New exhibition of sculpture from Bardney Abbey

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Around the year 675 King Æthelred of Mercia founded a monastery at Bardney. He was to become its Abbot and was buried there when he died. Æthelred arranged for the bones of St Oswald to be enshrined at Bardney and this little Lincolnshire village became one of the great places of pilgrimage in Anglo-Saxon England.

Æthelred‘s abbey was destroyed by the Vikings but a new abbey was built at Bardney in 1087. It survived until 1538 when, like all abbeys in the land, it was demolished by Henry VIII in his great Dissolution.

But Bardney was to rise from the ruins. Between 1909 and 1913 the local vicar, Rev Charles Laing undertook a nationally important archaeological excavation at the site. He unearthed hundreds of beautifully sculpted and carved stones from the abbey buildings. At one time these were displayed in a small museum at Bardney, but they have been in store and hidden from view for over 30 years.

In 2011 the Jews’ Court and Bardney Abbey Trust obtained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a grant from the Lincolnshire Co-Op to design and install a brand new display of the best of the Bardney Abbey stones in St Lawrence’s Church. The design of the display has been produced by museum design students from Lincoln University and the stones include some of those excavated by the Bardney Heritage Group during their excavation at the Abbey in 2011.

David Start, a Trustee of the Jews’ Court and Bardney Abbey Trust, said: “This fabulous sculpture has been hidden away for too long - this new exhibition will remind us all what an important place Bardney was in medieval times”.

The new exhibition has been funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund, the Lincolnshire Co-Op and the Jews’ Court and Bardney Abbey Trust. The exhibition is in St Lawrence’s Church, Bardney, LN3 5TZ and will be formally opened by the President of the Lincolnshire Co-Op, Mrs Susan Neal, at 2.30pm on Saturday 13 October. The Bardney Stones exhibition will be open to the public 10am - 4pm every day (excluding church services).