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Karen Kirk,
Time Team,
49 Goldhawk Road,
London W12 8QP
Email: karenkirk@timeteam.net

Dear Karen,

Re. Richard III – Leicester Greyfriars – mitochondrial DNA ✓

Further to our telephone conversation yesterday afternoon, here is an outline of the genealogical / DNA work I am already involved in, together with the possible scope for a *Time Team* exploration of the Greyfriars site in Leicester to

- clarify the lay-out of the conventual buildings (at present the layout is totally unknown) and
- possibly find and identify the remains of Richard III (with the help of the mtDNA sequence I have discovered).

My genealogical research is part of attempting to identify the remains of Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy (sister of Edward IV and Richard III), using DNA from a living relative in an all-female line of descent. This project, which is hopefully now nearing a conclusion, has figured in several publications and radio reports, but the attached article [YFTSept05] commissioned by *Your Family Tree* magazine represents the most complete publication of the work to date. I am now awaiting results from Professor Cassiman of the University of Louvain in Belgium, who is seeking to match the living DNA sample with DNA from the various possible 'Margaret' bones. (Professor Cassiman is well-known in this field, having recently proved that the little boy who died in the Temple Prison in Paris in 1795 WAS indeed Louis XVII, using DNA from the child's body and from Queen Marie-Antoinette's hair).

The reason why I thought that this story might be of interest and relevance to *Time Team* is because the DNA from the living donor whom I have identified, and which has now been sequenced, is the mitochondrial DNA not only of Margaret of York, but also of all her brothers and sisters, including Richard III. In his Chanel 4 programme on Richard III and the royal line of descent, Tony Robinson expressed an interest in the DNA of the Australian descendants of Richard's brother, George, Duke of Clarence, but in fact nothing could have been done using this modern DNA, since the Australian descendants of the house of York have a mixed male and female line of descent. On the other hand the living DNA sequence from my donor could be used to help to identify the remains of Richard III – if they could be found.

That is where a *Time Team* investigation might come in. Richard III was buried at the Franciscan (Grey Friars) Priory in Leicester. Despite seventeenth century horror stories that his body was dug up at the dissolution of the monastery, and thrown into the River Soar, there is actually no evidence that Richard was ever moved from his Greyfriars tomb, and there is good reason to suppose that he still lies buried there. You might like to look at

http://bbc.net.uk/legacies/myths_legends/england/leicester/

this is an article for the BBC *Legacies* website which they commissioned from me a year or so ago, which deals in more detail with the evidence relating to the fate of Richard III's body. The Leicester Greyfriars site is well-known, but has never been excavated, and parts of it now lie beneath later buildings, some of which are listed. I attach a **plan** showing the general location of the Greyfriars site. (Home in on the red dot.)

The important feature of this site is that two central areas are currently occupied by car parks. It would, in theory, be comparatively easy to try some trial excavation there, if the owners

Church to
north or south?
Q

ok (privately
asked)

would give permission. One of the car parks contains remains of a wall which may be part of the priory cloister. This car park is owned, I believe, by Leicester City Council. The other car park, which, it has been suggested, may occupy the site of the priory church where Richard III was buried, belongs, I believe to Social Services. Since very little is known about the lay-out of the pre-dissolution priory, ANYTHING *Time Team* was able to find out would be very valuable for the overall reconstruction of the priory and hence for pinpointing the most likely part of the site in which Richard III lies buried. And of course, if any test pits should happen to come up with human remains, there is now the DNA sequence from my living donor with which to compare them. It would be wonderful if *Time Team* could discover the long lost body of Richard III. Apart from the intrinsic interest in finding royal remains, it would offer the chance of settling once and for all such vexed questions as the legends of Richard's humped back and withered arm!

I do hope that this is an idea which might appeal to you for a future *Time Team* investigation. Meanwhile, a contact in Leicester is researching the layout, size and ownership of the car parks for me in greater detail, and I hope to be able to provide you with more information in due course.

} update
J ✓

Yours sincerely,

John Ashdown-Hill

cloister wall -