

**EXPO  
GRAND  
FORMAT**

**place du  
11 novembre**

# **STORIES BENEATH OUR FEET**

Before the new development of Place du 11 Novembre begins, a vast archaeological study will be undertaken.

● An initial assessment carried out in 2019, has shown that this site has major potential for helping us to understand the history of Laval and its origins.

● Today, there are still many questions surrounding the remains buried under the square.

● What will we find on this site? What discoveries will shed light on the past of this central area of the town?

● In six panels, the exhibition presents what the historical study of the archives and the first archaeological investigations have enabled us to discover about the features of the square, from the Neolithic period to the 1950s and 1960s

Translated from the original document produced by VILLE DE LAVAL  
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Illustrations by <https://vincentlandaisillustration.fr/>

**BEFORE 1000 A.D.**

# RIVERS & MEN

The current square is located at the junction of the Mayenne river and the Râteau stream. This wetland, which is conducive to the development of agriculture, seems to have been exploited by men long before the creation of the city of Laval.



**Thanks to the archaeological assessment, we already know that**

The Mayenne River flowed at the level of the current square  
The area seems to have been cultivated since the Neolithic period

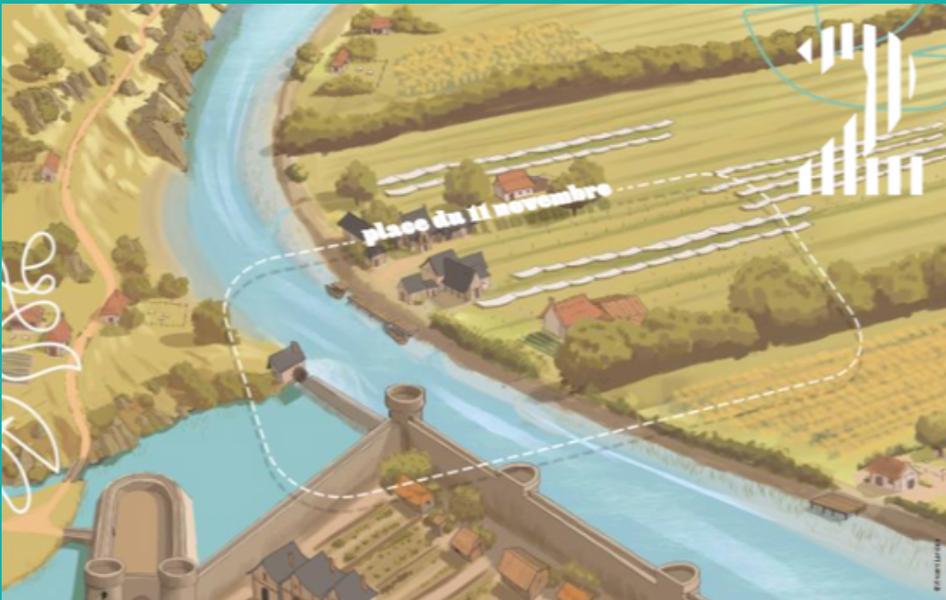
**The archaeologists want to know**

If the river has changed its course several times through the ages  
What did the banks look like, were there hydraulic works: mills?

# THE MIDDLE AGES

## FORTIFICATIONS TO PROTECT THE TOWN

During the Hundred Years' War, the military situation led to the strengthening of the town's fortifications. The northern front of the city walls was extended to the river.



**Thanks to the archaeological assessment, we already know that**

The new rampart included a tower called the "Devil's Tower"  
A pond, known as the Chiffolière pond, was created in the area of the current town hall

**The archaeologists want to know**

When was the Devil's Tower built and how was it connected to the fortifications?

Where exactly was the Chiffolière pond and what shape was it?

## THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV

### A TOWN THAT EMERGES FROM ITS WALLS

The abandonment of the fortifications and the draining of the Chiffolière pond were accompanied by the construction of new buildings. The town emerged from its medieval ramparts and gradually colonised an area devoted to residential and economic activities.



**Thanks to the archaeological assessment, we already know that:**

A square, known as La Chiffolière, was developed with several public buildings such as the Saint-Louis hospice  
Impressive private residences were also built, such as the Hôtel de Farçy

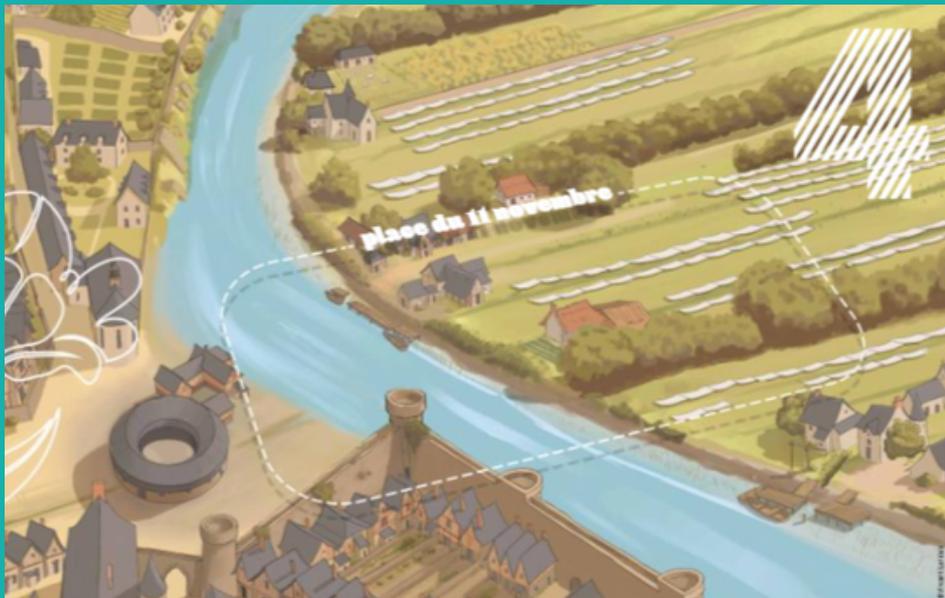
**The archaeologists want to know...**

what the first public square on this site looked like  
what happened to the medieval ramparts when the square was built

# BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES....

The municipality undertook work to improve and equip the town. A fish market was set up on the Place de la Chiffolière, while laundries linked to the textile industry were developed on the riverbank.



**Thanks to the archaeological assessment, we already know that:**

On the left bank, cloth laundries were present

On the right bank, a fish market was built in 1734

**The archaeologists want to know...**

Whether there are still any remains of the fish market under our feet

If other economic activities linked to the river banks were present (tanneries, etc.)

# NAPOLEONIC TIMES

## THE BIRTH OF A NEW URBAN CENTRE

The creation of an imperial road from Paris to Brest transformed Laval by rerouting the bed of the Mayenne river and building a new bridge to the north of the medieval town. The project was accompanied by major embankment work to create a tree-lined square in front of the town hall



**Thanks to the archaeological assessment, we already know that:**

The course of the Mayenne was diverted  
Docks were built along the new Mayenne canal from 1862 onwards

**The archaeologists want to know...**

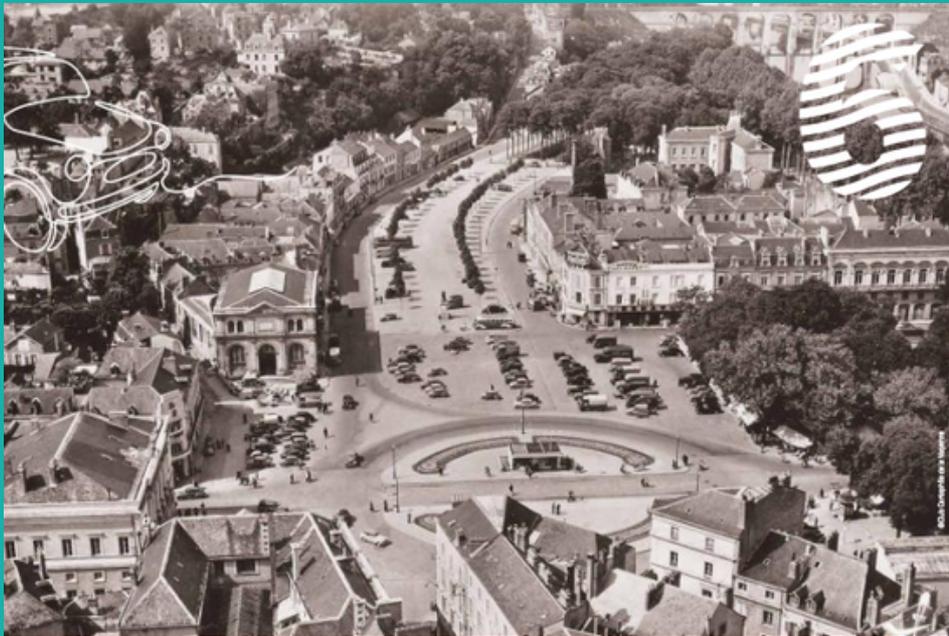
How was the large-scale work of rerouting the old Mayenne riverbed organised?

What objects were found in the square? What do they tell us about the daily life of the people of Laval in the nineteenth century?

# THE GLORIOUS THIRTIES

## WHEN THE CAR TOOK ITS PLACE

In the twentieth century, improvements to the square mainly concerned the road system to adapt the public space to the increase in traffic. From 1997 onwards, only buses belonging to the newly created TUL (Transports Urbains Lavallois) network were allowed to travel in the middle of the square where their station was located. In 1976, the first roundabout near the Town Hall was followed by a roundabout around the entire square....



**Today, the square is the legacy of these transformations: a dense traffic junction where all modes of transport pass through: four traffic lanes, two large car parks, a heavily asphalted square that leaves little space for pedestrians and relaxation.**