

Old Testament link comes to Richards Bay

# History sails our shores

## Dave Savides

AN historic voyage, with a time link that goes back over 2 500 years, will include Richards Bay in its itinerary within the next two weeks.

The Phoenician Ship Expedition is recreating the first circumnavigation of Africa, accomplished by Phoenician mariners in 600BC, and recorded by Greek historian, Herodotus.

Sailing a replica of a typical Phoenician/Mediterranean trading vessel of the time, they are following a route that began on the Egyptian shores of the Red Sea.

In 600BC, according to Herodotus, Phoenician mariners set sail into unknown waters previously considered too dangerous to attempt.

The 'Phoenicia', a 70-foot vessel, was built for the modern expedition at the ancient Phoenician port of Arwad in present day Syria, from where the journey launched in August 2008.

Phase One of the expedition was completed in January 2009 when Phoenicia reached Hodeidah in the Republic of Yemen via Port Said (Egypt) and Port Sudan.

Phase Two, launched in August 2009, saw 'Phoenicia'

round the Horn of Africa and sail down the east coast, stopping at Aden (Yemen), Salalah (Oman), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Beira (Mozambique).

The vessel is expected in Richards Bay in a fortnight, before moving on to Cape Town, and negotiating the dangers of the Cape of Good Hope will be a critical point in the expedition.

At the Zululand Yacht Club, the public and especially schools will have the opportunity to visit the ship and meet the crew.

The voyage will continue up the west coast of Africa, through the Straights of Gibraltar and across the Mediterranean to return to Syria. The circumnavigation will be followed by another voyage to bring the ship to the United Kingdom; in all 17 000 miles and 10 months at sea.

## Mariners' secrets

The expedition is being led by Philip Beale, whose most recent venture was to lead the 2003-04 Borobudur Ship Expedition.

This involved building a replica 8th century Indonesian trading vessel which Beale and his multi-national

crew sailed from Indonesia to West Africa.

Phoenicia is a bold and ambitious expedition which seeks to rediscover and document the secrets of ancient Phoenician mariners, by recreating one of mankind's greatest exploratory voyages in the history of seafaring.

It has drawn upon a number of leading academics and advisors, who have been influential in the development of this project and have contributed to the expedition concept and/or design specification of the ship.

## The project aims:

- To build the first reconstruction of a large Phoenician/Mediterranean vessel and attempt to re-create the first circumnavigation of ancient Africa.
- To publicise the maritime skills and achievements of the Phoenicians through a wide range of media and to assist in the preservation of an ancient cultural heritage.
- To test, from an exercise in experimental archaeology, the performance characteristics of the ship under sail.

- To document the practical issues experienced in building and sailing a ship of this type.
- To provide a number of young adults with the opportunity to participate in a once in a lifetime adventure and international community project.
- To conclude the expedition by sailing the ship to the UK and exhibiting the vessel in one of the country's leading museums.
- Visits to the 'Phoenicia', by schools or other interested parties, can be arranged strictly through the Zululand Yacht Club on 035 7880256.

## Phoenicia fact file

- According to the Bible, the Phoenicians were regarded as 'rulers of the sea' (Ezekiel 26:16). Their cities of Tyre, Sidon and Joppa are well known to biblical students
- Phoenicia occupied what is now modern day Lebanon and the coastal parts of Syria and Palestine from circa 1200 BC for approximately one thousand years
- This civilisation is credited with many discoveries including the alphabet, insurance and remarkable trading and seafaring abil-

- ities including the discovery of the pole star
- The Phoenician sphere of influence spread throughout the Mediterranean and their trading activities reached as far as Cornwall for tin, and Indian and China for spices and precious goods
- In 600BC, Egyptian King Necho II commissioned the Phoenicians to carry out the first circumnavigation of Africa.
- Phoenician mariners embraced this challenge as documented in 440BC by Greek historian Herodotus in The Histories (4.42).



(Source of information: phoenicia.org.uk)