## **IRON-AGE BODIES**



- 0. IRON-AGE BODIES Story Preface
- 1. INCA MUMMIES
- 2. BODIES TELL TALES
- 3. PEAT BOG MUMMIES
- 4. IRON-AGE BODIES
- 5. FROZEN MUMMIES
- 6. FRANKLIN EXPEDITION MUMMIES
- 7. EGYPTIAN MUMMIES
- 8. KING TUT (AND DOWNTON ABBEY)



Tollund Man, as he appeared in the peat bog at the time he was discovered on May 6, 1950. Image online, courtesy Silkeborg Public Library.

On the 6th of May, 1950, two Danish brothers needed to cut peat to fuel their tile stove and kitchen range. From the <u>small village of Tollund</u>, Viggo and Emil Højgård - and Viggo's wife Grethe - were about to do what people have done at the same bog <u>for thousands of years</u> (including <u>during the Iron Age</u>). This day, however, they would make an amazing discovery.

Resting in the Bjældskovdal peat bog, located about six miles (ten km) west of Silkeborg, Denmark, the body of an <u>Iron-Age</u> man - follow these links to view animated examples of <u>Iron-Age architecture</u> and <u>chariots</u> - had been hidden from view since before the time Aristotle was tutoring Alexander the Great in ancient Macedonia.

As Emil, Viggo and Grethe worked in the bog, about six feet (three meters) down, they were startled to find a body so well preserved they believed the man must have been a recent murder victim. The Silkeborg police, however, knew that other bodies had been found in that same bog in 1927 and 1928, so they summoned officials from the Silkeborg Museum to the scene. They confirmed what the police had suspected: The body was a bog mummy.

After carbon-dating, Danish scholars concluded the man (now named "Tollund" in honor of Emil and Viggo's village) had been in the bog at least 2,200 years. He had a cap on his head, a belt on his waist and a braided leather rope around his neck. Tollund Man had met his death by hanging.

He was so well preserved one could see <u>stubble on his face</u>, and forensic experts were even able to determine the specifics of <u>his last meal</u>. He is still a fascinating <u>subject</u> and is <u>maintained</u> in the Iron-Age Exhibit at Silkeborg Museum.

How could a human body be in a peat bog for thousands of years and not decompose?

- It is the nature of a bog to prevent much oxygen (which aids decay) from getting through.
- Bog acid, which does exist in peat bogs (it comes from the sphagnum moss) helps to create an acidic, wet environment which keeps out most flesh-attacking organisms.
- Additionally, sphagnan (the substance produced by the moss) takes calcium out of bones (giving bacteria even less to consume) and effectively tans the skin (helping to preserve both it and other soft tissue).

Other bog mummies have been found throughout Europe. One of the more intriguing is <u>Yde Girl</u>, found in a Dutch bog in 1897.

Archeological techniques at the time were unsophisticated, causing damage to her remains. Thanks to a <u>facial reconstruction</u> by Dr. Richard Neave, from the University of Manchester, we can remember her more for what she was than for what she became.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/IRON-AGE-BODIES-Mummies-Bodies-Talk

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/IRON-AGE-BODIES-Mummies-Bodies-Talk

# Media Stream



**Emil and Viggo Picture** 

Image online, courtesy <u>Silkeborg Public Library</u>.

View this asset at: <a href="http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Emil-and-Viggo-Picture">http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Emil-and-Viggo-Picture</a>



Tollund Man on Display at Silkeborg Museum

Image by Gérard Janot, online via Wikimedia Commons.

License: <u>CC BY-SA 3.0</u> View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tollund-Man-on-Display-at-Silkeborg-Museum



**Tollund Man Preserved** 

Image, described above, online courtesy Google Books.

View this asset at: <a href="http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tollund-Man-Preserved">http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tollund-Man-Preserved</a>



Yde Girl Mummy

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <a href="http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Yde-Girl-Mummy1">http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Yde-Girl-Mummy1</a>



#### **IRON-AGE BODIES**

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/IRON-AGE-BODIES



### Bog Bodies Provide Clues to Iron-Age People

Clip from <u>National Geographic</u> - *Explore: Mystery of the Mummy Murders.* Copyright, National Geographic, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes. Online via NatGeo's Channel at YouTube. Standard YouTube License applies. View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bog-Bodies-Provide-Clues-to-Iron-Age-People



#### Mummies - Tollund Man

From FirstscienceTV, placed online at FirstScienceTV channel at YouTube. View this asset at: <a href="http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mummies-Tollund-Man">http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mummies-Tollund-Man</a>