

## **The Vine Street Excavation**

Between 2004 and 2006, archaeologists from ULAS began a large excavation at Vine Street in Leicester. It would prove to be the single largest archaeological project ever undertaken in the city. In total, more than a hundred archaeologists took the better part of three years to excavate the site.

Initial hints at the area's importance emerged in the 19th century, when part of an elaborate Roman mosaic floor was unearthed by workmen digging a cellar next to Vine Street. Eventually, excavations revealed a complicated sequence of occupation of a single *insula* (city block) in the Roman town's north-eastern quarter, dating from the 2nd century through to the 4th century.

**PHASE 1:** The excavation revealed a complex sequence of Roman buildings constructed between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD on the junction of two streets. Occupation initially began as a scattered development of timber buildings amongst fenced paddocks and yards.

**PHASE 2:** These survived for about fifty years before being replaced by a mixture of more sophisticated stone houses and commercial buildings. One of these houses possibly contained a bath suite incorporating a room and sunken pool heated through a small hypocaust system (underfloor heating).

**PHASE 3:** In the early 3rd century AD three of the stone buildings underwent a massive transformation into a spacious townhouse. This measured 40m by 40m and, with four ranges of rooms linked by corridors surrounding a central courtyard, it is the largest Roman house ever excavated in Leicester.

**PHASE 4:** By the mid-4th century AD the courtyard house was in poor condition. Parts of it had been knocked down whilst other rooms were being converted to commercial use, as a smithy and as workshops making bone pins. A hoard of 500 Roman coins was found buried under the floor of another room.