

Study: Neolithic life wasn't much fun

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U.K. researchers say they've determined Neolithic, or New Stone Age, people were more violent than has been believed.

Rick Schulting of Queen's University-Belfast and Michael Wysocki from the University of Central Lancashire studied skulls from that era -- 4000 B.C. to 3200 B.C. -- and found early Neolithic Britons had a one in 20 chance of suffering a skull fracture at the hands of someone else, the BBC reported Thursday.

Blunt instruments, such as clubs, are believed to have been responsible for most of the trauma, they said.

While previous studies have identified human-induced injuries in New Stone Age people, Schulting and Wysocki say their study is the first to provide some idea of the overall frequency of such trauma.

"We generally think of Neolithic people as living peaceful lives ... busy looking after cereal crops and rearing livestock," Wysocki told BBC News. "But it was a much more violent society."

The research originally appeared in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society, while details were presented recently during a meeting of the Society for American Archaeology and reported in New Scientist magazine.

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