

# **Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick**

## **Marketing Plan**

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2008**

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## **PART ONE : SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report has developed from the growing awareness that St Mary's finance were not as healthy as they once were, and that action needed to be taken, fairly urgently, to maximise income.

Terry Babbage has compiled this Plan, working closely with Jayne McHale and Clive Black. It is envisaged that they will continue to oversee its implementation via a sub committee of the Finance Committee. However, *the success of much of the full Plan depends upon identifying one or more volunteers to join this committee, and to contribute in a "hands on" way to its implementation.* The following steps are therefore required.

- 1. The full membership of the Marketing Sub Committee to be identified, and PCC to agree a structure whereby it reports through the Finance Committee.**
- 2. A fact finding tour of several cathedrals and large churches, focussing specifically on the issues raised in this report.**
- 3. The report highlights, among a long list of recommendations, a number of fairly straightforward, low cost options listed below, some of which will have an immediate impact on the finances of St Mary's, and which should be undertaken as soon as is practicable, following agreement by Finance Committee and PCC.**
  - a) Gift Aid desk.** The Marketing Committee to design and install a designated gift aid desk for visitors as they exit the Church. This will be accompanied by a permanent notice highlighting the costs of keeping the Church open and inviting donations. It is estimated that these could yield an increased income in excess of £4000 per annum. Set up costs are likely to be in the region of £1500, so we should get a return on our money inside six months. Following consultation with the Receptionists a faculty would need to be obtained, but lead time should be no more than six months.
  - b) Front of house display.** In order to attract passing visitors into the Church, as a minimum a prominent notice should be placed at the base of the Tower. Cost is likely to be in the region of £900, and will require a faculty and, probably, assent from the local planning authority. Initial work is already being done on this in the hope and expectation that it can be in place for the increase of visitors in Spring 2009. It is unclear what increase in visitors numbers will ensue, but it should be significant.
  - c) Further front of house display.** The various items of signage in the entrance area of the Church should be considered holistically by the Committee, and replaced by signage of a professional standard. There must be full consultation with the Shop Manager and the Receptionists, but a faculty is unlikely to be necessary. Much depends on the perceived signage requirements, but costs might be in the region of £750, and completion time no more than six months.

- d) **Website.** Add further pages to the Church website. There are many options, but those that can be achieved reasonably quickly are: Church hire arrangements; a topical “Fulke Greville” page; Donations to the Friends of St Mary and/or to the Church itself. Terry Babbage can proceed with these immediately, and they could be in place by the beginning of 2009 (though anything involving the Friends will clearly have to be with their agreement). There are several other website options which will be tackled subsequently. Currently the cost of each extra website page is £50, and an online donations facility would be a further £50.
- e) **Local websites.** Terry Babbage to make contact with local and Church websites to request inclusion of St Mary’s details. This is already underway and ongoing. There are no cost implications.
- f) **Charging options.** The sub committee to consider the range of charging options with a view to making recommendations to the Finance Committee at its meeting of January 2009.
- g) **The Shop.** Create a Shop Committee consisting of the Shop Manager, The Parish Administrator, and a volunteer with retail experience to draw up a shop policy, and to have oversight of the Shop. The Committee would report to the Finance Committee. This can be set up as soon as a volunteer is identified. (A facility for credit card sales in the Shop is currently being explored).
- h) **Group visits.** The possibility of arranging regular guided group visits, for which a charge would be made, is currently being discussed with the Guides themselves, as is a plan to encourage more school visits through direct mailing.
- i) **Other proposals.** Many other proposals feature in Part Three of this report. These will be considered by the Marketing Sub Committee in due course.

## **PART TWO: MARKETING ST MARY'S: THE CURRENT POSITION**

### **The "Product"**

St Mary's as a "product" can be viewed in two ways: the spiritual and the historical. It has some exceptional features which make it a unique and deeply interesting site.

- a) The Beauchamp Chapel, described as the best non-royal chapel in England, is clearly of international architectural interest. The tomb of Richard Beauchamp alone has been a major feature in an Exhibition of the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- b) Tombs and monuments. As well as the Beauchamp Chapel, other tombs and monuments attract visitors. For instance, the tomb of Thomas Beauchamp and Katherine Mortimer incorporates a series of figures in medieval dress which constitutes an important primary source for students of costume. Many other tombs in the church are of interest to historians and genealogists.
- c) The Norman Crypt. The age of this structure makes it notable attraction and selling point. The presence of the ducking stool, one of only two in English churches, adds interest.
- d) The Chancel is medieval, and of architectural importance.
- e) The Nave and Tower. These are notable as having risen from the ashes of the Great Fire of Warwick. The Tower is of great physical prominence, announcing our presence for many miles around; it is also a source of significant income by way of tower visits.
- f) Being the Church of the Earls of Warwick, many of whom are buried within, adds to the historical appeal, and could be a factor in leading to a closer relationship with the Castle, which could be very beneficial to us.

Other aspects of our "product" include:

- a) The Shop. This is managed along the lines of cathedral and church shops throughout the country. It produces a steady source of income.
- b) Brass rubbing. Managed from the Shop, this is a minority activity, but does bring in revenue.
- c) Guiding. Church Guides have been in place to show visitors round for many years now. A Guide will be on hand throughout most of the time the Church is open to assist visitors, and impart their knowledge of the Church. The service is free of charge and open to everyone; we should consider whether a different guiding arrangement might create income.
- d) Visitor leaflets. We offer a free leaflet to visitors, in a multitude of different languages. We also offer guidebooks and other leaflets for sale. We should question whether the free information we offer restricts the sales of other guidebooks.
- e) Music. St Mary's is notable as a church with a strong musical tradition through its choirs and choral societies, and also a venue for other musical events.

St Mary's as a "product" is of interest to:

- Historians
- Architectural historians
- Those interested in churches generally
- Family historians
- General sightseers and visitors to Warwick
- Local people
- Academics
- Music lovers
- The media, especially television
- Other niche groups, e.g. bellringers, organists

### **Unique Selling Point (USP)**

Marketing texts usually recommend having a Unique Selling Point (USP) for any product, as a way of improving focus, and distinguishing the product from its competitors. Some years ago the Visitor Committee came up with the Beauchamp Chapel as our USP, on the basis that its architectural reputation was considerable, and that it was possibly the single feature which attracted most interest.

I think it is correct to view the Beauchamp Chapel in this light, but at the same time I feel that St Mary's has a number of attributes which are unique, and which should not be overlooked or underplayed. The fact that St Mary's is the Church of the Earls of Warwick is in itself a better USP than most sites can boast. In addition it is the most prominent architectural feature for many tens of miles; more so than Warwick Castle. One can also think of the Norman Crypt; the Ducking Stool (one of only two in English ecclesiastical buildings); and the Regimental Chapel. All of these are a unique reason for many people to visit the Church. It may be that Fulke Greville becomes a focus for visitors.

When considering marketing our appeal, then, I think we should not focus solely on the Beauchamp Chapel, as we will thereby be missing many potential customers with our publicity.

### **Current marketing activity**

For a short period some years ago one of the newly appointed Reception staff, Lee Griffin, also worked on tourism issues. She was paid the Reception rate for a small number of hours, but did excellent work. She saw through the Church leaflet, and oversaw its distribution, and promoted the Church in other ways, including group visits. She was an active member of a local tourism group. Following her departure no staff time has been specifically devoted to this activity.

During Lee Griffin's time a Church Visitor Group was set up. While Lee was around to carry out the work of this group it worked reasonably well, but after her departure it was more difficult to see things through to completion. The group was subsequently wound up.

Following an exercise which drew up a Church Committee structure, the Visitor Committee was resurrected. Again, despite good work from some quarters this group suffered from the lack of someone to see decisions through. Also this was a group that tended to look at the visitor experience per se, rather than the urgent matter of income and costs.

In 2008, following an appraisal interview, Terry Babbage has had his duties reassessed, and the drawing up of this marketing plan, and other tourism activity, included. This will go some way to implementing the recommendations of this report, though I think it certain that other hands on involvement will be necessary to derive full benefit from the report.

The following are an outline of current marketing activity for St Mary's, such as it is.

1. Website. The Church website was launched in 2008. This has numerous features, but is still a work in progress with other pages planned. Early use of the website is encouraging, rising from 998 unique visitors in April, to 1126 in May, and 1389 in June (currently some 46 visitors per day, who visit 5 pages on average). The website is managed from the Parish Office, and, apart from a hitch of a few days, has been kept up to date.
2. Leaflets. There is one Church promotional leaflet. This is glossy and well produced, and has a restricted but active distribution network. The latest cost for these was £495 for 10,000; as we take on average approximately £1 for every visitor through the door, around one in twenty leaflets produced has to therefore result in a visit for us just to break even. I suspect that this is an unlikely ratio, and that we need to consider how we could produce leaflets even more cheaply.
3. Other publications. Glossy guide books, to the Church, and the Beauchamp Chapel, are on sale, together with various, slighter leaflets on various topics of interest. At the same time there is a free leaflet handed out to all visitors, in many languages, which acts a general guide to people going round the Church. We have to consider to what extent these act as a counter to sales of the guidebooks, and generally we should always consider carefully the effect on sales of giving out free information.

### **Charging policy**

It has been our policy for as long as anyone can remember not to charge visitors for entry. One of the reasons for this is that the Church is a place of worship first and foremost, and a visitor attraction secondly. There are clear dangers in having an entry charge: people coming in to pray would be deterred, for instance, and it is not clear that St Mary's is such a draw that we would actually make more money by charging. Having said this, several cathedrals charge for entry, successfully.

Nor is any charge made for entry to any other part of the Church, except the Tower which brings in a very useful income. Many years ago a charge was made for entry to the Beauchamp Chapel, and this could be considered again. However, it must be

realised that any additional charges are likely to reduce the amount we receive in donations. In fact, the Tower charges should be reviewed in light of this effect.

Charges are also made for lighting a votive candle.

### **SWOT analysis.**

#### **1. Strengths**

- a) Beauchamp Chapel as Unique Selling Point
- b) Physical prominence of building
- c) Town centre location
- d) Historic building
- e) Within easy reach of Warwick Castle
- f) Popular as a music venue
- g) Large, accessible space suitable for exhibitions
- h) Good transport network
- i) Proximity to Castle
- j) Guiding structure in place

#### **2. Weaknesses**

- a) Prominent building, but visitors not prominently attracted.
- b) No charge for entry
- c) High maintenance costs
- d) Poor parking arrangements
- e) Minimal advertising budget
- f) Not well signposted
- g) Poor marketing structure
- h) Conflicting needs: working church and visitor venue

#### **3. Opportunities**

- a) Cooperation with other heritage sites: local; national (Greater Churches?)
- b) Range of charging options
- c) Build on low base of marketing activity
- d) Membership of tourism groups
- e) Tourism websites
- f) Increase in UK holidays by UK nationals
- g) Increase prominence of The Friends of St Mary
- h) Family history connections: publicise details of monuments and gravestones.

#### **4. Threats**

- a) Increased maintenance costs
- b) Fewer foreign visitors



## **Tourism sites in Warwick. Friend or Foe?**

### **Warwick Castle**

Clearly the main tourism site in Warwick, and one of the major attractions in the UK, is Warwick Castle. It is doubtful that St Mary's would have anything like the visitor numbers they do were it not for the high international profile of the Castle, and so it is quite clear that its presence nearby is a big boost for us. Having said that, it is very difficult to interest the Castle in anything we do. Attempts to interest the Castle in sharing expertise, or mutual arrangements in our advertising, have met with deaf ears; often our correspondence is not even acknowledged. Perhaps this is to be expected from such an enormous enterprise, but it is to be regretted when we share so much history and background.

### **Other heritage sites in Warwick**

The other sites are:

The Museum

The Dolls' Museum

The Lord Leycester Hospital

St John's Museum

Hill Close Victorian Gardens

Other churches: St Nicholas, St Paul's, etc.

The existence of these sites should be seen more as an opportunity than a threat. Being relatively small concerns, all of these together with St Mary's could be visited in a day, so the success of one should not detract from the success of another. It may be that there is scope for collaborative marketing, thus reducing the costs of leaflets, for example. A town trail incorporating these attractions may also be a possibility.

The other Warwick Churches have a very restricted opening policy, though St Nicholas opens in the week during summertime. A Warwick Church trail might be interesting to try, though, if other churches showed an interest.

## **Tourism organisations**

### **Churches Tourism Association**

An important organisation for church marketing purposes. Its remit is to develop tourism potential and the visitor experience. It has an annual conference which we should always try to attend, and facilitates tourism and visitor projects across the country: Coventry Diocese's "Divine Inspiration" is one of these. Membership is £60 per annum. Conference costs are £165 per delegate (with travel expenses on top).

### **South Warwickshire Tourism Ltd.**

This is a not for profit organisation involving both the private and the public sector, providing marketing and visitor services for its members. Its aim is to generate tourism in the area, and it runs the Tourist Information Centre at Leamington Spa Pumprooms, and the Shakespeare Country website.

### **South Warwickshire Association of Tourist Attractions**

Little information on this at present.

### **Regional Centre for Tourism Business Support**

Provides free and impartial advice for tourism businesses. Runs free tourism-based workshops: recent examples are a series on setting up and maximising websites.

### **Divine Inspiration**

A project run within Coventry Diocese to encourage churches to be regularly open. Attendance at the early meetings of this group suggested that the activity was too low level for ourselves, and was mainly aimed at churches which found difficulty in mustering the resources to keep their buildings open for visitors. This remains the case; however, some of the activities associated with the project look quite interesting: to date it has run three events entitled “What do visitors want?”, “Leaflets, trails and guides”, and “God’s ground: conserving, recording sharing your churchyard”. We would benefit ourselves by finding the resources to attend the meetings and events, and taking an active part in this initiative.

### **Pilgrim’s Association**

This is mainly a cathedrals group, though some larger churches, for instance Bath Abbey, are members. It sees itself as promoting the care and welcome of pilgrims, tourists and visitors, and has actively encouraged the membership of St Mary’s as being a large church rather similar to a cathedral in terms of its visitors. It would be to St Mary’s advantage to be an active member, especially as cathedrals are a group from which we can learn a lot. It has an annual conference. Subscriptions for parish churches are £70 per annum.

### **Greater Churches Group**

St Mary’s is one of the “Greater Churches” and is an active member of the group. We have sent one or more representatives to all but one of their biennial conferences since 1998. Its remit is much wider than just tourism and marketing, but, being a body of churches so similar to St Mary’s, we should maintain our active association.

## **Sanctuary UK**

Strictly speaking this is a new organisation, still in the exploratory stage with a mainly conservation and funding agenda, but includes within its remit church tourism and education. Associate membership seems to be for Friends' groups and Trusts, and there seems to be a benefit in attracting individual membership at £30 per annum. We should pursue this further.

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Generally speaking, St Mary's should seriously consider maintaining active contact with all these groups. We will learn from the exchange of ideas, and there will be marketing opportunities to be had. There will be costs involved in membership, though in most cases these will be small, but more costs in terms of human resources. There is little point in membership unless we can take a full and active part in these groups' affairs; however, it would probably not be possible to maintain these contacts without volunteer involvement

### **Local websites**

About Britain. Has a local section, but no mention of St Mary's.

Warwick-uk. Includes information about St Mary's, and has a link to our website.

Enjoy Warwickshire. Includes an article on St Mary's, but the link to our website doesn't work.

A Church Near You. A worldwide listing of Anglican churches. We have entered our details on this, and we get several daily hits. Unfortunately, an incorrect map of the Parish is displayed, and the site seems unable to correct it.

Warwick District Council website. This has a tourism section, but St Mary's is not mentioned, and we are not among their "useful links".

Shakespeare Country. Nothing on St Mary's despite there being a Warwick page, and details of The Lord Leycester Hospital and Holy Trinity, Stratford.

We should liaise with these websites, and identify other relevant sites, to ensure that we are included to best effect.

## **PART THREE: PROPOSED ACTIONS**

### **Internal Communications and report structure**

**Marketing Committee.** To consist of the two Churchwardens, Terry Babbage, and up to two “hands on” volunteers who are prepared to put in time actually carrying out as well as advising on, some of the requirements of the marketing report. The group to be a sub committee of the Finance Committee, meeting bi-monthly as a minimum and reporting to every Finance Committee meeting.

There is a need for others to input into the process, in particular the Receptionists, the Shop Manager, the Verger, the Guides, and other interested parties. These can be the source of new ideas, and a sounding board, and they need to feel part of the process. At present there are regular biennial meetings of Guides “Team Leaders” (there are Guides who ostensibly have responsibility for the manning of the Church for each day of the week, but who also act as a sounding board and source of ideas). In addition there are ad hoc meetings of the Receptionists. Thought needs to be given to the best meeting structure involving these groups.

**Other “stakeholders”.** Some have voiced strong views on how the management of tourism marketing should be managed. Others may well have an equally interesting contribution. PCC members should be invited to meet with Terry Babbage to discuss the marketing plan.

### **Gift Aid**

There is a considerable potential income from Gift Aid from visitors. Some of this is realised as a steady stream of visitors do fill in gift aid forms. However, our request for gift aid is nowhere near as prominent as it could be, nor are the facilities in place to encourage the completion of gift aid forms. Currently around one tenth of our income from visitors is gift aided, bringing in some £930 per annum. If we assume that 50% of our visitors are UK taxpayers (the figure is probably much higher) we could potentially receive a further £3720 per annum from this source.

Following discussions with the Receptionists, I came to the conclusion that the Reception Desk is psychologically not the best place to locate the gift aid area. Some people are embarrassed to undertake the gift aid process under the eye of a Receptionist, and would prefer to do this anonymously. During the discussions with The Friends on the matter of a new Reception Desk I lobbied for an additional feature to be located by the exit door (by the Shop). This would combine a desk and a seat, with gift aid envelopes and pens, together with a prominent notice informing visitors of the costs of keeping open the Church, together with a plea for assistance via a completed gift aid envelope. In fact I considered that, in the Church’s current financial climate this was the more important issue. I still consider this to be the case.

The opportunity to donate money and complete gift aid forms should still remain at the Reception Desk, but for those who want anonymity the area I propose by the exit

door has great importance. A well worded notice detailing the costs of running the Church, and inviting donations and gift aid contributions, is equally vital.

### **Church layout**

Within the constraints of a working church, there will be an optimum layout of the various visitor features, e.g. the reception area and the shop. We need to consider these features both in terms of visitor income, and staff costs.

Ten years ago, the welcome of visitors was solely the work of volunteer Guides. They were very good at their work of showing visitors round and explaining the architecture and history. They did not see their role as inviting donations, however, and often flatly refused to do so. Prior to the setting up of the Reception Desk, income from visitors in the donation box was around £8,000 per annum. Following the introduction of the Desk this rose to around £40,000.

Another feature of the pre Reception era was that the Church was manned by a Custos whose hours did not encompass the entire opening hours, and by volunteer Guides who would occasionally not turn up, or leave early without notice. Equally there were many times when there was no one to manage incidents as they arose, or even to lock up.

The introduction of paid Receptionists improved the running of the Church, and more than paid for itself by some considerable margin. Another feature was that we were able to open the Tower for visitors for a longer period, and dispose of the extra casual labour required to manage the Tower.

More recently income from visitors has been falling, while the costs of Receptionists have been rising. This has led some to ask if there are more cost effective ways of managing the Church. One suggestion is that the layout of the Church should be changed, to channel visitors initially through the Shop, where the staff there would manage the reception aspect as well as the running of the shop. I personally doubt that anyone could manage both functions simultaneously, as well as manage Tower visits. However, it is right to consider what options may be open to us in this respect.

Should we be able to raise visitor numbers, these options would lose their immediacy.

## Church frontage

The Church porch was renovated some seven years ago; it was in a very run down state, and it was realised that it did not encourage people to venture within. The stone floor was resurfaced, and all the woodwork was cleaned thoroughly, so that now we have an attractive base from which to work. However, as a visitor attraction it cannot be said that there is much to excite the mind of the casual visitor. Most heritage sites will have a prominent front of house display designed to convert potential visitors into actual ones; English Heritage properties are particularly good in this respect, combining tastefulness with visibility. We have nothing except the rather conservative and dilapidated Shop A-board.

Part of the problem is that the area outside the front door is public highway and does not belong to the Church. We previously advertised the Tower more prominently from under the Tower, but were advised by the District Council that we are not able to do this. It seems therefore that we are confined to the small area immediately outside the front door, the Churchyard, and the Churchyard railings; anything that we do may be subject to the Planners' consent.

Among the possibilities are a permanent noticeboard in the Churchyard facing Church Street; a board on the Churchyard railings similar to those advertising music events; and a display in the main doorway. We should attach great importance to advertising ourselves in this way, mainly with a view to enticing the casual visitor inside.

## The Shop

It is important to encourage, even to require, visitors to visit the shop. At present visitors are free to go pretty much in any direction they desire, though the exit from the Church is via the west end door adjacent to the Shop. It should be possible to exert even more control via the use of free standing rope barriers to require exit through the shop.

## Charging policy options

- a) **Entry to the Church.** This is currently free of charge, although a donation is actively sought. Charging for entry may run counter to the ethos of the Church; it is also not clear that revenue would necessarily be increased by charging, although it seems to work well for some cathedrals, and we should consider the matter fully. We need to review the recommended donation amount.
- b) **Tower trips.** Income from the Tower is substantial. Previously someone had to be employed to manage these, so there were outgoings (sometimes more than a day's takings), and access to the Tower was restricted. Now that the Receptionists manage the Tower there are no outgoings, and access to the Tower is unrestricted, except for bad weather. We need to review the pricing structure for Tower trips.

- c) **Entry to Beauchamp Chapel (and Chancel?).** Many years ago visitors paid a fee for entry to the Beauchamp Chapel, though entry has been free for a long time now. Holy Trinity, Stratford charges for entry to Shakespeare's tomb, and Warwick Castle makes an extra charge for entry to one of its internal features. Charging for the Beauchamp Chapel would raise some logistical issues; for instance it can be viewed quite well from the Dean's Chapel, so we might have to consider restricting entry to the Chapel also. Also, should we charge we would have to consider the effect on donations, which we could expect to go down, and on revenue from gift aid.
- d) **Entry to Chapter House (Fulke Greville tomb).** This issue is similar to that of the Beauchamp Chapel. The matter of Fulke Greville may or may not come to public prominence, and we should be prepared to take advantage of it. However, the nature of the Chapter House makes it a physically difficult subject for charging. The whole matter of the Fulke Greville issue is discussed elsewhere.
- e) **Photography/film.** At present no charge is made for either of these, except by commercial companies such as the BBC. Some places do require a fee for use of cameras. St Mary's has rejected this option in the past, one of the reasons being that it would be difficult to police. We should reconsider this; the fact that some people would slip through the net would not stop us from making some income from this.
- f) **Guided tours.** At present Guides are on hand free of charge, although we have experimented in the past with group tours for which a fee is paid. Some churches offer only group tours. We should carefully consider, in consultation with Guides, how we do our Guiding, with a view to identifying any income opportunities.
- g) **Photo database.** It should be possible to place a photo database on the website, for which a fee is required for downloading. Whether or not this would be cost effective is uncertain at this stage.
- h) **Hiring out the Church for events.** We have been doing this fairly effectively for many years, though the current charging structure is cumbersome, and needs to be reviewed. Also the Church website needs a page devoted to the hiring out of the Church.
- i) **Hiring out the Church for exhibitions.** The Church is used for exhibitions (the annual schools art exhibition is the most notable example). I am not aware that we have ever invited exhibitions, or charged for them. However, there are many groups who are looking out for exhibition space (libraries are a favoured location), and they have an added advantage that they bring people into the Church who otherwise would not be seen. An active policy of inviting exhibitions (subject to strict controls), on the website, might be effective.
- j) **Hiring out Church House.** We cannot overtly advertise Church House for lettings as there are tax implications. However, we get a small but regular demand, and we need to keep our prices competitive.
- k) **Leaflets/guide books.** We have some glossy guide books for sale in the Shop and on the Reception Desk. We need to consider how these can be most effectively displayed. We also have a range of other leaflets, some for sale and others free. We need a coherent policy on leaflets to avoid giving for free what we otherwise would charge for. We are rightly proud of our free guide leaflets in many languages. However, these are free of charge and could actively deter the purchase of our guide books

- l) **Candles.** Can we review our pricing to maximise income, or do other issues come to bear?
- m) **Refreshments.** Refreshments in churches and cathedrals are big money spinners; in fact we have received advice that they are far and away the best money spinners. We used to offer Crypt teas many years ago; this was run by volunteers. We have recently tried selling teas on a Saturday, though this experiment was not very successful. We need to consider all the options here to see if a successful formula can be found.
- n) **Private use of Church organ.** Currently the organ is used on a steady basis by private individuals, who are accommodated free of charge. We have the option to make a charge, or ask for a donation.

### Advertising options

1. **Press releases.** These have been done from time to time, occasionally, when we think of it, and when the event seems important enough. Indeed, we have taken out paid advertising in the Church Times for the Lent Addresses. A concerted policy of well targeted press releases would keep us in the public eye for little expense other than staff time. Information on our services and other activities is already sought by one local newspaper.
2. **Radio and television.** Similarly, contacts with local radio and local television news programmes especially could bear fruit, with little financial outlay.
3. **Magazines.** Articles written especially for specialist magazines could bear fruit. These would require some effort and expertise, but could make an impact. Historical and architectural magazines might take articles about the Church, but they would have to be serious articles written by an expert. Less demanding, and more likely to be well received would be articles for “country magazines” of the Warwickshire Life type.
4. **Exhibitions.** A travelling exhibition on our largely redundant, but well looked after, exhibition panels could make an impact. Public libraries are prepared to offer exhibition space, and we might be able to move an exhibition around a number of Warwickshire libraries. Other possibilities might arise at fairs and open days, and other churches might be interested. Some expertise would be required to pull an exhibition together, and exhibitions would have to be manned in some cases.
5. **Leaflets.** We currently have a glossy, well produced, leaflet about St Mary’s. Its success depends upon good distribution, and on getting a good take up of our publicity. At present we have a distribution system operated on a voluntary basis. Whether we could actually afford the number of leaflets required to be completely success in this regard is open to question. We have to question the economics of providing leaflets at nearly 5p each when our average visitor gives us only about £1. The more we can raise the visitor donation, whether by formal charging or other means, the more viable is out production of glossy leaflets. At present it would be helpful to consider a more cheaply produced leaflet, or one which shares the cost with other heritage organisations.



6. **Direct Mail.** Many groups look for venues for days out. Those interested might include Women's Institutes, Mothers' Unions, local history societies, other churches. A mailshot might generate considerable interest. In addition, St Mary's is already recognised a fine educational resource; a well designed mailshot to all schools within a defined area might reap rewards. First we have to consider the basis on which we offer group or educational visits: do we charge or offer refreshments, for instance? Do we have the resources to manage these visits? Should they be in the day or in the evening? This issue needs to be considered initially with the Guides and the Reception staff.
7. **Presentation.** Visual presentation at the front of the church has been considered elsewhere. We also need to consider the way we respond to visitors, potential or otherwise, whether face to face, on the phone, by letter or email. The more professional we appear, the more likely we are to attract visitors. Promptness in replying to booking requests needs to be prompt and professional, and managed on the basis that the enquirer is a valued customer. Similarly, the responses of Receptionists and Guides must not slip from our high standards. Meetings of Receptionists and the Parish Administrator should include a customer care element.

### The Shop

The Church shop is an important source of income. The issues of putting the shop on the website, and its place in the visitor's journey round the Church, have been discussed elsewhere.

The shop is run by the part-time Shop manager, who recruits volunteers to work in the shop when she is not here herself. She attends the Cathedral Shops association meetings at which she picks up useful marketing and product advice.

There have been debates over the years as to the overall style of the shop, and its range of products. Cathedral and Church shops have a certain recognisable style, and St Mary's by and large conforms with this. Items for sale tend to be in keeping with the church ambience, mostly being tasteful and having some religious connection, however tangential. Conversely, overtly commercial or "cheap" items are avoided, as are those which clearly have no religious significance. There could well be a case for additional lines, such as cheap goods (pencils, notebooks, etc. for children).

We would do well to constantly review this policy, and to be clear about what the purpose of the shop is. Is the shop there purely to raise income, or does it have another purpose? Until we know this we cannot adequately manage and promote it.

Currently the Shop Manager works to the PCC through the Parish Administrator. Previously there have been attempts to set up Shop Management Committees, but I understand these have not worked well, and that Church politics tends to interfere with their proper functioning. Nevertheless, I feel that the Shop would benefit from the following:

1. A clear, written policy on the purpose of the shop and the range of its merchandise.

2. Regular meetings of a Shop Committee consisting of the Shop Manager, the Parish Administrator and an enthusiastic parishioner with retail experience.
3. Regular reports of the Shop Committee to the Finance Team, to include financial statements.
4. A facility for sales via credit card (under investigation at the time of writing).

### Website

St Mary's new website dates from early 2008, and is still under construction in that several extra pages are planned. The website has a number of functions, but, as it relates to marketing, it is designed to attract visitors and to attract funding. The following additions to the site are being planned or considered. Currently we are attracting around 40 "hits" a day on the site, and each visitor looks, on average, at 5 pages.

1. Hiring the Church. Revenue from the hiring of the Church is important to our overall finances, and we have the opportunity to attract business via our website. The importance of St Mary's as a high profile musical venue will be stressed, and the possibilities of other events, such as graduation ceremonies, highlighted. A list of charges, and the ability to book online should increase business. The position as regards the hiring of Church House needs to be considered for tax implications before publicity can go ahead.
2. Family History. This is a very popular hobby with many people, and St Mary's already receives many inquiries on the subject (most of which we are unable to answer). Making available the detail of all the tombs and memorials, both in the Church and the Churchyard should attract interest, and hopefully encourage more visits to the Church. We should also consider the possibility of publishing parish records on the website.
3. Appeals. At present we have no appeals under way. However, we have various important fabric issues which could benefit greatly from an injection of cash: amongst these would be the Beauchamp Chapel stonework, which could be the subject of a high profile appeal. Appeals such as these could be displayed on the website, with the facility to donate on line.
4. Donations. We can also invite donations independently of an appeal. Something on the website detailing our huge costs could be supplemented with an online facility for payment. Likewise, the Friends could offer online membership with a payment and donation facility. The possibilities should be discussed with The Friends.
5. St Mary's shop. The shop could be made available online, with an online purchase facility. We have attempted one online sale to the United States so far; this fell through because the financial arrangements were not in place.
6. Fulke Greville and other topical issues. The interest in Fulke Greville is growing, regardless of the success or otherwise of a scan on his tomb, and his link, fictional or otherwise, with Shakespeare has far too much potential to be ignored. A page devoted to the Fulke Greville "myth", and links to the "Master of Shakespeare" website and others would be invaluable in creating

interest. We should similarly take advantage of any other popular anecdotes associated with the Church and publish them on the site.

7. The History and Architecture page. This should be developed further. The more interesting detail we can add, the more interest will be generated, and, hopefully, more visits will ensue.
8. Photo archive. There is a market for good architectural photographs, and we should investigate if it is possible to set up an archive from which online sales are available. The set up costs might be more than we get in sales, but investigation of similar sites should help in this regard.

### **Visitor makeup**

We have only anecdotal evidence regarding the visitors who come through our doors. We know that we get visitors from all over the world, from near and far, and many from Warwick itself; but we do not know in what proportion. We also know that some people come in on a whim, some to pray, and some specifically to see the Beauchamp Chapel or a particular memorial. Again we do not know the proportions involved.

We do not know what people feel about us, other than comments in the Visitors' Book; these tend to be uniformly complimentary. We have no real idea about what visitors want to see when they come in, nor what they think is best or worst about the facilities and attractions we offer.

With this gap in our knowledge, it makes it difficult to plan our marketing and promotions. A well designed visitor questionnaire would remedy this defect.

Amongst the information we should glean from this exercise are:

- Number in party and ages
- Where did they come from
- Why do visitors come to St Mary's
- Where did they hear about us
- Would they come again
- What did they think of the welcome (1-10)
- Would they have come in if we had made a charge of £3/£4/£5
- What did they think of the signage/information (1-10)
- What was the most interesting feature (list features)
- Where else visited in Warwick.
- How do they rate the shop (1-10)

We would probably need to offer a prize draw to encourage entries.

## **Guiding and group visits**

St Mary's has a long established guiding system which has served us excellently. Many dedicated people give voluntarily of their time to ensure someone is on hand to show interested people round the Church, imparting interesting information and answering queries. The Guides have a rota system which usually means that the Church has a Guide on duty all the hours we are open. This has the added benefit that the Church is rarely in a position where only one person is on duty during hours of opening, a position whereby we would be required to close. Where a visiting group requests a Guide, a volunteer will usually turn out specially, free of charge.

All guiding is offered free of charge, whether on a one to one, or a group basis. There are other possibilities:

1. Group visits requiring a special Guide to be available for a charge.
2. A regular guided tour of the Church to be publicised for a certain time of the day; a charge to be made per person.

Valuable as the Guides, input is, we should bear in mind that the provision of historical and architectural information, which they do so well, could have the effect of suppressing the purchase of guidebooks; it could equally be said to stimulate sales.

Both options could be a useful source of income, and work well in some other churches. However, any exploration of these must be handled sensitively as the

Guides' interests should be considered, and any decisions made in conjunction with the Guides themselves.

Should we introduce a system of paid guiding this should be promoted on the website. We would also benefit from mailshots inviting bookings; various options spring to mind: schools, women's institutes, historical societies, tourist and guides' organisations, etc.

## APPENDIX : STATISTICS

### 1. Breakdown of tourism from overseas (from “Britain Inbound”, January 2008).

a) Visits to UK from overseas, 2006 (total 32,713,000):

USA	11.9%
France	11.3%
Germany	10.4%
Irish Republic	8.9%
Spain	6.1%
Netherlands	5.5%
Italy	4.5%
Poland	4.1%
Belgium	3.0%
Australia	2.9%

b) Percentage spend by nation of overseas visitors, 2006:

USA	18.2%
Germany	6.8%
France	6.6%
Irish Republic	5.7%
Spain	5.2%
Australia	4.2%
Italy	3.9%
Poland	3.4%
Netherlands	3.1%
Canada	3.0%

2. The UK is the 7<sup>th</sup> most popular tourism venue in the world.
3. The UK is rated the 6<sup>th</sup> most popular venue in the world for heritage and historical tourism (behind Egypt, Greece, Italy, France and China)
4. The UK is rated the third most popular venue for culture (behind USA and France).
5. Apart from shopping, visiting castles churches, monuments and historic houses is the most popular activity amongst overseas visitors.

6. The Internet is regarded as by far the best way to communicate with potential visitors from overseas.

### Local tourism statistics.

Statistics are for Warwick District in 2006

1. Visitors to Warwick District by type of visitor

Day visitors	51%
UK visitors, touring	9%
UK visitors, overnight	27%
Overseas visitors, touring	4%
Overseas visitors, overnight	10%

2. Place of origin of UK day visitors to Warwick District

Warwickshire	23%
West Midlands Metropolitan area	23%
Coventry	11%
Leicestershire	6%
Staffordshire	6%
Worcestershire	4%
Oxfordshire	4%
Northants	3%

3. Place of origin of UK touring visitors to Warwickshire

London	7%
Scotland	5%
Essex	5%
Lincolnshire	4%
Kent	4%
Hants/IOW	4%

4. Place of origin of UK overnight visitors to Warwick District

Cheshire	10%
Scotland	7%
London	6%
Kent	4%
Lancashire	2%

5. Place of origin of overseas visitors to Warwickshire

USA	27%
Australia	20%
Eastern Europe	8%
Germany	7%
New Zealand	5%
Canada	4%
France	3%
Spain	3%
Republic of Ireland	3%
Asia	3%
South Africa	3%

6. Age profile of all visitors to Warwickshire

55-64 years	19%
45-54 years	17%
65+ years	15%
35-44 years	14%
0-9 years	12%
25-34 years	11%
10-14 years	5%
19-24 years	5%
15-18 years	3%

7. 62% of visitors to Warwick District had no children in their party.

8. Socio economic makeup of visitors to Warwick District.

- AB 44% (Managerial, administrative or professional at senior or intermediate level)
- C1 32% (Supervisory, clerical, junior administrative or professional)
- C2 16% (Skilled manual worker)
- DE 7% (Semi-skilled and unskilled manual worker, retired state pensioner, casual earner, unemployed)

9. The percentage of visitors to Warwick District who are making a repeat visit to the area is 79%.

10. Mode of transport for those visiting Warwick District

Private car/motorcycle	77%
Hire car	5%
Bus service	6%
Coach tour	5%
Train	5%
Bicycle	1%
Walk	1%
Other	2%

**Visitor statistics**

	Boxes and Tower income	Tower income only	Total visitor numbers	Tower visitors only	Box and Tower income per visitor	Candles and other income	Reception costs	Shop income
2007	33867	8668	30850	3878	£1.10	3239	18005	29109
2006	33639	7729	33440	3340	£1.00	2543	19499	28181
2005	36782	9540	39637	5877	£0.93	2568	18439	29877
2004	35728	7707	41552	5881	£0.86	3327	17954	
2003	33318		37335		£0.89	2744	15969	
2002	35466		46204		£0.77	2575	17491	
2001	39758		54780		£0.73	2465	18463	
2000	29721					2644	13293	

	Lettings income
2007	5284
2006	7796
2005	7194
2004	6446
2003	3625
2002	1994
2001	2182
2000	2644



The above breakdown of income and costs relating to visitors and lettings reveal that the trends do not entirely match the general perception of things. It is generally assumed that income is falling rather drastically, while costs rise inexorably.

If we look at income from **donation boxes** and the **Tower** we see there was a bumper year in 2001; other than that the figures are fairly homogenous. The worst that can be said is that we are not keeping pace with inflation. Interestingly the 2001 high coincides with the period when some marketing activity was undertaken.

**Reception costs** equally do not show a uniform rise, in fact costs for 2007 are lower than for 2006, 2005 and 2001.

Income from the **purchase of candles** in the Church is also a fairly steady figure.

Lettings income has grown considerably over the period covered, but has fallen off in 2007. In recent years the charging structure has been cumbersome and has actually deterred groups from making repeat bookings. We also failed to make a deal with our most lucrative customer for rehearsal space in Church House. The charging structure needs to be considered afresh, and we need to attract custom more proactively.

