

Months of hard work near their completion

Jane Dawson reports from the Chester Mystery Plays



SUNDAY at St Mary's Centre felt like the last day of term.

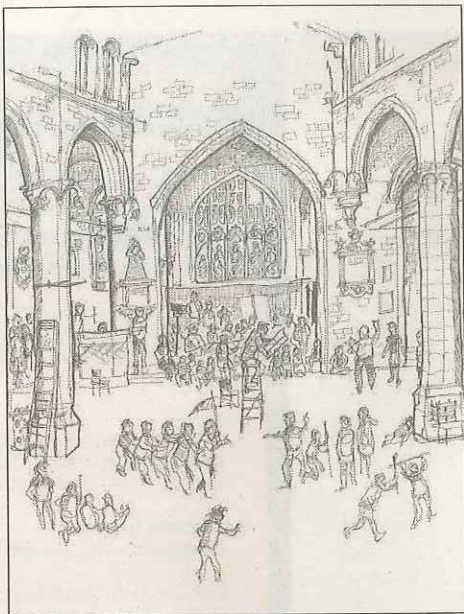
It was our final full rehearsal there after six months' occupation. Several of our company members brought cakes in (mainly to celebrate music director, Matt Baker's birthday), which really made it feel like a proper farewell to this wonderful, underused gem.

It was also the end to another very busy week.

The production team, together with lighting and sound technicians and set builders, worked day and night in the cathedral nave, getting everything in for Monday when the full performance company started to work on set. Their efforts were watched closely by visitors who got slightly more than they expected from their tour round.

Meanwhile, the musicians had a session on Friday evening to test out sound levels. It's the first time we've had so many musicians playing live so it was a really useful practise for both them and the 'noise boys'!

Then, on Saturday, Jesus and the thieves were 'crucified' on set to try out the crosses, film was projected onto the amazing 'floating' screens and company members had tours of the set to familiarise themselves with entrances and exits. It's a complex construction with different levels and all sorts of hidden spaces, so it's incredibly important that everyone knows it well if only for health and safety reasons. The



QUICK DRAW: A drawing from rehearsals for the Chester Mystery Plays at St Mary's Centre by Handbridge artist Dai Owen.

set, designed by Judith Croft and built by Set-Free Projects, is magnificent and sits perfectly in the grandeur and glory of the nave.

On Monday, the seating stand was installed, and the slow process of technical rehearsals started. These blend the action and the music together with lighting, sound and film, so the focus is on all the technical aspects of the production.

I may be biased, but it's looking amazing – six days to go.

■ Tickets for the 2013 production of Chester Mystery Plays are now on sale at www.chestermysteryplays.com or from 01244 500959.