

Woolly rhino skull found in Cambridgeshire Fens, UK

BBC News 29 October 2014



The skull is largely complete but missing its teeth and lower mandible

The skull of a woolly rhinoceros thought to be at least 35,000 years old has been found in Cambridgeshire, UK.

Jamie Jordan, who runs Fossils Galore in the Fenland town of March, said it was uncovered by a digger driver on nearby farmland.

He described it as "a very big beast", adding: "I couldn't believe my eyes."

An expert from the Natural History Museum said it was "an apparently well-preserved, largely complete skull of a woolly rhino and relatively uncommon".

Woolly rhino (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) remains have been found spanning Eurasia, from the UK in the west to Chukotka and Kamchatka in the Russian far-east.

Archaeozoologist Chris Faine, from Oxford Archaeology East, said: "They were around in Britain throughout the Pleistocene period with their extinction here probably not coming until about 35,000 years ago." However, the skull could be far older, he said.

Palaeontologist Prof Adrian Lister, from the Natural History Museum, said: "Most similar fossils to this date from the last ice age, about 75,000 to 35,000 years ago.

"Woolly rhinos were herbivores with low-slung heads who roamed the plains chomping on grass. "They were a bit like giant furry lawnmowers."



Woolly rhinoceros roamed Britain during the Pleistocene period

In 2002, an entire woolly rhino skeleton discovered in a quarry at Whitemoor Haye in Staffordshire was described as "the most significant fossil find of a large mammal in Britain for over 100 years".



The skull is being cleaned and examined before being put on display

Mr Jordan, who describes himself as a "self-taught palaeontologist", said: "The skull is about one metre long and we're very lucky it came out nearly whole."

"It's a very rare find so it's going to take pride of place at the fossil centre."



Jamie Jordan, Fossils Galore



Experts described the find as "uncommon"