

# Information Pack 7: People and Organizations involved in the Discovery and Reinterment of Richard III

## Philippa Langley

Philippa Langley MBE (b. 1962), is a Scottish screenwriter described by the Richard III society as having “a passion to tell stories that challenge our perception of established truths”. At the time of the excavation of the Greyfriars site in Leicester, and the discovery of Richard III’s remains, Philippa Langley was secretary of the Scottish branch of the Richard III Society. She was pivotal in the drive for the Leicester dig, and organised negotiations between key parties as well as leading campaigns to acquire the necessary funds for archaeological work. Later disputes were to focus upon her status as the named client of the University of Leicester Archaeological Services’ work, and therefore her rights to the custody of Richard’s remains following their identification. As such, hers was an influential voice heard throughout the events which took place between 2012 and 2015, and she organised opposition to the confining of Richard’s remains in a scientific laboratory, as opposed to a religious environment, resulting in a compromise with University of Leicester Archaeological Services. Following the discovery, Philippa Langley actively promoted the history of Richard III throughout the country, especially in schools, and she is currently working on a new screenplay concerning his life. The Channel 4 documentary, “The King in the Car Park”, intimately followed her experience during the discovery and identification of Richard III’s remains.

## Dr. John Ashdown-Hill

Dr. John Ashdown-Hill, MBE (b. 1949) is a freelance historian, writer and genealogist best known for tracing Richard III’s mitochondrial DNA (DNA passed through an unbroken female line) and thereby enabling the later identification of his remains through a match with Michael Ibsen, the son of Joy Ibsen, the last in an all-female line of descent from Richard III’s sister, Anne of York. Ashdown-Hill holds a PhD in Medieval History from the University of Essex, and has published extensively on the history of the Yorkist side during the Wars of the Roses. In the introduction to his ground-breaking genealogical work, *The Last Days of Richard III and the Fate of his DNA* (originally published in 2010, second edition 2013), Ashdown-Hill explained his personal belief that Richard III had a better claim to the English throne than the children of Edward IV, namely Edward V and Richard of Shrewsbury. John

Ashdown-Hill made his personal views concerning Richard III's life heard extensively during the events following the discovery of his remains, especially as a vehement opponent to further testing on the remains and as a supporter of their movement to and coffining within a holy place. This was linked to his beliefs as a Catholic; although he never challenged the decision to rebury Richard III in the Anglican Leicester Cathedral, Ashdown-Hill always sought to ensure a degree of Catholic symbolism and ceremony. To this end, his own rosary was included in Richard's coffin alongside a crown that he had personally commissioned, perhaps reflecting in part his personal and profound views concerning the king's faith and legitimacy.

## The Looking for Richard Project

The Looking for Richard project, founded by Philippa Langley in 2009, brought together a group of Ricardians who strongly believed that Richard III's remains had not been irretrievably lost, but were in fact still to be found in Leicester. They also sought to create the honourable and dignified burial that had been denied the king following his defeat and death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. The project was not directly affiliated with the Richard III Society, but prominent members included Dr John Ashdown-Hill and Dr David and Wendy Johnson, who together with Philippa Langley later published *Finding Richard III: The Official Account* (2014).

The project was largely responsible for facilitating the dig that took place at the Greyfriars site in Leicester, and for contacting the relevant bodies such as the Crown, Leicester City Council and Leicester Cathedral. It then sought to ensure that the remains were reinterred appropriately in the cathedral, subsequently opposing their public display and coffining in a laboratory. Finally, the Looking for Richard project was partially responsible for financing the excavations, raising more than fifty per cent of the costs through an international appeal for funds. Their work was undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis. Tensions continue to exist over responsibility for the research leading up to the positive identification of Richard III and the discovery of his remains.

## University of Leicester Archaeological Services

The University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) is an "independent and professional unit" of archaeologists who undertake archaeological and excavation projects throughout the United Kingdom. ULAS was commissioned by the Looking for Richard

Project, and by Philippa Langley personally as the named 'client' in the Written Scheme of Investigation, to undertake the excavation of the former Greyfriars site in Leicester. The team provided by ULAS included Richard Buckley as the lead archaeologist and project manager, who subsequently was responsible for acquiring the exhumation licences that led to the university claiming legal custodianship of Richard III's remains until their reburial, as well as having a decisive say in the outcome of the debates that followed their discovery. Working with Richard Buckley's team were other university researchers such as Dr. Jo Appleby, a lecturer in bioarchaeology who undertook the osteological analysis of Richard III, and Dr. Turi King, the geneticist who led the Richard III identification project as well as the sequencing of his genome.

## **The Plantagenet Alliance**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2013, a new group appeared (distinct from the Richard III Society), named the Plantagenet Alliance, which called for Richard III's remains to be reinterred not at Leicester Cathedral, but at York Minster. The Plantagenet Alliance, begun by Stephen Nicolay, sixteen-great-grandson of Richard III's father Richard, Duke of York, sought to bring together the king's collateral descendants in order to collectively demonstrate their opposition to a reinterment at Leicester and, as family members, to give the king's own wishes "a voice". None of its members were directly descended from Richard III, whose only legitimate son Edward of Middleham predeceased him, and whose illegitimate offspring, John of Gloucester and Katherine, died childless. Instead, they represent collateral or non-direct descendants who can trace their ancestry back to Richard's siblings and ultimately his father. The Plantagenet Alliance's membership was said to number fifteen individuals in March 2013, and approximately forty in December of the same year.