

A Slice Through Time: Dendrochronology and Precision Dating

M.G.L. Baillie



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The dramatic development of European oak chronologies over the last ten years parallels and supplements the bristlecone-pine chronology in the United States. Dendrochronologists can now provide a wood sample - a time capsule of biological material - for any calender date over the last seven millennia from two continents.

For archaeologists, resigned to the imprecision of radiocarbon dating, the implications are profound. For the first time it is possible to establish precise dates for prehistoric events. Similarly, we have an independent and scientifically objective way of testing historical accounts, such as the traditional Egyptian chronology. Equally fundamental are the insights provided by the related disciplines of dendroecology and dendroclimatology. The Bronze Age eruption of Santorini and the AD 540 `event' are explored as fascinating

case studies. Drawing on a further decade of research by himself and others, Mike Baille not only brings the pre-1980 story up to date, but demonstrates the wide and exciting applications of this comparatively new science.

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