

Danson House Survey  
Final Report

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## **Abstract**

Danson House is a small historic house in the London Borough of Bexley that has suffered lackluster visitation numbers since it reopened following major renovations in 2005. The goal of this project was to evaluate the impact of recent efforts to enhance the visitor experience at Danson House and recommend ways to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation. Three surveys conducted in the house, tearoom, and adjacent park revealed high levels of visitor satisfaction, as well as opportunities for improvement.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our sponsors, Sarah Fosker and Caroline Worthington, for all their guidance over the past term. We are very thankful for all their insight and all the time that they committed to the project. We would like to thank them for welcoming us and helping us become accustomed to the ways of Danson House, as well as answering all of our numerous questions. We would also like to thank the staff and volunteers at Danson House for taking the time to share valuable knowledge they have gained through their experiences at the house over the years.

We would also like to thank our advisors, Melissa-Sue John and Dominic Golding, for all the time they took answering our questions, reviewing our report and surveys, and making sure we had all the resources we needed to complete our project. Their feedback was always useful and kept us on track. Without them our project would not be as polished or precise.

## Executive Summary

Tourism is a large part of the United Kingdom's economy as it attracts 29 million tourists each year to a variety of historic sites. Altogether the heritage sector generates £115 billion every year. Danson House is a small historic house attracting less than 10,000 visitors per year and now faces fierce competition for visitor numbers. The house reopened in 2005 after major renovations and initially saw high interest from the community but has suffered declining visitation in recent years.

The goal of this project was to evaluate the impact of recent efforts to enhance the visitor experience at Danson House and make recommendations to Bexley Heritage Trust with ways to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation at Danson House. To achieve this goal, the project team identified four objectives. The project team: (1) clarified the nature of past and current efforts to improve the visitor experience at Danson House; (2) assessed the visitor experience at Danson House; (3) conducted site evaluations at Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace; and, (4) recommended ways Bexley Heritage Trust might enhance the visitor experience and improve attendance at Danson House.

## Methodology

The project group engaged in several different tasks over a seven-week period. The methods included a combination of background research, observations, and surveying. To understand past and present efforts to improve Danson House the project team researched Danson House, as well as conducted interviews with staff and volunteers who work at Danson House. From the information obtained the project group gained an in-depth understanding of the historic sector and the nature of the problems that small historic houses face.

To assess the visitor experience at Danson House the project team developed and implemented a set of surveys focused on the perspectives of three types of visitors: a house visitor survey, a tea room visitor survey and a park visitor survey. The surveys are comparable to one another. The house visitor survey allowed the project group to gather information about the visitor experience from visitors who had taken a tour of Danson House. The tea room and park surveys allowed the group to obtain the general

population's perception of Danson House. Additionally, these surveys helped to identify the audience that the sites attract. The tea room survey also helped the project group gain feedback for the tea room in general. The data was analyzed carefully in order to draw conclusions and compose recommendations for Bexley Heritage Trust.

In order to further develop the recommendations and understand the historic sector, other historic sites in England were assessed. The historic sites chosen to assess were Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace. These particular sites were chosen because they are comparable to Danson House either in size, location, type of organization responsible for the site, or a combination of these criteria. In addition, the observations allowed the group to illuminate efforts made to increase visitation at other historic attractions.

## Findings

Three different surveys were designed and conducted by the project group. The Danson House Visitor Survey was given to visitors who had toured Danson House focused on their experience within the house. The Tea Room Visitor Survey evaluated customer satisfaction in a variety of areas pertaining to the tea room while also inquiring about Danson House. The Danson Park Visitor Survey conducted in Danson Park was meant to demonstrate how aware park visitors were of Danson House and gauge one's interest in visiting. The data collected and analyzed was separated according to each different survey.

### Danson House Visitor Survey

Fifty-seven surveys were collected with a total of 163 participants with 122 (75%) female and 41 (25%) male. The total participants are larger than the number of surveys since demographic information was only recorded for the primary respondent if visitors were in a group; from the 24 groups that had both female and male visitors there were 11 (46%) male primary respondent and 13 (54%) female primary respondents. The average age of visitors was 60. Of the 57 primary respondents surveyed 45 (79%) of the participants were retired. Eighty-seven percent were White British while 13% were categorized as Other (e.g. Chinese, American, White New Zealander, etc.). The average distance traveled was 28.36 miles, due to the fact that some visitors traveled from a

further distance and skewed the data (e.g. Chislehurst, BL7 at 225 miles). However, 78% of the visitors were from the Borough of Bexley. The most popular modes of transportation to Danson House were by car (37%) and coach (37%), since there were high numbers of visitors traveling by coach on scheduled tours. Other modes of transportation used included by foot (11%), by bus (10%) and by rail (5%).

Ninety-one percent of the visitors were visiting Danson House for the first time. Seventy-five percent of the people came to take a tour of the house as a whole, 14% came to visit the tea room, 12% came because of the park, 2% came because of items in the house (e.g. furniture and paintings), 2% came because of the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit, and 19% of people came for other reasons (e.g. curiosity, to see the house since it had been restored, etc.). An average of 1.8 hours was spent in Danson House. When asked how things could be improved at Danson House 39 % of visitors said there are no changes they would make. Although people were pleased with Danson House's accessibility, 19% of visitors said there needs to be more seats around the museum for the elderly and disabled. Seven percent said that the entrance needed to be more clearly labeled. Ten percent reported the tea room could be improvement in some way. Ten percent of the visitors had some other improvements that they would like to see (e.g. inclusion of watercolors of the house, more guides, a recreated Georgian bathroom, etc.). Six percent would like to see more furnishings in the house such as tables in the dining room. Nine percent said that they would like to see the upstairs of the house restored. When visitors were surveyed about their favorite part of the house 28% said the dining room, 16% said the salon, 10% said the historic floor as a whole, 11% said the library, 7% said the spiral staircase, 3% said the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit, and 22% said some other answer, which included the tour that was given, the Victorian kitchen, and the restoration of the house as a whole. Fifty-two of the total respondents had visited an average of 7 other historic sites in the past 12 months.

Respondents were asked to rate the likeliness of recommending someone to visit Danson House on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). The average rating was 4.61. The house staff and volunteer guides were rated in three categories on a similar scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The staff's friendliness received an average rating of 4.86, the staff's knowledge of history received an average rating of 4.94, and the staff's

ability to answer any questions guests had received an average rating of 4.92. This data illustrates that visitors were highly satisfied with the performance of staff and volunteer guides.

Of the total respondents, 28% had seen the Danson House website and gained information on opening times and admission fees, however, many visitors said they had trouble navigating the website. Of the respondents 17 (30%) had heard about the Danson House by personal recommendation, 11 (20%) of the people lived nearby and thus knew of the house already, 9 (16%) had found it using advertisement such as the website or pamphlets, 14 (25%) of the people were part of a tour group through an organization such as the National Trust, 4 people (7%) had come for a school project, and 1 (2%) heard of it because of the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit.

When visitors were asked about what type of events they would be interested in attending at Danson House 30% of visitors expressed interest in music concerts and recitals, especially if the organ in the library were to be played; other responses included boat rides along the lake, holiday events, historical role-playing, and cinematic screenings. Some visitors indicated they would not be interested in events at Danson House because they live too far away. With this in mind, 50% of the people said they probably would not visit again within the next 12 months.

### **Tea Room Visitor Survey**

Forty-two surveys were collected with a total of 102 participants with 78 (76%) female and 24 (24%) male. Of the people surveyed in the tea room, 97% were White British. The tea room guests were more varied in age than house visitors with an average age of 47. Fifty-eight percent of visitors traveled by car to get to the tea room, 20% traveled by foot, 11% traveled by bus, 4% traveled by bicycle, 4% traveled by rail, and 2% traveled by minibus. The average amount of time visitors spent traveling was 17.6 minutes and the average distance traveled was 5.29 miles, again with a majority of 73% of the visitors coming from the Borough of Bexley. Thirty-eight percent of visitors came to the tea room because they saw it while in the park, 33% of visitors came specifically to eat, 14% came to socialize or meet up with friends, 7% came for other reasons (e.g. organized trip), 5% visited through a recommendation, and 3% came in order to see Danson House.

Of the respondents 44% were returning visitors, while 56% were there for the first time. Of the returning visitors, 41% of the visitors came back because they enjoyed the atmosphere, 32% liked the food, 13% came on a regular basis, 5% thought it was close by and convenient, and 9% came to tour the house. Ninety-six percent of first time visitors said they would return. Of the tea room visitors 28% had taken a tour of the house previously, and 88% of those who had previously toured the house enjoyed their experience. Of those who had not taken a tour yet, 57% stated their interest to take a tour.

Visitors were asked to rate the tea room in 5 different categories on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The visitors rated the friendliness of the staff (4.82 average), the efficiency of the staff (4.7 average), the variety of the food (4.45 average), the quality of the food (4.8 average), and the cleanliness of the tea room (4.94 average). The visitors were also asked if they would recommend a friend to visit the tea room on a similar scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very unlikely) and it received an average rating of 4.8.

### **Danson Park Survey**

The project group collected 41 park surveys with a total of 72 participants. Forty-five (62.5%) were women and 27 (37.5%) were men. Eighty-one percent of respondents were White British. The average age was 36. This data shows that Danson Park attracts a more varied clientele than Danson House. Once again, the majority of visitors in the park were from the Borough of Bexley with an average distance traveled of 3.6 miles.

Some visitors visited the park for multiple reasons and therefore would respond with multiple answers causing the percentages to add up to be more than 100%. Forty-four percent of visitors were at the park enjoying pleasant weather, 27% came to give their children space to play outside, 17% came to socialize, 15% came to walk their pets, 15% came to exercise, and 5% came for other reasons. Eighty-four percent were returning visitors while only 16% were visiting for the first time. All respondents said they would visit the park again with 27% reporting that they visit every day. Twenty-two percent of the respondents had previously visited Danson House.

Park visitors who had not toured Danson House were asked to rate how likely they would be to visit on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) and the average rating was 2.16. Reasons that people had not yet visited were as follows: no interest (36%), unaware of Danson House (44%), too time consuming (12%), or other reasons



(8%) such as having children or not knowing how to get into Danson House. People stated that they would be encouraged to visit the house if there was more frequent advertising (32%), if the house was easier to get to (9%), if the house had more events (5%), or if they had knowledge of the tea room (5%). However, most people (50%) said there was nothing that would increase their interest in visiting Danson House.

### **Observations from Other Historic Sites**

Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace were all compared to Danson House. Red House conducts tours with one continuous guide for both the house and the grounds. The tour focused on the architect of the house, William Morris, and his life as well as the architecture of the house. Eltham Palace only utilized self-guided tours with an optional audio tour. Additionally, it had clear and concise directions with signs that led to the entrance of the palace. Dover Castle was much larger than Danson House, and it had interactive visitor role playing with employees dressed in medieval costumes. There were also dioramas set up in rooms to show people what the house would be like if people were living there in medieval times. Comparing these observations to Danson House allowed conclusions and recommendations of improvements for Danson House to be made.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The project team developed conclusions and recommendations regarding three aspects of operations at Danson House: (1) the nature of the visitor experience; (2) the tea room experience; and (3) outreach and marketing.

#### **The Nature of the Visitor Experience**

**Conclusions:** Overall, the survey respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the Danson House experience, particularly with the quality of the guides and the restored rooms. The Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit was not well received but visitors expressed interest in similar exhibits, events, and activities more related to the time period. Visitors would like to see additional rooms (e.g. bathroom, bedrooms, servants' quarters) restored to historical authenticity. Additionally, navigation and way finding to the entrance needs

to be improved. Lastly, visitors would appreciate more seating for the elderly and disabled.

**Recommendations:** In order to bring more visitors to Danson House and encourage people to return, future exhibits are crucial. Based on the feedback collected future exhibit should be more closely related to the time period of the house. Options to please visitors include restoring the top floor to historical authenticity, an exhibit about the servants of the time period, or an exhibit on the watercolors used to assist in the restoration of Danson House. To improve way finding signs are vital since the entrance to Danson House is not the grand door in the front but a smaller one on the side of the house. A sign on the fence or in front of the house directing people to the actual entrance would reduce many visitors' confusion. Additional signs inside near the ticket office directing people to the staircase will help guests navigate their way to the historic floor. Interviews with the guides and the visitors both reflect a need for usable chairs in the rooms, especially since the average age of visitors is 60. Providing seating for visitors would make the experience more positive for many elderly and disabled people. Visitors' suggestions support making these changes and therefore will improve the visitor experience thus encouraging repeat visitors.

### **The Tea Room Experience**

**Conclusions:** Respondents to the tea room survey expressed high levels of satisfaction in all categories with the exception of the variety offered on the menu. Visitors enjoyed the staff, the food offered and the atmosphere.

**Recommendations:** Tea room visitors were not completely satisfied with the variety offered on the menu. They expressed interest in more lunch options, specifically more sandwiches and salads. Improvement could also be made by offering simple meal options for children since many visitors are families or mothers who come from the park to get lunch with young children. Survey results also yielded a desire for menu options for visitors with allergies, specifically requested was at least one gluten-free option. Making these adjustments will increase the satisfaction of tea room visitors and encourage repeat customers.

## **Outreach and Marketing**

**Conclusions:** In order to increase visitation numbers, more people need to be aware that Danson House is open and the best way to spread this knowledge is through a variety of advertisements. The majority of Danson House visitors are White British women above the age of 60 who come from southern London boroughs within 30 miles. Tea room and park visitors are younger and more diverse in all demographics compared to the house visitors and are typically unaware of what Danson House has to offer. The principle way new people are made aware of Danson House is currently recommendations via word of mouth. Many house visitors have visited similar historic sites.

**Recommendations:** Most visitors to Danson House had found out about the house through word of mouth or an organization. Ensuring every visitor has a quality experience is essential. To encourage visitors to return with friends a coupon or other discount for friends and neighbors should be considered. To improve awareness of Danson House, Bexley Heritage Trust should utilize Danson Park and the tea room to aid in advertisement. A counter display on the tables in the tea room (with permission from the outside vendor) would increase awareness about the house and encourage tea room visitors to take a tour. Survey results suggest posting signs in the park and having pamphlets (especially near maps and entrances) would greatly improve park visitors' awareness of Danson House. Another positive advertising strategy would be to work with other historical attractions. Building relationships with other nearby houses, such as the Red House, as well as advertising for each other and possibly offering a discount program, is a strategy Bexley Heritage Trust should implement. This would help the public gain awareness of Danson House, especially because visitors at other historical attractions are an audience Bexley Heritage Trust should be targeting. Along with focusing on target audiences, survey results show the majority of Danson House visitors are retired White British women. In order to use appropriate channels to continue to reach this primary audience, Bexley Heritage Trust should advertise Danson House in places that will be seen by this demographic such as, grocery stores, retirement homes, etc. To increase visitation numbers extending marketing efforts to other geographic areas should also be considered.

## **Authorship**

This report was developed through a collaborative effort by all members of the Danson House Survey Project Group, Rodrigo Calles, Rachael Matty, Molly Ott and Patrick Roll. All sections were developed as a team, with each member of the group contributing equally.

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## Introduction

The United Kingdom attracts 29 million tourists each year and many visit castles, churches, historic houses and other historic attractions. As a result, the ‘heritage sector’ generates £115 billion each year (Brine & Feather, 2010). Over 350 historic houses are open to the public ranging from large establishments such as the Chatsworth House with 600,000 visitors a year to the smaller attractions such as Danson House with less than 10,000 visitors a year (Chatsworth, 2011). Competition is fierce, and many historic houses are exploring innovative ways to attract visitors. Smaller historic houses are especially hard-pressed (Brine & Feather, 2010). Therefore, Bexley Heritage Trust is exploring innovative ways to attract more visitors to Danson House, including a recent exhibit based on the novella “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Unfortunately, visitation at Danson House has declined since the initial flurry of activity and interest that followed the renovations and reopening in 2005 (Worthington, 2011). Danson House is a Georgian mansion that is owned by the London Borough of Bexley and operated by Bexley Heritage Trust. It is located in Bexleyheath to the east of London. The Trust is interested in understanding the visitors and their perceptions of exhibits in Danson House including what they think about the recent changes.

The main goals of this project are to explore ways to increase visitation at Danson House and evaluate the impact of recent efforts to enhance the visitor experience. The project team identified four objectives for the completion of this goal. The project team: (1) clarify the nature of past and current efforts to improve the visitor experience at Danson House; (2) assess the visitor experience at Danson House; (3) conducted site evaluations at Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace; and, (4) recommended ways Bexley Heritage Trust might enhance the visitor experience and improve visitation numbers at Danson House in the future.

To achieve these objectives, the project group engaged in several different tasks over a seven-week period. Our methods included a combination of background research, observation, surveying, and interviewing. By researching, collecting, and comparing data, observations, and surveys the project group gained an in-depth understanding of the nature of the problem that small historic houses face and identified possible means and strategies that Danson House can use to improve its visitor experience.



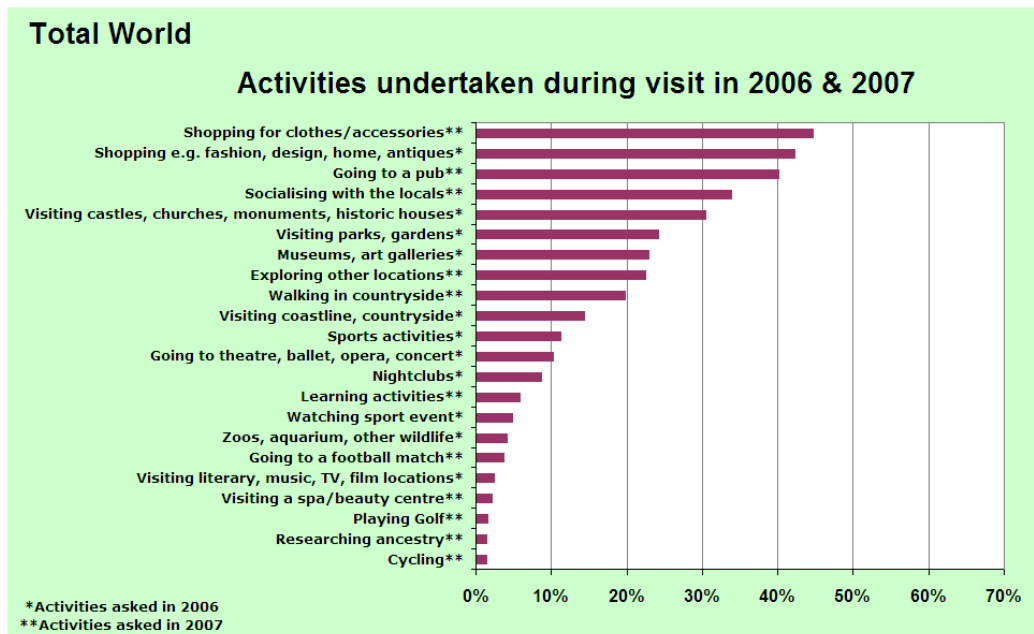
## Literature Review

### Heritage Sector

‘Heritage sector’ is a broad term that is used to refer collectively to museums, historic houses, monuments, and other artifacts of historic significance in the United Kingdom. For example, Waterfield defines archaeological heritage as “all remains and objects and any other traces of humankind from past times...[which] includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, movable objects, monuments of other kinds as well as their context, whether situated on land or under water” (Waterfield, Section A, 2004). The heritage sector is composed of both artifacts under the formally acknowledged organizations, such as museums, and artifacts in the possession of individuals or communities (Deacon, Mngqolo, & Prosalendis, 2003). The United Kingdom is rated fourth in the world for being “rich in historical buildings and monuments” (Visit Britain, 2011) and as shown in Figure 1 visiting historic sites is one of the top activities that tourists undertake.

**Figure 1: Activities of Tourists**

(Culture, 2010)



Tourism is one of the largest industries in the UK accounting for 115 billion or 8.9% of Gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 based on direct (e.g., tourist spending) and

indirect (e.g., employment) contributions. More than 2.5 million jobs, or 1 in 12 of all jobs, are related to tourism. Approximately, 30 million overseas visitors come to Britain each year, with 5.8 million visiting a castle, 5 million visiting historic houses and 6.4 million visiting religious buildings or monuments. Within the heritage sector, historic houses play a prominent role; the Historical House Association “represents 1,500 of the UK’s privately-owned historical houses, castles and gardens. Over 500 members open their properties to the public, attracting 15 million visits [foreign and domestic] and generating £1.6- £2 billion” annually (Ellis, 2009).

### Historic House Sector

Historic houses are houses that have been converted into museums and attempt to encapsulate a moment in history. “The historic house is certainly an incomparable and unique museum in that it is used to conserve, exhibit or reconstruct real atmospheres which are difficult to manipulate...by bringing together original furnishings and collections from one or other of the historic periods in which the house was used” (Pinna, 2001). Typically, historic houses collect artifacts that are related to the house and its prior owners. The artifacts are researched and analyzed to develop a clear understanding of the use and importance of each piece. Once each piece is thoroughly researched, the collection is constructed in a way that conveys the information to the public and educates the visitors about the collection, the house and how they are connected. This differs from other museums mainly because the building itself is considered an artifact (Cabral, 2001).

Originally historic houses were created as a monument to whoever had lived there, whether it was a hero, collector, or to display a historic event (Young, 2007). This meant that they were the homes of famous or important historic figures. Later, historic houses included houses that were considered more ‘average’ for their time period, so that visitors would not only be able to learn about the lives of important figures but about the different classes of society and what it was like to live during a specific time period.

There are different types of homes that vary by ownership, management, visitation and conditions. Although the homes of famous people often receive more attention due to the greater significance of the house or the person that lived in the house, local historic houses compete for visitors (Wise, 2008). Some historic houses are

privately owned, but nevertheless available for public viewing and tours, for example, the ancestral estates of the English nobility (Young, 2007). Other historic houses may not be regularly open to the public, but can be viewed by making appointments or contacting the owners. Typically, these types of houses are used for private events such as conferences and weddings. The most common type of historic house are those that are toured by the public and open for regular hours, which are used as museums and run in a business manner (Brine & Feather, 2010).

While historic houses are a large part of the historic sector, visitation numbers and revenues may vary within and across the sector in response to a variety of factors, especially the state of the economy and the size of the house. For example, visitation at smaller attractions (10,000 or less visitors) has decreased by 2% from 2009 to 2010 and the number of visitors for larger attractions (over 200,000 visitors) has increased by 4% (Mills, 2010). Danson House would be considered a small attraction, while Chatsworth House is a large tourist attraction, in part because of its extensive art collection (Chatsworth, 2011).

Historic houses face a number of challenges in general along with ones specific to visitation, including maintenance, accessibility, location, and funding. Each house must adapt according to its particular condition, opportunities, and type of visitation. "Houses can be relatively easy to acquire as museums, but are expensive to conserve, demanding to maintain, and frequently difficult to open to large-scale visiting" (Young, 2007). In terms of accessibility to the public, many historic houses were not built with the disabled in mind. Despite many challenges, museums can be successful by gaining the support of the community (Waterfield, section E, 2004). Museums located in remote or sparsely populated locations may have to work harder to attract visitors through marketing and a regularly changing calendar of interesting programs and events (Izard, 2012; Waterfield, Section G, 2004).

Unfortunately, it is difficult for historic houses to mount temporary exhibits or change the content and layout of their permanent exhibits for a variety of reasons, so many do not (Waterfield, Section G, 2004). The house itself is a major part of the 'exhibit' and the basic structure, fittings, and fixtures cannot be changed merely to attract new audiences. Some contain furniture and other artifacts associated with the house, but

these are typically arranged to represent a particular period of occupancy. Alternative or additional artifacts of the time period may not be readily available for use in temporary exhibits. Danson House has tried, nevertheless, to address this issue with its most recent special exhibit on the novella “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This has become common among small historic houses. Many are doing similar special exhibits that include artifacts that are not always necessarily directly related to the house itself, but are intended to generate interest in the house and increase visitation.

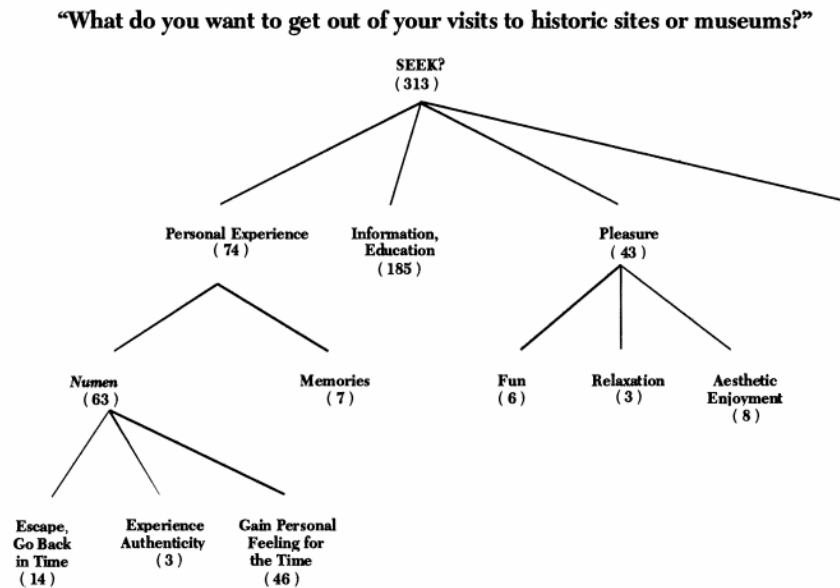
Financing poses an additional challenge since houses are often faced with flat or declining revenues and increasing costs of maintenance and staffing. Many of them are non-profit organizations and they depend on entry fees, retail sales in gift shops, donations, and grants for much of their funding. Declining visitation can have a substantial impact on each of these revenue streams. The state of the economy can also have a dramatic impact on visitation, donations, and the availability of grant funds (The Charity Commission, 2011). Simply raising fees, however, may not solve the problem. Typically, during economic recessions, visitors are more likely to choose to go to free attractions. For example, paid attractions experienced a 1 % decrease in visitors between 2009 and 2010 while free attractions experienced a 6% increase (Mills, 2010).

### **Education in Historic Houses/Museums:**

Like museums, historic houses serve the purpose of informal learning and education (Malcolm-Davies, 2007). As seen in the Figure 2, the main reason people visit a historic site or museum is for their educational value. Every person learns best in his or her own way, whether it is visually, orally, interactively or a combination of the like. Therefore, museums try to offer a variety of exhibits, which involve interactive displays along with offering assisted tours that have guides there to answer any questions guests might have.

**Figure 2: What You Get Out of Your Visit to Historic Sites or Museums**

(Cameron & Gatewood, 2000)

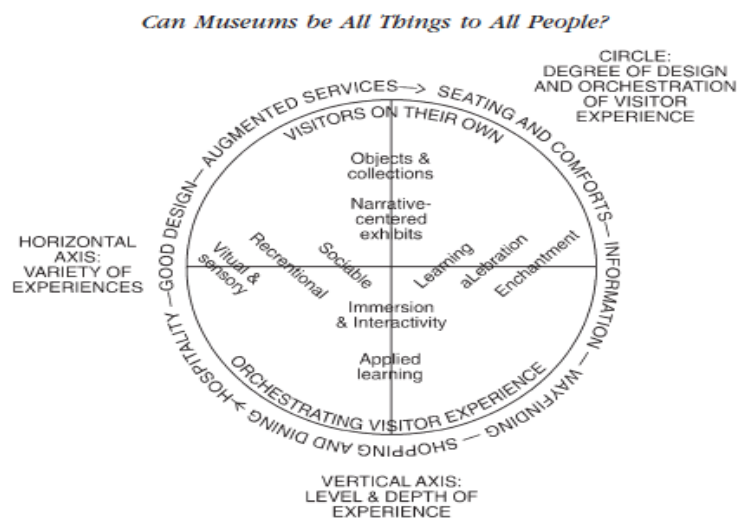


Historic houses are unique because they have the task of creatively blending the educational and emotional aspects of the specific house and integrating them into a pleasing experience for all types of visitors (Pavoni, 2001). It is difficult to determine who prefers to hear about what specific information when conducting a tour. Historic houses and museums therefore realize the needs of the different audiences are diverse. They must try to cater to all of them in various ways, such as interpretative tours led by volunteers, workshops and lectures on specific topics, oral history presentations, and similar attractions (Cameron, 2000; Kotler, 2000). Historic houses still have education as a priority for their tours and exhibits. They have to engage in a variety of strategies to connect the diverse needs and interests of the entirety of the visiting public. A historic house tries to show how people used to live while reenactment venues try to bring the past back to life with costumes and role playing. Historic houses strive to embody what it was like for the certain famous person or family to live in the house. An interesting background story about that person or family can make a tour more interesting and relatable to a varied audience. Since the top three priorities have been found to be a learning experience, a feeling of the sense of the past and having fun; staff members are

always trying new ideas to incorporate all three priorities into one experience, like having costumed interpreters (Malcolm-Davies, 2007). A historic house is in place to preserve, create interest in and increase communication to whatever historic setting it is connected.

When considering what type of education strategies are more popular one must always think of the target audience. Figure 3 maps out different types of exhibits and visitors' experiences related to them. The horizontal axis depicts what different types of experiences are offered throughout museums. The vertical axis shows the different types of learning styles that come from the experiences that go along with the words on the inside of the circle. Those words vary in types of tours, while the words outside the circle show what a museum may or may not offer as an attraction.

**Figure 3: Degree of Design and Orchestration of Visitor Experience**  
(Kolter & Kolter, 2000)



Although people visit historic houses primarily for their educational value, it is not all they should focus on. It is also essential to realize not everyone who walks into a museum is there solely for an educational experience. Some visitors purely want to embrace a different culture, or a different part of their own culture, with the goal of being entertained (Kotler, 2000). Therefore, it is vital for historic houses to focus on all aspects of a visit, not just the educational part in order to be successful.

In an attempt to make the visitor experiences both educational and entertaining, many houses display artifacts from their collections in different ways and offer

interpretations that are intended to encourage audience engagement and understanding. Stories about how the artifacts are connected to the house or the people who lived there can be an effective way to promote engagement and learning for visitors (Cabral, 2001). Promoting greater interactivity with the subject matter can enhance visitor engagement and help people feel more deeply involved in history. “Generating experiences involves activities in which visitors can directly participate, intensive sensory perception combining sight, sound, and motion, environments in which visitors can immerse themselves rather than behave merely as spectators, and out-of-the-ordinary stimuli and effects that make museum visits unique and memorable” (Kotler, 2000). This is especially useful because many things in historic houses usually cannot be touched by the visitors. A way to avoid this, called Living History, was developed as an educational tool in the United States and later adapted in the United Kingdom by National Trust Young Theater. This approach recreates historic events and often attempts to engage the visitors, including children, in a minor way with costumes or props in order to allow visitors the chance to role-play in hopes that they retain more of what they hear and learn about. “Nowadays, Living History forms the backbone of the learning experience in many historic country houses, whether National Trust or private...At its best it offers one of the most accessible and lively introductions to old buildings and historic landscapes.” (Waterfield, Section E, 2004).

Malcolm-Davies (2007, 279) summarizes interpretive trends in the heritage sector by saying:

“A marked preference among visitors for dynamic, animated and changing stimuli and events has been noted. A survey of visitors and non-visitors to museums in Lincolnshire prompted 46% to request the opportunity of seeing people making and doing things. Furthermore, 62% said there should be things for visitors to do themselves. In a similar survey in Leicestershire, 73% wanted workshops where they could watch people making and doing things and 69% requested events where they could do things. This survey also discovered that 55% of respondents thought museums would be better if they provided participatory experiences. In two other studies requesting local comment on the future of museum development in the UK (at Poole and Croydon), interactivity and liveliness were identified as key requirements. A great deal of research has shown that visitors and non-visitors to museums want workshops, activities and personal contact with history rather than to be kept at arm’s length by the professionals.

There are few similar studies that focus on historic attractions rather than museums. Research in Wales in the 1980s offered early predictions of a growing trend. Visitors were asked for their reactions to possible future developments. As many as 91% of visitors were in favour of ‘special exhibitions of crafts, costumes and armour’, 75% were similarly disposed towards ‘outdoor events which recreate historical happenings’, and 55% towards ‘people in historical costume’. When attempting to entertain visitors, historic houses must remember that education should be the priority. “While market pressure has prompted historic site managers to consider ways of improving the entertainment value of the visitor experiences they offer, it is educational benefit that is implicit in the management of most heritage resources” (Malcolm-Davies, 2007, 278).

Using different ways of presenting information along with knowing what guests are interested in when visiting a museum may help improve people’s overall experience at a historic house or museum. One way that museums are appealing to the educational needs and entertainment interests of their visitors is through the increasing the use of digital technology.

### **Technology use in Historic House/Museums:**

Technology is quickly becoming a tool that museums and historic houses all over the world use to enhance the visitor experience. Historic houses “have a public duty to make provision for all parts of society – all ages, social, cultural and educational backgrounds” (King, 2003). Many museums, galleries, and even historic houses are embracing technology as a way to attract and engage broader audiences and meet the expectations of the visitors. The difficult part is that historic houses must use and make these technologies accessible without taking away from the ambiance and appearance of the house.

The 2008 *Horizon Report for Museums* has identified six trends to look for in the next six years; therefore we are in year four of these trends. The first trend is that museums will adopt automated collection management systems, such as for member payment dues and employee wages; however these sophisticated systems can be extremely expensive to implement and still have not been utilized by some museums. These trends also indicate that tech-savvy audiences will “demand more and richer online content from museums” and that open content is inevitable; open content is accessible



view of the museums information, such as hours of operation and upcoming events that will be part of the online content. A 2003 report called *Opening Doors: Learning in the Historic Environment* gathered information from 137 “built-heritage” sites in the United Kingdom and Ireland; of these properties, 85 (62%) had their own website, 41 (30%) were represented on the websites of managing bodies such as English Heritage, and 11 (8%) had absolutely no Internet presence. Of the 85 properties with their own website, only 29 (34%) were found to have educational content on the website. Educational content is defined as “material specifically created for and/or distributed on the website, to facilitate learning. This includes online exhibitions, activities, and resources...” This study found that the houses that had websites with educational content (21% of the total properties) were performing better in terms of attendance and interest than those that did not. Although the field has most likely advanced in terms of the amount of properties with websites, this shows the importance of rich online content. The term open content also applies to the museum relinquishing control of certain intellectual properties of exhibits and ideas in order to enhance visitor knowledge, and as such museums have been reluctant to adopt a policy of open content. This trend can be applied to historic houses as well as museums, as online content cannot damage the ambiance of the house. A trend enacted in the past 2-3 years is the use of interactive devices as shown in Figure 4; however these devices can possibly betray the purpose of enveloping the visitor in the atmosphere of a historic house.

There are several specific ways that technology is already being utilized to enhance the experience and enjoyment of average museum visitor; one key way is an interface that presents information. A touch screen or normal computer interface with a mouse and keypad. These can give information in a number of ways such as audibly while the user is wearing headphones, selecting information from a content database, or a two-way responsive activity (King, 2003; Saint-Lawrence Valley Natural History Society, 2012). These can also be used to obtain visitor feedback and opinions on how to better a certain exhibit or the museum in general.

### Figure 4: Two-Way Responsive Activity

(Saint-Lawrence Valley Natural History Society, 2012)



3D technology has also been utilized in many museums and historic houses. Many museums offer short films that convey a large amount of information in a short time; 3D imaging makes these films more informative and enjoyable, especially for children. These films can be shown in a small cinema with a large audience or individually as shown in Figure 5.

### Figure 5: Individually Shown Films

(King, 2003)



It is also very important to utilize media and social networking, which is mainly used outside of the facility. It promotes the museum's benefits and informs people on items such as attractions, hours of operation, driving directions to the facility, pictures of inside the facility and the outside of the facility, and other general information (Evans, 1999). For example Danson House has a homepage with several tabs one can access such as Visitor Information, Events, Education, and Group Visits. However, there are some small museums and historic houses' websites that are not updated frequently and sometimes contains either no information or outdated information, as Danson House used to have (Evans, 1999). Using social networking websites is a good way to provide

information and to attract visitors as well; for example the English Heritage government organization has a Facebook page which they utilize quite well: they have more than 20,000 people that they can provide almost daily updates to about museums and historic houses. However, similar to individual websites, the smaller museums and historic houses have trouble gathering interest in their social network pages.

There are three main barriers to technological learning in a museum: physical, intellectual, and motivational (King, 2003). The interactive technological implements such as the touch screen or computer interface can be difficult for people to operate, especially for older or physically handicapped visitors. They may also physically take away from the exhibit itself, either by blocking views and taking up useful space or visually distracting people (King, 2003). Intellectual barriers may include improper interpretation by the visitor or confusing interaction/instruction by the technological implement. Perhaps most important is the third barrier, motivation. As King says “there is no obvious reward for completing an activity;” (King, 2003) whether or not a visitor uses the technology is entirely up to them. These devices may also make them look foolish if they try to use them and fail, and no one wants to look like a fool in front of their peers. These three barriers are arguments against the use of technology in museums, and will be considered by our project group on exactly how advantageous technology is and to what degree Danson House should use technology.

### **What Other Museums Are Doing:**

Based on a research, historic houses like Danson House show “that they are profiled in terms of demographic characteristics but rarely in terms of motivation” (Malcolm-Davies, 2004). And while there are around two hundred and forty museums all around London, it is hard for historic houses to have a stable or an increase of visitors. With this type of pressure, site managers are considering “ways of improving the entertainment value of the visitor experiences they offer” (Malcolm-Davies, 2004).

“A great deal of research has shown that visitors and non-visitors to museums want workshops, activities and personal contact with history rather than to be kept at arm’s length by the professionals” (Malcolm-Davies, 2004). In this quote, ‘non-visitors’ refers to the people who had not visited the museum at the time of the survey but showed

interest in workshops and activities. With this said, historic houses are trying to promote, run, and improve many of their activities and specific events in order to keep visitors interested in the house while trying to increase visitation numbers.

Whether is by activities, events, or exhibits, there are multiple ways of engaging visitors. The National Trust is accomplishing this slowly by disappearing the “look, don't touch” atmosphere. Therefore, some of their houses contain activities that “appeal to heart, mind and all five senses” (National Trust, 2010). The first example is Red House. It is a Grade I building representing the Arts and Craft Style. It was design mostly by Philip Webb and William Morris, including the wall paintings, stained glass, and furniture. In 2002, the house was attained by the National Trust in order to renovate the house to its original condition. They host numerous of activities and events, which are posted on their website. On June 9, 2012 they held an event called Children's' Crafts at Half Term. Children designed “wallpapers or cards using William Morris inspired Medieval designs and rubber stamps,” as stated by National Trust website. This event provides a creative and interactive way for children to learn more about William Morris designs while they draw their interpretation of their own designs. Furthermore, their website also provides a list of upcoming event which include Meeting the Gardener, and Arts and Crafts Fair.

**Figure 6: The Red House**

(National Trust, 2012)



According to the journal, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, costumed interpreters contribute to the atmosphere of the visitor experience at historic houses. In Figure 7, a man and woman are dressed in costumes and are about to play period music at a Red House event. Through the vintage clothes and music, the house is recreating a world that visitors have not yet experienced. This “enhances the scene and adds to its

visual interest and enjoyment; the costume and props add extra ‘realism’” (Malcolm-Davies, 2004).

**Figure 7: The Man and Woman at a Red House Event**

(National Trust, 2012)



In a similar way, English Heritage has been conducting re-enactment events for several years now. In 2009, 620,000 people attended to English Heritage of Events. 20,000 of them attended to The Festival of History, which is a two day event consisting a large number of re-enactments. In this manner people can “live events where they can enjoy the sounds, smells and colours of history being brought to life that makes them decide to visit a heritage attraction rather than a cinema, theme park or shopping centre” (English Heritage, 2010). With this in mind, Eltham Palace provides many events that provide this type of atmosphere. This large house is an unoccupied royal residence owned by Crown Estate and it is now manage by the English Heritage. Eltham Palace was restored and opened in 1999. On June 23 and June 24, 2012, the house will run a large event where the visitors are going to experience the trilling contest of a medieval joist. In this same event they will provide entertainment with their jester, “plus medieval games to play and a knights training school for children. This full day out gives an great insight into life at the palace during the medieval period with music, dance, falconry displays and much, much more” as stated in the English Heritage website. Therefore, this event provides a taste of medieval life, which is an unique experience for visitors that can only be lived in a historic house like Eltham Palace. “If it is done well the re-enactment of, say, a medieval tournament in the grounds of a great castle can leave a lasting impression on visitors” (English Heritage, 2010).

**Figure 8: A Grand Medieval Joisting Event at Eltham Palace**

(National Trust, 2012)



Fifty-five percent of visitors were interested seeing more re-enactments, ninety-one percent of visitors wanted to see more hands-on exhibitions, while seventy-five percent were inclined to see more outdoor events that would recreate historical events. (Malcolm-Davies, 2004). The Red House and the Eltham Palace successfully accomplished these three types of events that people are looking for in a historic house. This is not the major cause of the decline of visitation but improving events helps it drastically. In order to help increase the visitation numbers Bexley Heritage Trust is working to improve their performance by surveying and collecting performance indicators from the visitors. Our project is to help them make that survey and analyze those results for them, in order to improve their events and facilities for the visitors. This would include helping them advertise the house and events through social media and other aspects of advertising in order to attract more visitors. Eventually Danson House will be better known by the public as the important piece of history, and the noteworthy attraction that it is.

**Conclusion**

The heritage sector is a major part of the United Kingdom's economy. Historic houses and historic house museums are a major part of this sector, but they range from

the large stately homes with tens of thousands of visitors to the smaller historic houses with much more modest visitation numbers and therefore much more modest funds. Visitor evaluation has become a standard procedure at major museums and galleries, but has only recently been used by historic houses. With increased competition for visitors and increasingly scarce resources, it is imperative that historic house museums better understand what their visitors' desire so they can continue to improve the visitor experience and enhance visitation numbers. Historic house museums can accomplish these visitor evaluations by taking into account the conditions of their houses, how they educate the visitors, their use of technology, and their use of advertisement. In this project we used multiple methods to understand the public's perception of Danson House and examined the ways Danson House can improve the visitor experience.

## Methods

The goal of this project was to evaluate the impact of recent efforts to enhance the visitor experience at Danson House and make recommendations to Bexley Heritage Trust with ways to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation at Danson House. The project team identified four objectives for the completion of this goal. The project team:

1. Clarified the nature of past and current efforts to improve the visitor experience at Danson House;
2. Assessed the visitor experience at Danson House;
3. Conducted site evaluations at Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace; and
4. Recommended ways the Bexley Heritage Trust might enhance the visitor experience and increase attendance numbers.

To achieve this goal using the objectives previously stated, the project group engaged in several different tasks over a seven-week period. Our methods included a combination of background research, observations, surveying and interviewing. By researching, collecting and comparing data from the staff and volunteer interviews, observations and surveys the project group had gained an in-depth understanding of the nature of the problem that small historic houses face and identified possible means and strategies for Danson House to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation numbers.

### **Objective 1: Clarify the nature of efforts to improve the visitor experience**

To understand past and present efforts to improve the visitor experience at Danson House the project team conducted background research on Danson House as well as conducted interviews with the staff and volunteers who work at Danson House. The staff and volunteers were able to provide first hand information on how visitors reacted towards the recent changes to the house, such as the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit and the new informational panels. These interviews also included the interviewee's personal observations and opinions about these alterations. The responses were anonymous and the interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Another important aspect in the project required knowledge of exactly what it is like when a visitor walked through the door of Danson House. The project group



observed and analyzed the type of tour given at Danson House, the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit, and the general flow and feeling one had while visiting.

### **Objective 2: Assess the visitor experience**

In order to assess the visitor experience at Danson House the project group developed a set of survey instruments to evaluate the perspectives of three types of visitors: a house visitor survey, a tea room visitor survey, and a park visitor survey. Each survey was designed for a different target audience in order to obtain more relevant information. These survey instruments, especially the Danson House Visitor Survey, were based on the survey conducted at Hall Place in 2010 by Bexley Heritage Trust. The responses from the three surveys helped gauge the visitor experience at Danson House. Comparable information was gathered from all three surveys, such as social demographics, mode of transport, reason for visit, and total parts of Danson estate visited. The weather (e.g. sunny, rainy, cold, windy, etc.) was also recorded to determine whether that affected the visitor experience or the number of visitors at all. Initially, pilot surveys were conducted by the project group; and after making edits based on visitor feedback, data was collected from a finalized set of surveys.

For the implementation of surveys, face-to-face interviews with one member of the team reading the questions and another noting the responses were conducted. Thus, a maximum number of visitors were approached in order to gather as large of a sample audience as possible. A sample that was diverse in both age and ethnicity was targeted, however the sample collected was limited by the visitors that came to Danson House within the seven weeks. After approaching a visitor, a short preamble introducing the project team members as students from the United States of America working on a project to help improve the visitor experience at Danson House was given. Then the visitor (or group) was asked if they would answer a few questions anonymously; those who agreed were interviewed.

From the Danson House Visitor Survey information was gathered on the general visitor experience, visitor opinions and suggestions on possible improvements for the visitor experience, visitor opinions on certain rooms or exhibits, and their personal reason(s) for visiting Danson House that day. Information on whether or not the visitor

had seen the Danson House website and the 2012 Danson House events leaflet, what other historic houses the visitor had visited recently, and if they planned on returning to Danson House was also recorded. Refer to Appendix B for the Danson House Visitor Survey.

Customers of the Danson House tea room were also surveyed since many visitors would come to the tea room for tea or lunch but not to take a tour of the house itself. The tea room survey revealed information about customers' opinions of an array of categories in the tea room and generalized information about Danson House if they had taken a tour. If they had not taken a tour of Danson House, the visitor was asked to answer further questions to help the project group gain an understanding as to why they had not toured the house, if they would consider taking a tour, and if not, the reason that they would not consider taking a tour. Refer to Appendix C for the Tea Room Visitor Survey.

The Danson Park Visitor Survey consisted of fewer questions since it was meant to be conducted quickly as many park visitors are active. Through this survey the park visitors were able to provide information about the local public's perception of Danson House. The Danson Park Visitor Survey is shown in Appendix D.

### **Objective 3: Conduct site evaluations at similar historic sites**

The project group visited and made observations at a selection of historic sites, focusing on how the sites compared to Danson House. To provide context for the assessment of Danson House, evaluations of Red House, Dover Castle and Eltham Palace were conducted. Red House and Eltham Palace were chosen for their similarities in size and proximity to Danson House. Dover Castle was selected for its successfulness in visitation. It is also owned and managed by English Heritage, like Eltham Palace, providing the project group with more comparable data. General observations of the estate and some demographics of the other visitors at each site were recorded. The project group rated the sites in a similar manor as what was asked of Danson House visitors. The observation checklist, which can be viewed in Appendix E included the following categories:

- Cleanliness of facilities (e.g. bathrooms, cafés, etc.)
- Proximity to public transportation (bus/rail)

- Condition of the estate (e.g. upkeep of walkways, painting, etc.)
- Friendliness of staff (e.g. welcoming receptionist, cheery guides, etc.)
- Guides' knowledge of history

These categories were chosen for comparability reasons. The information recorded could have been obtained by an average visitor without any restricted access just as the information for the Danson House Visitor Survey was recorded.

#### **Objective 4: Recommend how Bexley Heritage Trust might increase attendance**

At the end of the seven-week period what Danson House was currently doing well and in what areas it needed to improve were determined. Based on the information gathered from interviews, observations, and surveys, the recommendations were based on the following key areas of operation and management:

- Ideas for improving exhibits and programs
- Ideas for events and activities
- Marketing and outreach
- Facilities Improvements
- Visitor Accommodations
- Tea room improvements

These recommendations are designed to ensure that Danson House is representing its unique history and full attraction through activities, events, and tours while accommodating visitors to guarantee an all-around positive visitor experience. This was easier to express once enough information was collected to conclude the strategies in which Bexley Heritage Trust could enhance the visitor experience and improve attendance at Danson House.

## Findings

### Volunteer and Staff Interviews

The project group interviewed the volunteers and staff at Danson House to gain information about the historic houses and more specifically Danson House. From the interviews the project group found that the number of visitors could fluctuate from two to twenty visitors on any given day. People most often asked questions about the history of the house and families that lived in the house. Some visitors came to see the restoration in general since the house was in such great disrepair. The informational panels that were recently made for each room on the historical floor of the house have been very beneficial for when there are many visitors. The volunteers also mentioned that the house has a great flow to it because there are no hallways for visitors to get confused in. The information gained from the interviews with staff and volunteers allowed us to improve and finalize the Danson House Visitor Survey.

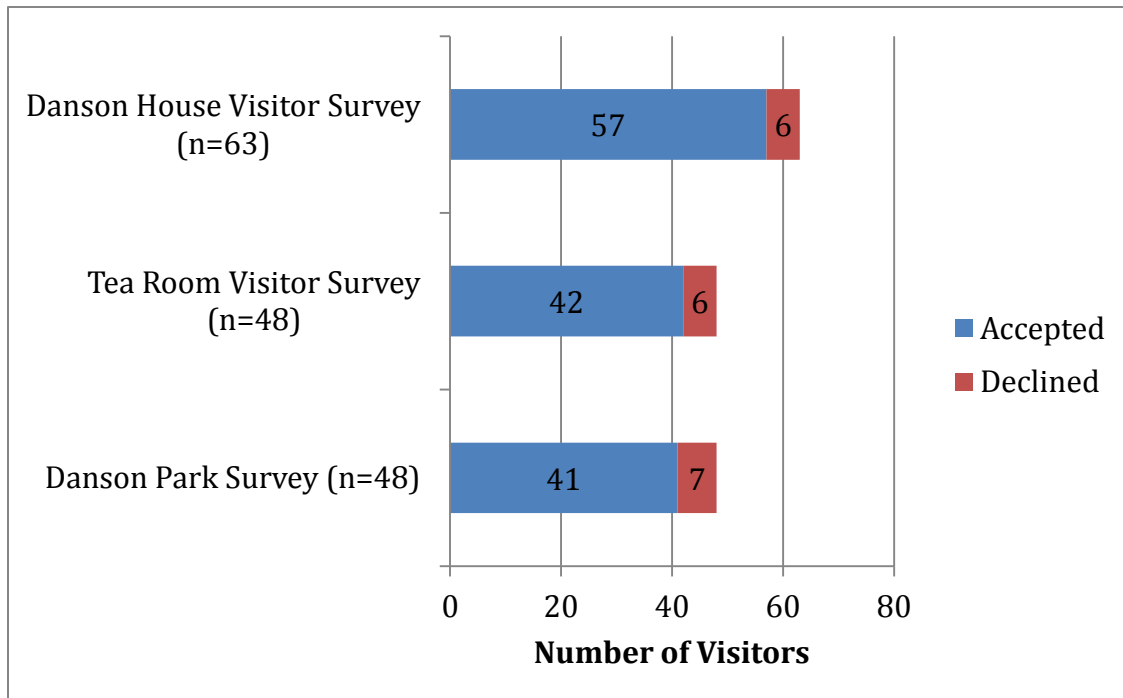
### Surveys

In this section the findings from the three surveys that were conducted between Tuesday May 8, 2012 and Monday June 18, 2012 are presented. The Danson House Visitor Survey focused on the house itself and ways to improve the tours, accessibility, the new exhibit and the house overall. The Tea Room Visitor Survey focused more on ways to improve the tea room as well as seeing whether people were interested in taking a tour of the house or even knowledgeable that it was open. If a respondent in the tearoom had taken a tour on a previous visit the project group would also ask him or her some basic questions about his or her experience. The Danson Park Visitor Survey focused on whether or not the people in the park had been to the house and taken a tour, and if not why they had not taken a tour. This survey helped make recommendations about advertisement and ways to get more people to come to Danson House.

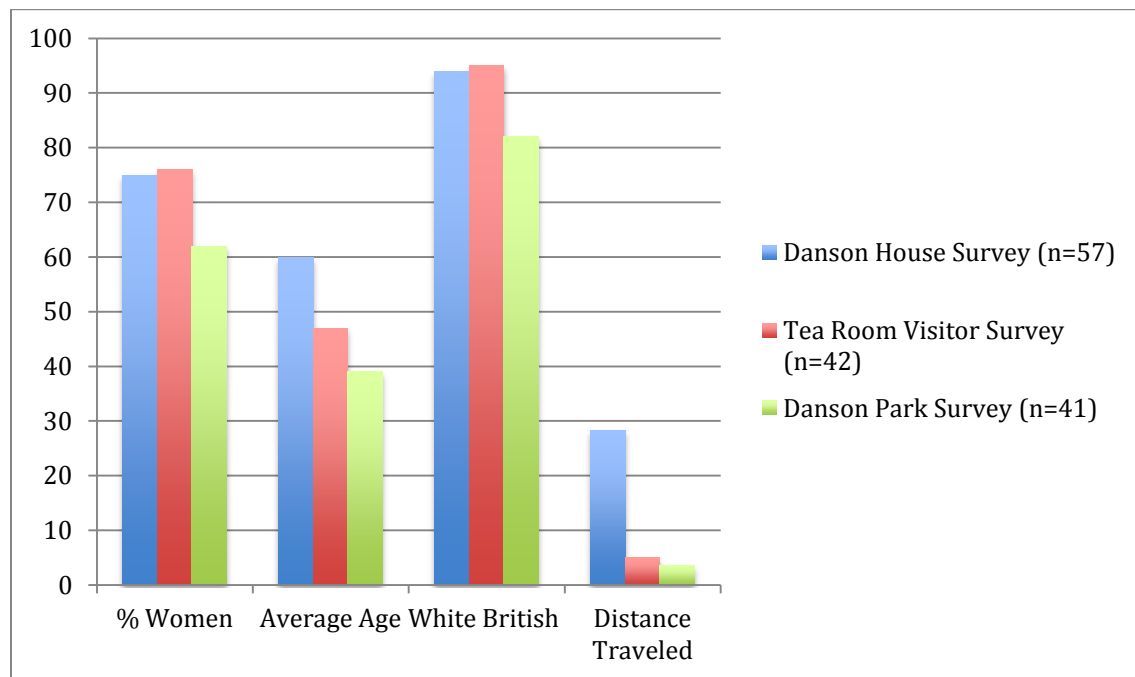
Some of the questions asked were answered with multiple responses and therefore the total percent for that response is greater than 100%. For example Question 8 from the Danson House Visitor Survey, each percent represents what drew the visitor to the house and most visitors came for more than one reason.

All surveys had a high acceptance rate as compared in Figure 9. The acceptance rate of the Danson Park Survey was 85% and there were 41 surveys collected in total, the Danson Park Survey had an acceptance rate of 88% with 42 surveys collected, and the Danson House Survey had an acceptance rate of 90% with 57 surveys collected.

**Figure 9: Acceptance Rate of Surveys**

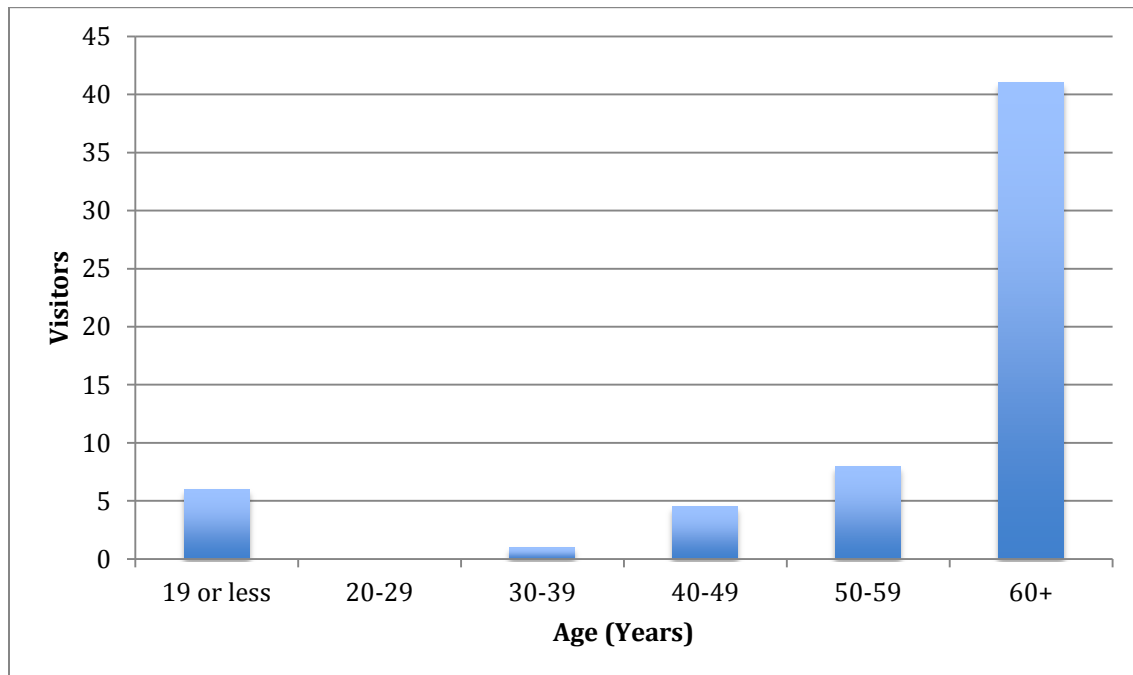


When comparing the demographics there are a couple of apparent trends (Figure 10). In all three surveys there was a significantly larger amount of women than men and there was a significantly larger amount of White British people compared to other ethnicities. However, when comparing the surveys to one another it is apparent that the park survey is more varied than the other surveys because the percent women and White British are a little lower. The average age of visitors was much older for the Danson House Visitor Surveys (60) and then decreased for the Tea Room Visitor Survey (47) and decreased even more in the Danson Park Visitor Survey (39). Lastly when comparing the distance traveled by the visitors, Danson House attracted people from farther distances while the tea room and the park are used more by local people.

**Figure 10: Demographics of the Surveys**

#### Danson House Visitor Survey:

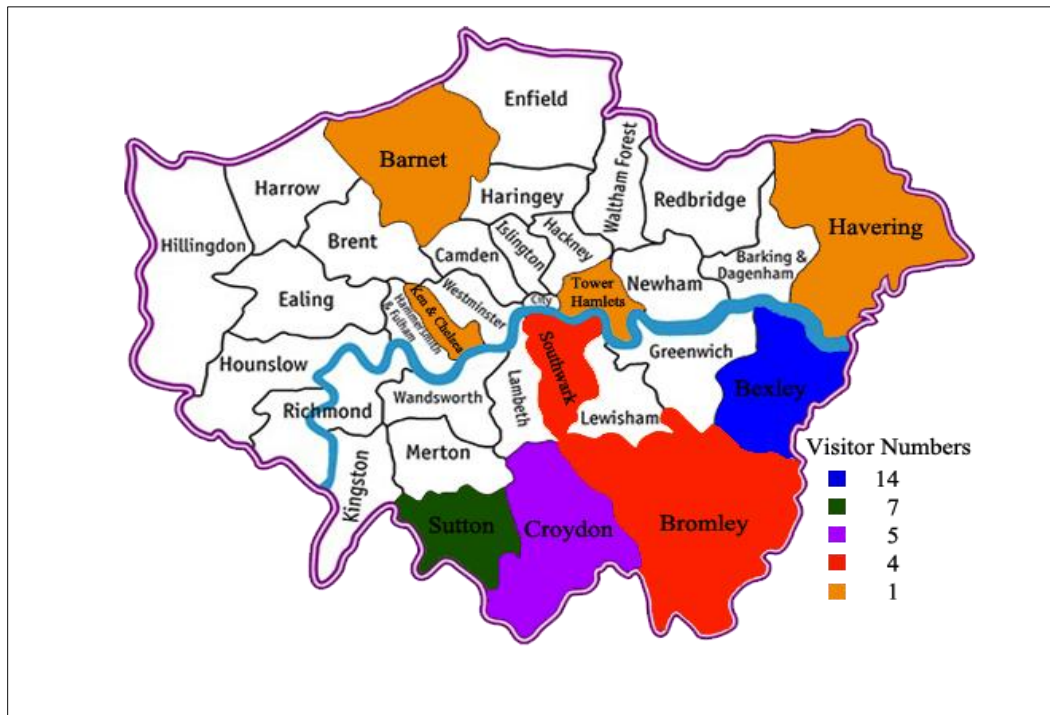
Fifty-seven surveys were collected with a total of 163 participants (75% women). The total participants are larger than the number of surveys because the demographic information was only recorded for the primary respondent if in a group. For the 24 groups that had both female and male visitors there were 11 (46%) male primary respondents and 13 (54%) female primary respondents. The average age of the visitors was 60. When the ages were separated into age brackets (Figure 11), it is clear that the majority of the visitors are considered elderly. Those who had disabilities have been pleased with the service that was provided with the only complaint being not enough seating throughout the house, and they would like more assistance using the lift. Of the 57 surveyed 45 (79%) of the participants were retired, 4 (7%) were employed, 6 (11%) students and 2 (4%) were full time mothers. Of the participants 87% were White British, 13% were Other including Chinese, American and a New Zealander. When visiting the house 58% of people visit with friends, 34% of people visit with relatives and 8% of people visit with coworkers.

**Figure 11: Age of Danson House Visitors (n=57)**

The average distance traveled was 28.36 miles with a standard deviation of 45.6 because there were some people that traveled from rather far distances to see the house (e.g. Chislehurst, BL7 at 225 miles). However, 78% of the visitors were from the Borough of Bexley. When getting to the Danson House 37% of people traveled by car, 37% traveled by coach, 11% traveled by foot, 5% traveled by rail and 10% traveled by bus. The high percent of visitors traveling by coach is due to the larger groups of people that we surveyed that had come as part of a tour group.

The choropleth map of visitors (Figure 12) depicts the location of where the Danson House visitors had traveled from that day. Thirty-eight of the 57 respondents (67%) came from Greater London. Fourteen of these visitors came from within Bexley and a further 16 (28%) from the adjacent boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, and Sutton. Evidently, Danson House draws a large proportion of visitors from south side of London. The 19 visitors that are not represented on the map came from areas outside of the London area.

**Figure 12: Location of Visitors (n=38)**

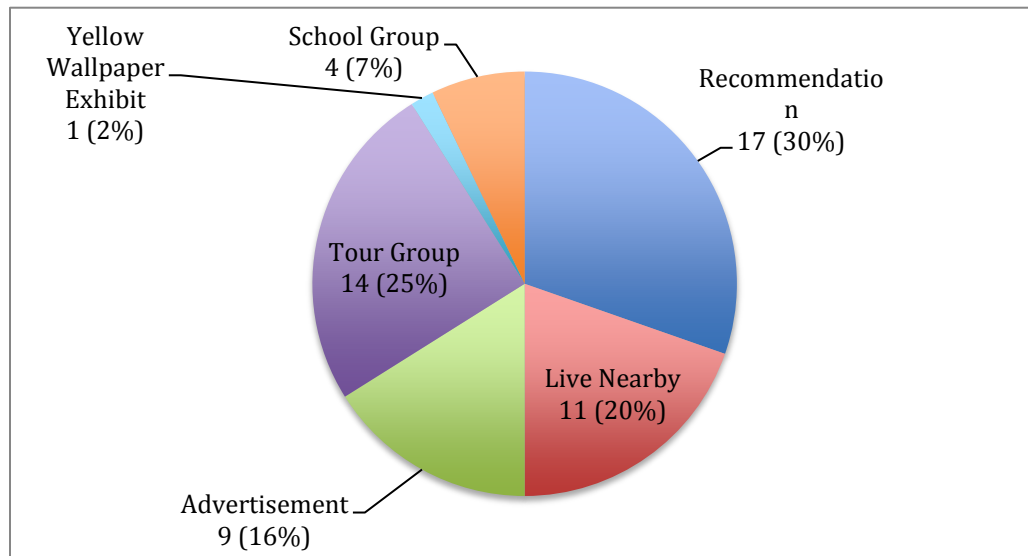


Although there were no reports of having difficulty finding their way to the house, 2% of people reported difficulty about not knowing where to enter, other guests implied having difficulty without outwardly complaining. Visitors explained that they walked up the main steps or through the tearoom not knowing the main entrance was on the side of the house. Of the 57 tour groups that responded only 14 groups (25%) had seen the Danson House Leaflet for 2012 but very few people commented on what information they gained from the pamphlet. Fifty percent the visitors that were part of the larger tour groups were given the pamphlet but had not had time to look through it yet. The people who had looked through it gained information about the opening times and dates. Of the 57 respondents 28% had seen the Danson House website. Of those visitors most of them were looking for the opening hours of the house and what the admission fees were. However, 19% of these people had difficulties navigating the website. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the visitors admitted to not using the internet often. Figure 13 shows the different ways that visitors became aware of Danson House. Of the respondents 17 (30%) had heard about the Danson House by personal recommendation, 11(20%) of the people lived nearby and thus knew of the house already, 9 (16%) had found it using some sort of advertisement such as the website or pamphlets, 14 (25%) of

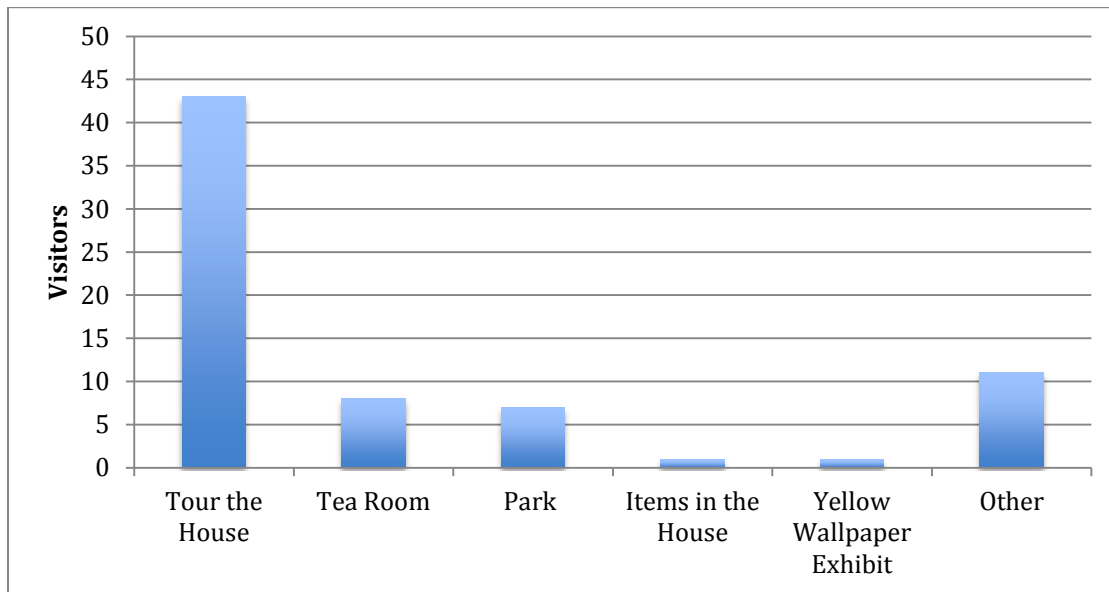


the people were part of a tour group through an organization such as the National Trust, 4 (7%) people had come for a school project and 1(2%) person heard of it because of the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit. Of all the people surveyed only three had previously been to an event at the Danson House; this is valid because there was a relatively small surveying sample and thus the amount of people who had been to an event was expected to be small.

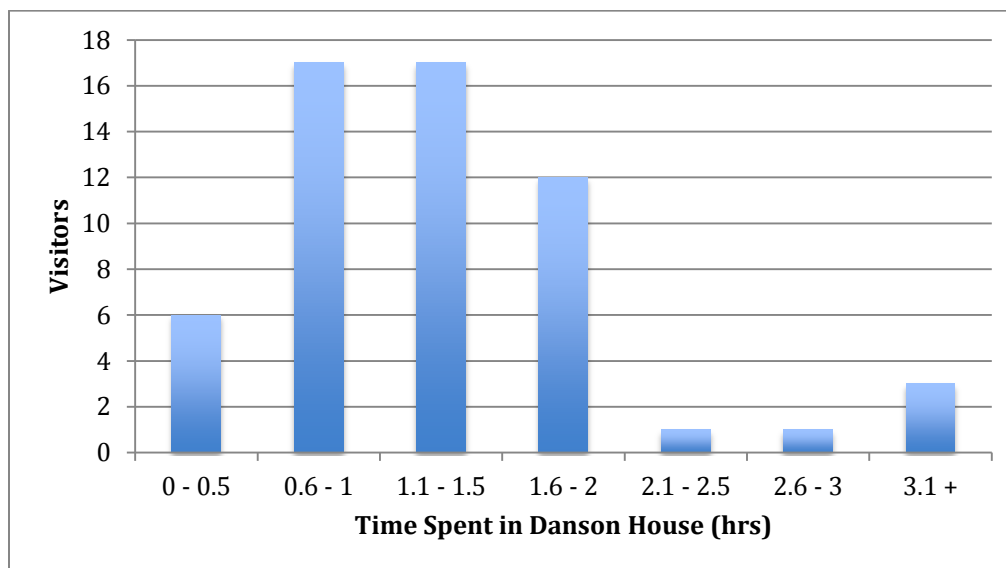
**Figure 13: Different Ways Visitors Gained Knowledge of Danson House (n=57)**



Of the respondents 91% were first time visitors. Of the reasons that people came to visit Danson House (Figure 14) 75% of people came to view the house as a whole, 14% came to visit the tea room, 12% came because of the park, 2% came to view the items in the house (e.g. furniture and paintings), 2% came because of the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit, 19% of people came for other reasons such as curiosity, wanting to see the house since it was restored, as part of a school group or just being in the area. Respondents had visited an average of seven other historic sites. Often respondents had visited historic sites close to Danson House such as Hall Place, Red House or Eltham Palace.

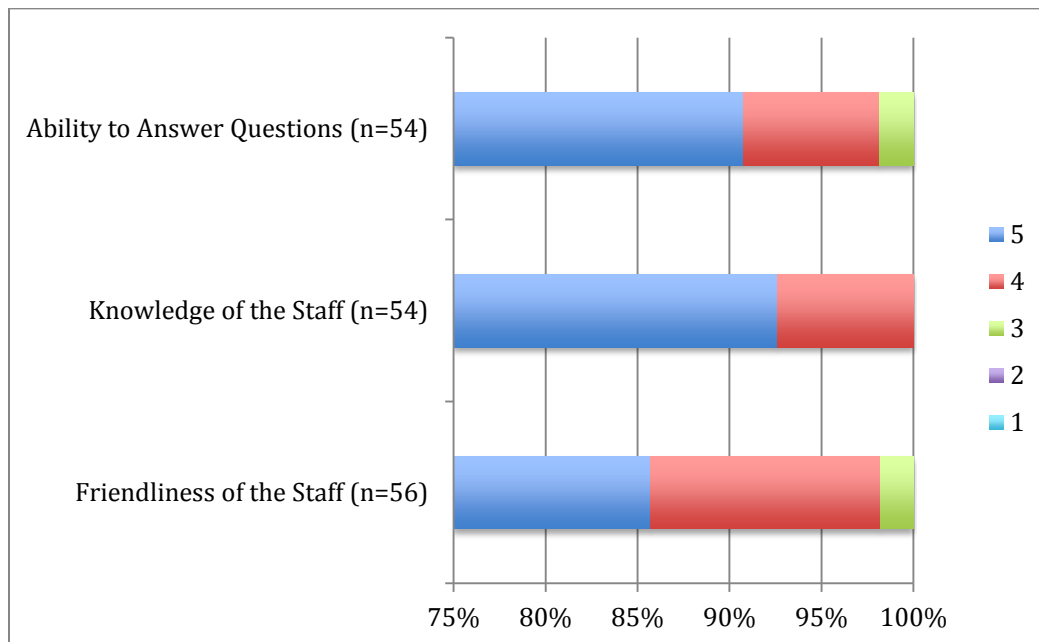
**Figure 14: Purpose of Visit (n=57)**

The average time spent in the house was 1.8 hours. The time spent in the house was also displayed in time brackets (Figure 15). This graph shows that although the average time spent in the house is 1.8 hours the majority of people do not spend more than an hour in the house. However there are some people that spend more than three hours in the house between the tours and using the tea room.

**Figure 15: Time Spent in the House**

The staff and volunteers were rated in three categories on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) as shown in Figure 16. Average ratings were also calculated with all of the average ratings being above 4.80. The friendliness of the staff received an average rating of 4.86, the knowledge of the staff received an average rating of 4.94, the staff's ability to answer any questions that were asked where they received an average rating of 4.92.

**Figure 16: Ratings Of Staff and Volunteers**



When asked how things could be improved (Figure 17), 39% of visitors said that there are no changes they would make, 19% of visitors said more seating for the elderly and disabled, 7% said that the entrance needed to be more clearly labeled, 9% said that they would like to see the upstairs of the house restored to same time period as the rest of the house, and 10% percent of the respondents suggested other improvements (e.g. watercolors of the house, more guides, a recreated Georgian bathroom, and staging the Victorian kitchen).

**Figure 17: Suggested Improvements to Danson House (n= 57)**

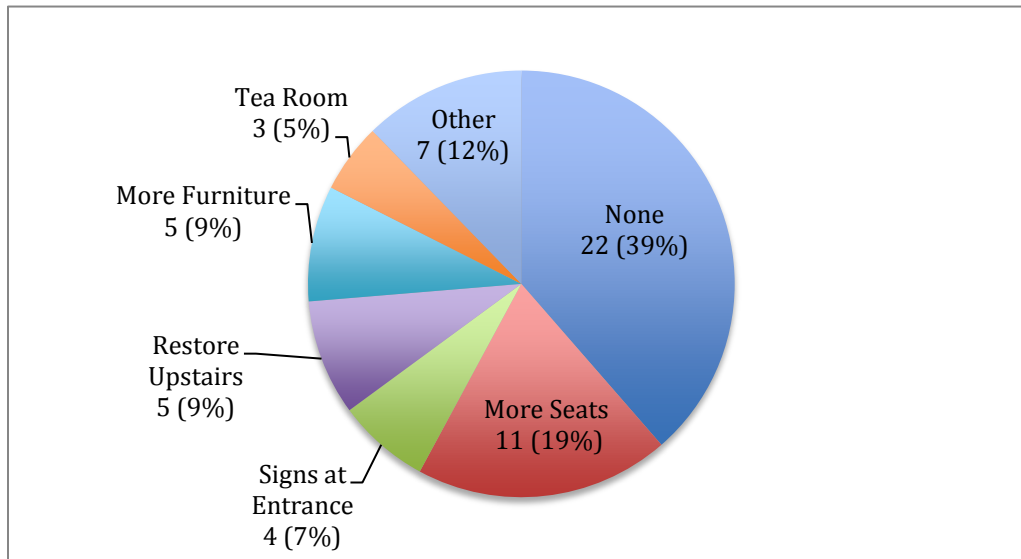
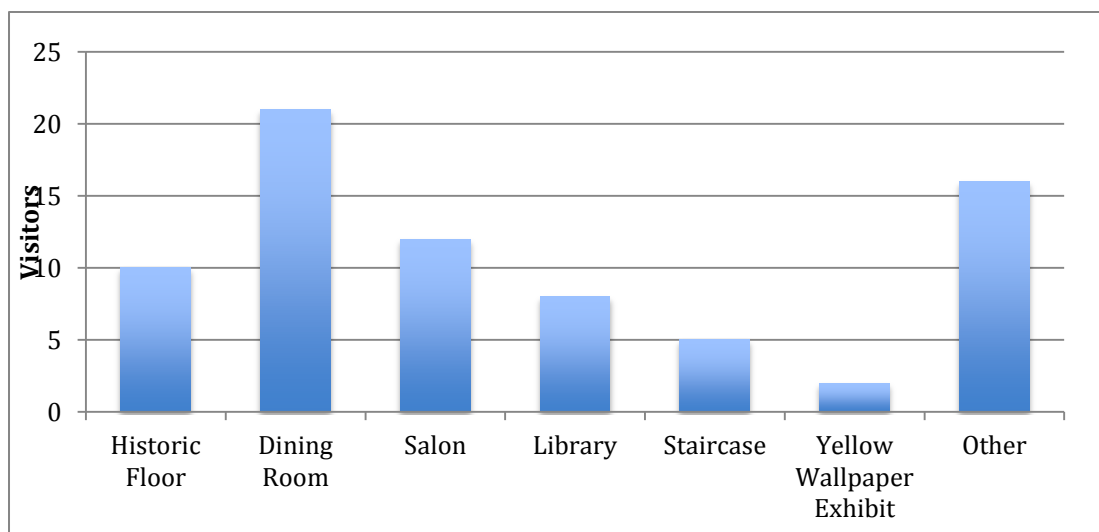


Figure 18 illustrates that 28% of respondents thought the most appealing part of the house was the dining room with the paintings on the walls, 16% said the salon was their favorite part and 13% said they liked the historic floor as a whole. Twenty-two percent identified other items as their favorites (e.g. the guided tour, the Victorian kitchen, and the restoration of the house as a whole).

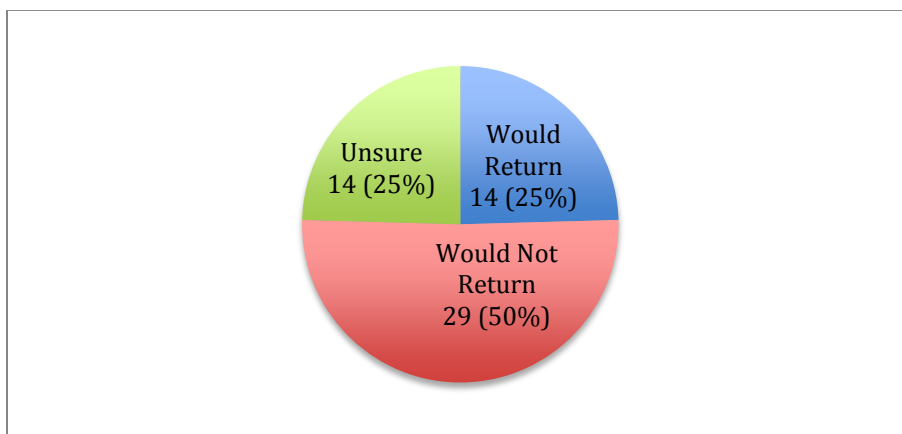
**Figure 18: Most Appealing Part of Danson House**



Respondents were asked to rate the tea room in various categories, however this data was presented with the rest of the tea room data so that all the data could be compared together.

When asked how likely the respondents would be to recommend Danson House to someone on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) the average rating was 4.61. Some of the reasons people would not recommend the house to family and friends are because it is far away from where they live or it is difficult to travel to. Other minor causes for them not recommending a visit are explained throughout the survey analysis. Of the visitors surveyed (Figure 19) 50% of the people said they probably would not visit the Danson House again within the next 12 months, 25% said they would probably come back to the Danson house in the next year, and 25% said they were unsure of whether they would return.

**Figure 19: Likeliness to Return (n=57)**



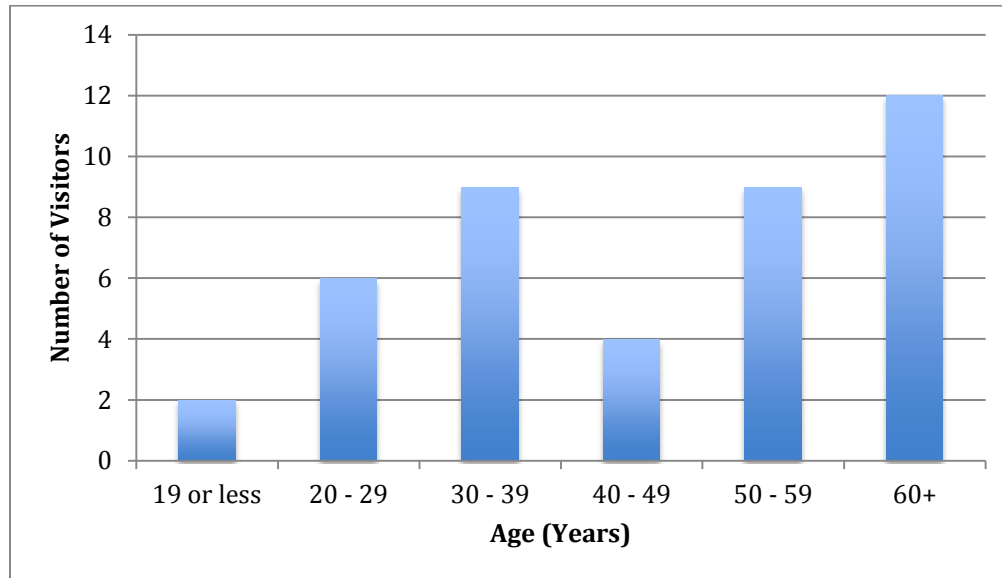
For events that could be held at Danson House 30% of visitors said they would enjoy having music concerts or recitals, especially if they used the organ that is already in Danson House. Other less common responses included boat rides along the lake, holiday events, historical role-playing and movie screenings.

### Tea Room Visitor Survey

There were 42 surveys collected with a total of 102 participants (76% women). Most people came in groups of two or three. The people surveyed were 97% White British and 3% Other. The age for the tea room (Figure 20) was a broader range than recorded in the Danson House Visitor Surveys with 29% over 60 years of age, 21% being between the ages of 50 - 59, 10% being between the ages of 40 - 49, 21% being between

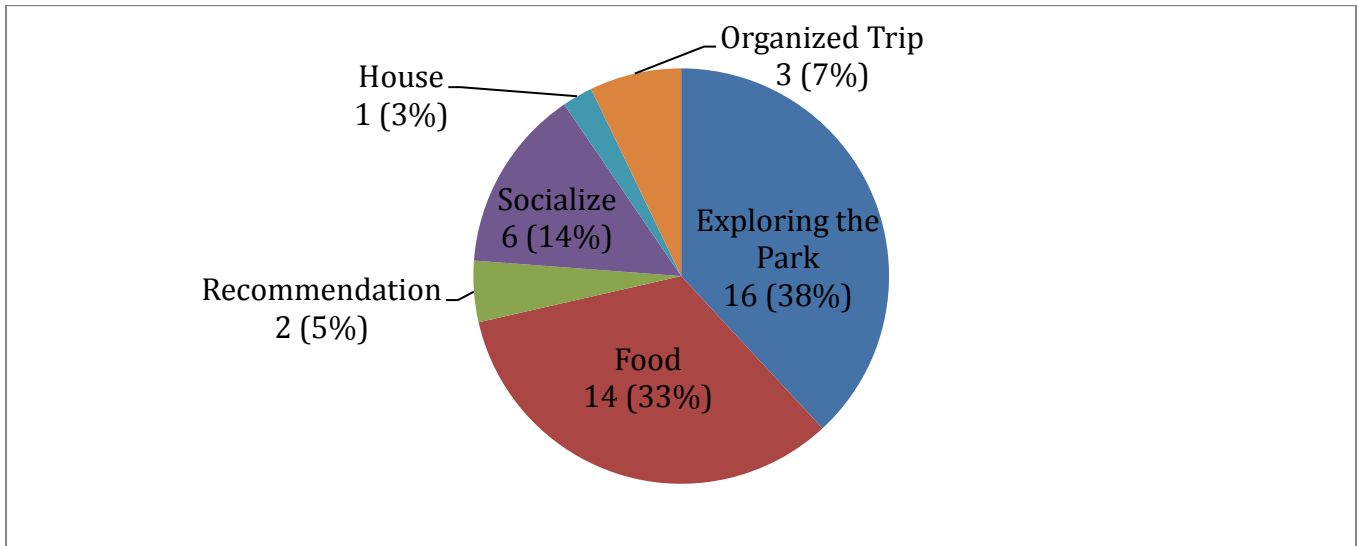
the ages of 30 - 39, 14% were in between the ages of 20 - 29, 5% younger than 19 years old.

**Figure 20: Ages of Tea Room Visitors (n=42)**



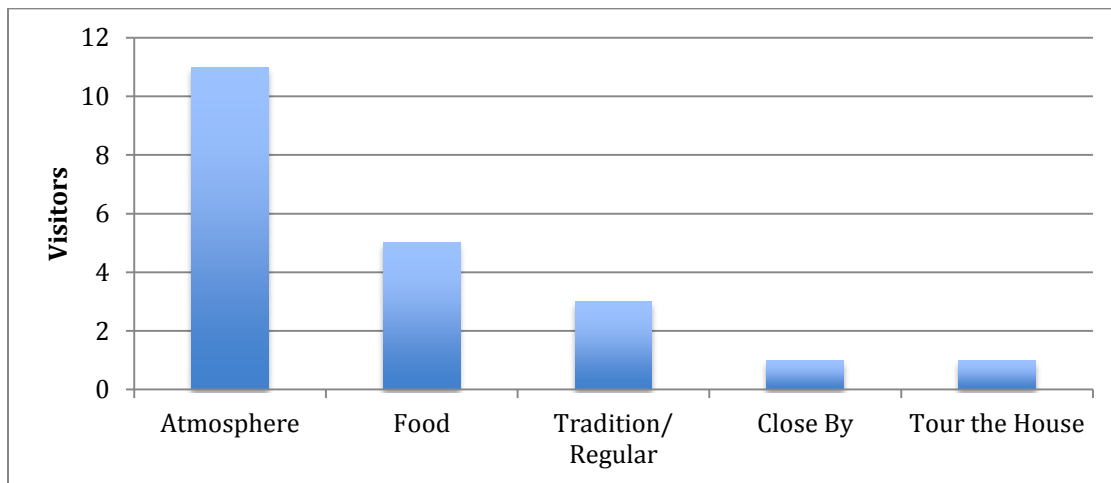
Most people (58%) got to the tea room by car, while 20% arrived by foot, 11% by bus, 4% by bicycle, 4% by rail and 2% by minibus. The average amount of time visitors spent traveling was 17.6 minutes and the average distance traveled was 5.29 miles with a majority of 73% the visitors coming from the Borough of Bexley. The majority of people came to the tea room (Figure 21) because they were either exploring the park and found it by chance (38%) or they came specifically for a meal (33%). Three percent came because they wanted to see the house and 7% came for some other reason (e.g. visiting as part of an organized trip).

**Figure 21: Reasons to Come To The Tea Room (n=42)**



Of the 42 tea room respondents, 44% were returning customers and 56% were there for the first time. Of the 21 people returning (Figure 22), 58% came back because of the atmosphere, 26% for the food, 16% came to regularly, 6% came because it was close by and 5% of the people returned because they were there to see the house.

**Figure 22: Reason for Return to the Tea Room (n=20)**

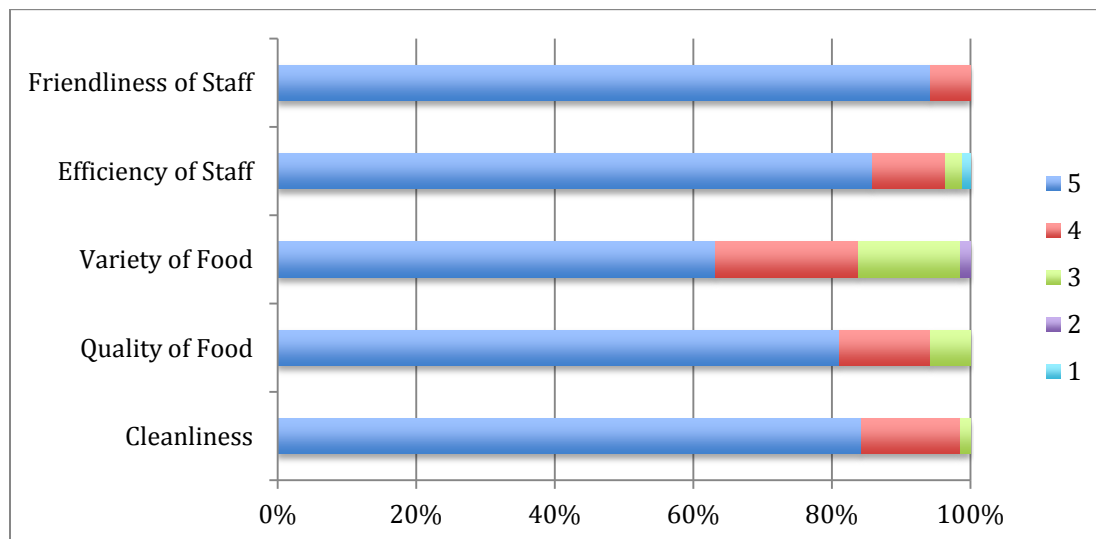


Of the people that were there for the first time 96% of them said they would return and the 4% that said they would not return explained that it was too far away to travel to again. Of the people surveyed in the tea room 31% had taken a tour of the house previously. Of the visitors that had previously taken a tour 12 (88%) of them said that

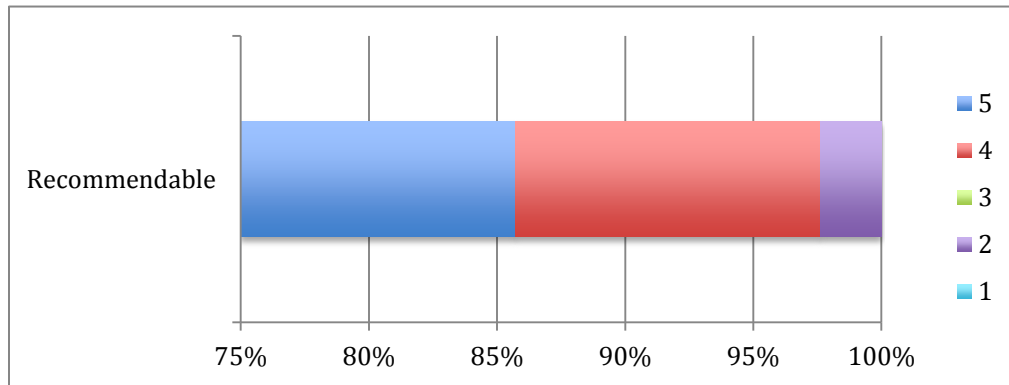
they had an enjoyable experience and 2 (14%) said that there was room for improvement with regard to the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit and other smaller aspects of Danson House. Of the visitors that had not toured the house 57% said they would be interested in seeing the house and 43% said they probably would not take a tour of the house. This is mostly because they were not interested in the history of the house or they were with children, which would make the experience more difficult.

The tea room was rated in various areas (Figure 23) on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). Average ratings were calculated: friendliness of the staff received a 4.82, efficiency of the staff was rated at a 4.79, variety of the food was rated at a 4.45, quality of the food was rated a 4.80, and cleanliness received a 4.94. This shows that overall the tea room had high satisfaction ratings. When asked if they would recommend the tea room to a friend on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) the visitors rated the tea room with a 4.82 (Figure 24); however, the most common reason for lower ratings was because it was a little far for some of the visitors and their friends to travel.

**Figure 23: Ratings of the Tea Room**

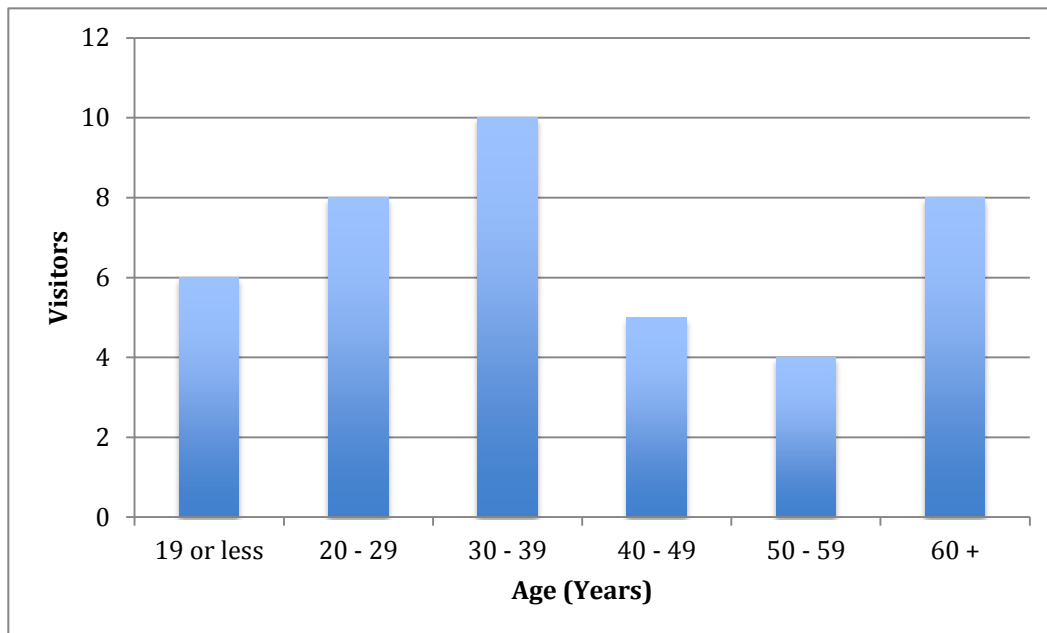




**Figure 24: Likeliness to Recommend to a Friend**

### Danson Park Visitor Survey

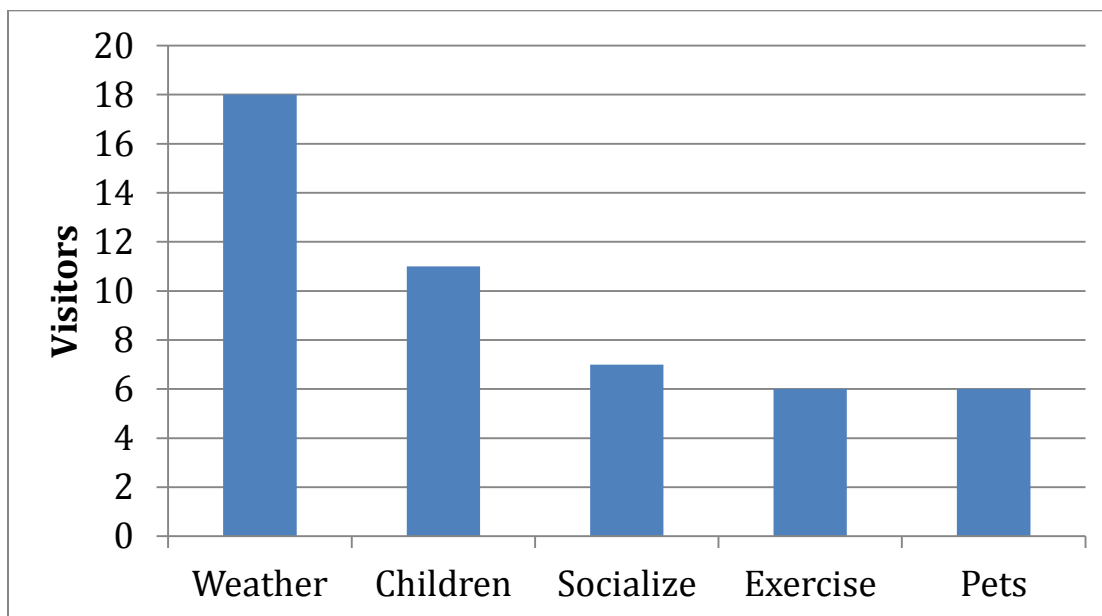
There were 41 surveys collected with a total of 72 participants (62% women). Of the respondents 81% of the people that we interviewed were White British, 3% were Black British, 9% were Indian, and 6% were Other. The average age was 36. Age distribution of the Danson Park visitors were more varied (Figure 25) than the tea room and the house demographics. The average distance traveled was 3.6 miles and a majority (80%) of the people being from the Borough of Bexley.

**Figure 25: Ages of Danson Park Visitors**

Of the people visiting the park 12% were first time visitors and 88% were returning visitors. Everyone that we surveyed said that they would return within the next year. Of those returning visitors 37% come at least once a week, 23% come every day, 14% come at least once a month, and 26% come at least once a year.

People would visit the park for multiple reasons (Figure 26) and therefore would respond with multiple answers causing the percentages to add up to be more than 100%. Forty-four percent of the people that were surveyed come to the park because it is a nice place to be when there is nice weather. Twenty-seven percent of the people come because it is a good place to let their children play, 15% come because there is space for their pets to walk and play, 15% come because they can exercise on the walking paths, 17% come to socialize with friends, and 5% come for other reasons (e.g. the ice cream van).

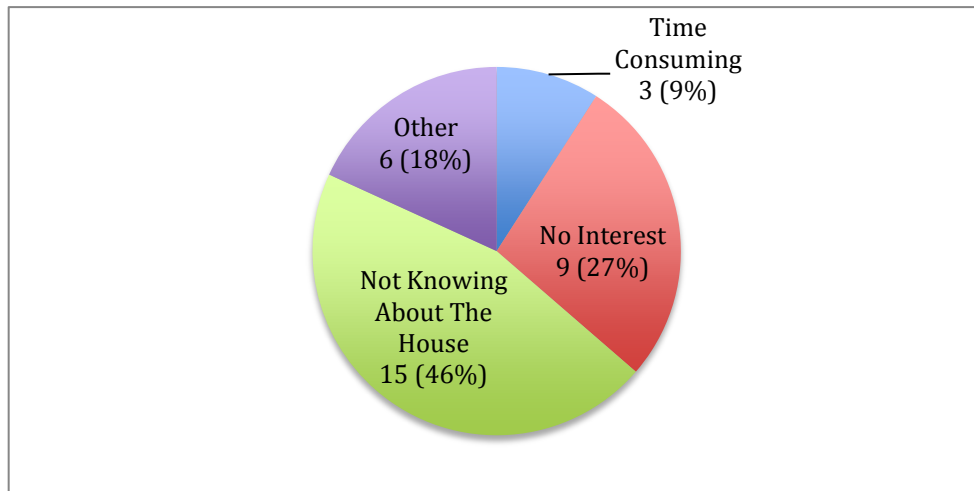
**Figure 26: Reasons for Coming to the Park (n=41)**



Only 17% of the respondents had visited Danson House. Of the people that had visited the house 25% of the people went because they wanted to take a tour of the house, 50% of the people came because they were curious about the house, (which often happened because people saw it when it was in disrepair and wanted to see the renovations), and 25% came because of the tea room. The people who had never been to the house rated the likeliness on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) of whether they would visit Danson House. The average rating was a 2.16. Of the 33 park

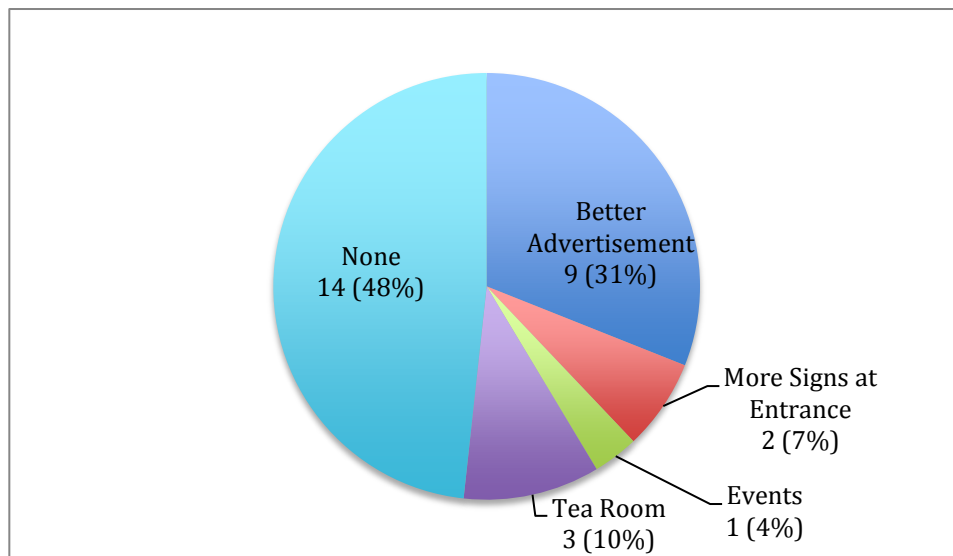
visitors who had not visited the house, the most frequently cited reasons for not visiting (Figure 27) was lack of knowledge about the house. The 18% that responded with other mentioned reasons like having dogs or children with them.

**Figure 27: Reasons for Not Visiting Danson House (n=33)**



Respondents believed that better advertising (32%), easier access (7%), more events (3%), and greater awareness of the tea room (10%) might enhance visitation (Figure 28). However, most people (48%) said there was nothing that would increase their interest in Danson House.

**Figure 28: Ways to Improve Visitor Attendance (n=29)**



## Observations of Other Historic Sites

On the visits to Red House, Dover Castle, and Eltham Palace observations were recorded that provided data to compare these historic sites with Danson House and therefore assist in making the recommendations. Observations on proximity to public transport, price of admission, estimated visitor attendance, demographics of visitors, evaluation of the staff, evaluation of the sites' tea room or similar restaurant venue, and general observations of the experience as visitors were recorded. Demographics observed at all three sites were a majority of White British most likely at least 50 years of age or older. The staff of all three sites also had excellent evaluations in friendliness and their knowledge of history about the site.

Of the three sites visited, Red House was the most similar to Danson House. It is a twenty minute walk from Danson House itself as well as an eight minute walk from the nearest bus stop, so it attracts the same local visitors as Danson House. The admission at Red House is similar to Danson House and it also has a tea room with refreshments similar to the tea room at Danson House. The notable differences came from the tour experience itself. The tour starts outside the Red House and leads visitors around the grounds and gardens before taking visitors into the house itself. There is one tour guide for each tour group, whereas at Danson House if there are multiple volunteer tour guides they remain in one or two rooms while the visitors move from room to room; this can give them a different experience based on which volunteer they had in which room, whereas the tour at Red House has a constant guide that gives you a constant experience. The Red House tour was also focused more on the architecture and architect of the house, William Morris, than the objects or rooms inside the house. The tour guide gives the visitor a great deal of information about the life and work of William Morris, as well as ceiling paintings and other such artistic designs made by him. This differs from Danson House in that depending on which guides visitors see in which rooms, visitors may not learn about the life of John Boyd or other people that lived in the house, which may be what people are interested in more so than the rooms or the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit.

Of the historic sites visited, Dover Castle differed the most from Danson House in both size and location; located southeast of London in the Town of Dover and about an hour and twenty minute drive from Danson House, Dover Castle is the largest castle in

England and attracts a great deal more visitors annually than Danson House. Dover Castle was evaluated because it is owned and managed by English Heritage, and observing what makes Dover Castle successful was useful. The price of admission is £16, and there is a café style venue for refreshments. The visitor experience differs from Danson House in two key ways: the first being that one room contained three employees dressed in medieval clothing and conversing with the visitors in order to make for a more interactive tour; this could be effective at Danson House. The second difference was that since it is such a large site visitors are given a map upon entry to help them explore the castle; rarely people need assistance with knowing where to explore in Danson House. The only similarity between Danson House and Dover Castle was that no technology was utilized on the site in order to maintain the aesthetic value of the property, with the exception of the limited use of handheld audio guides at Dover Castle.

Eltham Palace is a Medieval Royal palace located about four miles west of Danson House in the Borough of Greenwich. Owned by English Heritage, it is most well-known for its Art Deco interior and surrounding gardens. Its price of admission is £9.60, and it has a venue similar to Danson House tea room for refreshments. Its visitor experience was similar to Danson House in two key ways: it was a self-guided tour, and one room contained a television. The purpose of the television was not explained, and it made the room feel awkward and confusing. This is similar to the room in the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit in Danson House that contains a television, with a decent amount of visitors having the same confused reaction. One key difference between Eltham Palace and Danson House was there were multiple and clearly comprehensible signs informing visitors how to get to Eltham Palace, whether or not Eltham Palace was open, and where to enter Eltham Palace. These signs reduce confusion and can even attract visitors to the palace; similar signage at Danson House could greatly improve visitation.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the findings, the project team developed conclusions and recommendations regarding three aspects of operations at Danson House: (1) the nature of the visitor experience; (2) the tea room experience; and (3) outreach and marketing.

### The Nature of the Visitor Experience

**Conclusions:** Overall there are high satisfaction ratings among Danson House visitors, particularly with the quality of the guides and the restored rooms. The Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit yielded an array of responses but overall was not well received. Visitors expressed more interest in similar activities, events and exhibits specifying that the exhibit be more related to the time period. Also requested by visitors was the opportunity to see additional rooms (e.g. bathroom, bedrooms, servants' quarters) restored to historical authenticity. Additionally, navigation and way finding to the house entrance needs to be improved as many visitors were confused by the side door. Available seating for the elderly and the disabled would be appreciated by the visitors as well.

### Recommendations:

1. In order to bring more visitors to Danson House and encourage people to return, new exhibits are crucial. However, based on the feedback collected the future exhibit should be more related to the time period of the house.
2. Visitors expressed interest in either the restoration of the top floor or an exhibit that relates back to the house. Options that would please visitors include restoring the top floor with historical authenticity, having an exhibit about the servants of the time period, or an exhibit on the watercolors used to restore Danson House. Many people would also like to see the Victorian kitchen to be staged as it would have looked when being used.
3. To improve way finding, signs are vital. Since the entrance to Danson House is not the grand door in the front but a smaller one on the side of the house, a sign on the fence or in front of the house directing people would reduce many visitors' confusion. Additional signs inside near the ticket office directing people to the staircase will help guests navigate their way to the historic floor.

4. Providing seating for visitors would make the experience more positive for the many elderly and disabled people. Interviews with the guides and the visitors both reflect a need for usable chairs in the rooms.

The survey responses support making these changes and suggest they will improve the visitor experience thus encouraging repeat visitors and will give a positive reputation to first time visitors.

### **The Tea Room Experience**

**Conclusions:** Visitors in the tea room reported high satisfaction ratings with the exception of the variety of choices offered on the menu. Visitors expressed interest in more lunch options, specifically sandwiches, salads and gluten-free selections. According to the other rating data and open response questions; visitors enjoyed the tea room staff, the quality of the food offered and the overall atmosphere created.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Improvement could be made by offering simple meal options for children since many visitors are women who come from the park to get lunch with young children.
2. Survey results also yielded a desire for menu options for visitors with allergies, specifically requested was at least one gluten-free option.

Making these adjustments will increase the satisfaction of tea room visitors and encourage repeat customers.

### **Outreach and Marketing**

**Conclusions:** To increase visitation numbers, more people need to be aware that Danson House is open. The best way to spread this knowledge is through a variety of advertising strategies. The majority of Danson House visitors are White British women above the age of 60 who come from southern London boroughs within 30 miles of the house. Compared to the demographics collected from house visitors, tea room and park visitors are younger and more diverse in all categories. Visitors from the tea room and park are also typically unaware of what Danson House has to offer. The principle way

visitors found out about Danson House was recommendations via word of mouth. Many of these Danson House visitors had visited similar historic sites in the past 12 months.

**Recommendations:** Most visitors to Danson House had found out about the house through word of mouth or an organization. Ensuring every visitor has a quality experience is essential. To encourage visitors to return with friends a coupon or other discount for friends and neighbors should be considered.

1. To improve awareness of Danson House, Bexley Heritage Trust should utilize Danson Park and the tea room to aid in advertisement. A counter display on the tables in the tea room (with permission from the outside vendor) would increase awareness about the house and encourage tea room visitors to take a tour. Survey results suggest posting signs in the park and having pamphlets available in the park (especially near maps and entrances) would greatly improve the awareness in park visitors.
2. Another positive advertising strategy would be to work with other historical attractions. Building relationships with other nearby houses, like Red House, and advertising for each other, possibly offering a discount program (with other historic sites besides Hall Place) is a strategy Bexley Heritage Trust should implement. This would help Danson House be better known, especially because visitors at other historical sites are an audience Bexley Heritage Trust should be targeting.
3. Along with focusing on target audiences, survey results show the majority of Danson House visitors are retired White British women. In order to use appropriate channels to continue to reach this primary audience, Bexley Heritage Trust should advertise Danson House in places that will be seen by this demographic (e.g. grocery stores, retirement homes, etc.). Also, to increase visitation numbers extending marketing efforts to other geographic areas other than the Borough of Bexley should be considered.



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**12. Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve:**

a) The tea room: \_\_\_\_\_

b) The kitchen: \_\_\_\_\_

c) The Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit: \_\_\_\_\_

d) The shop: \_\_\_\_\_

e) Advertising for the Danson House: \_\_\_\_\_

f) The Danson House in general: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?**

## Appendix B: Danson House Visitor Survey

### Preamble

Hello my name is (Patrick/Rodrigo/Molly/Rachael) and I am a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States. As a project my group and I are attempting to help Danson House improve its visitor experience; would you like to help by answering a few questions about your visit today? Your replies will be kept anonymous.

Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many are there in your party?: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are the members in your party friends or relatives?

1) Friends      2) Relatives      3) Coworkers

3. Where did you travel from today?: \_\_\_\_\_

i.) If from UK, what is first part of your post code?: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Mode of transportation used to come to Danson House today?

1) Car      2) Coach      3) Bicycle      4) Foot      5) Rail      6) Bus      7) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you at the end of your visit?

1) Yes

2) If no, how much more time do you plan on spending here? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Roughly how much time did you spend in:

i) Danson House: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Danson Park: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you a first time visitor?

1) No: How many times have you visited the house in the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

2) Yes: i. Did you have any problems finding Danson House? \_\_\_\_\_

ii. How did you find about it?

1) Recommendations/Word of Mouth

2) Live Nearby/Driving Past

3) Did own research

4) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. What features of the Danson House drew you to visit today?

1) House      4) Park      7) Yellow Wallpaper Exhibition  
2) Tea Room      5) Items in House (e.g. Furniture, etc.)      8) Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
3) Gift Shop      6) Show to relatives/friends

9. Did you have any problems finding your way around the house or park?

1) No      2) Yes (What were they?): \_\_\_\_\_

10. What parts did you actually visit?    i) Shop    ii) Tea Room    iii) Park

The following questions are ranked from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest) (#11 to #15)

11. How would you rank the tearoom in the following categories?

i) Friendliness of staff: \_\_\_\_\_    iii) Quality of food and drink: \_\_\_\_\_    v) Cleanliness: \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Efficiency of staff: \_\_\_\_\_    iv) Variety of food and drink: \_\_\_\_\_

12. How would you rate the friendliness of the staff in the house?: \_\_\_\_\_

13. How would you rate the staff knowledge of the history of the house?: \_\_\_\_\_

14. How would you rate the staff's helpfulness in answering any questions you had?: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How likely would you be to encourage a friend or relative to visit the Danson House?: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Overall, how could we improve the experience of your visit?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. What was your favorite part of your visit to Danson House?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Have you seen the 2012 Danson House events leaflet? Y or N

i) If Yes: What information was most useful to you?

1. Information on hours and dates open	4. Guest Speakers
2. Information on location	5. Specific events
3. New yellow wallpaper exhibit	6. Booking events contact information

19. Have you booked any events for Danson House? Y or N

i) Yes: What events? : \_\_\_\_\_

20. Do you plan to visit again in the in the next 12 months: 1) Yes 2) No 3) Don't Know

21. What events if any would you be interested in seeing at Danson House?

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Have you seen the Danson House website? Y or N

If Yes: i. What information did you gain from it?

1. Directions	2. Opening hours	3. Events	4. History about the house
5. Other: _____			

ii. Was it easy for you to use/navigate? Y or N

iii. Any suggestions on how to improve it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. How many Historic Houses have you visited in the past 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

i) Which one most recently?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Did you buy anything in the gift shop? a) No b) Yes

(For recording purposes)

25. Age?: \_\_\_\_\_ M: \_\_\_\_\_ F: \_\_\_\_\_

26. What is the occupation of members of your party?: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Do you consider anyone in your party to have a disability? Y or N

If Yes: i) Do you feel they were adequately provided for? Y or N

ii) If not, what needs to be improved?: \_\_\_\_\_

28. What is your ethnic background?: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

## Appendix C: Tea Rom Visitor Survey

### Preamble

Hello my name is (Patrick/Rodrigo/Molly/Rachael) and I am a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States. As a project my group and I are attempting to help Danson House improve its visitor experience and visitor attendance; would you like to help by answering a few questions about the Tea Room?

Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What brought you to the Tea Room today? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you been here before? \_\_\_\_\_
  - i) **If yes** : What made you want to come back? \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii) **If no**: Would you consider coming back? Why or why not?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. How did you hear about the Tea Room?
 

a) Word of mouth	e) Advertisement: _____
b) Through the Danson House	f) Other: _____
c) Live nearby	
d) Recommendation	

### The following questions are ranked from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest)

4. How would you rank the Tea Room in the following areas?
  - 1) Friendliness of staff: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) Efficiency of Staff: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) Variety of food and drink: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) Quality of food and drink: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) Cleanliness: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) How likely would you be to encourage a friend or relative to visit the Tea Room?: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you ever taken a tour of the Danson House?
 

**Yes:**

  - a) When was your last visit? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Did you find your experience enjoyable? Why or why not?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**No:** Do you have plans on visiting? Why or why not?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### (For recording purposes)

7. How many are in your party? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Age(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where did you travel from today? \_\_\_\_\_
  - i) If from the UK: What is the first part of your postal code? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What mode of transportation did you use today?
 

a) Car	b) Coach	c) Bicycle	d) Foot	e) Rail	f) Bus	g) Other
--------	----------	------------	---------	---------	--------	----------
12. About how long (in minutes) did it take you to get here today? \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D: Danson Park Visitor Survey

Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

### Preamble:

Hello my name is (Patrick/Rodrigo/Molly/Rachael) and I am a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States. As a project my group and I are attempting to help Danson House improve its visitor experience and visitor attendance; would you like to help by answering a few questions?

**1. Is this your first time visiting Danson Park: Y or N**

**i) Yes: Do you plan to return the next 12 months? Y or N**

**ii) No: On average how often do you visit? \_\_\_\_\_**

**2. What brought you to the Danson Park?:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Walk around the park for exercise      2) Walk/play my pet around the park  
 3) Socialize and meet with friends      4) Allow my children space to play

**3. Have you visited Danson House? Y or N**

**i) Yes: 1. What drew you to the house?** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Tour the house      2) Tea room      3) The yellow wallpaper exhibit  
 4) Items in the house      5) Curiosity

**2. What was your favorite part of Danson House?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Overall, how could we improve the experience for our visitors?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**ii. If No: 1. How likely are you to visit Danson House (1 the lowest, 5 the highest): \_\_\_\_\_**

**2. What has kept you from visiting?**

- a) Accessibility/couldn't find the entrance      b) Time consuming      c) No interest  
 d) Not knowing what about the house.      e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What would make you want to visit?**

- a) Better advertisement      b) More easily accessible      c) Events: \_\_\_\_\_  
 d) Tea Room      e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**(For recording purposes)**

**4. Age(s): \_\_\_\_\_ M: \_\_\_\_\_ F: \_\_\_\_\_**

**5. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_**

**6. What is your ethnic background?: \_\_\_\_\_**

**7. What mode of transportation did you use to get to Danson Park today?**

- a. Car      b. Coach      c. Bicycle      d. Foot      e. Rail      f. Bus      g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Where did you travel from today?: \_\_\_\_\_**

**a) If from UK, what is the first part of your postcode? \_\_\_\_\_**

**9. Approximately how long did it take you to get here? \_\_\_\_\_ (mins)**

## Appendix E: Observational Worksheet for Other Historical Sites

### Place:

Team Member(s):

Date:

Time:

Weather:

Proximity to public transportation:

Price of admission: £

Visitor attendance (estimated number seen):

#### Demographics of Visitors

Average age:

Race(s) observed:

#### Evaluation of staff (scale: 1= very poor, 5=excellent)

Friendliness:

Knowledge of history:

Quality/Cleanliness:

Tea room? Y or N

If Yes, observations:

If No, any other restaurant like venue? Y or N

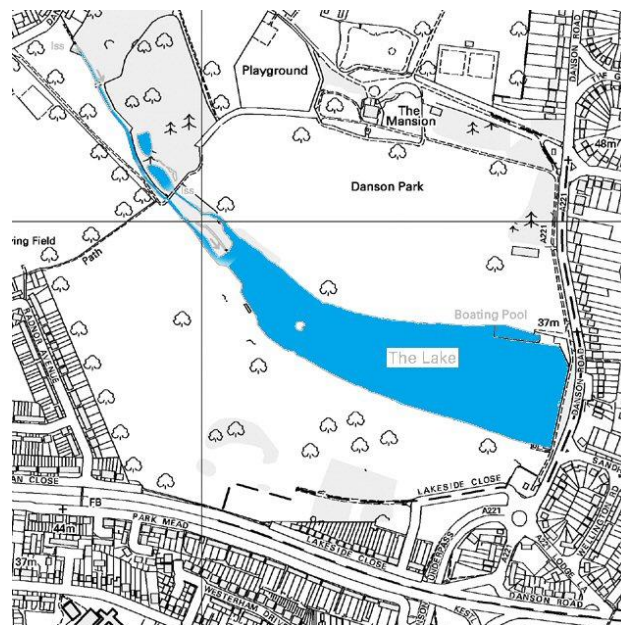
Observations:

Other Observations:

## Appendix F: Sponsor Description

The Bexley Heritage Trust is a non-profit charity that was set-up in 2000 in order to manage two historic houses located in the London Borough of Bexley, Danson House and Hall Place. Hall Place is a Grade I stately home, with a Grade II gardens. The house is a public museum that contains local artifacts, history and information center, three galleries, and a restaurant with bars. Danson House is a Grade I Georgian mansion which is located at the center of the Danson Park. It is open for public viewing and activities.

**Figure 1: Area view of Danson Park**



The Danson house was built in 1766 for Sir John Boyd. Boyd acquired the 200 acre lease in 1753, planning to build a grand home for himself, his wife Mary Bumpstead, and his four children. Unfortunately, Mary passed away before construction of the house began; Boyd then married Catherine Capone in 1766 and proceeded to build his new house. He commissioned Sir Robert Taylor as his principal architect, who developed a design based on an Italian villa from Vicenza of the sixteenth century. As described on the Danson Hall website, the house “reflects a preoccupation with the Golden Age of antiquity and is full of the symbolism of classical mythology.” Boyd passed away in 1800 and left the house to his son John Boyd. John faced some economic hardships and attempted to raise money to retain ownership of Danson House by selling his father’s extensive art collection, but was forced to put the house and estate up for auction in 1805. The estate was bought by John Johnston who lived in the house until his death in 1828;

the house was then occupied by his widow and their daughter Sarah until 1860. Sarah Johnston painted a set of watercolors of different features and views of the house, which were vastly important to the English Heritage's restoration of the house in 1995. Alfred Bean bought the estate in 1862 and chose to refurbish the house in an imperial French rococo style as well as install hot water and gas lighting. Following the death of Bean's widow in 1921, the house was bought by Bexley Council in 1923. The Council opened the 65 acre park to the public and adapted the house as a museum. During World War II, the house was used for civil defense purposes. Following the war, the house began to fall into a dilapidated state due to lack of proper maintenance, and continued to deteriorate until 1995. In 1995 English Heritage<sup>1</sup> deemed Danson House to be "the most significant building at risk in London" and began a £4.5m project to restore Danson House to its former Georgian glory under the guidance of principal architects by Purcell Miller Tritton. A local group, called Bexley Heritage Trust, formed a partnership with English Heritage in 2000 and worked to complete the restoration. The house was finally reopened to the public by Her Majesty the Queen on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

**Figure 2: Queen reopening the Danson House to the public**



(Danson House Website - <http://www.dansonhouse.org.uk/index.php/english-heritage/>)

Bexley Heritage Trust raises money to improve the quality of their public services in order to maintain Hall Place and Danson House. Their mission is "to protect, preserve and manage the buildings, gardens and collections... and to provide a high quality service offering vibrant cultural sites and activities for the education and enjoyment of everyone" (The Charity Commission, 2011). The trust achieves this by: taking care of the grounds in

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<sup>1</sup>English Heritage est. 1983 (officially the Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England) is an executive non-departmental public body of the British Government sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is the steward of over 400 significant historical and archaeological sites, from Stonehenge to the world's earliest iron bridge. Its main job is to maintain and upkeep these sites.

a proper manner, understanding the visitors and trying to accommodate to their interests, building upon its successes and its ability to educate effectively and keep audiences engaged, making changes to displays to keep them current and interesting for returning visitors and improving the displays with new information that is discovered. (Bexley Heritage Trust, n.d.) Some of the events that they do to achieve this is concerts, talks by various guests, there is a masquerade ball in the winter, and they are currently working to open an exhibit on wallpapers.

The properties under the government of the Bexley Heritage Trust are taken care of by many people. There are 11 trustees on the board who make executive decision about the properties, the finances, the events and other matters involving the trust. Under the guidance of the trustees are 40 employees who perform various acts from keeping the grounds well taken care of to making sure the information given to the visitors is accurate and interesting. Many other people volunteer their time to maintain the properties under Bexley Heritage Trust and to reach out in various ways to their target audiences. (Charity Commission, 2011)

Since Bexley Heritage Trust is a non-profit organization, it relies heavily on donations and fundraising to fund its activities. The organization considers itself in healthy financial standing by doing everything it can to spend less than it raises each fiscal year. In addition to admission fees, the Trust raises money from catering and rental fees for events and from retail sales in its stores, as Figure 3 shows.

**Figure 3: Bexley Heritage Trust Fundraising Activities, taken from “Summary Information Return 2010”**

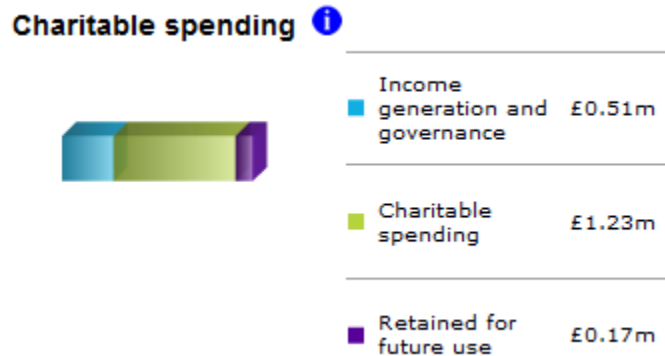
What were your charity's three main fundraising activities in the year and how much did each generate and cost?

<b>Fundraising Activity</b>	<b>Income Generated £ 000s</b>	<b>Cost of Activity £ 000s</b>
Trading income from functions and lettings	169	35
Trading income from Catering	262	233
Trading income from retail	113	80

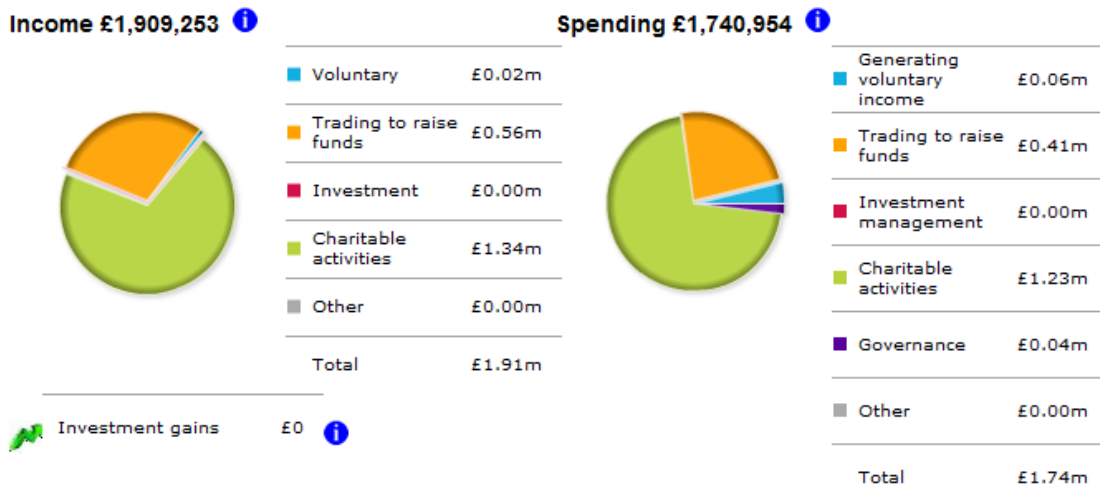
The organization's spending is closely monitored and is often used on charities as well as the future bettering of the Bexley Heritage Trust. The charitable spending of this association in 2012 is shown in Figure 3. This bar graph is an example of how they see the difference between their income, spending, and the money saved for future use. With this said, income and spending are equally important in a non-profit organization. As

seen in Figure 4, charitable activities and trading to raise funds are top priorities in both the income and spending departments.

**Figure 4: Visual of Charitable Spending 2010**



**Figure 5: Break Down of Income and Spending for Bexley Heritage Trust in 2010**



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