The Mummy from the Bog

Tollund, Denmark

Across northern Europe, damp areas called peat bogs have held the remains of people who died several thousand years ago. The bogs are perfect mummies' lairs. Although rotting plants formed them, these swampy places helped stop the corpses from rotting.

The most famous bog mummy of all is Denmark’s Tollund Man, who was named for the village near where he was found. In 1950, some local men were digging for peat, which poor people sometimes burn as heating fuel. Cutting into the peat bog, they found the mummy, which is thought to be about 2,400 years old.
Peat bogs have several conditions that help create natural mummies. Their water is high in acid, which can kill **microbes** that eat dead flesh. The bogs also lack oxygen, something else the microbes need to survive. In addition, a **moss** called sphagnum (SFAG-nuhm) is found in many bogs. It contains a substance that, like acid, kills certain microbes.

Tollund Man is thought by experts to have the best-preserved head of any ancient mummy. Also preserved is the rope around his neck that was used to hang him. The people who placed the dead body in the bog never knew that the peat would create a mummy that would shock people thousands of years later.

---

**Experts think the ancient people of northern Europe sometimes hanged people as *sacrifices* to the gods they worshipped. Tollund Man and other bog mummies were most likely such sacrifices.**