

Boat 1550 BC: Exploring a Bronze Age maritory in NW Europe

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Thursday 5th June@ 5:00pm

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Extensive archaeological fieldwork and research on either side of the English Channel over the last twenty years or so has brought to light exciting new evidence of the close cultural links between Bronze Age communities on either side of the sea. Close similarities in material culture, settlement types and funerary rites seem to suggest a maritime 'culture' focussed on the Transmanche coastal zones during the 2nd Millennium BC. In 2012 a major international project 'BOAT 1550 BC' was launched to examine the evidence for this putative 'maritory'. The project was undertaken by a consortium of seven institutions from France, Belgium and the UK, financially supported by the European Union through their Interreg IV A '2 Mers Seas Zeeën' programme. The project comes to an end in June 2014, and this paper will review and assess the results of the project, examining the evidence for cross-channel connections which was brought together in a major exhibition, the construction and sailing of a replica of the Dover Bronze Age boat and the far-reaching programme of education and outreach. Particular attention will be given to the theoretical models of explanation underpinning these archaeological phenomena.

