Bermuda’s Heritage and shipwrecks - Week 1

First people in Bermuda

In 1505 Juan de Bermudez discovered Bermuda, although he never came ashore as the dangerous reefs made the island uninviting. However, the Spanish king ordered a pair of hogs be released on the island to aid marooned sailors. In 1511 ‘La Bermuda’ appeared on a published atlas. 1543 a Portuguese ship, wrecked off Bermuda leaving 32 men stranded on the island. Evidence of this can be seen at Spittal Pond on ‘Portuguese Rock’ where the rock carving ‘1543 RP’ was discovered. They built a ship and continued on their journey to San Domingo. Between 1560-70 a French ship wrecked off Bermuda stranding the first French people, they also built a ship and continued on their journey. In 1603 a Spanish vessel anchored in the Great Sound and sent the first recorded back man ashore named Ventruilla. At night the island became loud with shrieks and cries, religious and superstitious sailors gave Bermuda the nickname ‘The Isle of Devils’. Ventruilla came ashore at night and discovered that the shrieking came from nesting seabirds! They became food for the hungry Spanish sailors! In 1609 a fleet of seven ships left Plymouth England headed for Jamestown, Virginia with supplies and settlers. A storm blew the fleet apart, after three days of battling the storm ‘The Sea Venture’s captain Sir George Sommers, spotted Bermuda and wrecked off of Fort St. Catherine Beach. All 150 passengers came safely ashore. Two passengers on board were Native American and were returning home. The settlers built two ships, the Deliverance, and the Patience, and continued onwards to Jamestown, leaving 3 men in Bermuda. Within three years Bermuda became a British territory. In 1612 British sailors returned to the island settling in Bermuda’s first capital, The Town of St. Georges. Get creative and discuss with a friend or family member what you would do to survive if you shipwrecked in 1500 Bermuda. What would you do to survive? Tip: food, shelter, and water!

Activity - Draw a Timeline

Using the information provided in the text above, fill in the timeline (page 2) from 1500 until present (cut along the dashed line). In Week 2 we will provide dates of some key shipwrecks around Bermuda. Be sure to add your own dates, like your date of birth and arrival of your family to Bermuda! If you are interested do further research into Bermuda’s history and heritage and add to your timeline

Call to Action - Eco-schools Pathway - Biodiversity

Hogs, rats and humans were the first invasive species to land in Bermuda. Before that, Bermuda was a perfectly balanced ecosystem and paradise for ground nesting seabirds. Rats, hogs and humans ate the seabirds and their eggs until the endemic cahow was thought to be extinct! Fortunately, a nesting pair was rediscovered in 1951 and since then, protected nesting areas have slowly helped return the cahow population. This year (2021) there are 71 chicks in Bermuda! Read more and watch the live stream of the chicks: http://www.nonsuchisland.com/live-cahow-cam