

DNA evidence suggests Black Plague not a rodent problem

Archaeologists and forensic scientists who have examined 25 skeletons unearthed in the Clerkenwell area of London a year ago believe they have uncovered the truth about the nature of the Black Death that ravaged Britain and Europe in the mid-14th century.

The Black Death arrived in Britain from central Asia in the autumn of 1348 and by late spring the following year it had killed six out of every 10 people in London. By extracting the DNA of the disease bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*, from the largest teeth in some of the skulls retrieved from the square, the scientists were able to compare the strain of bubonic plague preserved there with that which was recently responsible for killing 60 people in Madagascar. To their surprise, the 14th-century strain, the cause of the most lethal catastrophe in recorded history, was no more virulent than today's disease. The DNA codes were an almost perfect match.

Read the full, original story: [Black death was not spread by rat fleas, say researchers](#)