

Wooden Cup

Period: all periods

Material: wood

Complete item

This wooden cup has been carved from freshly cut birch. Making items from unseasoned 'green' wood is known as 'green woodworking'. An axe was used to create the shape of the cup. The inside was then hollowed out with a gouge. A small knife was used to refine the shape and create a smooth finish. Simple decoration has been added by scoring lines on the outside of the cup with a knife and rubbing charcoal into the groove, a technique called 'colrosing'. The finished item was allowed to dry slowly so that it did not split.



Wooden items very rarely survive, but some wooden cups and bowls have been found preserved in waterlogged conditions. This cup is modelled upon one found at Ardgour – one of a group of cups or bowls found buried together in a peat moss. Carbon-14 dating has shown that they were made from wood felled around 200 AD. Although preserved wooden objects are sometimes warped and squashed, the preservation of these items is sufficiently good that individual tool marks can be seen, which tell us how the item has been made.

Wooden bowls and cups would have been widespread and in frequent use. Many of them show signs of breakage and repair.

What advantages and disadvantages can you think of for using wood to make items like this?

Both images: Bowl from Bracadale on Skye showing tool marks, now in the Skye and Lochalsh archive



See also:

CT Green woodworking

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