

Who Killed the Iceman?

New evidence ► suggests that a 5,300-year-old man found frozen in the Alps may have been murdered.

- 1 In 1991, high in the mountains of Europe, hikers made a gruesome¹ discovery: a dead man partly frozen in the ice. However, the police investigation soon became a scientific
- 5 one. Carbon dating² indicated that the man died over 5,300 years ago. Today he is known as the Iceman and has been nicknamed “Ötzi” for the Ötztal Alps where he was found. Kept in perfect condition by the ice,
- 10 he is the oldest complete human body on earth.

Who Was the Iceman?

- Scientists think he was an important person in his society. An examination of his teeth and skull tells us that he was not a young man.
- 15 His arms were not the arms of a laborer. His dagger was made of stone, but he carried a copper³ ax. This implies wealth, and he was probably from the upper classes.⁴ We know he
- 20 could make fire, as a fire-starting kit was discovered with him. Even the food he had eaten enabled scientists to deduce exactly where in Italy he lived.

¹ Something that is **gruesome** is extremely unpleasant and shocking.

² **Carbon dating** is a scientific method of finding out exactly how old an object is.

³ **Copper** is a soft, reddish-brown metal.

⁴ The **upper classes** are the group of people in a society who own the most property and have the highest social level.

▲ The Iceman carried this ax with him on his final journey.

Clues to an Ancient Murder

25 But why did the Iceman die in such a high and icy place?
There have been many theories. Some said he was a lost
shepherd.⁵ Others thought he was killed in a religious
ceremony. Over the years since he was found, **tiny** scientific
discoveries have led to great changes in our understanding
30 of the story of the Iceman. The newest scientific information
indicates that he was **cruelly** murdered. “Even five years ago,
the story was that he fled⁶ up there and walked around in the
snow and probably died of exposure,⁷” said Klaus Oegg, a
scientist at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. “Now it’s
35 all changed. It’s more like a . . . crime scene.”

A Bloody Discovery

In June 2001, an x-ray examination of the body showed a
small dark shape **beneath** the Iceman’s left shoulder. It was
the stone head of an arrow. It had caused a deadly injury that
40 probably killed him very quickly. In 2003, an Australian
scientist discovered the blood of four different people on the
clothes of the Iceman. Did a bloody fight take place before his
murder? Injuries on his hand and head indicate that this may
be true. One theory, put forward by archeologist Walter
45 Leitner, says that the Iceman’s murder was the end of a
fight for power among his people. However, this idea is
certainly **debatable**.

Today, the research continues, proving some theories false while
opening the door to others. Through scientific research, this
oldest member of our human family continues to tell us about
his life and the time in which he lived.

⁵ A **shepherd** is a person, usually a man, whose job is to take care of sheep.

⁶ To **flee** means to escape.

⁷ **Exposure** is the harmful effect on your body from very cold weather.



▲ Using detailed scans, scientists are able to recreate what the Iceman may have looked like.

◀ The Iceman's body was found at a pass in the Ötztal Alps, between Austria and Italy. He had started his journey 12 miles to the south, in the Val Venosta. Why he was traveling so high in the mountains is still a mystery.