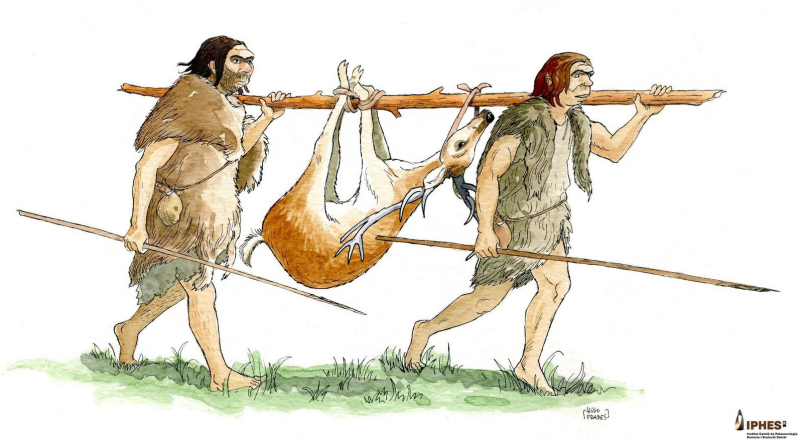
WHAT CAN NEANDERTHAL WOODEN TOOLS TELL US ABOUT THEIR LIVES?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Archaeologists studying a rock shelter in Spain have found hundreds of ancient wooden objects linked to Neanderthals. The site, called Abric Romaní, was used between about 40,000 and 62,000 years ago. Wood normally rots away, so most evidence about Neanderthals comes from stone tools. At this site, minerals and repeated flooding helped preserve pieces of wood and the shapes left behind when wooden objects decayed. Researchers found nearly 600 wooden remains or impressions. Thirteen had clearly been shaped by people. They include pointed sticks that may have been weapons, bark trays, poles and a knife-shaped object that may have been a club. The discovery suggests that Neanderthals used wood for many different parts of daily life. It adds to growing evidence that they were skilled, intelligent people whose behaviour was more complicated than older stereotypes suggested.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

For a long time, people imagined Neanderthals as simple and less capable than modern humans. These wooden objects tell a different story. They show planning, skill and an ability to use different materials for different jobs. The discovery also reminds us that the past can look different simply because some materials survive better than others.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“How might wooden tools change what we think about Neanderthals?”

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/an-unprecedented-trove-of-ancient-wooden-tools-uncovered-at-a-rock-shelter-in-spain-show-neanderthals-were-skill