

Archaeologists probe mysterious Canadian shipwreck

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An aerial view of an old shipwreck on the shore of Cape Ray, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada on January 30, 2024.

A shipwreck believed to date from the 19th century has washed up on the snow-covered shores of Canada's Atlantic island province of Newfoundland, attracting a bevy of looky-loos and archaeologists probing its mysterious past.

Over the past weekend, a team of archaeologists and volunteers rushed to recover parts of the 30-meter (100 feet) long ship before tides take it back to the ocean depths whence it came.

They managed to extract wooden planks, metal sheathing from the keel and other bits which have been sent to a laboratory for analysis.

"We're hoping to identify the wood species and age of the wood and to identify the make-up of the metal. Those things will give us clues as to its age and origin," archaeologist Jamie Brake told a news conference on Tuesday.

"It's in a dangerous spot. It's being pummeled by the ocean and so on. It's not ideal conditions to try to learn more from it" at the site itself, he said, adding that it will probably take months for any results from the laboratory tests.

Located on the shores of J. T. Cheeseman Provincial Park on the southwest tip of Newfoundland, the wreck was discovered in late January in an area known for its numerous shallow rocks on which many ships have run aground over the centuries.

According to Newfoundland's Archaeology Office, old shipwrecks are commonplace in this region, numbering in the thousands.

Brake noted European ships navigated these waters for hundreds of years.

Some believe that Hurricane Fiona, which in September 2022 hit Canada's Atlantic coast hard, may have dislodged the ship from the ocean floor.

A number of curious Newfoundlanders have journeyed to the site for a

close up look at the wreck.

"It's a sizeable vessel," said Brake. "It is a pretty amazing thing to see. I can understand why this captures people's imagination, why people are so interested in it."

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