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TO ARMS**
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Patton's
schooner

**HEART
OF GLASS**
Early
Nic 36

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The best
under 16ft

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there first?

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Top ten sailing films

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Parisian runabout

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Make a handrail

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STEFFAN MEYRIC HUGHES, EDITOR



SCHOONER AT SUNDOWN



PAGE 4

Of course, I should think all our covers are equally wonderful but as we all know in these matters some things are always more equal than others. What can beat a schooner, the most romantic rig of them all, at sunset? The story of *When and If's* build, in 1939 for one of the most famous generals of the war, George S Patton, is spookily resonant to the state of lockdown we are emerging from now. Patton planned to sail her around the world 'when and if' peace resumed, which of course it did, but not for Patton, who died in a car crash shortly after the war's end. It's all there in the photo: the boat, of course, but the sunset too, General Patton's death. Eight decades later, a new chapter is beginning, with a new owner, who plans to fulfil Patton's wish to sail her around the world. It's rare that we feature late or early light on a cover, for the simple reason that it produces silhouetting of the subject, defying the mantra of 'show the boat'. This time, the photo really does tell a thousand words. Thankfully, our writers have many more than 1,000 at their disposal. I hope you find the time to enjoy at least most of them this month.

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WHO WAS REALLY THE FIRST TO DISCOVER AMERICA?

A historical replica voyage has proved that the Phoenicians may well have reached the shores of the new world a full two millennia before Columbus

WORDS AND PICTURES TOM WESTCOTT

Replica wooden sailing ship *Phoenicia* has reached America after a 6,000 nautical mile journey, proving that the Phoenicians – an ancient seafaring civilisation pre-dating the Romans – could have reached the shores of America some 2,000 years before Christopher Columbus.

Between replacing a couple of hull planks in Tenerife, in preparation for the Atlantic crossing, *Phoenicia*'s British owner and captain Philip Beale, 59, said: "This is the first time a Phoenician vessel has made this voyage in 2,500 years, and such a replica journey has never been attempted before."

The Phoenicians Before Columbus expedition, Beale's second major voyage on *Phoenicia*, was years in the planning. The expedition, launched from Tunis (site of ancient Carthage, capital of the Punic empire, which once dominated much of the Mediterranean) had provoked much doubtful head-shaking, including from many who had seen the unusual vessel berthed in ports along the Mediterranean.

Inspecting *Phoenicia* for stowaways before its departure from Tunis in late September last year, one security official said, in incredulous tones: "This ship is never going to make it to America." Despite such doubters, the transatlantic crossing, in what is probably the world's newest oldest ship, was successfully completed in 130 days (of which the Atlantic leg took 39), arriving in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on 4 February.

Phoenicia, built in Syria between 2007 and 2008, never fails to turn heads, even with the sail brailed up to the yard. Many describe her as a 'pirate ship', but that is perhaps to be expected as 2,500 years have passed since a Phoenician ship sailed the world's seas.

Although stunning, with its single 90m² (970sq ft) purple and white striped sail (which takes a minimum of five crew to raise), *Phoenicia* has considerable sailing challenges and limitations. She can't be sailed into or against the wind, and



MAIN PICTURE BY YURI SANADA

tacking is unworkable. Gybing is possible, by moving the yard across the boat, but that can take up to 10 minutes.

The Phoenicians deployed the first known system of reefing, using eight brailing lines to help change the sail's shape, making it possible to mimic a triangular sail.

"This partially works, but not totally, because the bottom of the sail is still reefed up, which detracts from performance. It looks a bit like a triangular sail but is not as efficient," Beale explained. "The important thing is the brailing lines enable the sail coverage to be reduced without lowering the yard during storms or strong gusts."

Phoenicia's top speed is 7 knots but, Beale said, once she hits 6.5kt she starts to bounce, at which point the crew will start taking in the sail with the brailing lines.

"It's a challenging ship because there's only one sail, so we can only sail downwind, and it's very heavy. But, because it has a broad beam and a lot of ballast, she is also quite stable. Whereas a traditional yacht could be knocked down by a side wind, *Phoenicia* is rarely exposed to strong winds on the beam and, therefore, is much less likely to capsize."

THE CASE FOR THE PHOENICIANS

"The Phoenicians were the pre-eminent sailors at the dawn of global trade, the first of the ancient sailors and the first civilisation with ocean-going boats," Beale told *Classic Boat*. "They sailed over 2,000 miles from Tyre, Lebanon, to the Straits of Gibraltar, and even as far as Cornwall, so we know they could undertake long journeys and had boats capable of such voyages."

One such achievement was circumnavigating Africa – mentioned by ancient Greek historian Herodotus – a journey Beale replicated for *Phoenicia's* maiden voyage, between 2008 and 2011. This two-year journey also gave him the first practical indication that the Phoenicians would have been accustomed to sailing the Atlantic.

"We got over halfway across the Atlantic on that trip because the winds push you out... and we ended up sailing for 84 days in the Atlantic."

Beale even suggested the Phoenicians could cross the Atlantic. "Greek geographer Strabo said the Phoenicians had 300 settlements down the Iberian Coast, which is an incredible achievement. These were powerful trading posts and we know they were looking for trade and new markets, and were adventurous. They almost certainly would have had to venture out into the Atlantic, so why wouldn't they have kept going? Circumstantially, they were in the strongest position to cross the Atlantic."

PHOENICIA'S JOURNEY

Phoenicia's journey from Tunisia, with port calls including Algeria, Morocco, Spain and the Canary Islands to undertake essential maintenance and engage with local communities, has thrown up new evidence supporting Beale's hypothesis.

'The Phoenicians were the pre-eminent sailors at the dawn of global trade, the first of the ancient sailors and the first civilisation with ocean-going boats'

PHOENICIA

LOA

67ft 3in
(20.2m)

BEAM

19ft (5.8m)

DRAUGHT

4ft 11in (1.5m)

DISP

50 tonnes

SAIL AREA

970sq ft
(90m²)

BUILT

2007-2008,
Arwad, Syria

TIMBER

Aleppo pine/
Lebanon cedar
(keel), Cypress
fir (mast),
Mediterranean
oak (ribs)
and pink pine
(planks), plus
olive wood
tenons and
dowels, all
locally sourced
in Syria.

In Essaouria – a Phoenician trading-post for fish and valuable purple dye – a Moroccan historian claimed the Phoenicians had tapped into nearby ancient iron ore deposits, smelting metal tools for trade in West Africa.

"This helps build our theory, because it's more evidence of the strength and power of the Phoenicians on the eastern seaboard of the Atlantic," said Beale. "We've been building up a more practical picture to show the potential for their transatlantic voyages. It's great to find evidence and think yes, this is real, not just hypothetical."

In the Dominican Republic, the expedition's first port of call on the other side of the Atlantic, the crew found the Phoenicians enshrined in local mythology (rock carvings in ancient caves depict 'men with beards', believed to be Phoenicians) and coastal town names.

The replica vessel's successful voyage to America has proved that Phoenicians had the capability to get there, which, Beale hopes, will encourage archaeologists and scientists to redouble their efforts in finding more evidence to support the theory.

Phoenicians Before Columbus had several additional aims, including Beale's desire to highlight the ancient civilisation's rightful historic position. "They've been completely overlooked by history, despite being a civilisation of over 1,000 years' standing and the pre-eminent sailors of their time," Beale said.

Most port calls have also engaged with museums and local communities, including multiple school visits, with crew member and Beale's nephew Charlie Mannix-Beale, 26, leading hands-on vessel tours.

"Education is a priority wherever we stop, and we invite schools and young people aboard for tours and talks," said Mannix-Beale. "The boat's an easy thing to get young people excited about because children are full of curiosity, and they get to reef the sail, use the bilge pump and see the amphoras. *Phoenicia's* a very good vehicle for talking about ancient civilisation and adventure sailing." The timing of the voyage, arriving in America in early 2020, was also intentional. "It's 400 years since the Pilgrim Fathers reached America, in 1620 so, with a big focus on this anniversary, it seemed like a good time to point out that others may have beaten them to it by some 2,000 years," said Beale.

As well as its historical imperatives, *Phoenicia* also has a contemporary role, forging a partnership with the UN's #CleanSeas project, which aims to reduce maritime plastic litter. Diver, writer, sailor and resident on-board film-maker Yuri Sanada collected 64 seawater samples from the slow-moving vessel, which will be analysed by a Brazilian university and the data passed to the UN.

BUILDING A PHOENICIAN REPLICA

Once Beale had decided to build a replica Phoenician ship, finding the right boatbuilders for such an unusual project was crucial: "I wanted to have the ship built in a place with Phoenician roots. It could have been made more cheaply in Turkey or India, but it was much more important to me to have it built where it meant something to the local community." Scouring Lebanon for traditional boatbuilders, without success, he discovered most Lebanese bought their wooden boats from Arwad, Syria's only inhabited island, where shipwrights still work almost exclusively with wood.



Expedition leader and captain
Philip Beale



From Top: Meals, prepared and eaten in the little galley, were always a highlight; *Phoenicia* en route; a Phoenician shipcarving from the second century found on a sarcophagus; crew member Maran looks out across the city of Cadiz, where *Phoenicia* made a port call

“We are among a handful of people in this world who have had this experience, being under sail on a replica Phoenician ship, almost the way it was done over 2,000 years ago.



YURI SANADA



Arwad and the mainland town of Tartus once formed a powerful Phoenician city-state known as Aradus, with a hundreds-strong fleet of ships and its own coins. The small, car-free island still features parts of its original Phoenician sea wall and most of its men are boatbuilders, fishermen, or navy and merchant sailors; building *Phoenicia* was an important project for the island.

Beale based his designs on *Jules Verne 7*, the remains of a Phoenician vessel discovered by archaeologists near Marseilles, but some features had not survived. “There were one or two aspects missing, about which we had to make educated guesses. We knew the mast’s position but not how high the mast would have been,” Beale said, adding that the sail was accurate, based on surviving depictions of Phoenician ships on ancient Greek vases.

One of the vessel’s more unusual features is its two quarter-rudders – the norm for ancient ships – supported by a thwart mechanism. Adding two additional thwarts was a major structural change required after *Phoenicia* set sail from Syria in 2008 as an experimental ship.

She has required ongoing attention. “Maintaining a wooden boat over a 12-year period, some planks either above or below the waterline will rot if rainwater or worm get to them. Maintenance is a constant challenge for all wooden boat owners, but especially classic boat owners, and *Phoenicia* is no exception to that.” Using traditional methods where possible, Beale shocked several American crew members by patching leaks with human hair, to which longer-haired crew members dutifully donated “brushings”. Major work was done in ports but some, such as sewing up sail tears, was carried out at sea.

The expedition had many smaller equipment sponsors, though major sponsorship would have helped. Beale said: “We could only do what we could do and, although you could throw a million pounds at this expedition, it might spoil the essence of the project.”

LIFE ON BOARD

Beale was generous in offering enthusiastic volunteers opportunities, even those with no sailing experience. For *Phoenicia*’s Atlantic crossing, life aboard for the crew of 12 (13 including an uninvited rat acquired in Tenerife), was often extremely tough. The vessel lacks most modern conveniences; its toilet, an open-air affair overhanging the side of the ship and lacking any privacy, was described by Lebanese crew member Sheima Oubari as the worst

Above left:
Phoenicia
mid-Atlantic

Above right:
American crew
member Boyd
Tuttle at the helm

toilet with the best view. With no tank or taps, potable water was carried in jerry cans and crew washed themselves, clothes and dishes on deck with seawater.

Phoenicia’s bunks had been removed for an exhibition, leaving the crew to sleep in hammocks – particularly tough-going in inclement weather, when they had to be shrouded in plastic sheeting to avoid being soaked.

Meals were prepared in the little galley and, with an eclectic crew from around the world, including Indonesia, Brazil and Lebanon, these were always varied.

The core crew included *Phoenicia*’s Indonesian shipwright, lifelong sailor and captain Dirman, 45, who had sailed on Beale’s two previous expeditions. “You need different skills on board and, when you see talent like his, you know he’s the right one.” Beale also said Norwegian Steiner Lillas, 65, a retired competitive sky-diver and captain of a replica Viking ship since 2012, was “a gift”.

Despite the daily deprivations, for most crew it was an experience of a lifetime. As Sanada said: “We are amongst a handful of people in this world who have had this experience, being under sail on a replica Phoenician ship, almost the way it was done over 2,000 years ago.”

PHOENICIA’S FUTURE

“As yet, there’s no silver bullet that proves the Phoenicians did reach America, but this project might facilitate that evidence coming about,” Beale said. “I suspect a return journey would’ve been unlikely as I believe we’re talking about relatively small numbers and, if you found nice islands and made a life, would you try and build another boat and sail it back? And, of course, it’s a more difficult route home because of circularity of the Atlantic winds and currents. It’s not impossible, but it is less likely.”

Following the successful completion of the expedition, Beale is contemplating *Phoenicia*’s future. Originally, it was planned that the ship would return to Syria as an education facility teaching the young about Phoenician history and culture, but after the civil war started, the idea was shelved. He believes *Phoenicia*’s rightful home is in a museum, which is where his first expedition vessel, a replica Indonesian Borobudur ship, ended up.

Beale also hopes a museum or theme-park sale may enable him to recoup some of his £1m outlay for the ship’s building, upkeep and both expeditions, although his 12-year journey with *Phoenicia*, as with most wooden classic boat owners, has really been a labour of love. 🌐



Yuri Sanada taking seawater samples as part of the UN CleanSeas initiative