

IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS
2000 JAHRE | VARUSSCHLACHT®

Press Release

Roman Ship Undergoes Practical Tests: Researchers Close Gap in Roman Nautical Archaeology

Ratzeburg, 17th April 2008

At the moment scientists are testing a Roman ship, reconstructed full-scale, in an experiment on the Ratzeburg Lake near Hamburg. The reconstruction is part of the exhibition project “IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle”, which next year will deal with the Varus Battle (also known as the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest) from different angles.

Researchers have known for some time what the Roman ships looked like, which the Imperium Romanum deployed 2000 years ago during its victorious campaigns. Methods of construction and materials are known, too. The researchers at Ratzeburg want to find out what speeds such ships could reach and their handling characteristics.

This is why they are sailing the reconstructed warship across the lake near the Hansa cities of Hamburg and Lübeck. Two boatbuilders, three apprentices and 17 students worked on the reconstruction of the 16 m long and almost 3 m wide ship for over a year. Two Roman shipwrecks provided the builders with a model for their work. They were discovered in 1986 in the vicinity of the legionary camp of Oberstimm, not far from Ingolstadt, are raised in 1994.

The Start for the Tests

“Now the time of waiting is over. At last we can get going”, was the happy comment of Prof. Dr. Christoph Schäfer from the Department of Ancient History at the University of Hamburg, before the tests started in mid-April. Schäfer headed the group of historians who together with the shipyard, Jugend in Arbeit e.V. in Hamburg-Harburg built the four ton wooden ship. The test runs, too, are under the command of the experienced yachtsman, who was already involved in the reconstruction of an ancient warship in Regensburg.

Schäfer and his team want to discover in the course of archaeological experiments the performance and manoeuvrability of the Roman ship. The two weeks of tests will provide information on speeds and acceleration characteristics. “We can

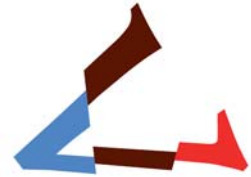
www.imperium-konflikt-mythos.de

„IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS. 2000 Jahre Varusschlacht“ ist ein Ausstellungsprojekt im Jahre 2009 getragen von:

LWL
Für die Menschen.
Für Westfalen-Lippe.

**VARUS
SCHLACHT**
IM OSNABRÜCKER LAND
MUSEUM UND PARK
KALKRIESE

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calculate from the speeds measured what distance these ships of 2000 years ago could cover in a day”, says Schäfer.

The manoeuvrability of the vessel will be tested, with 20 oarsmen and under sail. “We want to know how hard on the wind you can go with this ship”.

The researchers are documenting the sailing characteristics of the Roman ship with the aid of a measuring device originally developed for the America’s Cup. Apart from this the historians and archaeologists want to find out how long it takes until the crew of this kind of ship, powered by oarsmen, is seaworthy. The team of scientists are expecting new information from the answers to these questions concerning the establishment of Roman rule in Germanic areas.

Naming of the Ship on 30th May in Hamburg

When the tests have been concluded the crew will row the Roman ship in mid-May in the direction of Lübeck. From there the crew will use the Elbe-Lübeck-Canal and row to Lauenburg, 40 km south of Ratzeburg and then on the Elbe to the Harburg shipyard. The naming of the ship will take place on the 30th of May in Hamburg. Up to now the ship has the working name of “Oberstimm I”. It will set sail in the early summer under its new name.

“The construction of this type of ship from the early imperial period will fill a gap in experimental nautical archaeology”, says Dr. Rudolf Asskamp, head of the project and the LWL-Römermuseum in Haltern am See (Westphalia). On the conclusion of the scientific tests the ship will be made accessible to the general public. For this reason it will head for various cities in Germany and in neighbouring countries and there offer the public archaeology they can touch. At the same time the Roman ship is the ambassador for the special exhibition project: “IMPERIUM CONFLICT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle”.

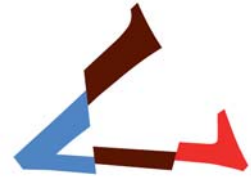
In 2009 Cooperative Project Commemorates Varus Battle

Three museums at original sites, Haltern am See, Kalkriese (Lower Saxony) and Detmold (Kreis Lippe) are spotlighting various facets of the historic event in the year 9 AD. The Roman commander, Varus, and his three legions were destroyed by Germanic tribesmen in the “Battle in the Teutoburg Forest”. The partners in this major project are the Landschaftsverband (LWL), the Varusschlacht im Osnabrücker Land GmbH – Museum und Park Kalkriese, the Landesverband Lippe as well as the Kreis Lippe.

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Ship Sets Off on its Journey

The Roman ship will be anchoring for example in Rheine in the Münsterland (11.-13.07), Nijmegen (22.-24.08.) and Bonn (29.-31.08.). Further stops are planned for, amongst other places, Magdeburg, Mainz, Ingolstadt and Hanover, too. Precise dates will be announced at the naming on 30th May in Hamburg.

The partners co-operating in this exhibition project “IMPERIUM CONFLICT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle”, the University of Hamburg as well as the shipyard, Jugend in Arbeit e.V., financed the shipbuilding project costing over 200.000 Euro. The project made a contribution to combating unemployment amongst young people by involving the shipyard, Jugend in Arbeit e.V.

Further information: www.imperium-konflikt-mythos.de

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