



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE, SPORT & LEISURE
310 Main Street
Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

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Calpe 2011: Bridges and Barriers – A History of the Strait of Gibraltar

This year's Calpe Conference, coinciding with the 1300th Anniversary of the crossing of the Strait by Tarik ibn Zeyad, aims to review the entire history of this important channel. The conference's title gives the focus of the meeting: was the Strait a bridge that allowed access between Africa and Europe and between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, or was it a barrier to such access?

An impressive panel of speakers will assemble in Gibraltar to attempt to answer these questions. The conference kicks off on Thursday 22nd September at 0930 hours with the official opening by the Honourable Edwin Reyes MP, Minister for Culture, Heritage, Sport and Leisure. The opening will be followed by a key note address by Professor David Abulafia of the University of Cambridge. Professor Abulafia is arguably this generation's top Mediterranean historian and this is clearly highlighted by his recent book *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*.

The key note address will launch an exciting three-day conference. The first day will ask questions about the Strait as a bridge or barrier to terrestrial and marine animals. It will lead to issues regarding the use and passage of the Strait by prehistoric peoples, which will be addressed at the end of the first day and the first part of the second. Speakers will include biologists, archaeologists and geneticists, the latter providing fresh insights based on the study of our genes.

From prehistory the conference will move forward to the edge of history. The proto-historic world of the Phoenicians will receive prominence in a major paper describing, in detail for the first time, the work which has been carried out at Gorham's Cave – a Phoenician and Carthaginian coastal shrine - in the past 20 years. It will be followed by a presentation on the exploitation of the Strait's marine resources in Roman times. The medieval period will be given prominence, given the significance of 711 AD, with several presentations. One will summarise all the work that has been carried out in Gibraltar, from the archaeology at Casemates and Main Street to the Castle itself. But papers will also talk about Tarik's landing and subsequent events and about a relatively unknown time – the period before 711 in relation to Visigothic and Byzantine influences.

The latter part of the conference will adopt a more contemporary flavour, dealing with 19th, 20th and even present-day questions. Among the papers will be an analysis of the logs of the port of Gibraltar in the 19th Century and also a paper on piracy which will be presented by Professor Andrew Lambert of King's College, London.

The week's events commence on Tuesday 20th September at 7pm with the official opening of the photographic exhibition "Bridges and Barriers" by Finlayson Nature Photography. It follows from their successful spring exhibition and the photographs will, on this occasion, highlight the relationship of the sea with the fauna of the Strait.

The exhibition will be opened by the Honourable Edwin Reyes at 1900 hours and will remain open to the public for two weeks.

Registration for the Calpe Conference, which is free for residents of Gibraltar, remains open and the public is encouraged to attend this exciting series of lectures by world renowned speakers.

Note to Editors: For further information please contact Marie Mosquera at the Gibraltar Museum on 200 74289. Alternatively, email: museumpr@gibraltar.gi