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## Outreach, Knowledge and Access

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# 3

## Outreach, Knowledge and Access

1 *Review of the Historic Environment in Wales* Welsh Assembly (March 2003), p.v.

2 *The State of the Historic Environment 2002*, p.60.

3 *Public Attitudes Towards Heritage*, research survey conducted for English Heritage by MORI (October 2003).

### INTRODUCTION

The discussion in the previous section addressed different ways in which the historic environment could be valued in economic terms. This section of the report focuses on non-financial benefits through education, training, community outreach and volunteering opportunities. Heritage has a key role to play in all these areas, and in helping to deliver the Government's priorities for education, lifelong learning, social inclusion and community renewal.

A recent report on the historic environment in Wales sums this up by saying, 'the historic environment is a unique and valuable cultural asset and source of historical knowledge. A greater sense of 'ownership' of the historic environment, based on increased understanding through improving physical and intellectual access, can make a real contribution to social sustainability and cohesion, and to fostering a genuine sense of community, based on shared connections with the past as well as the future'.<sup>1</sup> As the sum of all past and present human interaction with our physical surroundings, the historic environment offers an informal classroom and playground for all age groups and types of learning, from formal curriculum-based work at primary school to an individual's first taste of practical work or new skills for a retired office worker.

### 3.1 THE ROLE OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN FORMAL EDUCATION

Government places a high priority on education, and on the contribution that can be made to it through environmental, cultural and sporting activity both inside and outside the formal education system. Educating people to enjoy and use the historic environment as a learning resource is a central priority for many organisations involved in the preservation of heritage assets. Last year's report highlighted the enormous value that members of the public placed on the historic environment in relation to the education of children and young people. The teaching of history in schools plays a vital role in deepening our understanding of the past and informing attitudes about the future.

A nation-wide MORI poll in 2000 revealed that some 98% of respondents thought that heritage was an important means of teaching children about the past. According to a similar poll carried out in Liverpool in 2002 education was the highest priority for funding for the historic environment.<sup>2</sup> More than half of those surveyed in polls carried out in Bradford, Cornwall and London in 2003 stated education as either the first or second priority for spending on heritage issues.<sup>3</sup>

The historic environment is relevant across the National Curriculum and especially to history, geography, citizenship and sustainable development. It can provide context and depth to all subject areas and act as a canvas for exploring a wide range of hobbies, whilst providing inspiring locations for training or personal development.

The teaching of history in schools, colleges and universities is vital to encouraging understanding about the historic environment among future generations. The evidence presented here suggests that history education is generally of a good standard, both in terms of the quality of educational provision and the popularity of the subject. But the situation will continue to require close monitoring in future years if we are to preserve the place of history against pressures from other parts of the curriculum and from threats to its continuing importance in schools.

#### Formal Education: Primary and Secondary

##### The historic environment as part of the curriculum.

History is a compulsory subject up to the age of 14. The statutory requirements for the subject are set out in the National Curriculum, which was most recently revised in 1999/2000. Pupils are expected to develop a chronological understanding of the past across a wide timespan ranging from the Roman Empire to the present day, with a predominant emphasis on British history. Teachers are required to use a variety of methodologies, texts and other sources in helping pupils to develop their historical knowledge and skills, and in particular their ability to research, sift through evidence and argue for their point of view – skills that are prized in adult life.

## 1 School visits to historic visitor attractions

CATEGORY	SAMPLE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF VISITS BY SCHOOL CHILDREN	MINIMUM VISITS BY SCHOOL CHILDREN BASED ON SAMPLE	CHANGE ON 2002 (BASED ON SAMPLE OF 377)
CASTLE/FORT	92	7,800	266,300	-3%
GARDEN	120	2,000	139,100	-5%
HISTORIC HOUSE	288	2,200	376,200	+25%
HISTORIC MONUMENT	64	1,800	36,100	+4%
OTHER HISTORIC PROPERTIES	87	4,400	231,000	-12%
HERITAGE/VISITOR CENTRE	76	5,500	336,700	+18%
PLACE OF WORSHIP	66	9,300	463,500	-7%
<b>TOTAL SCHOOL VISITS</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>1,848,900</b>	<b>+ 28%</b>

Source: VisitBritain, *Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions 2002*

4 History in Primary Schools and History in Secondary Schools, Ofsted subject reports series 2001/02 (November 2002).

5 Statistics from VisitBritain Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions 2002, as analysed by the Moffat Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University.



Cleaning out the chicken run at Lower Treginnis Farm



Birdwatching at Brancaster Activity Centre

## Guardianships

Since its creation with the help of Norwich Union 10 years ago, the National Trust's Guardianships Scheme now involves 105 primary and secondary schools and 92 National Trust properties in England. The scheme develops mutually beneficial relations between schools and sites where pupils can gain hands-on experience of environmental and conservation work. The National Curriculum is imaginatively brought to life through practical activities and the exploration of pupils' local environment, whilst fostering awareness and responsibility for it.

## Redrow Schools Partnership

The Redrow Schools Partnership Programme, sponsored by housebuilder Redrow and supported by Arts & Business, offers opportunities for schools of contrasting backgrounds to work together on curriculum-based activities at National Trust properties around Britain. Through sharing ideas and skills, pupils from urban and rural schools combine to produce high quality exhibitions, events and performances that are featured at the Trust venue for the enjoyment of other pupils, teachers, families and members of the public. 27 schools across the country are involved in this programme.

To support teachers' planning and assessment of pupils' progress, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), in collaboration with the Department for Education and Skills, has published guidance including schemes of work for primary and secondary history ([www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes)) and exemplification of standards in history through the National Curriculum in Action website ([www.ncaction.org.uk](http://www.ncaction.org.uk)).

Successive OFSTED annual reports confirm that, on the whole, history is well taught in schools. OFSTED's 2001/02 subject report said that 'History teaching is good or very good in six in ten lessons in key stage 3 and three-quarters of lessons in key stage 4 and post-16'.

Evidence from OFSTED inspections and QCA's ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and qualifications shows that there is much enthusiasm for history in both primary and secondary schools. In three-fifths of schools there has been a significant improvement in history since the last inspection, whereas there was a deterioration in only one in twenty. OFSTED reports a significant improvement in pupils' achievement in key stage 3. 4

There has been some comment on whether the history curriculum is getting narrower, and in particular on whether it is focusing on some topics (such as Nazi Germany) at the expense of British history. OFSTED has argued that 'the overwhelming majority of schools meet National Curriculum requirements, with a strong focus on the three British history studies'. At key stage 3 the main British History units are generally well treated, but at GCSE and A-Level history OFSTED inspectors observed more lessons on Nazi Germany than on any other subject. They also observed work on Roman Britain, early modern and modern British History, and modern European, American and African history, including mainly nineteenth and twentieth-century themes such as colonisation, decolonisation and the Cold War. Developing the study of local history in schools was one area that OFSTED identified for the future.

Visits to sites of historic importance continue to be of much value to the teaching of history and other National Curriculum subjects. Visits can encourage an imaginative understanding of the past. Estimates based on VisitBritain's *Visits to Visitor Attractions Survey* suggest that there were three million school visits to historic visitor attractions in 2002. This figure is broadly similar to that reported in 2001. Considering the wider context of continuing pressure on education budgets, the figure remains a success story for use of the historic environment as an educational resource. The greatest increases in school visits were to historic houses (+25%) and heritage/visitor centres (+18%). Other, often smaller, sites have experienced slight reductions in the size of school visits. This may be due to cost factors for schools looking for an 'all-encompassing' visit that can serve a variety of educational and interpretative purposes. Places of worship received the greatest number of school visits in 2002. At a regional level, the South East had the highest proportion of school visits recorded (23% of total number) with London receiving 21%. The lowest proportion is seen was the North East (5% of total school visits). 5

There were 478,499 free educational group visitors to sites owned by or managed in agreement with English Heritage in 2002/03, of which about 85% were from visits by primary and secondary schools. There were 1,300 visits by school to Historic Houses Association (HHA) properties in 2002, involving between 40,000 and 50,000 children. In 2003, funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a one-year project to appoint education officers with English Heritage in two regions, the South East and North West, to develop pilot educational resources at HHA houses. These posts will enable private owners of historic houses and landscapes to develop educational services for a wide range of audiences, and to provide access to those communities who have traditionally been under-represented.

The National Trust reports that in 2002/03 there were 9,621 school group visits to their properties across England which equates to 336,735 students (based on an average group size of 35 students). However this figure omits some regions, where no data is currently available, and special school groups or nursery schools. A fuller analysis due for completion by the end of 2003 is expected to reveal somewhere in excess of 450,000 student visits. According to a National Trust survey of the key curriculum areas covered by the educational work in their properties, history, science and the environment, geography and the creative arts were covered to a significant degree across all its regions. Literacy and numeracy coverage was slightly more variable. <sup>6</sup>

**Qualifications.** There were nearly 200,000 GCSE history candidates in 2001/02, a slight drop on the figure for 2000/01 but up overall on the position five years ago when there were 189,070 candidates. A-level history was the fourth most popular subject at A-level in 2001/02, despite a slight drop in the number of actual entrants, while AS-level history in 2001/02 saw a 20% rise in entries on the previous year. See Table 2. According to the Council for British Archaeology there were 1,951 A-level and GCSE students studying archaeology in 2002, an increase of 200 on the number of students in 2001.



Chintz Exhibition at Brodsworth Hall, Summer 2003



Pupils from schools in Rotherham, Doncaster and Bradford designed and printed their own chintz patterns as part of the exhibition

## Chintz Yatra: Chintz Journey, Brodsworth Hall and Gardens

The Discovering Chintz exhibition at Brodsworth Hall follows the journey of chintz from its origins in India to Victorian country houses such as Brodsworth in Yorkshire. Through a visit to the exhibition, Year 3 pupils from schools in Rotherham, Doncaster and Bradford explored the manufacture, design and qualities of chintz fabric. Textile artist Pavan Samra worked with the pupils to make, test and print their own designs.

As recognised in last year's report, attention needs to be paid to the quality as well as quantity of educational provision. English Heritage and other bodies are committing resources to this in a variety of ways, for instance by ensuring the availability of training for teachers using the historic environment as a teaching resource. English Heritage offered around 90 courses for teachers in 2002/3 with a similar number planned for this year.

A significant development for future years was the launch in 2003 of a **joint DCMS/DfES Advisory Committee** to advise Ministers from both departments on how best to promote the contemporary and historic environment as an educational resource. The Committee will report in summer 2004 on:

- How to strengthen the partnership between DCMS and DfES to support policy proposals for the built and historic environment
- Identifying ways of promoting built environment-related careers in schools and further education establishments
- Contributing to Government plans for community-led regeneration by engaging communities with their built environment

<sup>6</sup> Information from the National Trust.

7 *Young People and Heritage: A Review of Current Literature*, Debi Roker and Helen Richardson for the Heritage Lottery Fund (June 2003).



A volunteer gardening at Llanerchaeron



A volunteer mixing up compost at Anglesey Abbey

## Employee Volunteering Programme

The Employee Volunteering Programme (EVP) is a new initiative designed to increase the opportunities for corporate and public sector organisations to contribute to the community, to the environment and to offer development opportunities to their staff. The National Trust is working in partnership with BTCV, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, and YHA to develop employee volunteering projects for groups and individuals. EVP was established in 2001 in response to the increasing demand experienced at the Trust and at partner organisations. It is backed and funded for three years by the Home Office's Active Community Unit.

### Formal Education: Tertiary

There continues to be a steady rise in the number of students entering higher education to study history and other degrees related to the historic environment at degree level, although the proportion of overall student numbers taking these courses has declined slightly on the position in 1996/97. The Higher Education Statistics Agency produces year-on-year figures for entrants to different subjects. This shows that there has been a 10% increase in number of entrants to history courses since 1996/97, but a slight decline in the proportion of students taking this subject. See Table 3.

These figures may well underestimate the total number of students studying courses relating to the historic environment at University level. Many key courses (such as in 'heritage studies') may not be counted in these figures, and other courses with a significant historic environment component may fall into other categories, such as courses in geography with historic or heritage components. According to research by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) there are 138 departments in 92 universities offering archaeology and/or heritage studies degrees or sub-degree qualifications.

The historic environment offers a wide range of opportunities for continuing informal interaction beyond school and higher education. Much of this is captured in the earlier sections on tourism and the historic environment (see Section 2.7) and later on in this chapter in relation to volunteering (see Section 3.4). Though informal participation is often associated with older age groups, it is interesting to note that family membership is the fastest growing area of the National Trust's 3.2 million-strong membership. This year the Trust has seen a 24.3% increase in the 'Family One Adult' category, and the 'Family Group' category has increased by 8.5%. Heritage organisations offer a myriad of different events, attractions and practical experiences for all age groups up and down the country.

## 3.2 SKILLS

As well as providing opportunities for formal education, the historic environment offers opportunities for lifelong learning and the development of new skills. This can be achieved through informal learning, working holidays, voluntary activity or vocational training. The future of the historic environment depends directly on an active skillsbase of people with the capacity to care for it and interpret it to the wider community.

### Informal and lifelong skills and learning

There are many opportunities that offer people the chance to acquire new skills through participation with the historic environment. The Heritage Lottery Fund's **Young Roots** grants programme, for example, run in partnership with the National Youth Agency, has awarded over £600,000 to 34 projects designed to engage young people aged 13 to 20 in local heritage projects. The programme builds on research which suggests that young people often display low levels of participation in heritage activities, but that projects that have been designed by young people themselves and those that are led by credible youth workers and peer educators are most likely to have the greatest impact.

As well as a better understanding of the heritage all around them, such schemes can offer the participants a range of social and life skills. A Young Roots project at the Waterways Museum in Goole was targeted at young people aged 16-17, many of whom had no skills or qualifications and little chance of finding work.

## 2 GCSE and A-level history

YEAR	GCSE		A LEVEL	
	NUMBER ENTERED GRADES A*-C	% ACHIEVED	NUMBER ENTERED GRADES A-C	% ACHIEVED
2001/02	193,937	62.3%	33,421	71%
2000/01	195,231	61.3%	34,514	61.6%
1999/00	190,279	61.3%	30,938	61.3%
1998/99	188,934	60.2%	30,763	59.8%
1997/98	189,070	58.2%	31,627	57.3%

Source: Inter Examination Board

## 3 Higher education

COURSE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS 1996/7	% OF ALL STUDENTS 1996/97	NUMBER OF STUDENTS 2000/01	% OF ALL STUDENTS 2000/01	NUMBER OF STUDENTS 2001/2	% OF ALL STUDENTS 2001/2	CHANGE IN PROPORTION OF ALL STUDENTS 96/7 TO 01/02
ARCHAEOLOGY	5,825	0.33%	5,425	0.27%	5,785	0.28%	-0.05%
ARCHITECTURE AND OTHER ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES	13,428	0.76%	14,525	0.73%	14,690	0.70%	-0.06%
BUILDING	20,097	1.14%	17,905	0.90%	18,700	0.90%	-0.24%
HISTORY AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY	28,673	1.63%	30,170	1.52%	31,565	1.51%	-0.12%
HISTORY OF ART	7,904	0.45%	8,630	0.43%	8,955	0.43%	-0.02%
LAND AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	3,011	0.17%	2,455	0.12%	2,525	0.12%	-0.05%
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING	10,503	0.60%	9,155	0.46%	9,300	0.45%	-0.15%
<b>TOTAL OF ABOVE</b>	<b>89,441</b>	<b>5.09%</b>	<b>88,265</b>	<b>4.43%</b>	<b>91,520</b>	<b>4.51%</b>	<b>-0.58%</b>
TOTAL FOR ALL SUBJECTS	1,756,179	100%	1,990,625	100%	2,086,075	100.00%	+18.78%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

<sup>8</sup> Information from  
Countryside Agency.

<sup>9</sup> Information from Dry  
Stone Wallers' Association.

Although many had never left their local area before, they were taken on overnight trips in the museum's historic sailing vessels, and taught new skills. The project also involved researching archives and photographs to discover more about the role the canals played in transporting coal. As a result of participating in the scheme, some of the young people gained the confidence and skills to get work outside the area, and took the initiative to discover more about their local history using the internet. Similarly, twelve young disaffected students with learning and behavioural difficulties from the local secondary school followed a module for the ASDAN award at Porchester Castle. The project focused on looking at old buildings and why we preserve them. Students took part in a practical workshop on traditional repair techniques.

### Vocational skills

Last year's report highlighted the issue of conservation craft skill shortages. People with specialist craft skills are critical to the continued maintenance and repair of the historic environment. These range from people with specialist buildings conservation skills, to thatchers and dry stone wallers. Often it is difficult to assess the numbers of people available with such skills. It is estimated that there are between 800 and 1,000 thatchers, with Knuston Hall providing training for 25-30 new apprentices per year. <sup>8</sup> There are 1,255 members of the Dry Stone Wallers' Association (DSWA), broken down into 255 professional wallers, 953 amateur wallers and 52 others. 252 new members joined the DSWA between January and September 2003 representing a mixture of ages, whether those at the start of their careers or those embarking on second careers after taking early retirement at 50-55. <sup>9</sup> Knowing more about the numbers of people with specialist construction and conservation skills would enable us to monitor better the pressures that the historic environment is under.

Indicators produced by CITB-Construction Skills, the Government's sector skills council for the construction industry, suggest that there are considerable shortages in both general construction skills and the specialist skills that are drawn upon in specialist conservation work. Across the construction industry 80% of respondents to the CITB *Employers' Skill Needs Survey 2002* expressed difficulties with recruitment. An initial analysis of new research carried out in 2003 suggests that the industry will continue to experience difficulties in meeting its skill requirements for the next five years. This is because of:

- Competition for workers from other industries
- Too few people coming through training
- A gap in the workforce which occurred during low levels of recruitment in the early 1990s

First year intake for construction training in 2002/03 stands at just under 49,000, which represents a rise on the previous year's figures. English Heritage provides co-ordination of measures to address the skills problem. Since last year English Heritage has helped to fund:

- A craft skills 'summit' at Warwick University in February 2003
- The establishment within CITB of a specialist sector skills development group, *The National Heritage Training Group*
- An NHTG website ([www.nhtg.org.uk](http://www.nhtg.org.uk))
- A careers brochure available from CITB regional offices and distributed to all secondary schools and careers advisory services
- The creation within CITB of a Heritage Manager's post

English Heritage plans to work with CITB-Construction Skills, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Executive and others to carry out research to assess the degree of need and demand for skills and labour locally. Once this information is analysed and published in the same format as the CITB's current Foresight Report the NHTG will be able to collaborate with local employers and FE colleges to establish or adapt courses and qualifications to meet demand. To contribute to this process, English Heritage will carry out research, to be reported on in next year's *Heritage Counts*, into the likely client demand for specialist conservation skills in the next 5 years. The likely demand for such skills from the public, private and charitable sectors will be considered by seeking data from organisations that commission work on the refurbishment, repair and maintenance of historic buildings. This information will help the NHTG to map likely future skills 'hotspots', as well as to contribute towards an assessment of the multiplier effect of heritage regeneration in terms of the skills and jobs that it helps to sustain.

Rural crafts and trades are very important in terms of retaining vital heritage skills, provision of local jobs, local tourism, the conservation and well-being of the English countryside, diversification of the rural economy and the generation of an estimated £40 million per year to the rural economy of England. The rural crafts sector is dominated by the self-employed and micro businesses, often located in the more remote parts of rural England, who do not have the same access to work-based training as their urban counterparts.

The Countryside Agency set up a National Rural Crafts Apprenticeship Working Party in June 2002 to identify how the national training programme can fund work-based training for crafts and rural trades, attended by officials from government departments and relevant agencies. The Working Party is developing a Rural Crafts version of the Modern Apprenticeship. This will include MA Frameworks at Foundation level (Advanced in some cases) for Wheelwrighting, Forgework, Thatching, Saddlery and Dry Stone Walling, with potential to include additional crafts and trades as frameworks are developed. English Heritage, the Countryside Agency, English Nature, LANTRA (the sector skills council for the environmental and land-based sector) and CAFE Space are also carrying out a 'green skills' mapping exercise, the results of which will be completed in March 2004. The project addresses issues raised in the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce Report (2002) about green space management standards and appropriate skills.

### 3.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The historic environment should be for everyone to enjoy. However, significant barriers still exist for many people, whether because of their cultural background or limited income. The need to attract a wide diversity of people to the historic environment was a key part of *Power of Place* and *A Force for Our Future*. This was reinforced by the publication in June 2002 of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport document *People and Places* which set out the Government's position on how the built environment can be used to promote social inclusion, regeneration and community cohesion.

The report showed how visits to historic sites can help people find out about diverse aspects of England's history, society and multi-cultural heritage, and help people understand how the past influences the present. The first step to engaging better with communities, identified by the report, was to identify and tackle physical, cultural intellectual and financial barriers to greater access. <sup>10</sup>

By its very nature, the historic environment is multicultural. It represents the physical embodiment over time of the legacies of a diversity of different cultures and communities and their engagement with the landscapes around them. The sheer diversity that is represented within the historic environment prevents a simplistic understanding of 'national heritage' or 'Englishness'. There has always been a diverse range of communities living in England. The website *Moving Here* ([www.movinghere.org.uk](http://www.movinghere.org.uk)), launched this year by the National Archives, brings together documentary evidence for the many peoples from across the world who have made this country their own, from the thousands of Black people living in Elizabethan London to the Russian and Eastern European Jewish settlers of the nineteenth century, to the more recent arrival of migrants from the Caribbean and South Asia in the second half of the twentieth century. Heritage is an elastic concept that can be applied to different things by different people depending on their economic background, their ethnicity, their gender and their physical abilities.

Engagement in the multifaceted complexities of the historic environment can help all of us to learn more about the histories of our communities. However, often the historic environment is perceived as an 'elitist' preoccupation, which speaks only to a privileged few. Last year's *State of the Historic Environment Report* identified that a key challenge for those involved in looking after the historic environment was to reach out to groups in society who were excluded from participation in heritage. In 2003 the DCMS was given a specific target to increase by 100,000 the number of people from 'priority groups' (ethnic minorities, people on lower incomes) engaging with the historic environment by 2005/06. *Heritage Counts 2003* reports on research that was commissioned as a direct result of this challenge, which seeks to establish the current level of engagement of different social groups and the barriers that exist to greater participation.

<sup>10</sup> *People and Places: Social Inclusion Policy for the Built and Historic Environment*, DCMS (2002).

**11** *Attitudes Towards the Historic Environment*, research conducted for English Heritage by MORI (April-July 2000).

**12** *Developing New Audiences*, PLB Consulting Ltd for Heritage Lottery Fund (April 2001) available at [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

**13** All figures from *Public Attitudes Towards Heritage*, Research Survey conducted for English Heritage by MORI (October 2003).

This research marks the beginning of a renewed effort on behalf of heritage organisations to reach out to wider groups in society, to ensure that everyone has the chance to enjoy the many delights and benefits that the historic environment can offer.

### Popular attitudes to the historic environment

*Power of Place* drew on work by MORI that identified the extent of popular support for heritage. Some 98% of respondents to a national poll in 2000 thought that heritage was important to teach children about the past, and 76% agreed that their lives were richer for having the opportunity to visit and see examples of heritage. **11** This led English Heritage to commission further work by MORI into the different ways in which people in London and Liverpool interacted with their local areas, and the attitudes towards heritage of ethnic minority people in London, Birmingham and Leicester. This research highlighted the fact that for many sections of society, the traditional emphasis on the built heritage, and on a formal style of interpretation, was of little interest or value. Similarly the study 'Developing New Audiences' carried out for the Heritage Lottery Fund identified the following 'missing' audiences from the built heritage: teenagers; young adults; older people; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; people without cars; unemployed people; and people from low-income households. For these groups, the study identified the following barriers to participation: perceptions that heritage was 'not for them'; lack of suitable facilities at sites; lack of information about what is available to them; poor transport links; poor physical access to and at sites; lack of intellectual access; cost of visiting; and 'management ethos'. **12**

In 2003 MORI were commissioned by English Heritage and DCMS, with additional support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, to conduct an additional nationwide survey of public attitudes towards heritage, and more detailed research into the attitudes of different ethnic and social groups in three diverse regions of the country – inner-city London, Bradford, and Cornwall. MORI's nationwide survey was based on a nationally representative sample of 1,649 adults (aged 16 and over). Although an average of two in five respondents said that they had visited a historic place in the last 12 months, almost three quarters (72%) of the general public agreed that more should be done to recognise the contribution of different communities to our heritage. A similar number (74%) agreed that restoring older buildings could play a part in reviving neighbourhoods.

41% of respondents said that they would be interested in taking their family to a museum or historic site, and over a third (36%) said that they would like to find out more about the local history of their area. 32% said that they were interested in tracing their family tree. A minority said they would consider getting more directly involved in the historic environment whether by joining a preservation society (12%) or as a volunteer (8%). The survey also asked what would make respondents more likely to visit heritage sites. Around 43% said that cheaper entry would encourage them to visit more, with 29% saying that events would tempt them to historic sites. People from ethnic minorities were statistically more likely to say that 'more information' would enable them to visit historic sites more often (36% compared to a national average of 28%).

There were some clear divisions between different social groups interviewed. Those from social classes A and B and, to a certain extent, C1, were significantly more likely to have visited historic sites than those in social groups C2, D and E. Those with children in their household were significantly less likely than average to think that they would visit a historic garden or park, building or palace, or ancient monument. White people were almost twice as likely to associate 'historic buildings and stately homes' with 'heritage' (80%) as ethnic minority people (48%), while only 29% of ethnic minority people said they had visited a historic building or garden compared to the national average of 40%. **13** This research confirmed the picture of the historic environment as something that is perceived to be disproportionately more accessible to some members of society than others, and as something that can mean different things to different people.

The more detailed quantitative and qualitative studies carried out in Bradford, Cornwall and London also revealed differences in opinions towards heritage among different groups by social class and ethnicity. A broad cross-section of the population in those areas was surveyed to establish patterns of participation in heritage, its meaning to people, and the barriers preventing greater access. In terms of heritage-related behaviour:

- Two thirds or more of those in each region had visited the countryside or watched a TV programme about history or archaeology within the last 12 months.

- Around half had visited a historic garden or park or visited a historic house, with the proportion especially high among those in London
- White and middle class people were more likely to have visited a historic house, garden or park, although those from ethnic minorities or adults from lower social classes were just as likely to have been to a historic park or garden
- When presented with a list of historic sites in their local area, London residents were more likely to have visited any of them than those of other regions.
- In Bradford, Asian people were statistically more likely to have visited one of a list of sites mentioned than any other group

When asked about ways that would encourage people to visit sites more frequently, cost frequently emerged as the key barrier to overcome, regardless of ethnic origin. Transport, better information and parking were mentioned by over one in three overall. A quarter or more outside London mentioned facilities for children and people with disabilities as particular needs. 'A warmer welcome for people like me' (34%) and better facilities for children (37%) were more likely to attract people from ethnic minorities, while working class adults would be more encouraged by better transport (40%), a warmer welcome (27%) and better facilities for disabled people (29%). The issue of transport may be particularly pertinent: over 70% of the poorest 20% of households in Britain do not own a car. <sup>14</sup>

When asked for spontaneous associations with the term 'heritage' the primary association across all three regions was 'historic buildings and stately homes' (over a third of responses). Local history received a reasonably high level of association (15% in London, 9% in Cornwall and 13% in Bradford). Young people and people from ethnic minorities were among those least able to come up with any spontaneous associations. When prompted with a list of possible associations the response rate rose dramatically. This also revealed significant regional variations in definitions of 'heritage'. While seven in ten of all respondents associated historic buildings and stately homes and around two thirds mentioned gardens, parks and cemeteries, those in Cornwall had stronger associations with the countryside, old documents, oral history and language.



Oxford Prison, Oxford. An eleventh-century tower and castle mound and eighteenth-century prison buildings. Open as part of Heritage Open Days 2003



London Garden Squares Day June 2003, St George's Fields

## Heritage Open Days, National Archaeology Days, London Open House and London Gardens Squares Scheme

Heritage Open Days are England's most popular voluntary cultural event. The Heritage Open Day weekend held in September 2002 attracted 800,000 visitors, who were welcomed by 23,000 volunteers working under 796 local organisers. In 2002 1,803 historic properties were open to visitors, over half of which (970) were involved in the Heritage Open Day scheme for the first time. At an estimated total cost of £160,000, or approximately 8 pence per visitor, Heritage Open Days are highly cost-effective. Similarly, the National Archaeology Day events organised by the Council for British Archaeology saw 90,000 visitors at 161 separate sites across the country, while 350,000 people visited 600 buildings over the period of the 2002 London Open House weekend. London Garden Squares Day attracted over 5,000 visitors to 100 gardens in 2003. On average they visited 10 gardens each, representing 150,000 visits.

People in Bradford were more likely to mention factories and other industrial buildings than any other group, while Londoners were more likely to think of shops, pubs and modern buildings. White people had more associations with the term 'heritage' than those from ethnic minorities, who in turn were more likely to cite transport as a form of heritage.

<sup>14</sup> Family Spending 1999-2000, Office of National Statistics.

Focus group discussions were also held with communities in the three regions to explore in more depth attitudes towards engagement in the heritage. In Bradford, focus groups were held with Asian people from social groups C1 and C2. In West London groups were held with Afro-Caribbean people from social classes C1, C2, D and E, and in Camborne, Cornwall, discussions were held with white people from social groups C2, D and E.

These discussions, while they produced results of an anecdotal rather than statistical nature, generated much evidence about the importance of heritage to many communities' sense of place and identity, and also about what constitutes 'heritage' itself for different social groups.

There was some concern from the focus groups that the particular cultures of socially excluded groups were publicly celebrated. There was also a concern that many historic sites open to the public were simply not relevant to everyone. This was despite some positive messages about the multicultural nature of modern life in England. As one woman in Bradford said, 'heritage reminds you of where you belong, and I belong in England'. Another quote demonstrated how people from different ethnic backgrounds were now integrated into contemporary society without losing sight of their self-identities: 'we're not losing our values but at the same time, we are mixing in with society'.

When asked to explain further their attitudes towards the built heritage, many of those taking part in the groups said that they placed a high value on the everyday historic environment where they lived. Old buildings that reflected an individual or community's history, especially its industrial history, were especially highly valued, such as factories, houses, hospitals, transport hubs, shops, streets and buildings built for social activity. For the groups in Bradford, the mills were seen as particularly important and worthy of saving. One Asian man pointed out that 'our fathers all worked in these mills for 12-14 hour shifts but how many of us actually know what they actually did in there?' Similarly, for Afro-Caribbean west Londoners, the transport system and other industrial sites were evocative of their personal heritage. As one London woman explained, 'I remember my Dad and many of the West Indian community going to work in Sheffield steel then coming to London and then building London Underground so when I see things like old factories and mills... that's where my [heritage] starts from'.

One consequence of this interest in the everyday landscape was that people were often unhappy to see their local landmarks disintegrated or demolished to make way for new, alternative buildings. Examples cited included a local hospital in Camborne which had been developed into 'executive homes'; the demolition of the old cinema in Bradford; the modernisation of traditional pubs; the closure of small, independent shops often forced out of business by large out-of-town supermarkets; and the dereliction of buildings which could be developed into facilities for local children or minority groups. 'They've knocked down an old chapel and now it's a rubbish car park,' said one woman interviewed in Camborne, while other members of the group bemoaned the destruction of traditional features of Cornish towns through 'modernisation'. Asian people felt that it was important to preserve local areas so that they could show their children where they were born and raised. The younger Cornish group also felt it was critical to preserve the Cornish language. None could speak Cornish themselves but they expressed interest in learning and many felt it should be offered to children as an education option at school.

Events held to celebrate local or cultural history were valued. The Notting Hill Carnival, for example, was identified as the only celebration of Black culture in the UK. However, the group complained that the Notting Hill Carnival was being eroded by commercial interests and activity. As one woman said, 'it was great because it started as an expression of Caribbean culture here in London. The women wearing their national costume, St Lucia, Dominic and Granada. All of those things are educational for the young people'.

The groups involved in the discussions were very proud of their heritage. They were keen for their children and for others in society to gain a better understanding of their particular history and culture. Inadequate information was highlighted as a major barrier to the promotion and maintenance of their heritage. Many were unaware of the facilities and events targeted at their communities and at minority groups even where these were available, and they all agreed that insufficient coverage was provided for their culture through the education system. The groups did not feel that there was anything available for them in their local areas, and called on heritage organisations to communicate more about the opportunities available, through schools, the internet and the media.

### Promoting access to the historic environment

This research presents a huge challenge to existing heritage organisations: how can all groups in society be encouraged to participate in and benefit from an understanding of the historic environment? It remains the case that many heritage organisations are staffed primarily by white people, and that people from ethnic minority or other socially excluded backgrounds do not have access to the training that would enable them to contribute to creating a more inclusive heritage. One survey in 2001 suggested that just 3.55% of students on archaeological or heritage courses were from a Black or Asian background, and that just eight out of 1,116 employees of 33 Institute Field Archaeologist-affiliated organisations were Black or Asian.<sup>15</sup>

But there are some very positive steps being taken to promote the involvement of excluded groups in the historic environment. The Historic Houses Association, for example, has devised an innovative new project with the Black Environment Network (BEN), **Linking People and Places**, to link together historic houses and their local ethnic communities. Focusing on eight houses across Britain (three in Scotland, two in Wales, and three in England), local ethnic minority community groups are being taken on visits to historic houses, in order to demonstrate the appeal of such places and to find out more about why minority groups feel excluded from them.

The project will challenge perceptions and strengthen understanding on both sides, and help to identify and remove barriers – either real or perceived – to visiting historic places. A key consideration is how places can be presented in culturally relevant ways, and participants will be involved in managing and designing new activities. While some of the houses involved may be regarded as iconic symbols of Britain's heritage, they are also local resources for recreation, learning and discovery, places to meet friends, bring communities together, and places to have fun. It is hoped that meaningful and long-lasting links will be forged between the houses and communities.

This work follows on from similar work that BEN has done with the HLF. The aims of the Mosaic Project are to promote access by ethnic minority communities to National Parks and to build stronger links between National Park bodies and ethnic minority communities. The Countryside Agency and Black Environment Network have now published the report *Capturing Richness*, which features the work done to promote access to the countryside over the last 16 years.

It reports on the experiences of ethnic communities taking part in countryside-based activities and their sharing of cultural knowledge with those working in the countryside – on topics ranging from traditional land management techniques to historic exotic horticultural collections.<sup>16</sup>

English Heritage has now appointed a new Head of Outreach and a team of regional outreach offices to engage new audiences. English Heritage is working with the Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust to fund the Sikh Heritage Trail project highlighting 150 years of Anglo-Sikh history. Projects have also been funded by English Heritage in the North East and in Liverpool with the aim of helping local people to celebrate the particular spirit of their local communities. Rollout of heritage regeneration funding has also helped to maintain the unique sense of place of some ethnic minority communities, such as the Asian community of Brick Lane in east London. In conjunction with the Black and Asian Studies Association and Black British Heritage Group the distinctive Blue Plaques scheme has celebrated the lives of a number of historically significant Black and ethnic minority figures including Paul Robeson, Mahatma Gandhi and Jimi Hendrix.

### Improving Physical Access

The barriers preventing disabled people and other excluded groups from experiencing heritage are diverse and interrelated. Physical barriers are interwoven with social, intellectual and economic issues such as appropriate information, transport, poverty, social isolation, accompaniment, personal security, low expectations and discrimination.

The Sensory Trust is working with organisations and projects throughout the UK to promote and implement inclusive approaches to environmental design and management. Inclusive design is designing for the widest audience, and avoiding as far as possible the exclusion of particular groups or individuals. It means being aware of the diversity of the potential audience for heritage sites, and the staff who design and manage these spaces. Most of all it means considering how different people read and access the world around them in ways that are coloured by their age, physical mobility, ethnic background, gender, health, sensory acuity, intellect and experience. It is a people-centred approach that maximises ways in which people can engage with their environment at all levels and experience it through all their senses.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Paul Benjamin, 'Black and Asian representation in UK Archaeology', *The Archaeologist* 48 (Spring 2003), pp.8-9.

<sup>16</sup> *Capturing Richness: Countryside Visits by Black and Ethnic Minority Communities*, Countryside Agency (2003).

**17** *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal*, Liz Greenhalgh and Ken Warpole for DEMOS (1995).



Explaining the local heritage in Ennerdale

## Untold Story

The National Trust's pilot Untold Story project encourages young people and community groups with no previous experience of an NT property, to explore the significance of a place on their own terms. In August young people from secondary schools around Ennerdale in north Cumbria used drama, puppetry, photography, music and story telling to articulate their experiences and responses to the property. The Untold Story celebrates heritage in new ways, bringing a fresh, local approach to the interpretation of Trust properties. The creative work developed by each group is incorporated into each property's interpretation plans and the project is intended as a starting point for sustained partnerships with the community. Ennerdale is the second of twenty properties to be involved in this three year pilot, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The work of the Sensory Trust responds to a concern that many areas of public greenspace in this country fail to meet the needs of disabled people and that even sites with good physical access can still remain relatively under-used. This pattern of under-use has been expressed informally by many site practitioners. It was also highlighted for instance in a survey which indicated that the presence of people with evident disabilities never amounted to more than 0.5% of all users. **17**

In addition, the Countryside Agency identified that 'missing visitors' of the countryside represented 40% of the population. These were mainly people on low income or state benefit, living in poorer conditions and reliant on public transport. They include ethnic communities, elderly people and people with disabilities.

Physical barriers, such as narrow or steep paths and inaccessible toilets, are reasonably well understood. However, there are often more 'hidden' factors that are harder to identify.

Physical barriers were identified as the major reason preventing access to greenspace, but these were closely followed by lack of information.

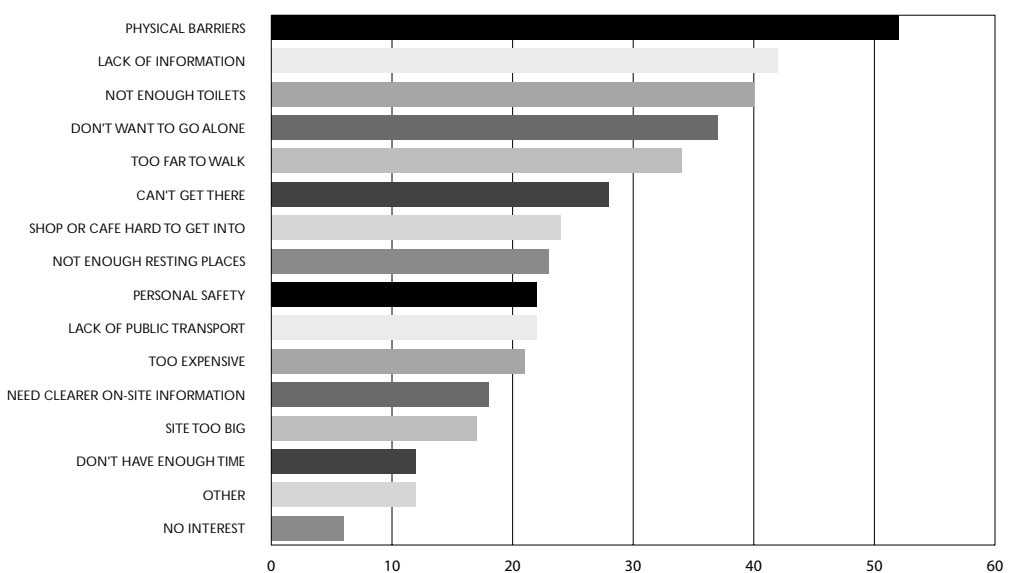
These social factors are generally less obvious but often very significant in making disabled people feel excluded. It is crucial that physical and socio-cultural factors are considered together with the ways in which heritage can provide rich experiences and a means of disabled people connecting with their community and surrounding environment. See Chart 4.

The Sensory Trust's work on heritage sites includes work on urban parks and rural areas, input to strategic planning, helping with the preparation of HLF bids, site evaluation and development of specific design and management ideas. The Trust is currently working with local authorities in different parts of the country to develop inclusive evaluation and design tools, enabling designers/managers and users of public open space to address issues of site access, use and quality of visitor experience. At the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall the Trust has prepared an Inclusive Design Review, to review existing accessibility of gardens and opportunities for improvement across the different areas of garden operations, including visitor information, wayfinding, physical access, interpretation, and sensory enrichment of the visitor experience. At Stourhead in Wiltshire it has worked with the National Trust to prepare a sensory interpretative tour of the gardens, in particular focusing on interest that inspires all the senses, not just the visual.

### Disability Discrimination Act

Ensuring a co-ordinated approach to promoting access to the historic environment by people with disabilities is important in and of itself to ensuring that everyone in society can benefit equally from what heritage has to offer. But there is also a legal imperative incumbent on all organisations that make aspects of the historic environment open to the public. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places a duty on service providers not to discriminate in the provision of their services. The first part of the Act relating in particular to the provision of visitor services at historic sites and other visitor attractions came into force in 1999 in respect of the provision of intellectual and non-physical access. The second part relating to the overcoming of physical barriers comes into force in October 2004.

#### 4 What puts people off visiting green spaces?



Source: The Sensory Trust

The provision of reasonable access to all historic sites open to the public will mean different things in different circumstances. Over time, new solutions will be identified that will help overcome what seem to be insurmountable problems. A number of key historic environment organisations meet on a regular basis to share best practice, discuss options and to try to identify potential solutions to difficult access issues, based on each others' experience. This group expects to continue indefinitely, irrespective of the deadlines in the Act, to consider the development of new options.

The Disability Rights Commission has issued guidance on interpreting the meaning or the physical access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. English Heritage has therefore recently undertaken a consultation exercise to update its *Easy Access to the Historic Environment guidance* note. A revised guidance note is due for publication early in 2004, which it is hoped will also be able to take into account the new Part M of the Building Regulations.

There is much that the sector can do to improve access for those with disabilities, both to recognise the requirements of the Act, but more importantly, to recognise that many potential visitors to historic sites are currently prevented from visiting either because of actual barriers or from strong perceptions that historic places are not open to them. Many of the changes are relatively straightforward and cost little. The right attitude and interpersonal skills, can make all the difference to the experience of the visitor, regardless of any other changes.

The Act is an initial driver, but there will be constant opportunities arising as thinking and practical solutions evolve. The sector must recognise and take advantage of these changes to engage with a major sector of our population.

### Access through technology

Imaginative use of new media and information technology can also promote access to the historic environment. Provision of internet access forms an essential part of Historic Environment Records projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. There are currently nine such projects, which also include specific provision for outreach through displays, educational materials and community projects.

The National Monuments Record (NMR) is English Heritage's public archive, holding over 6 million photographs, 300,000 drawings and over 1 million database records. It aims to increase understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment by providing access to its extensive collections and data sets. The archives repository is based in Swindon, is a recognised place of deposit under the Public Records legislation and has high environmental standards for the storage of photographs and other archives. As well as conventional visitor and research services the NMR runs education and outreach programmes. It seeks to increase access to its data and collections via the internet. Current projects include:

- **Listed Buildings Online**  
Local authorities, amenity societies, fire brigades, church and other conservation agencies are now using Listed Buildings Online, a website providing rapid access to the current statutory list of buildings of special, architectural and historic interest.
- **Images of England ([www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk))**  
The Images of England website will provide public access to a photographic record of every listed building in England. Each image will be posted alongside statutory list descriptions for each building, creating one of the largest free-to-access digital image libraries in the world. Over 82,000 images are already available on the website, along with 370,000 list descriptions. Last year users of the site made over 4 million image requests.
- **Viewfinder ([www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder))**  
The Viewfinder website was launched in March 2003. Made possible by a grant from the New Opportunities Fund, it provides online access to 20,000 archive images dating from the 1840s to the present day. Each year the National Monuments Record will add thousands more photographs from its most important photographic collections. Since March, users of the site have made over 900,000 image requests.
- **CVMA ([www.cvma.ac.uk](http://www.cvma.ac.uk))**  
Drawing primarily on the NMR's photographic collections, the CVMA website provides public access to around 8,000 images of medieval stained-glass windows. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board, it was developed in partnership with the Courtauld Institute of Art and King's College, London.

## 3.4 DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

### Volunteering

Volunteers are the unsung heroes of the historic environment in England. New research carried out by Heritage Link for *Heritage Counts 2003* helps to demonstrate the extent and value of volunteer activity in the historic environment sector. The research found that:

- England has an active heritage volunteer workforce of some 157,000 individuals, who give their time and energy to at least 107 national voluntary bodies and associations, to the National Trust, as part of the annual Heritage Open Days and to looking after and opening up churches, cathedrals and historic houses (this is based on the assumption that 6.5% of members of conservation organisations are active volunteers)
- Volunteers contribute the equivalent of an estimated £25 million per year to the historic environment through their unpaid work (this represents c.15% of the grant spent on the historic environment by DCMS every year)
- In addition, heritage bodies raise an estimated £100 million each year through membership fees and voluntary contributions
- Many heritage volunteers are highly skilled and perform a range of functions that are vital to the sustainability of the historic environment
- Without the support of volunteers, most of the organisations with responsibility for the historic environment would struggle to survive

The figures quoted here undoubtedly underestimate the true extent of volunteer activity in the heritage sector. This is not least because most of the organisations surveyed for the research project did not in fact maintain records of their volunteers (who for the purposes of the study were defined as those who gave time or money to the heritage through an organised group of some kind). Moreover, much volunteering activity takes place at a local level through numerous groups and organisations dedicated to looking after the historic assets that surround them.

Countless conservation and environmental groups also contribute to the historic environment through their care of historic walls and boundaries, footpaths and woodlands.

According to VisitBritain's *Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions*, all sites in the heritage sector rely heavily on unpaid volunteers. It is not an exaggeration to say that the majority of properties within the sector could not operate as tourist attractions without this voluntary support. The use of volunteers varies somewhat according to the type of attraction: castles and forts have the least proportion of volunteers among their workforce, while historic monuments rely on a large volunteer staff (65% of the workforce).

The survey found that the largest proportion of volunteers was in places of worship, with many cathedrals and larger churches operating a 'Ministry of Welcome' run by local friends' organisations. <sup>19</sup>

According to the VisitBritain survey, the greatest number of volunteers are found in the East of England, where they make up 73% of the workforce at historic properties. The lowest proportion of volunteers is seen within London, where attractions are often open all year round and employ greater numbers of paid staff. Sites which charge for admission have an average proportion of volunteers of over 70% of the workforce. This figure should be treated with some caution however, as it is driven within individual regions by the bigger sites with a large cohort of volunteer labour (not all of which work at the same time during the week). The data suggest however that many historic visitor attractions not only rely on admission income to support them, but also rely on volunteer effort.

One organisation that is able to produce reliable figures on volunteering is the National Trust. The Trust was originally founded by volunteers as a charitable organisation dedicated to preserving the historic environment through the preservation of common land and open spaces. It operates today effectively as a partnership between a dedicated professional staff and some 40,000 active volunteers who work in 150 different types of task for the Trust, most visibly serving as guides and room stewards at Trust properties. Volunteers working for the Trust contribute 45% of the Trust's total working time, equivalent to 1,330 additional full-time posts, and this level of activity has seen an increase of 30% over the last ten years.

<sup>19</sup> VisitBritain, *Visits to Visitor Attractions 2002*.

20 National Trust Annual  
Report 2002.



Guardianship scheme at Ravenscar



Recruitment at Ightham Mote

## The National Trust

Voluntary work opportunities for the National Trust are advertised in the Do It Website ([www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)) and in local Volunteer Bureaux. Applicants are interviewed, and if selected for the role have a signed contractual relationship with the Trust. They undergo a probationary period, are trained and appraised, and are invited to give feedback. All National Trust managers are supplied with a manual on looking after voluntary workers, including details of essential legal and health and safety information. Volunteers undertake a huge range of tasks, from fundraising and room stewarding to highly skilled conservation and environmental projects such as undertaking archaeological investigations at Chedworth Roman.

The Trust itself estimates that their volunteers contribute the equivalent of £14 million a year (or 2.4 million hours of their time at a very conservative £5.80 per hour).<sup>20</sup>

Another way of calculating the importance of volunteering to the historic environment is to consider what the sector would look like without volunteers:

- The National Trust would need to find £1,175,000 to pay contractors for the work that volunteers carry out on 470 separate projects each year through its Acorn Camp working holidays
- English Heritage would have many fewer visitors to its properties without 8,000 or so participants in living history events, many of whom give their time in return for just their travel and subsistence costs. Living history events take place at many properties throughout the year and many groups come together for the annual Living History Festival
- There would be almost no functioning historic canals and railways; voluntary transport history groups have over 12,000 members and are among the largest and most active of voluntary groups.
- Churches and other places of worship would remain locked much of the time without at least 6,280 volunteers (and probably many more) who provide access and security through church watch schemes, welcome visitors, offer guided tours, maintain churches and churchyards and write church and parish histories
- Countless historic chapels and redundant churches would be lost or carelessly converted to alternative uses without the efforts of the Historic Chapels Trust and the Friends of Friendless Churches
- Many historic houses would be unable to open to the public without the 9,440 unpaid volunteers who work for members of the Historic Houses Association
- There would be no National Gardens Scheme (which attracts 350,000 visitors to 3,500 gardens), no Heritage Open Days (which attract 800,000 visitors to 2,134 sites), no National Archaeology Days (which attract 60,000 visitors to 3,600 sites), no London Open Weekend and no London Garden Schemes
- There would be no Civic Trusts to scrutinise planning applications in our communities, no amenity societies to undertake case work and act as guardians of the heritage, and no Buildings Preservation Trusts to rescue 50 historic buildings a year in need of care
- We would have little or no understanding of garden history, vernacular buildings, industrial archaeology or the archaeology of the Second World War. All of these are subjects that originated from the commitment and enthusiasm of volunteer groups, which were only later adopted by academics and professionals
- We would be without the energetic efforts of thousands of amateur archaeologists and historians engaged in fieldwork and investigations into local history
- Without volunteers working on the 1,000-plus projects organised by BCTV, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts every year, landscape features such as dry stone walls, hedges and woodlands would deteriorate, and footpaths and stiles that enable people to enjoy the historic landscape would not be maintained and repaired

Without the work of volunteers in researching, managing, conserving and funding the heritage, not only would the historic landscape be considerably impoverished, many of the institutions that give our nation its distinctive character and that underpin our appeal as a tourist destination would simply not exist.

### Profiling the Volunteer

Many different types of people get involved in voluntary projects related to the historic environment. Any precise assessment of the profile of heritage volunteers is hampered by the fact that most organisations do not maintain accurate records on the volunteers that work for them. But through interviews with the key bodies involved it has been possible to draw up a general picture of the type of person most likely to offer their time and services.

Young people, for example, are more likely to be involved in working holidays – even though there is no age limit to many of the schemes run by the National Trust or the BCTV. People in their thirties are more likely to be involved in employer-supporting volunteering, whereas people in their forties and fifties are more likely to be on management committees and boards of trustees. A very high proportion of people involved in support work, access and casual volunteering for bodies like the National Trust are retired.

Besides these age distinctions there are several other discernible patterns. Some types of voluntary activity attract more women (a very high proportion of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies is female, for example), while other activities such as industrial archaeology and transport heritage tend to be male-dominated. In terms of ethnicity, managers working with volunteers all expressed a general desire to recruit volunteers from a diverse background.

Volunteers will often be people who have picked up a passion for heritage from an early age. Younger people tend to become involved in volunteering because of some external impetus – at the suggestion of friends, teachers, parents or employers for example – while older people tend to become involved as a result of deliberate and personal choice. Many people working full-time in the sector today owe their first taste of the heritage to teenage experiences of participating in archaeology, buildings surveys or field work.



The garden entrance, Eltham Palace



The herbaceous border along the south moat designed by Isabelle Van Groeningen

## Eltham Palace

At Eltham Palace, ex-offenders and long-term unemployed people and New Deal clients have been given the chance to take Royal Horticultural Society training courses to develop horticultural skills. Participants have gone on to gain their first proper jobs as a result of this scheme. English Heritage now intends to offer more such opportunities at its gardens throughout England.

There are opportunities here, through the Citizenship aspects of the National Curriculum, to cultivate a new generation of heritage volunteers. The Working Group on 14-19 Reform, for example, proposed this year the idea that every student should spend at least 45 hours a year in some form of approved community or volunteering work. This represents a great opportunity for the heritage sector to create entry points for young people.

### The Benefits to Individuals

Volunteering is not just good for the historic environment and the people who use it. It can also bring huge benefits to the individuals who take part. For many young people, volunteering is a means of acquiring skills and experience – for instance by studying for National Vocational Qualifications while undertaking BTCV work or for Royal Horticultural Society qualifications while working as gardens volunteers for the National Trust and English Heritage. It is also an important route into paid employment for graduates: the amenity societies such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group and SAVE have a long tradition of providing placements to graduates and interns wishing to gain hands-on experience of case work or campaigning as a way of finding their first job in heritage management or a related career. Even people who already have successful careers are able to gain new skills and perspectives from heritage volunteer work.

Many of the skills that are developed through heritage work – teamwork, problem-solving, empirical observation and deduction, understanding and interpretation, creativity and communication – are all highly valued skills for commercial life. A third group of people – the ‘empty nesters’ and the active retired – find voluntary work creative, constructive and meaningful and a means of maintaining vital social networks.

### **The Challenges for the Sector**

Given the fundamental importance of volunteering to the sector, it is perhaps surprising that few heritage organisations have an explicit strategy for recruiting, developing and deploying volunteers. In some cases this is due to lack of available resources to devote to better management of volunteers. In other cases organisations may have concerns about formalising their relationship with volunteers, or fears about the sustainability of ever-increasing numbers of volunteers coming into the sector.

It is noticeable that at present there is very little contact between heritage bodies and the national associations for volunteering. As a first step Heritage Link propose that they take out membership of the Centre for Volunteering, as a means of building a link between the two sectors.

Another major challenge for the sector is to broaden the profile of volunteers. Very few heritage volunteers come from ethnic minorities or from people on lower incomes (with the exception of pensioners). Volunteering strategies that address this issue will also help to address some of the broader inclusion issues highlighted in Section 3.

These concerns are genuine, and need to be addressed if the sector is to take the volunteering agenda forward.