

Chester Day Visit on 02-07-19. Report.

A warm and sunny day was perfect for a Day Visit to Chester by the History Group and the city was viewed at its best. Chester has much to offer the visitor and the Group made the most of the opportunity, availing themselves of many the facilities that a popular tourist attraction could give.

For some people a boat cruise on the River Dee gave a unique perspective of this historical city, while others preferred to get their bearings by using the hop-on/hop-off bus.

As the coach dropped off the Group near the Roman Amphitheatre, this was an ideal opportunity to admire the Roman origins of the city. The 2000 year old Amphitheatre was busy with groups of schoolchildren being marched Roman-style around the site by Tour guides dressed as Roman Legionaries. Later in the day these groups, dressed in colourful tabards, could be seen marching through the city, chanting and being led by the same 'Roman Legionaries'. The Amphitheatre is the largest stone-built Roman Amphitheatre in Britain and is very well preserved. It is one of only three legionary amphitheatres known to exist in Britain. It may once have seated 7000 spectators.

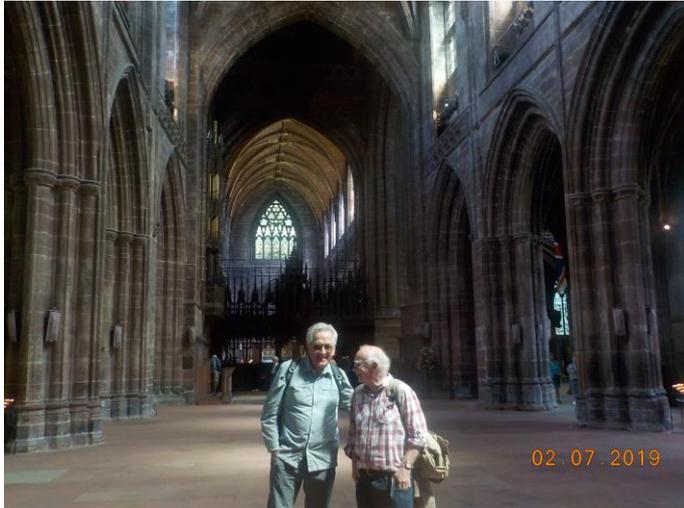
Adjacent to it are the Roman Gardens, where the remnants of Roman colonnades and a hypocaust can be seen.



The Roman Gardens

Close to the Roman Amphitheatre is the City Wall, the most complete city wall in the country. Many of the group chose to do the City Walls Walk of about 2-3 miles, and this trail leads past some of the most notable sites and attractions of this beautiful city. One feature of the City Walls Walk is the opportunity to descend from the Wall at regular intervals to go into the city centre.

The Cathedral lies adjacent to the Wall and this magnificent building is well worth a visit. The Saxon church was founded here before 875AD and it was refounded as a Benedictine Abbey in 1093. From 1260 to 1537 the Norman monastic buildings were gradually replaced by a great Gothic building, which became a Cathedral in 1541. The medieval misericords are considered the finest in the country.



Chester Cathedral

Further around the Walls there is access to the C13 Rows, a unique feature of this delightful city. The Rows are covered walkways built above the shops at street level. This provides a two-tier shopping experience, with a wealth of high class and High Street shops to enjoy. As a Visitor Guidebook says: 'Two tiers of shops running along the main streets. Two high streets in one, they take shopping to another level. You will find nothing like them elsewhere in the world'.



The Rows in Chester

In the middle of this shopping area lies the High Cross. This C15 sandstone pillar marked the centre of the Roman fortress and the four main Roman streets radiate from it to the main gates. The Via Principalis is now Watergate and Eastgate Streets; the Via Decumana is now Northgate Street and the Via Praetoria is now Bridge Street.

The Eastgate Clock is another feature of this historical city. Chester's most famous landmark was designed to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897 but was not erected until 1899!

Chester Castle occupies a prominent position overlooking the River Dee. It started as a medieval castle but was extended over the years, eventually housing the Shire Hall, the Assize Court and the County Gaol.

Lying close to the pick-up point of our coach was St John's Church. Founded by the Saxons, it contains one of the region's finest Norman architecture, as well as a medieval wall painting of St John the Baptist. Originally thought to have been much larger, it was from 1075 - 1102 Chester's Cathedral. This church has many royal connections, from Aethelred, King of Mercia in 689AD to King Edgar the Peaceful in 973AD to Queen Victoria.



Norman architecture in St John's Church

It was agreed by those who went that Chester proved to be an excellent day out and thanks must be given to Val Jarrett for organising this superb visit, her first for the History Group.

Heidy Hague.