**RESEARCH REPORT SERIES no. 22-2014** 

# DANDRA GARTH, GARSDALE, CUMBRIA TREE-RING ANALYSIS OF TIMBERS

# SCIENTIFIC DATING REPORT

Alison Arnold and Robert Howard





INTERVENTION AND ANALYSIS

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# TREE-RING ANALYSIS OF TIMBERS

Alison Arnold and Robert Howard

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#### SUMMARY

Analysis undertaken on samples from a number of different areas at Dandra Garth resulted in the dating of site sequence DNDRSQ01, which contains 32 samples, to the period AD 1373–1635.

The earliest timbers identified are a purlin (thought to be reused from the original roof), dated to AD 1565–90, and a floorboard from the attic dated to AD 1586–95. Other floorboards have *terminus post quem* felling dates ranging from AD 1477 to AD 1600.

The first- and attic-floor frames contain timber dated to AD 1633 and AD 1635 and are thought to be broadly contemporary with the kitchen lintel (AD 1628–53) and partitioning (AD 1624–43).

Two further site sequences are undated.

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Alison Arnold and Robert Howard

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#### **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

Dandra Garth is a Grade II\* listed farmhouse, situated in Garsdale in the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Figs 1–3). It is an inverted 'T' shaped plan (Fig 4) with a main east-west aligned range of three storeys and three bays, and with a smokehood in the western end of the attic. Behind this main range, set slightly off-centre, is a short, north block which is thought to have been a gabled wing originally but now has a catslide roof continuous with that of the main building. Both ranges are built of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone under a low-pitched flagged roof.

Dandra Garth is believed to be 'one of the oldest houses in the dale, dating at least from the early 1500s, and probably much earlier' (www.garsdale.info), with the north block thought, on structural grounds, to be the oldest part. The main range with its original upper-cruck roof has been described as broadly seventeenth or early eighteenth century in character and, in his assessment of the building, Peter Ryder found nothing to suggest a date from before the seventeenth century (Ryder 2012). In the eighteenth/early nineteenth century the side walls were raised and the original heather-thatched roof replaced by the present stone flag one. Other alterations included the replacement of the smokehood at the west end with an internal stone stack servicing ground- and first-floor fireplaces.

#### Main range

At ground-floor level the house is divided by a passage, to the west of which is the living room with a mural staircase in the north-east corner, and to the east is what was the parlour but is now kitchen and dairy (Fig 4). In the kitchen, over the fireplace mantelpiece, is a plaster panel depicting a lion amongst leaves thought to commemorate a visit by James I of England in April AD 1603.

#### Roof

The extant roof is of three trusses, the easternmost one (truss 3) is of softwood whilst the other two are oak. The trusses consist of principal rafters, tiebeams, and slightly arched collars (the collar of truss 2 is no longer *in situ* but lies amongst other beams to one side). There is a double row of purlins to each side and a ridge board (Fig 5). This present roof replaced an earlier upper-cruck one; the cut off remains of two of these blades can still be seen at first-floor level and in the attic. Other roof timbers have redundant mortices and are thought to represent reused timber from the original roof; the chimney lintel can also be seen to have a cut out, perhaps for a lap joint, and may again be from the original roof (Fig 6).

#### Floor frames

The first-floor frame is visible from ground-floor level and can be seen to consist of, in the living room, two, heavy, main north-south, chamfered beams. The north end of beam 02 (Fig 4) is carried by the lintel of the door into the mural stair. In the kitchen there is a third main beam (03) with chamfers and stepped stops, the south end of which rests on a heavy lintel over the window. Either side of this main beam (03) are a series of smaller common joists, some of which are chamfered and others left square (Fig 7). The attic-floor frame is partly visible in the attic where floorboards are loose or missing and again consists of main beams and common joists, some of which are chamfered and some simply squared (Fig 8).

#### Floorboards

The first floor has broad, oak floorboards pegged to the joints beneath. It was noted that the joints between sections of boarding did not appear to have a relationship with the partitioning above (Ryder 2012). In the attic there are further floorboards of varying character, although some do resemble those seen below, others are still pegged in position and some are loose (Fig 9).

#### Partitions

At first-floor level there are two transverse plank-and-muntin partitions (Figs 10 and 13) which would have divided the space into three rooms, with a third longitudinal partition creating a corridor. The northern part of the eastern partition has been removed and a later partition installed, dividing the eastern room into two. The older partitions consist of moulded studs, grooved, to take intermediate planks.

## SAMPLING

A dendrochronological survey was requested by Diane Green, English Heritage, to inform listed building consent for repair and possible replacement of the roof. It was hoped that by establishing the date of the primary roof construction and any earlier timber elements, whether reused, *ex situ* or *in situ*, that it would be possible to identify earlier forms of the farmhouse. Independent dating evidence would also add to the overall understanding of its historic development and hence inform significance and its future care.

Forty-one timbers from various areas of the building were sampled by coring, four planks from one of the partitions had *in situ* readings taken from them, and samples in the form of thin cross-sectional slices were taken from eleven loose floorboards in the attic. Each sample was given the code DND-R and numbered 1–56. One of the partition planks had a slight crack, disrupting the growth pattern, and so it was not possible to measure this plank in a single-run. Therefore, the beginning of this plank, up to the crack, was measured

first (DND-R45), followed by a new set of measurements after the crack to the end of the plank (DND-T45). The location of measured *in situ* samples and partition planks was noted at the time of sampling and marked on Figures 11–15. Further details relating to the samples can be found in Table 1.

# ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Six samples, two from the extant roof (DND-R05 and DND-R06), three from lintels (DND-R15, DND-R17, and DND-R18), and one from the first-floor frame (DND-R26) had too few rings for secure dating and so were discarded prior to measurement. The remaining 46 cores/slices were prepared by sanding and polishing and their growth-ring widths measured; the data of these measurements, and the *in situ* measurements taken from the partition planks, are given at the end of the report. All samples were then compared with each other by the Litton/Zainodin grouping programme (see Appendix), resulting in 36 samples matching to form three groups.

Firstly, 32 samples (including the inner and outer sets of measurements from a single partition plank, DND-R45 and DND-T45) from all areas matched each other and were combined at the relevant offset positions to form DNDRSQ01, a site sequence of 263 rings (Fig 16). This site sequence was compared against a series of relevant reference chronologies for oak where it was found to span the period AD 1373–1635. The evidence for this dating is given in Table 2.

Two samples, one from a reused roof timber and one from a chimney lintel in the attic, grouped to form DNDRSQ02, a site sequence of 60 rings (Fig 17). This site sequence was compared against a series of relevant reference chronologies for oak but could not be securely matched and so remains undated.

Finally, two further samples from the roof matched each other and were combined to form DNDRSQ03, a site sequence of 102 rings (Fig 18). Attempts to date this site sequence and the remaining 15 ungrouped samples were unsuccessful and all remain undated.

## INTERPRETATION

Tree-ring analysis has resulted in the successful dating of 31 timbers (32 samples) from all areas targeted. To aid interpretation each area is dealt with separately below and illustrated in Figure 19. Felling date ranges have been calculated using the estimate that mature oak trees in this region have 15–40 sapwood rings.

## Roof

Only one of the samples taken from the roof has been successfully dated. Sample DND-R08, taken from a purlin, has a last-measured ring date of AD 1550 (the

heartwood/sapwood boundary) and an estimated felling date within the range AD 1565– 90. The timber represented is thought to be reused in its present location from the original roof.

## Lintels

Only one lintel has been dated; sample DND-R14, taken from the lintel over the kitchen window has a last-measured ring date of AD 1613 and is estimated to have been felled in AD 1628–53.

## First-floor frame

Five of the samples taken from the timbers of the first-floor frame have been dated, three of which have complete sapwood. Two of these three (DND-R22 and DND-R24), have the last-measured ring date of AD 1633, the felling date of the timbers represented. The last-measured ring date of the third sample (DND-R28) with complete sapwood is AD 1635, the felling date of the timber represented. Sample DND-R27 has the heartwood/sapwood boundary ring date of AD 1615, giving an estimated felling date for the timber represented to within the range AD 1630–55, consistent with either an AD 1633 or AD 1635 felling. The final dated sample from the first-floor frame (DND-R23), does not have the heartwood/sapwood boundary ring and so an estimated felling date range cannot be calculated for it except to say, with a last-measured heartwood ring date of AD 1549, this would be AD 1565 at the earliest. However, this sample matches samples DND-R31 and DND-R33 at values of t=11.0 and t=11.9 respectively, which does suggest that they are all cut from the same tree and would, therefore, have the same felling date (see below).

## Attic-floor frame

Nine samples taken from timber of this floor frame have been dated. Sample DND-R30 has complete sapwood and the last-measured ring date of AD 1633, the felling date of the timber represented. Two other samples (DND-R29 and DND-R33) both have the heartwood/sapwood boundary ring, which is broadly contemporary and suggestive of a single felling. The average heartwood/sapwood boundary of these two samples is AD 1603, giving an estimated felling date range for the two timbers represented (allowing for sample DND-R29 having a last-measured ring date of AD 1630 with incomplete sapwood), of AD 1631–43, consistent with a felling of AD 1633.

None of the other dated attic-floor frame samples have the heartwood/sapwood boundary but with last-measured heartwood ring dates ranging from AD 1484 (DND-R32) to AD 1598 (DND-R34) it is possible that these were also felled in AD 1633. Furthermore, one of these samples DND-R31, matches DND-R33 (felled AD 1631–43) at a value of t=16.4 and, therefore, is likely to have been cut from the same tree and would have been felled at the same time.

#### Floorboards

Samples were taken from eleven of the loose floorboards from the attic; of these, nine have been dated. Only sample DND-R47 has the heartwood/sapwood boundary ring; the date of this is AD 1555, which, when the last-measured ring date of this sample (AD 1585) is taken into consideration gives an estimated felling date range of AD 1586–95 for the timber represented. The last-measured heartwood ring dates of the other dated samples vary from AD 1462 (DND-R56) to AD 1585 (DND-R53), giving *terminus post quem* felling dates ranging from AD 1477 to AD 1600. It is possible for all but sample DND-R53 to have also been felled in AD 1586–95, however, equally they could represent different felling/s.

## Partitions

Two of the top-beams associated with the partitioning, and four of the planks have been dated. Only one of these (DND-R40), taken from a top rail, has the heartwood/sapwood boundary ring, the date of which is AD 1603, giving an estimated felling date range for the timber represented of AD 1624–43. This allows for the sample having a last-measured ring date of AD 1623 with incomplete sapwood.

The rest of the dated samples do not have the heartwood/sapwood boundary and so estimated felling date ranges cannot be calculated for them, except to say, with lastmeasured heartwood ring dates varying from AD 1515 (DND-R43) to AD 1597 (DND-R39), this would give *terminus post quem* felling dates ranging from AD 1530 to AD 1612 making it possible for all of them to have been felled in AD 1624–43.

# DISCUSSION

Although Dandra Garth is thought of locally as being of some antiquity, prior to the treering dating being undertaken there was thought to be nothing structurally to prove a date before c AD 1700. The dendrochronology has now identified two phases of felling, both of which pre-date AD 1700.

The earliest felling is represented by a purlin, believed to be reused from the original roof, dated to AD 1565–90 and a floorboard found in the attic which dates to AD 1586–95. It is likely that these two timbers are contemporary and relate to a single programme of work, undertaken in the final decades of the sixteenth century, and thus providing evidence that the main range is potentially earlier than previously thought (seventeenth or early eighteenth century). These two samples match each other well at t=8.0 (which is a higher value than any other match), pointing to the same woodland source being utilised

for both timbers, further supporting the suggestion that they belong to the same programme of felling.

It is unfortunate that an estimated felling date range could only be calculated for one of the floorboards, with the others having *terminus post quem* felling dates only. With the exception of sample DND-R53, it is possible that the rest of the floorboards also represent trees felled in AD 1586–95. However, this cannot be said with confidence and given the fact that DND-R53 is almost certainly from a tree felled after this date (unless one floorboard is cut from a tree with less than the average number of sapwood rings, or the other is cut from one with more), it is possible that more than one phase of work is represented within the floorboards.

The majority of the dated timber is somewhat later, belonging to the first half of the seventeenth century. Timbers of the first- and attic-floor frames have been dated to AD 1633 and AD 1635. The lintel over the kitchen window has been dated to AD 1628–53. Given the relationship between this lintel and the first-floor frame (one of the main beams rests on it) and that its felling date range is consistent with it also having been felled in AD 1633 or AD 1635, this lintel is likely to be contemporary with the floor frames.

The top rail of one of the partitions has been dated to AD 1624–43, consistent with this beam also having been felled in the AD 1630s. The rest of the dated samples taken from the partitions have *terminus post quem* felling dates ranging from AD 1530 to AD 1612, making it possible that they were also felled in AD 1624–43. In contrast to the dated floorboards, which were *ex situ* and hence could not be associated absolutely to each other, the partitions are intact and it may be safer, in this case, to assume all timbers are contemporary.

The lack of an apparent relationship between the position of the partitioning and the floorboards below them had raised the possibility that these two elements were of different phases, with the partitions being slightly later. Indeed, it is now known that at least one of the floorboards (represented by sample DND-R47) belongs to the late-sixteenth century and at least one of the partition top rails is seventeenth century (AD 1624–43).

With a *t*-value match of 16.4, samples DND-R31 and DND-R33, both taken from joists of the attic-floor frame, are almost certainly cut from the same tree, despite DND-R31 having a last-measured ring date (AD 1487) substantially earlier than that of DND-R33 (AD 1616). This suggests that DND-R31 is the inner portion of a very long-lived tree (more than 200 years old at felling), whilst DND-R33 is the outer portion. The *t*-values of sample DND-R23 (from the first-floor frame), against these two samples (above), makes it likely to be another inner portion of the same tree (end date AD 1543).

It is unfortunate that more of the samples taken from timbers thought to be reused from the original roof could not be dated as this might have added support for a primary phase in the late-sixteenth century. Undated site sequence DNDRSQ02 contains DND-R10, taken from a purlin, and DND-R20, from the lintel over the chimney. Both of these timbers were thought to be reused from the earlier roof and although this cannot be proved or even their date demonstrated, it can be said that, by looking at their relative heartwood/sapwood ring positions (Fig 17), they are likely to have been felled at the same time and hence are probably from the same structure. Similarly, undated site sequence DNDRSQ03, containing a sample from one of the *in situ* blades (a remnant from the earlier roof) and a principal rafter in the extant roof demonstrates that these timbers are of the same felling (again it is unknown when this was) thus demonstrating the likelihood that timbers from the upper cruck roof were indeed utilised within the present roof.

The dendrochronology has demonstrated that the majority of the extant internal timber fabric is dated to the first half of the seventeenth century but that there is also evidence, on the basis of only two timbers presently, for an earlier phase dating to the last decades of the sixteenth century. This suggests a late sixteenth-century building, heavily modified, with the insertion of floors and partitioning, in the AD 1630s.

Analysis of samples from Dandra Garth produced a single dated site sequence which contained samples from all areas and represented timber from both the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Generally, the level of cross-matching seen between samples is good suggesting that the same source of timber was used for the different elements and that this source was utilised during both phases of work. Given that DNDRSQ01 matches most highly against Nether Levens Hall in Cumbria (Table 2) it is thought that this woodland source is likely to be relatively local.

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# TABLES

#### Table 1: Details of samples from Dandra Garth, Garsdale, North Yorkshire

Sample	Sample location	Total	Sapwood	First measured	Last heartwood ring	Last measured ring date (AD)
number		rings*	rings**	ring date (AD)	date (AD)	Ŭ
Roof		-		T		
01	North <i>in situ</i> blade	66				
02	South <i>in situ</i> blade	74	h/s			
03	North principal rafter, truss 1	43	01			
04	South principal rafter, truss 1 - reused	102	h/s			
05	Tiebeam, truss 1	NM				
06	South principal rafter, truss 2	NM				
07	Tiebeam, truss 2	84	h/s			
08	South upper purlin, west end truss 1 - reused	87	h/s	1464	1550	1550
09	South upper purlin, truss 1–2	41	h/s			
10	South lower purlin, west end to truss 2	60	01			
11	North upper purlin, west end truss 1 - reused	81	01			
12	North lower purlin, west end truss 2- reused	45	h/s			
13	North common rafter 6, bay 1	45	h/s			
Lintels			Į.	•	•	
14	Kitchen, W03	186	h/s	1428	1613	1613
15	Living room, blocked doorway to north range	NM				
16	Living room stairway, outer lintel	88	16C			
17	Stairway, middle lintel	NM				
18	Bedroom 1, W08	NM				
19	Bedroom 3, W10	58	01			
20	Attic chimney stack, - reused	51	h/s			
First-floor fram	<u>ne</u>	•	•		•	
21	Beam 01	63	18			
22	Beam 02	46	15C	1588	1618	1633
23	Beam 03	144		1406		1549
24	Kitchen, joist 2 east	66	16C	1568	1617	1633

25	Kitchen, joist 3 east	54							
26	Kitchen, joist 4 east	NM							
27	Kitchen, joist 1 west	104	08	1520	1615	1623			
28	Kitchen, joist 3 west	97	20C	1539	1615	1635			
Attic floor fra	Attic floor frame								
29	Beam 04	97	36	1534	1594	1630			
30	Beam 07	101	22C	1533	1611	1633			
31	Joist 9, bay 1	86		1402		1487			
32	Joist 5, bay 1	86		1399		1484			
33	Joist 3, bay 1	166	05	1451	1611	1616			
34	Joist 1, bay 2	147		1452		1598			
35	Joist 3, bay 2	97	38C						
36	Joist 8, bay 2	77		1468		1544			
37	Joist 5, bay 3	88		1448		1535			
38	Joist 10, bay 3	97		1416		1512			
Plank & munt	in screens								
39	Beam 05, plank & muntin top rail	70		1528		1597			
40	Beam 06, plank & muntin top rail	90	20	1534	1603	1623			
41	East-west partition, muntin top rail	64		1521		1584			
42	East-west partition, plank	65							
43	East-west partition, plank	55		1461		1515			
44	East-west partition, plank	70		1435		1504			
R45	East-west partition, plank (inner section)	47		1404		1450			
T45	East-west partition, plank (outer section)	69		1460		1528			
Attic floorboa	rds ( <i>ex situ</i> )			•					
46	Floorboard	51		1456		1506			
47	Floorboard	102	30	1484	1555	1585			
48	Floorboard	92							
49	Floorboard	61		1477		1537			
50	Floorboard	152		1402		1553			
51	Floorboard	75							
52	Floorboard	71		1400		1470			
53	Floorboard	133		1453		1585			

54	Floorboard	72	 1433	 1504
55	Floorboard	99	 1409	 1507
56	Floorboard	90	 1373	 1462

\*NM = not measured

\*\*h/s = heartwood/sapwood boundary is the last-measured ring
C = complete sapwood retained on sample, last measured ring is the felling date

Table 2: Results of the cross-matching of site sequence	DNDRSQ01 é	and relevant i	reference chronologies	when the first-ring	date is AD	1373 and the
last-measured ring date is AD 1635						

Reference chronology	<i>t</i> -value	Span of chronology	Reference
Nether Levens Hall, Kendal, Cumbria	10.3	AD 1395–1541	Arnold et al 2008
Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland, County Durham	8.7	AD 1425–1698	Arnold and Howard 2013
Turton Tower, Lancashire	8.3	AD 1483–1665	Arnold and Howard 2008
Howley Hall Farm, Morley, West Yorkshire	8.0	AD 1415–1635	Arnold and Howard 2013
Bolsover Castle (Riding School), Bolsover, Derbyshire	7.9	AD 1494–1744	Arnold et al 2005
Hougher Hall Farm, Dutton, Lancashire	7.8	AD 1452–1550	Arnold and Howard 2012
2–4 Church Street, Leek, Staffordshire	7.8	AD 1406–1512	Arnold and Howard 2009

## FIGURES



Figure 1: Map to show the general location of Dandra Garth, circled. © Crown Copyright and database right 2014. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900



*Figure 2: Map to show the general location of Dandra Garth, arrowed.* © *Crown Copyright and database right 2014. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900* 



*Figure 3: Map to show the location of Dandra Garth.* © *Crown Copyright and database right 2014. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900* 



Figure 4: Plan of Dandra Garth (Paul Crosby Architect, annotated by PFR)



*Figure 5: The roof, with truss 2 in the foreground, photograph taken from the west (Alison Arnold)* 



Figure 6: Chimney stack with timber lintel, photograph taken from the east (Alison Arnold)



*Figure 7: First-floor frame, viewed from below in the kitchen, photograph taken from the north-west (Alison Arnold)* 



Figure 8: Attic-floor frame, viewed from above (Alison Arnold)



Figure 9: Attic floorboards, some of which can be seen to have peg holes (Alison Arnold)



Figure 10: Plank-and-muntin screen, photograph taken from the west (Alison Arnold)

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Figure 11: Section looking east, showing truss 1 and the location of samples DND-R01–05, DND-R08, DND-R10–12, and DND-R39 (Paul Crosby Architect, annotated PFR)



*Figure 12: Ground-floor plan, showing the location of samples DND-R14–17 and DND-R21– 8 (Paul Crosby Architect, annotated PFR)* 



*Figure 13: First-floor plan, showing the location of samples DND-R18–19, DND-R29–30, and DND-R40 (Paul Crosby Architect annotated PFR)* 



*Figure 14: Attic-floor plan, showing the location of samples DND-R06–07, DND-R09, DND-R13, DND-R20, and DND-R31–8 (Paul Cosby Architect annotated PFR)* 



*Figure 15: Long-section through the house, showing the location of samples DND-R41–5 (Paul Crosby Architect, annotated PFR)* 



Figure 16: Bar diagram of samples in site sequence DNDRSQ01



Figure 17: Bar diagram of samples in undated site sequence DNDRSQ02



Figure 18: Bar diagram of samples in undated site sequence DNDRSQ03



Figure 19: Bar diagram of all dated samples, sorted by area

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#### DATA OF MEASURED SAMPLES

Measurements in 0.01mm units with the exception of samples DND-R42–T45 which are in 0.1mm

#### DND-R01A 66 118 129 123 148 150 140 119 105 122 105 76 76 82 62 84 97 109 115 166 133 98 89 89 91 144 122 161 134 143 212 189 206 193 179 155 128 105 137 272 182 148 154 193 164 217 173 219 237 98 72 79 62 78 75 86 77 76 82 101 151 141 128 114 99 106 83 DND-R01B 66 121 125 126 136 144 132 127 103 119 106 78 76 76 61 89 99 110 113 174 138 119 82 76 83 141 128 171 132 145 223 191 203 198 171 135 131 107 126 234 162 148 161 194 164 208 175 219 240 98 75 78 60 80 76 92 72 80 83 95 151 143 135 113 103 113 80 DND-R02A 74 94 95 109 95 145 77 57 154 192 324 278 377 253 551 393 350 380 177 527 190 396 153 143 135 147 88 151 183 188 118 178 164 99 82 146 137 131 162 166 126 188 146 161 120 110 127 104 120 131 165 190 141 103 115 173 152 130 121 189 175 183 113 144 181 119 111 119 129 130 169 135 150 152 183 DND-R02B 74 101 86 108 92 140 76 67 163 176 327 240 332 265 504 365 341 376 170 527 182 411 136 153 137 153 86 151 178 169 117 173 180 100 73 143 156 135 167 158 122 205 162 143 117 112 123 113 116 128 167 188 137 113 102 159 155 142 130 185 183 186 121 144 187 131 105 125 137 125 161 140 159 160 177 DND-R03A 43 185 160 192 225 278 330 228 207 192 208 98 88 126 184 304 219 146 165 132 100 87 44 90 136 279 261 394 328 223 169 257 256 112 204 137 190 255 265 248 286 350 168 220 DND-R03B 43 202 153 273 216 288 315 234 188 202 221 102 83 139 182 307 216 146 161 135 102 87 43 93 137 276 264 377 325 210 165 247 254 112 199 152 186 251 249 250 280 351 173 208 DND-R04A 102 194 164 146 124 169 141 151 202 163 161 151 127 155 154 127 238 229 136 186 159 172 307 302 338 277 329 238 179 87 63 78 41 92 41 36 108 115 143 162 191 140 213 213 150 113 68 157 180 182 151 162 162 154 88 106 86 112 94 107 108 85 83 90 91 65 89 64 85 127 114 91 67 69 122 113 105 176 187 173 113 136 107 167 141 158 186 264 210 208 184 228 214 236 101 117 128 112 220 170 147 134 208 DND-R04B 102 185 167 144 114 170 135 156 185 171 163 158 120 152 156 120 237 235 126 196 162 162 312 304 340 277 324 243 184 76 71 74 39 91 50 40 111 110 144 157 201 131 215 215 144 119 79 152 188 185 150 165 157 154 96 104 89 112 91 111 110 81 94 97 72 77 78 74 84 114 118 82 70 78 117 111 108 175 185 178 111 142 102 168 146 155 184 262 210 207 180 231 214 234 98 130 121 123 215 161 162 150 206 DND-R07A 84 85 98 96 130 114 135 63 95 93 89 86 96 86 108 96 77 72 71 54 29 35 51 67 82 82 81 82 73 108 81 68 61 57 60 44 67 59 53 77 76

35 51 67 82 82 81 82 73 108 81 68 61 57 60 44 67 59 53 77 76 70 52 64 55 52 54 58 82 90 82 108 94 84 104 112 197 121 118 136 139 149 148 140 156 157 162 92 172 174 127 148 178 166 164 192 183 228 183 149 168

138 111 120 77 98 116 102 154 129 123 162 143 170 213 146

161 171 88 113 87 75 60 54 80 68 DND-R56B 90 139 117 108 74 99 149 146 115 94 129 173 175 118 97 68 86 99 74 73 74 99 161 140 100 75 96 68 129 141 102 162 116 168 175 117 79 107 166 144 178 163 105 110 104 205 166 139 378 204 141 194 208 169 88 42 63 68 116 118 234 181 205 112 75 88 135 79 68 73 131 364 314 98 69 105 76 84 93 70 135 167 164 86 112 91 60 55 51 69 88

## APPENDIX: TREE-RING DATING

## The Principles of Tree-Ring Dating

Tree-ring dating, or dendrochronology as it is known, is discussed in some detail in the Laboratory's Monograph, An East Midlands Master Tree-Ring Chronology and its uses for dating Vernacular Building (Laxton and Litton 1988) and Dendrochronology: Guidelines on Producing and Interpreting Dendrochronological Dates (English Heritage 1998). Here we will give the bare outlines. Each year an oak tree grows an extra ring on the outside of its trunk and all its branches just inside its bark. The width of this annual ring depends largely on the weather during the growing season, about April to October, and possibly also on the weather during the previous year. Good growing seasons give rise to relatively wide rings, poor ones to very narrow rings and average ones to relatively average ring widths. Since the climate is so variable from year to year, almost random-like, the widths of these rings will also appear random-like in sequence, reflecting the seasons. This is illustrated in Figure A1 where, for example, the widest rings appear at irregular intervals. This is the key to dating by tree rings, or rather, by their widths. Records of the average ring widths for oaks, one for each year for the last 1000 years or more, are available for different areas. These are called master chronologies. Because of the random-like nature of these sequences of widths, there is usually only one position at which a sequence of ring widths from a sample of oak timber with at least 70 rings will match a master. This will date the timber and, in particular, the last ring.

If the bark is still on the sample, as in Figure A1, then the date of the last ring will be the date of felling of the oak from which it was cut. There is much evidence that in medieval times oaks cut down for building purposes were used almost immediately, usually within the year or so (Rackham 1976). Hence if bark is present on several main timbers in a building, none of which appear reused or are later insertions, and if they all have the same date for their last ring, then we can be quite confident that this is the date of construction or soon after. If there is no bark on the sample, then we have to make an estimate of the felling date; how this is done is explained below.

# The Practice of Tree-Ring Dating at the Nottingham Tree-Ring Dating Laboratory

1. Inspecting the Building and Sampling the Timbers. Together with a building historian the timbers in a building are inspected to try to ensure that those sampled are not reused or later insertions. Sampling is almost always done by coring into the timber, which has the great advantage that we can sample in situ timbers and those judged best to give the date of construction, or phase of construction if there is more than one in the building. The timbers to be sampled are also inspected to see how many rings they have. We normally look for timbers with at least 70 rings, and preferably more. With fewer rings than this, 50 for example, sequences of widths become difficult to match to a unique

position within a master sequence of ring widths and so are difficult to date (Litton and Zainodin 1991). The cross-section of the rafter shown in Figure A2 has about 120 rings; about 20 of which are sapwood rings – the lighter rings on the outside. Similarly the core has just over 100 rings with a few sapwood rings.

To ensure that we are getting the date of the building as a whole, or the whole of a phase of construction if there is more than one, about 8–10 samples per phase are usually taken. Sometimes we take many more, especially if the construction is complicated. One reason for taking so many samples is that, in general, some will fail to give a date. There may be many reasons why a particular sequence of ring widths from a sample of timber fails to give a date even though others from the same building do. For example, a particular tree may have grown in an odd ecological niche, so odd indeed that the widths of its rings were determined by factors other than the local climate! In such circumstances it will be impossible to date a timber from this tree using the master sequence whose widths, we can assume, were predominantly determined by the local climate at the time.

Sampling is done by coring into the timber with a hollow corer attached to an electric drill and usually from its outer rings inwards towards where the centre of the tree, the pith, is judged to be. An illustration of a core is shown in Figure A2; it is about 150mm long and 10mm diameter. Great care has to be taken to ensure that as few as possible of the outer rings are lost in coring. This can be difficult as these outer rings are often very soft (see below on sapwood). Each sample is given a code which identifies uniquely which timber it comes from, which building it is from and where the building is located. For example, CRO-A06 is the sixth core taken from the first building (A) sampled by the Laboratory in Cropwell Bishop. Where it came from in that building will be shown in the sampling records and drawings. No structural damage is done to any timbers by coring, nor does it weaken them.

During the initial inspection of the building and its timbers the dendrochronologist may come to the conclusion that, as far as can be judged, none of the timbers have sufficient rings in them for dating purposes and may advise against sampling to save further unwarranted expense.

All sampling by the Laboratory is undertaken according to current Health and Safety Standards. The Laboratory's dendrochronologists are insured.





*Figure A2: Cross-section of a rafter, showing sapwood rings in the left-hand corner, the arrow points to the heartwood/sapwood boundary (H/S); and a core with sapwood; again the arrow is pointing to the H/S. The core is about the size of a pencil* 



Figure A3: Measuring ring widths under a microscope. The microscope is fixed while the sample is on a moving platform. The total sequence of widths is measured twice to ensure that an error has not been made. This type of apparatus is needed to process a large number of samples on a regular basis



Figure A4: Three cores from timbers in a building. They come from trees growing at the same time. Notice that, although the sequences of widths look similar, they are not identical. This is typical

2. Measuring Ring Widths. Each core is sanded down with a belt sander using medium-grit paper and then finished by hand with flourgrade-grit paper. The rings are then clearly visible and differentiated from each other with a result very much like that shown in Figure A2. The core is then mounted on a movable table below a microscope and the ring-widths measured individually from the innermost ring to the outermost. The widths are automatically recorded in a computer file as they are measured (see Fig A3).

3. Cross-Matching and Dating the Samples. Because of the factors besides the local climate which may determine the annual widths of a tree's rings, no two sequences of ring widths from different oaks growing at the same time are exactly alike (Fig A4). Indeed, the sequences may not be exactly alike even when the trees are growing near to each other. Consequently, in the Laboratory we do not attempt to match two sequences of ring widths by eye, or graphically, or by any other subjective method. Instead, it is done objectively (ie statistically) on a computer by a process called cross-matching. The output from the computer tells us the extent of correlation between two sample sequences of widths or, if we are dating, between a sample sequence of widths and the master, at each relative position of one to the other (offsets). The extent of the correlation at an offset is determined by the *t*-value (defined in almost any introductory book on statistics). That offset with the maximum t-value among the t-values at all the offsets will be the best candidate for dating one sequence relative to the other. If one of these is a master chronology, then this will date the other. Experiments carried out in the past with sequences from oaks of known date suggest that a *t*-value of at least 4.5, and preferably at least 5.0, is usually adequate for the dating to be accepted with reasonable confidence (Laxton and Litton 1988; Laxton et al 1988; Howard et al 1984–1995).

This is illustrated in Figure A5 with timbers from one of the roofs of Lincoln Cathedral. Here four sequences of ring widths, LIN-CO4, 05, 08, and 45, have been cross-matched with each other. The ring widths themselves have been omitted in the bar diagram, as is usual, but the offsets at which they best cross-match each other are shown; eg the sequence of ring widths of CO8 matches the sequence of ring widths of C45 best when it is at a position starting 20 rings after the first ring of C45, and similarly for the others. The actual t-values between the four at these offsets of best correlations are in the matrix. Thus at the offset of +20 rings, the t-value between C45 and C08 is 5.6 and is the maximum found between these two among all the positions of one sequence relative to the other.

It is standard practice in our Laboratory first to cross-match as many as possible of the ring-width sequences of the samples in a building and then to form an average from them. This average is called a site sequence of the building being dated and is illustrated in Figure A5. The fifth bar at the bottom is a site sequence for a roof at Lincoln Cathedral and is constructed from the matching sequences of the four timbers. The site sequence width for each year is the average of the widths in each of the sample sequences which has a width for that year. Thus in Fig A5 if the widths shown are 0.8mm for C45, 0.2mm for C08, 0.7mm for C05, and 0.3mm for C04, then the corresponding width of the site

sequence is the average of these, 0.55mm. The actual sequence of widths of this site sequence is stored on the computer. The reason for creating site sequences is that it is usually easier to date an average sequence of ring widths with a master sequence than it is to date the individual component sample sequences separately.

The straightforward method of cross-matching several sample sequences with each other one at a time is called the 'maximal *t*-value' method. The actual method of cross-matching a group of sequences of ring-widths used in the Laboratory involves grouping and averaging the ring-width sequences and is called the 'Litton-Zainodin Grouping Procedure'. It is a modification of the straightforward method and was successfully developed and tested in the Laboratory and has been published (Litton and Zainodin 1991; Laxton *et al* 1988).

4. Estimating the Felling Date. As mentioned above, if the bark is present on a sample, then the date of its last ring is the date of the felling of its tree (or the last full year before felling, if it was felled in the first three months of the following calendar year, before any new growth had started, but this is not too important a consideration in most cases). The actual bark may not be present on a timber in a building, though the dendrochronologist who is sampling can often see from its surface that only the bark is missing. In these cases the date of the last ring is still the date of felling.

Quite often some, though not all, of the original outer rings are missing on a timber. The outer rings on an oak, called sapwood rings, are usually lighter than the inner rings, the heartwood, and so are relatively easy to identify. For example, sapwood can be seen in the corner of the rafter and at the outer end of the core in Figure A2, both indicated by arrows. More importantly for dendrochronology, the sapwood is relatively soft and so liable to insect attack and wear and tear. The builder, therefore, may remove some of the sapwood for precisely these reasons. Nevertheless, if at least some of the sapwood rings are left on a sample, we will know that not too many rings have been lost since felling so that the date of the last ring on the sample is only a few years before the date of the original last ring on the tree, and so to the date of felling.

Various estimates have been made and used for the average number of sapwood rings in mature oak trees (English Heritage 1998). A fairly conservative range is between 15 and 50 and that this holds for 95% of mature oaks. This means, of course, that in a small number of cases there could be fewer than 15 and more than 50 sapwood rings. For example, the core CRO-A06 has only 9 sapwood rings and some have obviously been lost over time – either they were removed originally by the carpenter and/or they rotted away in the building and/or they were lost in the coring. It is not known exactly how many sapwood rings are missing, but using the above range the Laboratory would estimate between a minimum of 6 (=15-9) and a maximum of 41 (=50-9). If the last ring of CRO-A06 has been dated to 1500, say, then the estimated felling-date range for the tree from which it came originally would be between 1506 and 1541. The Laboratory uses this estimate for sapwood in areas of England where it has no prior information. It

also uses it when dealing with samples with very many rings, about 120 to the last heartwood ring. But in other areas of England where the Laboratory has accumulated a number of samples with complete sapwood, that is, no sapwood lost since felling, other estimates in place of the conservative range of 15 to 50 are used. In the East Midlands (Laxton *et al* 2001) and the east to the south down to Kent (Pearson 1995) where it has sampled extensively in the past, the Laboratory uses the shorter estimate of 15 to 35 sapwood rings in 95% of mature oaks growing in these parts. Since the sample CRO-A06 comes from a house in Cropwell Bishop in the East Midlands, a better estimate of sapwood rings lost since felling is between a minimum of 6 (=15-9) and 26 (=35-9) and the felling would be estimated to have taken place between 1506 and 1526, a shorter period than before. Oak boards quite often come from the Baltic region and in these cases the 95% confidence limits for sapwood are 9 to 36 (Howard *et al* 1992, 56).

Even more precise estimates of the felling date and range can often be obtained using knowledge of a particular case and information gathered at the time of sampling. For example, at the time of sampling the dendrochronologist may have noted that the timber from which the core of Figure A2 was taken still had complete sapwood but that some of the soft sapwood rings were lost in coring. By measuring into the timber the depth of sapwood lost, say 20mm, a reasonable estimate can be made of the number of sapwood rings lost, say 12 to 15 rings in this case. By adding on 12 to 15 years to the date of the last ring on the sample a good tight estimate for the range of the felling date can be obtained, which is often better than the 15 to 35 years later we would have estimated without this observation. In the example, the felling is now estimated to have taken place between AD 1512 and 1515, which is much more precise than without this extra information.

Even if all the sapwood rings are missing on a sample, but none of the heartwood rings are, then an estimate of the felling-date range is possible by adding on the full compliment of, say, 15 to 35 years to the date of the last heartwood ring (called the heartwood/ sapwood boundary or transition ring and denoted H/S). Fortunately it is often easy for a trained dendrochronologist to identify this boundary on a timber. If a timber does not have its heartwood/sapwood boundary, then only a *post quem* date for felling is possible.

5. Estimating the Date of Construction. There is a considerable body of evidence collected by dendrochronologists over the years that oak timbers used in buildings were not seasoned in medieval or early modern times (English Heritage 1998; Miles 1997, 50–5). Hence, provided that all the samples in a building have estimated felling-date ranges broadly in agreement with each other, so that they appear to have been felled as a group, then this should give an accurate estimate of the period when the structure was built, or soon after (Laxton *et al* 2001, fig 8; 34–5, where 'associated groups of fellings' are discussed in detail). However, if there is any evidence of storage before use, or if there is evidence the oak came from abroad (eg Baltic boards), then some allowance has to be made for this.

6. Master Chronological Sequences. Ultimately, to date a sequence of ring widths, or a site sequence, we need a master sequence of dated ring widths with which to crossmatch it, a Master Chronology. To construct such a sequence we have to start with a sequence of widths whose dates are known and this means beginning with a sequence from an oak tree whose date of felling is known. In Figure A6 such a sequence is SHE-T, which came from a tree in Sherwood Forest which was blown down in a recent gale. After this other sequences which cross-match with it are added and gradually the sequence is 'pushed back in time' as far as the age of samples will allow. This process is illustrated in Figure A6. We have a master chronological sequence of widths for Nottinghamshire and East Midlands oak for each year from AD 882 to 1981. It is described in great detail in Laxton and Litton (1988), but the components it contains are shown here in the form of a bar diagram. As can be seen, it is well replicated in that for each year in this period there are several sample sequences having widths for that year. The master is the average of these. This master can now be used to date oak from this area and from the surrounding areas where the climate is very similar to that in the East Midlands. The Laboratory has also constructed a master for Kent (Laxton and Litton 1989). The method the Laboratory uses to construct a master sequence, such as the East Midlands and Kent, is completely objective and uses the Litton-Zainodin grouping procedure (Laxton et al 1988). Other laboratories and individuals have constructed masters for other areas and have made them available. As well as these masters, local (dated) site chronologies can be used to date other buildings from nearby. The Laboratory has hundreds of these site sequences from many parts of England and Wales covering many short periods.

7. **Ring-Width Indices.** Tree-ring dating can be done by cross-matching the ring widths themselves, as described above. However, it is advantageous to modify the widths first. Because different trees grow at different rates and because a young oak grows in a different way from an older oak, irrespective of the climate, the widths are first standardized before any matching between them is attempted. These standard widths are known as ring-width indices and were first used in dendrochronology by Baillie and Pilcher (1973). The exact form they take is explained in this paper and in the appendix of Laxton and Litton (1988) and is illustrated in the graphs in Figure A7. Here ring-widths are plotted vertically, one for each year of growth. In the upper sequence of (a), the generally large early growth after 1810 is very apparent as is the smaller later growth from about 1900 onwards when the tree is maturing. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the lower sequence of (a) starting in 1835. In both the widths are also changing rapidly from year to year. The peaks are the wide rings and the troughs are the narrow rings corresponding to good and poor growing seasons, respectively. The two corresponding sequence of Baillie-Pilcher indices are plotted in (b) where the differences in the immature and mature growths have been removed and only the rapidly changing peaks and troughs remain, that are associated with the common climatic signal. This makes cross-matching easier.

*t*-value/offset Matrix



# *Figure A5: Cross-matching of four sequences from a Lincoln Cathedral roof and the formation of a site sequence from them*

The bar diagram represents these sequences without the rings themselves. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of rings in the sequence. Here the four sequences are set at relative positions (offsets) to each other at which they have maximum correlation as measured by the *t*-values. The *t*-value/offset matrix contains the maximum *t*-values below the diagonal and the offsets above it. Thus, the maximum *t*-value between C08 and C45 occurs at the offset of +20 rings and the *t*-value is then 5.6. The site sequence is composed of the average of the corresponding widths, as illustrated with one width.

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Figure A6: Bar diagram showing the relative positions and dates of the first rings of the component site sequences in the East Midlands Master Dendrochronological Sequence, EM08/87





# Figure A7 (a): The raw ring-widths of two samples, THO-A01 and THO-B05, whose felling dates are known

Here the ring widths are plotted vertically, one for each year, so that peaks represent wide rings and troughs narrow ones. Notice the growth-trends in each; on average the earlier rings of the young tree are wider than the later ones of the older tree in both sequences

#### Figure A7 (b): The Baillie-Pilcher indices of the above widths

The growth trends have been removed completely

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