

French introduced farming to Britain: study

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Simon Fraser University archeologists Mark Collard and Kevan Edinborough and colleagues from University College London have uncovered evidence that French farmers introduced agriculture to Britain some 60 centuries ago.

The researchers note that without the civilizing influence of their Gallic neighbours, the Brits might have continued running around with spears for hundreds of years more instead of cultivating plants and animals.

Their work, published in the most recent *Journal of Archeological Science*, contradicts previous theories that indigenous British hunter-gatherers developed farming independently.

The archeologists studied carbon-14 dates for bones, wood and grains from about 6,000 years ago at locations throughout Great Britain and determined that the population of the island more than quadrupled in just 400 years.

“We also found evidence that this increase occurred first in southern [England](#) and shortly afterwards in central Scotland,” says Collard, an associate professor and Canada Research Chair in human evolutionary studies.

“These findings are best explained by groups of [farmers](#) from the Continent independently colonizing England and Scotland,” most likely from Brittany in northwest France.

“The case for believing that the Neolithic transition in Britain was mediated by a large influx of farmers from continental Europe is compelling,” the authors conclude.

“The migrants’ arrival resulted in sudden and dramatic economic, demographic and social change that seems to have led to a ‘boom-to-bust’ cycle lasting 600-700 years, with the initial rapid rise in population followed by an equally rapid decline, heralding the very different cultural patterns of the later Neolithic (period).”

More information: [Radiocarbon](#) evidence indicates that migrants introduced farming to Britain, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, [doi:10.1016/j.jas.2009.11.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2009.11.016)

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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