

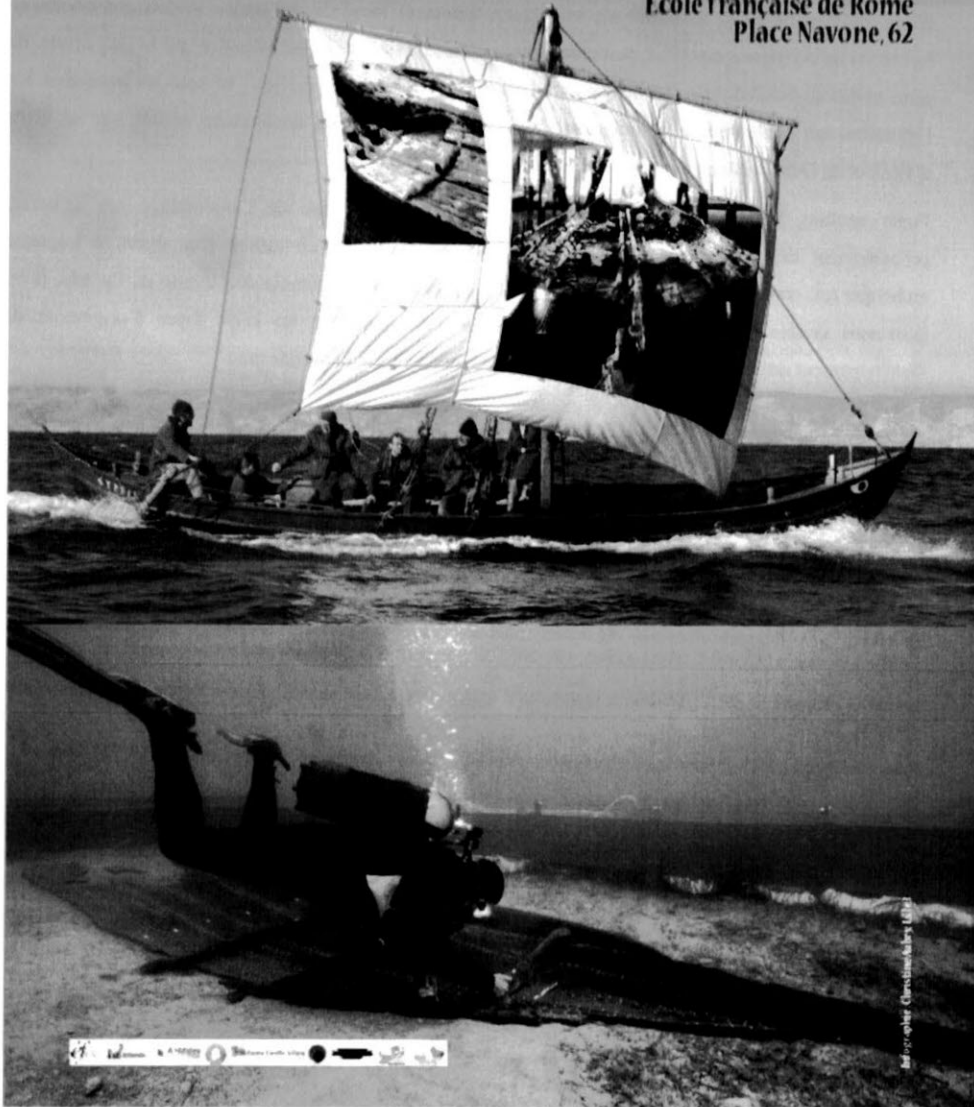
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Regards croisés en Méditerranée occidentale et en Manche/mer du Nord

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ARCHEOLOGIE DES PREMIERES NAVIGATION MARITIMES. REGARDS CROISES EN MEDITERRANEE OCCIDENTALE ET EN MANCHE/MER DU NORD

RESUMES

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Premières navigations maritimes en Manche/mer du Nord : BOAT 1550 BC, de la découverte archéologique au projet européen

The unexpected discovery of a superbly preserved middle Bronze Age sewn-plank boat in the port of Dover, England in 1992 had a profound impact on the study of maritime archaeology in north-west Europe. The salvage, conservation and study of this astonishing vessel – now on public display in Dover Museum – has provided an immense amount of new information about the technology of water transport and the skills of Bronze Age craftsmen. But beyond the field of nautical archaeology it also stimulated a renaissance in the study of maritime cultural contacts in the Transmanche region and a more nuanced understanding of the context of other archaeological discoveries on both sides of the Channel.

Extensive archaeological fieldwork and research on either side of the English Channel and southern North Sea 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, quite different to communities living further inland during the 2nd Millennium BC. In 2012 a major international project 'BOAT 1550 BC' was launched to examine the evidence for this putative 'maritory', and to also review our understanding of the technology of Bronze Age seafaring through the construction of a replica of the Dover Bronze Age boat. 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 and catalogue, the construction and sailing of the replica Bronze Age boat and the far-reaching programme of education and outreach. Particular attention will be given to the theoretical models of explanation underpinning the archaeological phenomena presented and the new insights made possible by bringing together an international team of professional archaeologists with different cultural backgrounds.