**Five things we've learned about Richard III since he was found**

[](http://www.cnn.com/profiles/bryony-jones)

**By** [**Bryony Jones**](http://www.cnn.com/profiles/bryony-jones)**, CNN** Mon March 23, 2015

**London (CNN)**The discovery of the remains of [Richard III](http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/21/europe/richard-iii-leicester-coffin/index.html) beneath a car parking lot in the English city of Leicester in 2012 sparked excitement around the world. Now those bones are to be reburied following a series of commemorations full of the pomp and circumstance befitting of a royal farewell.

In the years since it was exhumed, the King's skeleton has given up plenty of secrets -- and research continues to find out more.

**Richard III was not hunchbacked**

Say the name Richard III to most people, and the image that will spring to mind is of Shakespeare's villain, a cruel, conniving figure whose nasty character is reflected in his physical abnormalities, a "poisonous bunch-backed toad."

History, they say, is written by the victors, and according to the Tudors and their most famous playwright, Richard was hunchbacked, with a withered hand and limping gait, "deformed, unfinished ... and that so lamely and unfashionable that dogs bark at me as I halt by them."

Read More

close dialog

Top of Form





Receive **Political Pop Culture News**

informing you when the worlds of politics and pop culture meet

Please enter above

Activate COVER/LINE Newsletter

By subscribing you agree to our

For the archaeologists searching for Richard's remains, the sight of the freshly-uncovered skeleton's twisted spine was the moment the hairs began to stand up on the back of their necks; tests later revealed the King suffered from idiopathic adolescent-onset scoliosis.

But while the skeleton's curved vertebrae are striking, experts say the resulting disability would not have been obvious in Richard III when he was alive. It would have meant his right shoulder was slightly higher than the other, but this was likely disguised by clothing, and so only apparent to the King's closest family and confidantes.

**He was blue-eyed and blond**

The most famous portraits of Richard III depict him as dark-haired and steely eyed, but they were painted some 25 to 30 years after his death, and DNA tests on the remains suggest they are far from accurate.



*DNA tests suggest Richard III had blue eyes and fair hair, meaning the Society of Antiquaries portrait is likely to be the closest to his real appearance*

Genetic specialist Turi King, from the University of Leicester, said analysis of various genetic markers offered clues to the King's appearance, suggesting he was actually fair haired and had blue eyes.

*"[There are] genes that we know are involved in coding for hair and eye color," she told CNN in December 2014. "The genetic evidence shows he had a 96% probability of having blue eyes, and a 77% probability of having blond hair, though this can darken with age."*

This would mean that the painting of Richard III held by the Society of Antiquaries of London is the closest approximation we have to his real appearance: It shows him with grey-blue eyes and lighter brown hair than other portraits.

**He dined on peacock and heron**

It is perhaps not surprising that a monarch would have a taste for the finer things in life, but heron -- really? Well yes -- in the medieval period wildfowl such as heron, even swan would have featured heavily on the high-protein menus of the aristocracy.

Scientists at the British Geological Survey measured the levels of isotopes including oxygen, strontium, nitrogen and carbon in Richard III's remains, revealing clues to what he ate and drank. They spotted a dramatic change in the last few years of his life -- suggesting his dietary habits became markedly richer once he became King.

"*Obviously, Richard was a nobleman beforehand, and so his diet would be reasonably rich already," explained isotope geochemist Angela Lamb, who led the study. "But once he became king we would expect him to be wining and dining more, banqueting more.*

*"We have the menu from his coronation banquet and it was very elaborate -- lots of wildfowl, including real 'delicacies' such as peacock and swan, and fish -- carp, pike and so on."*

**He had worms when he died**

Something in that rich diet made Richard III sick: Scientists from the University of Cambridge and the University of Leicester found evidence the King was suffering from a roundworm infection when he died.

**He was killed by a blow to the head**

Richard III was the last English King to die in battle, at Bosworth on August 22, 1485. In his "Anglica Historia," the Italian [Polydore Vergil](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/626042/Polydore-Vergil), recorded that: "[King Richard alone was killed fighting manfully](http://www.r3.org/links/to-prove-a-villain-the-real-richard-iii/these-supposed-crimes/polydore-vergil/) in the thickest press of his enemies."

When archaeologists studied the remains unearthed in Leicester, they found evidence of 11 of wounds inflicted at or around the time of his death: Nine to his skull and two to other parts of his body. The position of the injuries suggest that Richard had lost both his horse and his helmet when he was set upon by opposition troops.

"The most likely injuries to have caused the king's death are the two to the inferior aspect of the skull -- a large sharp force trauma possibly from a sword or staff weapon, such as a halberd or bill, and a penetrating injury from the tip of an edged weapon," said Professor Guy Rutty, who said the wounds were consistent with accounts of what happened to him at Bosworth.Tests also found an injury to the inside of Richard III's pelvis which supports contemporary reports that his body was subjected to acts of ritual humiliation after his death.