The culture of Anglican church redundancy: Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, 1945-1995
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Why this is important
Redundant Anglican churches are not a new feature in the English landscape but since the introduction of formal processes to deal with them historians have shown greater interest. It is said that there was a high rate of redundancy because of the accelerated pace of secularisation since the Second World War. However, there are underlying motivations behind church redundancy that reflect local attitudes to community and belonging. The future of each redundant church illustrates the national attitudes towards heritage at that time. Between 1968 and 1995 over 1500 churches were made redundant. 20% were preserved in the Redundant Churches Fund (now the Church Conservation Trust), 21% were demolished and 11% were converted into homes. Those remaining were found a range of alternative uses. There is a paucity of historical literature that explains the pattern of church redundancy or explores the reasons for church closure. The main aim of this thesis is to test the assumptions, generalisations and statements made about church redundancy using two different geographical regions.

Research questions
- What makes a church redundant and what does the official designation mean?
- How and why are churches valued and devalued over time?
- What specific factors lead to the sense of inevitability of closure?
- To what degree has the secularisation perspective become so entrenched that it serves to shape the decision-making process?
- Has there been a fundamental shift in complicated notions of community and belonging that has created the circumstances for church property to be re-evaluated?
- What sort of objections are raised?
- To what extent are they persuaded by heritage issues?

Preliminary Findings - Lincolnshire and Leicestershire

Population: Too many churches were built for a population that declined rapidly in the twentieth century. Some churches were built in very remote areas where there were very small congregations which were unlikely to grow. The changing social structure of some villages affected the sense of belonging and attachment to a church. Planning processes in urban areas left some churches without congregations. Attitude: The Lincoln Diocesan attitude towards churches with very small congregations at this time was to close them because of a lack of clergy. Too few clerics living close to congregations weakened the relationships. There were very few objections to church closure but more objections to demolition. Condition: A high percentage of redundant churches were in a very poor condition with unaffordable repairs. Finance: Sustaining diocesan financial obligations which rose significantly and keeping a church maintained overwhelmed small congregations. Secularisation: The community’s allegiance to a church is qualified and selective. Congregations in villages were historically low and there did not appear to be the inevitability of closure?

Heritage

Redundant churches in Leicester City
Redundant churches in Lincolnshire

Heritage organisations played a significant role in the church redundancy process. There was a strong bias against churches built in the nineteenth century.