

Cheddar Man



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Name

Class



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Introduction

In 1903, a skeleton was discovered in Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset, and named Cheddar Man. Cheddar Man is the oldest almost-complete skeleton of a modern human ever found in Britain, giving him the nickname of 'The first Brit'.

Scientists and researchers have studied different pieces of evidence to find out more about him. Study the evidence in this pack and discover what it tells us about people in ancient Britain.



Evidence 1

Place of discovery



Cheddar Gorge



Gough's Cave

Cheddar Gorge is three miles long and 400 feet deep with good water supplies. There are caves in Cheddar Gorge that were carved out by running water, over one million years ago. Remains of animal and human bones have been found in the caves, alongside rock art and tools, which were of a similar age to Cheddar Man. Cheddar Man's body was found alone, curled up in Gough's Cave.

1. What does the evidence tell you about how people like Cheddar Man may have lived in Cheddar Gorge? Tick all that apply.

lived in the caves

☐

used tools

☐

only ate plants

☐

used the water for drinking and washing

☐

created cave art

☐

buried bodies in caves

☐

2. Why do you think Cheddar Man's remains were found alone and curled up in a cave?



Evidence 2

Skeleton



Scientists used a technique called radiocarbon dating to find out the age of Cheddar Man's skeleton. The test results showed that Cheddar Man's remains were about 10,000 years old. Scientists looked at the size and shape of the bones and discovered that Cheddar Man was an adult man, about 20 years old and 168cm tall.

Scientists also examined his skull and found a hole above his right eye socket. There were some fractures on his skull, which may have caused his death. They found that his teeth were in good condition.

1. Tick the time period when Cheddar Man would have lived:

Palaeolithic: c750,000–c10,000 BC

☐

Mesolithic: c10,000–c4000 BC

☐

Neolithic: c4000–c2500 BC

☐

2. What could have caused the hole above his right eye socket?

bone disease

☐

injury

☐

damage to the skeleton from excavation

☐

3. Which description best describes Cheddar Man?

An old, frail man with rotting teeth.

☐

A young, healthy man who may have died from injuries.

☐

A tall, young boy with healthy teeth.

☐

Evidence 3

Genetic analysis

Genetic analysis involves examining DNA. DNA is a material that is found in all living things. Every person’s DNA is different, like a unique code. A person’s DNA can tell us about their hair colour, eye colour and information about diseases.

Scientists found some of Cheddar Man’s DNA inside a small bone at the base of his skull and used it to work out what he might have looked like.

Cheddar Man would have had dark skin and dark hair that would have been curly or wavy. His eyes were pale blue or green. This combination of dark skin, dark hair and pale eyes was also found in some other Stone Age people whose remains have been found in Spain, Hungary and Luxembourg.

- 1. The dark colour of Cheddar Man’s skin, and of the people found in Spain, Hungary and Luxembourg, is usually associated with people from Africa. What does this evidence tell us about Cheddar Man’s ancestors?



Evidence 4

Facial reconstruction



Two Dutch artists put the information from Cheddar Man’s DNA together with measurements of his skull and made a reconstruction of his head.

1. Why do you think the artists created this reconstruction?

2. What do you think that archaeologists learned from this reconstruction?

Conclusion

Use the knowledge that you have gained from this evidence to answer these questions.

1. Draw a line to match the types of evidence with the information that they provide.

Type of evidence	Information that it provides
radiocarbon dating ●	● to see what the person would have looked like
bone analysis ●	● to find out information about the skin, hair and eye colour
genetic analysis ●	● to find how old the skeleton was
reconstruction ●	● to find out the sex and age of the person

2. What **doesn't** this collection of evidence tell us about Cheddar Man?
Tick all that apply.

his beliefs	☐	his skin colour	☐
his height	☐	who his family were	☐
what he ate	☐	why he was in the cave	☐
how he died	☐	when he lived	☐

3. What does the information gained from Cheddar Man tell us about the people who lived in ancient Britain 10,000 years ago?

