



SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS
FROM A RECENT
DOCTORAL THESIS

*THE ENGLISH PARISH
CHURCH – ITS
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
HERITAGE VISITOR
ATTRACTION MARKET*

Dr Bob Gibson

- 887 visitors interviewed on site over 6-month period
- 14 different locations – selected from typology designed to assess criteria such as urban / rural; within major tourist area / non-tourist area
- Major re-think to data recording after pilot study



WHY DO PEOPLE VISIT CHURCHES ?

- Overwhelming proportion of visits are secondary
- 775 of 887 (87% responses) said visit secondary to other activity
- Excluding special events (eg. flower festivals) 747 of 821 (91%) responses were secondary



BUT MANY ARE
SECONDARY TO
NON-TOURIST
ACTIVITY



REASONS GIVEN

Reason for visit	No.	%
Habit / Custom	160	18.04
Local History	115	12.97
Link with famous person	108	12.17
'Architecture'	88	11.17
Family Roots / Personal	69	7.77
Tranquillity / Spirituality	68	7.66



MEMBERSHIP OF HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS – DOMESTIC VISITORS

ORGANISATION	No	%
National Trust	216	27.55
English Heritage	17	2.17
Both NT & EH	36	4.59
Hist.Houses Assoc. (HHA)	1	0.13
TOTAL	270	34.43

Based on 784 Domestic Visitors



HERITAGE CONNECTIONS OF OVER SEAS VISITORS

- 4 of 37 (10.81%) visitors from USA were ROYAL OAK MEMBERS
- Only 2 of 103 overseas visitors using GB Heritage Pass
- A further 2 visitors using English Heritage Overseas Pass



SOURCE OF INFORMATION

NO PRIOR INFORMATION	303	34.10%
PREVIOUS VISIT	276	31.11%
FRIEND /RELATIVE	137	15.44%
NEARBY VISITOR ATTRACTION	26	2.93%
LOCAL TOURIST PUBLICITY	19	2.14%
TIC	6	0.07%



CAN FIND NO EVIDENCE AT
ALL TO SUPPORT
ENTHUSIASM FOR
CHURCH TRAIL CONCEPT



**MOST CHURCH VISITORS
HAVE LOW EXPECTATIONS
OF
SERVICE DELIVERY**





HARD / SOFT TOURISM ISSUES

SOFT TOURISM
REQUIRES HIGHER
LEVELS OF SERVICE
DELIVERY

RETAIL PURCHASES

724 (81.62%) made no purchase at all

Refreshments	63	7.10%
Leaflet	38	4.28%
Postcard	25	2.81%
Church Guidebook	16	1.80%
Parish Magazine	10	0.10%
Prayer Card	4	0.04%
Book	3	0.03%





“93% of visits have
informal learning
outcomes”

National Trust

Museums: Policy from Practice p2

Oct 2006



LOCATION

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