

Gristhorpe Man

historical period

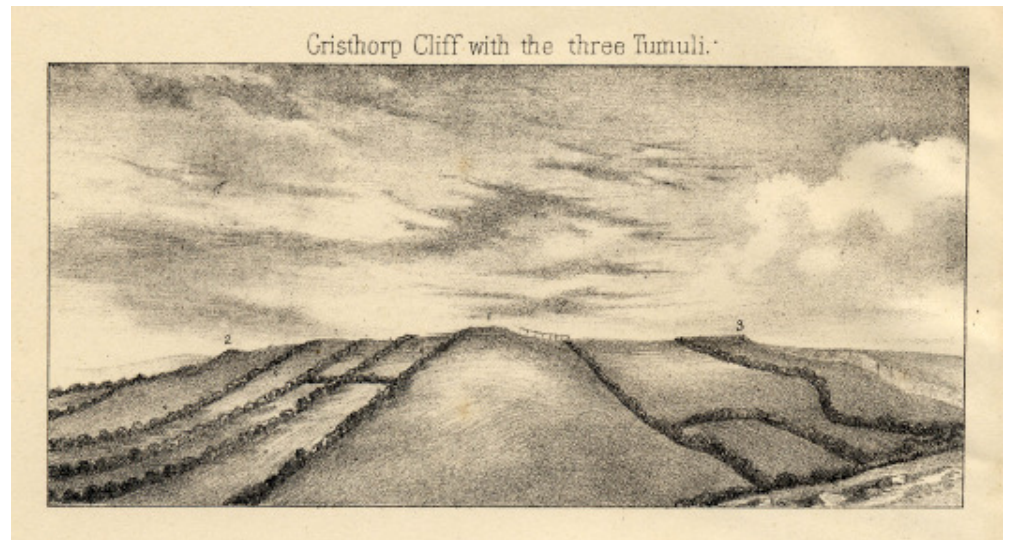


(above) Stonehenge, a Bronze Age construction (below) Gristhorpe Tumulus

The Bronze Age refers to the period of history from c.2300—700 BC, when metal was first widely used in Britain, possibly as a result of the increase in contact with Europe. However, various types of stone, particularly flint, remained important.

Bronze Age society appears to have been divided into chiefdoms based around a largely agricultural economy.

The Bronze Age saw the introduction of cremation of the dead and burials in round barrows. The later and best known phases of construction at Stonehenge also date from this period.

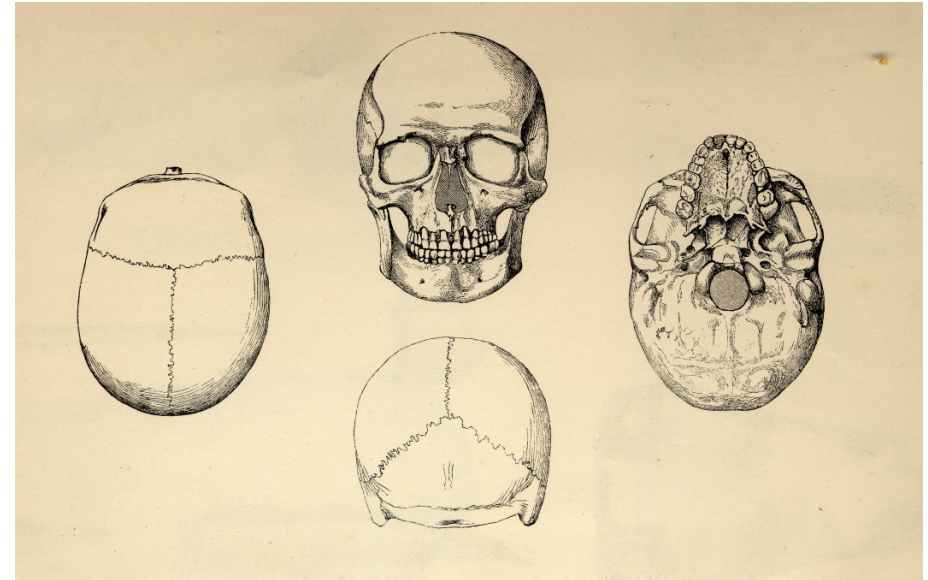


the object

The remains of Gristhorpe Man were found buried in a tree trunk in an ancient burial ground near Scarborough in the 19th century. The tumulus was discovered on land owned by William Beswick, but it was WC Williamson, son of the first keeper of the Rotunda, who described the findings aged just 17.

Recent findings by Bradford University suggest that the man was a high status individual. Judging by his height of 6 feet, it is likely he was a tribal chieftain. Growing to such a height may have been because of a relatively good diet; an indication of social standing. He also boasts a full set of teeth which are in remarkable condition.

Other clues to his status come from the grave goods he was buried with. His body was wrapped in a skin cloak, of which only fragments survive. There was a bronze dagger, flint tools, hair from the hide and a wicker basket containing food residue. It is thought the individual was in his sixties, a great age in the Bronze Age, and seems to have died from natural causes. There were many healed fractures, consistent with the life of a warrior.



(above) illustrations from William Williamson's original description of Gristhorpe Man
(below) Gristhorpe Man



things to ask ..

Why would Gristhorpe Man have been buried with possessions such as a dagger and food (these are known as grave goods)? What was the significance of a tree trunk burial?

What do you think of Gristhorpe Man's reconstructed face?

Facial reconstruction is used a lot in science? How is it useful?

Suggest how the remains of Gristhorpe Man might have been so well preserved. Why is his skeleton black?

Try and research other important burial discoveries in the UK



(above left) Facial reconstruction of Gristhorpe Man by Dr Alan Ogden, 2010
(above right) portrait of Williamson (below) Gristhorpe Man as he used to be displayed

