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## **SCIRE' 2008**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

*(Official Press Release)*

*Under the patronage of:*



*Ministero degli Affari Esteri*

On 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1942 the Italian Royal Submarine Scirè of the X<sup>^</sup> MAS Flotilla was getting ready to attack the port of Haifa which at that time was under British control. Eleven commandos, "Gamma Men" as they were known at the time, were aboard. Their hope was to repeat previous



successes at Gibraltar, and above all, the raid on Alexandria where in the December of the previous year, under the command of Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, the Scirè had sunk two British battleships, HMS Valiant and HMS Queen Elizabeth, and the tanker Sagona. The three sinkings had been carried out using SLCs (human torpedoes), the so-called "Pigs", and the action was rewarded with the addition of a Gold Medal to the submarine's flag. However, when the Scirè arrived at Haifa, all hell broke

loose: the coastal artillery, aircraft and ships seemed to be expecting her and after a merciless chase, the Scirè was sunk with her commander Bruno Zelik and all the sailors and the raiders aboard. It has always been thought that the British knew about the raid in advance and recent research by IANTD Expeditions has found proof of this in the World War II archives of Bletchley Park and Kew (West London). The Scirè entered into history and is still today one of the most famous naval vessels in the world. After a long period of oblivion, in 1984 the wreck was the subject of an Italian Navy expedition tasked with recovering the remains of the Scirè's sailors and commandos. Israeli underwater archaeologist Ehud Galili was part of that team and was the first to re-discover her. This expedition was followed by a second in 2001. Since then, the wreck has been visited only occasionally by Israeli divers but very rarely by Italians. From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2008. IANTD, under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting in the interests of international cultural promotion and cooperation, organised and conducted an expedition on this important shipwreck. The goals of the expedition were both archaeological and scientific. Primarily the aim was to conduct a survey of the site and assess the condition of the wreck. Nine IANTD

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instructors and divers took part in the diving, Fabio Ruberti, expedition leader; Carla Binelli, deputy expedition leader; Agostino Fortunato, operations manager and diver; Ivan Incalza, underwater video operator; Silvia Grassini, underwater video operator; Jurek Lewandowski, underwater photographer; Gianni Calandrelli, diver; Roberto Masucci, diver; Jacopo Ruberti, diver. Three Israeli divers also took part in the expedition: Mark Feder, logistics manager and diver; Shai Roth, coordinator and Professor Ehud Galili who honoured the expedition with his presence. The expedition was also encouraged and supported by the Associazione Nazionale Incursori di Marina and in particular by DAN Israel in the person of Shai Roth. The



IANTD Training Facility, Acquamarina of Marina di Pisa (PI), CDT of Fidenza (PR), Blufit of Montebelluna (TV), Scuola Sommozzatori of Caserta, Teknika of Milano and above all Tek Dive of Tel Aviv were responsible for the on site logistics, and the expedition was grateful too for the support of underwater technology equipment companies Acquamarina® and Dive Rite®. The expedition was composed of three teams who had specific daily diving objectives: measuring and surveying the site, conducting external reconnaissance, assessing particularly interesting finds and producing a full video and photographic record of the wreck. The team used advanced diving techniques and the most sophisticated equipment available. The Israeli Broadcast Authority followed the activity with great interest, one team of Channel 1, led by journalist Itai Dodi, took part in a full diving day during which a wreath was placed on the wreck in memory of the fallen sailors. Carrying out an underwater expedition of an archaeological and scientific nature on a submarine wreck of such historical value as the Scirè is an important event with potential for future development. It also serves to increase public awareness of this key period of history. Following the expedition Professor Galili donated to The Naval Museum of La Spezia (Italy) a fin and a oxygen rebreather recovered from the Scirè during one of his original dives. News of the expedition was released by the Ansa Agency of Tel Aviv.



Fabio Ruberti

Haifa (Israel), 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008



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