

Debs So thank you again very much. Because the PhD is about how we came to be and experience-forming knowledge, I wondered if you wouldn't mind telling me about how you came to be where you are now and the roots that it came to be, where you are.

RJA Gosh! It's interesting. I was a curate in South London where I suppose I thought I would probably be staying for my career. I suppose one tries to be enterprising and I've always been trying to link up with the community. I used to run a carnival and I used to have a children's week for 250 children who wouldn't get a holiday in the summer, and we had lots of volunteers and all that excitement.

And then somehow my bishop had been in Cambridge as Vicar of Great St Mary's, Cambridge and they were advertising for a curate and he said, "I think you should be applying to go to Cambridge."

So I applied for the job and got it and I ended up doing seven years in Cambridge, which was three years as a curate at Great St Mary's and four years as Chaplain at Jesus College.

I found myself moving from trying to relate to a community with a large population of West Indians and reggae music and community work to actually relating to a Cambridge situation, which took me maybe in a more intellectual direction in a way. So I ended writing a thesis on the background in the ancient ((?)) Old Testament, so being taken off into another channel in a way.

And after that, the way the Church of England works, by sheer luck I was made vicar of a place called Towcester in Northamptonshire, which is an historic market town. Again, it was relating to the community in all sorts of ways, but it did have a magnificent medieval

parish church built on a Roman public building and Towcester was the Roman Lactodorum.

We had a chantry house, which was the bequest of Archdeacon William Sponne who died in 1448, who had a chantry chapel in the church. We had a lovely 17th century vicarage, and I found myself suddenly having to deal with really quite considerable historical assets and open them up to the community and interpret them. We put a little window in, so people could look at the Roman level and see the Roman pavement and some Roman heating tiles and all the rest. I found ways to open up the parish church, so that we didn't lock it during the day, and we put glass doors in and we then thought about removing the silver candlesticks and putting some wrought iron things and just looking at security.

Then had this fantastic medieval chantry house, which had turned into a parish centre. So I suddenly found myself dealing with heritage, the Church of England's full of it. I can remember my bishop saying, "one of these days I'll give you a reference to be a quantity surveyor" ((laughter)).

Then somehow from there, I got recruited to go to Bury St Edmunds as dean of the Cathedral, and that has an amazing history, reaching back into the great medieval abbey, which was at Bury. Within a week of my going there, the ((?)), Meritus had died and left £3m to be spent on the cathedral and its development.

So I then ended up with a millennium commission project and we completed the building of the existing cathedral, which was a church in waiting on the abbey. So I then found myself not only with a parish church you're trying ((to interpret?)) with a cathedral, and modest

compared with Westminster Abbey, but quite a lot of people finding their way to Bury St Edmunds; it's a lovely market town in East Anglia, and wanting to know about the cathedral and its story, and therefore trying to make that accessible and being very interested.

I had linked up with the Metropolitan Museum in New York who have got a cross they call the Cloisters Cross, which is a 12th century cross, which Thomas Hoving, who discovered the cross immediately ((?)) treasures with a provenance that couldn't be proved at the end of the Second World War and the British Museum wouldn't touch it but the Met took it. I managed to persuade them in the end to do a computerised copy for us so we could have the 12th century cross. We had the joy of an absolute identical replica but not having to worry about its security.

I do try and be a priest and a vicar as it were as well as managing heritage assets. Then I've ended up in Winchester and it did occur to me if I did a reasonable job in Bury I might end up with a bigger and more challenging, yet more heritage to interpret.

I could've spent my life in South London relating to ethnic minorities. I just try and respond to the situation I'm in really.

Debs So have you always been interested in that area, in the religious area, and therefore relating to the community in that way or is it something that came later?

RJA It's been a lifetime, from my twenties. I've spent my life really. Well I was brought up on a farm and I often say the farm was the best training really for being a vicar because you worked endlessly; you just kept going. The cows had to be milked and then you had tea and then the eggs had to be washed and the animals had to be fed and if it was

in the middle of winter you had to go and break the ice and all that.
One just 'lived' the job, so I suppose I've always 'lived' the job really.

Debs I was born in London but I grew up in Cornwall and that was always on farms; where there are tenant farms or other farms, so yes I know exactly what you mean! Getting up really early.

RJA I wouldn't say it affects the way I come at heritage because I suppose I'm trying to engage with the visitors who come, in a way that opens up at least the story of faith and their engagement with beauty and wonder. I'm always trying to get this across to our guides; it's not just telling people the date of everything in the cathedral. The children get it at once. You go into that huge nave, the longest medieval nave in Europe, and they just go 'wow!' It's unlocking that sense of awe and wonder.

Debs Sometimes digitally, that doesn't work does it? I've found anyway.

RJA I don't know, I think what made me excited about your digital things was that actually it did engage with. You're always trying to help people think about what would life here have been like in King Alfred's time; when St. Swithin was bishop, what was it like? I think your digital things give an encounter with historical characters.

Debs It was to try and bring things back to context in how you lived your life now and how they lived their life then. So by telling those stories, it was kind of reaffirming how you lived yours in some ways as well.

So that was my part of it really, is the fact that I like to learn by story and very visually, and I used to go round to heritage properties and like the ambience, like to soak up the feeling and touch a stone that somebody else has touched. But all the little wooden plaques and

whatever, just kind of like, well that's not what I want to know!
((laughs)). So I always had that in my head that I preferred to learn about this in a different way and that's where the Talking Walls came in.

RJA We do have a lot of guides, and clearly they come from different backgrounds, so some may have a military background, some may have an educational background, some may have been doctors or whatever. So they tend to interpret the building from their perspective, which is quite interesting, which means that visitors do get different sorts of journeys around the cathedral.

Sometimes when a trip's being organised, the visitor officer will try and pick the person who seems to best relate to the group, so that they're likely to deliver something, which that group is looking for.

In a sense having, there's something like 600 volunteers here, there must be over 200 guides, so you have got quite a lot of variety there.

Debs Yes, because it is definitely the way that somebody tells a story as well as the actual story itself, isn't it? It's how they interpret it and pass the information over.

RJA Just recently a group of dentists going round, they'll be very different from a group of clergy ((?)) diocese being taken round. The dentists may be more interested in the skeletons that are there, stories of human biology and things, whereas the clergy want to know, "Here's the bishop's seat and, oh, that's why it's a cathedral." So you can, I think, interpret to some extent try and make sure you relate to the people you're taking round.

Debs There's been so much done at Winchester. I'm very lucky to be at Winchester University to be able to be so close to it.

I also noticed in doing a quick bit of research about you, is that, you're a member of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission. Presumably that's because of the work that you've done in enhancing the buildings that you've been involved with?

RJA I suppose because of having had a £12.5m millennium project in Bury St. Edmunds, I was thought the obvious one to put on the Cathedrals Fabric Commission.

It's like the National Planning Committee for cathedrals and its equivalent, I suppose in the secular world, of Listed Building Commission. Parish churches have to have faculty jurisdiction, cathedrals have their own system, where there's a fabric advisory committee for every cathedral, and certain things you have to get permission from your fabric advisory committee and certain other things you get permission from, from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, which meets monthly at Westminster. That's chaired by Frank Field, a member of parliament.

Debs I saw that he was coming to do a talk. My surname used to be Field but he's no relation. ((laughs))

RJA Yes, he did indeed. It's Field rather than Fielding. But there are two deans on it, otherwise there are representatives of various groups but they're architects, engineers, and conservationist. So it is a quite impressive group of quite talented individuals and you usually serve two terms of three years on it. Anything that materially affects the cathedral has to go to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission.

For instance, I want to move the font at the moment and I've been having two years of discussion with the Cathedrals Fabric Commission about it. People think that deans can do what they like with cathedrals and anything you want to do has to go out to amenity groups. English Heritage has to give its permission – well, not permission; its take on it. SPABS, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society, I mean all the amenity groups; it's very tied. So you move very slowly.

And I suppose actually the font is a marvellous example of the tension between caring for historic fabric and being a priest. Because it's a fantastic 12th century font, which was given to us by Henry de Blois who was Bishop of Winchester and he gave us Winchester Bible as well – those two great 12th century treasures, and he was the grandson of William the Conqueror, half-brother of King Stephen.

It's Tournai marble and it's reckoned to be the best. I think there's six Tournai marble fonts in England; one is in Lincoln Cathedral and a couple in Hampshire as well. It's beautifully carved with scenes of the life of St. Nicholas, because St. Nicholas was quite popular in the 12th century. People come and see it because it's got a carving.

The story of St. Nicholas gives you Santa Claus with his dowries and he saved three girls who hit poverty from prostitution. So that's there.

Then there were the boys he was supposed to have brought back to life and then he was supposed to have stilled a storm, and there's his boat and apparently it's the earliest example of a fixed rudder in art. So you get naval historians coming to look at the font.

But it's tucked away; it's been there 700 years, between two pillars and is not in the right place for a font in a cathedral. So I want to move

it to the west end. And to move something that's an heirloom, it's 12th century, it's been in this place for 700 years – how do I convince everybody that this is a safe and good thing to do?

I think that, not only will it make the point, your journey round the cathedral begins at the west end, the Christian journey begins at baptism. It will actually take a treasure and put it on a pedestal and put it right in the centre and they can say, "wow, admire this" And most people....even though we've got a font when visiting the cathedral.

Debs Yeah, I'm trying to think where it is.

RJA It's stuck between two pillars on the north side. Unless you're looking for it, whereas if it's up at the west end on the pedestal, everybody will immediately come in; it will be the thing that catches their attention.

And I'd like to double the pilgrimage in a way. If you're doing a Christian pilgrimage, baptism is where you start your Christian journey. If you're doing any journey, you'll need water. You've got to think how you're going to get through the journey and so the font can teach people about what are the spiritual resources that they garnish to get through their lives. So I would hope that they know we've got a 12th century font, St. Nicholas and the excitement of Henry de Blois and the fixed rudder and all that. But they might be thinking as well, actually what inspires me in my journey in life and where do I get my strength and resources? When things go wrong, where am I going to get the....and when things go right, how do I know how to interpret it in a grateful way. It's all there in this lovely font.

Debs It's quite interesting actually because I didn't realise that to do something like that, you had all those stakeholders involved and the fact that you've got to work with every single one of those, in order to do what it is that you want to do.

RJA And also you've got to take the guides who like it where it is, because they've always guided with it there. You've got to take the cathedral community with you and the diocese, and the bishop and whatever. You've got so many stakeholders, you've got the historic ones and those are you guardians of heritage and those who are...

Debs ...the guardians of the journey.

RJA ...yes, absolutely.

Debs I can imagine that some of the guides have got their pat off, to know what they're going to say, and if you move an object then that disrupts their flow.

RJA Absolutely, they've got to rethink their flow and people might touch it if it moves. And I keep saying that you can actually protect it by giving it a sense of the sacred, rather than by putting a fence around it. I'm sure mounting it properly, lighting it properly, perhaps having a burning candle by it, people might get a sense of the sacred.

Debs And the sense of its age and importance as well. That's interesting because it was stakeholders, budget and time that kind of crunched what I wanted to do with the Talking Walls, which is nothing like that but it really crunched it. You start off with all these wonderful things that you want to do and then you find that, as you get down the road, actually it's a mere shade of what you want it to be.

That's what's intrigued me to do this research really, it's the fact that it's not just what I do as a designer or curator does but it also flows into everything else in life. The systems that are in place, the stakeholders involved. What actually comes out at the end is very different to what initially started. Pretty similar to our lives really.

RJA Yes, it is, it's all organic really. So many people have opinions and you start off trying to do something and it ends up something quite different. I would concur totally with that.

Debs I'm going to leave this question here until a bit later. These are just guiding principles and I'll leave you a copy of them if you'd like them. But one of the things that I've noticed within the cathedral is, and I suppose on a much, much smaller scale with Beaulieu Abbey, is the fact that there are so many different ages, nationalities, religious beliefs and so on, that go and visit the cathedral. Are you able to encompass everyone and have something that is there that will give everyone the experience they are looking for? How do you manage?

RJA I suppose that's what I'm saying about the variety of the guides. Just in terms of being totally practical, there are some guides that can do French and some that can do German and the odd one or two can do Japanese. So I suppose you're immediately trying to find, and once you've got someone who speaks French, they probably know quite a lot about French culture and so they'll have some idea of the French. I mean it's quite a secular country; tradition is Catholic and they'll be asking questions, for instance they're always saying, "why do you need to charge to come in the cathedral if the state keep it up?" And the answer is, actually, the Church of England, although it's established has no money at all from the state to keep up these buildings.

People are quite shocked. I think it's a like the National Health Service, somehow there's some money that comes from the Government. But there's no money from Church or state to keep up Winchester Cathedral. I mean to keep the show on the road, £4.5m every year, and we have to have a big appeal. I mean this £19m one at the moment, in order to keep going.

So there are always issues that different nationalities bring with them. And it's interesting; a lot of Americans come looking for Jane Austen. So there are some guides that are very much trained in Jane Austen and her connections with Hampshire and Winchester and her burial in the cathedral.

I think religious wise, as I was saying earlier, we've learnt the hard way, for instance clergy ((?)) diocese, you don't give them your most secular guide, who gives them every date of everything and they go away thinking, "yeah, well this is a cathedral surely", and people think why isn't there a bishop at the cathedral, for instance.

But it's the dean that runs the cathedral and the Bishop of Winchester's there at Christmas and Easter and ordinations and big occasions. But understanding how the cathedral works and how it meshes into the diocese and what canons are, is something that other guides can explain.

As I was saying there are these dentists, but they do tours that will do flowers in the cathedral for instance where they're carved. If it's children's tours, well then, as you know, Cheryl who's our children's education officer, she's very good. They might dress up as monks, they might actually just experience silence in the cathedral; just sit and be quiet. They might do calligraphy.

Debs Immersive roles, basically.

RJA Yes. And of course there's a huge amount of music goes on in the cathedral and that in worship, the cathedral choir is nationally renowned. But there's lots of concerts. There's lunchtime ones which might be student groups or younger people; the big Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra Choir. They're all in their different ways interacting with the context and if Bournemouth Symphony decides to come here and not to go to the Anvil in Basingstoke for a particular concert, it's probably because they think that there's some symbiosis between the concert and the building. If you're doing Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, where else better can you do it? Or even Handel's *Messiah*.

All the time, trying to find ways of relating to different audiences. Whether we always succeed, is another matter. We're better at it than we were, I think.

Debs Obviously being programme leader with digital media, I attend the graduation ceremonies and a magnificent occasion, it really is.

RJA It's lovely to have graduations in that context. I'm always thrilled the different ways in which the cathedral can be used and the different moods really that it captures.

Debs You did the, oh, something to do with light – the name's gone.

RJA Chronicles of Light.

Debs Yes, that's it. The Chronicles of Light. That was amazing. A big event.

RJA That was trying to help people understand the cathedral and its story. It's so easy to encounter it in one dimension. I know one person, a very bright lady, who was a significant businesswoman. We were

walking through the cathedral. "Do you ever have any services here?" I couldn't believe it. It hadn't occurred this might be a museum or something. So I reassured her that the rhythm of the morning and evening prayer, that's the core of what we do daily and there are forever being special services during the week and on Sundays.

Debs We go to France quite a lot and the route we were doing is always past Chartres Cathedral and you just couldn't go past Chartres without going into the cathedral and the amount of people and there would be different things going on that you would walk into. But you were perfectly allowed to walk in to, even though that was going on.

RJA The French are better. I remember going to Notre Dame and staying for a service. And they just let the visitors circulate around us. Maybe that's to do as well with it being the state owns the buildings and they're inhabited by the church, as it were.

Whereas we tend to, if there's going to be a service, the cathedral is closed X minutes before and then people, when they come to visit, are told either you can come and sit quietly and join the service or come back in 40 minutes' time, when it will be over.

Debs I think everywhere is different, how they do it. It is quite amazing. I knew about the lack of state funding and so on because Beaulieu Abbey doesn't get any of that either. So they're always trying to think of ways of bringing, not just footfall, because it's kind of tucked away and sort of a bit flat in parts now ((laughter)). Whereas the cathedral is very much in evidence.

But trying to get funding, it must be really, really difficult to do all these things. Not just for the fabric of the building but to actually put on all these different events and to show that interpretation. So, as I

found, with just creating what I did, budgets are just like this and you have to work so very hard to get that money.

RJA Well, you can see the Christmas Market and ice rink going up outside. That's worth £0.25m to us if it's successful. It's a huge risk, because if it snowed or poured with rain for the whole.. or hit by wind or whatever. But it is very significant.

I like it because it's sort of a community event as well, so it ticks both boxes and if you can do things that actually generate income, but are actually people-friendly, that seems to me, is absolutely brilliant. And in many ways, the refectory's like that. You're offering hospitality, people come and enjoy being at the cathedral and they're having a meal, but it's also generating income. The management of all that is immensely hard work and quite pressured.

Debs I sat down there just for a short space of time and the amount of people in and out is amazing.

RJA I always say the cathedral is a swan. It looks as if it glides along so magnificently but it's only because of the pedalling going on under the water.

Debs There's been various interpretations, obviously, done at the cathedral. When I first joined the university, not that long ago, about three or four years ago, there was some digital interpretation going on than about the buildings. Building in 3D or something?

RJA Portsmouth University, actually, they did a DVD of how the cathedral would have been in its Romanesque period and you could do a virtual tour of the Romanesque building. That was great because as it

happens, if you go in the transepts, they're still Romanesque because they never had a cosmetic facelift.

Whereas the nave was Romanesque and then in the 1300s, it got its Gothic – that was the architecture; everybody was excited by the new architecture, which must have been a massive undertaking. But it's very difficult to stand in the nave and think, well what would it have been like originally. The digital world gives you a chance to actually explore it and then you can then choose for yourself which bit you walk around. I think that's very exciting.

The cathedral, you've got the Saxon Old Minster. It wasn't that small. I think it was the biggest ecclesiastical complex north of the Alps in its time. So it was quite, as Wessex was, a significant kingdom and then ended up being the catalyst for the emergence of the English nation.

So you've got the Saxon minster, you've got the Romanesque and you've got the current Gothic one. So you've got three different cathedrals and we are hoping to have three levels of exhibitions in the south transept, which we will come on to.

The one we've got permission amazingly from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, with the agreement of English Heritage, and the Heritage Lottery Fund are very wobbly. If English Heritage wouldn't support it, they won't fund it – to actually put a lift through a 12th century vault, which is incredible.

Which means we have now got fantastic access to three levels of exhibition space and for me the exciting thing is you're interpreting the cathedral within the cathedral. So you're not going to a Visitor Centre and saying that's what it's like. All the time they're discovering the cathedral, it's from within.

Debs Yes, it's in context.

RJA Yes. So when they get up to the triforium level, they will have this fantastic view of the Romanesque south transept and one arm of the triforium at that level will be ((?)) decoding the stones. So there will be a model of each of the three cathedrals, so they can see what they were like and its story.

The other arm is Birth of a Nation. What we want to do is help people recover a sense of the Saxon Minster and the life of Wessex at that period and how it became the flame that created the nation. And some of the great names associated with that, including Canute and Queen Emma, whose remains are in the cathedral. And it's often not known that we are the oldest royal mausoleum. We pre-date Westminster Abbey and Windsor Castle.

Debs It's an amazing, amazing building. It really is.

RJA So we wanted to help people enter that world. So hopefully, some of your digital stuff and the creation of some apps will help us.

Debs I'd love to help you. I notice that something you were saying about removing the stones and seeing the pictures from behind or something in your text. I may have read it wrong. So I was thinking that must be something digital going on there like maybe augmented reality or something going on?

RJA I'm not sure which ones it would have been. There is 12th century wall painting in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel, which was over painted and the over paint has actually been removed at the other end of the chapel. Quite incredible to have been able to do it. And the exciting thing about that picture is that it's by one of the artists who actually painted

one of the illuminations for the 12th century Winchester Bible. So clearly, they could do miniatures of these big wall paintings.

The other possibility is behind the shelves in the 17th century Morley Library. There are some wall paintings.

Debs That's the one, I think.

RJA And we ought to be able to photograph the wall paintings so they become available digitally to see. The idea is that there will be an app, when you go in the Morley Library and through the app you will be able to digitally take off the shelf a number of books and look through them. So you can look at the shelf and they'll probably be five or six books amongst them and they'll be a screen on a table, so you can do it while you're there or take your app with you and do it when you get home. Again, it's interaction isn't it.

Debs And in different ways, it's different tools. So you've got traditional kinds of interpretation as well as the more modern forms of interpretation. Because one of the things when I was talking to Mary was the fact that she found that she didn't want people to view everything through something digital. She wanted them to be able to have a sense of where they were and what the building was about without actually looking through a screen all the time.

RJA Absolutely, well if you take for instance the great Winchester Bible, which is probably the treasure of the cathedral. These four volumes of bible, which is unique, and probably the best of those 12th century bibles in existence. And it's unique in still being in the place for which it was commissioned, which is amazing.

It's probably where it's going to be shown off on the ground floor in the south transept was actually where it was originally written. But it will be shown off in environmental cases so that people can look at the original but we're going to digitally copy the whole lot so you can have turning pages technology and you can thumb through and look at it. So you can actually enjoy, without any detriment to the original, turning over the pages and seeing what they look like and enjoying the illuminations but then you can go in and have some time. We'll try and make it a bit of a shrine so you can go in and feel you're in the presence of the real thing.

Debs Something that just flicked into my head then was the fact that if you're putting it in that area, where it was written, what you could do for those who wanted to use technology, you could actually have that photographed so it's a static image. Then, using augmented reality, people with their phones and the app that does that, put their phone up in front of it and it would pull up an animation of a monk sitting there writing the bible. That would be quite cool, wouldn't it?

RJA Ah right, that would be brilliant.

Debs So you're kind of overlaying the space there with this bit of information. So that's a possibility. We've got a company coming down to show us all the different technology with augmented reality at the uni, shortly. Mostly for the museum, but the technology now is moving on at such a pace, where I've found doing the Talking Walls really difficult because I'm being really constricted with technology.

RJA The tour is moving all the time, isn't it? You do something absolutely perfect for today and by tomorrow the technology has moved on. It

wouldn't be possible would it for somebody from here to see your augmented reality. Is that private when you're having that?

Debs No, no. In fact Oakley Mobile, the company, they've just won a museum job somewhere. They're going to tell me because it was a secret when I met them first. They're coming down for a meeting but also Brian Peaston from IBM Design, he's hopefully coming and then Christine from ((?)), she'll be able to make the meeting, as well.

RJA Would you mind having someone from the cathedral there?

Debs No absolutely not. I'd be delighted.

RJA If you could email me when, that would be really exciting.

Debs Yes, they're coming down on Tuesday 3rd December in the morning, but I will email you. It's quite exciting what the technology can do now so this, what my old Talking Walls for Beaulieu Abbey, I know I can do it better now because of the technology. I'm hoping so, anyway. But what I wanted to go on from the technology point of view was, there is a bit of a fear, Mary says, of people being 'wowed' by the technology rather than by the space. So they're not getting the feeling, the ambience of a religious building like Winchester Cathedral or Beaulieu Abbey, they're getting a snap of information through technology about it. Do you see what I mean?

RJA Yes. Just the scale of Winchester, it's very difficult that technology will overwhelm it, I think.

Debs Okay. I think Beaulieu Abbey, with just the domes maybe, it's a small space. And one kiosk that was there. And it's quite a big top screen to the kiosk. It almost seemed out of place because everything else was so old, for want of a better word.

Whereas they're redesigning it now so that it's more updated so people can touch objects and things like that. So the scene might be set so it's a little bit more modern. But even so, there is a balance maybe of getting that mix right. Do you think that?

RJA I suppose we shall focus the exhibition items in our three stories from the south transept, which doesn't detract from the rest of the cathedral. Although we wanted to keep the sense of journey, but then we've got audio tours and I suppose we shall be into the app world. So maybe the thing to do is that you don't turn your cathedral into a theatre, you use it through your phones. There's so many possibilities aren't there?

But, thinking of modern technology, we want to relight the cathedral as part of the appeal and you can have different levels of light in different places. So again, that sort of heightens the sense of appreciation of the fabric and its significance. After all, a lot of the artistry in the cathedral is carved into its fabric. So if you light it well, you can enhance it.

Debs The Basilica in Limoges, have you been there?

RJA No.

Debs It's a wonderful space. But it's all painted, all the interior is painted. Again we were just driving through and we thought we'd stop and have a look. We've got two big dogs so I sat outside while my husband went in and then he came out and I went in. And I said, "Oh, what's it like, what's it like?" and he said "I'm not telling you anything, just go in and see." And it was just like this...after doing Beaulieu Abbey and knowing how plain the Cistercian monasteries were and abbeys were. And then the cathedral with the Gothic-ness and everything else. And

to walk into this place and it was just completely and utterly painted. Every single part. But the lighting (this is why I'm saying it) was amazing. It had actually pulled up the right bits in the right places, but it's a modern-ish building.

RJA It recovered the colour.

Debs Yes, it totally recovered the colour.

RJA You think in medieval times a cathedral would have been really vibrant. You turn the pages of the Winchester Bible, where history hasn't dulled the colour because they've been folded and out of the way of the light and you think, "Gosh, that's what it would have been like on the walls", it's just tremendous.

The great screen behind the high altar, all those statues were destroyed or broken at the Reformation. Every one of them was vividly painted. We get used to stone or whatever and we probably would be quite shocked if we really knew the level of colour they had.

Debs There's the place up near Edinburgh, the one with all the carvings. My mind's gone.

RJA Oh, the Da Vinci Code one.

Debs Yes. I think they're saying that all those carvings, so intricate. ((?)) can't touch it really. ((laughter)) It's just so intricate carvings and they're all painted.

RJA How're we doing?

Debs Nearly there. So have you been to Beaulieu?

RJA Well, we met there.

- Debs Would you have gone there ordinarily? Is Beaulieu, the site itself, somewhere you would visit?
- RJA I think I would've gone in the normal course of events, yeah, I might on a day off – spent a day in Beaulieu. My brother has got...well he's died, but the motor museum still exists. So I would have been intrigued by the motor, the whole lot actually; how Beaulieu welcomes visitors, how it interprets the abbey. But then there was a specific invitation that day.
- Debs Yes, there was. But I just wondered if that kind of place is somewhere where you would normally visit on your day off. So if you visit heritage sites as a matter of interest personally?
- RJA Yes, my wife's a life member of the National Trust and I'm a life member of English Heritage; between us.
- Debs You're covered. You've got the interest there. So what did you think about the launch of the Talking Walls, the actual application itself and the whole event? Can you remember it?
- RJA What I was excited about was here you were using modern technology, as it were, at its best to interpret and give people... I can remember when you could do a tour of the abbey and you could get someone to take you round, and get King John and whatever. Actually, I thought it was very clever to have King John taking you round; was brilliant. You were absorbing bits of information about King John, without realising it. It's a bit like the difference between teaching children a language in class and then picking it up by being in France. And I felt wow, this was really interesting, really engaging and you were picking up this information almost effortlessly. You didn't realise you were learning.

- Debs Effortless learning because you were intrigued with what was going on.
- RJA Yes. I think that was brilliant and it brought to life, again King John not just being a date and Magna Carta and whatever. And a sense of his excitement in what he was about to build and this is rather a French style; this isn't English, this isn't sturdy enough, all those continental ideas coming across, which will give them a sense and how culturally united we were with Europe in those days.
- Debs Yes, all the travelling, especially to Rome, all the travelling that was done when it was so difficult to do it; the hardships caused by that and so on. The fact that Abbot ((?)) had to be such a diplomat and that was why he was in his position, because he was more of a diplomat than he was otherwise.
- RJA Yes, those were the skills that enabled it all to happen.
- Debs Because the person that was there before was a bit lapse ((laughter)) in the rules of this Cistercian way of life. So somebody had to step in to put the law back into what they were doing.
- RJA I suppose in Beaulieu's case, it's actually understanding why is this stately home an abbey? I thought it was helping us understand the story really of Beaulieu and the abbey and then how it became a stately home.
- Debs That's certainly how Mary and Susan were keen for it to show that the gatehouse was in fact, or the palace was a gatehouse in fact, so very different in mind-set as to what the building was about.
- RJA And then you can go into the parish church and relate that to the story of the whole abbey.

Debs Yes. The refectory being where they ate rather than where you prayed, which is totally different to what it is now. It intrigues me on how things change, so this building what it was before, I don't know I haven't looked at the history of it. But what's happened here? All that kind of thing intrigues me. It's not necessarily museums that intrigue me, but it's the buildings that intrigue me and hence the Talking Walls.

RJA And then people have gone away realising the evolution of buildings and people sometimes say no change, we don't do change. But actually buildings have evolved enormously through the years.

Debs Yes, because the cathedral's had lots of, not changes, but work done to it to keep it going.

RJA And its vicissitudes. Cromwell stabled his horses in it and it was nearly knocked down. So these great buildings, they are quite precarious in some ways and the windows smashed. We've got several items at an exhibition at the Tate Britain at the moment, and they're doing a special exhibition 'Art under attack', which has been about the vandalism of art over the years.

They've got some sculptures from the great screen, which we managed to rescue, which were found buried in walls and things. There's a lovely one of Madonna and Child, exquisitely beautiful and the Victorian replacements just aren't up to it. I don't know why it is or how it is, but they're just absolutely brilliant. And you can see the pigment and the colour that was on it. But it's Mary, she's lost an arm and Jesus has lost his head. There's no sense of this was a sacred piece of art, they were just going to destroy it.

There's what's called a head of God, which is God the Father, which was obviously part of a depiction of the Holy Trinity, and then there's a hand beautifully carved.

So those items are in that exhibition. Then there's a cast of a figure of Charles I, which again was in the cathedral. In the Civil War it was actually sold to a royalist on the Isle of Wight, who buried it and it was bought back by the Cathedral after the Civil War; obviously he buried it and I think he bought it for £10 and sold it back for £100. Anyway, the cathedral bought it back and that's got some pot shots from muskets that went through it so they were quite interested in that. And intriguingly, when they were getting it ready for exhibition, dusting it down, tidying it up, earth started falling out of it, so presumably from the time when it was buried in the Isle of Wight, during the Civil War period. So it carries its story with it.

Debs It's a bit like I was doing a lecture to the second years who are doing the Royal ((?)) Jackets and just to give them some sort of sense of what I was asking them to do really. There was this red coat, this jacket and it's got a bullet hole going from here through to there, belonging to – and they knew who the person was that it belonged to, knew the name – obviously it had been treasured for a long time but now it's in the museum.

So you then just start, slide by slide, putting a, it only took me an evening's worth of research, putting a slide together of this person. So not necessarily the jacket, but of the person, and the life he had up to the jacket, as much as you could find, and then what happened to him after the jacket and so on. That is what peaks people's interest; it is the human story behind these things quite often, isn't it.

So the cast that you were talking about, it's the person that's buried that, in some ways is just as interesting as the cast itself. Do you think?

RJA Yes, yes. There's the story of who was it who rescued it. Some ((?)) the bones of the ((?)) Saxon ((?)) were thrown round the cathedral, somebody collected those back in the boxes and the glass in the west end during the Civil War was all broken and you see it's like a collage now and someone collected up all the fragments, and then they put them back carefully in the window. It looks like it's very modern but actually it's 17th century.

Debs Yes, because one of the student's did something about that. I think Cheryl or one of the guides pointed out about that window and it took their interest. But I'm just thinking about the box of bones, because they went last year to be...?

RJA No, they're up in the Lady Chapel, they're still in the cathedral, but they've been taken down.

Debs But I was just thinking of some form of augmented reality again about these bones getting out of the box and forming themselves into the person. Quite cool.

RJA Yes, absolutely.

Debs Just one last question, a very short one. Out of all the roles that you do, which is the one that you are happiest with?

RJA You mean the different facets of being a dean? I think what actually makes it interesting is variety to be honest. There are moments in the grand services and you're part of it, and there's a great tradition of the cathedral.

But actually sitting round the table, planning a Heritage Lottery application and thinking if we can just get this right, just think how we can transform the cathedral and transform its welcome. So I quite enjoy that too. And I quite enjoy doing a bit of theology sometimes; I'm trying to write a book. End of ministry reflection in a way. I did a research book on the Old Testament and its background and the ancient year east ((?)). I suppose it's a sort of sequel really, given the vast amount we now know about the background of the Bible and how it came to us and so on. How do you relate that to faith in our own age? That's what I'm working on.

But it's the variety really. I wouldn't want to find myself doing any one of those all the time. It's amazing I get to go to Beaulieu Abbey, and to the New Forest Show, I've got quite a good relationship with and they come and help out with our harvest weekend. So you get the excitement of the animals and the fairground and I put on my old carnival with the fairground and the farmers' market.

There are a lovely lot of events and people. Every day is different.

Debs Well, thank you very much. I'm sorry if I kept you.