

An iron-age date for the Loch Lotus canoe

by Joanna Close-Brooks

The front half of a dugout canoe found in Loch Lotus, Kirkcudbrightshire, in 1874 is in the National Museum. An account of its discovery and a good description of the canoe is given by Gillespie (1876) with an inadequate engraving by way of illustration. The stern end of the canoe, now lost, is said to have had a separate end board. The surviving half, 6.2 m long, ends in a prow carved in the shape of an animal head (pl 26; also Thomas 1965, pl 196). The canoe was originally some 13.7 m (45 ft) long.

A radiocarbon determination of $101 \text{ bc} \pm 80$ (SRR-403) has been obtained for the canoe through the good offices of Dr D D Harkness of the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre, East Kilbride. The sample was taken from a drill-hole bored horizontally into the base of the canoe from the sawn-off end. A tree-ring count from the point sampled to the outside of the trunk adds 80 years to the age, while outer wood lost when the canoe was made represents an additional but uncertain factor, perhaps 50 years or so. To date the construction of the canoe, 130 or so years must therefore be added to the radiocarbon determination, giving a rough figure of $\text{ad } 30 \pm 80$. Allowing for two standard deviations, the date should fall within the last century and a half BC and the first two centuries AD.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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REFERENCES

- Gillespie, J E 1876 'Notice of a canoe found in Loch Lotus, Parish of New Abbey, Kirkcudbrightshire', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 11 (1874-6), 21-3.
Thomas, S 1965 *Pre-Roman Britain*. London.



The front 2.2 m of the canoe, showing the prow and one 'oar-hole' in the gunwale