

# The Hulton Abbey Skeletal Digitisation Project.

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# Overview of talk

- Historical background
- Development of project idea
- Development of resources
- Unique findings
- Demonstration of resource

## Historical background

- Hulton Abbey was a minor Cistercian monastery in North Staffordshire
- Founded as Cistercian monastery in 1219
- Founded by Henry de Audley, vassal of Ranulph, Earl of Chester
- Grant 'for the souls of Ranulph, Henry, Henry's predecessors and successors, and all the faithful departed' (British History Online. Date accessed: 09 June 2008)
- Foundation charter granted in 1223
- Poorly endowed monastery

## Development of project idea

- Skeletons being stored at Reading University
- Used by students at Staffordshire on forensics course
- Skeletons transported between sites
- Will eventually become too damaged for use
- Digitisation of resource a possibility
- Cross disciplinary use a real advantage
- Approached existing contacts at Physical Sciences Centre for funding

## Overview of project

- Many skeletons held at Reading
- Plan to digitise a number of them
- Resource will allow comparisons between skeletons
- Final resource will be freely available to UK HE
- Time and resources actually limited digitisation to one skeleton, but of particular interest...
- Project just about completed

## Development of resources

- Support from photography lecturer (Roger Brown) and entertainment lecturer (Paul Lucking)
- Input from Mary Lewis at Reading University
- Visited Mary during summer to undertake digitisation work – took 100s of photographs and some videos
- Developed good procedures for taking digital images
- Paul Lucking developed resource using Adobe Director, using INM (Integration New Media) plugins

## Unique findings

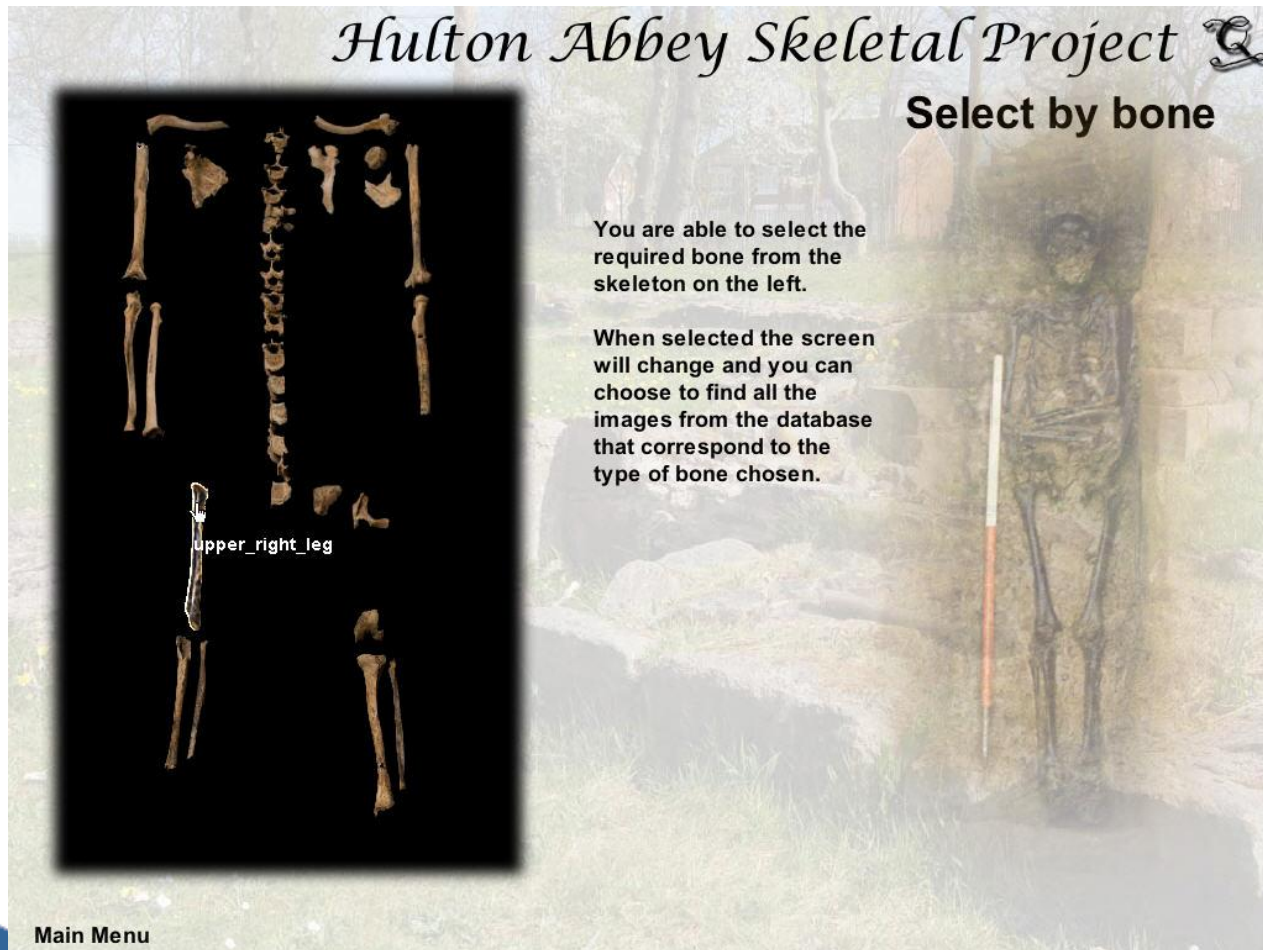
- Only one skeleton digitised due to time issues
- Skeleton showed signs of unusual injury or torture
- Only osteo-archaeological evidence of particular execution style in England
- Hung, drawn and quartered
- Historical evidence to suggest victim was connected to royalty
- Victim named as Hugh Despencer
- Alleged lover of King Edward II

# Image of Disembowelment

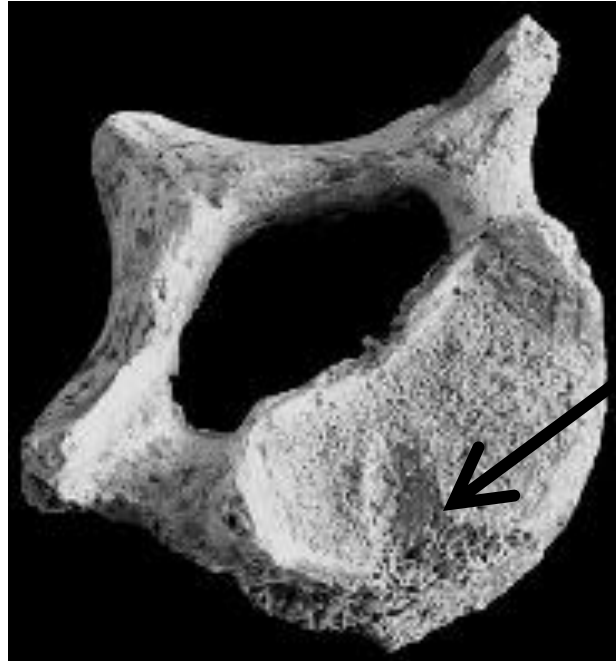


*Bibliothèque nationale de France*

# Screenshot of software



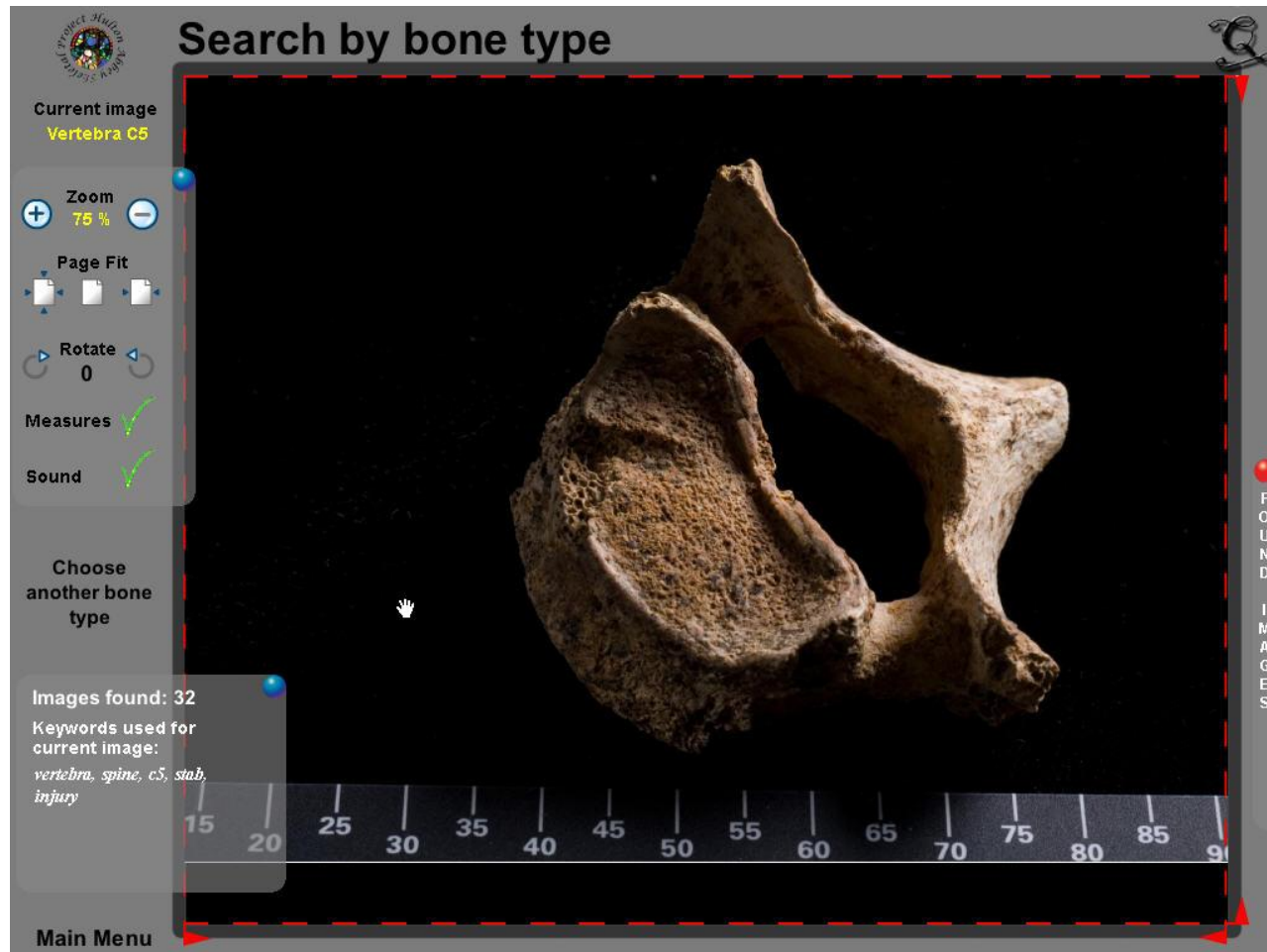
## Screenshot of vertebra



Damage from  
knife wound



# Screenshot of vertebra in software



# Zoomed image of vertebra

**Search by bone type**

Current image  
**Vertebra C5**

Zoom  
+ 400 % -

Page Fit

Rotate  
0

Measures ✓

Sound ✓

Choose another bone type

Images found: 32  
Keywords used for current image:  
*vertebra, spine, c5, stab, injury*

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FOUND IMAGES

## References

- Book: Klemperer, W. D. (2004). Excavations at Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire 1987-1994 / William D. Klemperer and Noel Boothroyd. London :, Society for Medieval Archaeology.
- Lewis, M. E. (2008). "A traitor's death? The identity of a drawn, hanged and quartered man from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire." Antiquity **82(315): 113-124.**
- British History Online:  
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=37849>

# Acknowledgements

- John Cassella (Staffordshire University)
- Mary Lewis (Reading University)
- Roger Brown (Staffordshire University)
- Paul Lucking (Staffordshire University)