

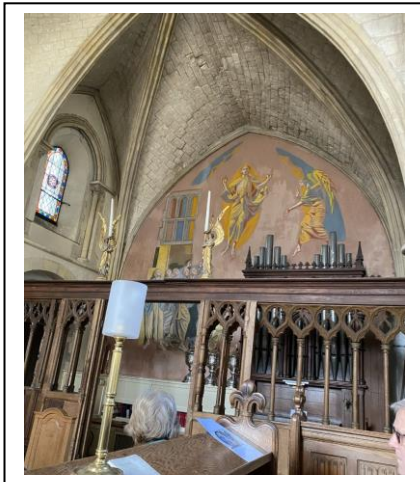
Chichester Cathedral behind the Scenes tour - Wednesday 8 February 2023

Feedback on this visit



On a sunny day 34 members of The Arts Society Arun assembled in the Cathedral, ready for their guided visit to the Library, Bishop's Chapel and the Song Room. The group was divided in three sub groups, each with a guide.

BISHOP'S CHAPEL



Alan Bradley received us in the Bishop's Chapel and enlightened us about its history.

In Cromwell's reign the walls were limewashed white, covering one of three lovely medieval roundels that used to decorate the walls. In 1829 the remaining roundel was discovered, of the Virgin and Child. Modern technology revealed original outline and colour.

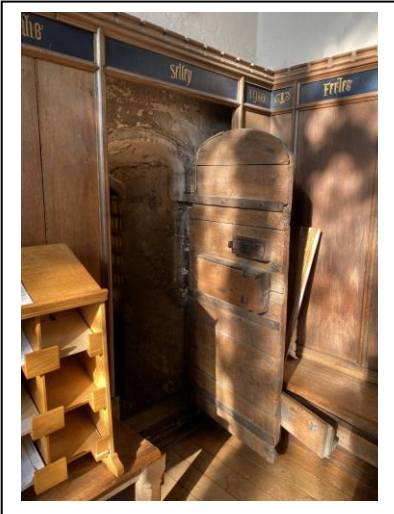
The carved wooden screen dates back to the 14th century and is a rare example of that period as most screens were ripped out and burned during the reformation.

THE LIBRARY



40 steps up spiralling, narrow stairs to the Library, something the Library volunteers do at least once every week, in order to sort out and clean the incredible leather-bound volumes. Some examples were laid out for us to admire such as Benedictine Missal from 1481, a beautiful illuminated manuscript that came from the first Duke of Sussex, who bankrupted himself partly due to his passion for books. The Library holds approx. 9000 books and is open to the public on the first Tuesday of the month for a couple of hours. No reservation needed. The volunteers do NOT wear gloves as this is more likely to damage delicate pages than clean hands. No photography allowed of the works, except for the corbelling (row of corbels deeply keyed inside a wall support) visible in this room. Charming figures, often of animals. A modern replacement stands out as it depicts the dog of one of the Cathedral's dignitaries.

THE SONG SCHOOL



Another 40 steps up and down. This room with the sun streaming through the high windows is where the Choir Boys practice. This part of the Cathedral was built around 1490 as a Chapter Meeting House. In the 16th century the Cathedral was the biggest employer in Chichester (2000 inhabitants).

The room has an almost invisible door hidden in the panelling, leading to a small windowless area where ca. 1500 choral works are stored.

On exiting our guide stopped to show us one of the misericords (=pity of the heart, sometimes called 'mercy seats') and explained the purpose. During the service much standing is required which for the older people could be an ordeal. By perching on these misericords, one appears to be standing. Underneath each one is usually a carving which can be rather bawdy. No religious themes allowed, considering it was below the 'bum'.

