

Richard III's makeshift grave opens to public

July 26 2014, by Anne Laure Mondesert

The grave of King Richard III, immortalised by Shakespeare as one of history's great villains, was opened up to the public on Saturday in central England.

The remains of the infamous ruler were found in 2012 under a car park in the city of Leicester.

Around a hundred visitors were on hand to watch city mayor Peter Soulsby cut the ribbon on the £4 million (\$6.8 million, 5 million euro) new visitor centre at the discovery site.

Early arrivals at the building, in an abandoned school close to Richard's grave, were able to examine a replica of his skeleton made using a 3D printer.

One floor guides visitors through the epic story of the king's life and brutal death in the 1485 Battle of Bosworth that ended the War of the Roses, the 32-year conflict between two rival branches of the royal House of Plantagenet.

Another tells of the momentous and painstaking work carried out by archaeologists that led to the discovery and identification of the king in a makeshift grave at the former site of a medieval friary.

Only then can visitors examine the excavated grave, which the centre says has been "preserved in a quiet, respectful setting... fitting for the last resting place of a slain warrior and anointed monarch."

"On the actual grave, a light shows how the bones looked, so you get the effect of the skeleton lying in the [grave](#)," Leicester City Council spokeswoman Debra Reynolds told AFP.

"The feedback from people is really excellent, people are particularly enjoying the graveside area."

British judges in May finally ended a bitter debate over Richard's reburial, ruling that his remains should be laid to rest in a cathedral near to where he was found.

Shakespeare portrayed Richard as a scheming hunchback who ordered the murder of two young nephews barring his way to the throne.

Descendants of the ill-famed king had fought for his skeleton to be buried in York Minster, in the northern city that gave its name to Richard's royal house.

But the High Court said that there was no reason that Richard should not remain in Leicester.

"It is time for Richard III to be given a dignified reburial, and finally laid to rest," the judges said in their ruling.

British authorities have drawn up plans for a grand re-interment ceremony at Leicester Cathedral, which is due to take place early next year.

Richard, the 14th great-granduncle of Queen Elizabeth II, became the last English king to die in battle.

His death marked the end of the war between the houses of Lancaster and York—named after their respective heraldic symbols of the red and

white rose—and the rise of the Tudor dynasty.

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Citation: Richard III's makeshift grave opens to public (2014, July 26) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-07-richard-iii-makeshift-grave.html>

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