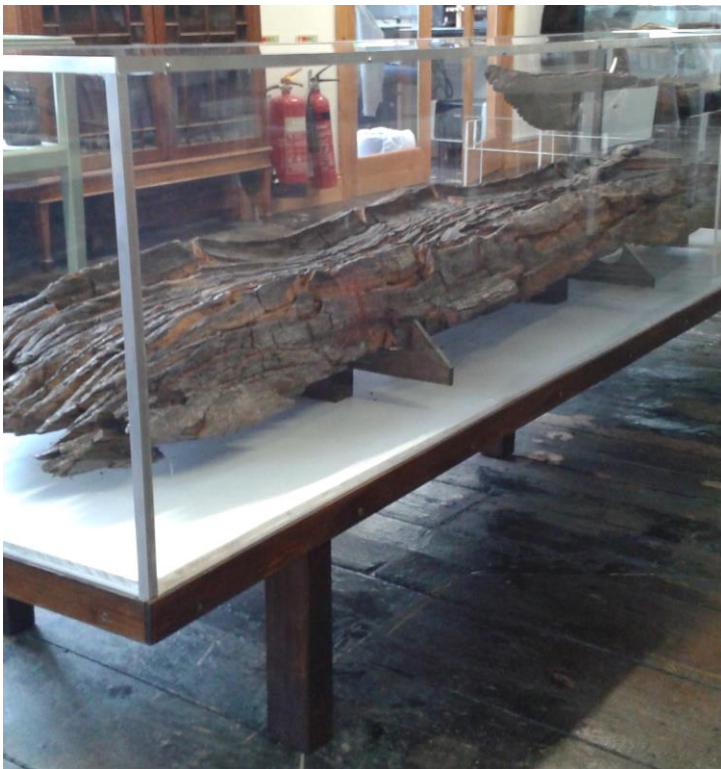


VIKING BOAT DATING PROJECT

KMS1987.817

History

This dugout boat was found in 1959 in the bed of Kentmere tarn while excavations of diatomaceous earth was being carried out for the Cape Asbestos Company and was donated to Kendal Museum by the landowner. After sitting in the store for many years it is now on public display.



Another boat was found four years earlier in 1955 by the same workman. It is believed to date from c.1300-1320. The single oak log which was dug out was over four metres long and it also has a series of 'wash strakes' supported by ribs and two bilge pieces. The boat went for conservation at the National Maritime Museum and is now housed at the Windermere Jetty Museum.

Due to the dating of the other boat it was always supposed that the Kendal Museum boat was earlier as it was found deeper, and is of a more basic type. It has always been called 'The Viking Boat' but had never been scientifically dated.

Dating project

A museum volunteer, Wanda Lewcun, wanted to pursue the dating of the boat as a project. Through Allan Steward, a member of Levens History Society, Oxford Archaeology North were contacted and they came to examine the boat in June 2015.

A small fragment from the case was removed for the environmental archaeology specialist to examine. This proved the wood to be Ash, which is not suitable for dendrochronology so a sample would need to be radiocarbon dated. As we only needed a date range rather than a specific date, the sample already acquired could be used for dating purposes.

Fundraising

A total of £408 needed to be raised for radiocarbon dating by The Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre and to cover the costs of Oxford Archaeology North.

It just so happened that at the same time Beth Pipe who runs an outdoor life blog with her husband wanted to feature the boat in a book they were writing. In return for allowing them to take photographs of the boat, she set up a crowdfund asking followers of her blog (and anyone else) to pledge donations towards the cost. Through this, plus personal donations from individuals, the total sum needed was raised by August 2015.

Results

The sample was sent off mid-September 2015 and the results were received mid-November. Five dates were obtained and after calibration there is a 95.4% probability it is late 10th to mid-12th Century, and is most likely to be pre-Norman conquest. This means it probably dates to late Viking times so it really is the Kendal Museum 'Viking Boat'.

The dates also prove that the Kendal Museum boat is probably several hundred years earlier than the first boat that was discovered in Kentmere tarn.

Morag Clement
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Kendal Museum
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