

Vikings in English grave had filed teeth

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An illustration of Vikings on a boat. (Image via Wikipedia)

(PhysOrg.com) -- In what is believed to be a gravesite filled with thousand year old Viking bodies along with separated heads, in southern Britain, a new artifact has been discovered; one of the slain Vikings had his two front teeth filed horizontally. Though it's not known exactly why, whether to instill fear in victims, to impress comrades or even to show rank, the filing of the teeth, likely a painful process, is a unique find, in that it is something that is rarely seen in early European history.

The gravesite, or burial pit, found in Weymouth, Dorset, on the southern coast of England two years ago, was filled with the bodies of 54 headless skeletons along with 51 skulls, all of whom are believed to be the remains of marauding [Vikings](#) from northern Europe during the time

period 970 to 1025, which would make it just before the infamous Norman conquest of 1066 that transformed England from a mostly Anglo-Saxon civilization to one dominated by the French Normans.

The bodies in the pit all show evidence of a mass execution, in that most had multiple cut wounds, and of course, the fact that their heads were cut off. Radio carbon dating was used to determine how long the bodies have been there and isotope analysis of [teeth](#) showed that the bodies were all men from the north of Europe, one even from above the Arctic Circle. The late 900s would place the time of death in the same time frame as Viking raids on the Anglo-Saxons that lived there at the time. Also, the fact that Weymouth is a port city on the English Channel would have made it a prime target for such raids.

The teeth filings appeared to be the work of a skilled craftsman, according to Oxford Archaeology project manager David Score, who spoke with the BBC about the find. He suggested the filings were likely made to frighten opponents, though in this case, it appears the ploy failed, as he and his party wound up in the pit with their heads sliced off. The pit was discovered in 2009 by a road crew, and a team of archeologists has been studying the remains since that time. The scientists are quick to point out that research is still ongoing, and while the evidence is strong that the remains are those of early Vikings, it still hasn't been proven definitively, thus far. Complicating the case is the fact that no clothing, buttons or any other artifacts were found in the pit, which means the victims were stripped naked before their execution.

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