

The journey of Cleopatra's Needle

The obelisk was one of a pair made for Pharaoh Tuthmosis III who died in 1425BC.

The British people, who were fascinated by Egyptian artefacts, raised £15,000 to bring one to Britain.

The obelisk started its journey from the Egyptian port of Alexandria, known as the city of Cleopatra. It was transported in a container ship called the Cleopatra.

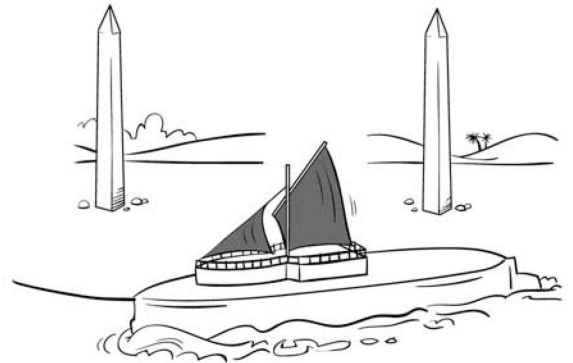
During the journey there was a terrible storm which threatened to sink the Cleopatra. The steam-ship that was towing it, called the Olga, sent six people to help the Cleopatra's crew. The sea was so rough that they drowned before they reached the Cleopatra. The six names are written on a special plaque that can be seen today at the bottom of the Needle.

The Olga finally managed to draw alongside the Cleopatra and rescue the crew. The tow-rope was cut and the Cleopatra was left to drift.

After five days the container was spotted floating off the coast of Spain. It was towed to the Port of Ferrol where a new steam-ship, the Anglia, was sent to bring the Cleopatra to Britain.

In January 1878, crowds gathered to watch the Cleopatra as it was towed along the River Thames in London.

In September of 1878 the Needle was winched into place on the London Embankment, where it can still be seen today.



Activities

- What would it have been like to be a crew member on the Cleopatra during the storm? Write or draw a story describing what happened.
- Make a factsheet to explain why the obelisk was called Cleopatra's Needle.
- Imagine being in London in 1878 and seeing the Needle for the first time. How might you feel?