

ENGLAND'S VAMPIRES

This film brings together English Medieval texts, new archaeological evidence and a shocking interview from a modern day Romanian vampire hunter to show that Dracula's roots lie not in fiction but in fact.

Short Para 82 words

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PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS 400 WORDS

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In 2004 Professor John Blair from Oxford University, England made the connection between folktales from Medieval manuscripts describing rituals to dispatch the walking dead and archaeological finds of disturbed Anglo Saxon graves. There was a striking similarity between the violent actions performed on the skeletons in the grave and what was described by the texts. Could this be proof that the folktales were real? Then Professor Blair came across a case of a vampire slaying in modern Romania. The ritual that the vampire slayer described was almost word for word as that described by the medieval text. The three pieces of evidence stack up to suggest that in Medieval England there was indeed a belief in Vampires.

The documentary goes on to explore why this belief in vampires may have existed and how anyone could be motivated to perform such gruesome acts on a corpse.

That motivation was fear. This was a time where much of life was inexplicable and one of the most terrifying experiences was disease – no one knew how it was spread and where it might strike. The vampire stories often talk about disease or illness hitting a community and the belief a vampire was causing it.

Science also helps us to understand why people in both the Medieval texts and in modern day Romania were so convinced that vampires existed – both describe how when they dug up the corpse they find its belly bloated and what appears to be blood around the mouth. Charting the decomposition of a pig shows that this is a natural process of post mortem decay. To the medieval mindset and in pockets of present day Romania this was proof that what they believed was true.

The vampire of popular culture exists to thrill and entertain – a titlating metaphor for transgression - whilst the vampires from history were a response to a very real fear. How connected then is the true story of the vampire to our modern day Draculas? Just as Dracula has no reflection, then so across the ages we have made him exactly what WE want him to be.