

'Little foot' skeleton is dated

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British scientists have dated an ape-man skeleton at 2.2 million years old, suggesting it might not be part of the ancestral tree leading to Homo sapiens.

University of Liverpool and University of Leeds researchers analyzed the skeleton, which was found in 1997 in a South African cave.

Known as "Little Foot," it was believed to be between 2 million and 4 million years old but the team has now dated it precisely to 2.2 million years old.

The finding suggests the ape-like creature might not be the immediate ancestor of human beings as some experts thought. That is because the team found "Little Foot" lived after the arrival of the stone tool makers, Homo habilis, raising the possibility that the family was more of a side branch of the human evolutionary tree.

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