

Further Information

You can read these medieval texts in full as well as many others, plus a digital atlas of the city c.1500 and other resources at www.medievalchester.ac.uk

'Discover Medieval Chester' will soon have its own website with lots of new materials, but in the meantime you can keep in touch with the development of this artwork – and the wider project – on the Blog at www.blog.medievalchester.ac.uk

Find out more about the work of artist Nayan Kulkarni at www.nkprojects.co.uk

Visit St John's Church itself to see more of its wonderful historic and spiritual heritage. Check with the church about public opening times. www.parishofchester.com

The illuminations feature as an event on the council's facebook page www.facebook.com/cheshirewest

Feedback

This temporary installation is one stage in the development of the permanent artwork. We are keen to know your thoughts on it.

Please leave your feedback:
Text the word 'Light' and your comment to 63333
Email - artswest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



PUBLIC ART PROJECT INFORMATION

'HRYRE'

St John the Baptist Church, Eastern Ruins, Chester
Temporary Installation (October 2011 onward)



Image: computer generated illustration by Nayan Kulkarni

What is the artwork?

'Hryre' (the word for 'ruin' in Old English) is a new artwork designed to explore the medieval heritage of Chester, and of St John's Church in particular. It draws on the research of the 'Mapping Medieval Chester' project, and is part of a new 'Discover Medieval Chester' project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The artwork has been commissioned by Cheshire West & Chester Council's (CWAC) Arts & Festivals team, in partnership with Museum Service, Street Lighting and Chester Renaissance.

The current artwork is temporary (from October 2011) and will be replaced by a permanent work in early 2012.

Who has produced the artwork?

The artist Nayan Kulkarni has been commissioned to produce this artwork. Nayan works in the medium of light and is particularly interested in site-specific projections. Nayan has worked closely with Dr Catherine Clarke (Swansea University and director of the 'Mapping Medieval Chester' research) and has developed ideas in conjunction with local people through workshops and discussion.

What are the projections?

The projections across the ruins at St John's are formed from fragments of medieval texts which describe the city of Chester, in English, Latin and Welsh. Medieval Chester was a multi-cultural city with a rich multi-lingual culture, and these texts reflect that.

As the words are projected across the uneven stonework, they take on new shapes and abstract visual forms. Some letters and words remain legible, and are designed to open up ideas and themes for reflection. The artwork asks viewers to contemplate subjects such as ruin and memory, decay and survival, the passing of time and the idea of a spiritual, peaceful place.



The illumination is created by combining light and projected text from different positions around the ruins. A remote computer controls which lights are on at any moment. This means that the artwork will gently change from hour to hour and night to night revealing the different qualities of the ruins and highlighting the texts.

For the next four months Nayan and Catherine will be developing the permanent content of the artwork, in consultation with the community. The current projections are a means of testing the illuminations and providing a real experience that will form the basis for a number of workshops to be held in Chester.

The light system has been designed by Nayan Kulkarni with electronic engineer Duncan Turner and computer scientist Jamie Craig. They have created a technology that creates extremely accurate projected light that optimises its use of power in a unique way.

What are the texts?

The temporary artwork centres on two key words:

Wonað (the Old English word for 'endures' or 'lives', drawn from the Old English poem 'The Ruin')

anhofio (the Welsh word for 'to forget' – the opposite of cofio, 'to remember')

The other texts projected across the ruins are:

- **solatio** ('consolation', Latin)

Writing in the 12th century, the monk Lucian uses this word to describe the consolation and solace he finds at St John's, in contrast to the pressures and busyness of secular life in Chester.

- **ond yr eglwysau yn dir glasach** ('but let the churches stay in a greener land', Welsh)

Like many Welsh writers in the Middle Ages, the poet Lewys Glyn Cothi is hostile towards Chester as a site of colonialist oppression. In his poem 'Satire on the Men of Chester' he wishes ruin on the city – but still has respect and affection for the churches and asks that they endure.

- **Troye** ('Troy', Middle English)

Henry Bradshaw, a monk at St Werburgh's in the early 16th century, gives an account of the 'great fire' of Chester in the 12th century, which leaves the city in ruins, like the once-great, lost city of Troy.

- **llanw** ('tide', Welsh)

Whilst medieval Welsh poems are often satirical about Chester, St John's Church is venerated as a site of pilgrimage, as it was believed to hold relics of the 'true cross' which, according to Welsh tradition, were washed into Chester on the tide. This image of the tide, from a poem by Maredudd ap Rhys, suggests both inexorable change and continuity.