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Groundbreaking New Exhibition
The Mysterious Bog People
Presents Bodies and Other Archaeological Finds
From the Peat Bogs of Northwestern Europe

First international touring exhibition uses archaeology and forensic science to shed light on the daily lives, religious beliefs and rituals of the ancient people of Northern Europe

LOS ANGELES, January 31, 2006 — The first international touring exhibition to showcase prehistoric objects and well-preserved human bodies deposited in the peat bogs of Northwestern Europe over thousands of years, makes its West Coast debut at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. *The Mysterious Bog People* will be on view at the Museum from March 26, 2006 through September 10, 2006.



Facial reconstruction of Yde Girl.
Photo courtesy of the Drents Museum.

Unprecedented in its size and scope, *The Mysterious Bog People* with over 400 remarkably preserved artifacts and six famous bog “mummies” — examines the lives and rituals of people living near the bogs from the Mesolithic Period almost 12,000 years ago to the end of the 16th century. *Bog People* provides a unique “window” into the past, enabling visitors to come face to face with ancient Europeans while obtaining a deeper understanding of the unique archaeology of the peat bogs.

“The role of a natural history museum is to serve as a laboratory for the exploration of our natural and cultural pasts,” said Jane Pisano, Director and President of the Museum. “*The Mysterious Bog People* not only offers a major selection of European bog findings rarely seen in the United States, but also provides visitors with the tools of modern science and archaeology to further investigate what bog artifacts reveal about the lives of the ancient people who created them.”

The Exhibition

The Mysterious Bog People is divided into three interconnected sections: an introductory bog area; an area examining the daily life of the people living near the bogs and presenting artifacts from these cultures; and a scientific analysis area. An additional interactive area entitled “Bog Science Investigation (BSI)” allows young visitors to investigate hypothetical bog body cases using forensic techniques.

The excavated bog artifacts selected for *Bog People* help to convey the rich history and culture of the people who lived near the bogs. Spanning over 10,000 years in age and wide-ranging in type, the objects on view include: ceremonial objects, bronze swords, agricultural tools, household items, gold coins, jewelry, textiles, leather shoes, and musical instruments. The preservative qualities of the bogs have maintained the good condition of all the artifacts on view.



A Bronze Age necklace consisting of beads, tin, faience and amber. Photo courtesy of the Drents Museum.

Bog artifact highlights in the exhibition include a wheel dating to 2700 B.C. (one of the oldest known from prehistoric Europe); exquisite necklaces and hair ornaments consisting of tin, faience, amber and copper; and unique ceremonial wind instruments, or *lurs*, from the Bronze Age (2000 B.C. - 500 B.C.).



Remains of the 16-year-old “Yde Girl” from the Netherlands. Photo courtesy of the Drents Museum

Most remarkably, the exhibition presents six bog “mummies” preserved by the unique properties of the bog environment. Some of the bodies show evidence of violent death — evidence of millennia-old practices of ritualistic sacrifice that further demonstrates that bogs were important ritual landscapes.

Exhibition visitors can see the remains of a 16-year-old female, dubbed “Yde Girl,” from the Netherlands. Despite the age of the remains, approximately 2,000 years old, one can still see the remains of the woolen cord with which she was strangled.

Other famous bog bodies on view include the Weerdinge couple (dating from the late Iron Age or the Roman Era. 700 B.C. - 500 A.D.) discovered in 1904 in the Boutangerveen bog in the Netherlands, and Germany's most famous bog mummy — “Red Franz” — who lived more than 1,500 years ago. With his hair and beard dyed red by the bog, the Germanic horseman Red Franz is one of the highlights from the collection of the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum in Hanover, Germany.

Scientific analysis is at the core of *The Mysterious Bog People* exhibition. This section of the exhibition explores the unique preservative nature of the bogs, as well as scientific techniques used in examining bog finds. Topics range from how bog bodies are preserved, why they are discolored, and what these findings tell us about human sacrifice.

The technique of reconstruction using modern forensic science is also presented in the scientific analysis area. Detailed facial reconstructions of Yde Girl and Red Franz are on view. Using clay and wax, the tissues and skin were modeled on copies of the preserved skulls. Other facial features such as eyes and hair were added, offering exhibition visitors a clear idea of the appearance of both individuals.

Bog Science Investigation (BSI) is an interactive extension of *The Mysterious Bog People* exhibition. It allows visitors to play a part in interpreting the didactic information presented in the scientific analysis area. Visitors can hone their own forensic techniques by participating in an investigation of one of four hypothetical bog body cases. By examining simulated bones, skulls, teeth, tools and valuables, visitors will reach their own conclusions regarding age, gender, diet, status and even the manner of death of these hypothetical bog individuals.

Organization/Catalog

The Mysterious Bog People is a traveling exhibition organized by a consortium of four museums in Europe and Canada: the Drents Museum, Assen, the Netherlands; the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hanover, Germany; the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau-Ottawa; and the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Canada.

A fully-illustrated, color, 132-page exhibition catalog accompanies the exhibition. It can be purchased for \$39.99 at the Natural History Museum gift shop or by phone at (213) 749-3079.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

The Natural History Family of Museums serves more than one million families and visitors in Los Angeles County annually, and is a national leader in research, exhibitions and education. The Museum is L.A.'s second oldest cultural institution, the first to open its doors to the public in 1913, and has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history — more than 33 million objects, some as old as 500 million years.

The Museum is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$6.50 for children. For more information, visit the museum's website at www.nhm.org or call (213) 763-DINO.

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