

A man in a hooded cloak and boots is kneeling in a graveyard at night. He is holding a flaming torch that illuminates the scene. The background shows tombstones and dense foliage. The title 'VAMPIRE LEGEND' is overlaid in large, red, brush-stroke font.

VAMPIRE LEGEND

1 x 60 HD



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Bram Stoker penned his gothic horror *Dracula* in 1887 and popularized the modern vampire myth—but evidence now points to those myths originating in England, not Eastern Europe as many believe. Unexplained burials, identified as ‘deviant’ and ‘cursed’ by their contemporaries, were detailed in Stoker’s original research notes and drafts, discovered by his great-grandson in the family archive.

Oxford professor John Blair follows clues in medieval burials in England that may offer insight into physiological reasons for the formation of the myths. The cases hint at a deeply-held belief that the dead could rise and bring fear to the living...a belief that predates the Eastern European lore and is forcing a reexamination of the modern vampire legend.

Vampire Legend also explores 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 titillating metaphor for transgression—while 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.

CREDITS

Executive Producers: Harry Marshall and Owen Gay

Director: Kate Thomas-Couth

Photo: Icon Films Ltd.

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