

ROBERTS'S JOLLY ROGERS



Photo source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartholomew_Roberts

“The Jack had a Man pourtray'd in it, with a flaming Sword in his Hand, and standing on two Skulls, subscribed A B H and A M H i.e. a Barbadian's and a Martinican's Head.”

- Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*

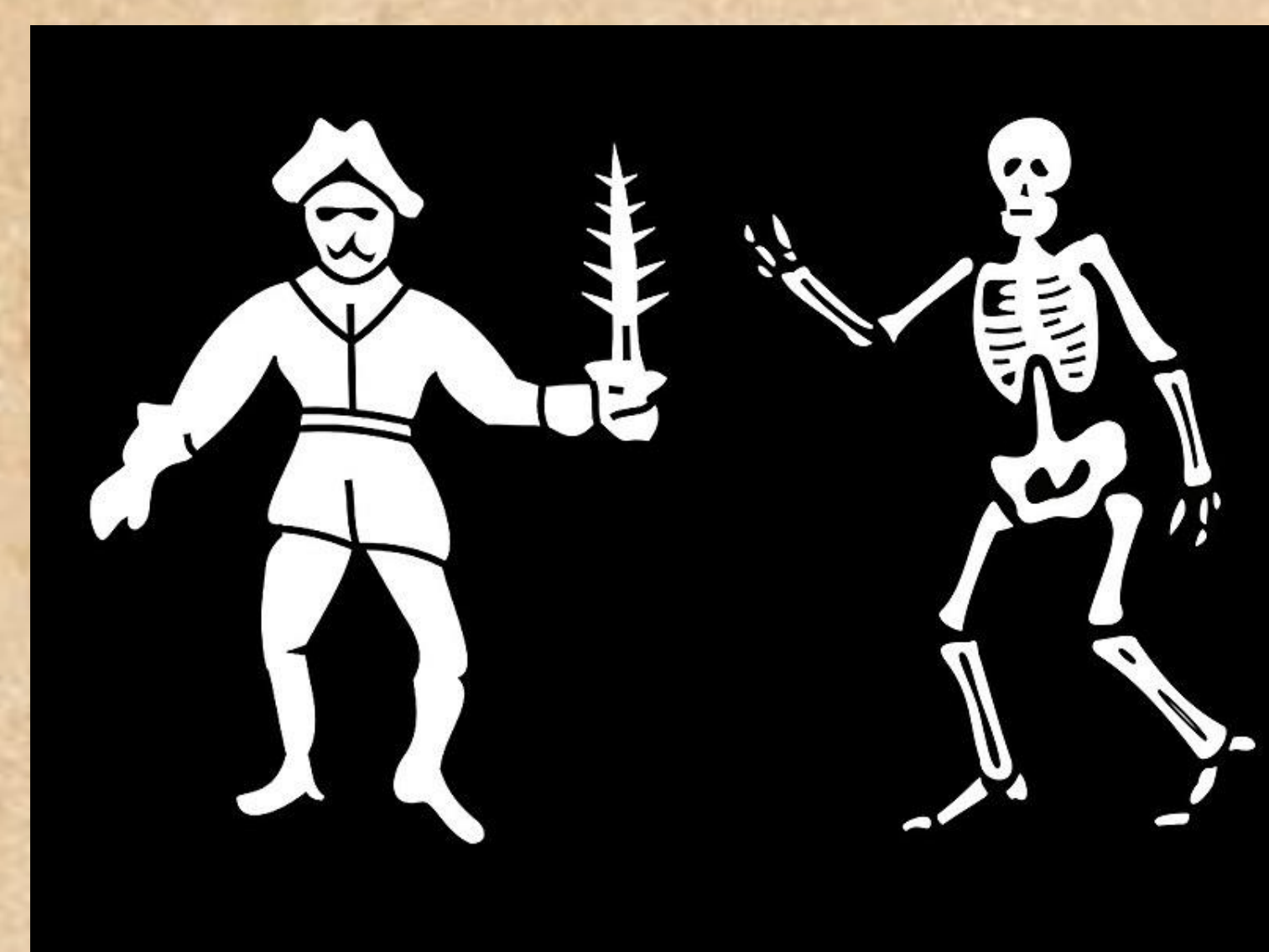


Photo source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartholomew_Roberts

“...it had the Figure of a Skeleton in it, and a Man pourtray'd with a flaming Sword in his Hand, intimating a Defiance of Death it self.”

- Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*

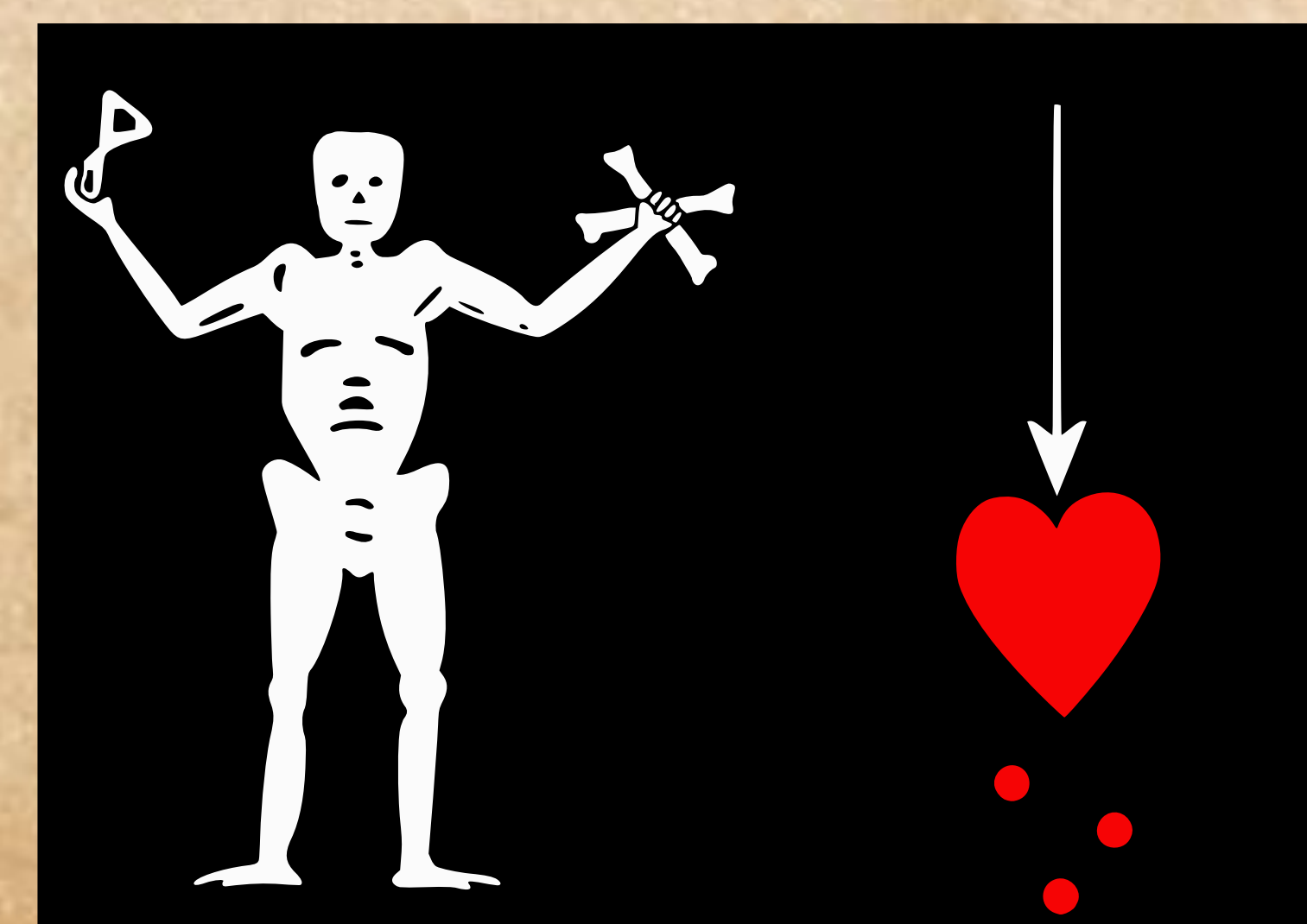


Photo source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartholomew_Roberts

“The Flag had a Death in it, with an Hour-Glass in one Hand, and cross Bones in the other, a Dart by it, and underneath a Heart dropping three Drops of Blood.”

- Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*

BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS: KING OF THE ATLANTIC

PIRATES

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Bartholomew “Black Bart” Roberts captured over four-hundred ships throughout his three-year career, more than any other pirate in the Atlantic, bringing trade to a screeching halt. He rightfully earned the title of “King of the Atlantic Pirates.”



Photo source: *A General History of the Pirates* by Captain Charles Johnson

“Captain Bartho. Roberts with two Ships, viz. the *Royal Fortune* and *Ranger*, takes a Sail in Whydah Road on the Coast of Guiney, January 11th. 172½”

- Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*

TIMELINE OF ROBERTS'S PIRATE CAREER

June 1719	The <i>Princess</i> was captured by Howell Davis, taking Roberts and other crew members as captives.
July 1719	Captain Davis was killed in action and Roberts was elected as the new captain of the <i>Royal Rover</i> .
July 1719 – May 1720	Roberts and his crew crossed the Atlantic in less than a month and spend time sailing between Brazil and the Caribbean, where they faced many defeats.
June 1720 – April 1721	Roberts and his crew sailed North to Newfoundland for a short period, where Roberts acquired his infamous <i>Royal Fortune</i> , then return to the Caribbean. They devastated seaborne trade in the West Indies.
April 1721 – February 1722	Roberts and his crew sailed back to the West African coast, where he acquired his other infamous ship, <i>Ranger</i> .
February 1722	Roberts's ships were captured by British war vessels the <i>Swallow</i> and <i>Weymouth</i> at Cape Lopez. Roberts was killed in the violent exchange. His crew was tried a month later; sentences included execution, penal servitude, and imprisonment.

SUMMARY

It is unknown how Bartholomew Roberts, born John Roberts in a small Welsh village in 1682, got his start on the sea. He emerged in the historical record as the third mate aboard a slaving vessel, the *Princess*, on the coast of West Africa, which was captured by Howell Davis in 1719. After Davis's death, just six weeks later, the crew elected Roberts their new captain, likely because of his navigation skills and daring and well-tempered attitude. Roberts led his crew to the coast of Brazil, through the Caribbean, up to Newfoundland, back to the Caribbean, and finally, they returned to the Western coast of Africa, capturing, plundering, and burning ships along the way. In total, between 1719 and 1722, Roberts and his crew captured upwards of four-hundred ships. Roberts followed the common egalitarian socio-cultural foundation of pirate life as explicated in Marcus Rediker's 1981 analysis of Anglo-American pirates, the first of its kind. Roberts created and enforced a pirate code, called articles, which gave more power to the crew than the captain, allowed for a more equal distribution of plunder, and demanded discipline from himself and his crew; he established alliances with other pirate captains and targeted those responsible for oppressive systems of authority or those known for taking actions against pirates, displaying pirates' symbolic unity; and he enacted revenge on those that wronged him or attempted to capture him. Bartholomew Roberts captained his ship with order and civility while holding a capacity for ruthless and barbarous violence, aiding to his success as a pirate.