

## Treatment of Richard after the battle

Many sources refer to Richard being brought back to Leicester, naked, and laid out for a number of days to allow the public to view him.

- **Crowland Chronicle, c.1486**, “Richard’s body was found among the other slain... Many other insults were heaped on it, and, not very humanely, a halter was thrown round the neck, and it was carried to Leicester...”
- “They brought King Richard thither that night as naked as he borne might bee.  
& in Newarke Laid was hee,  
that many a one might looke on him”  
**Ballad of Bosworth Field (Percy 1867-8; quoted by Kelly 1884 and Billson 1920)**
- **A Castilian letter by Diego de Valera, early 1486**, also mentions that Richard’s body was “covered from the waist downward with a black rag of poor quality, [Earl Henry] ordering him to be exposed there three days to the universal gaze.”  
**De Valera 1878, 94; Bennett, 1993, 160**
- **Robert Fabyan, *Fabyans Chronicle* (1533)**, “And Richard late King as gloriously as he by the morning departed from that town, so as irreverently was he that afternoon brought into that town, for his body despoiled to the skin, and nought being left about him, so much as would cover his privy member, he was trussed behind the pursuivant called Norroy as an hog or another vile beast, and so all besprung with mire and filth was brought to a church in Leicester for all men to wonder upon, and there lastly irreverently buried.” (**Bennett, 1993, 164**)
- **Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, about 1503-13**, describes how “Richard’s naked body was slung over a horse, its head, arms and legs dangling,” **Vergil 2005** (see also **Wright 2002, 141**)
- **Thomas More, *History of King Richard III (English version) between 1512-19***, “Kinge Richarde himselfe as ye shal hereafter here, slain in the fiede, hacked and hewed of his enemies handes, haryed on horseback dead, his here in despite torn and togged lyke a cur dogge”. (**More, ed. Sylvester 1963, and in Seward 1983, 195**)
- **Hall *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* (1548, 58<sup>v</sup>)**: Richard was “Trussed behind a pursuivant of arms called *Blanche Sanglier* or White Boar, like a hog or calf, the head and arms hanging on one side of the horse and the legs on the other side, and all besprinkled with mire and blood.”
- **1579 Thomas Legge, *Richardus Tertius*** (Latin play performed at Cambridge) [Stage Direction, Act 3 Scene 5] “After this let Henrye Earl of Richmond come tryumphing, having the body of King Richard dead on a horse”
- **1594 anon. *The True Tragedie of Richard III*** “I will it be proclaimed presently, that traitorous Richard, Be by our command drawn through the streets of Leicester Stark naked on a collier’s horse let him be laid, For as of others’ pains he had no regard, So let him have a traitor’s due reward”

## His burial in the church at the Grey Friars

There are sources that state that Richard was buried in the choir or church of the Friars Minor (another name for the Grey Friars).

- **1486 John Rous, *Historia Regum Angliae*** “*finaliter apud fratres Minores Leicestriae in choro est sepultus.*” ... “at last [Richard] was buried in the choir of the Friars Minor at Leicester” (**Rous et. al. 1745, 218**).
- **1496** “Tombe were set up and fynysshed in the Church aforeseid:” [**PRO CI 206/69**] **Edwards 1975**. Although Edwards does not quote the full text identifying the church, she does note that it was named first in error as the ‘Newark’... which was then crossed out and ‘of Friars’ substituted.
- “in the Church of Friars in the town of leycestr where the bonys of Kyng Richard the iijde reste”. [**PRO TNA, C1/206/69 recto, lines 4 and 5**]. **Baldwin** gives the reference in relation to the alabaster tomb (see **Baldwin 1986, n. 5**; see also **Ashdown Hill 2010, 97**).
- **Polydore Vergil, 1503-13** states that Richard’s body was “brought to the Franciscan monastery at Leicester, a sorry spectacle but a sight worthy of the man’s life, and there it was given burial two days later, without any funeral ceremony [*sine ullo funere*].” (**Vergil 2005**) (**Ellis 1844, 226**).
- **Hall, 1548, 58<sup>v</sup>-59<sup>r</sup>**: “In the meane season, the deade corps of king Rycharde was as shamefully caryed to the Towne of Leycester, as he gorgeously the day before wyth pompe & pryde departed out of the same Towne. For his body was naked and dyspoiled to the skin, and nothing left about him, not so much as a clowte to couer hys priuie members, and was trussed behinde a Pursyuant of armes called Blaunche Senglier, or White Bore, like a Hog or Calfe, the head and armes hanging on the one side of the horse, and the legs on the other side, and all besprinckled with mire & bloude was broughte to the gray Friars Churche within the Towne, & there lay like a miserable spectacle”
- **Francis Bacon, *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh* (1622), pp. 1-2**: “the body of RICHARD after many indignities and reproches (the Dirigies and Obsequies of the common people towarso Tyrants) was obscurely buried. For though the King of his noblenesse gave charge unto the Friars of Leicester to see an honourable interrment to be given to it, yet the Religious People themselves (being not free from the humours of the Vulgar) neglected it; wherein neverthelesse they did not then incurre any mans blame or censure.”
- **The historian Charles Billson in *Medieval Leicester* (1920, 184)**: “Richard’s remains must now lie, if undisturbed, somewhere beneath the Grey Friars Street or the buildings that face it”
- The historian **David Baldwin (1986, 21-24)** said “It is possible (though perhaps now unlikely) that at some time in the twenty-first century an excavator may yet reveal the slight remains of this famous monarch; but in the meantime we can do no more than agree with Charles Billson that the grave most probably lies beneath the northern (St Martin’s) end of Grey Friars Street, or the buildings that face it on either side.”



- In 1993, the *Daily Telegraph* interviewed David Baldwin who clarified that the site of Herrick's house, which was built on the remains of the friary, was now covered by banks, shops and a car park.



## Discrediting the legend (Billson 1920 & Baldwin 1986)

Summary: In 1610, on Speed's map of Leicestershire, a text box stated that Richard was buried in the Grey Friars in Leicester. The following year, in 1611, 73 years after it was supposed to have happened, John Speed published a story that Richard's remains were dug up during the dissolution of the monasteries and buried under Bow Bridge. This can be discredited very early on: see sources, **Burton (1622)**, **Wren (1750)** and **Billson (1920)**.

**Billson (1920)** felt the original rumour may have first stemmed from the first source below. **Baldwin (1986, 22)** was also very sceptical.

- In **1491 York City Records** legal proceedings, it is recorded that a William Burton, while in a dispute with a John Payntor, stated that "King Richard was an hypocrite, a crocheback and buried in a ditch like a dog". This was subsequently publicly refuted during the same legal proceedings: Richard was not buried in a ditch, "for the King's grace has been pleased to bury him in a worshipful place" (**Billson 1920, 185**)
- On **Speed's map of Leicestershire (1610)** a text box says "buryed in ye Graye Fr. Within Leicester, which being ruinated, his grave rests as obscure overgrowne with nettles and weeds" (**Nicolson (ed.) 1988, 115**)
- As noted by **Billson (1920, 185)** the legend that Richard's remains were dug up at the Dissolution is first mentioned by John Speed in his *History of Great Britain* in 1611, 73 years after it was supposed to have happened: "At the suppression of that [Greyfriars] Monastery [Richard's monument] was pulled down and utterly defaced, since when his grave overgrown with nettles and weeds is very obscure and not to be found. Only the stone chest wherein his corpse lay is now made a drinking trough for horses at a common inn. His body also (as tradition hath delivered), was borne out of the city, and contemptuously bestowed under the end of Bow Bridge." (**Speed 1611, 725**)
- However, Speed himself was sceptical about these stories, noting that they were only hearsay: "but of these things, as is the report, so let be the credit" (**Speed 1611, 725**)
- **Throsby** adds his own embellishments to Speed's rumour in **1777**: "...at the suppression of religious houses in his son's [Henry VIII] reign, the Church being about to be destroyed, the monument was wantonly pulled down, and broke to pieces by the inhabitants of Leicester; who not satisfied with offering this indignity to his memory, dug up his remains, and as wantonly triumphed over his bones, which they carried through Leicester to Bow-bridge, where they contemptuously buried them, either by throwing them into the water, or depositing them in water's bank there." This is in Throsby 1777, *The memoirs of the town and county of Leicester* rather than Throsby 1791 *The history and antiquities of the ancient town of Leicester*. Throsby can probably be credited with shifting the legend to the bones being thrown in the river.
- The Speed story is repeated verbatim by **Sir Richard Baker in 1643** and is reprinted in **Nichols in 1815**.
- Authors between the Dissolution and Speed's narrative, and indeed afterwards, including **Holinshed's** chronicle published in **1577** and revised in **1587**, describe the

tomb but make no mention of its desecration. William Burton writing in **1622** also describes the tomb but not the desecration.

- **By 1612**, the site was in the ownership of Robert Herrick who had built a mansion there. **Billson (1920, 185-6) quotes from notes made by Christopher Wren** “being slain at Bosworth, his body was begged by the Nuns at Leicester (sic) and buried in their chapel there; at the dissolution whereof the place of his burial happened to fall into the bounds of a citizen’s garden, which after being purchased by Mr Robert Herrick (sometime Mayor of Leicester) was by him covered with a handsome stone pillar, three foot high, with this inscription, ‘Here lies the body of Richard III, some time king of England’ This he showed me (Chr Wren) walking in his garden. Anno 1612”. **Wren 1750, 144** Herrick appears to have no awareness of the legend, published the previous year, or evidently has no faith in it.
- **Billson (1920, 186-7)** concluded, in relation to the contradictory accounts of Speed and Wren: “The destruction of the Greyfriars monastery took place in the lifetime of Robert Herrick, who was born in 1540; and the events connected with it must have been fresh in the recollection of his contemporaries; yet in 1612, he does not appear to have been aware of the tradition which had been published by Speed in the previous year, or if so, he evidently had no faith in it. We cannot do better than follow his example.
- “If then the Grey Friars Church and the burial place of Richard III were in Robert Herrick’s garden, Richard’s remains must now lie, if undisturbed, somewhere beneath the Greyfriars Street or the buildings that face it. The exact place cannot be more nearly identified. The story told by Wren is far the more credible of the two. The popular tale of the desecration of Richard’s tomb rests on no good authority.”
- ‘There is indeed no question about the burial at the Grey Friars’ Church, which is quite well established. Nevertheless the common rumour survived’ (i.e. that remains were thrown in a ditch)

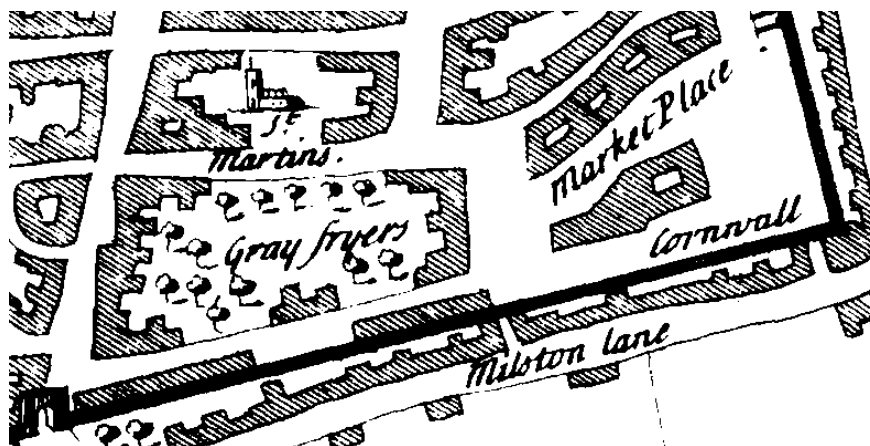
#### 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century discussions

- **Billson (1920, 185)** considered that the Speed story resulted from an account soon after Bosworth (but discredited by 1489) which suggested that the King’s remains were ‘buried in a ditch like a dog’
- **Edwards (1974)** has discussed the documentation for the commissioning and payment of the tomb.
- **Baldwin (1986)** has reviewed the various sources for the fate of Richard’s body, and his tomb in the Greyfriars and concluded that his grave was likely to be found in the remains of the Greyfriars, which would now lie under buildings and a car park.
- **Ashdown-Hill (2004, 34)** has drawn attention to a poem by Richard Corbet, later bishop of Norwich (d.1635) probably written in the 1620s, on the occasion of a visit to the city, which records that Richard had then ‘no tombe’. Corbet, who also made the journey to Bosworth, makes no reference to any desecration of his bones, and Ashdown Hill argues that if this were a local story, he would have surely picked this up.
- **Buckley *et al.* (2013)** have presented the results of the excavations of 2012, which located the friary and the grave of the king.

## The location of the Greyfriars

Summary: The location of the Grey Friars was never lost. However, the precise location of Richard III's grave today was not known.

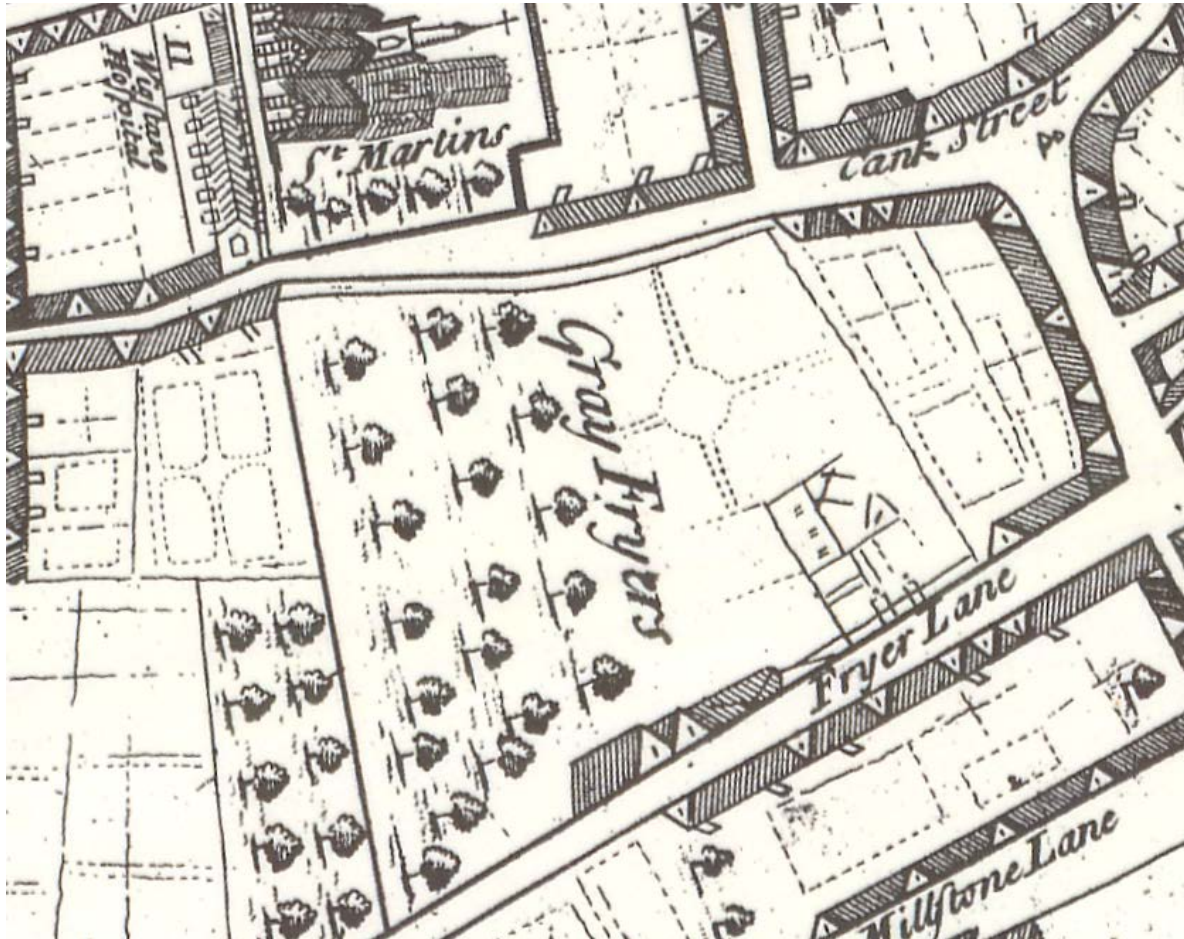
- A report from the town's coroners' rolls confirms that Greyfriars was on the same street as St Martin's church "It chanced [Dec. 26, 1300] after the hour of curfew, in the lane which leads to St Martin's church and towards the church of the Friars Minors, that ..." (**Bateson 1899, 364-5**)
- In the 16th century, the antiquarian John Leland recorded that "the Grey Freres of Leicester stode at the end of the hospital of Mr. Wigston" (**1538-43, 1:16; Toulmin Smith (ed) 1964**); the latter is known to have been immediately west of St Martin's church and was not demolished until the 19th century. Leland visited Leicester shortly after the dissolution and would have seen the ruins of the friary which were still present at least until 1561.
- **John Speed's Leicestershire map of 1610**, which includes an inset of Leicester, incorrectly labels the site of Blackfriars as Greyfriars and also labels modern Friar Lane as 'Blackfryers Lane' Throsby clearly places no trust in Speed, writing "Mr. Speed, in his plan of Leicester, which is copied facing p. 22, the reader will perceive places this house [Blackfriars] in the situation of Grey Friars, and Grey Friars where this should be" (1791, 288). Speed's town maps, which were frequently based on earlier cartography, confused the location of friaries in a number of other places, including Lincoln (Austin Friars with Greyfriars) Northampton, (Whitefriars misidentified as the Greyfriars) and Stamford (Whitefriars with Greyfriars) (**Nicolson (ed.) 1988; O'Sullivan 2013 forthcoming**).
- In the 18th century John Throsby noted that "The Franciscan or Grey Friary, stood on the south side of St Martin's church-yard" and that "the grounds belonging to the Friary were spacious and extended from the upper end of the Market Place to the Friar Lane meeting house" (**1791, 290-1**).
- William Stukeley's 1722 map of Leicester clearly marks 'Gray Fryers' in a block of land to the south of St Martin's church (**Stukeley 1722**).



Extract from Stukeley's 1722 map of Leicester



- Thomas Roberts' 1741 map of Leicester clearly marks the position of the 'Gray Fryers' precinct.



*Extract from Roberts' 1741 map of Leicester*

- Medieval street names - Friar Lane and St Francis's Lane (now Peacock Lane) – clearly place the friary south of St Martin's cathedral. A 19th century street would not have been called Greyfriars if the location of the friary was in doubt.
- Throsby places the church in what would eventually become the Social Services car park: "When workmen were digging for the cellars, to the range of houses which face St. Martin's church, they cast up, I remember, many human bones; one skeleton lay entire: the Friary church probably stood there." (1791, 291).

## **Greyfriars Church - location thereof**

Friary buildings were usually accommodated within existing townscapes. The location usually reflected the friars' need to be close to major thoroughfares and public spaces, because of their need to collect money from passers-by, in line with their mendicant vocation; usually without other guaranteed sources of income, this was their main source for everyday needs.

The layout of the buildings was usually of a typical monastic character, with a church and cloisters. The cloisters were often on the south side of the church, in line with, for example, the usual Benedictine plan, but a number of examples of cloisters on the north side of the church are known. This is usually because of the position of existing thoroughfares, and the church is positioned next to the public route way, as for example at the Leicester Austin Friars (Mellor and Pearce 1981) and the London Greyfriars (Martin 1937, 176-204; O'Sullivan (forthcoming) 2013). In Leicester, streets lie both to the north and south of the Greyfriars precinct, therefore the church could have been located in either position. The southern street – Friar Lane – leads from the south gate to the market place and would have been used by traders on a regular basis; for this reason, a church on the south side of the precinct was a real possibility.

Although the site of the precinct was known, the precise location of the friary buildings, including the church, was not. There was a reasonable presumption that they would be located at the east side of the precinct, close to the market place, but the position of the church with respect to the buildings remained open. Based on extensive experience of monastic sites and urban archaeology, the excavation team devised a strategy intended initially to locate some part of the monastic ranges. The trenches were positioned to get a cross section of these across the area of the car park available for investigation.



## If we knew so much about where he was likely to be, why didn't we go looking before?

It is very rare to be able to do research projects on urban sites, for a variety of reasons. Excavations in towns usually take place because of redevelopment – opportunities to investigate towns below ground usually involve a ‘rescue’ agenda, where archaeological levels are going to be destroyed by the foundations for new constructions. The Greyfriars project was actually the first urban research excavation within the historic core of Leicester, and came about because of the initiative of members of the Richard III Society, who sought professional expertise to investigate the likely site of the Greyfriars.

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