

Pilgrimage & England's Cathedrals

PAST & PRESENT



Canterbury Cathedral

Report and findings March 2017



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Contents

Contents	i
Project summary, team and acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	2
1. Cathedrals as multi-purpose spaces	4
2. Experiencing worship	6
3. Enhancing spiritual engagement	8
4. Experiencing the building	10
5. Festivals and special events	12
6. Saints, beliefs and traditions	14
7. Pilgrimage and the Cathedral	16
8. Leaving and taking away	18
9. Belonging, identity and ownership	20
10. Building wider relationships	22
Appendix 1: Canterbury Cathedral question data overview	24
Appendix 2: Canterbury Cathedral demographic data overview	30

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Project summary, team and acknowledgements

Project summary

This report is the product of a three-year interdisciplinary research project (2014-2017) funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council and led by a team based at the University of York. The project examined the history and contemporary experience of pilgrimage in its broadest sense through the lens of case-studies of four English cathedrals: Canterbury, Durham, Westminster and York. The chief interdisciplinary strands were history, social science, anthropology, theology and religious studies. Through a combination of historical research and on-site fieldwork the team has been enabled to compare past practice with modern experience in a new way. The project has examined people's expectations and the ways in which these were met or modified by their experience of engagement with each building and the community it houses.

Project team

The Principal Investigator was Dr Dee Dyas (University of York), a recognised authority on pilgrimage, who is currently carrying out detailed research on engagement with sacred space. The two Co-Investigators were Dr Marion Bowman (Open University) and Professor Simon Coleman (University of Toronto). Dr Bowman is a Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, a recognised specialist in contemporary vernacular religion and pilgrimage. Professor Coleman is an anthropologist who holds a chair in The Study of Religion, specialising in the theory of pilgrimage and the study of cathedrals. The Research Assistants were Dr John Jenkins and Dr Tiina Sepp. Dr Jenkins is a medieval historian who has undertaken research into the experience and management of pilgrims at each case-study cathedral. Dr Sepp, a social scientist and ethnologist with expertise in the study of pilgrimage, worked with Dr Bowman and Professor Coleman, to undertake extensive on-site fieldwork and interviewing of participants for the study.

Acknowledgements

The project team would like to record their considerable gratitude to the staff and volunteers at Canterbury Cathedral for all the help, support and goodwill they showed to the project across the three years of research. We hope the results of our work will assist this hardworking team to continue to enhance the mission of the cathedral to worshippers and visitors, of every faith and none, who cross the threshold of this special place.

Introduction

Context

In 2012 the *Spiritual Capital* report estimated that 27% of the resident adult population of England (roughly 11 million adults) had visited a Church of England cathedral at least once in the previous year. One of the report's key findings states:

Cathedrals are not just tourist destinations but places that can convey a sense of the spiritual and sacred even to those who are on the margins of Christian faith, or who stand some way beyond... this presents cathedrals with enormous potential.

(Theos/Grubb Institute)

This 'enormous potential' for engaging with visitors from many backgrounds is hardly news to those responsible for the life, worship, and ministry of welcome of our cathedrals. Most would agree that the continuing rise in visitor numbers, together with the growing interest in spirituality, 'special' places and pilgrimage shown by so many today, offer great opportunities for mission and community building. They also bring significant challenges in terms of resources and strategy.

The 'Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals, Past and Present' (PEC) Research Project

Since 2014 the PEC team has been working with Canterbury Cathedral staff and volunteers on an agreed plan of research exploring the cathedral's history *and* contemporary visitor experience. Both perspectives are key to understanding the way the Cathedral was designed and used in the past, and recognising the needs, expectations and aspirations of today's multiple audiences. The team has explored a wide range of evidence related to the Cathedral's mission, management, and its identity as 'a place of welcome, beauty, and holiness' which seeks 'to show people Jesus... through the splendour of the building as well as the beauty of the worship.' This summary report is designed to promote discussion, highlight examples of best practice, and build on current achievements to enhance further the Cathedral's outreach and the experience of all who visit.

Some key issues

- Cathedrals have worship, welcome and witness at their core, yet they are now welcoming increasingly diverse audiences for whom both worship and witness may seem alien. Is the answer to keep worship and tourism apart or to allow worship to speak to all visitors?
- Cathedrals are shared but diverse spaces inhabited by many groups: staff, volunteers, visitors of all ages and interests, pilgrims, regular congregations and other worshippers. All affect each other; all are affected by and influence the shared space. How helpful is it to see them as separate rather than overlapping categories? Should everyone, whatever their reasons for being in the space, be seen as a 'potential pilgrim' capable of spiritual response?
- Cathedrals now often speak of 'pilgrims' but what or who *is* a pilgrim? In Christian tradition pilgrimage can be a journey through life, an inner journey, and a journey to a holy place. All who cross cathedral thresholds are on a life journey, with many keen to take the chance to reflect on it or spend time in quiet. Evidence shows a wide range of interaction with sacred places, past and present. This may include formal 'pilgrim' activity but may also be fluid, spontaneous and variable, even within a single visit. What does this mean for managing visitors and the use and presentation of buildings?
- Cathedrals have multiple identities. How can they combine being major heritage sites and civic resources with retaining their core role of offering worship and being places of spiritual encounter, rather than museums? What is the balance between access and control?
- Cathedrals are places of 'spiritual heritage'. How do they explain their meaning to visitors who may come from any faith or none and have little if any Christian understanding?

Most cathedrals today present a 'stripped back' appearance compared to the rich splendour of their medieval predecessors, yet human beings learn and respond through their senses. What can cathedrals offer today to enhance learning, experience, encounter and response? How can they encourage return visits, and a feel of ownership, especially for local people?

Principles of Investigation

Our team consists of historians and social scientists, all with experience of working in Christian contexts. Team members are aware that their role is not to redescribe the cathedral for staff who already know its spaces intimately. Rather, the aim is to develop a holistic perspective that would be difficult for any single person to attain. Thus, we are guided by a number of general principles:

- An interdisciplinary approach is necessary to understand how current understandings and uses of cathedrals relate to their role in the recent as well as more distant past.
- Cathedrals are not only important *repositories* and *guardians*, but also significant *interpreters*, of history, through exhibitions, guided tours, notices, and material culture.
- Worship spaces are vital parts of cathedrals, accessible to the public, but our focus on the management, mission, and civic profile of cathedrals means that we are interested in all dimensions of work associated with cathedrals. We have therefore developed techniques to learn from as many people as possible with connections to cathedrals.

Methods

These guiding principles led us to develop the following research strategies:

- Study of cathedral archives.
- Tracing shifts in spatial arrangements and uses of cathedrals over time.
- Consulting previous works published about cathedrals, including commissioned reports.
- Techniques designed to gain a wide and rich variety of information, including:
- Direct observation of behaviour in cathedrals from different vantage points, during different seasons and special events, and at different times of the day.
- Interviews with both staff and visitors to cathedrals. The term 'staff' is understood to cover a wide variety of roles, ranging from senior clergy to volunteers. The term 'visitors' is taken to cover both local residents and travellers.
- Questionnaires distributed from a project table located within the cathedral.
- Follow-up online interviews with respondents to questionnaires who indicated their willingness to be contacted—a means of gaining extended insights from even brief visitors, regardless of their home location.
- Observation of social media

Conceptual Frameworks

While this report presents detailed analyses of different spaces and uses of the cathedral, our research has uncovered broad themes, derived from our observations and academic literatures. These themes represent challenges but also great opportunities for cathedrals:

- The significance of **adjacencies**, i.e. the ways cathedrals house different activities, often simultaneously, within close proximity. Boundaries between these activities may be fuzzy.
- Cathedrals as containing **tight and loose** spaces: sometimes, activity in a cathedral is highly focused and regulated in space and time, as during a service; sometimes activities are far less regulated and focused, as during times of open access. Staff manage the often swift transitions between these different uses of space.
- Cathedrals as places of **low thresholds**, but **high expectations**. Apart from charging for entry in some cases, cathedrals are open freely to all; but those who come may have high expectations for spiritual or heritage experiences.
- Spaces with **norms of access and behaviour**. Cathedrals control access (times and spaces). Behavioural protocols (ideas of 'appropriate behaviour' not necessarily shared by/ explained to visitors) are important to convey without censure: these are often key in determining the experience of visitors, and key points of challenge for staff.
- Spaces of **relationality**. Cathedrals are places where people may seek anonymity, but may also seek connections with fellow visitors, faith, history, their city, etc. Sometimes, the connections they make are unexpected, leading to surprising transitions in identity, as between a 'tourist' and a 'pilgrim'.

1. Cathedrals as multi-purpose spaces

Cathedrals have always been places of multiple roles and significance. This fact is one of their great strengths; it also underlies many of the challenges they face today. Recent decades have seen English cathedrals build congregations, attract greater heritage visitor numbers, develop an increasing range of civic roles and provide very popular 'venues' for cultural and educational events. These developments offer great potential for mission; they also place great demands on resources and on maintaining a clear identity. How can 21st century cathedrals combine being major heritage sites with their key roles of offering worship and providing spaces that encourage even casual visitors to sense the reality of God and become intrigued by the Christian story? To what extent can multiple activities and audiences co-exist positively, creatively drawing on adjacencies and permeabilities of activity? The ways in which Canterbury Cathedral is seeking to answer these questions not only have local relevance but can also make a major contribution to national debate as all cathedrals look to the future.

Historical perspectives

Canterbury Cathedral has long had multiple roles. It was founded as a monastery and although we tend to see the medieval Cathedral as one of England's foremost pilgrimage destinations, the monks had very different priorities. Pilgrims always had to be accommodated around the primary business of the monastic liturgy. Those who came to the Cathedral rarely did so for one easily-identifiable purpose. In the medieval period, for example, a visitor could come to worship, pray, hear a sermon, seek the aid of Thomas and other saints, attend the ecclesiastical court, or any combination of these and other activities. The monks invested considerable thought and care into managing the space and providing a spiritual and special experience for all.

The Cathedral was a magnet for tourists from the 18th century. In 1784 the Chapter forbade 'the rabble' from coming into the church to see Bell Harry at times of the Fair and holidays, while in the 19th century 'strangers' and 'tourists' were prohibited from looking around the Cathedral on Sundays at service times. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Cathedral's purpose was seen as offering a model for services throughout the diocese, providing guidance, inspiration, and support for parishes.

Contemporary observations

The practical management of differing audiences is a major challenge, not least with regard to interactions between visitors, paid cathedral staff and volunteers. Some of the key topics addressed in this report include questions of how worshippers and heritage visitors can co-exist in the same space positively, and how spiritual engagement for all can be enhanced. Both historical perspectives on Canterbury's past, and social scientific observations of 'porous boundaries' between contemporary visitors, suggest that it may not be helpful to categorise user groups too definitively. Data collected by the Spiritual Capital report suggested that 'the distinction between tourists and pilgrims is "fuzzy"'. Those who appear to be secular tourists nevertheless understand that cathedrals hold 'spiritual capital', and even look to tap into it for themselves.' Our research confirms these findings and we suggest that it is useful to re-examine the pilgrimage terminology used so widely today and to look at ways in which all those who enter can be seen as potential pilgrims.

Cathedrals across the country use the terms 'pilgrim' and 'pilgrimage' frequently today but it is clear that many staff and volunteers often desire more help in seeing how these concepts might work on the ground in providing for and approaching visitors. We propose that harnessing the full range of meanings of pilgrimage within Christian thought, i.e. a) the New Testament sense of life as a pilgrim journey, b) inner journey/pilgrimage through prayer and meditation, c) journeying to 'holy places', could offer a range of ways in which all who visit could, if they wish, find access to spiritual experience and be helped to 'see Jesus', this Cathedral's core mission.

Opportunities to explore

- How can all visitors increasingly be welcomed and guided in ways which create and maintain openness to all aspects of the space?
- How can the Cathedral maximise the positive power of the 'fuzzy' or 'porous' boundary'?

Historical evidence

- *'Because conflicting opinions frequently arise about the observances, payments, and other burdens of the shrine custodians concerning their duty, with the help of God and the assistance of St Thomas, and with diligent study, we are taking care to bring together accurately the observances and other things set out in earlier writings. So that if doubts or uncertainties emerge in the future about these matters, in order that all doubt should be avoided and the truth should be provided, just as our fathers told it to us and we have learnt it from their traditions, reference may quickly be made to the present orderly account at the relevant place where the uncertainty has arisen.'* **Customary of the Shrine of St Thomas, 1428**
- *'We hesitate to make a distinction between pilgrims and tourists. Chaucer's pilgrims were in many ways tourists also. As a consequence, we are determined as far as possible to help visitors to become aware of the religious dimensions of the Cathedral- its life and work... We would not wish to separate these from the existence of the Church as a great work of art. We would therefore want to respect each visitor's right to appreciate the Cathedral in his or her own terms and at the level which he or she finds most natural.'* **Victor de Waal, Dean of Canterbury, 1979**
- *'One does not have to be exceptionally 'psychic' to realise that Canterbury Cathedral is permeated by an atmosphere so potent that, coming into the building at times when it is relatively empty and silent, one receives its impact as tangibly as if a hand had touched one's face.'* **Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide, 1980**

Contemporary evidence

- *'If you've come to say your prayers because grandma's just died, where can you light a candle quietly in a building that's constantly busy? We are trying to keep the Crypt as a quiet and still place for pilgrims or people who want to pray, whilst the Nave has a concert rehearsal and the Quire's full of visitors.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'It's a place of inspiration... It makes me ask questions about history, it makes me curious... where does this feeling [of great calm] come from when I'm inside?'* **Winter pilgrim**
- *'We want the Cathedral to touch everybody's heart as a working living church.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'A Cathedral ought to be a place above all to encounter 'God'. In practice cathedrals sometimes tend to become heritage sites, and market themselves that way. Canterbury... has exceptional resources as a religious site (not least for visitors who are not especially religious themselves).'* **London-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *'I found Canterbury balanced the needs of tourists, religious/spiritual visitors, and pilgrims better than any other I have been to in the Church of England.'* **London-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *'I probably come four or five times a year to get this sort of quiet presence, the reminder of the strength of God... the Cathedral's been here for hundreds of years as a reflection of him... It gives me inner strength and resilience to carry on.'* **Pilgrim**
- *'It's not unusual on a graduation day to have the nave closed for visiting and it's a graduation hall, therefore with music, people are clapping, sometimes cheering and whooping... This side of the Quire screen is for visiting and the Crypt could be closed for a pilgrimage group. So it's not unusual to have three separate things all happening at once. Meanwhile the works department are trying to repair the building, so they're hammering on the roof or mowing the grass. The Lodge are catering for an event... so it is a very diverse community.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'There are 32 services in the diary every week... And we know instinctively that other things just have to fit around those things... If you come from Australia to see this piece of sculpture you have heard all about, it's an inconvenience that we're having a service, but that's what this space is used for at this moment. When that's over, it will reopen.'* **Cathedral staff**

Reasons for visits from questionnaires: 'To see what it is like... learn about its history... follow in other pilgrims' footsteps'; 'to light a candle for a friend's dying father'; 'to see a great work of art... be in a great transcendental place'; 'to celebrate my 50th birthday'; 'to attend Mass and Evensong and view the architecture'; 'to reflect on those most dear to me, dead and alive'; 'a beautiful, calming place we love to visit'; 'saint seeing (love cathedrals)'; 'to visit and pray'; 'as a pilgrimage to God's house'; 'I come often because I am a student and can get in free, but I love the Cathedral and its history and just being inside'; 'spontaneous visit'; 'a 50 year dream to.... spend time with St Thomas'.

2. Experiencing worship

Both historical records and contemporary responses indicate the power of worship to enhance the experience of visitors and help them to understand more of the meaning of the building through direct observation. To what extent could more opportunities to experience worship, even from a distance, help 'tourists' take a step on the way to becoming 'pilgrims'?

Historical perspectives

The relationship between services and other attractions in the Cathedral is complex. The well-documented early stages of Becket's cult show a division between the monastic liturgy taking place in the Choir and popular devotional activity confined to the Crypt below. Yet later medieval accounts make it clear that, once the Trinity Chapel had been built, most pilgrims experienced the shrine in the context of divine service. The 'opening hours' of the east end of the Cathedral coincided with the monastic hours, including closure at lunchtime. Architectural change rendered the pilgrims' potentially disruptive presence compatible with liturgical life; the activities henceforth overlapped and visitor behaviour was 'controlled' by the music, incense, candles, and prayer. Even in the more open Nave, the daily sung Mass in the north aisle Lady Chapel would have reinforced the sacred nature of the space through sound and incense.

In the early 17th century, sermons were given in the Chapter House (known then as the 'Sermon House'), although this meant a separation of sermon from service. It was felt at the time that this was to the detriment of service attendance - 'the one main reason that so few are acquainted with, and by consequence, not more in love, with the service'. Others, however, felt the Quire ill-suited for preaching, and considered the acoustics and smaller space of the Chapter House better for worship and sermons. Concerns arose again in the 19th century, when crowds of holidaymakers came to the Cathedral to hear popular sermons but not to attend the services. In 1872, the Dean and Chapter responded to the Royal Commission's suggestion that they should use the nave for services by arguing that it was too distant and separated from the Quire to provide spillover space, and was too lofty and cold for regular use except as a 'novelty' in summertime.

Contemporary observations

Worship is a powerful spiritual force able to transform visitor behaviour and response. The sight of lit candles, the sound of music, the smell of incense, are cues to which many respond instinctively. Interviews and observation indicate that many who would feel too unsure of their knowledge, and too afraid of potential embarrassment to take part in a service, may still be gradually drawn in by being allowed to observe and experience worship 'from the sidelines'. In this respect recent changes to patterns of worship and of location are very helpful in gradually broadening access. Thus the 12.30 Wednesday Holy Communion is now held in the Chapel of Our Lady Undercroft (rather than the Jesus Chapel) and some visitors choose to sit close by for part or all of the service. This is a very positive use of the Cathedral's capacity to use its scale and the permeability of its behavioural boundaries to illustrate worship 'in action'.

While the 12.30 Holy Communion service on Wednesdays and major Saints' days, and the daily Bell Ceremony, are held during normal visitor hours, other services, such as Matins at 7.30 am and the 8.00 am Communion Service are not. It might be helpful to indicate more clearly through signs at the Cathedral Gate that it is possible to enter and attend *before* general visiting begins.

Opportunities to explore

- Further encouraging wider participation, including allowing people to become familiar with worship gradually from close by, might be productive, as well as allowing the sound and atmosphere of services to 'spill out' during normal visitor hours.
- Clearly signalling through notices that it is permissible to enter the precinct before opening hours to attend Matins and Holy Communion.

Historical evidence

- *'When High Mass is finished and the versicle of the new hour before the lunch hour is begun, the custodian securely closes and bolt the doors of the shrine, and the clerk with some attacking or defensive instrument makes a careful search in every dark place and suspect corner in which some wicked and cunning person could hide in order to commit robbery, God forbid, or in which any abandoned or wild dog could secretly conceal itself.'* **Customary of St Thomas' Shrine, 1428**
- *'I cannot but profess my great dislike, that Service, and Sermon, should be parted any where; the one, in one place; the other, in another; if it may possibly be avoided. Especially at such a distance, as it is here with us, in the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Christ in Canterbury. I conceive it to be one main reason, that so few are acquainted, and by consequent, not more in love, with the Service.'* **Canon Meric Casaubon, 1663**
- *'[Officers of the Cathedral were to] prevent all rudeness and noyse by walking and talking in the Body and Isles of the Church in time of divine Service and women bringing Children with them unless they can keep them quiet and not suffer any Burden to be carried through the Church or make it a common thoroughfare.'* **Dean and Chapter, 1712**
- *'The Quire is very ill-contrived for any considerable auditory, and that Venerable Body have thought fit for a long time to disuse the Sermon House commonly so called tho' a most commodious place for divine worship, and where on Sundays, morning prayer and preaching might be used without prejudice to the Cathedral Service.'* **Rev. John Lewis, 1724**
- John Moore, Dean - *Pray sir, what is the reason you do not read the early prayers?*
Minor Canon - *Why Mr Dean, so few persons attend them, that it is not worth while to read them.*
The Dean - *Sir, that shall not be admitted as an excuse; if there are so few, I will pay so much a morning to half a dozen poor persons to attend them; for I am fully resolved that they shall never be given up while I am dean of this Church.* - **1770s**

Contemporary evidence

- *'There are 32 services in the diary every week... And we know instinctively that other things just have to fit around those things... If you come from Australia to see this sculpture you have heard all about, it's an inconvenience that we're having a service, but that's what this space is used for at this moment. When that's over, it will reopen and you can visit it again.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'The vastness of the building and the beauty of the architecture, along with the rituals of the choristers entering followed by the minister, make [Evensong] an experience on a completely different level to that of attending a normal Church service.'* **Visitor**
- *'[I was surprised] how much I enjoyed the service. I used to be a practising Christian but lost my faith so I am always surprised when I still feel something spiritual... in a place of worship.'* **Visitor**
- *'A Cathedral has amazing potential for spiritual ambience and very powerful connection with the numinous... the formal (and choral) character of the services generates a different kind of religious encounter than in a regular parish church... the cathedral experience is very precious indeed for those able to access it only occasionally.'* **London-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *'I arrived at the Martyrdom on a Friday afternoon as a completion of my pilgrimage and went from there to Evensong: I returned on the Sunday morning (Feast of the Holy Cross) as a liturgical completion of the whole visit to Canterbury.'* **London-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *'It really is wonderful being Anglican and in this job because you also get to worship as you work... As a Christian I'm doing something for God in the way I set up the service... helping people to worship... being able to go forward for Communion, sit through the prayers... you can reflect throughout parts of the day... daily prayers, every hour.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'Evensong in the Quire is one of my favourite services. You sit close to the choir, the choristers and the lay clerks and it is a powerful experience.'* **Volunteer**
- *'Some visitors feel uncomfortable in a service, unsure what will be expected of them.'* **Volunteer**

3. Enhancing spiritual engagement

Canterbury Cathedral is a 'place of welcome, beauty and holiness,' offering all who enter the chance to pause, reflect on their lives, pray, and worship. Many visitors sense the spirituality shaping the building but may not be familiar with churches or sure how to express response. A significant number also lack sufficient 'religious literacy' to interpret or engage with what they see. The very grandeur of the building can overwhelm and people may struggle to find a personal focus in a highly complex space. Visitors today therefore need increasing levels of support, spiritual explanation - and encouragement - if the Cathedral's mission is to be fulfilled.

Historical perspectives

The medieval cathedral experience at Canterbury was multifaceted and multi-sensory, drawing those who came into a process of revelation and transformation. The cathedral was not one large space but a series of interconnected smaller areas, each with its own altar or other focus. The blue reliquary-like glass of the Trinity Chapel, together with the experience of moving through the cathedral towards this focal point, created a sense of mystery, awe, and expectation. Two factors enhanced this experience: the gradual upward movement towards the shrine, like climbing the steps to the 'gate of Jerusalem'; and the use of semi-transparent grilles, rather than screens, to ensure that the treasures of the Cathedral could be 'glimpsed', but were rarely seen full-on.

Medieval pilgrimage involved not only travelling to a shrine but also an expectation of spiritual and moral transformation. The medieval Cathedral was aware of the need to cultivate an atmosphere which would ensure appropriate behaviour and a spiritually profitable visit. Pilgrims were expected to have fasted overnight before entering the presence of the saint. They should also have been to confession and absolved of their sins; at busy times the Cathedral provided priests to ensure all pilgrims had done so before entering. At the door of the Church they were anointed with holy water by a monk. Inside, candles, incense, and music 'filled the space' of the church. The removal of the shrine and associated sensory stimuli has left a space which has its own power but has also been felt to lack focus.

Contemporary observations

Today, as in the Middle Ages, sensory experience, including opportunities for action, has a key role in facilitating spiritual learning and response. Appropriate sound *and* appropriate places of quiet are both vital for spiritual engagement. When choir practice or concert rehearsals are taking place, many visitors choose to sit and listen - an opportunity to engage vicariously, which involves little embarrassment or self-consciousness. For many the Cathedral is a sanctuary from daily pressures and both 'High' and 'low' season fieldwork confirm the importance of peace and quiet in spiritual response. Many respondents reported that having places clearly designated for prayer and meditation is very helpful. The popularity of the Crypt demonstrates this. The Chapel of Our Lady Martyrdom also offers space for private prayer but access to it is not straightforward with many unsure whether they are allowed to enter.

Lighting candles offers a very important, 'universally-accessible' way to express response or need, without requiring particular understanding or knowledge of how to participate in a formal act of worship, or even being able to articulate one's thoughts clearly. In a place full of international visitors. It is a ritual action that crosses cultural and denominational divides, and one of the most frequent actions of visitors (Q5). It may also be a prompt to explore thoughts with companions and in prayer notes. The placing of candle-stands is important, as lighting a candle directly in front of a tomb or statue may feel 'too Catholic' for some. Touch also remains an important means of connection - with the space but also within the visiting group as all touch the same spot. Can touch be encouraged more, particularly as unlike sound it has no impact on others? Are there spaces available that are accessible to touch but not likely to be damaged by it?

Opportunities to explore

- What more (including greater sensory engagement) can be offered to help people focus, reflect on their lives, and express response, including thanksgiving?
- Could there be more explicit *invitations* to use smaller, 'human-sized' spaces which feel 'safe' and not over-exposed, especially for those new to prayer?
- What further material could be provided to help those who wish to learn more about faith?

Historical evidence

- *'...and we came to the city of Canterbury, in which is the most precious body of the blessed Thomas archbishop and martyr... This is in the monastery of the Black Monks, under a case of purest gold, wonderfully and skilfully fashioned with innumerable precious stones and pearls, shining like a gate of Jerusalem, decorated with untold glittering gems, and also crowned with an imperial diadem. Which, all considered, there is no other similar under the moon, according to the assertion of the inhabitants.'* [Symon Semeonis, 1323](#)
- *'It must strike many religious observers that there is a bareness in the very place which in former ages was a great centre of devotion.'* [George Bell, former Dean, 1929](#)
- *'The Cathedral is being used for its proper purpose in so far as it is presented as a place in which it seems natural for people to pray, if they feel inclined to do so, as they wander about.'* [Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide, 1980](#)
- *'A chapel is set aside for private prayer. But this chapel with its notice on the gate, besides being the clearest possible way of saying that it would be improper to pray anywhere else, tempts in only those very few for whom prayer is a normal exercise in any case. For the most part it is empty - and seen to be empty - not only of people but of anything at all (as, for instance, a couple of lighted candles, a few flowers even) to serve as an invitation and a reassurance.'* [Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide, 1980](#)

Contemporary evidence

- *'The cathedral authorities do very well in emphasising that it is first and foremost a place of prayer. I saw in their mission statement that they're here to show Jesus to people... I think they do that very well.'* [Pilgrim](#)
- *'I'm not sure why [I lit a candle]: my Uncle had died a few months previously.'* [Visitor](#)
- *'I lit a candle at the site of the Martyrdom as a mark of having arrived at the end of my pilgrimage; I lit a small number of candles in the crypt (near the site of the original tomb) for people whose concerns and anxieties I had been 'carrying' on the walk.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'I particularly like the Crypt just because.... you can go and be quiet there.'* [Local resident](#)
'I think that the Crypt, especially, is an amazing place of mystery and potential for reflection on the numinous.' [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'The Martyrdom chapel... it's quite dark in a sense but alight inside... I can go there be silent in it.'* [Pilgrim](#)
'People really like the idea of leaving even a silent prayer somewhere and that symbol of light is very striking. Jesus was the light of the world... And it's something that they can do... if they are finding their faith, if they don't know if they have a faith, if they are strong believers. Anyone can leave a candle... It's just very powerful.' [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'We do have a prayer board in the Crypt and people will scribble out their hearts on a piece of paper.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'In the chaplain's role, you get people, as I've had quite regularly, who want a prayer because it's the anniversary of their husband's or their parents' death... They're not in a terrible state, but they just want to be there because that's the right place to be to remember their loved one.'* [Volunteer chaplain](#)
- *'Sometimes [people] will bring things like a cross or a ring or something and ask it to be blessed.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'A little German boy got hold of my cassock and said, "Would you like me to tell you about my grandpapa?"... So we went in one of the little chapels and sat down and he told me about his grandpapa who had just died and how special he was to him. So I said, "Would you like me to say a little prayer?" and he said, "Yes." So I said, "We'll go down into the crypt and you can write a little prayer about your grandpapa," which he did in German. And then I said, "Now what we can also do is light a candle and then I'll say a little prayer for you."'* [Volunteer chaplain](#)
- *'You're cut off completely from all the hustle and bustle of the cathedral above... when I'm in the Chapel of the Holy Innocents it is only me and my communion and I do say my prayers.'* [Volunteer](#)

4. Experiencing the building

Both historical and contemporary research evidence shows that the differing ways in which the Cathedral community and visitors experience the building are profoundly affected, not only by changes in architecture and spatial arrangement, but also by the designation of spaces and the manner in which people are enabled to move around. Historical research, including material from the 20th century, shows that current challenges and debates are not new.

Historical perspectives

Medieval visitors to the Cathedral entered a highly controlled atmosphere, where monastic use of the building took precedence, and access to areas was individually negotiated based on status and need. The reconstructed 'pilgrim routes' around the Cathedral were actually monastic processional routes (see 7. **Pilgrimage and the Cathedral**). Rather than routes around the Cathedral, it would be more accurate to think in terms of more and less privileged spaces - in the later middle ages the Nave, Tomb, and South Quire Aisle were relatively freely accessible; the Quire and North Quire Aisle were largely reserved to the monks; and the inner sanctum of Our Lady Undercroft could only be accessed by high status devotees. At each chapel and altar monks and chaplains were present to manage the space and guide visitors around the building. The whole of the building was designed to inform and build faith and evoke response.

Following the death of Thomas Becket, the Cathedral was partially rebuilt, with his golden shrine as its focus. The dismantling of his shrines, and the removal of many of the screens and grilles that divided the space of the church, has changed the appearance of the Cathedral, but on a deeper level it has altered what we might term the 'sacred landscape' of the building – how the space is navigated, negotiated, and experienced. For centuries after the Reformation, most visitors could only experience the Cathedral as part of a paid-for guided tour. Admission charges and mandatory tours were dropped in the early-twentieth century as part of an 'open and free' policy, but the necessity to install prominent collection boxes led to concerns about the Cathedral's welcome. Charges were reintroduced to control increasing numbers of visitors in 1995, and between services on Sundays from 1997.

Contemporary observations

Once someone has entered the Cathedral and experienced an initial striking impression of its grandeur, the question is how the visitor without a personal guide can be introduced in a coherent way to both the history and the spirituality of the building. One way of addressing this is through the provision of 'differentiated trails', where leaflets or booklets focus instead on a particular theme, such as tombs, stained glass windows, or links with monarchy. Our data (Q. 5) indicate the popularity of leaflets/guidebooks. Another method is to provide explicit 'spaces of invitation', where the person (individually or in a group) is encouraged to focus on and engage with a particular area and activity, where a specific and meaningful action beyond simply viewing is encouraged, such as joining a service even from a short distance, lighting a candle, touching a significant object, or sitting down and contemplating. 'Spaces of invitation' need to offer not only permission but *encouragement* to enter, and focus, often without a sense of being watched.

A particular challenge but also a considerable opportunity for the Cathedral is that it attracts visitors who engage with it according to a range of time frames: the person coming for a short visit; the person staying at the Lodge as a pilgrim, heritage visitor or conference delegate; the long-term resident of Canterbury or the surrounding area. Focused trails and spaces of invitation are flexible enough to cater for all of these types of visitor, particularly if a trail could be developed on the Cathedral's connections with the city.

The way in which Christchurch gate functions as a buffer zone between the outside world and the Cathedral clearly has both positive and more negative aspects. Those who engage with the Cathedral see it as protecting the peace of the precinct; others can view it as a somewhat intimidating barrier.

Opportunities to explore

How can engagement with 'spaces of invitation' be enhanced and provision for 'spiritual seekers', in particular, be further developed?

Historical evidence

- *'The church dedicated to St Thomas rises to the sky so majestically that it inspires devotion even in those who see it from afar... It has two huge towers, as though greeting visitors a long way off and making the region ring far and wide with the wonderful resonance of its bronze bells... When you enter, the spacious grandeur of the building is disclosed.'* **Erasmus, early 15th century**
- *'I have always venerated its lofty pillars, dim aisles, and mysterious arches. Last night they were more solemn than ever, and echoed no sound other than my steps. I strayed about the choir and chapels, till they grew so dark and dismal, that I was half inclined to be frightened.'* **William Beckford, 1780**
- *'The Cathedral is very composite and historical, in the best sense expressing the best thoughts of many men at different times, we gratefully accept that as a whole it is beautiful, there is no feeling of discord in the very distinct thoughts it unites as a whole.'* **Rev. Arthur Tooth, 1930**
- *'As far as deriving revenue from tourists is concerned, we would want to bring home to everybody their responsibility for handing on their great human treasure to succeeding generations. This, we feel, should be the emphasis rather than 'please help us.'* **Victor de Waal, Dean, 1979**
- *'...of what are [visitors] reminded, stridently, the instant they come in? Of our need for their money...What do we offer them, as our own particular contribution in the present to the total impact of this holy place? Info-bars and souvenir shops. These are the things they see as they come in. The daily services touch only a fraction of them... No evidence is presented to them that this place is regarded now as being holy ground.'* **Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide, 1980**

Contemporary evidence

- *'My impression of this place was – wow! This cathedral is rooted so deep down in the earth. A feeling I have never had in this intensity, or in this depth. And not only rooted in the earth, but in time. As if the Cathedral was here as a... what's the word?... A witness.'* **Winter pilgrim**
- *'You arrive in the cathedral precinct and immediately have a sense that you are perhaps passing from the 21st century back to the Middle Ages... and you know that you're on a site that's been sacred since whenever the cathedral was built or before the cathedral was built.'* **Pilgrim visitor**
- *'We walked past the Cathedral and as it was open, we decided to go to the cloister as it is such a magical place at night time. Especially when you can hear the choir singing.'* **Local student**
- *'Once you enter the portal, there is that separateness from the outside world. There are no cars... buses... shops... domestic homes. You get the feeling that you are going into somewhere special.'* **Volunteer**
- *'People have huge pride in living in a place that is well-known, that has such a beautiful cathedral connected to it. People who were in touch with the Cathedral team felt that we were all very lovely but the people who had no direct connection all felt that we wanted to keep people out... the Christchurch gate is. ...rather forbidding.'* **Cathedral staff**

Favourite areas: *'Becket's shrine (the thing that stayed with me most from my very first visit as a child) and the crypt where I light candles' (Former resident); 'The remaining wall paintings and the Crypt, I feel that brings you closer to medieval worship' (Visitor, worshipper); 'The crypt, due to its atmosphere and warmth.' (Spiritual tourist); 'The Quire stalls area as it reminds me of the lovely evening services and it's a beautiful area to just be in' (Visitor); 'Some of the side chapels, St Gabriel's Chapel really seems to capture people's imagination, and the Holy Innocents on the other side, partly because of those old carvings.' (Volunteer); 'The western end of [the crypt] is really beautiful and seems to take us back to a medieval world. Something about some sort of pure Christianity' (Volunteer); 'Nobody knows that [Our Lady's Martyrdom Chapel is accessible for private prayer]. I would say 100% of the people that I observe merely look through the gate, they are not aware that they're allowed to go in... There's no notice saying that. It says it's a chapel for private prayer, but it doesn't say all are welcome if you need a place of peace and quiet.' (Volunteer); 'We do as best we can to give [visitors] some understanding of the spiritual side of the church rather than purely as an architectural artefact... We are the voice of the cathedral that can't speak for itself.' (Volunteer)*

5. Festivals and special events

Canterbury Cathedral's special status and manifold roles, local, national, and international, offer opportunities to connect with an unusually wide range of audiences, whether they visit the Cathedral in person or encounter it from a distance through the media.

Historical perspectives

We may think of the medieval Cathedral as being constantly thronged with pilgrims, but accounts make it clear that attendance was concentrated around major feasts, particularly Easter, Pentecost, the Translation (July 7th) and Michaelmas. Such events could be a source of bonding between Cathedral and city, as the centre of the St Thomas pageants, or the focus of its Christmas celebrations, but could also be a point of friction, as when the vast crowds attending the 1420 Becket Jubilee were forcibly billeted in citizens' houses.

While festivals brought larger numbers, the need to provide space for the liturgy and community rituals meant that the Cathedral had to be carefully managed. St Thomas' shrine might be in use by the monks, and so pilgrims could only circulate around the edges of the Trinity Chapel. If the Cathedral was too busy, the laity were confined to the nave, and could only experience the shrine as glimpses from afar. They could be given alternative spiritual activities when the shrine was out of bounds, such as a popular sermon or the display of relics, images, and pageantry. Major events also gave the opportunity for deeply spiritual encounters such as the overnight stay in the Cathedral by pilgrims on the eve of the Martyrdom, exchanging stories of the saint around a fire, and attending a series of Masses in the Martyrdom, Tomb, and Shrine from dawn.

Recognition of Becket's martyrdom began again in the 1930s as a simple annual ceremony on 29th December; by 1970 this had become an ecumenical affair with St Thomas' RC Church, and by the 1990s there was a well-attended Evensong and Procession, usually with the Archbishop present and readings from Eliot's *Death in the Cathedral*. Also by this time on 7th July there was Evensong and Procession to the site of the shrine, occasionally with incense, although this was not attracting more than normal numbers. The RC parish of Canterbury also has an evening Mass at the high altar of the cathedral on both feast days.

The Cathedral has also always been a site of popular thanksgiving, as happened in the weeks after the Gunpowder Plot, the Restoration of the Monarchy, VE Day, and many others.

Contemporary observations

Attending festivals and special events offers a wide range of audiences reasons and opportunities to (re)connect with the Cathedral. Hosting concerts, carol services and graduation ceremonies creates significant opportunities to invite people who might otherwise not have an 'excuse' to come. Christmas Carol services, though very demanding for staff and volunteers, are excellent 'bridging' events for secular groups and institutions: they appeal to elements of culture, not least carols themselves, that are already half-known by audiences, and which encourage participation.

One question to consider might be how the narrative of the Cathedral, including not only the martyrdom of Thomas Becket but also other historical figures, might be brought discreetly to the fore in some events, indicating the deep ties between the Cathedral and the city. Becket and other saints are key figures in mediating historical, material, and spiritual experiences of the Cathedral, and the current changes to the calendar of saints celebrated at Canterbury might also provide further scope and possibilities for links with schools and other groups with interests in English history.

In addition, the forthcoming 850th anniversary of the death of Becket in 2020 offers significant opportunities to connect with the teaching of pilgrimage in the RE curriculum and create resources which could be used nationally. A key question might be how the commemoration of Becket in 2020 might be extended into longer-term relationships with school groups (see **6. Saints**).

Historical evidence

- [On the Feast of the Martyrdom] *'the shrine-keepers open the doors to the people who have kept a devoted watch throughout the night and let them enter. Many of them arrive with great devotion, eager to hear the life and works of the glorious martyr Thomas which are usually read in the mother tongue, and they store them up in their attentive minds and pious hearts. This having finished, the two clerks serve the people, who may be wearied by toil, drawing them to the heat of the fire that they have prepared, soothing them, and serving them sufficient bread, cheese, and ale... after Mass at the Martyrdom has finished and Mass at the Tomb of St Thomas is almost over, the shrine-keepers make it known to the people that a third Mass is celebrated in the shrine.'* [Customary of the Shrine of St Thomas, 1428](#)
- *'On the day of the translation of St Thomas... a great crowd of people suddenly arrived so that the Nave was totally full; and so while the doors of the shrine were open, a private Mass was celebrated only with difficulty. It was by no means possible to celebrate a mass with solemn singing on that day, because of the almost innumerable people who flocked there.'* [Account of the 1420 Jubilee](#)
- *'It has been a laudable custom of the mayor and other citizens, that at the feast of Christmas they have assembled themselves in the Church at the tomb of Archbishop Sudbury, there saying diverse orisons and prayers for the soul of the Bishop, for the great acts he has done to the said city, the mayor, and citizens.'* [Canterbury trial record, 1500](#)

Contemporary evidence

- *'On the 23rd or the 24th of December this place will have three thousand people in it. And they will all go out and they will say: 'Thank you, it was a lovely service. I love the candles, I love the choirboys... See you next year'. And if I'm really looking at Christian faith and growth, I want to know whether them being here has made them think: 'Oh, I must go and look in my local church or I must learn more about what faith is about.' And so again, you know, seeds are sown in all sorts of ways. And you never know the end of that journey.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'The season of Advent is a real hotchpotch because we could do a jolly carol service in the afternoon and then at Evensong we're back into Advent mode, and then there's another carol service for another group. So if we were to get emotionally involved in it, you'd be on a rollercoaster all the time. So in one sense I find Christmas a bit of a frustrating festival. I'm much happier with Lent, Holy Week and Easter because there's no secular pressure to do other stuff at that point.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'We anticipate Christmas over four weeks with endless carol services. We're not complaining about that because that's part of what we're here for – it's to support our link with churches, schools, universities in the diocese.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'When the local Pantomime Dame died, suddenly, we had his funeral, we had thousand people in the nave... To offer hospitality to the community, to the city in which we're set, to the civic authorities with whom we work closely, we offered the Cathedral and the Cathedral choir. They have the nave for 1000 people and stars from stage and screen come from all over the country to be at his funeral and we sang the Pantomime Dame's set songs, in the middle of his funeral, in the nave.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'One of the busiest weeks is graduation week for the University of Kent. They do 12 graduation ceremonies in 5 days, so it's 3 a day some days. The nave is basically theirs for the week, it's hired out as a graduation hall for a completely secular event.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'If you come here on 29th December, when it is Saint Thomas' Day and we have a special service, you cannot move in that cathedral; it is packed to the gunnels and there's a procession from the choir to the martyrdom – you can't move... people are hanging over the walls and looking down into it.'* [Cathedral staff](#)

6. Saints, beliefs and traditions

Cathedral histories and guidebooks, although not Cathedral guides themselves, tend to present the past in terms of dates and names - when was that built, and by which prior or dean? Yet the history of a living Church is much broader. It can include many related stories and traditions which embody the multiple meanings which the building and its community have held for successive generations.

Historical view

Canterbury was home to England's foremost medieval saint. His historical role as the defender of Church liberties against the Crown, while securing his vast popularity throughout medieval Christendom, has ensured that since the Reformation the Cathedral has had an uneasy relationship with its best-known historical figure. Both tourists and Roman Catholic pilgrims continued to visit the site of the martyrdom, and rumours persisted of Becket's bones buried in the Crypt. In the twentieth century there were various plans for a permanent monument to Becket in the Trinity Chapel or Crypt, particularly with a 1930 Ninian Comper design funded by Lord Halifax. However, Chapter could never come to an agreement over suitability. Until the 1970s at least, there were concerns that commemorating Becket in the Cathedral would promote inappropriate Roman Catholic forms of pilgrimage and veneration.

The medieval Cathedral also claimed the bodies and relics of numerous other saints. Individual monks often looked to SS Dunstan and Alphege as their patron saints, and the learned to St Anselm. St Blaise was in a reliquary on a beam behind the high altar which performed a number of throat and nose-related miracles. Other miracle-performing cults, particularly those of archbishops Robert of Winchelsey and Simon Sudbury at their tombs off the south choir aisle, have been dismissed as 'unofficial', but the lack of canonisation would have made them no less potent for the many devotees who prayed to them. In particular, Winchelsey's tomb in the south-east transept became a popular focus for those with mental health issues, who would often stay there for weeks at a time.

Contemporary observations

For many visitors, Canterbury Cathedral is centred on the dramatic story of Thomas Becket. Significant numbers want to see where Becket was killed and where his shrine stood, and to pray and light a candle in the Martyrdom. Becket's dominant position in the cathedral narrative raises a number of significant questions. Some visitors are surprised to hear that Becket's remains are no longer in the Cathedral. Where there was once a magnificent shrine to Becket, there is now empty space and it has been suggested that 'Mystery serves us better than actuality'. This idea corresponds with the anthropological view of a symbol as often an open 'vessel' for the beholders' assumptions and aspirations. The 'idea' of Becket is sufficiently broad to contain, and encourage reflection on, a 'fan of meanings': sanctity, resistance, bravery, and community.

A further question, however, relates to the role of other saints in the Cathedral, such as those mentioned in the historical section above, as well as the foundational role of St Augustine. While the histories of such saints might be seen as detracting from the centrality of the Becket narrative, they have the potential to broaden the historical and spiritual appeal of the Cathedral, indicating further its links with English history but also the wider history of Christianity and indeed Canterbury itself. Aspects of the Cathedral's past, combined with movement through its spaces, might be experienced through a 'saints' trail', which also explores the historical and thematic links between key figures. The saints' trail might be complemented by one encouraging the visitor to move between areas associated with key post-Reformation figures, up to the present-day.

Opportunities to explore

- Develop the resonance of the 2020 Becket anniversary through creation of pilgrimage-related resources for adults and schools; explore Christian understandings of martyrdom, past and present (link to Lambeth Conference 2020?).
- Further exploration of the stories of other key saints and Christian leaders.

Historical evidence

- *'A woman from the outskirts of London went on pilgrimage to Canterbury, as is commonly the case. A bone became lodged in her throat which, becoming ulcerated, made her life increasingly doubtful through each hour of delay. And when she gave her mind up to the blessed martyr St Blaise she felt no pain and all sensation was lifted. Thus this woman was freed from her infirmity by the holy martyr Blaise who resides in Canterbury.'* **15th Century**
- *'It is not long since our Queen's Mother was led by these Prelates to Archbishop Thomas Becket's stone, in that Cathedral (the stone on which he fell when he was cast down headlong in that Cathedral, when he was executed for his treason and rebellion) and she came out of her Sedan, and bowed towards it; some say she kissed it, as thousands of Papists have done before her, and it was then said to her, look on the crack in that stone, that mouth calls to heaven for vengeance on those that shed this holy Martyr's blood (a Traitor Martyr, I think) a Saint fit for a Roman Calendar, and a Cathedral shrine ... There was demolished also, a very large stone Image of Christ... right over the great Cathedral South Gate next the Bullstake: men, now living, testify, that they have seen travellers kneele to it in the street, as they entered the Cathedral, which is continually visited by Outlandish Papists, who daily commit Idolatry in that Cathedral.'* **Richard Culmer, 1644**
- *'Thomas a Becket's own merits and history are surely worthy of recognition on the part of those who desire to vindicate the rights of the Church, and enable it to bear witness, as it alone can do, to all those spiritual rights which are the only security for true liberty, and for that justice between man and man which can only be maintained when Christian principles are accepted and secured.'* **Lord Halifax, 1929**

Contemporary evidence

- *'[I] was always aware of his courage and faith but the pilgrimage brought it into sharper focus, particularly seeing where he was murdered.'* **Winchester-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *[Favourite area] 'Where St Thomas was murdered and the site of his old shrine where we prayed as a group – very moving.'* **Winchester-Canterbury pilgrim**
- *'In my experience people are always asking about the Martyrdom, and the shrine of St Thomas... every week somebody says: 'Where is St Thomas?''* **Volunteer**
- *'What happened to the bones of Thomas Becket?... If Becket's bones were found in Canterbury Cathedral, would that make it place of pilgrimage for Catholics to go?... or is it preferable that they are not discovered.'* **Visitor**
- *'I don't think anybody's really keen to find the bones of Becket. I think mystery serves us better than actuality. Because what would happen if we had all the money in the world but the cathedral is being worn to shreds by the feet of passing pilgrims'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'I suppose it's because of my nonconformist background... I'm not into all this going to relics and things like that... I love the fact that there's a simplicity of that candle there.'* **Volunteer**
'I saw a lot of statues of our Lady in the Cathedral today – I don't know how long they have been there...' **Pilgrim visitor**
- *'We started with Augustine, and only after that – Thomas Becket... the Cathedral is bigger than Thomas Becket. And of course he is a huge part but St Augustine, who established Christianity here, arguably he's more important than Thomas Becket... I know we talk about charging [entry] to the Cathedral, but it is the pilgrims who brought the wealth to the Cathedral and have made the Cathedral as big... and as important as it is now. But to me the Cathedral is certainly not all about Thomas Becket.'* **Cathedral staff**
- *'I didn't know much about Canterbury except that St Anselm used to be an Archbishop here and that it's the centre of the Anglican Church. So I knew nothing about St Augustine or Thomas Becket. And when I came here, I saw Oh, OK everybody's talking about them, nobody about St Anselm and sometimes it's even: Saint who? I did a little research about St Anselm... but not really about Canterbury Cathedral in general. And I just had the impression that I wanted to visit Canterbury because of Anselm... it feels like visiting an old friend, an old pen pal sort of... even though he's dead for 900 years...'* **Winter pilgrim**

7. Pilgrimage and the Cathedral

A major purpose of Christian 'holy places' has always been to reveal the existence and greatness of God and stimulate belief in his willingness and power to respond to human openness and need. In the process, individuals may experience a range of spiritual engagement, from self-identified 'pilgrims' with a clear focus, to heritage visitors who come with no 'spiritual' intention but may perceive new meaning and opportunity to reflect on their 'life journey', past, present, and future. There can often be movement along this continuum of spiritual experience while in the Cathedral, offering both opportunities and challenge.

Historical view

Modern ideas of how medieval pilgrims encountered the space of Canterbury Cathedral have focused on 'pilgrim routes' which went from the Martyrdom, to the Tomb, then the Shrine and Corona. This was chiefly a processional route for the monks, and while notable visitors like Erasmus may have received a personally guided tour along these lines the evidence shows that most pilgrims went straight up the south choir aisle to the Shrine where they would give their offering and say their prayers. After this they would explore the rest of the Cathedral. Paid clergy were on hand to provide information and access to the various chapels and shrines.

From after the Restoration, visitors (although not locals) paid to be shown round the Cathedral, and many agreed with John Evelyn's view of it as 'the finest sight'. From the 1770s the Dean and Chapter financed guide books, and allowed authors access to the archives for material for their popular histories. Official guides were first appointed in the 1860s, and tours were so popular that in 1870 no more than 30 people were to be shown round the Cathedral at any one time. In the 1920s, efforts were made to remove the distinction between different types of visitors. Women were not compelled to cover their heads on entering, prohibitory signs were removed, colour-coded plans provided, and entrance fees were dropped for the first time since the 17th century. Yet the sheer numbers of people made it difficult to control the atmosphere. From the 1960s there were complaints that the increasing prevalence of foreign tourists was turning the Cathedral into 'an outpost of the English Tourist Board, rather than a house of prayer and worship', though this was countered by polyglot guides providing spiritual tours, and the use of non-liturgical incense.

Contemporary observations

A sense of pilgrimage to, within and from Canterbury Cathedral is manifested in many ways, involving not only visitors *from* near and far, but also those who work *within* the cathedral as staff and volunteers. Individuals and groups of self-identified pilgrims arrive at the Cathedral or set out with a clear sense of purpose, but others have a broad sense of the place as a pilgrimage destination without necessarily seeing their own visit in such terms (e.g. see Qs 5-8). Some move into spiritual engagement through responding to the worship and beauty of the building, having the rare opportunity to express need or thanksgiving, or seeing the responses of others. The scale and complexity of the building, which, for example, allow 'visitors' to find themselves standing by a 'pilgrim', provide important opportunities of 'permeability' and 'adjacency' for Christian mission.

A number of very effective strategies have enhanced the role of pilgrimage in the Cathedral's ministry, including the offering of pilgrim blessings, acknowledging pilgrim groups in services, providing pilgrim passports, the pilgrim stone, revival of the old Pilgrim's way from Winchester to Canterbury, candle-lit pilgrimage led by members of Chapter, and a temporary 'Pilgrim Corner'. Given the fact that both pilgrims and other visitors respond to personal narratives, to invitations to engage, and to material culture, it could be helpful to have a more permanent display of short extracts of 'pilgrim narratives' provided by those who come to, and leave from, the Cathedral. By encouraging visitors to then provide their own narratives in this 'space of invitation', they might also come to reflect on their own identity as a 'potential pilgrim'.

Opportunities to explore

- 'Pilgrimage' has many meanings in Christianity (and other faiths), and wider currency signifying visits to places of special meaning. Exploring the multiple Christian senses of the term could help visitors connect experience in the cathedral to the start of, or a key stage in, their spiritual journey.
- Provide a more permanent Pilgrim Corner' with personal narratives?

Historical evidence

- *'Always and in every way pilgrims are to be gathered together, spoken to, and answered in all gentleness, friendliness, and seriousness.'* [Instructions to Cathedral clergy, 1428](#)
- *They kneeled down before the shrine and counted their beads
They prayed to St Thomas in such ways as they could
And then the holy relics, each man with his mouth
Kissed, as a goodly monk the names told and taught
And then to other places of holiness they went
And were in their devotions till service was all done
And then they went to dinner, as it drew to noon.*
[The 'Canterbury Interlude' from the Tale of Beryn, 15th century](#)
- *'If we treat visitors as "trippers", that is what they will remain'* [George Bell, Dean, 1920s](#)
- *'People at large shew less and less understanding of the nature of a shrine or a holy place... Smoking and eating in the Cathedral are becoming commonplace.'* [Sacrist, 1938](#)
- *'We talk too much about the 'tourist problem'. There is no such thing. The millions who visit our Cathedral are neither 'tourists' nor 'pilgrims'. They are simply - people. If we treat people as 'tourists' that is what they become in relation to us. In reality they are, individually, persons... The House of God can never have too many visitors... Today, on account of the unprecedented sense of spiritual deprivation and bewilderment being experienced by men and women all over the world, the vocation of the Cathedral must be expressed in its ministry to these deprived people - our visitors, who are in no way different from ourselves - above all else. That is the work of the Cathedral at the present time. Nothing else is of comparable importance.'* [Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide, 1980](#)

Contemporary evidence

- *'If a pilgrimage is a spiritual journey, mine has been [one] of years rather than miles.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'It was part of my life pilgrimage... to go back and say thank you. To find yourself in the same sacred space... and be grateful and just relish God's presence, the answers to prayers and his faithfulness.'* [Pilgrim visitor](#)
- *'If God wants me to keep on growing in him... I have to go on a journey... that might be an inward spiritual journey but it might also be a physical journey to strengthen my inward journey.'* [Pilgrim](#)
- *'The question if I'm on a pilgrimage here is not easy to answer... Canterbury became a very spiritual place for me when I got here but it wasn't my intention.'* [Seeker](#)
- *'Pilgrims... will ask often for a blessing from the priest who is on duty.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'The Pilgrim corner] is so informative... it attracts a lot of people... some are quite surprised that pilgrimage... still happens.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'I was surprised (and touched and moved) by the absolute readiness of the gate-keepers at the cathedral to waive all fees for entry during the whole three-day duration of my visit to Canterbury on the basis of my being there specifically as a pilgrim.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'As a pilgrim, I felt that Canterbury Cathedral balanced its religious, cultural, social and touristic needs effectively.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'For a number of years I had been vaguely thinking of walking the Camino to Compostela. A family bereavement... prompted me to make the much more modest walk from London to Canterbury.... The walk presented itself as an apt gesture of burden-carrying, and the Cathedral an apt destination for burden-relieving.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'There is really great potential in England to nurture a different kind of religious relationship between the 'Church' and the public through a renewed phenomenon of pilgrimage (including walked/cycled pilgrimage) in place of some of the institutional components of formal religion which no longer resonate as they did. Beginning to walk pilgrimages has opened up for me completely new kinds of religious conversation with people (hikers, outward-bound types, religious sceptics, you name it) to whom institutional religion is otherwise fairly meaningless. I read somewhere that pilgrimage might [enable] Christianity to make viable connections with coming generations in a way that 'church-going' doesn't: my own experience as a pilgrim tends to substantiate this.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)

8. Leaving and taking away

Since the earliest days of Christian pilgrimage there has been a desire to take away objects that help individuals recall and rekindle their experience, and share what they have learned and felt. In the Middle Ages these channels of memory and holiness included pilgrim badges and other simpler objects, such as pieces of stone or cloth. Such objects were believed to be imbued with the spiritual power associated with the saint or place. It was also important for pilgrims to leave something of themselves behind, usually as offerings representing prayers. Opportunities to take away and to leave behind items full of meaning still carry real spiritual significance for many visiting cathedrals today.

Historical view

Canterbury was justly famous in the middle ages for the uniquely wide range of souvenirs that could be purchased cheaply in the town and the shops and stalls just inside the South Gate. The Cathedral itself had very little hand in the commerce of souvenirs. The uniquely wide range of badges and other items sold to pilgrims were an entirely secular initiative. While most other pilgrimage destinations are associated with one or a small handful of badge designs, Canterbury's were customised to the various feasts and relics of St Thomas and even to the identity of the purchaser. The trade was not static: while ampullae containing the blood-water of St Thomas were popular for a century after Becket's death, these were overtaken in popularity by simple illustrative badges by the early 14th century. Canterbury was a leader in the medieval English souvenir trade. Just as important as souvenirs was the ability to leave something at the shrine, and it would have been a brave pilgrim who came empty-handed to medieval Canterbury. A silver penny may have been the most basic offering, but often more sentimental or valuable items were offered which may then have been attached to the shrine. Thanksgiving for healing and other favours was often in the form of wax objects or candles which would be used to provide lighting around the Cathedral.

In the early nineteenth century there was a vogue for tourists buying pictures of the Cathedral, and so many amateur and professional artists were coming to the Cathedral that in 1812 the Dean and Chapter banned anyone from drawing the interior without permission. In 1967 the Friends' bookstall in the Cathedral was formed into a separate trading company. In the 1970s there were gift shops in both the south transept exit and the crypt. The latter was felt by many to be particularly irreverent, if popular, and after some protest was removed, although there attempts to justify it on the (unfounded) grounds of medieval commerce within the Cathedral

Contemporary observations

The importance of presence, proximity and the transferability of sacredness remain significant in relation to what is left at and taken away from the Cathedral by a range of visitors. Past objects of significance, shifting from ampullae to badges, have now been transformed into contemporary objects that are left behind or taken away, such as the prayer or pilgrimage 'testimony', the photos, the link to social media. Though sometimes dismissed as frivolous, the value of photographs as meaningful mementoes, establishing an individual's connection with place at that point and beyond, is clearly significant. People buying (and receiving) cards and other items, feel those bought on site have more 'value' and meaning than normal commodities. Both photos and cards encourage forms of narrative and connection with social groups beyond the space and time of the visit itself. The shop is an apparently more 'secular' space that nonetheless complements explicitly liturgical activity in important and memorable ways.

For the contemporary pilgrim, to receive a pilgrim blessing and associated bookmark recording the pilgrim blessing given, the date, and the name of the canon, is a powerful combination of medieval and modern sensibilities. One question is whether visitors, and perhaps especially self-identified pilgrims, might be offered the opportunity to contact each other through a website and social media.

Opportunities to explore?

- Prayers left in the Cathedral show the range of needs and emotions expressed by visitors. Could some of these themes (with anonymised quotes) be used in training staff and volunteers to give a sense of what may be on the minds of the people they welcome and direct?

Historical evidence

- *'Colonius, an Irish boy, received some money from the monks to buy an ampulla. He left the Cathedral, and stood in the shop deciding which to buy when he saw one that the merchant had dropped and stole it, keeping his farthing. He had the ampulla filled at the Martyrdom, hung it round his neck, and joined his friends in the precincts. Suddenly a large swelling appeared on his neck, almost choking him, and he cried out "The martyr is doing this for the merchant; he pursues a thief; he does not see a pilgrim" So he returned to the Martyrdom and confessed to an Irish priest there, and they hung the ampulla where the martyr lay, and the swelling disappeared.'* [Miracle story, 1170s](#)
- *Know that on the 17 April your servant J de Couffle came to the shrine of St Thomas and offered in your name five florins, known as regales, and a gold ring set with a ruby, and please to understand that the ring was affixed to the shrine, in the presence of the said John, on the same day.* [Letter to Joan of Navarre, 1332](#)
- *[To the Cathedral they went] to make their offerings,
Just as their devotion was, of silver brooches and rings.
...
Then as manner and custom is, signs there they bought
For men of the country should know who they had sought
Each man gave his silver for such thing as they liked*
['The Canterbury Interlude' from The Tale of Beryn, 15th C](#)
- *'It is more honest to preserve/ the precincts / so no markets are held there/ so that those who see/ and say of the merchants/ who enter the temple of God/ that neither the markets/ of the merchants/ nor their feasts/ disturb the choir of Christ.'* [Canterbury poem, 15th C](#)

Contemporary evidence

- *'People really like the fact that our things are actually from inside the Cathedral, they have found them literally in the Cathedral, it makes them more special.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *[Purchasing items in the Cathedral] 'will definitely make them more special to me because of where I bought them'* [Visitor](#)
- *'I always buy the Advent calendar and some Christmas cards – family tradition!'* [Former resident](#)
- *'I bought a number of postcards of the Martyrdom as mementos of my pilgrimage for myself and to send to the individuals whose burdens the pilgrimage had been designed to help carry: and I treated myself to a number of rather lavish books about the cathedral as souvenirs.'* [London-Canterbury pilgrim](#)
- *'My father... has very kindly offered to buy for me... a cross and chain which I can wear on my clerical shirt... we went to the gift shop and I found a very lovely Canterbury cross on a chain of which I'm delighted... I've come back to say thank you on this pilgrimage, these few days here, and that Canterbury cross for me is going to be very important as I walk on.'* [Pilgrim visitor](#)
- *'I bought a book about Thomas Becket, I wanted to give it to my parents because they like stories about..., also medieval stories about murder and all this, intrigue and all this kind of stuff. And I think two postcards.'* [Winter pilgrim](#)
- *'With the Black Prince, I always have a two pence piece... and I say, "Look on the back; that is the symbol of the Black Prince" and if I've got someone who hasn't, I give it to them and I say to them, "You take that"- when they were coming to Becket they would buy a token to say, "I've been there" and I said, "You take my two pence because that is – when you look at that, you will think, "I was at Canterbury Cathedral"'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'The candle lighting and moment of quiet reflection are always at the heart of my visits. Every visit I give thanks that I am there and for what has passed since my last visit and pray that I may come safely back again in the future.'* [Former resident](#)
- *'People have poured out their hearts in there, their lives and their spirituality into the building... leaving their mark in the form of a candle or a prayer... It could just be just a stone building but the fact that it has the daily flow going through and everything has a meaning and everything has a beauty behind it... it's like a tapestry, a carpet of stories - that's what makes it spiritual for me.'* [Cathedral staff](#)

9. Belonging, identity and ownership

The size of the Cathedral community is both a great asset and a challenge. The core ministry of the clergy is supported and complemented by lay staff and the large team of volunteers. Many volunteers see themselves not only as part of the working community but also as being on a personal spiritual journey, or developing a relationship with the Cathedral beyond the immediate scope of their role. There is often an understandable desire for tangible recognition of their value to the Cathedral, or of their being stakeholders, which the growth in volunteer numbers in recent decades can make difficult to manage.

Historical view

As the medieval Cathedral was a monastic church, a national institution, and an international pilgrimage site, it is easy to overlook the near-invisible lay and clerical staff and volunteers who built, decorated, repaired and cleaned it; who rang the bells, kept the church secure, and aided visitors. The Cathedral dominated the medieval city and its populace, and was at the heart of much civic ritual, but this power-imbalance led to numerous tensions and there is little evidence that medieval locals predominantly thought of the Cathedral as 'theirs'.

With the decline of Canterbury's position following the Reformation, however, evidence suggests the city felt much more proprietorially towards the Cathedral, which fulfilled a function as a 'broad church' notably taking a large refugee Huguenot population into its bosom alongside the civic congregations. Until the 20th century the Cathedral distinguished between locals and visitors, or 'strangers', in terms of the times and conditions of access.

The Friends group, the first of its kind at a historic English cathedral, was set up in 1926, partly to allow for the establishment of stakeholdership in the Cathedral by the laity at a time when visitor numbers were dramatically increasing. Calls for a more formal involvement of the laity in the organizational structure of the Cathedral from the 1950s were initially rebuffed, but the rapid rise in visitor numbers of the 1970s made this a necessary feature. The pace of change in the last four decades has been remarkable, with the numbers of lay volunteers and staff more than doubling during that period.

Contemporary observations

The Cathedral attracts multiple forms of affiliation. For some it is akin to their parish church; others feel a primary attachment to a parish elsewhere. For both occasional and more regular visitors the 'anonymity' of the cathedral may have particular value.

Besides its national role in relation to the Anglican Church, Canterbury faces two significant challenges in relation to identity and belonging: 1) how it relates to, and makes its activities comprehensible to, the large numbers of international visitors who come, particularly in high seasons; 2) in a complementary way, how it responds to and engages local residents, who may take the building for granted (particularly as it is sheltered by the close) and yet be interested in visiting in off season periods.

In relation to local residents, the use of differentiated trails' could be a means of appealing to local history and landscape, and 'spaces of invitation' might also be developed and used to encourage people to come in and, for example, light a candle at times of personal significance, such as birthdays, anniversaries, or particular rites of passage such as starting a new job or going on a journey. These latter strategies might not only encourage repeat visits, but also develop more of a 'sense of ownership' that links with contemporary civic as well as spiritual assumptions.

As with many Cathedrals, volunteers provide a vital yet often relatively hidden workforce, but also a powerful network of connections with the local community, within and beyond practising Anglicans. The scale of the team of volunteers is a great asset, providing a huge reservoir of gifts and experience. However, supporting, training, communicating with, and organising such large numbers of people also requires considerable investment by clergy and the highly-committed team of lay staff.

Historical evidence

- *“Many persons in all parishes in this town go to the Cathedral in the morning, to the Presbyterian meeting in the afternoon, and to the Methodist meeting at night.”* **Rector of St Alphege, Canterbury, 1786**
- *‘[We are pleased with the new Cathedral bells, and will try to ring them well] to please the Ear of all the City’* **Bellringers’ petition, 1802**
- *‘The great majority of the congregation consists of occasional attendants, and strangers. These latter flock in great crowds during the summer, when Ramsgate and Margate are full.’* **Henry Alford, Dean, 1866**
- *[The city clergy] get to ignore [the Cathedral], except as far as they think that its presence rather tends to interfere with the working of the parishes, and to regard the chapter as a body of clergy whose interests are rather different from theirs... the Chapter should call the clergy into council with regard to the spiritual welfare of the city... and give them more frequent opportunities of preaching in the Cathedral... so they can feel the privilege of having it within reach.”* **Hon Canon J.G. Blore, 1890**
- *‘Nothing exists apart from its context. If the Cathedral bestows a peculiar character upon the city which it dominates, equally its own character is determined by the city and by the Kentish countryside: the Cathedral is what it is by virtue of its precise position on this globe; it has affinities with the particular quality of the atmosphere and the light in one particular place. The Cathedral belongs to Canterbury and to Kent.’* **Lois Lang-Sims, Cathedral guide 1979**

Contemporary evidence

- *‘I’ve always liked the diversity that you see in a cathedral congregation. It tends to be more diverse than in churches.’* **Volunteer**
- *‘We do come here for services sometimes... we are Methodists, but we feel just as much at home here.’* **Volunteer**
- *I am originally local and feel I have the Cathedral in my blood – it has always been there. I am a ‘Friend’ of the Cathedral. I am drawn to it whenever I am in the country and try to visit if only for a few minutes. I now live in a Muslim country and the church seems to have become more significant to me now that I can’t visit.* **Former resident**
- *It is like visiting a much-loved relative. Couldn’t possibly be in the area without dropping in and always feel so glad that I have done so. For me, at heart, it is spiritually driven.* **Former resident**
- *The atmosphere created by the guide generated a nice bond between us all - a shared experience.* **Spiritual tourist**
- *‘No other cathedral has that dimension of being a world capital, other than St Peter’s in Rome, really. And that’s quite a powerful thing to have to uphold.’* **Cathedral staff**
- *‘[Volunteers] have to have that ability to make the cathedral belong to those people that are coming in, that have a short time to get that sense of belonging or of awe or wonder.’* **Volunteer**
- *‘I’m just always amazed about how much time [volunteers] give and give willingly; they want to be here and it’s almost like each of the groups becomes a family within a family.’* **Cathedral staff**
- *‘My mother had spoken about the pilgrimage she did on foot with a school friend in 1936 from Winchester to Canterbury. When they arrived, they took a photograph of the name of the city, to show that they had completed the walk. I found that black and white photograph. Mother undertook this journey and now I’m here. It made me feel connected to her.’* **Volunteer**
- *‘There are three carvings... the donkey for the Democratic Party, the elephant for the Republicans, and the American eagle. I think they were put there as a kind of acknowledgment of thanks for American money that was given after the war, but they’re really quite hard to find... most Americans are thrilled that they’ve got some link with the cathedral.’* **Volunteer**
- *‘I think it [the Cathedral] is a place of pilgrimage because of the people who gather there... the gathering, the being there together, is important... most people today... wouldn’t think of it as they thought of it in medieval times, going there to be near the relics of a great saint in order that somehow they would be some spiritual power emitted that will affect you... It’s just being where someone who was very special at one time was actually there and I’m there as well.’* **Volunteer**

10. Building wider relationships

Canterbury Cathedral's unique role both nationally and within the Anglican Communion worldwide means that it sits at the centre of a vast, complex web of relationships, with a great capacity to influence both individuals and groups.

Historical perspectives

Thomas Becket's cult spread quickly throughout Christendom and beyond. Similar church-state disputes in Norway, Iceland, Poland, and Hungary promoted him amongst the clergy and royal links spread his popularity to Saxony and Germany, Castile, and Sicily. Becket's exile in France had made him popular there, while papal patronage assured him promotion in Italy. His supposedly Saracen mother was the basis of the Knights of St Thomas, a military order in the Holy Land. Pilgrims came from beyond Christendom to see the renowned martyr's shrine.

From the late-16th century, a community of up to 2000 French Huguenots fleeing persecution were given refuge in the city and allowed to worship according to their own rite in the Cathedral crypt. Although their presence occasionally gave rise to tensions with Archbishop or Chapter, on the whole they were cherished and held up as represented both of the tolerance of the Church of England and wider links to Continental Protestantism.

Within the city and diocese, the Cathedral played a greater role following the Reformation. As the city's parish churches were all fairly small, the Cathedral provided the city's main Sunday services and major celebrations of the Eucharist from the late 17th century. By the 19th century however, the city clergy were growing increasingly frustrated with what they saw as competition from the Cathedral for congregations on Sunday evenings and at other popular service times.

In the 19th century the Cathedral and St Augustine's College provided many of the clergy for the new colonial churches, particularly in Australia. In the ecumenical atmosphere of the 1960s, the historic links with great northern French abbeys were re-established, and a stone Canterbury cross donated to the church at Bec. From the 1970s permission was granted for two Roman Catholic Masses per year to be celebrated in the crypt, and any large pilgrimages were permitted Masses in the eastern crypt.

Contemporary observations

The relationship between Canterbury Cathedral and local people is often close but also complex. The 'Canterbury Journey' project offers valuable opportunities to build closer relationships and partnerships with the city and beyond. Educational provision for school groups is effective and far-reaching; this too will be further enhanced by the 'Canterbury Journey' developments. Resources which will help adults engage more deeply with the Cathedral, its history, and the Christian story which has shaped its life and material culture, are also increasingly necessary.

The desire to identify with the Cathedral is clearly also important more widely: many visitors are not Anglican, and a number of visitors of other faiths (and none) come to the Cathedral explicitly seeking a spiritual connection. The Compass Rose in the Nave symbolises the Cathedral's place at the heart of the global Anglican landscape. The pilgrim stone outside the South-West door (also known as the 'kilometre zero stone') serves as a powerful symbol of connection with pilgrimage sites, such as Rome and Santiago de Compostela, from other Christian traditions situated in Europe and beyond.

The Papal visit to the Cathedral in 1982 clearly also symbolized the idea of a Church representing, but also reaching out beyond, the Anglican communion. Many Catholic Masses take place in the Cathedral with these groups bringing their own clergy. One remaining issue refers to whether and how the Church might also materially acknowledge other Christian denominations, such as the Orthodox and Coptic Churches.

Historical evidence

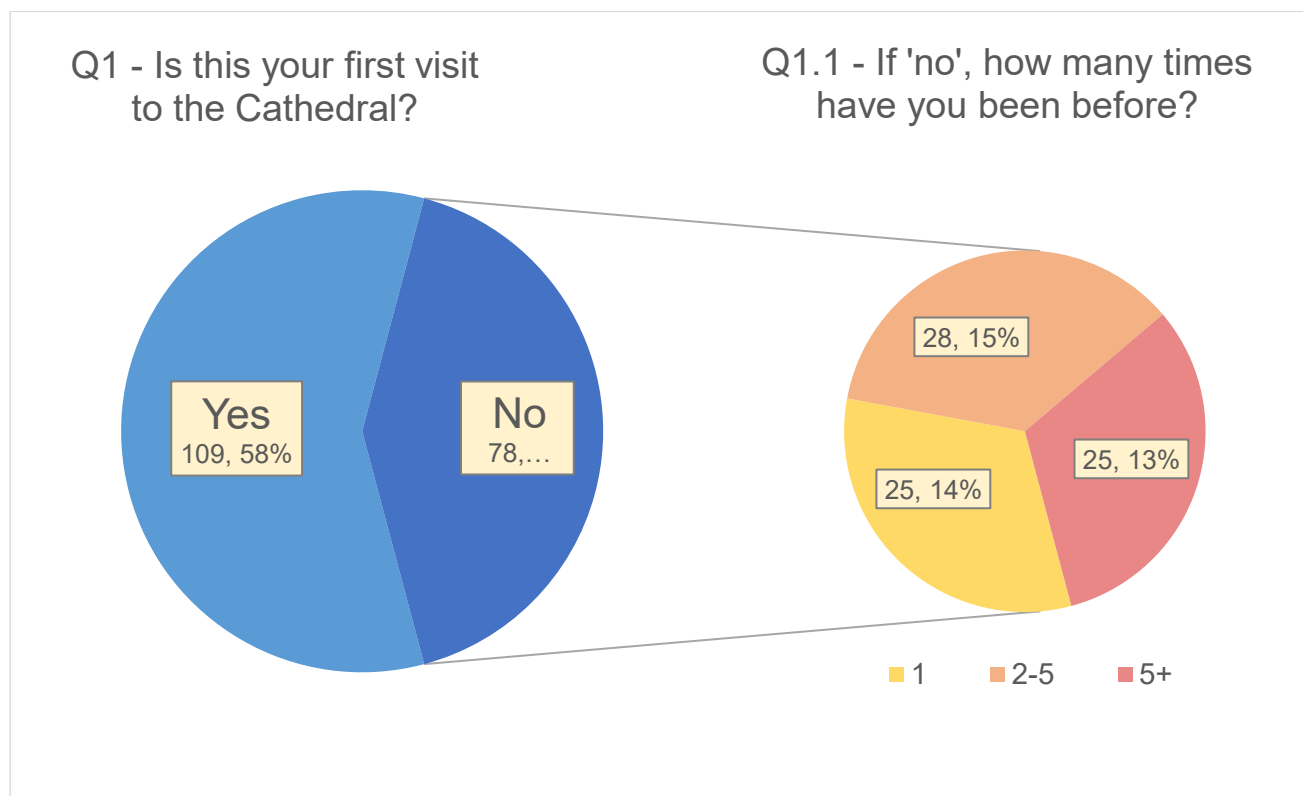
- *'[Three pilgrims] came from India to Jerusalem, and stayed there for several years, and have come to Rome in order to visit the basilicas of the Apostles Peter and Paul and other basilicas, and intend to visit the church of St. James in Compostela and the churches of St. Mary, Finistère, Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy, and St. Thomas of Canterbury in England, and then to return to Jerusalem, and thence to India.'* [Letter of Pope Innocent VIII, 1489](#)
- *This fostering Church, maternal shelter yields.
Beneath her roof, where gospel freedom dwells,
Beneath her spacious roof, in rites divine
Lo! various sects and various tongues unite;
In blissful league, French, Germans, Britons join,
While hovering Angels listen with delight.*
[John Duncombe, Elegy Written in Canterbury Cathedral, 1778](#)
- *'I do not forget that in this cathedral... there remains a memorial of those days when the Church of England, looked to as the mother of the Protestant Churches of Europe, gave an asylum to our persecuted Protestant brethren who came from other lands... So that here there is something to remind us of our connexion with those who in distant lands maintain under great disadvantages the truths for which the Reformers were content to die.'* [Archbishop Tait, 1876](#)
- *'The Dean and Chapter sent a "stone of symbolism" to be placed in St John's Church [now cathedral, Parramatta]...It was sent because of the fact that St John's is the oldest Anglican church extant in the Commonwealth of Australia. The gift is a high honour for us, and, recognising this, we have enshrined it in the most honourable portion of the Church - the chancel. It can there be seen with the brass plate above it, bearing a suitable inscription [and the arms of the see and Cathedral of Canterbury].'* [S. M. Johnstone, Rector of St John's, Parramatta, 1932](#)

Contemporary evidence

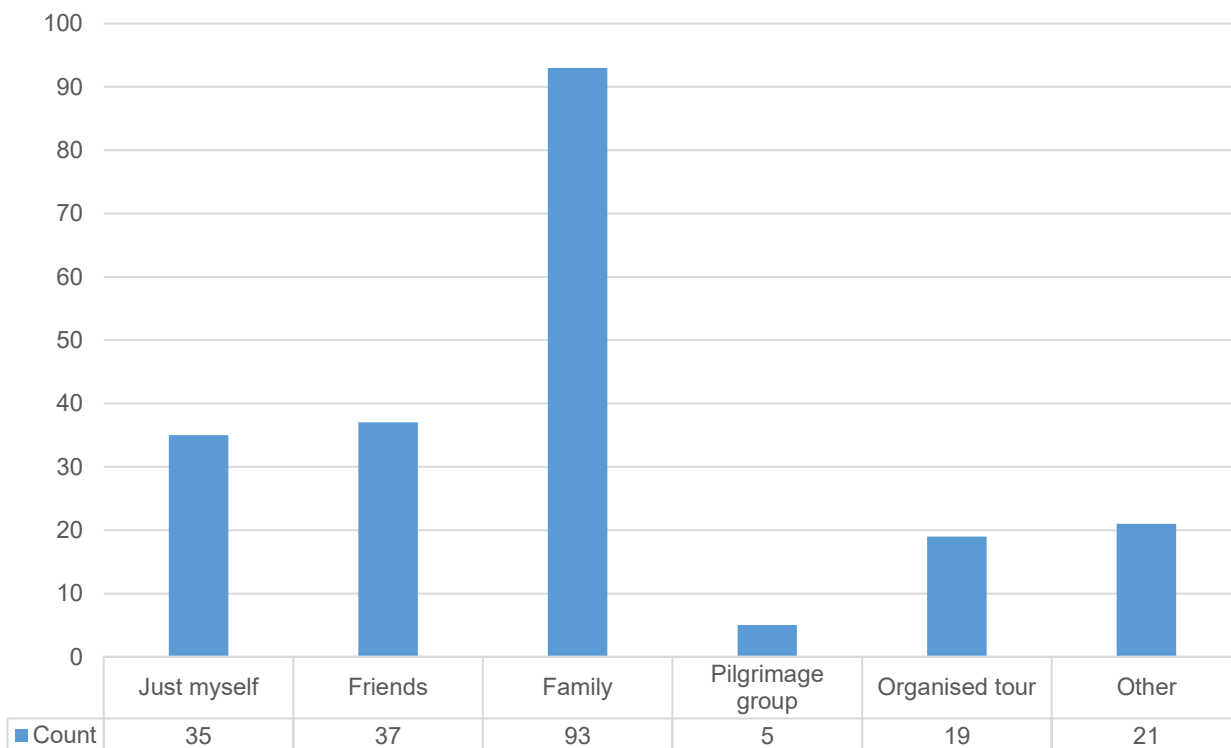
- *'It's a great privilege... that the Cathedral authorities allow Catholic Mass to be celebrated... I think that's very special - an act of great hospitality.'* [Pilgrim](#)
- *'If we are asked, 'Can we film Harry Potter here?' the answer is 'No, you can't.' Magic to African churches and witchcraft... is still quite a big issue... For [African churches] to see the Mother Church has been part of some strange fictional story which involves witchcraft would seem odd. Whereas if a film company approaches us and says, we are making a film about Thomas Becket or Henry IV or the Black Prince, or Chaucer – anything we have a connection with, we would negotiate with them to see whether what they want to do fits our model.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'And everybody in the whole wide world now knows that the Via Francigena starts in Canterbury. Which it did, because Archbishop Sigeric went on it.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'I did bring a Muslim friend of mine to a service here years ago, and she said that she felt at home in any house of God.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'Many people like to understand another faith, and so it's a good place to start, because it's a big, nice public building. If you go into a little church somewhere, you might not see a service, and if there was one on, you might feel very embarrassed about being there.'* [Volunteer](#)
- *'We are the home of the Anglican Communion [but] we don't preselect, we don't differentiate and that I think is the power of the cathedral...that there is no bar to anybody.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'It has a precinct, which in essence seals it off and is a physical barrier that becomes a mental barrier, a perceived barrier as well. So even with the local community, research and engagement with them has shown that even local residents perceive that barrier, that it's not for them, it's behind the wall, it's hidden.'* [Cathedral staff](#)
- *'A lot of local schools, might live or drive along roads called the Pilgrims Way, so they will understand a little bit about that. Last year [2013] two schools came on pilgrimage... they were doing a termly topic on pilgrimage and brought their whole school.'* [Cathedral staff](#)

Appendix 1: Canterbury Cathedral question data overview

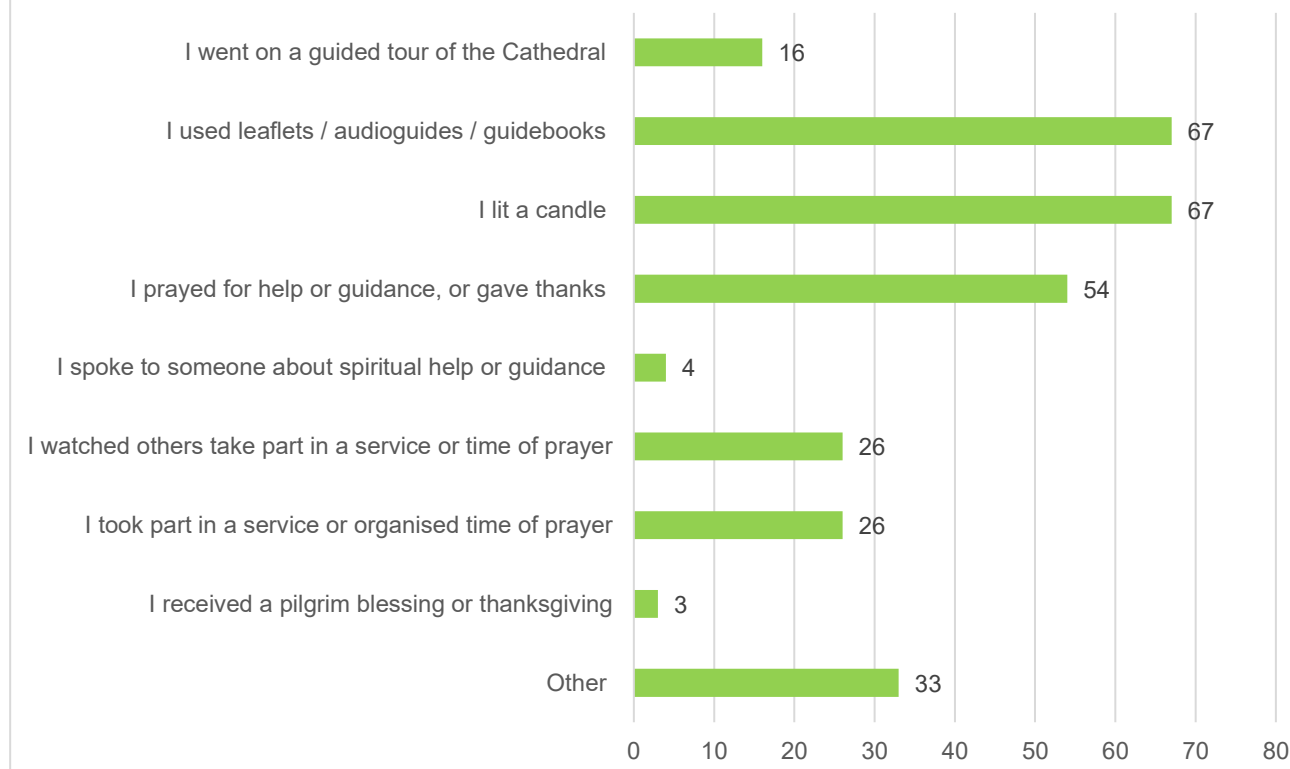
Total number of respondents: 187

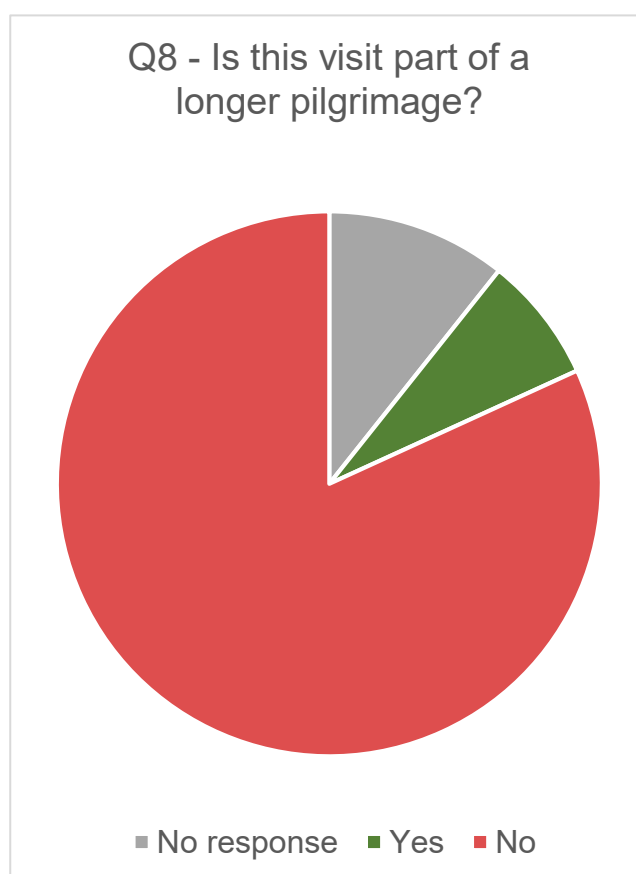
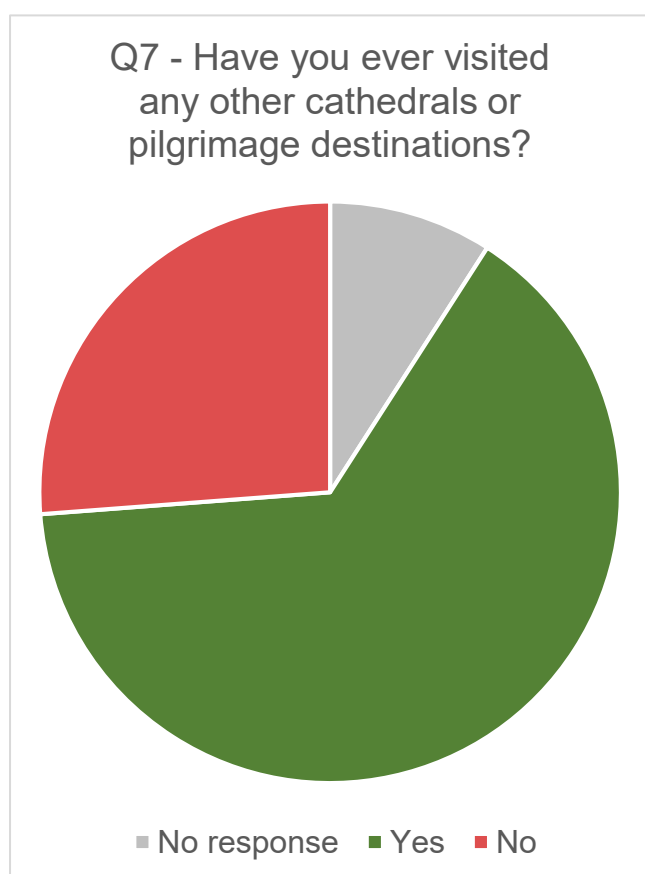
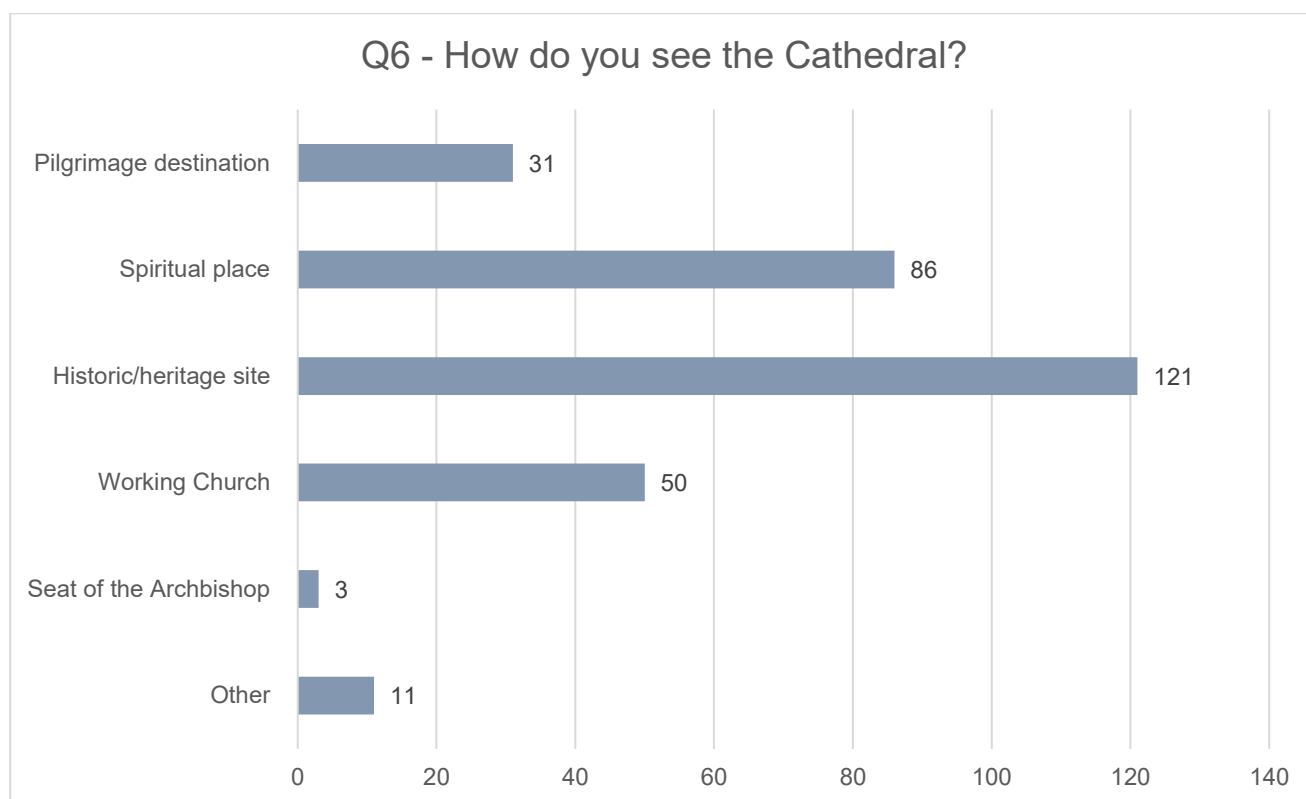


Q3 - Who are you here with?

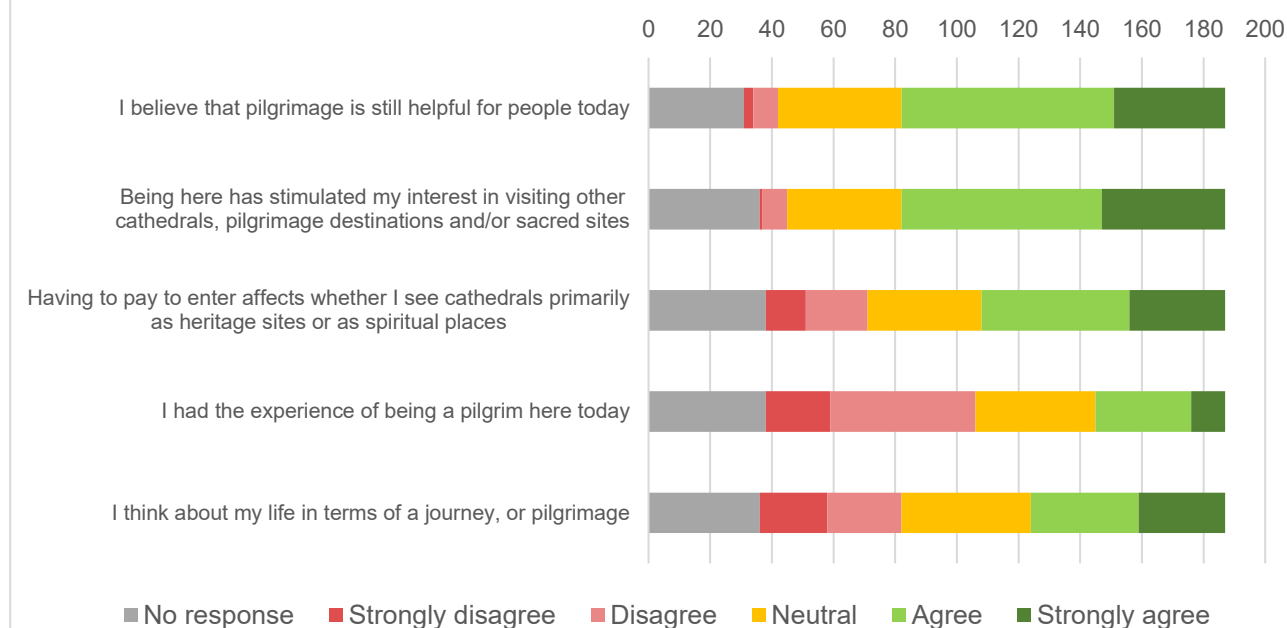


Q5 - What did you do here?

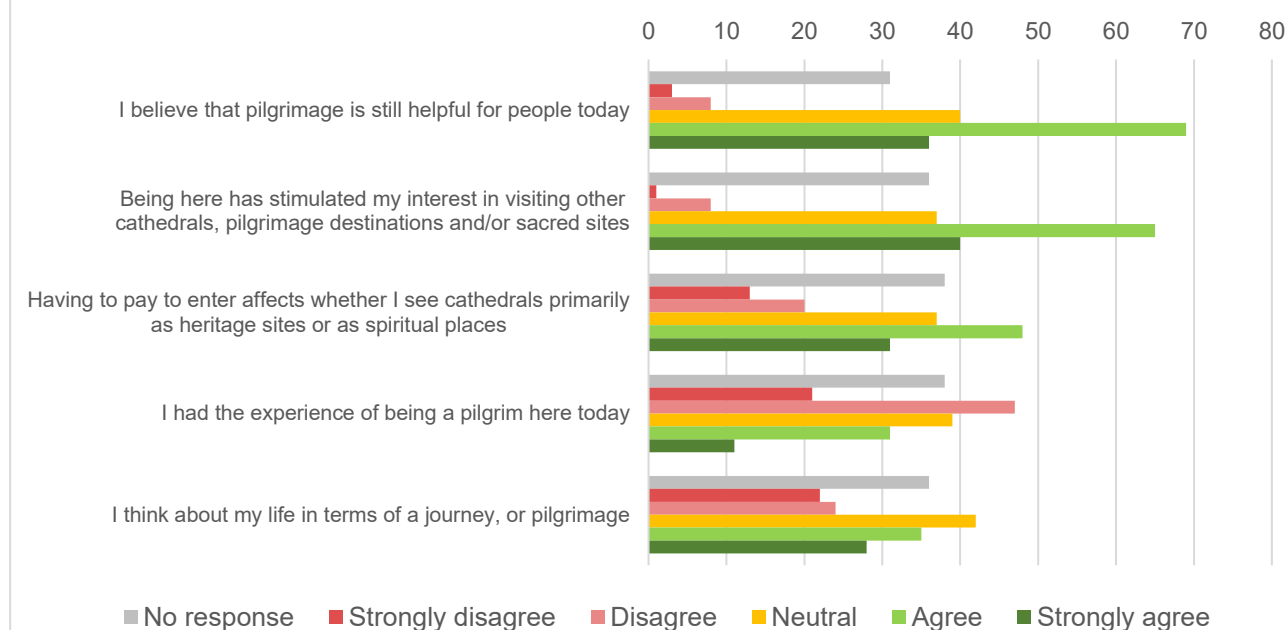




Q9 - Cathedrals and pilgrimage likert statements



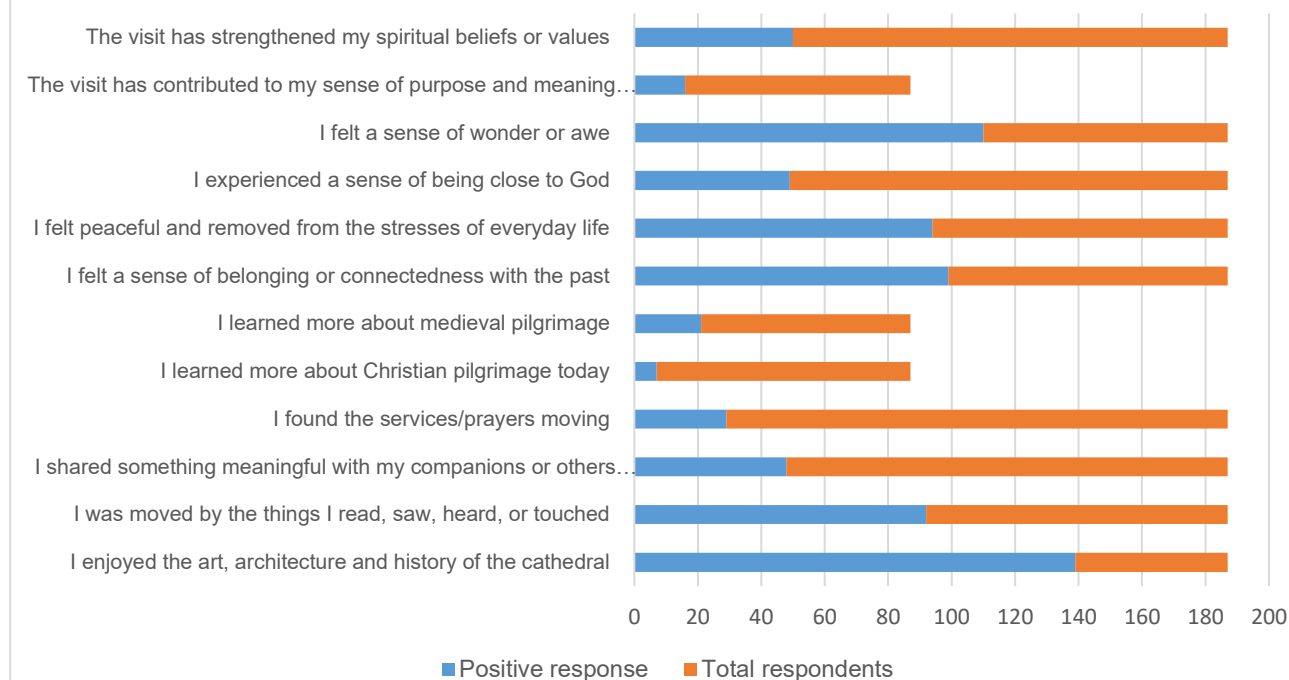
Q9 - Cathedrals and pilgrimage likert statements



Q9 - Cathedrals and pilgrimage likert statements – data overview

	No response	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that pilgrimage is still helpful for people today	31	3	8	40	69	36
Being here has stimulated my interest in visiting other cathedrals, pilgrimage destinations and/or sacred sites	36	1	8	37	65	40
If I have to pay to enter a cathedral, it affects whether I see it primarily as a heritage site or a spiritual place	38	13	20	37	48	31
I had the experience of being a pilgrim here today	38	21	47	39	31	11
I think about my life in terms of a journey, or pilgrimage	36	22	24	42	35	28

Q10 - Which of the following experiences formed part of your visit to the Cathedral?

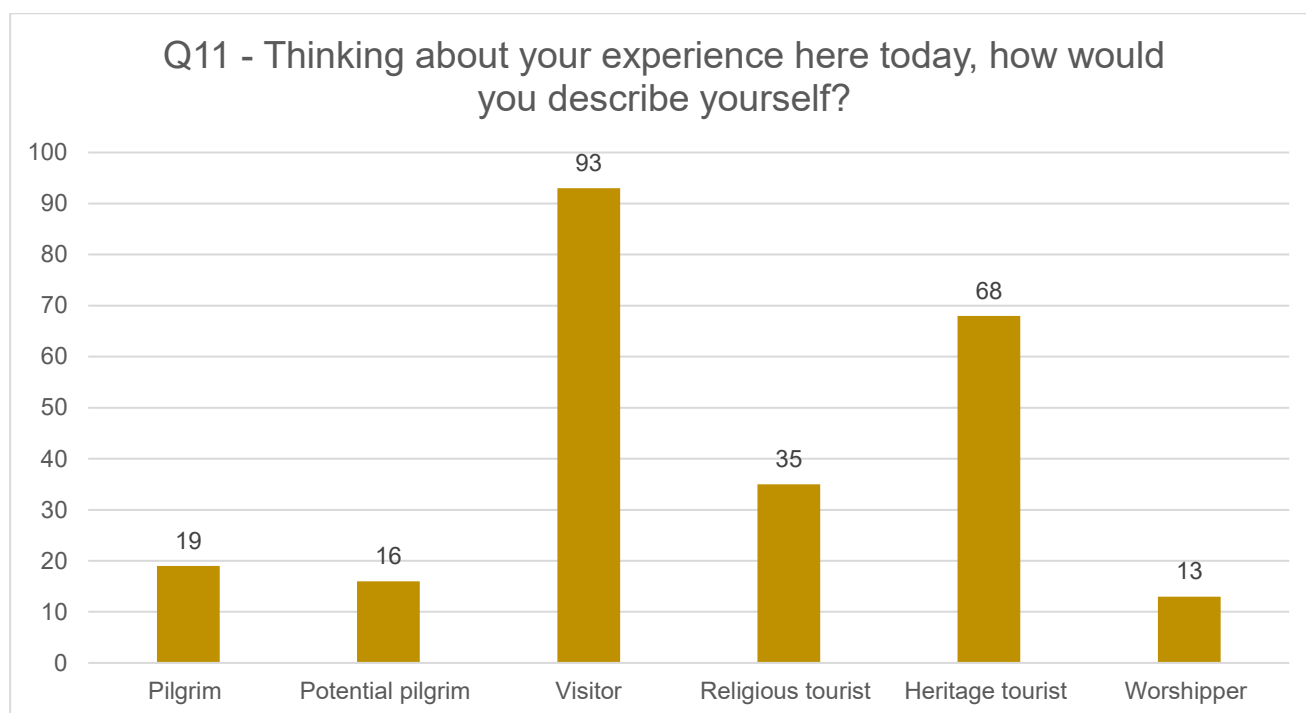


Note:

- The first 100 questionnaires had a different set of questions, three of which were not replicated in later questionnaires. The above chart therefore shows positive responses for each question against the total number of respondents to who had the option of that question.

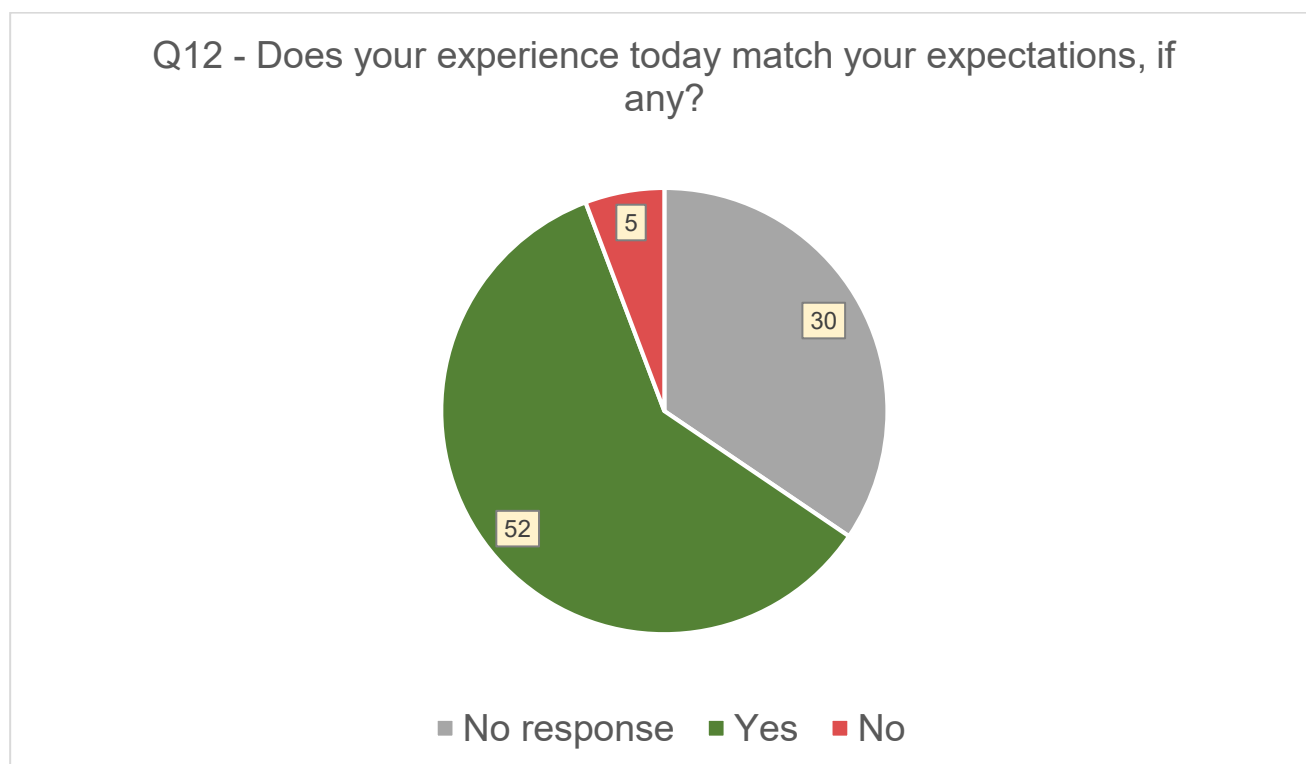
Full questions:

- I enjoyed the art, architecture and history of the cathedral
- I was moved by the things I read, saw, heard, or touched
- I shared something meaningful with my companions or others present
- I found the services/prayers moving
- I learned more about Christian pilgrimage today
- I learned more about medieval pilgrimage
- I felt a sense of belonging or connectedness with the past
- I felt peaceful and removed from the stresses of everyday life
- I experienced a sense of being close to God
- I felt a sense of wonder or awe
- The visit has contributed to my sense of purpose and meaning in life
- The visit has strengthened my spiritual beliefs or values



Notes:

- The first 100 questions presented the last option as 'Site-seeing tourist' rather than 'Worshipper'. The 'Worshipper' responses above should therefore be judged against a possible total of 87, rather than 187 as with the other options.
- The earlier presence of 'Site-seeing tourist' may also have a negative skewing effect on the 'Heritage tourist' responses.

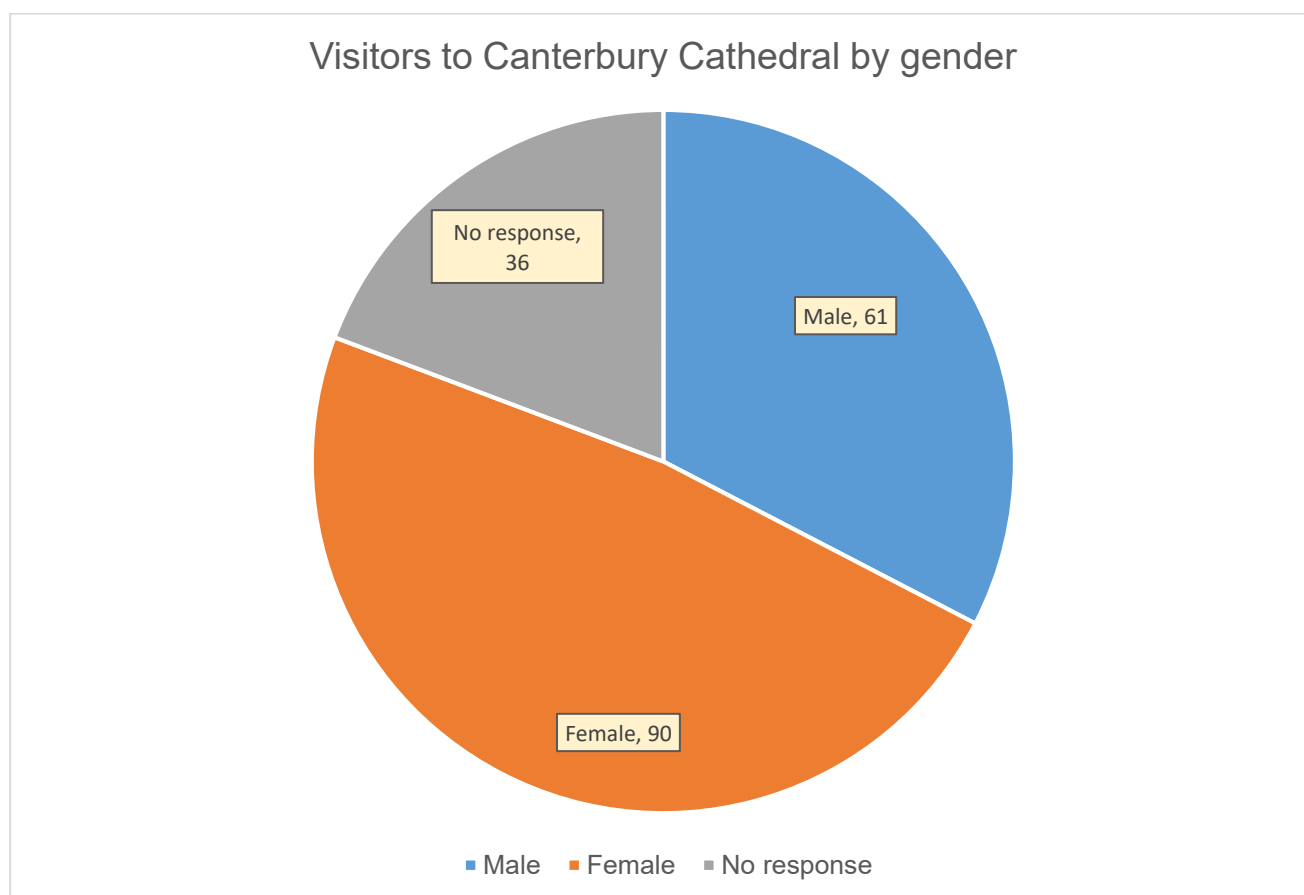
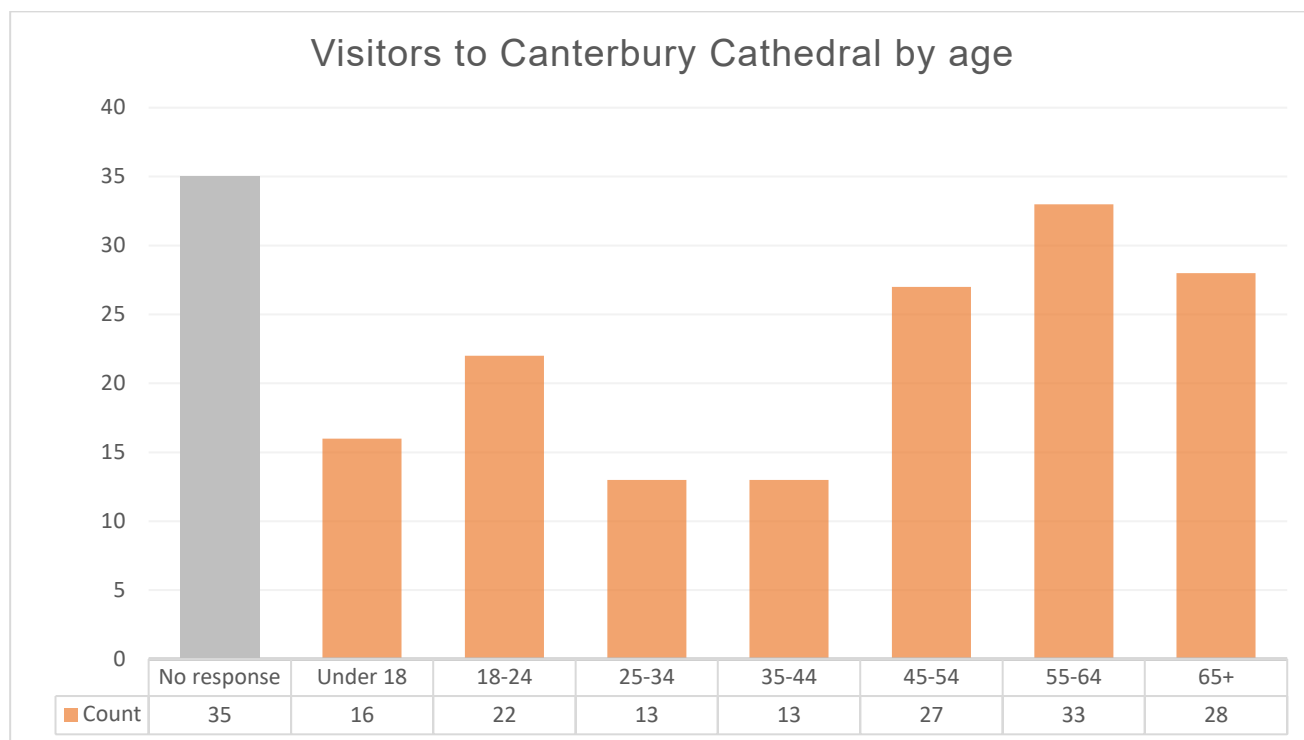


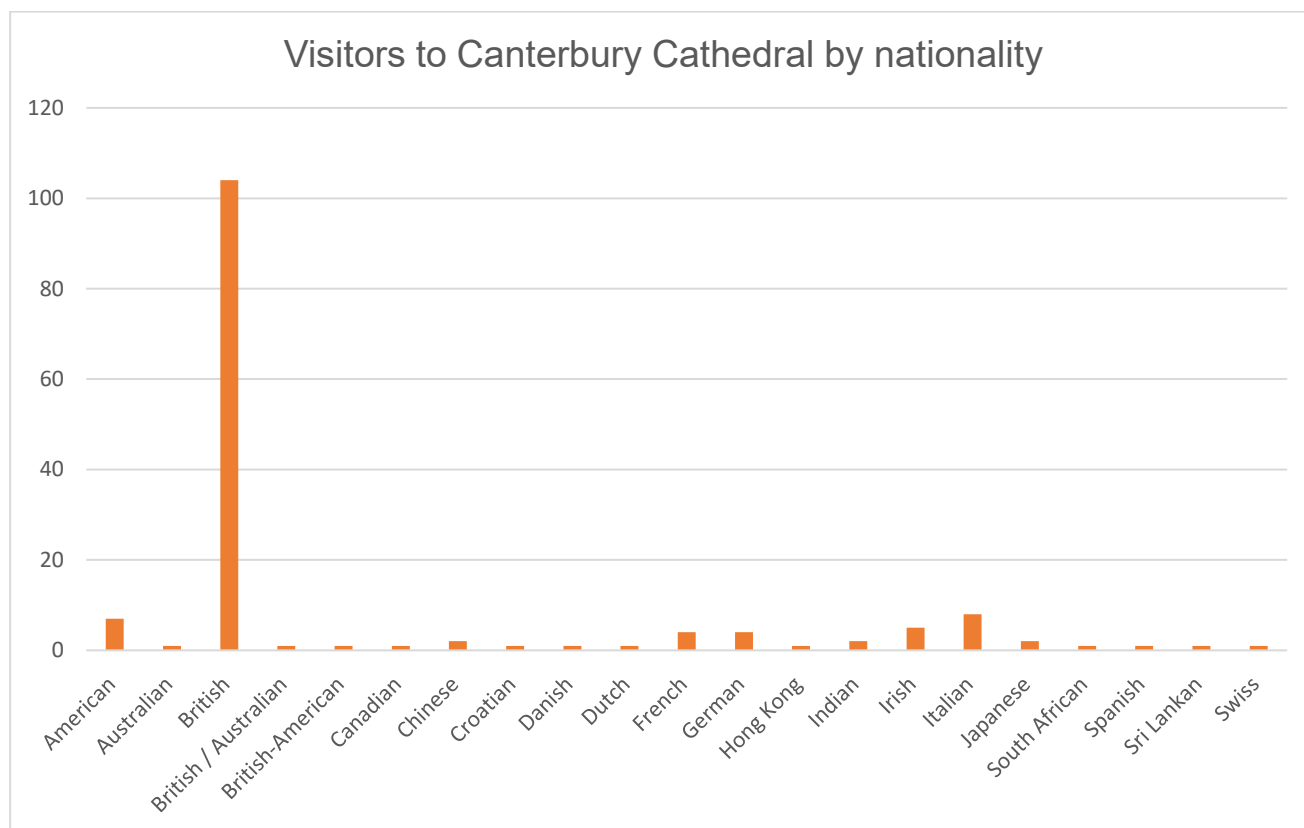
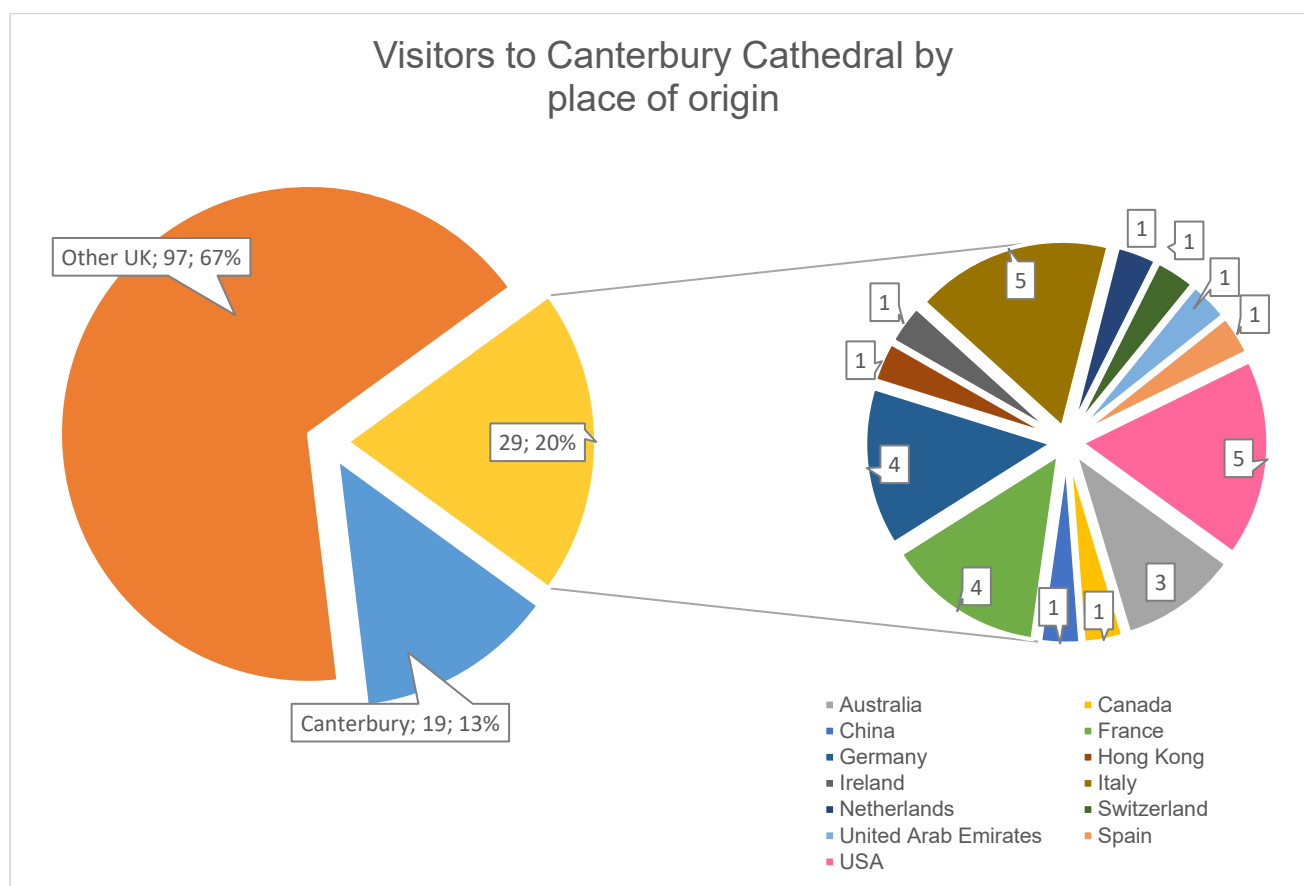
Note:

- A Yes/No option was not offered in the first 100 questionnaires. The above chart therefore represents the 87 later responses where this choice was on offer.

Appendix 2: Canterbury Cathedral demographic data overview

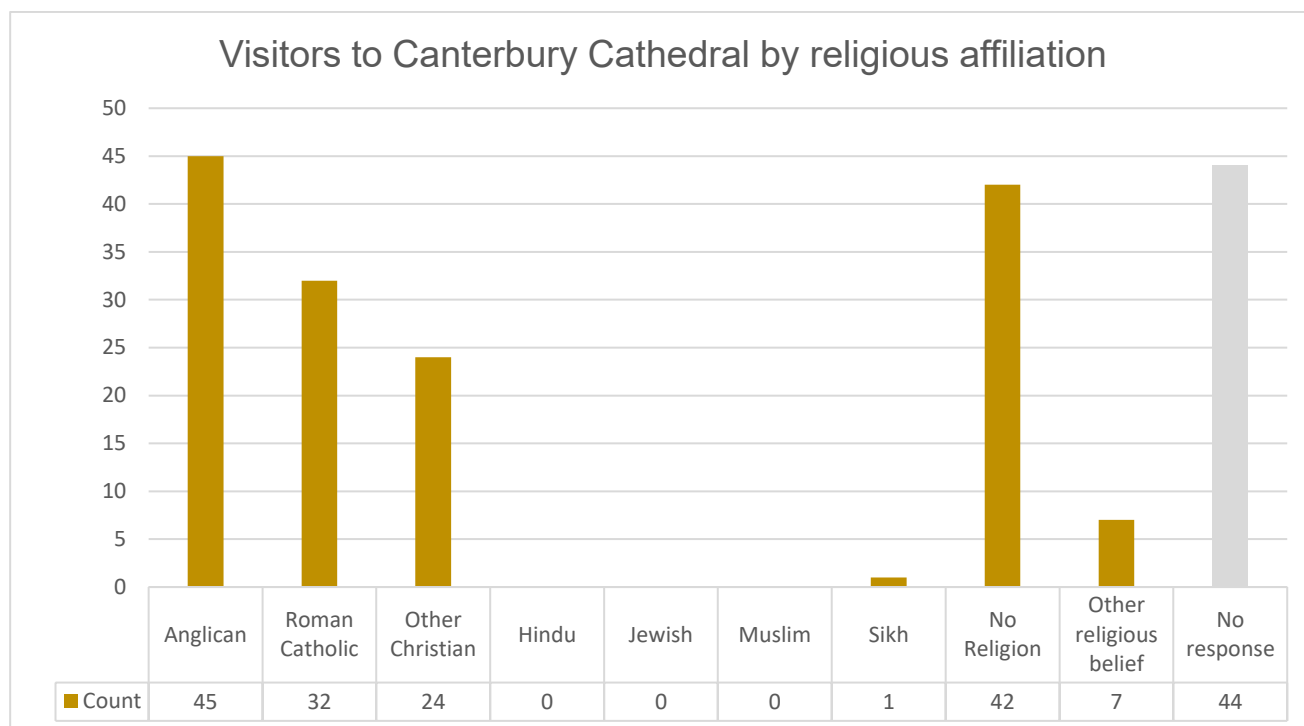
Total number of respondents: 187





Note:

- 'Asian-British' (1 response) 'English' (6 responses), 'Scottish' (2 responses) and 'Welsh' (1 response) amalgamated under 'British'.



Notes:

- This question allows respondents to choose more than one answer.
- The unusually high 'non-response' rate (34) suggests that the question (worded '*Please indicate any religious affiliation*') was ignored by many respondents who had no religious affiliation. The 'No Religion' option is therefore likely to be negatively skewed.
- Answers to 'Other Christian' were 'Baptist', 'Buddhist', 'C of E', 'Christian Science', 'Church of Ireland', 'Church of Scotland' (2), 'Methodist' (5), 'Protestant' (3), 'Protestant Scandinavian', 'Russian Orthodox', 'Salvation Army', 'Serbian Orthodox'. Five respondents indicated 'Other Christian', but did not elaborate.

