

# Decapitated skeletons were Vikings: scientists

March 12 2010

---



The Weymouth burial pit of skulls and bones. Dozens of decapitated skeletons which were uncovered during an excavation in Dorset were those of 1,000-year-old Vikings, scientist said.

Dozens of decapitated skeletons have been unearthed in southern England believed to be those of 1,000-year-old Vikings, scientists said Friday.

The macabre discovery in June of a neatly stacked pile of skulls next to a mass of male bones in a burial pit near Weymouth, on the southern English coast, sparked speculation about who the victims were.

Scientists from NERC Isotope Geosciences Laboratory analysed food and drink [isotopes](#) from the teeth of 10 of the 51 skulls and found it highly likely that the unfortunate men came from [Scandinavia](#).

It is believed that the raiding Vikings were slaughtered in public by local Anglo-Saxons between AD 910 and AD 1030.

"The isotope data we obtained from the burial pit teeth strongly indicate that the men executed on the Ridgeway originated from a variety of places within the Scandinavian countries," said NERC scientist Jane Evans.

"These results are fantastic. This is the best example we have ever seen of a group of individuals that clearly have their origins outside Britain," she added.

Oxford Archaeology members have been painstakingly uncovered the pit, which was found during investigative excavation work for an £87 million relief road.

"The find of the burial pit on Ridgeway was remarkable and got everyone working on site really excited," Oxford [Archaeology](#) project manager David Score said.

"To find out that the young men executed were [Vikings](#) is a thrilling development," he added.

"Any mass grave is a relatively rare find, but to find one on this scale, from this period of history, is extremely unusual and presents an incredible opportunity."

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: Decapitated skeletons were Vikings: scientists (2010, March 12) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-decapitated-skeletons-vikings-scientists.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.