

Lord Leycester Hospital – 2018 and 2019 Capital Campaign Fundraising.

In November 2017 the Governors of the Lord Leycester Hospital approved a major fundraising campaign to raise about £4 million over the next 5 to 7 years to restore, conserve and protect the Grade 1 listed medieval buildings of the Lord Leycester Hospital – a gem in Warwick's Heritage crown. Built in the 1300s by the United Guilds of Warwick for their business they passed ownership in 1571 to Robert Dudley Earl of Leycester who founded the Lord Leycester Hospital for 12 Brethren – local needy soldiers wounded in battle or soldiers fallen on hard times.

The Fundraising goal of this capital campaign will restore precious and unique medieval architecture, but also support the 450 year old philanthropic mission of the Lord Leycester - to care for needy or wounded service members - and ensure we can operate as a self-sustaining registered charity. Our core plan for increased revenue for our charity rests on increasing the footfall to the Lord Leycester from 5,000 Heritage visitors a year to 35,000 Heritage visitors a year. With this increase in the number of Heritage visitors each year we can be self-sustaining and carry out ongoing regular maintenance and conservation of the buildings.

The funding we raise will go in part towards offering the Heritage visitor far more to see and do at the Lord Leycester: Better and new exhibits; better historical interpretation; family activities and offerings that attract younger and new diverse sections of our community. This opening up and enhancement of the historical offering will help Warwick and tell Warwick's story as well as explain to visitors the Lord Leycester's extraordinary seven centuries history. We want the Lord Leycester to be what it deserves to be – a popular tourist and National Heritage site. That objective is good for us and good for the town of Warwick.

In May 2018 we established our fundraising committee led by Chair Joe Greenwell – former Chairman, Ford of Britain and Chairman & CEO Jaguar Land Rover and the committee began the task of raising funds. Our strategy rests on a successful Heritage Lottery Fund Bid (HLF) of £3.8 M – of which our partner share is £1 M. In real terms, the amount of £1 M is our LLH fundraising goal and this we will need to raise from Trusts and Foundations, corporations, local organizations and authorities and individual donors. In June 2019 we will hear the result of our latest HLF bid attempt submitted recently in March 2019. This will be our third HLF attempt – we hope very much that the third time we are lucky!

If we are successful in June 2019 with our third attempt at HLF, then raising £1M will accelerate in urgency – we will have the next two years, until June 2021, to have the full £1 M pledged so we can let HLF know and they will hopefully approve our move onto Phase two – which is the delivery part of our project which we would complete by June 2024.

We have already raised £400 k pledged towards our £1 M goal: £75,000 in cash through local community events and donations; Warwick District Council has pledged £100,000 towards restoring the medieval wall of Warwick that runs along the boundary of our property – (a Warwick heritage gem that few townsfolk know exists); and local charities and individuals have pledged a further £225 K if we are successful with our HLF bid. We have a Charity Lottery in effect run by Christine Cross one of our fundraising committee members, and the Friends of the Lord Leycester was set up in October 2017 by Mike Honnoraty, another fundraising committee member, to support the campaign. And with such wonderful events as the Court Leet Beer festival we slowly but surely keep adding to the funds raised. We thank all of you who have made the commitment to help us. It is a great showing and outpouring of community care for our beloved icon.

Our project for the Lord Leycester is to conserve the buildings which are literally falling down around our ears every day. Last week the plaster of the medieval Guildhall wall fell in; the Archway flat (that once housed the Headmaster of Warwick school in the 1500's) overlooking the courtyard is so badly eaten by damp that we fear it will fall in and if it does we will have to close the courtyard; one side of the Great Hall roof needs replacing; the Norman Arch in the Garden almost fell down last year and one of the beams of the chapel cracked and fell two years ago. We are Heritage at risk and we have been very explicit about in conversations with HLF - I think English Heritage and HLF appreciates this and understands the vulnerable position we are in. Our conservation requirements get worse by the year because we do not have the capital to take them on – if we don't get funding it will become overwhelming and put us in great jeopardy as an institution. I see it as a concern for the people of Warwick as well – after all the Lord Leycester was built by the people of Warwick for the people of Warwick over seven centuries ago.

By the way, the last major conservation effort to the buildings was in the 1950's when the fundraising committee set a goal to raise £120,000 to restore the Hospital - the Historical Buildings Council for England recognized the importance of the national treasures with a £40, 000 pound grant, and the Warwick Town Council gave a grant for the rehabilitation of the Brethren's quarters. (see document below.) This was big money in post war England.

How can Warwick Town Council help?

- The Warwick Information Office does a great job in promoting the Lord Leycester to visitors to Warwick – we thank you so much for this, please keep doing it – it is our life blood;
- Please help us promote fundraising events;
- Please know that when we put up temporary banners to advertise events at the Lord Leycester it is to raise precious funds that keep the place afloat - and keeping the lord Leycester afloat is for the good of all of our community;
- And when the time comes, when we win our HLF bid please be receptive and generous because we would like to ask the Town Council for a grant towards our £1 M fundraising goal.
- And please in your conversations promote us as much as you can; promote what we do and that we want full participation from our Warwick community for a very special and unique site that is an integral part of Warwick's history for almost a thousand years.

The Restoration Fund Appeal

Lord Leicester's Hospital is a charitable foundation which is, by its objects, origin, history and position, associated most closely with the Midlands of England.

When Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in 1571 endowed his Hospital for " 12 poor men " under a Master, he took over the chapel and buildings of the medieval United Guilds of Warwick for his foundation.

The Brethren are still chosen from those who have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and who come from the town of Warwick itself and from certain villages in Warwickshire and Gloucestershire named by the Founder.

Time has laid a heavy hand upon the ancient buildings of the Hospital. Inflation has eroded Lord Leicester's endowments. Social advance has made the quarters inhabited by the Brethren with their wives obsolete as habitations.

Until 1956 the administration of the Charity rested solely with the Corporation of Master and Brethren. In that year the Charity was reorganised by Act of Parliament. This is now the responsibility of a Board of Governors.

The great sum of £120,000 must be spent upon the Hospital for restoration and rehabilitation, and the work has already begun.

Through the Historic Buildings Council for England, the Ministry of Works has undertaken to provide out of public funds of approximately £40,000.

The Warwick Town Council with the support of the Ministry of Housing are making the maximum grant possible for the rehabilitation of the Brethren's quarters to provide them with the baths, lavatories and kitchens which they now lack. When this work (which must go forward with the restoration of the fabric) is completed, modernised quarters will be available.

The Governors however, have to find the balance of the money which is needed to complete the undertaking and to place the Charity physically and financially upon a sound footing.

In particular, no public funds are available for the repairs of the noble chapel which stands above the West Gate of Warwick. Although the Pilgrim Trust has generously given a Grant of £800 towards urgent repairs, and a further £1,000 has been provided by a legacy, it is estimated that £10,000 will be required to finish this task.

I have the honour to be the heir at law and collateral descendant of Lord Leicester whose name, famous in the history of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as a courtier and soldier, is for ever associated with Kenilworth as well as Warwick.

As Patron, therefore, and Chairman of the Governors, I am appealing for £50,000.

I ask for the support of all those who appreciate the value of so striking an example of a living tradition—a splendid group of buildings on the road from Stratford, housing a long established, but still socially most valuable Charity, visited and admired each year by thousands of travellers and sightseers who come to Warwick.

I appeal especially to Midlanders whose generosity can help to preserve a notable part of their heritage now greatly threatened.

DE L'ISLE,
Patron.

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