

Merlewood Cave

The Merlewood Estate, built in the early 1850's [1], lies between Lindale and Grange-over-Sands in South Cumbria. William Pitt Miller, the owner of the Merlewood Estate [1] since the mid-1870's, probably discovered the cave and arranged for an archaeological excavation. The excavation of a small cave in the face of a cliff immediately below Merlewood was conducted by H Swainson Cowper House in 1892. It was described "as a limestone cavern situated in the face of a small cliff or ledge of limestone". "The excavations at the cave mouth have revealed a chamber facing north-west measuring seven feet wide, sixteen feet long, with a roof sloping to the back. At ten feet from the entrance the chamber diminishes to half its width at the mouth, and from the extreme back and lowest part, a winding passage leaves the right-hand corner" [2] [1].



The cave, also known as Windermere Wood Cave, was visited in the 1980's by a member of the Furness Caving Club, and was described as a 10 foot rift. On a re-visit in 2011, the cavers reported that it had been extended to 20 feet deep with 3 low passages going off and with a draught [3].

The finds were Romano-British pottery and metal artefacts, Saxon artefacts and cut-marked animal bones [4]. The excavation yielded 7 stycas. The best description of the coins is given in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries. They were as follows: + ED E L RED REX, FOR D RED ; VICMVND IPEP, COENRED ; +EANRED REX, CADVTELS; +EDILRED RX, EARDV LF (retrograde letters and legend on both sides); + ERDED VEX, LEOFD EC N; uncertain ; broken and uncertain. The deposit is to be dated by the coins of the late, blundered series. A coin that turned up recently with an uncertain pedigree is probably the same as the second listed above [5].

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References

- [1] J. Beckett, homepage.ntlworld.com.
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- [2] H. S. Cowper, "A Bone Cave Near Grange-over-Sands," *Transactions of the Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 10, 1892, 206-208.
- [3] "Caving in Furness,"
] www.rrcpc.org.uk/newsletters/NL_V48_N1_A2.htm.
- [4] "Merlewood Cave (Windermere Wood Cave), Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria,"
] caveburial.ubss.org.uk.
- [5] *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 12, 1893, 277-279.