

The Richard III Society

Promoting research into the life and times of Richard III since 1924

Patron: HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO, Founder S Saxon Barton



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 4 February 2013

GREYFRIARS HUMAN REMAINS CONFIRMED AS RICHARD III

- Richard III Society hails news as a ‘unique moment in history’
- Society claims news is ‘spine-tingling’, ‘the stuff of legend’ and ‘an emotional link to a bygone age’
- Will inspire a renaissance in the study of the life and times of Richard III and the re-writing of history
- Calls to end the ‘lazy acquiescence with the Tudor and Shakespearean myths’ about the king

Today’s news confirmed what until this morning members of the Richard III Society had hardly dared believe, that the Greyfriars human remains are indeed those of Richard Plantagenet, the fifteenth-century English king, known to most as Richard III: the last warrior king of England.

‘This is a unique moment in history. Richard III has been found and can now be given a reinterment with dignity and solemnity, something denied him these last 500 or more years. Also, when the facial reconstruction is revealed, which will be spine-tingling, people will see the face of the man so badly used by history. Maybe, now that people can see that Richard III was a human being, not a monster, they will stop knocking his reputation and give the truth a chance to come out. Congratulations to Philippa Langley for her determination to see this project through. Thanks, too, to the scientific team at Leicester University for all that they have achieved. Good King Richard can be laid to rest at last.

Dr Phil Stone, Chairman, Richard III Society

‘The discovery of King Richard III is nothing short of miraculous, an emotional link to a bygone age. This historic moment represents the culmination of an extraordinary four year quest to uncover the *real* Richard III. Today that dream has been realised. To those around the world who saved the Greyfriars dig from disaster and cancellation, you gave us our mandate when you said: ‘Search for him, find him, honour him’. It is now time to fulfil this mandate and honour this much maligned monarch with a reburial that befits a king, and a total reassessment of his life and times. This is the stuff of legends.’

Philippa Langley, Originator of the ‘Looking for Richard’ project

This is an exciting and wonderful outcome from the DNA perspective. However, we must remember that DNA *alone* can NEVER *prove* someone’s identity. It can only DISPROVE identity (if you get a mismatch). This exciting DNA match indicates that the Leicester male is related in some way to the female-line descendants of Richard III’s sister, Anne of York. By itself, that is extremely suggestive. When we combine that with all the other circumstantial evidence available – such as the date of his death, the location in which his remains were found, the fact that he was male, the evidence of his high social class, and the compelling evidence of the circumstances in which death occurred, together with the evidence relating to his physical appearance, we are confronted with overwhelming evidence that the male remains from the Greyfriars are indeed those of Richard III

Dr John Ashdown-Hill, Historian

The Richard III Society has been working since 1924 to secure a reassessment of King Richard’s place in English history and to challenge the myths that surround his life and reputation.

The project to search for King Richard III’s final resting place was driven largely by two members of the Society, Philippa Langley and Dr John Ashdown-Hill. Philippa, a screenwriter who is secretary of the Society’s Scottish Branch, conceived the project and worked unaided for several years before approaching the Society for support. Dr. Ashdown-Hill contributed the background research into the location of the Grey Friars and discovered King Richard’s mtDNA that confirmed the identification of the human remains.

Until last summer, the location of King Richard's remains was one of the most hotly debated issues in English history; he was the last English king to die in battle and reports of what happened to his remains became muddled over the subsequent 500 years. As a defeated king Richard suffered at the hands of those who had deposed him and his reputation underwent claims of murder, physical deformity and incompetence. But today's results offer a tantalising opportunity to set the record straight over the king's reputation and encourage further research into his life and times. Historical justice for Richard III is long overdue.

Thanks to the efforts of the Richard III Society, and all those involved with the recent dig, the project to find King Richard's remains has now yielded results that few would dare have dreamt of. Our understanding of this period of English history will be the better for it.

Notes to Editors

TOMORROW, THE RICHARD III SOCIETY WILL REVEAL THE FACE OF KING RICHARD III FROM A FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION UNDERTAKEN BY PROFESSOR CAROLINE WILKINSON OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE.

THE RECONSTRUCTION, FUNDED BY THE RICHARD III SOCIETY, WILL BE UNVEILED FOR THE MEDIA.

**WHERE: Society of Antiquaries
Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE**

**WHEN: 10.00am - 11.00am
5 February 2013**

Background

Richard III was an innovative king of England; initiatives such as the Council of the North, an early example of devolution, lasted until the mid-seventeenth century; his legal reforms continued long after his death, with some still embedded in our laws today. Noteworthy aspects of his reign include:

- being the first king to use English to swear his coronation oath and to record acts of parliament.
- a commitment to fair play in the judicial system: his actions and proclamations stressing that his laws were to be administered impartially without delay or favour, thereby helping to establish the legal principle of 'blind justice.'
- development of an early form of Legal Aid, which provided support for those unable to afford lawyers by allowing people to make direct petitions to the Royal Council. Under Henry VII this became the Court of Requests.
- introduction of bail, thereby initiating the legal principle of 'presumption of innocence'.
- active encouragement of the fledging book printing industry, a policy reflecting the king's own personal interest in books

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About the Richard III Society

With a worldwide membership and local branches the Society is actively engaged in original research through its own initiatives and through collaboration with other institutions, bodies and scholars. Through the Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, a charitable body established by the Society, we publish important academic works and make research grants.

The Society publishes an annual journal, *The Ricardian*, with original articles on fifteenth-century history and a quarterly members' magazine the *Ricardian Bulletin*.

Members of the Richard III Society are available for media interview on any topic concerning the life and times of Richard III, the Leicester dig or any related matter.

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