

THE HOBBIT FILE

From John Mackay and Diane Eager

© Creation Research October 2005

www.creationresearch.net or info@creationresearch.net

WHO WERE THE FOSSIL PYGMY PEOPLE, as experts such as Dr Chris Stringer tell the world we have an amazing evolutionary find showing human evolution, and the press goes wild with headings such a "Fossil Hobbits Found". The publishing of 'A new small-bodied hominin from the Late Pleistocene of Flores, Indonesia' by P. Brown, T. Sutikna, M. J. Morwood, R. P. Soejono, Jatmiko, E. Wayhu Saptomo & Rokus Awe due in Nature 431, 1055 - 1061 (28 October 2004) is the cause of all the excitement. They reported 'the discovery, from the Late Pleistocene of Flores, Indonesia, of an adult hominin with stature and endocranial volume approximating 1 m and 380 cc, respectively - equal to the smallest known australopithecines. The combination of primitive and derived features assigns this hominin to a new species, Homo floresiensis.'

<http://www.nature.com/news/2004/041025/full/041025-3.html> wrote: 'The skeleton found at Liang Bua, a cave on Flores, is of an adult who was only about one metre tall with a brain size of only 380 cubic centimetres. That is less than one-third of the average brain size for a modern human and much smaller even than those of the primitive H. erectus skulls from Dmanisi..... The Flores skull shows a unique mixture of primitive and advanced characteristics. The brain is the same size as a chimpanzee's, the brain-case is low with a prominent brow ridge at the front, and the lower jaw completely lacks a chin. However, as in modern humans, the face is small and delicate. It is tucked under the brain rather than thrust out in front and the teeth are similar in size to our own. The skeleton shows a similarly strange mixture of features. The hip-bone resembles those of the pre-human African species known as australopithecines (meaning 'southern apes'). But the legs are slight, and enough detail has been preserved to show that this creature definitely walked on two legs, as we do. Although it is clear that this person was definitely not a modern human.' 'The small brain size and the hip-bone shape might favour classification as an Australopithecine'.

ED. COM. If you have a brain the size of a chimpanzee and a hip like a chimpanzee, then you're probably not a duck (or a Human either). Australopithecine is Latin for Southern Ape! (Ref. man, Australopithecus, Indonesia)

HOBBIT CONFUSION HAS BEEN reported by a number of our ENEWS readers who have read the numerous opinions from secular scientists and creation groups about bones found on the island of Flores that have been named fossil hobbits by the popular media and "Homo floresiensis" by some scientists. Some commentators, including the Answers in Genesis group, have claimed the fossils represent a small human that suffered a deformity named microcephaly - an abnormally small head. In Creation Research, we suggested the bones were a new(?) species of ape, rather than a deformed human. (See "Who were the fossil pygmy people" Evidence News, 3 Nov 2004, and "Floresiensis fight comes to head" Evidence News 3/05 16 March 2005 - see p.3) To help explain why we took this view, here is more background information.

A major problem in all claims about human ancestors is that the original material is invariably fragmentary and fragile. This means very few scientists, and no lay people get to examine the actual specimens. The H. floresiensis material was described as having the consistency of "wet blotting paper", i.e. very delicate and not able to stand up to much handling. This has been borne out by one of the numerous disputes among secular scientists studying the bones. One group has accused the other of breaking the bones. Therefore, most comments, including Creation Research's, are based on reports and opinions of others, where the best we can do is to consult the writings of those who have seen the original material.

The bones were first described in an article in Nature, vol. 431, p1055, 28 Oct 2004. The authors described their findings as: The brain size is estimated 380cc - the same as chimpanzee, less than half that of "Homo erectus", less than a third of the current human average. The face is smaller and lighter than Australopithecines, but the jaw is V-shaped and chinless, like Australopithecines. The femur (thigh bone) is described as being like that of an Australopithecine, and the tibia (shin bone) like that of a chimpanzee. The hip bone is incomplete, is more flared and has a smaller hip socket than a human hip bone, but would allow upright stance.

There were stone tools found in the cave where the bones were found. There were also other bones from fish, frogs, snakes, tortoises, rodents, bats and Stegodon. Some bones were charred, but the article doesn't say which ones.

Keeping in mind that "Australopithecine" means "southern ape", these findings suggest that H. floresiensis is another kind of southern ape that, like the African Australopithecines, is also extinct. The 'Homo' name is therefore wishful thinking by evolutionists who are doing their best to forcefully expand the Homo definition to include chimps etc. The presence of stone tools and burnt bones in the same cave as H. floresiensis bones does not prove that H.f used the tools or that the tools were used on H.f.

Following numerous claims the H. floresiensis was a microcephalic dwarf, a team of scientists made a further study of the skull and tried to construct a model of its brain. This type of study usually involves coating the inside of the braincase with latex, allowing it to set and removing it. The resulting rubber mould is called an endocast and is used to estimate the size and shape of different parts of the brain and compare it with brains of living humans and animals. Because the H. floresiensis skull (there is only one) was so fragile a computer model was first made of the skull using the same X-ray scanning technique used in medicine to find disease or damage to the skull and brain. The scientists then used the computer model to construct a "virtual endocast," i.e. a computer model based on the first computer model. Although the scientists who did this study claim the endocast was similar in shape to endocasts of "Homo erectus" they admit in the supplementary online data on the "Science" website that the brain to body proportion is that of an ape, i.e. it "has an ape sized body and an ape sized brain".

(This study was originally published in Science Express, an advanced online publication service associated with the journal Science, 3 Mar 2005, and reported to the general public in news@nature, BBC Online News and ScienceNOW, 3 Mar 2005.)

It should also be noted that the estimated size and shape of a "Homo erectus" brain is based on the ONLY specimen with a good enough skull to make an endocast from - a juvenile found in Africa by Richard Leakey. Therefore, any comparisons with the ONE SPECIMEN of H. floresiensis involve assumptions about the adult size and shape of ONE "Homo erectus" brain.

The "microcephalic dwarf" interpretation would only work if there was a double deformity, i.e. dwarfism plus microcephaly - they are not the same. Dwarfs have normal brain sizes even though their bodies are small. This means they have big heads in proportion to their bodies. Microcephalics with brains as small as H. floresiensis are severely mentally retarded and unlikely to survive in primitive conditions, unless they are cared for by normal humans.

This issue is a good opportunity to apply the injunction to "Prove all things, and only keep the things which are good or true", which the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

FLORESIENSIS FIGHT COMES TO A HEAD, according to reports in news@nature, BBC Online News and ScienceNOW, 3 Mar 2005. In October 2004 a skull and some bones found on the Indonesian island of Flores were presented to the world as a new species of human beings, scientifically named "Homo floresiensis" and popularly referred to as "the fossil Hobbit". However, some scientists were not convinced it was a new species and suggested that the bones were from a pygmy human or a human with a deformity of the head named microcephaly. A new study of the skull has fuelled the debate. A team of scientists headed by Dean Falk of Florida State University have made a model of its brain based on a computerised x-ray scan of the skull. They compared their model with those from a normal human, a microcephalic human, a pygmy, Homo erectus and some living and extinct apes. They concluded that the brain was different from all of these, being the size of an ape brain, but having some features similar to Homo erectus. They also noted that overall brain size in relation to the overall body size is similar to Australopithecines (meaning southern apes) – a group of extinct apes that includes "Lucy". The scientists who found the bones claim these findings reinforce their belief that they are from a new type of human that was intelligent enough to make and use the stone tools that were found in the cave near the bones. However, the sceptics remain unconvinced, and want more comparisons with microcephalic skulls.

ED. COM. This study supports the belief that H. floresiensis is a previously undiscovered species – but not of human beings. The original bones found did not include a complete skeleton, so it is not possible to know exactly what it was. However, its head and body proportions seem to most closely resemble the Australopithecines, which are a group of extinct apes. The most famous and well studied Australopithecine is a partial skeleton know as "Lucy". The more this skeleton has been studied the more ape like it is found to be. We suspect the same will happen with H. floresiensis. (Ref. hominids, human evolution, anthropology)

HOBBITS FEATURE AGAIN in an article on H. floresiensis from news@nature which details evidence of nine H. floresiensis individuals found at Liang Bua throughout 2004. 'The two jaw bones found are virtually identical even though their owners lived 3,000 years apart. "You can't have a colony of microcephalics going through time," says Brown. "That's crazy." The new bones also turned up features that are not found in modern humans. In particular, both of the jaws unearthed lack a chin structure; chins are a distinguishing feature of H. sapiens. The researchers also found arm bones from two individuals. "They are spectacularly long," says Brown, adding that the limb proportions are reminiscent not of H. sapiens but of Lucy, the 3.2-million-year-old Australopithecus afarensis found in Ethiopia in 1974'.

ED.COM. Did you note the comment about their arms in today's report? The hobbits never were small humans. At best they were some kind of chimp. There are many theories that disagree with everything the Bible says about man being made in God's image – but the facts only support the differences you would expect that would result from man being created by God, distinct and unrelated to the chimps or any other creature.

MORE "HOBBIT" BONES FOUND, as reported in Nature vol 437, p1012, 13 Oct 2005. Scientists excavating a cave on the Island of Flores in Indonesia have found a jaw bone, two arm bones and a shin bone that belong to "Homo floresiensis". The new jaw is very similar to the first jaw in that it lacks a chin. A chin is a distinctive feature of human beings, including dwarves and people suffering from microcephaly. The scientists note that "Lack of a chin is an ancestral feature of hominids, and is also a characteristic of *H. erectus* and *A. afarensis*." The humerus (upper arm bone) is thicker than a human arm bone and the head of the bone, where it joins to the shoulder is rotated at an angle of 110 degrees to the shaft – described by the scientists as "the norm for *Hylobates* and quadrupedal primates such as *Macaca*". The ulna (forearm bone) is also thicker than a human ulna and has lost the end that joins with the wrist. The tibia (shin bone) is very small and is similar in shape to that of a chimpanzee. The researchers comment: "The relationship between

midshaft circumference (56 mm) and the length of the tibia is in the *Pongo* and *Pan* range of variation, and distinct from *Homo*.” After putting these new bones together with the original find the researchers are now able to estimate the overall body proportion of *H. floresiensis* and compare them with humans and apes. After comparing the length of the arms and legs relative to overall body size they concluded: “Body proportions of LB1 are the same as AL288-1 *A. afarensis*, but differ from all other hominins for which there are reliable data, including *H. erectus*. Abnormal growth seems an unlikely explanation, as growth-hormone-related dwarfism and microcephaly in modern humans result in normal limb and pelvic proportions.” They then considered the brain size in proportion to the body size and concluded: “Although the endocast of LB1 has a gross morphology most similar to *H. erectus*, and distinct from *H. sapiens*, *Australopithecus* and *Pan*, the encephalization quotient and body-weight-to-brain-weight relationships are similar to *A. afarensis* and *Pan*, not *H. erectus*” They also studied the overall robustness, or thickness of the bones in proportion to their lengths and estimated the musculature and overall body mass. They concluded: “For the femur and humerus, midshaft circumference differs from predictions for *H. sapiens* of similar body size, with femur robusticity at the centre of the *Pan paniscus* range of variation, and humerus robusticity midway between the *P. paniscus* and *H. sapiens* ranges. Thus, estimations of musculature and body mass in *H. floresiensis* would be more accurate if based on chimpanzee rather than human models”

ED. COM. Translating the jargonese: *Hylobates* is the scientific name for Gibbon, a tree swinging ape; *Macaca* is the name for Macaques, a type of monkey; *Pongo* is orangutan, another tree swinging ape; and *Pan* is chimpanzee. *Australopithecus afarensis* means “southern ape from Afar” and is the scientific name for “Lucy”. LB1 is the original *Homo floresiensis* fossil. LB is “Liang Bua” the name of the cave where it was found. If we put the information from these new studies together with the previous studies of *Homo floresiensis* we can summarise them as follows: This creature has the brain size of a chimpanzee, a jaw like a “southern ape”, arms like gibbon or a monkey, legs like a chimpanzee or orangutan, body proportions of a “southern ape”, body mass like a chimpanzee and brain-to-body proportions of the chimpanzee or “southern ape”. Is there any alternative to the conclusion that the creature was an ape? Therefore, it is inexcusable that it continues to be classified as “Homo”, by evolutionists and creationists! (Ref. hominid, anthropology, skeleton)