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D. Dinis and his tomb

The Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage (DGPC) has announced a study of the tomb of one of Portugal's greatest kings, D. Dinis (1261–1279–1325).



D Dinis sword

He has been dubbed The Farmer King, The Poet King, The Father of the Nation and, during his lifetime, he was widely respected in Europe as a wise and just lawgiver.

In his will, D. Dinis wrote: "I command that my body should be interred at my Mosteiro de São Dinis de Odivelas, between the choir and the high altar, in the tomb which I have ordered. I founded and endowed this convent."

Odivelas itself lies about 10km directly north of Lisbon city centre. The tomb has been opened at least once before, the last time probably accidentally in 1938. As it was restored in 1939, the restorers left a current newspaper together with other rubbish within the tomb.



D Dinis

Photo: Mosteiro de Odivelas

In fact, the modern study has been proceeding since 2017, and has recently featured in a television programme by RTP, starring the masked technicians of both DGPC and the Municipality of Odivelas. Those items which had been introduced into the tomb have been removed, so that the skeleton and other medieval artifacts might be studied in situ. Analyses have included a DNA test; accurate dating; a facial reconstruction; toxicology; and the 14th century diet.

The sword of D. Dinis remains in good condition, even though it has lost its tip. Some of the colour of other metallic decorations on the pommel and handguard of the sword are still in evidence. The DGCP decided that all of the artifacts from the tomb should be held in an accessible collection.



D Dinis sword

Photo: Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

The study of the tomb and of the remains of D. Dinis may help to answer questions concerning his physical characteristics. He died at age 63, a good age for those days; he was 1.65m tall; he was physically fit all his life, riding to the hunt even in his 60s; and he died with a full set of teeth.

Unusually for a Portuguese monarch, D. Dinis had red hair. Opinion is divided whether his red hair was inherited from Henry II of England, or perhaps from the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick, known as Barbarossa, or Barba Ruiva in Portuguese.



D Dinis Tomb

Dinis was also a great one for the ladies, and almost certainly ordered that the Convent of Odivelas, the scene of many of his amatory conquests, should also be the site of his burial.

Much more information on the Convent of Odivelas is available here (in Portuguese):

<https://www.mosteirodeodivelas.org/>

Read more from [Peter Booker](#) about [Portugal and the Coronation of King Charles III](#) or [Dona Maria Amélia, the last Queen Consort of Portugal](#).

Peter Booker

Peter Booker co-founded with his wife Lynne the Algarve History Association.

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