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Publisher: Routledge

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Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The Mariner's Mirror

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmir20>

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T. Sheppard

Published online: 22 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: T. Sheppard (1922) THE PRE-HISTORIC BOAT FROM BRIGG, The Mariner's Mirror, 8:8, 226-232, DOI: [10.1080/00253359.1922.10655129](https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1922.10655129)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1922.10655129>

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THE PRE-HISTORIC BOAT FROM BRIGG.

BY T. SHEPPARD.

PROBABLY by far the largest movable pre-historic relic hitherto found in Britain is the enormous "dug-out" boat, found at Brigg, in Lincolnshire, in April, 1886. The discovery was made during the construction of a gasometer for the Brigg Gas Company, on the right bank of the river Ancholme, at a distance of 250 yards below the County Bridge. The position of the vessel was at right angles to the old channel of the river, the stern being towards the stream, and about 25 yards from the water.

In this part of Lincolnshire a wide alluvial valley once existed between the high ground on either side of Brigg, and this joined the Humber. The Ancholme in early times was an arm of the estuary, being then much deeper and wider than the present river. The Ancholme valley would then be tidal, and in a natural way would gradually be silted up, just as the height of the land in some parts of Lincolnshire has been artificially increased in recent years by warping. By a process of draining and embanking, the rivers have been reduced in size, and kept within definite channels, which usually occupy the centres of the old hollows.

The boat is of such a character that it can hardly have been suitable for long sea voyages, and the probability is that it may have served as a means of communication between one side of the valley and the other.

The circumstances in connection with the find are rather remarkable. A circular area of about 50 feet in diameter had been plotted out, and during its excavation, what was at first thought to be a log of wood, such as is commonly met with in the carrs of that district, was found to lie exactly across in its widest part. It was soon discovered, however, that the object was an enormous craft, and with commendable care and trouble, the boat was very carefully excavated, and lifted from its bed. It was then claimed by the Lord of the Manor, the late V. Cary-Elwes, but the Gas Company looked upon it as theirs. The matter was the subject of a somewhat lengthy lawsuit in the High Court, and eventually a verdict was given in favour of the Lord of the Manor. Mr. Cary-Elwes then had the boat moved, at considerable expense, and placed in a specially constructed brick building in the estate yard, near Brigg Station.

There for twenty-three years many thousands of visitors paid for admission to see it.

In April, 1909, Mr. Cary-Elwes made a present of the boat to our collection. A few days afterwards, it was carefully removed to Hull *via* the river Ancholme, though in a rather different method from the trip it made on the same river two thousand or more years ago.

When first found, the boat was lying due east and west, on what appeared to have been a sloping bank; the stern being about seven feet below the surface, and the bow five feet below. It was entirely embedded in alluvial clay, which also extended below it (Fig. 1). The wood was exceedingly soft, and naturally the excavation and removal of the boat from the gasworks to its former home near the station was difficult. It speaks well for those who had charge of the work, however, that the boat was safely removed in one piece, notwithstanding its fragile condition, and the fact that its estimated weight was three tons. Since then the wood has dried, and large cracks have unfortunately formed; though these facilitated the removal of the relic to Hull.

The boat when found was 48 feet 8 inches in length, varied from 4 feet to 5 feet in width, and from 18 inches to 32 inches in depth. It is made from a single straight trunk, about half of which has been cut away, longitudinally. There are no branches the whole of its length, except at the bows, where there have been two or three small ones. As a piece of timber alone, it is not without interest. It is highly improbable that an oak of such size is growing in the British Isles to-day; if it were, the trunk alone would realise an enormous sum in the market. In pre-historic times, however, oak grew to a much larger size than it does now. Mr. Dent, of Brigg, informs me that

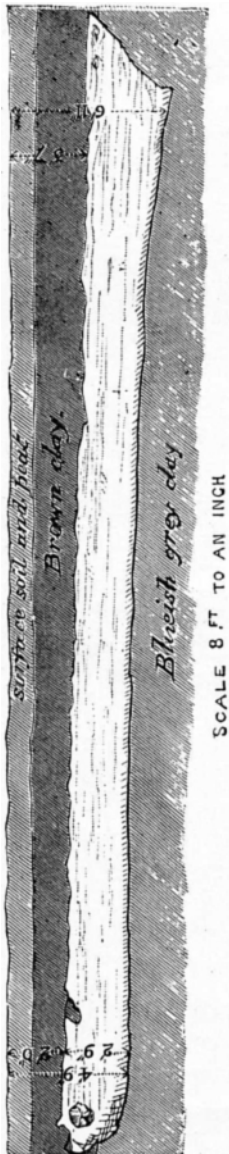


FIG. 1.

some years ago he assisted in extracting oak trees from the Redburn carrs, only about two miles from Brigg, and that one of them measured 72 feet in length, though it was comparatively narrow. In the peat district on Hatfield Chase, several big oak trees have been found, prostrate; though with their roots still in the position in which they grew. Adraham de la Pryme records that on Edward Canby's Moor, an oak tree was found 120 feet long, 12 feet in diameter at the large end, and 6 feet at the smaller, and that £20 was offered for it. "In 1829 there were men living who stated they had split up more than 1000 pales, four feet long, for park fencing, from a single tree. In 1861 a tree was uncovered which yielded 2000."

Since arriving at the Museum at Hull, the boat has been very carefully dealt with, the great cracks along the centre and at the sides have been closed up; large fragments which had either been broken off when it was first removed, or during the time it was on exhibition, have been carefully replaced; and to prevent further decay, it has been treated with a solution of glue, and in other ways, and will consequently be preserved for some considerable time to come. The principal crack along the bottom had not only widened the boat, but one side had warped up higher than the other, thus putting it out of shape. By adjusting this it has been possible, for the first time, to show the boat as it would be originally, and the present dimensions are consequently more reliable than those which were made while the cracks existed. For the first time also the stern-board now fills the place assigned to it, and in other ways the vessel has been restored.

At the time of its discovery, the boat was figured in the principal illustrated papers, and it was also described in "Archæologia," in "The Associated Architectural Societies' Proceedings," and in many other publications. Perhaps the best description appeared in "Archæologia," by Mr. Alfred Atkinson, and in a paper on "Pre-historic Naval Architecture of the North of Europe," by Mr. George H. Boehmer, printed in the "Report of the United States National Museum" for 1891.

The boat appears to have been constructed in Pre-Roman times, and from the workmanship exhibited in many of its details, it is certainly a wonderful example of early naval architecture, particularly when it is borne in mind how primitive were the appliances available for this kind of work in those early days.

In view of the fact that the boat was most carefully planned before construction, as is evident in many ways, it seems clear that these early shipbuilders not only selected a forest giant for their craft, but also secured a tree which was probably partially hollowed by decay, and thus much of the labour of hollowing out was saved. The circumstance that the stern board is separate and had not been carved from the solid, as was the case with the other portions of the boat, seems to favour this view ; but even bearing this in mind the labour of cutting such a craft, and possibly also conveying it to the water's edge, must have been enormous.

As it stands in the museum, the dimensions of the boat appear to be slightly smaller than the original measurements. It was rather remarkable to find that, although the outside of the woodwork showed signs of decay, beneath the surface the oak was black, and so exceedingly hard that ordinary tools could only be used with difficulty.

Careful measurements recently made show that the total length over all is 47 feet 6 inches, and the width varies from 4 feet 3 inches at the bows, and 4 feet 6 inches at the stern, to 5 feet 5 inches in the middle, though the last-named measurement may be due to slight bulging as the result of warping. The depth outside is 2 feet 4 inches at the bows and 2 feet 11 inches at the stern.

The log appears originally to have been hewn into an approximately square section, the sides and bottom being cut flat. Towards the bows, however, which was the narrowest part of the trunk, the section is almost semi-circular, being gradually rounded off at the sides and underneath. At the stern the wood at the bottom of the boat is much thicker than at the sides, or than the remaining bottom portion. At present the thickness is $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches, though originally this was apparently 16 inches through. At this end a square-shaped groove, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width and depth, has been cut, and in this the stern-board, which measures 3 feet 8 inches wide and 2 feet deep, was fitted. It is in two pieces, varying in thickness from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 2 inches (Fig. 2). It was made water-tight by a caulking of moss, which was firmly hammered into the groove.

It occupies a perpendicular position, but beyond it the sides of the boat are continued for about two feet, and are cut obliquely, with a slight curve, so as to form an overhanging counter. One of these clearly indicates that at this point

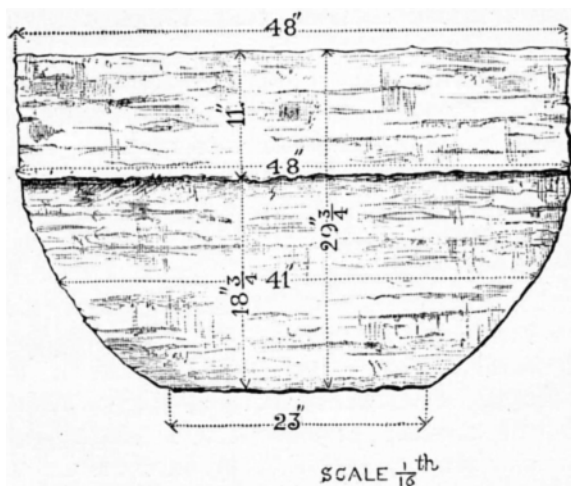


FIG. 2. STERN BOARD.

the builders had reached the outside of the tree near the roots, portions of the compactly knotted tissue still remaining.

Two holes had been pierced on each side of the projecting portion of the stern, evidently to receive a lashing or twitch which would pass to and from the sides, thus holding them firmly against the stern-board.

At the bows on each side there is a large hole, about a foot in diameter, and from the grain of the wood, it is fairly clear that these originally held the first branches. They had been filled with plugs of wood which are still preserved, though shrunk, but it is evident that these must have projected from the ship's sides in the form of bosses. By some writers they have been compared to the "eyes" represented on early Grecian war vessels. Along the gunwale, on each side of the boat, at an average of two feet apart, are a number of holes varying in diameter from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches. Owing, however to the weathered condition of the upper edges of the gunwales, portions only of some of these remain; others have entirely disappeared. This probably took place during the time the boat was being gradually silted up after having been lost or discarded on the Ancholme bank. With the exception of five, which measure as much as three or four inches across, all these holes are remarkable for their small diameter, and certainly none of them seem to be suitable, either as regards size or direction, for the purpose of rowlocks. The suggestion has been made that they were used for the reception

of twisted cords which stretched from side to side of the boat, thus keeping them in an upright position. This seems to be borne out by the circumstance that when first discovered, a branch of silver birch, cut exactly to the width of the upper part of the boat, was found in place, wedged between the sides. If, however, the whole of the series of holes were for this purpose, the network of lashings must have been inconvenient. Another suggestion is that through these holes an auxiliary gunwale may have been attached, thus giving additional height to the craft. There seems to be some little support to this theory from the fact that in the British "dug-out" canoe found at Giggleswick Tarn, near Craven, in Yorkshire, in 1863, and now preserved in the Leeds Museum, a similar provision was made for heightening the sides, and part of this auxiliary gunwale still exists, being fastened to the sides of the "dug-out" by round plugs of wood. Other details of construction are shown in Figs. 3 and 4

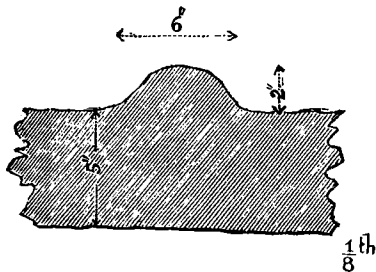


FIG. 3. SECTION OF RIDGE
ON FLOOR.

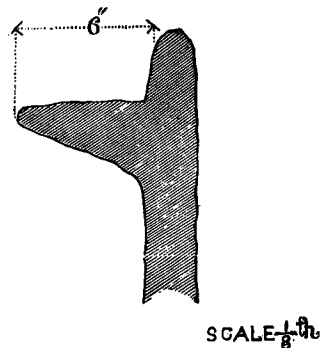


FIG. 4. SECTION OF SIDE
AT STERN.

One remarkable feature in connection with the Brigg boat is the extraordinary repair, by means of a patch, which seems to be a unique feature in our records of primitive naval architecture. The patch is lenticular in shape, and was inserted on the outside of the craft, in the position shown on the drawings. Three projections, left from the solid, were thrust inside the boat through the crack, and by means of pins these were firmly held in position. The patch was made further secure by being stitched to the boat with thongs, the holes for which are at a distance of an inch from the edge, average 3 in. apart, and are about $\frac{1}{3}$ in. in diameter.

The measurements of this cleat are slightly different from those given in previous papers, which may possibly be due to shrinkage. They now are : greatest length, 5 ft. 3 in. ; greatest width, $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. ; the thickness varies from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. Each of the three projecting " studs " is about a foot long, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. high and is wedged-shape, being $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick at the base and 1 in. at the top. The hole in the centre of each, for the reception of the peg, is oval, and measures 2 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in.

By a similar process a smaller crack, adjoining the larger one, has been healed, the wood in this case being $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. in width and $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in thickness. The holes for the thongs are drilled at a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the edge, and average 2 in. apart.

As previously stated, the stern-board and the patches put on the outside of the boat were made water-tight by bundles of moss being tightly caulked in. During the repairs which were recently made to the boat, some of this material was submitted to the late M. B. Slater, who spent some considerable time in examining it. He reported that he had detected twenty-three species of Mosses and Hepatics. These he has mounted on glass, and the specimens have been placed in the Museum. It is rather remarkable to find, that, notwithstanding the great age of the moss, etc., and the treatment to which it has been subjected, the most delicate tissues are still perfectly preserved.

Details of other finds of " dug-outs " with a Bibliography, appear in Hull Museum Publication No. 73.

H. M. S. "VICTORY."

(Continued).

BY EDWARD FRASER.

" VICTORY " IV.

[1st Rate ; 1,920 tons ; 110 guns ; 900 men.]

The keel of the fourth *Victory* was laid at Portsmouth in August, 1733, and the ship launched on February 23rd, 1737. She cost £38,239 3s. 1d. to build, hull, masts and rigging ; and in the five years she existed, an additional £20,230 5s. 8d. was spent on refittings and repairs ; a total sum of £58,469 8s. 9d. The *Victory*, while flagship of Admiral Sir John Balchen was wrecked on the Caskets, it was believed, on the night between October 4th and 5th, 1744, with, according to newspapers of the