

Some Questions and Answers concerning the Archaeological issues in the Whitefriars redevelopment scheme in Canterbury, Kent

Why is Canterbury Archaeological Trust digging at the Whitefriars?

- Canterbury is an Area of Archaeological Importance and Whitefriars lies within this. Because of prior investigations, documentary evidence etc., we know that there is likely to be significant evidence of Canterbury's Iron Age (Celtic), Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods buried beneath the modern city. This would all add important pieces to the jigsaw of Canterbury's past.
- The land is being redeveloped by Land Securities plc for a new shopping/residential centre. Unavoidably, the building works will include constructing some basements and laying some deep foundations. These would destroy the buried archaeological remains in these parts of the site. The archaeologists have this one opportunity to recover the evidence before this can happen.
- Successful negotiations have taken place between the three main parties concerned with the Whitefriars scheme (Canterbury City Council Development and Planning, Land Securities plc and Canterbury Archaeological Trust). It is in the interests of all to co-operate and have a good working relationship. Between 2000 and 2004, there will be six major digs in the Whitefriars area and a reasonable budget has been agreed for work to be carried out.

Who is paying for the archaeological work?

- Land Securities plc (the developers of the Whitefriars site) are paying all research, excavation, finds analysis, conservation and publication costs. The rationale is that as the new building works would destroy the archaeological remains, it is reasonable that the developers help to ensure that adequate steps are taken to investigate the site before this should happen.

Do the archaeologists keep what they find?

- No! The Trust does not own the archaeological finds from a site. The archaeologists recover and record the discoveries they make and then publish them in various ways. The finds (a term which encompasses naturally occurring things like animal bones and artefacts ie. man made objects) are owned jointly by the developer and land owner, Land Securities plc and Canterbury City Council.

What happens if you find something really unusual?

- In the majority of cases, all the archaeological remains are removed from the excavation area. In exceptional cases a discovery may be left intact, in situ. An

example would be the Roman mosaics found in the 1940's in the Longmarket area. They were part of a Romano-British house and were in a state of exceptional preservation for Canterbury. The remains were given Scheduled Monument status by the Department of the Environment. This means that they are protected from redevelopment and will stay in situ at the site. Canterbury Roman Museum is built around them so that they are on permanent public view.

- At Spring 2004, we have found something of national importance at the Whitefriars! A Roman tower as part of the town wall's original defensive circuit. Discussions took place between Canterbury Archaeological Trust, Canterbury City Council, Land Securities plc and English Heritage and a decision was made that the tower should be preserved in situ (opposite the new Fenwick's store). The tower is currently protected from the elements and the developers will be considering options regarding how to incorporate it into the building programme in this area.

What happens if you find human skeletons?

- Documentary sources tell us that there is a medieval cemetery within the Whitefriars complex.
- In order to excavate any human remains, the Trust needs a Home Office license. A license is only granted to an individual or organisation with professional status, to ensure that the remains are dealt with in a respectful manner.
- A great deal can be learnt about the health and lifestyle of our ancestors by examining their skeletons and any grave goods buried with them. As professional people, we believe that we deal with human remains with respect and that the knowledge gained is for the 'common good'.
- When study of the remains is finished, they will be re-buried and the location documented.
- Burials are not disturbed where there is a possibility of living descendants.

How will I know what has been found at Whitefriars?

- There is limited value in archaeological investigation unless people are given the opportunity to benefit and learn from it. The discoveries at Whitefriars will be published in a number of ways.
- Through a programme of site visits, there will be opportunity to see work in progress and discoveries made.
- Local and national media will cover the work, as appropriate.
- **The Friends of Canterbury Archaeological Trust** will receive regular Newsletters.
- Public talks will be arranged.
- Interested people can visit the Whitefriars page on the Canterbury Archaeological Trust website.
<http://www.canterburytrust.co.uk/archive/bigdig01.html>
- In the long term, a detailed report will be published and selected finds will go on more permanent public display.