later in the term, where they shared their work and their discoveries with the rest of the school.

Exploring diversity

Talking about religion in the East End of London

History is an area of interest with significant potential to bring together a range of religious groups. While the ‘religious history’ of a community might have significant controversial aspects, a closer examination will probably reveal important examples of cooperation and good relations. Some faith communities, particularly those which have historically migrated from abroad, will have had similar or shared historical experiences. History can appear to be a non-threatening and ‘neutral’ subject, and it can form the basis for stimulating wider community interaction.

In September 2011 the project modelled this kind of discussion by organising a day workshop for community leaders and religious practitioners in the East End of London on the local history of religious diversity. We discussed the historical experiences of the Jewish, Muslim, Anglican, Black Majority Church, Baptist and Roman Catholic faith constituencies and reflected on the range of interactions between these groups. Local groups displayed exhibitions on places of worship, and religious and community leaders reflected on the value of history for contextualising religious diversity in the present.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council has now agreed to fund Building on History: Religion in London, which during 2012 will work closely with a range of faith communities in the city (see p. 20).
4. Resources

What to do next?

If you would like to help churches in your diocese use history to engage with their local community you could encourage training and development for clergy and lay leaders on this theme. The following resources are also available:

- Example educational worksheets used in the Christ Church Hampstead primary school pilot project (see page 15) are available on the Building on History website – www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory.

- Various groups provide ideas and resources for churches. See the websites of Divine Inspiration (www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) and the National Churches Trust (www.nationalchurchestrust.org), or for a different denominational perspective, visit Methodist Heritage (www.methodistheritage.org.uk).

- Organisations working primarily with other religious groups, such as the National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trail (www.jtrails.org.uk), provide invaluable perspectives on history and the community.

4. Resources

Building on History has developed a range of accessible resources for helping the Church of England and other faith constituencies engage with history.

Online resource guide

www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory is the project’s innovative online guide. This major new resource has been produced to help dioceses and parishes engage with history, particularly in the ways highlighted in this report.
4. Resources

The guide includes:

- A comprehensive resource for those exploring the history of congregations – with advice on how to find out about themes such as clergy, laity, worship, buildings, children’s work, outreach and church planting. You will find:
  - Advice on how to explore the history of congregations by ‘reading’ the building, listening to oral testimony, referring to research by other historians, and archive research.
  - Guidance on how to use and where to find archive sources.
  - Links to a range of online resources (such as digitised archives) and information on libraries and archives.

- Resources on how to explore religious history more generally: for example, faith and belief, religion and community and religious diversity.

- Further information about the History Audit process, including case studies, guides and resources.

- Relevant historical case studies for church leaders on a range of themes and issues.

- A user-friendly guide for writing a Statement of Significance.

- Ideas and resources for school teachers.

Publications

The project has also produced a number of publications which are available now or forthcoming.

- **On how to do a history audit** - John Maiden and Neil Evans, *What can churches learn from their past? The parish history audit* (Grove Booklets, Pastoral Series).


5. Future directions

Links

There are also other organisations and resources which help the Church of England engage with history. The following are particularly helpful:

**Divine Inspiration** ([www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk)) – provides resources to help churches make their buildings and heritage available to the wider community.

**The Centre for Christianity and Culture** ([www.christianityandculture.org.uk](http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk)) – provides resources which allow students, schools and the wider public to engage with history, literature, art and music influenced by Christian thought and spirituality. It recently produced an educational DVD ‘The English Parish Church through the Ages’.

**English Heritage** ([www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)) – protects and promotes historical sacred sites through a range of projects and resources.

**The National Churches Trust** ([www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org)) has as one of its aims to promote understanding and engagement with historic church buildings.

5. Future directions

Engaging with Building on History in your diocese

The project team have already run a series of regional seminars, at Lambeth Palace for the south eastern dioceses, at Sarum College (Salisbury) for southern and south western dioceses, and at the Queen’s Foundation (Birmingham) for the West Midlands’ dioceses, with the aim of raising awareness in the Church of England nationally.

You can take the following next steps to engage with *Building on History* in your diocese:

1. Visit the project website ([open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory](http://open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory)). While this report can only offer a broad introduction to the project the website includes all our available resources.

2. Include training on history and heritage in your diocese’s IME 4-7 and CMD programmes, using *Building on History* resources.

3. Invite a member of project core team to give a seminar or workshop. For contact details, see p. 21.

4. Promote the **History Audit** process in your diocese – you might want to begin by running a pilot scheme, for example in a single deanery or with a group of interested parishes.

5. Increase awareness of the project by publicising the website through your diocesan communications and by linking to us from the diocesan website.
6. Project audit

Further plans

The project will continue to work with the Church of England and explore various possibilities for taking *Building on History* to a wider audience.

1. As indicated above, the project website will continue and we have now secured funds to ensure its maintenance and development.

2. The project is leading the way in developing a network of history and heritage organisations which work with the Church of England. This should result in
   a) greater cooperation and partnership
   b) streamlined communication with dioceses and churches on history and heritage issues
   c) the development of an online ‘hub’ for history and heritage resources.

3. The *Arts and Humanities Research Council* has now agreed to fund *Building on History: Religion in London*. During 2012 this will promote historical awareness and engagement amongst a wider range of faith groups, including Jews, Muslims, Roman Catholics and the Black Majority Churches, both in London and nationally.

6. Project audit

Below is a brief overview report of the events organised by the *Building on History* project between January 2009 and October 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch and promotion in Diocese of London</td>
<td>St Paul’s Cathedral (May 2009), Lambeth Palace Library (July 2009), Edmonton Area Synod (Sept 2009), Wardens of Readers (Sept 2009), London Diocesan Synod (Dec 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deanery presentations</td>
<td>East Haringey deanery chapter, Hampton deanery synod, Central Barnet deanery synod, Chelsea deanery synod, Westminster (St Margaret) deanery chapter, St Marylebone deanery synod, Islington deanery synod, Hounslow deanery synod, Enfield deanery synod, Westminster (Paddington) deanery synod, North Camden deanery synod, City Churches deanery event, Ealing deanery synod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sept 2009 – November 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development workshops</td>
<td>Stepney CME (Nov 2009), Willesden INSET day (Jan 2009), Willesden Readers and Commissioned Ministers training (Feb 2010), Edmonton Post-Ordination Training (Nov 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinand training</td>
<td>St Mellitus third-year residential training (Feb 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars for senior leaders and diocesan staff</td>
<td>Seminars for St Paul’s Cathedral Chapter and staff (Nov 2009) and Diocese Archdeacons and Area Deans (Dec 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher events (London Diocesan Board of Schools)</td>
<td>Secondary school teachers workshop (Nov 2009), Primary school teachers workshops (March 2010 and May 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional day workshops</td>
<td>South east dioceses (Lambeth Palace, April 2011), south and south west dioceses (Sarum College, Salisbury, May 2011), Midlands dioceses (Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham, June 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Making connections

For more information on the project, or to enquire about booking a seminar or workshop, please contact a member of our core team:

**John Wolfe (Project Leader)** is Professor of Religious History at the Open University. He is the author of numerous articles and books in the field of religion and national identity. Contact: j.r.wolffe@open.ac.uk

**The Venerable Dr Bill Jacob** is the Archdeacon of Charing Cross. He is also an academic historian and has wide experience in clergy training. Contact: Archdeacon.CharingCross@london.anglican.org

**Arthur Burns (Project Co-leader)** is Professor of Modern British History at King’s College London. He is also a director of The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 (www.theclergydatabase.org.uk). Contact: arthur.burns@kcl.ac.uk

**Dr Neil Evans** is Director of Ministry in the Diocese of London and has advised the project on professional development issues. Contact: Neil.Evans@london.anglican.org

**Dr John Maiden** is Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Open University and has written widely on the Church of England in the twentieth century. He has been Research Associate for the Building on History project. Contact: j.maiden@open.ac.uk

**Declan Kelly** is Director of Libraries Archives and IT for the National Church Institutions of the Church of England. He has represented Lambeth Palace Library on the project and has advised on promoting engagement with libraries and archives. Contact: Declan.kelly@churchofengland.org

The project has also had an Advisory Group, consisting of:

**Professor Grace Davie** (University of Exeter)
**Professor David Killingray** (Goldsmiths, University of London)
**Dr Martin Wellings** (Methodist Church)
**Fr Peter Harris** (Roman Catholic Church)
**Dr Colin Podmore** (Church of England)

The experience of Building on History: the Church in London
8. Responses to Building on History: the Church in London

‘Myths abound about the patterns of the Church’s mission and ministry – both past and present. It was immensely helpful to be presented with some soundly based historical research which identified themes which have recurred in the past. That information is an invaluable tool in considering current and future patterns, especially when combined with insights into the contemporary situation from a sociological perspective. The project meets its aims of developing a more historically literate Church which is more secure in its current identity and more effective in its mission.’

The Rt Revd Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston.

‘The ‘Building on History’ conference on religious diversity brought together academics and practitioners to explore the past in order to build for the future. Its academic rigour challenged simplistic assumptions and was particularly uncomfortable for those who, like me, represented some of the more powerful or ‘established’ influences from East London’s past. But the point of exploration and debate is exactly that, to open yourself up to fresh interpretation and understanding of our shared history. That is how we learn, and the conference allowed us to do that in an atmosphere of mutual respect and enquiry.’

The Rt Revd Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney.

‘Building on History provided a CME session for Stepney Readers and Clergy… which was tremendously well received. Comments afterwards suggested … “It explained how we got here in a way that I’ve never thought of before” and “If it can work like this for a parish in Bethnal Green then it can work for one in Islington”…It was clear during the session and from what has happened subsequently that people in Stepney valued the session and hope to use the resource in future.’

The Revd Andy Windross, Area Director of Training and Development, Stepney.

‘I certainly picked up from a lot people that they found the message that there may never have been a “golden age” of churchgoing very liberating. It was very helpful to note the importance of responding to population growth dynamically (even if the Victorians sometimes over-built on churches!), and the strategic importance of building a congregation and a broad base before building a glamorous church building. I also was encouraged to hear that ethnic and faith diversity is not entirely new, and should I presume therefore not discourage us in mission today.’

The Revd Richard James, Area Dean, Enfield.

‘The project highlighted the significant insights that an understanding of history can give in helping to understand the present and successfully navigate the future.’

The Revd Olly Rider, curate in Islington deanery.

‘I especially valued the attention to the detail of the historical, the broad sweep of social and historical analysis and the genuine desire not to see this as an end in itself but as a tool for the ongoing ministry and mission of the church.’

Archdeacon Chris Skilton, Diocese of Southwark.

‘I genuinely do feel that Building on History has been an exemplar project for developing an appreciation of the relevance of the past, and the importance of historical records, among contemporary faith communities.’

Dr Clive Field, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Birmingham.
ENGAGING WITH THE PAST
TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

THE EXPERIENCE OF BUILDING ON HISTORY:
THE CHURCH IN LONDON

www.open.ac.uk/buildingonhistory