

This project will be conducted under the aegis of the Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust, and managed on their behalf by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

It will seek advice and guidance from an advisory committee comprised of a wide range of expert specialists reflecting the many facets of each stage of the project; archaeologists, ancient woodworking specialists, boatbuilding specialists, mariners, museum designers and curators, etc.

It will involve many heritage institutions in the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, in collaboration with local schools, colleges, museums and local volunteer groups.

It is envisaged that funding for the four stages of the project will be sought from a variety of sources, primarily through the British Academy Research Grant Programme and the European Commission's Culture 2007 initiative, supplemented by funds from other grant-giving bodies, local and national government agencies, academic institutions and through public subscription and donation.



The Dover Boat re-assembly in Dover museum



The Boat during excavation, October 1992

Contact: doverboat@canterburytrust.co.uk

Peter Clark
Deputy Director
Canterbury Archaeological Trust

Support for the proposal has already been expressed by many individuals and institutions, including

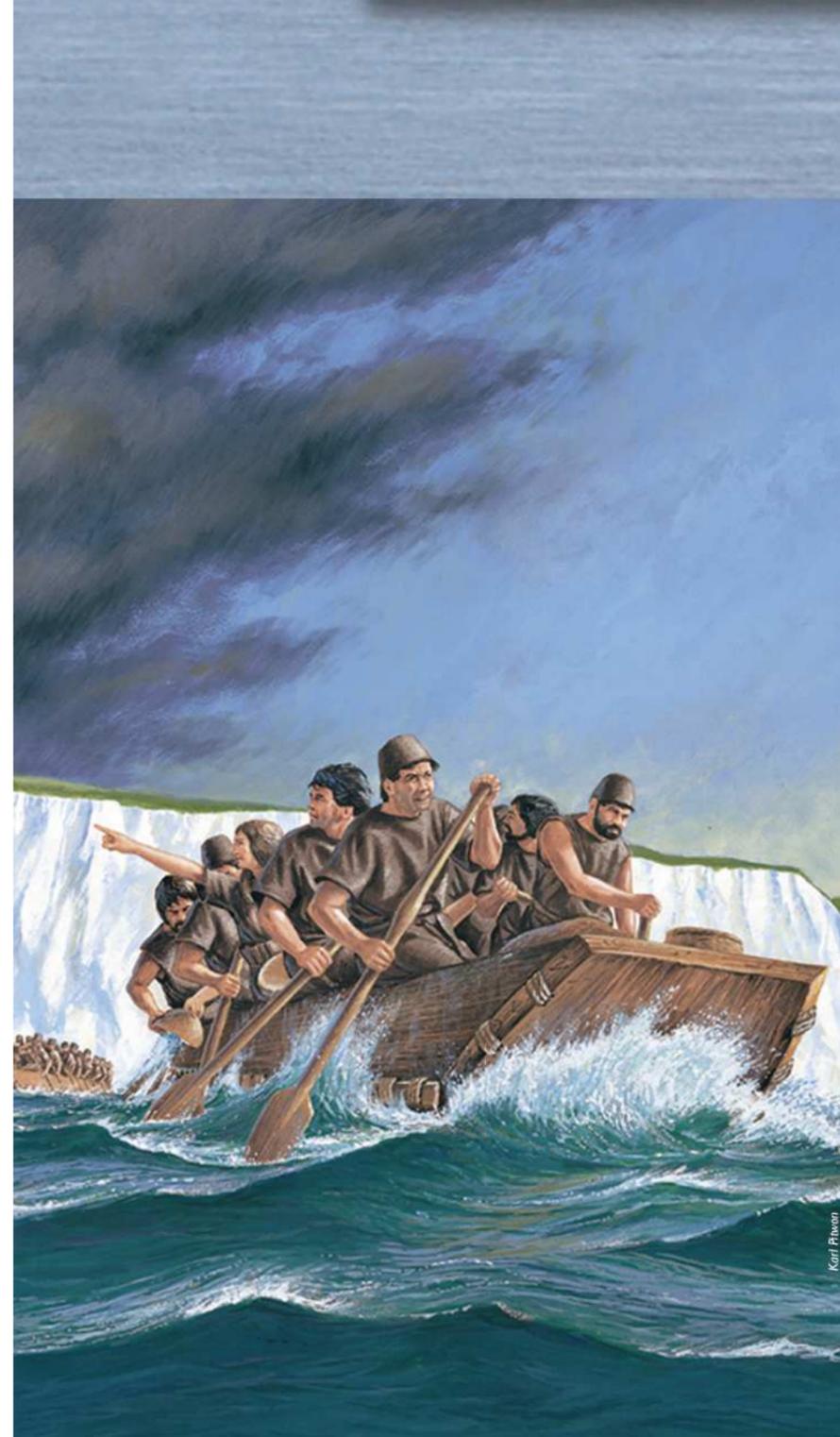
- Dr Joanna Brück, (Lecturer, University College Dublin, Ireland)
- Dr John Coates (Naval Architect, UK)
- Pr Barry Cunliffe (Professor of European Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, UK)
- Dr Edwin Gifford (Naval Architect, UK)
- Pr Anthony Harding (President, European Association of Archaeologists, University of Exeter, UK)
- André l'Hoer (Musée de Berck-sur-mer, France)
- Jon Iveson (Curator, Dover Museum, UK)
- Dr Thijs Maarleveld (Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, Netherlands)
- Jean-Luc Marcy (Directeur, Service départemental d'Archéologie du Pas-de-Calais, France)
- Dr Peter Marsden (Director, Heritage Shipwreck Museum, Hastings, UK)
- Michel Philippe (Directeur, Musée Quentovic, Etaples-sur-mer, France)
- Dr Francis Pryor (Director, Flag Fen Bronze Age Centre', UK)
- Dr Eric Rieth (Directeur de recherche au CNRS, Musée nationale de la Marine, France)
- Dr Robert Van de Noort (Senior Lecturer, University of Exeter, UK)
- Dr Simon Timberlake (Director, Early Mines Research Group, UK)
- Dr Anthony Ward (Senior Lecturer, School of European Culture and Language, University of Kent, UK)
- Dr John Williams (Head of Heritage Conservation, Kent County Council, UK)

Web site : www.dover.gov.uk/museum

Clark, P (ed) 2004

The Dover Bronze Age Boat, with illustrations by Caroline Caldwell (London: English Heritage)

The Dover Bronze Age Boat in context: Society and water transport in prehistoric Europe, (Oxford: Oxbow books)



The Dover Bronze Age Boat

Proposal for an experimental research and educational programme

March 2007

A Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust programme



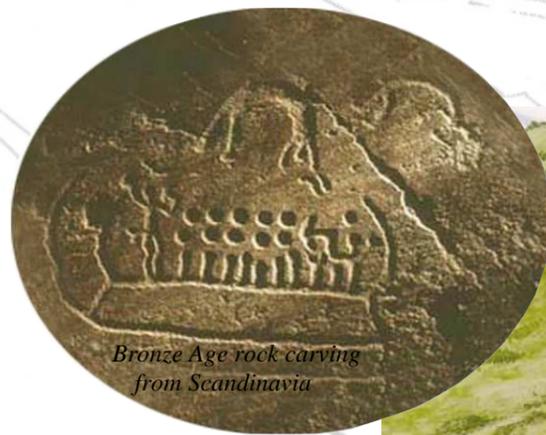
supported by



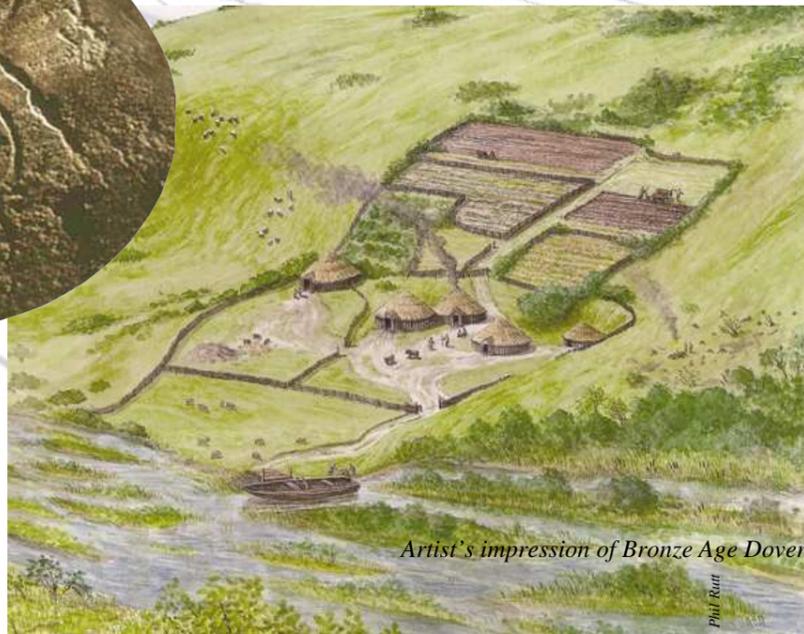
Proposed Programme



The Bronze Age (c. 2,000-600 BC) was a period characterised by astonishing artistic and technological innovation and achievement. This was a time when the myriad social groups across the continent were in close social and economic contact involving the long-distance movement of metal and other commodities, social mobility within and between communities, and a pan-European cultural and religious expression. Many scholars trace the origins of modern Europe back to this distant time, and this 'Golden Age of Europe' was the theme of a variety of events, exhibitions and scholarly conferences held under the aegis of the Council of Europe between 1994 and 1996.



Bronze Age rock carving from Scandinavia



Artist's impression of Bronze Age Dover

The Dover boat (c. 1550 BC), discovered in 1992 during roadworks in the center of town, is one of the most spectacular discoveries from the Bronze Age and, as a vessel, is symbolic of the multi-cultural contact and widespread movement of people and goods across the continent – and particularly across the strait of Dover – during this period. A programme of study and experimental archaeology is proposed here that will not only greatly enhance our academic understanding of the boat itself, but also act as a springboard for disseminating public understanding of the boat and its implications for economic and social contacts throughout Europe in prehistory. The multi-cultural aspects of prehistory may thus be made meaningful to as wide an audience as possible through a programme of education, outreach, community involvement and practical demonstration, ultimately creating long-term educational assets relating to our European heritage.

2007 : Academic Assessment

After several years study following the discovery of the vessel, a full description of the boat has been published together with a thorough analysis of the find and its context in British and European prehistory. To ensure any reconstruction is based on the best possible research, the preliminary hypotheses of the research team will be subject to rigorous review and assessment by an international inter-disciplinary team of experts. The result will be a range of possible hypothetical reconstructions that satisfy exacting academic criteria and scholarly consensus from which a preferred solution can be selected.

In addition, an initial crossing of the English Channel will be undertaken in a modern paddled boat in order to assess the viability of crossing in a Bronze Age reconstruction from a logistical, navigational and health and safety perspective.

2008 : Half scale reconstruction

A half-scale reconstruction of the preferred reconstruction design will be made, allowing any engineering or design problems to be modified and addressed at relatively low cost. Preliminary sea trials in sheltered waters will be undertaken, allowing preliminary assessment of handling properties and seaworthiness, which again can inform any further modifications to the design.

Associated with this process will be a widespread educational programme that will involve educational establishments, community groups and amateur societies in Belgium, England, France and the Netherlands. This will not only encompass ancient boats and boatbuilding, but also the ramifications of such vessels for multicultural

contact in the Bronze Age. Active participation will be encouraged, perhaps involving schools and other groups in the responsible harvesting of raw materials for the reconstruction (moss, yew branches, beeswax), providing support services for the boatbuilding and sea trials and artistic projects inspired by the concept of the voyage in prehistory

2009 : Full scale reconstruction

Using the lessons learnt from the half-scale reconstruction, and full scale reconstruction of a Bronze Age boat will be built (in three dimensions, eight times as large!). Extensive sea trials in sheltered waters and open sea will be of huge academic value, after which the vessel will be paddled across the waters of the English Channel, probably making landfall at Wissant in northern France, then possibly travelling northwards to Belgium and the Netherlands. The educational programme will be continued and expanded, taking advantage of the larger scale of the building programme, the visual impressiveness of the full-scale vessel and media coverage of the symbolic first crossing of the sea in a prehistoric boat for three and a half millennia.

2010 and beyond : Touring exhibition and permanent display

Following the cross-channel crossing, the boat will be mounted on a lorry and tour a number of museums in Western Europe, accompanied by an explanatory exhibition. The full-scale reconstruction will ultimately form the centrepiece of a permanent display focussing on the relationships between the communities of the European Bronze Age.