A TRULY UNIQUE BIRTHDAY

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The centennial of the jábega María del Carmen

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FOTO: Diego Iriarte
flowerpot

The collections of the Museu Marítim de Barcelona feature all kinds of materials, some are from Catalonia while others come from distant shores, if such a thing exists. Every now and then we set our eyes on one of these artifacts, and we strive to read beyond what we can see. Right now, one particular boat has stolen our hearts. We have found a story which, in a certain way, shows why we do the work we do here at the museum.

This particular jábega, a traditional fishing boat from Malaga, christened *María del Carmen* and built in 1926, grabs our attention for its shape, decoration and legend. This boat is almost unique, a witness to a bygone era and a centuries-old maritime culture. Yet its greater value lies in the intangible heritage it contains, from a flamenco palo song linked to the seafaring trade and the old *salomas*, or sea shanties sung by sailors and fishermen, to a feeling shared by the people of Malaga who value the jábega as an iconic element of local identity that must be preserved and explained.

We are currently working on activities to showcase this boat: a small musical recording of the *jabegote*, a little-known song linked to the fishing trade; an article in the magazine *Coolt*; a close collaboration with a cultural association in Malaga, and a small recognition event in the garden of the museum on 16 July 2026 to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We're doing all this and more to highlight a small gem of Mediterranean culture.

> *In 1933, the American millionaire and founder of the Mariners' Museum in Newport News (Virginia, United States), Archer M. Huntington, bought an Italian fishing boat for his collection. This is the version of the story that we have known for years. In reality, it was a jábega, the Isabel, which is now in the process of being restored. The María del Carmen and the Isabel, separated by a vast ocean, are two treasures that we must reclaim and value.*