



Dover Boat

By Danielle Hughes

The Dover Bronze Age Boat was discovered in 1992 while building work was taking place on the A20 road in Dover (English Heritage, 2014). The boat was found 200 meters inshore and 6 meters underground while the road was being dug up. It was believed to be around 3,500 years old when it was discovered (Clark, 2004). The construction of the road allowed for a full scale excavation to take place as the ground above the remains of the boat had already been removed. The boat was made up of four oak planks that had been joined together. Clark (2004: 2) highlights that “overall the design of the boat is unique but there are similarities to the Bronze Age boats found in Ferriby.” Another significant point to the discovery is that it is the only Bronze Age to be found in the South-East of England. The boat was made of huge oak planks which were cut into elaborate shapes which highlighted its significance from the other Bronze Age boats that had been found in England (Clark, 2004). The discovery of the boat was described as “one of the most important and spectacular prehistoric wooden objects found in Europe” (English Heritage 2014).

 Search

Archives

Meta

- [Register](#)
- [Log in](#)



Dover Boat (reddit.com)

The excavation itself was begun in June 1991 however it was not until over a year afterwards in September 1992 that the full extent of the boat was discovered after a worker had found a substantial amount and timber which was later confirmed to be the remains of a boat (English Heritage, 2014). Excavation took place in partnership with the

Canterbury Archaeological Trust after the boat was first discovered by workers from Northwest Holst (Clark, 2002). One end of the boat was discovered at the city wall and was 0.5 meters high. The cost of the excavation was covered by English Heritage which allowed for a full scale excavation (Clark 2004: 16). Clark (2004) highlighted that boat was discovered at what is believed to have been where the river bed would have been found during the Bronze Age. Unlike the original belief that the boat would have been dragged quite far inland nearer to where the river bed now lies. Clark (2004: 18) highlights that conditions of the excavation were far from ideal due to tight spaces and the area flooded. The flood water reached 2 meters deep which made it harder to remove the more fragile areas of the boat. At the time only one site report was recorded in the expectation of another being done once the boat was fully out of the ground (Clark, 2004:19).

The boat was dated as being built and used between 1575 and 1520 BC, this placed it in the middle of the Bronze Age (Current Archaeology, 2007). Highlighting that it would have been used during the Mesolithic period when England broke away from the Continent (Clark, 2004: 2). When the boats were discovered in Ferriby in 1937 it was difficult to precisely date the boat which led to mistakes being made and late research found the boat was around 2,500 years older than first thought (Ferriby Heritage, 2013). However, when the Dover Boat was found developments in archaeology meant it was much easier to precisely date the age of the boat.

When the boat was discovered in 1992 it was almost perfectly preserved and in a better condition than similar Bronze Age boats that had previously been excavated (Current Archaeology, 2007). Clark (2004) does, however, write that there was some damage to the boat when it was discovered and this was most likely caused by building of a Roman harbour wall. Also many parts of the boat had become fragile due to erosion which meant that it had to be removed by the use of machines as the boat could no longer support itself (Clark, 2004: 18). The boat had been made using two curved timbers which were attached to two timbers forming the base of the boat (Clark, 2004: 21). Clark (2004) also observes that there was evidence of a number of repairs visible on the boat including a split down the eastern side of the boat which had been filled with other pieces of wood. There were also holes in the hull and planks missing from the boat which would have contributed to the abandonment of the boat. Clark (2004: 32) records that the structure of the boat that remained was 2.30 meters wide and around 9.2 meters long and it was possibly 15 meters long when fully intact. Although the boat was almost perfectly preserved when discovered once it was exposed the boat began to rot away which meant the archaeologists working on the site had to work quickly to recover the boat (Current Archaeology, 2007).



Dover Boat (Wikipedia)

The discovery of such a unique boat has led to archaeologists realising the sophistication of Bronze Age society. It is believed that the boat would have been used to make regular trips across from England to the Continent (English Heritage, 2014). Therefore there must have been a form of trade between groups of people for there to have been a need to travel to

the Continent on a regular basis. The boat is now kept in the Dover Museum. The evidence of attempted repairs to the boat has led historians to believe the boat was deliberately abandoned and had been partially dismantled along the River Dour (Clark, 2004: 22).

Bibliography

Clark, P. (2002) *The Dover Bronze Age Boat in Context Society and Water Transport in Prehistoric Europe*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Clark, P. (2004) *The Dover Bronze Age Boat*. Swindon: English Heritage.

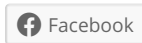
Current Archaeology (2007) *The Dover Bronze Age Boat*. Available Online:
<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/specials/the-timeline-of-britain/the-dover-bronze-age-boat.htm> [Accessed 11/11/15]

English Heritage Archaeological Monographs (2014) *The Dover Bronze Age Boat*. Available Online:
http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/eh_monographs_2014/contents.cfm?mono=1089022 [Accessed 14/11/15]

Ferriby Heritage Trust (2013) *North Ferriby's Bronze Age Boats*. Available Online:
<http://www.ferribyboats.co.uk/> [Accessed 11/11/15]

Historic England (2015). *The Dover Bronze Age Boat*. Available Online:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dover-bronze-age-boat/>
[Accessed 14/11/15]

Share this:



Loading...

Archaeology@Hull

Create a free website or blog at
WordPress.com.

Boat trips for all ages and abilities, Dover's only wheelchair accessible boat. Wheelchair accessible boat tours in the South East of England. Dover Sea Safari RHIB. Dover Explorer offer a
th
ex
wl
di
he
nd
o

Privacy & Cookies: This site uses cookies. By continuing to use this website, you agree to their use.
To find out more, including how to control cookies, see here: [Cookie Policy](#)

Close and accept