

Teaching unit 21: News language

Data

STORY ON SEARCH FOR KING'S BODY - *Guardian* 24 August 2012

Richard III could be buried under Leicester car park, archaeologists say

Press Association

Experts from University of Leicester believe ground was once site of medieval church, but that discovery is still a 'long shot'

Over the centuries many fables have arisen about the final resting place of Richard III.

Photograph: Getty

Archaeologists are hoping to find the lost grave of King Richard III under a Leicester car park, which they believe was once the site of a church where the medieval monarch was buried more than 500 years ago.

Richard III, the last Plantagenet, ruled England from 1483 until he was defeated at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. It is believed his body was stripped and despoiled and brought to Leicester, where he was buried in the church of the Franciscan Friary, known as Greyfriars.

But the exact whereabouts of the church have become lost over time and it is rumoured the monarch's bones could have been thrown in to the River Soar after the dissolution of the monasteries. Experts are hoping to dispel the rumours and uncover the site of the church and the monarch's remains.

Richard Buckley, co-director of the archaeology service at the University of Leicester, said: "The big question for us is determining the whereabouts of the church on the site, and also where in the church the body was buried.

"Although in many ways finding the remains of the king is a long shot, it is a challenge we shall undertake enthusiastically. There is certainly potential for the discovery of burials within the area, based on previous discoveries and the postulated position of the church."

Any discovered remains will be DNA-tested to confirm that they are those of Richard III.

The Richard III Society, which promotes research into the monarch, has been involved in the project.

Philippa Langley, from the society, said: "This search for Richard's grave is only one aspect

of the ongoing research effort to discover the real Richard III. After his defeat his reputation suffered enormous disparagement at the hands of his opponents and successors, the Tudors. The challenge lies in uncovering the truth behind the myths.

"Richard III is a charismatic figure who attracts tremendous interest. Partly because he has been so much maligned in past centuries and partly because he occupies a pivotal place in English history. The continuing interest in Richard means that many fables have grown up around his grave.

"Although local people like Alderman Herrick in 1612 knew precisely where he was buried – and Herrick was able to show visitors a handsome stone pillar marking the king's grave in his garden – nevertheless at the same time unlikely stories were spread of Richard's bones being dug up and thrown into the river Soar. Other fables, equally discredited, claimed that his coffin was used as a horse-trough.

"This archaeological work offers a golden opportunity to learn more about medieval Leicester as well as about Richard III's last resting place – and, if he is found, to re-inter his remains with proper solemnity in Leicester cathedral."

STORY ON DNA CONFIRMATION - *Guardian* 4 February 2013**Richard III: DNA confirms twisted bones belong to king**

Maev Kennedy

Skeleton found beneath Leicester car park confirmed as that of Richard III, as work begins on new tomb near excavation site

Not just the identity of the man in the car park with the twisted spine, but the appalling last moments and humiliating treatment of the naked body of Richard III in the hours after his death have been revealed at an extraordinary press conference at Leicester University.

There were cheers when Richard Buckley, lead archaeologist on the hunt for the king's body, finally announced that the university team was convinced "beyond reasonable doubt" that it had found the last Plantagenet king, bent by scoliosis of the spine, and twisted further to fit into a hastily dug hole in Grey Friars church, which was slightly too small to hold his body.

Grey Friars car park, Leicester, where the remains of King Richard III were found.
Photograph: Darren Staples/Reuters

But by then it was clear the evidence was overwhelming, as the scientists who carried out the DNA tests, those who created the computer-imaging technology to peer on to and into the bones in raking detail, the genealogists who found a distant descendant with matching DNA, and the academics who scoured contemporary texts for accounts of the king's death and burial, outlined their findings.

"What a morning. What a story," said Philippa Langley, of the Richard III Society. She had been driving on the project for years, in the face of incredulity from many people, and finding funds from Ricardians all over the world when it looked as if the money would run out before the excavation had even begun.

Canadian-born Michael Ibsen, a direct descendant of Richard III's eldest sister, Anne of York, uses an oral swab to give a DNA sample to researchers. Photograph: Colin Brooks/AFP/Getty Images

Work has started on designing a new tomb in the cathedral, only 100 yards from the excavation site, and Canon David Monteith said a solemn multifaith ceremony would be held to lay him into his new grave there, probably next year. Leicester's museums service is working on plans for a new visitor centre in an old school building overlooking the site.

Richard died at Bosworth on 22 August 1485, the last English king to fall in battle, and the researchers revealed how for the first time. There was an audible intake of breath as a slide came up showing the base of his skull sliced off by one terrible blow, believed to be from a halberd, a fearsome medieval battle weapon with a razor-sharp iron axe blade weighing about two kilos, mounted on a wooden pole, which was swung at Richard at very close range. The blade probably penetrated several centimetres into his brain and, said the

human bones expert Jo Appleby, he would have been unconscious at once and dead almost as soon.

The skull of Richard III. Injuries to the skeleton appear to confirm contemporary accounts that the king died in battle. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

The injury appears to confirm contemporary accounts that he died in close combat in the thick of the battle and unhorsed – as in the great despairing cry Shakespeare gives him: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

Another sword slash, which also went through the bone and into the brain, would also have proved fatal. But many of the other injuries were after death, suggesting a gruesome ritual on the battlefield and as the king's body was brought back to Leicester, as he was stripped, mocked and mutilated – which would have revealed for the first time to any but his closest intimates the twisted back, a condition from an unknown cause, which began to contort his body from the age of about 10. By the time he died he would have stood inches shorter than his true height of 5' 8", tall for a medieval man. The bones were those of an unusually slight, delicately built man – Appleby described him as having an "almost feminine" build – which also matches contemporary descriptions.

Jo Appleby, a lecturer in human bioarchaeology at the University of Leicester, who led the exhumation, is hugged by Prof Lin Foxhall. Photograph: Rui Vieira/PA

One terrible injury, a stab through the right buttock and into his pelvis, was certainly after death, and could not have happened when his lower body was protected by armour. It suggests the story that his naked corpse was brought back slung over the pommel of a horse, mocked and abused all the way, was true. Bob Savage, a medieval arms expert from the Royal Armouries who helped identify the wounds, said it was probably not a war weapon, but the sort of sharp knife or dagger any workman might have carried.

Michael Ibsen, the Canadian-born furniture maker proved as the descendant of Richard's sister, heard the confirmation on Sunday and listened to the unfolding evidence in shocked silence. "My head is no clearer now than when I first heard the news," he said. "Many, many hundreds of people died on that field that day. He was a king, but just one of the dead. He lived in very violent times, and these deaths would not have been pretty or quick."

It was Mathew Morris who first uncovered the body, in the first hour of the first day of the excavation. He did not believe he had found the king. The mechanical digger was still chewing the tarmac off the council car park, identified by years of research by local historians and the Richard III Society as the probable site of the lost church of Grey Friars, whose priests bravely claimed the body of the king and buried him in a hastily dug grave, probably still naked, but in a position of honour near the high altar of their church. The leg bones just showing through the soil were covered up again.

Sir Laurence Olivier as Richard III. The actor also directed the 1955 film. Photograph: The Criterion Collection/Sportsphoto/Allstar

Ten days later, on 5 September, when further excavation proved Morris had hit the crucial spot at the edge of the choir in the church, he returned with Lin Foxhall, head of the archaeology department, and Appleby, swathed in crime scene overalls to prevent contamination, to excavate the body. "We did it the usual way, lifting the arms, legs and skull first, and proceeding gradually towards the torso – so it was only when we finally saw the twisted spine that I thought: 'My word, I think we've got him.'"

Turi King, leader of the DNA team, said she completed her work confirming the mitochondrial DNA match only on Saturday night, and there is more work to be done on the Y chromosome through the male line.

The complete skeleton showing the curved spine of Richard III, who was killed in the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. Photograph: EPA

As far as Langley is concerned, Richard was the true king, the last king of the north, a worthy and brave leader who became a victim of some of the most brilliant propaganda in history, in the hands of the Tudors' image-maker, Shakespeare.

Foxhall quoted one contemporary description of Richard as "slight in body and weak in strength ... to his last breath he held himself nobly in a defending manner".

A painting of King Richard III by an unknown artist is displayed in the National Portrait Gallery in central London. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

There remains the dark shadow of the little princes in the tower, an infamous story even in Richard's day: the child Edward V and his brother Richard, declared illegitimate when Richard III claimed the throne, imprisoned in the Tower of London and never seen alive again. King said that although it is by no means certain that the bones claimed found at the tower centuries later were theirs, there may be more DNA detective work to be done there.

"I'm a medievalist really," Morris said. "I don't go much for the Tudors. Even if Richard did kill the princes in the tower, you have to judge him by the standards of his day – no other medieval king would have taken the risk of leaving them alive."

35			who initially funded the project
36			and instigated the search
37	2.19	PHILIPPA LANGLEY	the first time I walked the car park
38			erm there was
39			I just had the feeling
40			but then I came back a year later
41			and there was the letter R
42			right where
43			I had the feeling that Richard's grave was
44			and believe me I know
45			how mad that sounds
46			but it's
47			but for me that just gave me the push
48	2.36	ASHA TANNA	it's taken months of analysis by a huge team of
49			academics
50			to scientifically prove beyond all reasonable doubt
51			that this is Richard the Third
52			a tooth from the remains was used to match DNA
53			from a living day descendant
54			seventeenth generation
55	2.53	DR TURI KING	dental uh
56			they're just in very good condition
57			um and uh th-
58			that's the best thing to go for with DNA
59			when you
60			when you're starting
61			yeah
62	3.00	ASHA TANNA	and when you used the DNA from uh Michael
63			Ibsen
64	3.04	DR TURI KING	spit sample
65			I have a big tube of his spit in my lab
66			[laughter]
67	3.10	MICHAEL IBSEN	to know that there's some small part of you
68			that is part of a king of England
69			with Richard's status
70			it's
71			uh
72			it's difficult to di-
73			to digest I think

74	3.23	ACTOR	deformed
75			unfinished
76			sent before my time into this bleeding world
77			scarce half made up
78	3.28	ASHA TANNA	Richard the Third has been portrayed
79			as one of the great villains of medieval history
78			the hunchbacked monarch is accused
79			of killing his own nephews
80			the princes in the tower
81			to claim the throne
82			his reign formed part of the dynastic struggle
83			known as the War of the Roses
84			he was the last king of England
85			to ride into battle
86			for centuries it was widely believed
87			his remains were thrown into the River Soar
88			but this is where he was discovered
89			his well preserved skeleton was buried
90			without a coffin or a shroud
91			a combination of markings on the bones
92			and genetic analysis
93			proved what the experts had hoped for
94			they suggest the king was tied when he was buried
95			was in his late thirties and had an unusually slender
96			frame
96			the curve to his spine is believed to have formed after
97			birth
97			history records that Richard suffered
98			a bloody death on the battlefield
99			and a CT scan reveals there were ten wounds
100			to the skeleton
101			and potentially fatal injuries to his head
102			his naked body was hastily buried
103			without pomp and ceremony
104			next year he'll be reinterred at Leicester Cathedral
105			in a burial his supporters say
106			he's been waiting hundreds of years for