

VOYAGE OF THE *Phoenicia* MAKES HISTORY

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An amazing voyage is nearing its end. A replica of a 3,000 year old Phoenician ship is sailing towards Britain on the final part of an adventure that was thought by many to be impossible.

The story begins in 600 BC, when the Egyptian Pharaoh summoned the greatest sailors of his time – the Phoenician seafarers – and dared them to do what had never been done before: to make a voyage all the way around the vast continent of Africa. The Phoenicians set sail in dangerous, unknown waters, and after enduring an epic voyage that lasted three years, they completed the first circumnavigation of Africa.

But did they really do it? Even Herodotus, the famous Greek historian who wrote of the feat, doubted that it was possible. For almost 3,000 years the question has remained: could the

ancient Phoenicians really have made that great voyage around the coast of Africa?

One man was determined to find out.

Captain Philip Beale, a noted sailor and adventurer who served in the British navy, took on the challenge of proving that it was possible for the Phoenicians to have made their famous circumnavigation of Africa. The first step was to build an authentic replica of an ancient Phoenician ship – with the help of expert archaeologists who studied the early shipwrecks and corresponding artefacts, the design of the ship was

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formed. The ship was built in the ancient Phoenician city of Arwad, on the Syrian coast, and the ship-builders came from a family that has been making wooden vessels in Arwad for generations, and are proud of their own Phoenician ancestry. They used traditional materials and techniques to build the ship, which was named Phoenicia.

Captain Beale assembled a crew of volunteers of many

nationalities to sail the 21-metre-long vessel. The ship was launched from Arwad in August 2008, passing through the Suez Canal and entering the Red Sea to commence the re-enactment of the epic voyage. Of the many dangers facing them, the crew knew that they were required to show especial vigilance around the coast of Somalia, where pirates actively operate. Though they relied on intelligence reports to avoid the most dangerous areas, at one stage they were trailed suspiciously by a vessel, only to watch it vanish when a container ship passed by. Later they crossed paths with a pirate mother ship, which had made an attack only a few days before. They diverted course to avoid it, and the following week they heard that the same vessel had hijacked three other ships in the surrounding waters.

Having sailed down the east coast of Africa, the next challenge was to round the notorious Cape of Good Hope. The stormy seas of the Cape have long been a terror for sailors, and account for many shipwrecks. Here the Phoenicia met with 7-metre waves and gale force winds that tore the mainsail in two. Ever resilient, the crew made repairs and continued

their voyage around the Cape.

Having succeeded in overcoming this great challenge, the small wooden ship followed a course along the west coast of Africa. The captain and his crew faced not only storms but days of adverse winds, which caused long and unavoidable delays – an inevitable pitfall for the Phoenicia, which depended on the power of the wind for speed and movement.

Along the way the ship made stops at many ports, and its pres-

Clockwise from right: Traditional dancers welcome the ship on its homecoming (Arwad); Captain Beale plots the course of the voyage; the Phoenicia at sea.



ence garnered interest from the local people, raising new awareness of the achievements of the Phoenicians. The ship docked in Egypt, Yemen and South Africa, amongst many other ports. The crew, consisting of around twenty people at any one time, was rotated for various parts of the voyage; over fifty people from all backgrounds and religions joined the ship as crew members during its journey.

At last, the ship passed through the Straits of Gibraltar to re-enter the Mediterranean for the last part of the voyage – the homecoming. There were triumphant scenes when the

ship arrived in the ports of Tripoli and Beirut in Lebanon, the homeland of the Phoenicians. The circumnavigation was complete when the ship returned to Arwad, where it had been built, in October 2010. Captain



Beale had proved that it was possible – after a voyage that lasted two years and two months, sailing more than 20,000 nautical miles.

But this is not where the adventure ends. In May of 2012, the Phoenicia will sail to Britain, following the ancient trade route which the Phoenicians made for tin. The ship will visit several ports in the

UK, including Cornwall, where tin was mined in ancient times. During summer the Phoenicia will be on display at the Saint Katharine Docks in London, where members of the public can come on board to see what life was like for the ancient seafarers. The ship, and the Phoenicia Foundation that was established by Captain Beale, continues to play an important role in educating people about the achievements of the ancient Phoenicians – masters of sailing, trade and exploration.



A painting by expedition artist Danielle Eubank
www.danielleeubank.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Parts of the voyage were filmed by the BBC for its documentary series "Ancient Worlds." The website of the expedition www.phoenicia.org.uk tells the whole story of the ship, with a Photo Gallery of many scenes from the voyage – as well as the latest news and events as the adventure continues. The official artist of the expedition, the distinguished maritime painter Danielle Eubank, has had her artworks exhibited in galleries in London and Los Angeles. Some of these wonderful pieces can be viewed on her website: www.danielleeubank.com

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nazam Anhar is a children's author of Lebanese Australian heritage. He has written the novel *Milad: The Voyage to Ophir* (published by Scholastic Australia), which is the first children's novel set in the world of the Phoenicians. It tells the story of a boy who sails in a Phoenician merchant fleet, seeing many of the same places in Egypt and Africa as visited by the recent Phoenicia Expedition ship. Milad has been endorsed by the Phoenicia Expedition as part of its educational program. Milad has also been included on the Premiers Reading Challenge list in Australia.

Milad is available to order from www.lcp.co.uk/milad

