

# Plans revealed to create Richard III genome (Update)

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A painting of King Richard III in Leicester Cathedral on February 4, 2013

British scientists on Tuesday announced plans to create the complete genome sequence of infamous British king Richard III after his remains were found under a car park in 2012.

Geneticist Turi King will lead the £100,000 project (\$164,000, 120,000 euros) to produce the first genome sequence from ancient DNA for a

named historical figure, the project's co-funders the Wellcome Trust and the Leverhulme Trust said in a statement.

"It is an extremely rare occurrence that archaeologists are involved in the excavation of a known individual, let alone a king of England," said King.

"Sequencing the genome of Richard III is a hugely important project that will help to teach us not only about him, but ferment discussion about how our DNA informs our sense of identity, our past and our future," she added.

The year-long project, which will attempt to extract DNA from ground-up samples of Richard's bones, could reveal the controversial leader's hair and eye colour, and whether the scoliosis that deformed his spine was genetic.

Geneticist and co-funder Alec Jeffreys pitched the idea to King over dinner.



An undated handout picture released on February 4, 2013 from the University of Leicester shows the skeleton of king Richard III found at the Grey Friars Church excavation site

"We will never have this chance again, wherever he ends up being buried and whenever it ends up happening," King said. "We have this unique opportunity now and it seemed a shame not to do it."

The skeleton was found during an archaeological dig at a municipal car park in Leicester, central England, in August 2012.

DNA from the bones matched that of descendants of the king's sister, while the skeleton had the twisted spine and battle injuries consistent with contemporary accounts, said researchers from the University of Leicester.

After his death at the Battle of Bosworth, near Leicester, Richard's body

was buried by Franciscan friars, known as Greyfriars, in an unmarked grave. When their monastery was destroyed in the 1530s, all traces of him disappeared.

In "Richard III", Shakespeare described a villain who murdered his two young nephews to win the throne.

Enthusiasts say there is no evidence he killed the young boys, and hope the focus will now shift to the social reforms Richard introduced.

A court battle is ongoing to decide whether his remains should eventually be buried in the nearby Leicester Cathedral, or in York, his royal house.

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