

ESSEX, S. & BRAYSHAY, M. (2018) Devon Tourism: the story of the county's economic leviathan, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 150, 177-222.

# Devon Tourism: The Story of the County's Economic Leviathan

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*Over the past 149 volumes of these Transactions, fewer than half a dozen papers have focused directly on tourism in Devon. Given its key role in shaping the county's history, landscape and infrastructure, and its contemporary social and economic character, such a dearth of studies is striking and contrasts with the burgeoning body of scholarly work on Devon tourism aired elsewhere. The aim of this paper is to offer a broad, benchmark review of the origins, historical growth and changing character, as well as the contemporary state and future prospects, of tourism in the county. The analysis demonstrates how the 'tourist footprint' has shifted from being scarcely detectable before the eighteenth century, to possessing many of the recognisably 'modern' components of the sector by the end of the nineteenth century, and then developing on an unprecedented scale after 1945. A constant theme throughout the discussion is the ability of the sector to adapt, transform and restructure in response to changing conditions. Tourism's hidden and 'lightweight' image belies its contemporary economic, social, cultural and environmental significance in the county. The challenges facing tourism in Devon at the start of the twenty-first century, such as the UK's changing relationship with Europe and the implications of technological and climate change, suggest that the form and character of tourism in Devon will continue to evolve and transform over the next one hundred and fifty years.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the Devonshire Association's establishment in 1862, the importance of tourism to the county's economy, society and environment has been fundamentally transformed. An activity enjoyed during past centuries in very specific locations and almost exclusively by the upper classes and wealthier sections of the middle classes, tourism is now a much more egalitarian and geographically ubiquitous phenomenon. Globally, tourism is the third largest industry, employing ten per cent of the world's workforce, and it continues to exhibit inexorable growth. Evidence of the prominent role played by tourism in Devon is unmistakable: the county ranks as one of the country's most popular destinations; it contributes directly around £1-2 billion each year to the county's economy; and, in some towns, employs up to about two-fifths of the population. However, in the 149 past volumes of these *Transactions*, fewer

than half a dozen papers have focused directly on tourism in Devon. Given its key role in shaping the county's history, landscape and infrastructure, and its contemporary social and economic character, such a dearth of studies is striking and contrasts with the burgeoning body of scholarly work on Devon tourism aired elsewhere.

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## **DEVON'S TOURISTS AND TOURISM BEFORE 1939**

Pinpointing when tourism began in Devon, and who participated, depends upon how the pursuit is defined. Setting aside the snobbish contemporary distinction often drawn between the *tourist* and the *traveller*, where the latter is regarded as superior to the former, *tourism* may be taken to mean the commercial organisation and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest, while a *tourist* is a sightseer, tripper or holidaymaker. Whether bourgeois or proletarian, the phenomenon could be argued to have begun properly, both in Devon and elsewhere in England, during the eighteenth century. By the 1750s, the first tangible responses to tourist demand became discernible in Devon's built environment, as well as in the local economy and society. Before then, the 'tourist footprint' was scarcely detectable, but some kinds of leisure visitors certainly came to the county. They simply made use of the existing infrastructure of facilities, which catered for anyone who undertook a journey in Devon.

### ***Medieval pilgrims: Devon's earliest tourists***

Since the 1970s, scholars have argued that 'heritage tourism' is the oldest manifestation of the activity (Newcomb, 1979). An original meaning of the word heritage was, in fact, the shared inheritance of religious faith. Thus, pilgrimage in the distant past to holy places in Devon may be regarded as a form of heritage tourism – undertaken by the faithful and pious to seek indulgences for sins, or pray for a cure for a malady. Although pilgrims trod the county's common highways, byways and tracks, and drew on the facilities of ordinary inns and taverns, before the Dissolution, some of Devon's larger monasteries provided guest accommodation in response to the needs of pilgrims and wayfarers. For example, the impressive fourteenth-century hall, built for visitors at the Cistercian Abbey of Buckfast, stood conveniently at an intersection of routes linking several sacred sites in Devon and beyond.

While it is not possible to determine with certainty the numerical scale or spatial pattern of medieval faith tourism in the Southwest, a few clues survive. Figure 1 plots the home origins of just six Devon pilgrims who affirmed to an inquiry ordered by Exeter's Bishop John Grandisson that they had experienced a miraculous cure following personal prayer, between March 1359 and September 1361, at the burial place of Richard Buvyle, former rector of Whitstone in Cornwall (Webb, 2000). The longest individual journey was undertaken by a pilgrim from Woodford (Plympton), but the average round trip was 51.6 miles (83 km). Of course, this minute sample captures pilgrimage only during a very brief period to a remote tomb of an obscure, uncanonised priest, whose veneration was not sanctioned by the Church. It also focuses merely on travellers, once ailing, who subsequently claimed to have recovered as a result of their visit. It does not therefore even represent the full picture of pilgrimage at one, unrepresentative, site. Nevertheless, the map suggests that medieval faith tourism in Devon might have involved much larger flows and had a wider geographical reach than is commonly acknowledged.

The county certainly possessed many revered and hallowed sites. The shrine of St Nectan at Hartland, cared for until the Dissolution by the neighbouring Augustinian monastery, and

that of St Rumon at Tavistock Abbey, were both highly venerated. Shrewdly, Tavistock's annual, three-day fair in August was timed to coincide with feast of the Abbey's patron saint (Finberg, 1969; Kelly, 2013). There were also pilgrims travelling through Devon, bound for nationally celebrated sacred places such as Glastonbury. Even lesser sites, like the chapel outside Launceston dedicated to the Virgin Mary, drew the faithful from across the Southwest. In the 1540s, John Leland called it a place of 'gre[a]t pilgrimage' (Pearse Chope, 1968). Others would head for Bodmin, to pray at St Petroc's shrine in the Augustinian Priory (Jankulak, 2000). Together with an important collection of spiritual possessions, including relics of several saints, miracles avowed at the tomb of Bishop John Lacey in Exeter Cathedral, who died in 1455, further reinforced the city's longstanding renown for pilgrimage. Wax prayer tokens, often representing body parts in need of a cure, appear to have been purchased by diseased or ailing pilgrims, who hung them around Lacey's shrine (Orme, 1986; Ford, web site). Medieval Exeter exhibited the trappings of a structured faith-tourism organisation, which yielded a revenue stream, and encouraged the development of a superstructure of ancillary amenities. Religious pilgrimage declined rapidly as a result of the sixteenth-century plunder of the Church which saw shrines and holy relics destroyed. Therefore, inasmuch as any kind of rudimentary organised tourism sector had hitherto existed in Devon, by the end of the Tudor era, relatively little remained.

### ***Observant wayfarers: secular tourists of the later-Tudor and Stuart period***

Although pilgrimage diminished, evidence of secular leisure journeys in Devon offers inklings that small numbers travelled in the county during the early modern era. Indeed, well before England's schism with Rome, when William of Worcester compiled a commonplace book to describe his journey in 1478 from Norfolk to Cornwall, he patently did so in the manner of an educated and observant tourist. Whilst in Exeter, William wrote that he lodged at the Bear Inn, on South Street; and when he reached Tavistock, he stayed in the monastery's guest room. He was Devon's first ordinary, private visitor to leave a record not only of his itinerary, but also what he saw and what was said about the county by local inhabitants (Worth, 1886; Brayshay, 1996; Orme, 2012).

The accounts of personal travels between 1539 and 1545 written by the Tudor courtier and scholar, John Leland, are well known. Quarried by historians as a source of information about sixteenth-century England, in the context of his visits to the Westcountry, Leland had 'developed a taste for what may best be described as sight-seeing' (Chandler, 1996). Indeed, had Leland's manuscripts been published in his lifetime, they may well have become an early tourist guidebook and thereby stimulated more growth in the appetite for first-hand experience of England's local geographies; even so, a few others did follow his example (Chandler, 1993; Brayshay, 1996; Gray, 2000). Unlike the diverse social mix of visitors to Devon's sacred places before the Reformation, the later secular 'observant travellers' tended usually to comprise only individuals possessing sufficient wealth and time to indulge in scholarly sight-seeing, both within England and, already, across Europe. Their accounts blend antiquarian information with descriptions of prominent landscape features, castles, mansions and the estates of the wealthy. Elite visitors expected, in return for a gratuity, to be shown by servants the interiors of the houses of Devon's premier families. Moreover, there is no doubt that the wealthiest classes made reciprocal leisure visits to the homes of their counterparts to view neighbours' properties, enjoy entertainments and participate in pastimes such as riding, hawking and hunting (Tinniswood, 1998). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous cheap itineraries – guides to highway routes – were published. Though catering for a broad range of travellers, the availability of such material reflects an increasing demand for information of use to wayfarers, both English and foreign, otherwise unfamiliar with the places in which they journeyed (Brayshay, 2014).

By the late-sixteenth century, the worthy and learned tone of the texts of earlier visitors was being replaced by travelogues that represent the cusp of a transition to less-cerebral and often more humorous descriptions. In 1590, Richard Ferris, a messenger of royal Chamber, published an account of his perilous journey, with two companions, in a wherry boat (with sail and oars) from London's Tower Wharf, around England's coasts, to Bristol. In south Devon, Ferris landed at Seaton, Teignmouth, Dartmouth, Salcombe and Plymouth before going around Cornwall, to north Devon, where he described Hartland, Clovelly and Ilfracombe (Ferris, 1590). In fact, however, few such accounts were intended for publication; instead, they were personal records made for private recollection. An example is the 1635 diary of Lieutenant Hammond. Encountering Bradninch, for instance, Hammond wrote that the town was 'so poore, & ancient, as she hath quite lost all breeding, & good manners, for I could not passe here w[i]thout a Volley of Female Gun-shot, which made me hasten away from her as fast as I could' (Pearse Chope, 1968).

On the other hand, some writers sought to profit from written accounts of their travel experiences. In 1649, the Thames waterman, poet and pamphleteer, John Taylor, sought subscribers for the publication of a description of his 600-mile round trip by road from London to west Cornwall. On 5 July, Taylor walked seven miles to reach Barnstaple, which he said was 'a very fine, sweete Towne, so cleane and neate that, in the worse of weather, a man may walke the streets and never foule shooe or boote'. By 19 July, Taylor arrived in Plymouth, but 'stayd not two houres, the Towne was too full of suspitions to hold me', though he nevertheless enjoyed a drink and a 'smoake' with two stationers whom he met before walking four miles to Plympton (Taylor, 1649). The journals of Celia Fiennes offer yet more visceral responses to the places and people she encountered on her lengthy travels. Who could forget Celia's pithy verdict on Ashburton in 1698: condemned as 'a poor little town', where 'bad was the best inn' (Morris, 1984). Unlike many others, Daniel Defoe systematically collected facts during his tour of Britain, including Devon, undertaken between the 1680s and early-1700s. From the beginning, Defoe intended publishing his findings as a book and the tome appears to have further encouraged the popularity of educational leisure travel (Pearse Chope, 1968; Rodgers, 1971).

Despite the decline of pilgrimage, searches for cures for afflictions continued in Devon long after the Reformation in the form of visits to the county's numerous holy wells and springs (Brown, 1957, 1958, 1959). Indeed, belief in the therapeutic properties of certain mineral waters gave rise, by the later-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to a more profane form of health tourism in England's fashionable watering places, including Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Malvern and Halifax. Scattered evidence confirms that Devon's wealthiest personages participated. For example, in 1648, the fifth Earl of Bath left Tawstock to visit the spa at Bath (Gray, 1996). Although Devon lacked its own fashionable spa town, by the 1690s, the therapeutic benefits of the county's benign climate and the efficacious properties of its sea waters were understood (Floyer, 1697). Refined visitors began to bathe directly in the sea, and enjoy the health benefits of the fresh air, in certain Devon coastal towns. Exploitation of the potential of south Devon for the creation of seaside resorts thus began to occur.

Those owning their own horses and carriage began to journey from outside the county but, as early as 1655, a public London to Exeter stage-coach service also existed (some years before turnpike highway maintenance had commenced anywhere in England). By 1658, connecting onwards services to Plymouth were offered. In 1681, four partners began operating thrice-weekly coaches to Exeter. The journey took four days in summer, and six days in winter. Heavy luggage was often despatched separately by the waggons of common carriers (Delaune, 1681; Gerhold, 2005). It was thus feasible, for those lacking private transport, but nevertheless able to afford the fares and endure the discomfort of long-distance travel by public coach, to access south Devon. Moreover, the gradual improvements to key

highways by the mid-1750s, as they came under the management of turnpike trusts, and the development of robust steel-sprung vehicles, combined to reduce journey times by half, and offered greater passenger comfort. Though Devon was geographically remote, access for seasonal visitors, dependent upon public transport, was therefore much enhanced.

Paradoxically, however, for decades thereafter, the county's relative isolation was viewed as an advantage: offering exclusivity and an absence of vulgar, catch-penny amusements that stained the reputation of some resorts located closer to the metropolis (Travis, 1993).

### ***Genteel visitors: the Georgian expansion of health tourism and recreation***

Changes in the built environment of Devon's seaside towns began to herald the commencement of modern tourism. After visiting Exmouth in September 1750, Richard Pococke noted that, although the town was still 'chiefly inhabited by fishermen', it was also already 'a place to which the people of Exeter much resort for diversion and bathing in the sea'. In response to its growing profile as a resort, the town had attracted 'some persons of condition ... to live at the place, which they are improving by a gravel walk to the river, that is to be planted' (Cartwright, 1888). Andrew Brice (1759) similarly reported that Teignmouth had 'begun to be beautify'd w[i]th diverse handsome and delightful buildings, the Air being very wholesome here, espec[ially] in the Summer Season; wherefore 'tis visited both for Health and Recreation'.

Amongst the earliest to publish a medical treatise on sea-water bathing was Dr Thomas Reid. He gave meticulous recommendations for maximising its curative effects (Reid, 1795). The lengthy 1789 visit to Weymouth by the recuperating King George III, when he regularly bathed in the sea, undoubtedly amplified the growing popularity of the practice and further stimulated demand for bathing machines on many suitable south-coast beaches, including those of Devon (Travis, 1993; Shaw, Greenwood and Williams, 1999). Added to the cachet of other visits by members of the royal family to Sidmouth, Exmouth, Dawlish, Teignmouth and Torquay (Feltham, 1810), the basis for consciously marketed tourism existed. Demand appears to have surged; thus, for example, there were soon at least 16 bathing machines on Teignmouth's beach (Bulley, 1956; Andrews and Kearns, 2005).

In a newspaper advertisement placed by a Sidmouth surgeon in 1791, attention was drawn to premises lately erected 'for warm sea-bathing and the cold shower bath' (*Exeter Flying Post*, 9 June 1791). In May 1795, the Reverend John Swete, suffering 'an unremitting attack of rheumatism', recorded his six week sojourn in Dawlish, 'to try what good effects a change of air, and Sea-bathing might produce on myself' (Gray and Rowe, 1998). Swete commented on the twelve handsome new houses erected on the Strand, 'well calculated for the temporary residence of genteel families'. Indeed, Richard Polwhele noted that 'the houses of every description are good, from the mansion-house to the neat and picturesque cottage; the town is clean and wholesome ... and the walks and rides around it, are beautiful and romantic' (Polwhele, 1793). Local estate owners generally tended to release, in piecemeal fashion, parcels of land on the edges of resorts for sale on leasehold terms, and developers erected elegant villas or terraces as a means of expanding the available housing stock and meeting rising demand.

Exmouth offered comparable accommodation and amenities. By 1800, warm sea-water bathing premises had been erected (*Exeter Flying Post*, 16 January 1800). Soon after, a rival 'warm and cold' marble sea-water bathing suite was advertised. Located in a 'commodious house', the second establishment also offered board and lodging for 'three or four ladies or gentlemen' (*Exeter Flying Post*, 30 July 1801). Sea-water bathing premises existed in Teignmouth and Seaton by 1814; however, Ilfracombe's Tunnel Beaches Bath House was not built until 1836 (*Western Luminary*, 9 August 1814; Bates, 2007). During the 1790s, a range of other amenities were developed in south-coast resorts. By 1795, 'every elegance, every

luxury, every amusement' could be found in Sidmouth, 'iced creams, milliners shops, cards, billiards, plays' and circulating libraries all existed (Gray and Rowe, 1998). The provision of public assembly rooms came to be expected by cultured visitors. Fine premises erected on Teignmouth's sea front in 1796 comprised not only a dancehall for up to 100 couples, but also a billiards room and reading room (Croydon, 1818). Grand balls were specifically aimed at the 'nobility and gentry', both local and those visiting the resort (*Exeter Flying Post*, 10 January 1805). Theatres were also erected in the late-Georgian period. Sidmouth's was built by 1791 and Exmouth's was operating in 1795 (Travis, 1993). Teignmouth's first theatre opened in 1802 and another two were erected in 1821 and 1847 (Bulley, 1956). Warfare across Europe in the wake of the French Revolution intensified interest amongst stylish travellers in the options available for holidaying in England (Fraser, 1794). The 'staycation' thus dates back to the reign of George III.

The well-favoured and more readily accessible coastal towns of south Devon had been well-developed for genteel tourists well before resorts in north Devon began visibly to flourish. Nevertheless, the comparable potential of the north for seaside tourism was recognised as early as 1789 when John Swete found Lynmouth's 'beach ... very tolerable for bathing, seemingly much superior to Ilfordcoombe' and, if a 'better Inn, and even lodging houses were built on the plain' he knew 'no place more likely to be resorted to during the summer months, for none in Britain ... can exceed it in beauty and magnificence of its environs' (Gray and Rowe, 2000).

It is misleading to characterise Georgian tourists simply as languid seaside holidaymakers. As well as their well-known taste for visiting the mansions and parks of the aristocracy, a growing interest in exploring natural history, archaeology and landscape already drew visitors to Devon's wilder inland scenery. Well-read tourists were steeped in the Romantic and Picturesque ideas of the era (Wilmot, 1996). The rugged magnificence of north Devon and Exmoor was favoured by the Romantic poets, whose explorations prompted others to follow; and some adventurous visitors sought out Dartmoor's Wistman's Wood, Crockern Tor and Postbridge (Leonard, 1956-1958; Travis, 1995). Picturesque ruins of the county's abbeys and castles, as well as viewpoints from which to take in the prospect of a graceful country house and its grounds, were also readily accessible by hired post-chaise or on horseback from coastal watering places. The roots of the appetite for the kind of heritage tourism that would be recognisable today may thus be traced back more than two centuries.

For those drawn neither to geotourism or landscape aesthetics, energetic visitors engaged in stag and fox hunting and, certainly by the 1750s, there were gatherings at horse-racing events on the course at Haldon (Brice, 1759). It may indeed be argued that – albeit on a modest scale – 'event tourism' also began in the Georgian era.

### ***Expansion and diversification: early nineteenth-century tourism***

The nineteenth-century acceleration of the development of a modern commercial tourism industry in Devon is impressive. A range of pastimes and amenities was provided to cater for the broadening tastes and the changing demands and fashions that arose. As an increasingly important sector of the county's economy, since 1800, tourism has exhibited a remarkable capability for adaptation and innovation. It rapidly emerged to become one of Devon's greatest economic successes, eventually eclipsing the revenue-generating capacity of all other commercial activities and providing employment and a livelihood for a significant proportion of the resident population.

Throughout the 1800s, and well into the twentieth century, Devon's healthy mild climate and the therapeutic benefit of sea-water bathing remained mainstays of the county's attractiveness to tourists. Assessments made in 1841, by Dr Augustus Granville, of all the spas and the principal sea-bathing places of England, showed Devon's south-coast resorts to

be distinctively advantageous (Granville, 1841). The geographically more specific and glowing endorsements of Dr Thomas Shapter regarding the healthiness of the county's watering places, including Dawlish, Exmouth, Teignmouth, Sidmouth and Torquay, exerted an equally profound influence during the entire Victorian era (Shapter, 1842). Indeed, an Edwardian-period guide book for Sidmouth continued to highlight the town's credentials as a health resort offering one of 'the finest public sea-water bathing establishments and social clubs' in the country (Mate, 1907; Figure 2).

Victorian Devon strongly promoted itself as a place for the well-bred and civilised class of holidaymaker. As in the eighteenth century, but now perhaps in larger numbers, Anglican clergymen and their families were an element in the seasonal expansion of population at Devon's resorts (Jones, 2018). By the 1860s, many relatively low-status salaried workers enjoyed up to a fortnight's paid holiday, enabling them to travel as far as Devon and swell the ranks of middle-class visitors (Walton, 1983). However, even earlier in the nineteenth century, there were indications of a larger diversification of the tourist market. At first, because the vast majority of the population did not enjoy paid holidays, working-class day trippers could visit only on Sundays and therefore travelled short distances. Nonetheless, there was clearly a sizeable 'Sabbath influx' and clashes of cultural expectations and behaviour occurred. For example, some of the weekend day-trippers from Plymouth, who went by hire-boat or the cheap public ferry across to Mount Edgcumbe Park, were admonished for their bad conduct by Samuel Rowe, outraged by 'the ingratitude of those persons who abuse the noble proprietor's kindness, in permitting his grounds (to be open to the public), by wantonly injuring the trees and shrubs ... and by other unbecoming behaviour' (Rowe, 1821). Friction of this kind mounted when, in due course, railways were built that connected Devon with an expanding communications network, and new employment laws were enacted that enabled unprecedented floods of working-class visitors both the means and the time to access the county's tourist attractions.

### ***The Victorian transport revolution: Devon's tourism boom***

Devon's tourist industry was indeed affected profoundly by the advent of rail transport. Before the South Devon Railway reached Exeter on 1 May 1844, the fastest public coach service from London still took 16½ hours to complete the journey. By train, it could be accomplished in 4½ hours. An inside seat in an ordinary stage-coach cost, on average, £2 12s. 6d. Fares for a seat inside the faster mail-coaches were £4 14s. 6d. By contrast, second-class rail tickets for ordinary services cost £1 5s. First-class tickets cost another 10s. Both kinds of passengers paid an extra 5s. to travel by express service (Travis, 1993). In 1845, the South Devon company sought to extend its line to Plymouth so as to offer 'direct communication' with the 'favourite watering places on the south coast of Devon' and, in 1846, the section to Dawlish and Teignmouth opened (*Exeter Flying Post*, 4 June 1846). By May 1848, the line had been built to a temporary terminus at Laira near Plymouth and, within a year, it was extended to Millbay. The town was 'not slow to recognise the potential for attracting visitors' and rapidly marketed itself as a tourist and health resort (Essex, 1991). Meanwhile, the river Exe ferrymen had started to offer a connection from Starcross station to Exmouth. The five-mile branch line for passengers from Newton Abbot to Torquay opened in December 1848 (Travis, 1993). The pattern and dates of construction of the county's rail links to the seaside are summarised in Figure 3. The map indicates the dates when stretches of original broad-gauge track were converted to standard gauge, which together with more powerful locomotives, made feasible by the 1890s some longer-distance 'through services' for short-stay tourists from the Midlands and the North West (Travis, 1993).

The recollections of the Reverend Treasurer Hawker who, in his lifetime, experienced the end of the long-distance stage-coach era and the revolution in communications wrought by

the railways, emphasise also the often-neglected point that the establishment of new train stations in Devon's towns actually stimulated a noticeable increase in *local* horse-drawn transport services to link with many more places spread across the entire county (Hawker, 1885). It is therefore a mistake to overstate the existence of a simple binary correlation between the prosperity of any particular tourist destination and the timing of the arrival of its own railway link. The growth and fortunes of one resort over another usually involved a complex array of factors. Nevertheless, it is the case that the London and South Western Railway line from London Waterloo reached East Devon only in the 1860s and 1870s.

The North Devon Railway Company gradually linked Exeter with Barnstaple between 1851 and 1854, and extended to Bideford a year later. By 1873, the Devon and Somerset Railway Company had built a line from Taunton to Barnstaple and the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe railway was opened in 1874. After many years when no railway connection existed, Ilfracombe was effectively linked via two routes, although that from Taunton came only to Barnstaple (Travis, 1993). However, the growth of the resort had begun well before railways arrived. By 1822, Ilfracombe was a port of call for steamships connecting Bristol with Cork and, soon after, as a guidebook published by John Evans in 1824 indicates, there were regular packet services and excursions linking Ilfracombe with Swansea, Newport and Weston-Super-Mare. Between the 1820s and 1840s, newly established turnpike trusts improved the key arterial highways of North Devon, which made travel by coach easier than it had been before (Evans, 1824; Armstrong and Williams, 2007; Bates, 2007).

Despite the prospect of substantial extra income, the South Devon Railway Company eschewed the organisation of special trains for day trippers from Exeter to the south-coast resorts. There was a fear of conflict between the long-stay middle-class holidaymakers and working-class hoards. However, the company did agree occasionally to charter trains. In any case, working-class day trippers from the local area boarded scheduled services and flooded into the nearest coastal resorts on Sundays. Their exuberance, drunkenness and general lack of decorum shocked refined holidaymakers. In 1871, Francis Kilvert recorded his astonishment at the sight of a crowd of day-trippers arriving in Seaton and hurtling towards the beach. Among them were boisterous young females who removed their shoes, stockings and drawers and waded into the sea with their skirts hoisted up, naked from the waist down. Yet Kilvert was seemingly oblivious to the hypocrisy of his own brazen nude swims from the attended bathing machines on the same beach (Plomer, 1960). Although it seems that middle-class men, bathing naked, were acceptable and commonplace in many Devon resorts, William Miller, a tourist in Torquay, was nonetheless shocked in August 1887 when 'a number of working men ... whisked off their clothes and ran like savages to the sea' (Travis, 1993). Indeed, because of the continuing tendency of many men to swim without a bathing costume, several Devon resorts reserved specific coves exclusively either for men or for women. Blythe's Cove, under the cliffs of Hillsborough, about a mile from the centre of Ilfracombe, was emphatically for gentlemen only (Ward & Lock, 1898). A regulation prohibiting bathing anywhere ('with or without drawers') that was visible from Torquay's principal promenade was enforced in a byelaw of 1887, and men were excluded from bathing within 50 yards of the ladies' bathing machines in 1899 (Essex, 2012).

In 1871, new legislation extended statutory entitlement for all employees to extra holidays on Easter Monday, Whit Monday, the first Monday in August, and Boxing Day. Moreover, the 1850 law that had limited overall weekly working hours in textile factories, and entitled employees to free Saturday afternoons, was extended in 1878 to all trades (34 & 35 Vict. c. 17, *Bank Holidays Act*, 1871; 41 & 42 Vict. c. 16, *Factory and Workshop Act*, 1878). Bank holidays in spring and summer, plus free Saturday afternoons, added to the times when the working classes could enjoy recreational pursuits in Devon. Although it should be noted that the universal statutory grant of a full week's paid holiday did not exist until legislation was



enacted in 1938, the new Victorian entitlements radically transformed the social tone of tourism, even in the county's relatively remote resorts (1 & 2 Geo. VI, c. 70, *Holidays with Pay Act*, 1938; Cunningham, 1980).

As tourist numbers increased, prominent entrepreneurial landowners and businessmen began to recognise the potential to develop very large areas of land that they either owned or could acquire, lying adjacent to the existing built-up centres of coastal towns already renowned as fashionable holiday destinations. The rapid enlargement of Torquay thus depended critically on the role played by the Palk and Cary families. In the nineteenth century, substantial leasehold building plots were made available to the east and west of the resort for the erection of hotels and elegant villas. Their completion underpinned Torquay's astonishing increase in population from 1,639 in 1801 to 21,657 in 1871, and solidified the town's reputation as Devon's 'Queen of Watering-places' (Essex, 2012). In North Devon, by contrast, expansion until the 1860s had occurred as a result of smaller scale, piecemeal enterprise but, when a consortium of local businessmen formed the Ilfracombe Joint Stock Land and Investment Company, it made possible the development Torr's Parks, a substantial area lying adjacent to the town. At the same time, another group of investors set up the Ilfracombe Hotel and Esplanade Company, which developed the area behind Wildersmouth Beach with the resplendent new hotel as its centrepiece (Bates, 2007; Figure 4).

### ***Devon's recreation and tourism offer: attractions and activities before 1939***

Steadily improved accessibility by railway and the multiplication of connections from stations by horse-drawn conveyances, many as scheduled services, but also a great number of special excursions, enabled the further opening up, during the nineteenth century, of the whole of Devon to tourism. Recognising a potentially growing demand, Henry Besley published his first *Route Book of Devon* in 1845, and produced a much-extended and enhanced edition in 1877. Besley claimed to provide 'the tourist and the stranger' with a pocket-sized guide to 'interesting localities': some within reach of Exeter or Plymouth 'within the limits of twelve or fourteen hours'; some accessible as day trips by railway; and many to other 'nodes' in Devon, from which local itineraries were recommended (Besley, 1877). Spatial penetration of the entire county inevitably made possible, and encouraged, the expansion of participation in a wider range of tourist activities.

Handbooks such as Gosse's *A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coasts* had, by the 1850s, brought natural history rambles to the notice of countless Devon visitors (Gosse, 1853). Indeed, by the end of the century, so many tourists were tempted to search for the natural riches of the county's littoral zones that rock pools were ransacked: the natural world was already being pillaged.

Literary tourism also began in Victorian Devon. Visitors were drawn to locations incorporated as settings in popular literature. Most notably, Blackmore's 1869 book, *Lorna Doone*, boosted tourism to Exmoor and when, in 1893, an edition complete with maps and lavish illustrations was issued, some locations came under particular visitor pressure (Blackmore, 1869). Perhaps the most extreme case of fictional literature influencing Devon tourism occurred when Charles Kingsley's novel, *Westward Ho!*, partly set in Bideford, led in 1863 to the ambitious founding of an entirely new coastal resort village, given the same name as the book's title, on Sir James Clark's land near Northam Burrows (Kingsley, 1854). Such trends may be seen as foreshadowing the film and TV-induced tourism phenomenon common in today's Westcountry.

Organised sports became firmly embedded in Devon tourism. Traditional activities for men, including yachting, cricket, hunting and shooting, continued to flourish. Devon's first cricket club was founded in Teignmouth in 1824 (Bulley, 1956). Regular horse-race meetings in the nineteenth century became fixtures in the county calendar and stimulated periodic

boosts in tourist numbers. The oldest Devon horse-racing course at Haldon was brought under Jockey Club rules and re-badged as Exeter Race Course. In west Devon, a horse-race meeting was held at Whitchurch Down, near Tavistock, in July 1810. Another seems to have been staged in 1827 at Crabtree, near Plymouth. However, in 1828, the Earl of Morley laid out a 12-furlong (2.4km) flat, oval track on reclaimed land by the Plym, known as Chelson Meadow, on his Saltram estate (Parks Agency, 2007). A grandstand was later erected to accommodate growing attendances and, notwithstanding some interruptions, racing events were staged there until 1930. A new race course at Newton Abbot was established in 1866, but the course near Buckfastleigh, at Wallford Down, appears to date back to the mid-1850s, though meetings had moved by 1883 to a new course on the Dean Marshes. By the twentieth century, its two-day annual August meetings attracted crowds of over 10,000 spectators (Newton Abbot Race Course, 2016).

Exclusive sailing clubs had flourished in early Victorian Devon but, by the late-nineteenth century, their popular appeal significantly widened. Thus, while Starcross Sailing Club was founded in 1772, and held its first regatta in August 1775, in the later-1800s, the railway was bringing many more spectators from further afield. Indeed, regattas in Devon came to be seen as the crowning events of the summer season. The first use of the term Royal Regatta was for the event held in Torbay on 24 August 1813. Competitor and spectator numbers rose sharply during the second half of the century as the prestige of the prizes and the range of competitions, open separately to ‘gentlemen’ and ‘others’, made it not only a foremost sailing event within Devon, but also a fixture that was widely known well beyond the county (Torbay Royal Regatta, web site).

The popularity of cycling in Devon began as early as the 1870s, but later improvements in bicycle design and the introduction of pneumatic tyres had led to even more significant growth by the 1890s, when ‘the bicycle heralded a new era of personal freedom for many tourists’ (Travis, 1993). Facilities for lawn tennis and golf were offered in several of Devon’s resorts. Exmouth formed a tennis club, which held a four-day tournament in 1881 (*Exeter Flying Post*, 17 August 1881). The golf club at Westward Ho! was formed in 1864 and held its first open tournament two years later. A ladies tournament was then staged in 1868 (Royal North Devon Golf Club, 1964). Many swimming clubs were founded and the largest of them staged annual galas in Devon’s resorts. The Port of Plymouth Swimming Club was formed in 1862 and the Devonport Royal Swimming Association came into being a year later. The latter’s annual gala, at Mount Wise, regularly attracted large crowds of visitors and locals, sometimes as many as 5,000, and many spectators also attended both water-polo matches and the annual competitive swimming race across the estuary from Mount Wise to Cremyll (Devonport Royal Swimming Association, web page). Dawlish and Ilfracombe each boasted flourishing swimming clubs; indeed, the Ilfracombe Hotel Baths were among the best in the country and hosted a summer swimming gala, which was extensively advertised and drew large crowds (*North Devon Journal*, 21 July 1881).

Though considered by some in Devon to be places that attracted vulgar amusements, seaside piers were erected at Teignmouth (1867); Westward Ho! (1873); Paignton (1879); Plymouth (1884); and Torquay (1895) (The National Piers Society web site; Adamson, 1977). Piers provided safe and convenient landing stages for coastal pleasure steamers, though simple jetties sufficed elsewhere. For example, from Seaton, there were ‘well-appointed steamers’ offering trips along the coast in the summer months to Budleigh Salterton, Exmouth, Torquay, Lyme Regis, West Bay and Weymouth (Ward & Lock, c.1920). Minstrels frequently visited seaside resorts and performed on the piers, or promenades, or on beaches. Troupes of white-faced pierrots or black-faced minstrels are known to have regularly entertained Devon tourists in summer with their repertoire of jaunty,

popular songs (Joint, 2010, online). Portable, highly decorated Punch and Judy booths were also common on many Devon beaches by the later 1800s.

It is clear that, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century, all the essential elements of Devon's modern tourism industry had come into being: hotels; boarding houses; villas and cottages rented out as holiday homes or for seasonal tenancy; transportation for excursions and sightseeing trips; well-appointed facilities and leisure amenities in the coastal resorts, as well as in some touring centres in the interior of the county; all supported by comprehensive promotion and targeted place marketing (Figure 5). The huge and growing flow of nineteenth and early-twentieth century publications – which advertised accommodation of all kinds, comprehensively listed attractions to suit all tastes, and described the delights that Devon offered to visitors – represents a clear indication of the escalating scale of Devon tourism and its importance to the local economy.

The early twentieth century, especially the interwar years, saw the first manifestations of mass tourism and, even though Devon resorts still attempted to position themselves as genteel and exclusive, the explosion in numbers suggests that holidaymakers of all classes were arriving in the county. Soon to be boosted by new legal requirements upon employers to provide one week's paid holiday annually, by the 1930s, Torquay received over 150,000 visitors per annum. While all Devon's seaside resorts experienced their hey-day, the county's holiday towns mostly retained their stylish appearance, encapsulated in the images of the advertising posters of the Great Western Railway (Great Western Railway, 1923; Essex, 2012).

The advent of motor coaches, as well as the beginning of private car ownership further enhanced the potential access and attractiveness of Devon as a tourist destination. Fleets of char-à-bancs and, later, more comfortable enclosed motor coaches, were acquired by transportation entrepreneurs to take groups of tourists to remoter places of interest within the county with an ease and flexibility unimagined in the horse-drawn era (Figure 6). Holidaymakers were also by now travelling into Devon by coach. A consortium of motor-coach operators in the Midlands and Southern England established 'Associated Motorways' in 1934 to co-ordinate the operation of their long-distance services, including those to holiday destinations (Healey, 2002). The popularity of touring holidays by coach also took off (Brayshay, 2006). Some operators offered extensive package tours of Devon and the Southwest, which visited localities across the region. For example, in 1939, from mid-April to mid-September, Midland Red ran six-day coach cruises from Birmingham to Devon and Cornwall, costing eight guineas, and Devon and Somerset, for £7-10s (Figure 7). The latter fare included not only the usual first-class full-board hotel accommodation and all gratuities, but also a steamer trip on the River Dart. Each tour had its own souvenir itinerary booklet, with short pen-portraits of the main towns *en route*. The booklets evoke nostalgia for a past golden era; few holidaymakers who travelled by those Midland Red coaches in 1939 could have imagined the far-reaching changes that lay ahead.

## **DEVON'S TOURISTS AND TOURISM SINCE 1939: THE CREATION OF AN ECONOMIC LEVIATHAN**

Notwithstanding sustained growth in both the volume of tourism in Devon, and the dispersal of tourists across the county's landscapes during the period before the Second World War, an immense expansion of the county's holiday industry has since occurred (Shaw, Greenwood and Williams, 1999). Moreover, there have been radical changes in the character of visitor attractions as well as in the magnitude of associated economic, social and environmental effects. Three main factors have fuelled the modern transformation of Devon's tourism sector and laid the foundations of an activity that is now one of the county's foremost economic leviathans.

First, there has been a full democratisation of holiday entitlement by means of legislation affecting all employed people in Britain. Traditionally a privilege very largely confined to the wealthier classes, limited statutory extensions of paid leisure time for the working classes began, as previously noted, with the 1871 Bank Holidays Act. However, the major turning point occurred in July 1938, when the Holidays with Pay Act was passed. Together with subsequent legislation, that extended paid-holiday rights, and later, in some occupations, the introduction of ‘flexi-time’, these allowances properly heralded the era of ‘mass-market tourism’. Although fanciful 1960s predictions of a new ‘leisure society’ – released from the toil of long working hours by mechanisation, automation and computerisation – have never materialised, from 1939 onwards, legal holiday entitlement, massively enhanced the potential for growth in Devon’s tourism.

Second, increasing affluence and rising disposable incomes stimulated tourism demand for both long-stay and short-break holidays in Devon. Since the 1960s, however, there has been immense and growing competition for a share of national spending on leisure. The county’s tourism businesses have battled against the attractions of overseas package holidays, access to long-haul destinations, a growing diversity of domestic urban and rural destinations, and many other forms of leisure and household expenditure. In addition, periodic and unexpected crises have disastrously disrupted visitor demand in the county. Short-term economic recessions, acts of terrorism, and other local emergencies, such as the outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth disease in 2001, have caused the sector temporarily to stall. Indeed, the government’s ban on the use of public rights of way or open access land as a means of controlling the spread of Foot-and-Mouth exerted a ‘catastrophic’ effect on tourism and associated businesses (Mercer, 2002). There was a realisation that tourism was now as important, if not more so, than agriculture and that strategies to deal with such outbreaks needed to be more cognisant of potential collateral effects. Rural accommodation businesses were as badly hit as farming, and many workers suffered redundancy or reduced hours. Furthermore, long after the outbreak was over, tourists were very slow to return to previously affected areas (Centre for Rural Research, 2001; Rodway-Dyer and Shaw, 2005). Recovery of tourism in Devon’s countryside from September 2001 onwards thus proved to be painful and very slow.

Nevertheless, in general, Devon tourism has shown resilience and an extraordinary ability to weather fluctuations in demand. Tourism businesses have been ingenious in adapting their product to meet new and unexpected circumstances, and to prosper over the longer-term. Indeed, paradoxically, some disruptions have proved beneficial. Thus, the economic recession, beginning in 2007, led to a national boom in ‘staycations’, in a manner not seen since the later Georgian period when the phenomenon (though not the nomenclature) previously occurred; Devon tourism was a key beneficiary.

Third, the realisation of the potential created by increased leisure time and greater disposable incomes has been made possible by the greater mobility of the population. Indeed, even in the earlier twentieth century, as already indicated, tourists were becoming less dependent upon the railways for travel to Devon, and were not tied to seaside resorts for their holiday experiences. However, with the phenomenal rise in private motor-car ownership during the 1950s and 1960s, together with the development of Britain’s motorway network, improved access into Devon and, especially, to new destinations beyond her resorts, opened the county to additional tourist influxes. New forms of tourist accommodation blossomed, such as camping and caravanning, but these often produced significant negative aesthetic effects in both seaside and inland localities. The building of the M5, and improvements made to the A38 and A30 highways, reduced travel times to and within Devon. For some towns and villages, located remotely from these enhanced communications thoroughfares, the prospects for tourist trade could be undermined. Similarly, the establishment of budget domestic and

international airlines, although offering a fast means of travel to the county, generally favoured tourism growth in those localities within relatively easy reach of Exeter airport, often at the expense of other parts of the region.

It is very clear that these fundamental influences, as well as changing the expectations and experiences sought by tourists and visitors to the county, have transformed the scale, extent and character of tourism in Devon during the post-war decades. Indeed, changing patterns of consumption have created new 'post-fordist' modes of tourism based on the commodification of places and experiences for niche and highly segmented markets (Meethan, 1998, 2002), such as 'food tourism' (Cleave, 2013), surfing, festivals, and other set-piece 'events' (Orams and Towner, 2012). These processes not only help to explain the tremendous diversification of tourism attractions since the latter half of the twentieth century, but also illuminate the continuing economic robustness of the tourism industry within the county.

By contrast, traditional seaside resorts throughout Britain began to lose their appeal from the late-1960s onwards (Urry, 2002). No longer viewed as extraordinary, the accommodation and attractions on offer remained rather too strongly rooted in their Victorian and Edwardian origins. Moreover, from the early 1970s, an absence of strategic thinking led to an unusual sluggishness and tardiness in responding to the competition offered by the growing availability of cheap overseas package holidays. Demand began to erode for the once popular seven-day or fourteen-day holiday in Devon's seaside towns (Clegg and Essex, 2000).

Nevertheless, by the 1980s, the county's resorts began an extensive process of restructuring whereby much serviced accommodation was converted into self-catering apartments (and ultimately residential dwellings) and traditional attractions (such as pavilions and end-of-pier shows) were replaced by more up-to-date popular enticements, such as leisure parks and pools, bars and restaurants, IMAX cinemas, and facilities for art and culture. In addition, a necessary reliance on the short-break holiday market began to impact the character of many smaller Devon coastal communities. Torbay, on the other hand, retains its brash 'cheap and cheerful' atmosphere, but it has also diversified into conference tourism, environmental education tourism (with the Geopark designation and 'Living Coasts' attraction) and heritage tourism (through, for example, its association with Agatha Christie and its proximity to Torre Abbey).

While the restructuring process caused considerable hardship and deprivation in the resort during the transition, it has enabled such towns to survive economically, albeit with a markedly different character and composition of businesses. Indeed, despite gloomy forecasts of seaside-resort decline, after an initial slowness in changing, many have now shown their skilful ability to adapt and remain buoyant contributors to the local economy (Beatty *et al.*, 2014). In 2010-2012, average year-round employment supported by tourism totalled 25,100 jobs in Devon (Table 1). In Torbay, tourism supported 10,300 direct jobs, which represented 16 percent of total employment, and an estimated further 15,700 jobs were also in part related to tourism. Indeed, as Table 1 shows, in many smaller Devon resorts, direct jobs in tourism represented over one-third of total employment.

As outlined earlier in this paper, tourism has long been a strong element of the county's urban economy. Especially since the 1970s, during the so-called post-industrial transition, the importance of tourism has increased both as a source of employment and as a means of revitalising derelict urban buildings through townscape and heritage regeneration. In Plymouth, for example, former military and port-related sites have been transformed into mixed-use complexes where tourism blends successfully with other commercial activities and residential accommodation. Indeed, tourism has often been a catalyst underpinning the survival of historic buildings. Thus, the regeneration of Plymouth's Royal William Yard saw historic structures associated with the Royal Navy's former victualling depot magnificently restored and protected as accommodation for tourism-related activities, including bars and

restaurants, art galleries, and hotels (Essex and Ford, 2015). In Exeter, the former port area at the city's historic Quay has been transformed since the 1980s as a thriving leisure and residential area. Such projects facilitate the place-marketing and branding of towns and cities as 'must-see' tourist destinations. Tourism is prominent in defining the external images of Devon's cities, towns and localities.

Since the Second World War, the role of tourism in Devon's rural areas has continued to gain significance. The designation of the Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks in the 1950s meant that landscapes of national importance began to add considerably to the county's rich mix of tourist attractions. The two national parks attracted five million tourists in 2014, worth £237million to the local economy and supporting 4,473 FTE jobs (Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, 2015). Farm diversification, involving tourism-related activities such as accommodation provision or new attractions, have also become commonplace, especially since the 1980s, as reductions have been made in European Union (EU) agricultural food-production subsidies. Declines in EU support for food output have been offset by Europe's policies of support for farmers' contributions to landscape conservation, leisure access to the countryside; and for 'post-productivist' schemes, such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship. These schemes now cover two-thirds of agricultural land in England and the Southwest region, with 15,296 agreements, which is more than double the number that exist in the next highest region (East of England) (Natural England, 2009).

The revenues generated by visitors and tourists have become increasingly significant in the on-going conservation work of Historic England, the National Trust, and private owners of historic buildings and gardens who belong to the Historic Houses Association (Figures 8 and 9). Since the 1980s, in order to limit calls on the public purse, government policy has encouraged a maximisation of entrance-fee income at properties operated by Historic England. Visitor volumes have grown and maintenance and conservation issues have arisen. The National Trust, now an enormous national conservation charity, exists without any government income. It depends instead upon membership subscriptions and entry charges to secure funds for its work. However, in recent years, the Trust has been noticeably pro-active in raising income from its visitors. Thus, each property has been asked to develop a marketing programme to meet the expectations of at least two of the Trust's seven main market segmentation groups (Table 2). The approach has proved remarkably successful in increasing membership and paying visitors. Substantial income has certainly been raised for important conservation work, but the emerging dangers – posed by the ballooning pressure of rising demand for access to fragile historical landscapes, buildings and collections – may ultimately render the policy counter-productive. Heritage commodification, whereby manifestations of the past are seen merely as tradeable goods, inevitably risks detrimental impacts on the integrity – even the survival – of the artefacts (Hewison, 1987). It is clearly important not to disguise the difficult implications that arise from the presence of both the inexorably rising volumes of tourists in Devon, and the unprecedented, insatiable appetite among the resident population to engage in recreational activities.

Given the significance of its economic contribution, it remains frustratingly difficult to portray the recent history of Devon tourism in statistical terms. A consistent longitudinal database simply does not exist. Snapshot data nevertheless provide some evidence of the importance of tourism to the county. Drawing on information produced by a Southwest Research Company, which is based on the Cambridge Economic Impact model, tourism in Devon in 2014 was said to have accounted for 35.3m 'staying' and 'day' trips (Visit Devon, 2015). The total comprised 5.1m domestic staying trips, 0.4m overseas staying trips and 29.8m day trips. The staying trips translated into 19.7m domestic visitor nights (worth £1,097m) and 3.1m overseas visitor nights (worth £192m). Total day-trip spend was £1,015m

(Visit Devon, 2015). A year later, however, Visit Devon estimated the value of tourism in Devon to be only £164m, although it was noted to be the ‘largest revenue generator’ in the county and employed 25 percent of the county’s workforce (Visit Devon, 2017). Yet another set of figures, based on three-year averages for the period 2013-2015, add to the confusion: Devon is accorded a total of 4.7m total trips, 18.7m total nights and £1.03m total spend (Visit England, 2015). The tangle of discrepancies between these sources not only underlines the difficulty involved in accurately and consistently recording tourist data, but also perhaps in part explains the broader lack of awareness and disregard for the full magnitude of Devon’s tourism industry.

Despite its impressive economic contribution, the tourism industry also exhibits some less positive attributes. Much of the sector’s employment is unskilled, low-paid and seasonal, thus introducing structural weaknesses to local economies and often accentuating social deprivation, particularly in the seaside resorts. A number of studies have suggested that educational aspirations in resorts have been reduced by the dependence on tourism and the lack of a diverse range of economic, social and cultural opportunities (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2015).

Tourism has caused resentment and stress among some of Devon’s resident populations. Traffic congestion, litter and overcrowding during the holiday season are often cited as complaints. However, shifts from serviced to self-catering accommodation seem to reduce the perceived social impacts of visitors, and they appear not to exert any impacts on local culture (Brunt and Courtney, 1999). Nonetheless, the scale of second-home ownership is resented in several Devon communities. In Salcombe, 50 per cent of household spaces have no usual residents (ONS, 2014), a circumstance which has implications for the availability and affordability of housing as well as the viability of a range of community services. In addition, tourism inevitably creates additional local costs for cleaning and maintaining public spaces and beaches, as well as for extra policing during the holiday season (Brunt and Hooton, 2010).

Paradoxically, in Devon, one of the country’s foremost holiday destinations, tourism continues to suffer from a lightweight political profile. The origins of its somewhat inconsequential image may lie in the nature of the sector, which after all tends to comprise a very wide range of businesses, which serve not only tourists, but also other diverse markets. Furthermore, many tourism-related businesses are small, family-based enterprises, whose owners operate according to a wide spectrum of motives from those with profit-centred, customer-oriented drive, to ‘lifestyle’ or semi-retired participants, whose approach is often more casual. The level of professionalism in the sector is highly variable and the benefits of partnerships and co-operation are frequently constrained by the limited degree of shared trust between rival businesses that work in highly competitive circumstances. Sometimes referred to as measures of the ‘institutional thickness’ of an economic sector, these factors help to explain the highly fragmented character of Devon tourism, the disparate range of interests involved, and its striking failure ‘to speak with one voice’ (Agarwal, 2005).

Together with the English Tourist Board (for domestic tourism) and the British Tourism Authority (for overseas tourism), regional tourist boards, such as the West Country Tourist Board (WCTB), were introduced as part of the 1969 Development of Tourism Act (17 Eliz. II, c. 51). These agencies assumed a role in the development of tourism facilities through ‘Section 4 grants’, as well as the marketing and promotion of the sector. However, under the ‘Enterprise Culture’ of the Conservative Government (1979-1997), Westminster funding was steadily reduced because tourism was regarded as a mature industry, capable of supporting itself. The WCTB was subsumed within the Regional Development Agencies by the Labour Government (1997-2010) but the RDAs were then abolished in the dismantling of regional government by the Conservative-Liberal Coalition (2010-2015). Tourism responsibilities

within Devon County Council were transferred to a Community Interest Company called ‘Visit Devon’ in 2016, which is recognised as the official destination management organisation for the county. Its role is to market and promote Devon tourism, domestically and internationally; to represent the local tourism industry inside and outside the region; to enhance the quality of the county’s tourism product; and to act as Devon’s voice for the tourism industry to maximise funding opportunities (Visit Devon, 2017).

Similarly, the role of local government in tourism has also been subject to destabilising change. In 1978, Devon could boast the first public-private marketing bureau in the form of Plymouth’s Marketing Bureau (PMB). The Bureau’s activities targeted three specific markets. First, the domestic market, where the aim was to maintain and improve Plymouth’s place in the UK holiday market, especially short breaks. Second, there was a drive to create a stronger identity for the city and attract high-spending overseas visitors. Third, the goal was to position Plymouth as the leading conference and exhibitions centre in the Southwest (Essex, 1991). However, several factors conspired ultimately to thwart the PMB’s ambitions and cause its demise. The loss of European Union funding, city council budget cuts and a limited membership, which served almost exclusively the small hotel sector rather than the city as a whole, led to the Bureau’s closure in May 2004. In early 2005, it was replaced by an industry-led partnership, the Plymouth Visitor Development Group (later Visit Plymouth), formed to coordinate the sector. Visit Plymouth formulated a new visitor strategy for Plymouth to raise interest in the creation of the Visit Plymouth tourism and the ‘Waterfront Business Improvement District’ (BID), established in 2008. All businesses in the BID area paid a one percent levy on the rateable value of their premises in order to generate revenues for actions to be implemented. While the intentions of these various initiatives may be laudable, and some outcomes have been positive, the lack of a clearly defined, coherent, and stable suite of support agencies for tourism in Devon as a whole, or for any of its constituent localities, is lamentable.

## **THE FUTURE FOR DEVON TOURISM**

Tourism faces an unprecedentedly challenging future. Some of the challenges that confront the sector relate to trends that are already apparent, but they seem likely to become even more significant in the years ahead. With the advent of social media and online reviews, tourism businesses have had to become more alert to the almost continuous stream of positive and negative customer evaluation, whether genuine or distorted, which can profoundly affect their external profile. At the same time, new types of tourism-related businesses are emerging that are underpinned by web-based technologies. For example, Airbnb offers alternative – often cheaper – forms of accommodation, albeit under a different regulatory regime. These new types of more informal businesses are perceived as a ‘disruptive innovation’, which is likely to upset very seriously the prevailing status quo (Guttentag, 2015).

Although its impact upon tourism in Devon cannot yet be fully discerned, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (EU) in March 2019 represents another major short-term challenge. While the weakening of sterling since 2016 has boosted Britain’s international tourist appeal, and enhanced the attraction of popular holiday destinations such as Devon, the possible effects of future border controls on visitor movements and the sector’s dependence on foreign workers may pose problems when Britain’s secession from the EU actually occurs. Meanwhile, other damaging uncertainties prevail. Thus, the threat that the flow of EU funding for urban regeneration projects and rural tourism infrastructure will cease, and not be replaced by Westminster, is viewed with considerable alarm and disquiet by Devon’s tourism businesses.

Far more alarming and far-reaching implications for tourism are posed by the effects of climate change. Perhaps because of the wide range of possible scenarios presented by the



evolving science, responses so far within Devon have been, at best, fragmented and small scale. There is, in short, an absence of preparedness. Gehrels (2006) argues that sea-level rise predictions by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) only address changes in mean sea level and do not take into account other processes, such as changes in tidal range, storm-surge heights and coastal subsidence. Nevertheless, the consensus of climate change experts in the UK is for warmer and drier summers; warmer and wetter winters; a much greater frequency and severity of extreme storm events, involving coastal flooding and inundation; and more drought conditions (Table 3). Other destinations will, of course, experience similar changes and so any competitive advantage gained from warmer summers is unlikely, and the possibility of poorer winter weather may concentrate demand even more in the summer months. Damage to coastal infrastructure from storms and flooding will have serious consequences for traditional resort tourism in Devon. The other negative implications of climate change are diminished water supplies, deteriorating water quality, and higher temperatures that may lead to increases in heat-related mortality and disease. Historic buildings, gardens and parks will be vulnerable to the effects of changes in humidity, temperatures and light on natural vegetation and fragile artefacts.

Insofar as the tourism sector has responded at all to environmental change issues, emphasis has been placed on attempts to adopt more sustainable forms of management and provision. The notion of sustainable tourism emerged from the early 1990s as an approach which seeks to reduce the environmental impact of tourism by addressing the physical degradation caused by visitors; resource depletion resulting from the operation of tourism-related businesses, such as the utilisation of fossil fuels, water and other natural resources; and possible negative socio-cultural impacts on host communities (Essex, *et al.*, 2003). An ecological footprint analysis of tourism in the region in 2005 indicated the extent of savings in energy consumption, waste production and water consumption that might be achieved through more sustainable approaches (South West Environment Trust, 2005). As the movement of people from their place of residence to a tourist destination is inherently unsustainable, the approach might therefore be more realistically perceived as encouraging practical ways of assisting all forms of tourism to be consistent with sustainable development in all or some of its dimensions.

Some early initiatives have been pioneered in Devon. In 1993, the South Devon Green Tourism Initiative launched a Green Audit Kit, which was designed to provide structured guidelines for tourist operators on the relative benefits of introducing energy conservation, local purchasing, waste management, health and conserving the local environment in terms of overheads, costs, payback and environmental gains. By the end of the two-year pilot project, 189 businesses in South Devon (Torbay-Plymouth-Dartmoor) had participated in the programme and the Green Audit Kit itself was promoted at a national level (Dingle, 1993; English Tourism Council, 2000). However, research into the barriers affecting the adoption of sustainable tourism indicated the slow diffusion of these measures, which stood in stark contrast to the urgency of the problem (Hobson and Essex, 2001). Adoption was limited because of a lack of awareness, expertise, funding and support, and implementation often relatively modest, being dominated by activities that might be established priorities, such as energy conservation. Over 25 years on from these early pilot projects, many parts of Devon now have sustainable tourism strategies and sustainability has become more accepted as standard practice, including its heritage attractions (Darlow, *et al.*, 2012). However, the translation of the concept of sustainable development from theory into practice in tourism remains a long-term commitment, as in other areas of the economy.

The alternative to sustainable tourism would have much more radical implications for society. For example, the Forum for the Future in 2009 envisaged four possible scenarios for tourism in 2023, which included: (1) 'Boom and bust', in which the continued growth of

tourism was leading to serious degradation of tourism's resource base; (2) 'Divided disquiet', where an environmental crisis has led to resource wars and social unrest, which has made travel unattractive; (3) 'Price and privilege', where high oil prices from depleted supplies have transformed tourism into an elitist activity; and (4) 'Carbon clampdown', where, in order to tackle climate change, tradeable carbon quotas have been introduced for all UK households and only ethical tourism is encouraged. All four scenarios present a bleak picture, with only the fourth offering some benefits to tourism in Devon through encouraging domestic tourism rather than travel overseas.

The story of tourism in Devon over the course of the next one hundred years might therefore look very different from the narrative presented so far.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the origins of leisure visits into and within Devon may be traced to the distant past, but tangible physical, economic and social responses to tourism demand begin to be discernible only in the 1700s, with impacts most prominent in well-favoured coastal towns. During the nineteenth century, however, a tourism industry became well established in the county, boosted by improvements in the means of transport; and, in fact, much of the county's modern 'offer' was firmly in place by the later 1800s. By the early twentieth century, the expansion of motor vehicle ownership and use extended the reach and underpinned the intensification of holidaymaking activity across the county. However, 1939 and the ensuing Second World War mark a key turning point in the story of Devon tourism. During the following decades, the growing scale and scope of fundamental social and economic changes in Britain, as well as the unprecedented nature of challenges faced by tourism in the county prompted new and complex responses by all contributors to Devon's holidaymaking and recreational trade. Throughout their history, tourism providers have often been nimble in embracing change and resilient when faced with challenges, but their ingenuity and resourcefulness has perhaps been tested to its greatest extent in recent years.

Given its contribution to the local economy, the inadequacy of data collection regarding total numbers of visitors and revenues generated, and the relative lack of political and cultural esteem for the sector is puzzling. Intense rivalries between businesses, even among those belonging to the same larger corporate organisation, may explain failures to present a united case for more regard for tourism as a respectable and important economic sector.

The problems posed by rapid climate change, the increased imperative to operate in more sustainable ways, and future economic and political uncertainties that arise in relation to Britain's relationship with the European Union together represent an immediate and future need for tourism to demonstrate again its fleet-footed ability to adapt and to innovate. It is now hoped that much more research on Devon tourism will pursue these unfolding issues and be published in the *Transactions*.

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## CAPTIONS TO FIGURES 1-8

Figure 1. *Faith tourism in fourteenth-century Devon: the home origins and distances travelled by Devon pilgrims visiting the burial place of Richard Buvyle, rector of Whitstone, Cornwall, between March 1359 and September 1361* (source: based on data in Webb, D. **2000.**, p. 156).

Figure 2. *Sidmouth, The Parade (eastern end), c.1907. The Bathing establishment and its adjacent Social Club (with first-floor balcony) appear on the left of the photograph* (source: Mate's Illustrated Sidmouth, **1907.**, p. 11).

Figure 3. *Railways Serving Devon's Seaside Resorts by 1900* (source: adapted from two maps appearing in Travis, J. **1993.**, pp. 97, 126, with some corrections). Note: no attempt is made to depict the county's entire railway network; the focus instead is upon links to Devon's seaside resorts. The narrow-gauge, steam-operated circuit tramway that connected Bideford, Northam, Westward Ho! and Appledore, 1901-1917, is not depicted.

Figure 4. *The Ilfracombe Hotel's advertisement* (source: *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire, 1893*, 'County Advertisements', p. 29).

Figure 5. *Advertisement for Cecil Bevan's 'Tors Park Hotel', Lynmouth, promoted as 'The English Switzerland'* (source: *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire, 1893*, 'County Advertisements', p. 37).

Figure 6. *A Paignton-based company, offering daily motor tours (in char-à-bancs) 'during the Season' over Dartmoor and to other places in Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall* (source: Ward & Lock, **c1920.** *Sidmouth and South-East Devon Coast*, p. 2).

Figure 7. *Midland Red 'Six day coach cruises' from Birmingham to Devon in 1939* (sources: Midland Red. **1939.** *Six Day Coach Cruise Souvenir Itinerary: Devon and Cornwall*, p. 2; *Six Day Coach Cruise Souvenir Itinerary: Devon and Somerset*, p. 2).

Figure 8. *Properties in Devon of the National Trust and Historic England.*

Figure 9. *Properties in Devon of the Historic Houses Association (houses, castles, gardens) and the Royal Horticultural Society (gardens).*

## CAPTIONS TO TABLES 1-3

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Table 2. National Trust market segmentation adopted in 2006

Table 3. Timeline of future climate change impacts based on the medium emissions scenario (source: Zsamboky *et al.*, **2011**).





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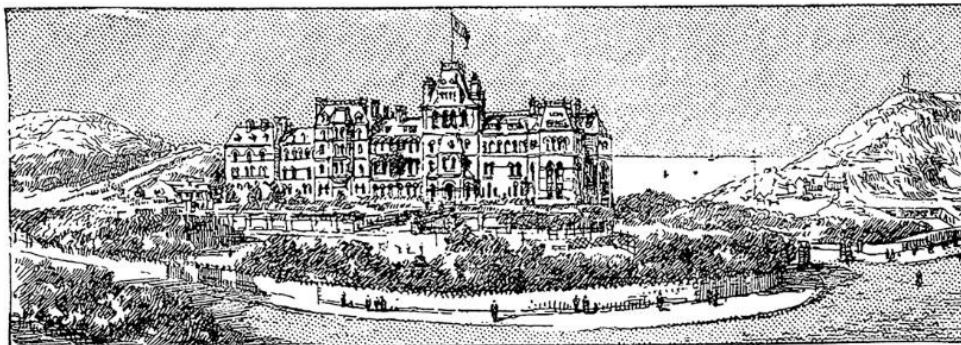


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# THE ILFRACOMBE HOTEL.



ILFRACOMBE HOTEL.

Unrivalled Sea Frontage and Open Surroundings. The Premier Hotel of Ilfracombe.

**250 APARTMENTS. ELEGANT LOUNGE HALL.**

**LARGE DINING, DRAWING, READING, BILLIARD AND SMOKING ROOMS, ALL ON THE GROUND FLOOR.**

Ornamental Grounds of Five Acres. Seven Lawn Tennis Courts.

**TABLE D'HOTE DINNER, AT SEPARATE TABLES, FROM 6.30 TO 8 O'CLOCK.**

There is attached to the Hotel one of the largest SWIMMING BATHS in England, the temperature of which is regulated. Private Hot and Cold Sea and Fresh Water Baths, Douche, Shower, &c.

**Full Descriptive Tariff of H. R. GROVER, MANAGER, ILFRACOMBE, NORTH DEVON.**

*REDUCED TERMS FROM 1st NOVEMBER TO MARCH.*

The attractions of Ilfracombe, and the places of interest in the neighbourhood, point to it as the natural centre to be chosen by the Tourist who desires to see with comfort all the beauties of Coast and Inland Scenery which North Devon affords. There is also easy access into South Devon and Cornwall. The means of communication by Railroad and Steamboat are most complete.

Tourist Tickets to Ilfracombe for Two Months are issued during the Season at all the principal Railway Stations in England.

Figure 4. *The Ilfracombe Hotel's advertisement* (source: *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire, 1893*, 'County Advertisements', p. 29).

1893.]

COUNTY ADVERTISEMENTS.

37

**THE ENGLISH SWITZERLAND.**

**LYNMOUTH, NORTH DEVON.**

## TORS † PARK † HOTEL.

**T**HE grandest situated First-Class Hotel in the West of England. Standing in its own extensive and beautiful grounds, and overlooking the far-famed "Glen Lyn," "Lyn Cliff," and the well-known Watersmeet Valley; also the rivers East and West Lyn, the Old Pier and Harbour, and all the principal Scenery adjoining Lynton and Lynmouth. Specially adapted for Families and Tourists. Fitted with all the latest comforts and improvements. Twenty miles of Trout and Salmon Fishing. The Devon and Somerset Staghounds and the Exmoor Foxhounds meet within easy distance of Hotel. Over 2,000 acres of Shooting. The Minehead and Ilfracombe Coaches stop at Hotel Gate. Shooting and Fishing Free to Visitors staying at the Hotel. Cheap inclusive boarding terms. Write for Tariff to

**CECIL N. BEVAN, PROPRIETOR.**

Telegrams: "TORS, LYNMOUTH." Hotel opened to Visitors all the year round.

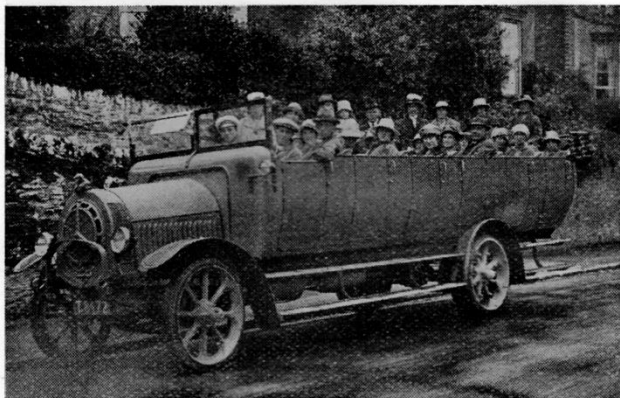
N.B.—The Tors Park Hotel stands 300 feet above the Level of the Sea.

[64]

Figure 5. *Advertisement for Cecil Bevan's 'Tors Park Hotel', Lynmouth, promoted as 'The English Switzerland'* (source: *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire, 1893*, 'County Advertisements', p. 37).

**PAIGNTON.**

## **“RELIANCE” CARS**



### **POPULAR MOTOR TOURS**

will be run Daily during the Season over

## **DARTMOOR**

and into the surrounding Country.

**Special Long Distance Tours will be run to the following places, viz. :**

NEWQUAY, FALMOUTH, WEYMOUTH, LYME REGIS,  
WESTON-SUPER-MARE, ILFRACOMBE, SIDMOUTH,  
MINEHEAD, BUDE, CLOVELLY, ETC.

Special Quotations for Large or Small Parties.

All Coaches are now run on Pneumatic Tyres.

Seats can be Booked and Programmes obtained on application to

**“RELIANCE” OFFICE, 17, Torbay Road, PAIGNTON.**

**'Phone 178.**

Figure 6. A Paignton-based company, offering daily motor tours (in char-à-bancs) 'during the Season' over Dartmoor and to other places in Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall (source: Ward & Lock, c1920., *Sidmouth and South-East Devon Coast*, p. 2).

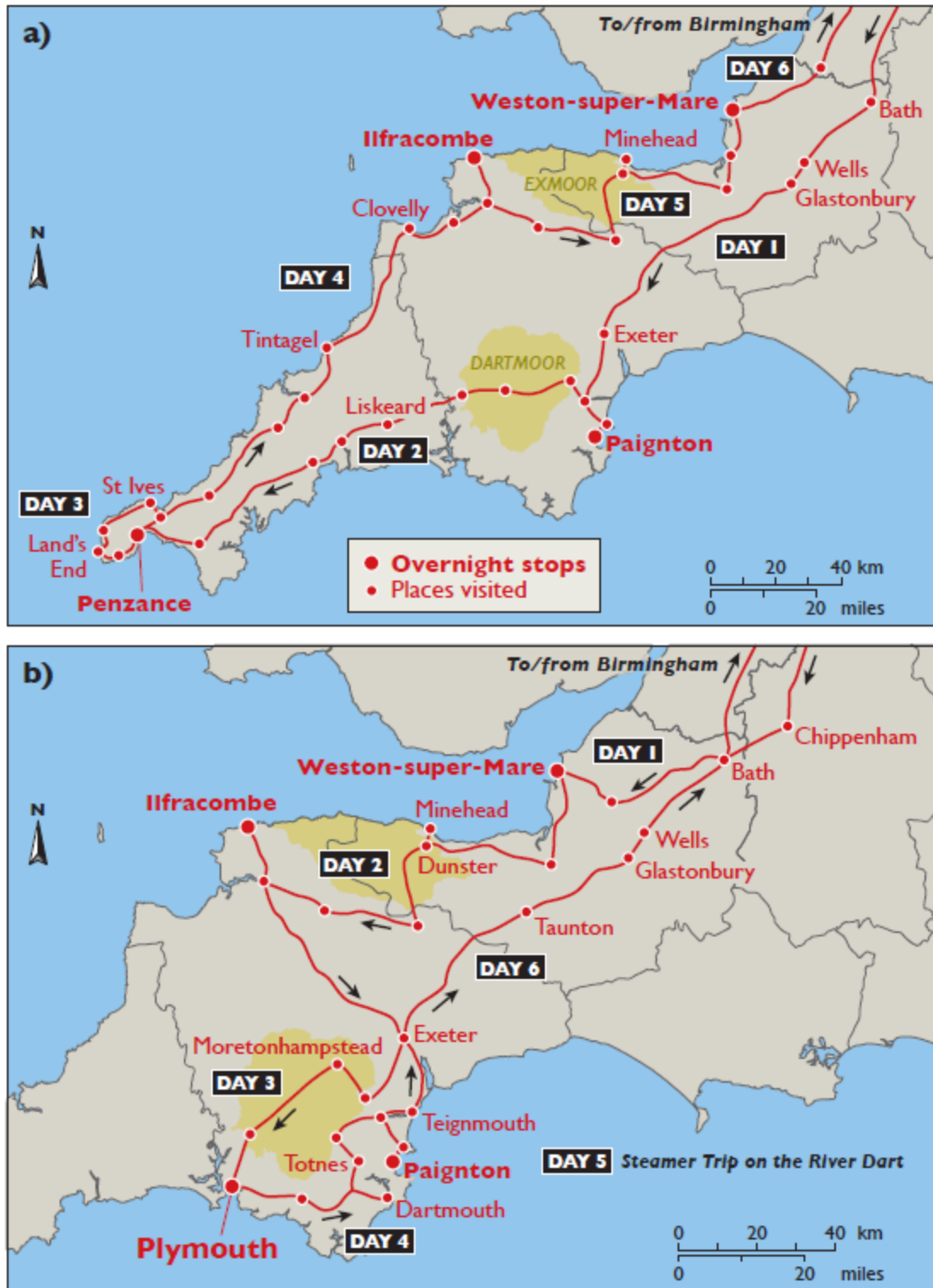


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Figure 8. Properties in Devon of the National Trust and Historic England.



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**Table 1.** Average year-round employment directly supported by seaside tourism, 2010/12

	<b>Number of direct jobs supported by tourism 2010/12</b>	<b>Share of total employment</b>	<b>Increase in direct employment supported by tourism 2006/08–2010/12</b>
Torbay	10,300	16	1,100
Sidmouth	1,900	28	400
Exmouth	1,900	19	300
Dawlish/Teignmouth	1,900	20	100
Bude	1,700	37	100
Dartmouth	1,500	44	300
Ilfracombe	1,100	23	-200
Salcombe	1,000	66	200
Lynton and Lynmouth	700	62	100
Westward Ho!	400	35	200
Budleigh Salterton	200	14	-100

Source: Beatty, Fothergill and Gore, 2014., pp. 25, 28 and 30.

**Table 2.** National Trust market segmentation adopted in 2006

\* denotes key target groups for Trust-wide activities. Individual properties must target one key target group and one other, using a communication theme from local food, cultural heritage, wildlife or climate change.

<b>Market segment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of people in segment nationally</b>	<b>Spend per visit to National Trust property</b>	<b>Reasons for visiting National Trust properties</b>
<b>Explorer families*</b>	Self-starters. Proactive. Enjoy adventure as an entire family. Into castles and ruins, high users of the internet, less likely to spend on catering/souvenirs, self-sufficient. Active attendance to NT properties in last twelve months	7.7m (22%)	<i>High</i>	...they want an active and stimulating experience
<b>Out and about*</b>	Moochers, doing things together is more important than what they are doing. The NT is a backdrop for socialising. Go where the fancy takes them. Picturesque towns and villages interest them, and art and architecture. Like to dip in and out of information and experiences	8.7m (25%)	<i>Low</i>	...we offer them something to do
<b>Grey matter*</b>	Majority 65+, active minds. Highest proportion of members. Deliberate visits to well researched places. Fascinated by people stories. Seek peace and relaxation, likely to be members of other like-minded organisations	5.6m (16%)	<i>Low</i>	...we provide mental stimulation to stretch their active minds
<b>Young experience seekers</b>	Eclectic, under 30, no children, high ethnicity, like new experiences, travel, some want an adrenalin fix. Group visitor for interest, exercise and challenge – ending in the pub	1.0m (3%)	<i>Medium</i>	...they want to see awe-inspiring things.
<b>Home and Family</b>	Know what they like and like what they know. Lowest income segment, largest groups of extended family and friends, most interested in spending family time together. Enjoy shopping. Visits likely on high days and holidays. Entertainment and value important, want affordable catering rather than having to take a picnic	4.9m (14%)	<i>High</i>	...we are a special family treat for school or bank holidays
<b>Kids First</b>	Want to be certain they will have a good time. Likely to attend Halloween, Christmas events. Large groups. Want	3.8m	<i>High</i>	...they want to be entertained

<b>Families</b>	packaged experiences and familiarity. Visit country parks and estates, wanting entertainment. High spenders but infrequent visitors	(11%)		
<b>Live Life to the Full</b>	Fill-on, into everything. Self-sufficient. Proactively seek new experiences. Highest level of special interest. Avoid crowds. Confident, sophisticated, young-at-heart, unlikely to buy souvenirs. Frequent day out takers, above average visits to stately homes	3.1m (9%)	<i>Medium</i>	...we can satisfy their thirst for knowledge and quest for escapism

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**Table 3.** Timeline of future climate change impacts based on the medium emissions scenario

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Temperature change (C) relative to 1961-90 baseline</b>	<b>Precipitation change (%) relative to 1961-90 baseline</b>	<b>Sea level rise (cm) relative to 1990 baseline</b>	<b>Cumulative coastal impacts</b>
<b>2020s</b>	+1.1 to +1.3 (winter) +1.3 to +1.6 (summer)	+4 to +7 (winter) -4 to -9 (summer)	+5.7 to +9.7	Increasing frequency of storm surges and lowland floods Increasing erosion on sandy coasts
<b>2050s</b>	+1.6 to +2.2 (winter) +2.0 to +2.8 (summer)	+9 to +17 (winter) -11 to -23 (summer)	+13.9 to +21.8	Significant impacts of sea level rise in estuaries Increasing landslide frequency
<b>2080s</b>	+2.2 to +3.0 (winter) +3.0 to +3.9 (summer)	+11 to +23 (winter) -12 to -28 (summer)	+24 to +36.3	Significant changes in sediment supply along sandy coasts Widespread erosional impacts

Source: Zsamboky, *et al.* 2011.