

St. John's
Chapel
CHICHESTER

Learning Resources



Learning resources

CURRICULUM RELEVANCE

St John's Chapel is probably very different from other churches with which your students may be familiar. Its plain style and design reflect the way in which it was used, and make the chapel an interesting introduction to looking at different approaches to worship, both in Christianity and in other faiths, so a visit to the chapel will support an RE programme of study. Ideas for comparisons and further work are given in the *Websites and resources* section below. The chapel and its immediate surroundings are also a good focus for investigating architectural styles and life in 18th and 19th-century Chichester for students at Key Stage 2 and 3 studying local history topics, and the chapel provides a starting point for various research, writing and presentation tasks.



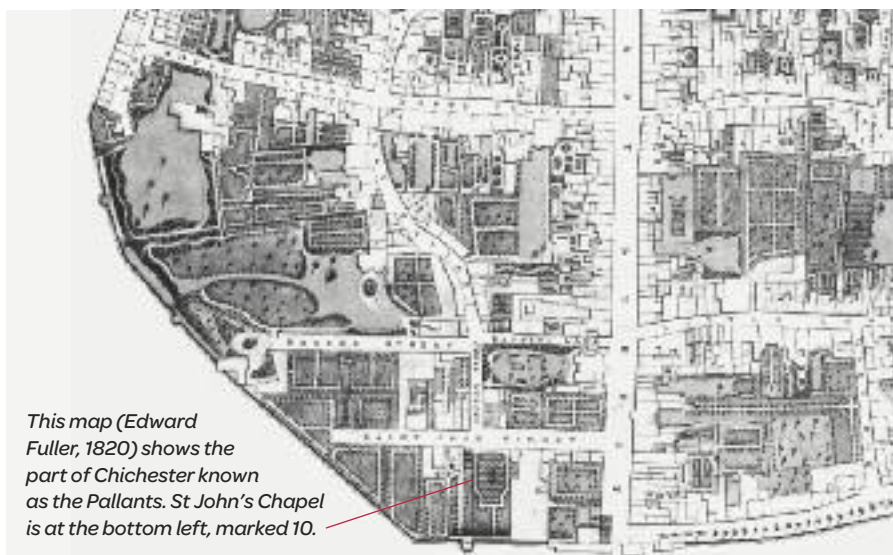
HISTORY

Chichester was a Roman settlement. There are few remains of the Roman town, but the central street layout from this period, dividing the town into quadrants can still be seen.

The medieval city of Chichester grew rapidly, and its boundaries were extended towards the end of the 18th century. By 1800 the medieval town had been almost entirely rebuilt. The 18th century was a time of expansion and rebuilding in Chichester, and much of the centre today retains the character of the Georgian period, particularly in the area around St John's Chapel, in the south-east quarter. This quarter includes the area known as the Pallants, and is also divided into four parts by two intersecting streets called North, South, East and West Pallant.

In this part of the city was the medieval foundation of the Black Friars. When the Friars were dissolved under Henry VIII in 1538, the land passed to a series of owners until the 19th century when it was divided up and sold as building plots to satisfy the needs of a growing population.

This growing population was the main reason for the building of St John's Chapel. Throughout the 18th century there had been various plans for providing more places of worship in Chichester, including the proposal to demolish the five existing medieval churches and replace them with one large new one. This unpopular plan was dropped, in favour of building a new church in the area then known as New Town. The new church was to be 'extra-



This map (Edward Fuller, 1820) shows the part of Chichester known as the Pallants. St John's Chapel is at the bottom left, marked 10.

parochial, that is without a parish of its own, but situated in another.

The site chosen was on land formerly occupied by the Black Friars, and it is said that the chapel was built on the site of the Friars' church. An Act of Parliament was needed to establish a new church within the city walls, and this was passed in 1812. Twelve trustees of the chapel were appointed by the Act, each donating the considerable sum of a minimum of £100. On 25th May 1812, the trustees and the Mayor and Corporation of the city laid the foundation stone of the chapel.

The architect chosen to work on the chapel was a local man from Oving, James Elmes. He described the building as 'an octangular edifice, 80ft long by 50ft broad, built entirely of brick, with timber roofs covered with slates.' St John's

Chapel was finally consecrated for worship in September 1813.

At first St John's Chapel flourished. It was recorded, in 1853, as having a congregation of between 500 and 600, and it was the first church in Chichester to hold an evening service as well as a morning one on Sundays. There was a regular Sunday School, with around 80 children attending, and lectures were held on Thursday evenings.

The chapel continued in use through most of the 20th century, in 1955 being united under one minister with the church of St Pancras. However, congregations continued to fall. In 1976 St John's was closed for public worship, and responsibility for its care passed to the Redundant Churches Fund, now The Churches Conservation Trust.

WHAT TO SEE

Outside

The chapel is built from white brick, now partly covered with cement, with a slate roof. The brick façade is broken by a horizontal line of stonework above the door. The outside of the chapel is, at first sight, unadorned, and certainly different from other older churches in Chichester. However it is not as plain as it first appears. The architect paid great attention to proportion and detail, and there is a lot to look at. The details of the chapel reflect the interest shown in classical buildings from Ancient Greece and Rome in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was popular for an architect, both of houses and public buildings, to incorporate several classical features into the design.

Things to look for

- 1 Classical features to be seen at St John's include the pilasters (semi-columns) either side of the main door.
- 2 The front of the building is decorated by an overhanging cornice supported by wooden brackets, topped by a pediment (another classical feature).
- 3 Above the pediment is a bell tower, or campanile, surrounded by Corinthian-style columns, and modelled on a famous example in Athens.
- 4 The large round-topped window, set in stonework with a decorative balustrade.



- 5 Wrought iron boot scrapers were placed by each side door, and possibly by the main door, although only one remains.
- 6 The remains of the tall iron-spiked fence, originally with two pairs of double

gates. These were removed during the Second World War as part of the collection of scrap metal for armaments.

Inside

The interior of the building reflects how the church was used. It remains almost unchanged since it first opened. In many Anglican churches in the early 19th century, the act of Holy Communion was not the most important part of the service. The preaching of the Word of God was the most important aspect of worship in churches of a lower Anglican tradition. This means that rather than the altar being the focal point of the church, the pulpit was the major place of interest. In St John's Chapel, the pulpit almost completely hides the simple altar.

The layout of the chapel gives a glimpse into the divisions of society in early 19th-

century Chichester. The main entrance on the ground floor leads directly into the centre of the chapel, where the pews in the body of the building were reserved for the poor. These 250 seats were free of any rent. The pews are not the original ones, as the ground floor pews were replaced in 1879, at the expense of a local benefactor. An early photograph shows that the original free seats for the poor were open-backed and would probably have been very uncomfortable. A plaque commemorating these changes is set above the main door inside the church.

The two side entrances, at an angle to either side of the main door, each leads into a small entrance hall. A staircase leads

from each hall, up into the gallery to the pews which were available for rent by the gentry of Chichester. Pew rents were a major source of income for many churches, including St John's where they provided between £200 and £300 per year for most of the 19th century. These fees paid for the minister's salary and other costs. In the gallery (only open to the public on certain occasions) the original early 19th-century box pews remain.

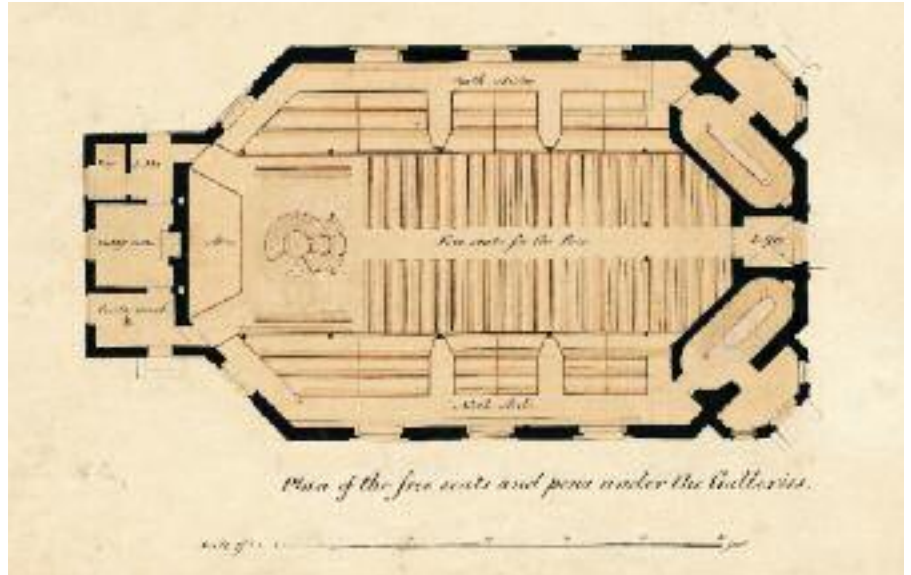
On the ground floor there were additional pews to rent in the side aisles, again only accessible from the side entrances to keep the gentry quite separate from the poor. Originally these would all have faced into the centre of the

chapel, but most were re-aligned in 1879, to face the pulpit.

The chapel was lit by gas lamps, first installed in 1836, and remains of the fittings can still be seen. This lighting was controlled by a pneumatic system, activated by two plungers towards the back of the chapel on the ground floor (one each side). These were pressed to light all the lamps at once. Ventilation was via vents in the ceiling rose, but this was not very effective. Originally the chapel was heated by a system of underfloor heating, carried from two stoves, one under each staircase. This was later supplemented by gas stoves, paid for by various benefactors.

Things to look for

- The altar is a simple table, surrounded by a plain wooden rail. This emphasises the point that the act of Holy Communion was a less important aspect of the service. ❶
- Behind the altar are four panels, containing the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments and the Creed. Below are four square panels containing texts from the Bible: Corinthians x 16; Proverbs xxii 2 and Matthew xi 28. ❶ ❷
- The pulpit is a three-decker pulpit, arranged north to south across the chapel rather than east to west as is more usual. It may have been re-aligned at some stage. Its prominent position shows the importance of preaching.
- The pulpit is decorated in a simple style, but the underside was ornately carved. ❸
- The clock, set into the gallery, enabled the minister to check that he was giving his congregation the benefit of a full hour's sermon. ❹
- Box pews (when there is access to the gallery) and their labels showing who paid the rent, and which are still available to rent. Also you can see the pegs on which gentlemen could hang their hats. ❷ ❹ ❸
- Narrow benches around the back of the gallery were for the servant of the gentry, accompanying their masters to church. According to the account books, at some stage simple rush matting was fixed to the wall behind the



This plan of the chapel shows the original layout of the ground floor. Give a copy to your students, and ask them to note the differences between the plan and the layout today. Can they estimate how many people could be seated in the main body of the chapel then? How many can be seated now?

benches, maybe to protect clothing, or for comfort, or even to protect the building. No trace of the matting remains.

- At the corners of the gallery pews, the pillars which supported the gas lamps still remain. ❸





This photograph, taken in 1923, shows the chapel decorated for Harvest Thanksgiving, and also the large iron stove in the centre of the main aisle.



The pulpit

The pulpit, known as a three-decker, had three separate sections. The lower desk was for the parish clerk. He was not usually ordained, and his role was to lead the responses and to intone the psalms. This role reflected the low levels of literacy in the 19th century; many of the congregation would have been unable to read.

The minister led the service from the second level, known as the reading desk. The third level was used by the minister when preaching his sermon, which usually lasted for one hour. It was as important that the congregation could see and hear the minister, and that he could keep an eye on his congregation.

In some churches there was a sounding board above the pulpit to ensure that everyone could hear properly, but at St John's the acoustics are good, so there was no need for this. There were originally two built-in candlesticks to light the pulpit at evening services, but these no longer remain.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Before your visit

Talk to your group about places of worship. Do any of your students attend a church, synagogue or mosque? If they do, ask them to describe the inside the place they are familiar with, and perhaps to explain a little about the activities that take place

there. They might be able to identify three or four things that they would expect to find in a place of worship. For a Christian church, they might mention the following, even if they do not know the correct terminology: stained-glass windows, altar, pews, statues, aisles, arches, font, side-chapels, bells.

If your school is close to a church, take them there to identify these different features on site. Ask them which they think is the most important place in the church

and how they know. They may choose the altar; often richly decorated, in many churches it is the focal point as you enter the church. Explain that this is because the celebration of Holy Communion is the most important aspect of a service for many Christians.

When you visit St John's Chapel, your students will be looking for the same features, seeing what is similar and what is different about them and how this reflects the way the chapel was used.

Activity 1 – First impressions

Learning objectives

This introductory activity encourages your students to explore the chapel in a structured way, and to observe and describe its main features. The extension activity develops skills of writing for a specific audience, selecting, summarising and organising factual material, and using appropriate specialist vocabulary. Students will plan, organise, draft, amend and proof-read their text. Research, design and IT skills will also be developed.

When you arrive, take a few minutes to get your students' first impressions of the exterior. There is enough space on the forecourt for a group to gather in safety. Ask students each to think of three words to describe the building, which to their

eyes may not look very special. Ask them if there are any clues outside to what the building is used for. Is it a house? Or is it an office or another place of work? Is it intended for a large number of people? What is it built from? Is it decorated or plain? Remind students to look up, as much of the detail may be out of their immediate view.

Take your group inside, if possible by the main central door leading into the nave, or central area, of the chapel. Divide into smaller groups and give each a structured task to allow them to explore, and to feel a sense of excitement in discovering somewhere new. For example, give each group a list of features to find – such as the pews, memorials, pulpit, altar, and clock. Students could simply tick the list as they



This architect's drawing shows the classical details on the front of the chapel, and the importance of symmetry to the building's design. Enlarge the drawing, and ask your students to mark on it the various axes of symmetry.

find each item, or could write a sentence or two describing what they notice about it. Ask students what they think is the most important feature in the building. They will probably identify the pulpit as it is so eye-catching. Explain that this was because the Christians who worshipped here felt that the most important aspect of a service was hearing the word of God, through Bible readings and the minister's sermon.

This activity could be further developed, into a more detailed research, writing and design task. Tell your students that they have been commissioned to produce two information panels for visitors to the church, one to be placed on the forecourt

outside and one inside. These panels are to direct the attention of visitors to the most interesting features of the building, and to explain how the chapel was used earlier in its history.

If possible show students some examples of information panels – either at other sites in Chichester or via the internet (see *Resources* section), and discuss what works and what is less successful. Ask them to think about the number of words (a maximum of 200 for each panel is best), the wording and size of the main heading to attract the reader, and how side-headings can make a panel more readable for visitors. Size of text is also important.

Consider the style of language and vocabulary and how to make the text accessible for a non-expert visitor, how to address the person reading the panel, and the use of photographs or drawings.

At St John's, ask students to work in small groups to photograph and describe their chosen features. Back at school they should find out more about the building's history, decide which information should be included on their panels, plan, draft, edit and proof-read their text, select their photographs or other illustrations and design their layout using IT.

Activity 2 – Pictures in words

Learning objectives

This activity aims to develop your students' writing skills. Although the chapel is very plain, it has great atmosphere, and provides scope for imaginative and creative writing tasks, the development of vocabulary and opportunities for creating narratives, scripts and poetry.

Explain to your students how the architect planned for the chapel to be used by different social groups, without them coming into contact with each other. Then divide your group into three. Ask one group to sit in the seats in the centre of the church, and another to sit in the side pews. If your group is accompanied by a volunteer, arranged at the time you make your booking, it may be possible to use the gallery. If so, some students may sit on the servants benches and others in the box pews rented by the more wealthy worshippers. If the gallery is not available, then select other contrasting places in the chapel, maybe the entrance area or stairwell.

Ask students to sit or stand quietly, and look around the place, noting what they see, hear and feel now, at this exact moment. They need not write in full sentences, just simple jottings of words and phrases will be fine. You could provide a simple template for them to record their words. Then ask them to transport themselves back in time, to when the chapel was in use in the 19th century. Ask them to record, from exactly the same place, what they might have seen, heard and felt then.

To start students thinking, ask them to consider:

- How the chapel was lit, what effect would this have had and what noises were associated with gas lighting.
- Would the chapel have been warmer or colder than now?
- Would they have been able to see the same things then as they can today?
- What kind of noises might have filtered in from outside?
- How might they have felt about the

other people in the church?

- How might they have felt at the end of an hour-long sermon?

This exercise can be repeated at each of the three places in the chapel, to give all students a chance to absorb the atmosphere and to think about the past from different physical viewpoints. Ask them to share and discuss their ideas.

After the visit, ask students to use their site notes to produce a piece of creative writing, possibly a narrative account from the point of view of one person in the past, a poem, or a dramatic interchange between two or more people. If your students are studying the 19th century in history, ask them to research the kind of clothes that would have been worn, the transport used and the types of work that would have been carried out by those who used the chapel, to add more accurate detail to their writing. If your students are enthused by their work, this could be worked up into a full dramatic presentation.

Activity 3 – Material evidence

Learning objectives

This activity gives students a scenario for their visit and work back at school. They will develop observation skills, their powers of description and choice of suitable vocabulary. They will produce a formal report, planning and organising their materials, redrafting where necessary, and using an appropriate style for factual reporting.

A wide variety of building materials was used to build St John's Chapel. Explain to your students that The Churches Conservation Trust has commissioned them to carry out a condition survey of St John's Chapel, and to produce a formal written report based on the evidence they find. Divide them into smaller groups, and allocate each a specific area to work in:

- the front exterior and forecourt
- the entrance halls and staircases
- the gallery
- the main body of the church.

Give each group a simple recording sheet, and ask them to list the different materials used, what they have been used for, and what condition they are in. Emphasise the importance of accuracy and clear

description rather than opinion. If possible, photograph the various items.

Students might notice that most of the columns are iron, but two are wood. The upstairs doors to the gallery are made of unfinished wood, covered with red baize to deaden sound from outside, and the rails around the gallery are brass. The pulpit and altar rails are both made of American black

bean wood, while the altar is made of oak. The ground floor pews are made from pine wood. Students will not be able to identify different types of wood on the spot, but they should be able to describe colour and grain, and could do further research back at school. The ceiling, which was originally plastered is now covered with painted wood. Look up to see the shadows of the

original plaster rosettes and the connecting ribs, since taken down. Outside the church, students should find brick, glass, stone, cement, iron and wood.

After the visit, students should produce a report on the materials used in the chapel and their current condition. They may use photographs taken during the visit to support their report.

Activity 4 – Round and about Learning objectives

This activity is based in the locality immediately around St John’s Chapel. Students at Key Stage 2 and 3 working on a local history study could use their visit to explore and record the architecture in the surrounding streets, developing their understanding of Georgian building styles and materials as well as the architectural style of the chapel itself.

St John’s is in a part of Chichester that retains much of its original 18th-century appearance. The same classical details that are included in the architecture of the chapel may be seen in large and small houses, and other buildings in the area. Pallant House, on the corner of North Pallant, is an imposing building which was built in the early 18th century. It is sometimes called the Dodo House, after the carvings on the gateposts. These are, in fact, ostriches, representing the crest of the original owners, the Peckham family. Now part of Pallant House Gallery, the exterior of Pallant House provides a good example of the symmetry of Georgian architecture.

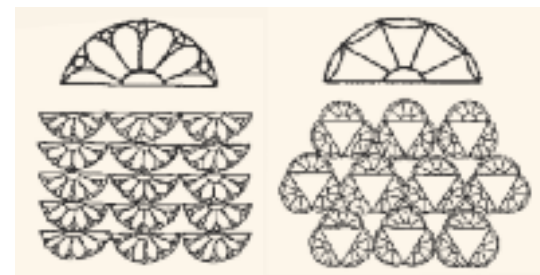
Use your walk to and from the chapel to draw out style similarities. Give students a copy of the drawings of classical features and a simplified and enlarged road map, and ask them to record how often they spot each of them. You could plan your route to walk past Baffins Hall (on the corner of Baffins Lane and East Pallant). This was built in 1721 as a Presbyterian chapel, and has many similarities with the style of St John’s. Ask students to note the various different building materials used. Are these the same as the materials used for St John’s Chapel?

Many houses have decorative fanlights, and students could be asked to draw two

or three different types, as a basis for creating their own repeating design for fabric back at school as part of an art activity.



The front entrance of Pallant House



Fanlights can provide the starting point for repeating designs

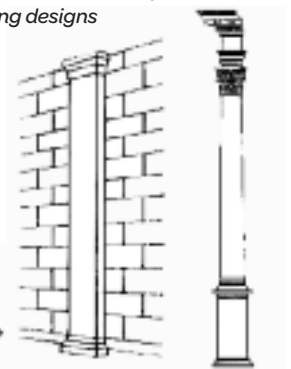


Acanthus leaf decoration



Balustrade

Pediment



Pilaster

Corinthian column

Activity 5 – Redundant churches Learning objectives

This activity asks students to consider and debate some of the issues involved in saving churches as part of our heritage. They should develop skills in spoken English, through classroom discussion, more formal discussion or by taking on specific roles to persuade or convince others in the group.

Parish churches are such a familiar and beautiful part of our English scene that they seem to be as permanent as the landscape itself. Sadly this is not so. For many reasons, including the mobility of populations in town and country, and the decline in church attendance, many of them cannot now be maintained for their

original purpose. But every parish church is special. All over England people are raising huge sums of money to keep their churches standing and in good order, because they value them so much.

When a church has to close for regular worship, the Church of England at its highest level becomes very concerned and a complicated legal process is set in motion to decide its future. A few have to be demolished, usually for very good reasons and as a last resort, but many are given new leases of life through alternative uses. The Churches Conservation Trust cares for over 340 outstanding churches which, because of their beauty and interest remain unaltered and still consecrated for all to visit and enjoy. The Trust makes them accessible to the public,

including educational groups. Today, St John's Chapel is regularly used for events including concerts and talks.

The issues that surround redundant churches can make interesting topics for discussion with your students. Ask them to think about the following:

- the number of places of worship which have been closed in your area
- the wide variety of re-use that chapels and churches have been put to (from tyre depots to art galleries to pubs

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Exploring churches, Johnson, Corbishley, Hollinshead, (2004), Churches Conservation Trust.

This book, available from www.visitchurchchurches.org.uk, is an excellent resource for teachers, showing how churches may be used to support all areas of the curriculum. It is full of information, timelines and images.

Pocket guide to how to read a church, Taylor, (2007), Rider, an imprint of Ebury Publishing.

Written for adults, but accessible for young people, this is a well-illustrated short guide to church architecture, decoration and symbolism.

Be a church detective, Fewins, (2005), Canterbury Press Norwich.

A good introductory guide to church architecture for young people.

St. John's Chapel and the New Town,

and cafes) or have been adapted for other religions.)

- the large sums of money needed to restore or repair a church (nearly always an historic building) and where the money could, or should, come from.

You could pose specific questions for your students, taking this approach further into developing role play or a more structured discussion or formal debate. Starting points could be, for example:

- you are one of a congregation of 12, in

Chichester (2004), Alan Green, Phillimore. A detailed and comprehensive history of the Chapel and the area of Chichester in which it stands and a good source for images.

Churches: how to read them, DVD, (2010) BBC. This DVD contains six half hour programmes presented by Richard Taylor on churches from earliest times through to the Victorian period. Programme 5 (*Restoration and reason*) offers some interesting comparisons with the style and use of St John's Chapel.

www.stjohnschapelchichester.co.uk provides further background and a gallery of images which teachers may download for use with their students.

www.christianityandculture.org.uk contains a free downloadable primary school pack, including lesson plans, assembly material and guidance on planning a visit to a local church.

www.educhurch.org.uk compares three places of Christian worship, a parish church, a Salvation Army citadel and a building used by a Christian Fellowship

a village of 250 people and you love your old church which was built in the 15th century. You have been told the church will need £200,000 within two years to pay for repairs to keep it standing. What do you do?

- you have to decide whether to allow a redundant church to be adapted for another use, or it will have to be demolished. What kind of re-use would you be happy with and what would you refuse to accept?

group. There is supporting guidance for teachers, which is the best place to start.

www.heritage-explorer.co.uk is the website provided by English Heritage and the National Monuments Record. It contains a wealth of images, teaching activities, case studies and interactive whiteboard resources. Its section on 'How to' guides offers a very useful step by step guide to planning a local study.

www.westsussexpast.org.uk is a searchable web gateway for databases and information on the heritage of the county.

The website of West Sussex County Council, www.westsussex.gov.uk has some useful local history resources, including Victorian West Sussex, under its learning section.

Many cathedrals provide learning activities to download, although many of these are linked to their taught cathedral programmes. Chichester Cathedral, www.chichestercathedral.org.uk offers downloadable activity packs, photo resources and teacher/pupil notes.

MAKING A VISIT

The chapel is open from 1000 till 1600 each day. To arrange a visit contact **secretary@stjohnschapelchichester.co.uk**

Teachers are responsible for the safety of their students while visiting the chapel, and are strongly recommended to make an advance planning visit. Please ask your students to be aware of other visitors, and to respect the historic and spiritual importance of the chapel.

www.stjohnschapelchichester.co.uk

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk. Since its foundation over 40 years ago, the Trust has saved over 340 buildings, which attract almost two million visitors each year. Its unique collection of English parish churches includes irreplaceable examples of architecture, archaeology and art from 1000 years of history.



THE CHURCHES
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