

Expedition will recreate the first circumnavigation of Africa in 600BC

Student wins place on once-in-a-lifetime trip

By IAN McDONALD

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YOUNG Weymouth adventurer has won a place on a once-in-a-lifetime edition sailing from Syria around the world.

John Bainbridge will take part in the Phoenician Ship Expedition, recreating the first circumnavigation of the continent by Phoenician mariners in 600BC.

The team - led by Philip Beale - will do so on a replica of the ancient Mediterranean galley, currently being built in Syria.

The ship will be without modern pleasures such as running water and will sail through dangerous waters and regions notorious for pirates.

John said: "It's so prestigious to be involved. I'm apprehensive because it's the unknown but I can't wait to get going."

John, 22, of Wyke Road, was in the middle of his A-Levels at Weymouth College when Mr Beale led his Borobudur Ship Expedition from Indonesia to West Africa in 2003.

When the new Phoenician venture came up as he finished his university degree he decided to join immediately.

John, who studied International Development in the third world at the University of East Anglia, said he lacks experience.

"I'm probably one of the least experienced members but I'm trying to get as much on the water as possible," he said.

There was a slight point of contention but the ship is so unique, it's a replica of a 2,500-year-old galley, so none of us have sailed anything like it before.

As long as I've got some basic skills now a few knots I'm sure I'll be okay."

John, who has been on Dorset Expeditionary ventures to the US and Kenya, said the first 6 weeks would be tricky.

There's a risk of pirates, especially off the coast of Somalia, he said. "But we're doing everything we can to avoid dangerous situations."

The Cape of Good Hope is notorious to



BOUND FOR AFRICA: John Bainbridge is preparing for the Phoenician Ship Expedition

Picture: BRIAN JUNG/BU

negotiate, especially in ships like ours, but I'm fully aware of the risks. My family are a bit worried but they're also very supportive."

John, who has sought assistance from Weymouth yacht chandlers Bussells in preparation, said the ship is very basic.

"There are no compromises," he said. "It's very realistic and the shower will be a bucket on the end of a rope."

"This is the first time anyone's tried to build a replica and it's awakened lots of academic interest. The ship will be exhibited in the British Museum afterwards."

"The whole point is proving the Phoenicians were the first to circumnavigate Africa. Hopefully it'll inspire others to learn more about them."

Former Wey Valley School student John said the trip was the 'perfect opportunity'.

He added: "We're partnered with the non-governmental organisation WaterAid and I'll be their point of contact on the ship."

"It should really complement what I studied and I'll be immersing myself in exactly what I've learnt. Hopefully it'll lead to more work with NGOs in the future."