
Leicester Uncovered







Karen Rooms

The Revd Canon Karen Rooms
Acting Dean of Leicester



Gordon Arthur

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Just over ten years ago, Leicester uncovered one of England's greatest ever archaeological discoveries and our Cathedral assumed responsibility – thanks to phenomenal support from our Cathedral community – for reintering a king.

We settled back into the rhythm of cathedral life and prepared for our major project of restoration and renewal which is now moving towards completion. Again, this was possible only because of the extraordinary generosity of our congregation and supporters.

But the earth had not yielded up all its secrets. There was more to be found, this time in Cathedral Gardens. During the excavation for the new building, over 2,000 years of history were uncovered, revealing traces of Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Normans and succeeding generations up until the Victorian age.

Why is this particular archaeological project so important to our Cathedral? There is, of course, the interest we all have in our shared heritage and the pride we all feel that these discoveries are considered to be nationally, even internationally, significant.

But it is more than that.

The Cathedral is legally responsible for funding the assessment and analysis work which follows the excavation. This is because the finds were uncovered as part of the Cathedral's development project. This brochure sets out what the archaeologists are going to do. It is hugely exciting and important. The stories of our shared histories will make our Cathedral even more richly textured and reinforce our role as a place-maker within the city.

The project will cost more than £2 million and we are confident we will secure a major grant to cover most of this. This leaves us with £600k to find, most of which will come from grant giving trusts. But not all of it.

It is therefore with humility, and deeply mindful of the generosity many of you have already shown, that we ask again for your support.

Please, read this brochure and the inserts which explain the different ways in which you might donate.

Do help us if you can.

Emerging Stories

Leicester Cathedral is located within the heart of Roman and medieval Leicester so it is not surprising that a wealth of amazing new information is already emerging about our city's past. The discoveries provide a window into Leicester's history and give us a unique opportunity to tell new stories in innovative and immersive ways.

So far, significant discoveries include:

- A Roman shrine – a private, pagan place of worship preceding the Cathedral – and the first Roman altar stone ever found in Leicester.
- Rare evidence for Anglo-Saxon and Viking Leicester, suggesting that the early post-Roman presence in Leicester is more widespread than previously observed.
- Confirmation, for the first time, that a place of Christian worship has stood on the site of St Martin's Cathedral for over 1,000 years.
- Over 1,000 medieval and post-medieval burials in a rare and significant continuous 850-year sequence of burial activity.
- Mass interments in the burial ground, which are a stark reminder that the town has previously suffered from and survived catastrophic pandemics.
- Named people, whose life stories give us a poignant and personal connection with our past.

And in the next couple of years we are going to learn so much more.



What will *Leicester Uncovered* do?

The assessment and analysis of the archaeological discoveries by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) will focus on three themes:

- **Sacred Spaces** – exploring the history of St Martin's Cathedral and its connections with its Late Saxon and medieval predecessor, and earlier Roman places of worship.
- **Arrangements for the Dead** – examining the manner in which the people of Leicester buried their dead, how burial practices changed over time, and what that tells us about people's changing attitudes towards death, both past and present.
- **People of the Parish** – using the osteological analysis of the skeletal assemblage, combined with research of named individuals, to: help tell the story of the people of Leicester; explore what life was like in the city through different periods of history; and see how the health and lifestyle of its communities changed as the result of significant nationwide changes, such as the Industrial Revolution and the development of modern medicine.



What does *Leicester Uncovered* mean for our communities?

As the project progresses, digital and downloadable resources will be available via a web-based hub within the Cathedral's website. The ongoing insights revealed by the analysis will also be shared via regular updates through a range of media platforms.

When the project is complete, the most significant finds will be displayed in our new building and the many stories that we have learned about our city's past will be imaginatively told through digital technology. We will develop exciting new engagement activities for schools and community groups, including handling boxes with objects from our city's past, in which they will share the stories emerging from the archaeological discoveries.

How you can play your part

The Cathedral has a responsibility to fund the analysis of the archaeological discoveries and we are excited about the opportunities this research will provide to tell the story of our communities, our city, and our cathedral.

Yet again, we ask for your generous support, which will be recognised and thanked in a range of imaginative ways.

- An hour-long session with ULAS archaeological specialists as they assess and record the finds.
- A half-day session comprising an hour-long lecture followed by examination of skeletons with the University of Leicester's project team for Tobacco: Health and History.
- Thank you gifts associated with the archaeological excavations.
- A permanent acknowledgement near the excavation site.

Please look inside the brochure pocket for information on how to donate. Thank you for your generosity.





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