

Exhumation of Shakespeare to determine cause of death and drug test

June 27 2011, by Deborah Braconnier



(PhysOrg.com) -- Director of the Institute for Human Evolution, anthropologist Francis Thackeray has formally petitioned the Church of England to allow him to exhume the body of William Shakespeare in order to determine the cause of his death.

Thackeray is best known for his controversial suggestion nearly a decade ago which pointed to the possibility that Shakespeare had been a regular [cannabis](#) smoker. Utilizing [forensic techniques](#), Thackeray examined 24 pipes which had been discovered in Shakespeare's garden and

determined that they had been used to smoke the drug.

Citing that even after 400 years, Shakespeare is still one of the most famous people in history, Thackeray hopes to be able to end the question of how he died and establish a health history. With new state-of-the-art computer equipment he hopes to create a three dimensional reconstruction of Shakespeare. The hope is to be able to determine the kind of life he led, any diseases or medical conditions he may have suffered from and what ultimately caused his death.

The new technology, nondestructive analysis, will not require the remains to be moved but will instead scan the bones. They are also hoping to collect DNA from Shakespeare and his wife and sister, all who are buried at Holy Trinity Church.

Thackeray also hopes to find evidence to back his controversial claims years ago regarding Shakespeare's marijuana smoking. Examining the teeth could provide the evidence they need. If they are able to discover grooves between the incisor and canine teeth, it could show them he was chewing on a pipe.

This plan however goes against the final wishes of Shakespeare himself who had the following words engraved on his tomb: "Good friend for Jesus sake forebear, To dig the dust enclosed here, Blessed be the man that spares these stones, And cursed be he that moves my bones."

The Church of England denies that any requests have been made to exhume Shakespeare's body but Thackeray and his team hopes to gain approval in time to be able to make the determination before the 400th anniversary of his death in 2016.

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Citation: Exhumation of Shakespeare to determine cause of death and drug test (2011, June 27)
retrieved 1 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-06-exhumation-shakespeare-death-drug.html>

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