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### ***Centre for International Heritage Activities (CIE)***

The CIE is an independent, non-profit organization for international knowledge exchange about the heritage of the European expansion and international heritage cooperation.



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# ANCODS

## **WELL TRAVELLED ARTEFACTS**

The Australian-Netherlands VOC collection makes its final voyage

## Foreword by Ambassador C.W. Andreae

Exploring new and faster sea routes between Europe and the Dutch East Indies, and the search for trading opportunities, first brought Dutch sailors to Australian shores. Travelling to this part of the world in the 17th and 18th centuries was not only a risky undertaking; it was also a complex and lengthy expedition. It required sturdy, self-sufficient ships, large crews and meant many months at sea away from home.

The discovery in the 1960's of four Dutch shipwrecks off the coast of Western Australia presented Australian and Dutch scholars with a unique insight into daily life aboard these ships and the purpose of those sea voyages. It has enabled them to better understand and appreciate an interesting part of our joint past.

Under the Agreement between the Netherlands and Australia Concerning Old Dutch Shipwrecks, ANCODS for short, the artefacts found on board were divided between Australia and the Netherlands. On the occasion of the commemoration of 400 years of our bilateral relationship in 2006, the Netherlands Government announced that it would give its share of the treasure to Australia. The official handover will take place on Tuesday 9th November 2010 at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.



This booklet is issued on the occasion of the official handover. As the Netherlands Ambassador to Australia I see it as an excellent opportunity to emphasise our common history and shared cultural heritage. It is important that not only governments, but also citizens of Australia and the Netherlands are aware of this common history. It provides the basis for many Dutch-Australian initiatives and, more generally, for the excellent cooperation between our two countries.

*Willem Andreae*

Willem Andreae  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Canberra, November 9th 2010



*The collection is securely packed in crates, containing boxes with the smaller objects. © CIE*



## ***ANCODS collection's final voyage***

In the 20th Century four VOC-shipwrecks were discovered and excavated off the Western Australian coast. The recovery of archaeological objects from these ships resulted in the bilateral Agreement between Australia and the Netherlands Concerning Old Dutch Shipwrecks (ANCODS). Signed on 6 November 1972, it was agreed that the collection would be equally divided between Australia and the Netherlands.

Over the years the collections from the four ships has been scattered over different museums in Australia and the Netherlands. In 2006, during the celebration of the 400 year Dutch-Australian relationship, the idea of bringing the collections together was first raised by the Netherlands Minister of Culture Maria van der Hoeven. The decision to transfer the Dutch collection was announced by then Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Verhagen on his visit to Australia in 2009. The decision to transfer the objects was formalised on 15 September 2010, when Australia and the Netherlands signed an agreement aboard a replica of the *Batavia* in Lelystad in the Netherlands.

The collection will be officially handed to the Australian Government in a ceremony on Tuesday November 9th 2010 at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, where Netherlands Ambassador Willem Andreae will present the artefacts to Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water, Senator the Hon Don Farrell.

Following the repatriation and handover-ceremony, the objects will be transferred to the Western Australian Museum in Fremantle. This is in line with the current practice that archaeological collections should be kept together as close as possible to their archaeological excavation sites. A united collection will also enable more specialized and comparative research.

An online database has been established to allow the best possible access to information to researchers and the general public in both Australia and the Netherlands.



*Prince Willem Alexander, diving on the Batavia site. Photo: Patrick Baker © WAMM (1997)*



*Geoff Kimpton with Mariners Astrolabe from Vergulde Draeck. Photo: Brian Richards © WAMM (1981)*



## The voyage from Europe to Asia

In the 17th and 18th centuries, hundreds of ships of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) made the voyage from Europe to Asia. Their destination was the lucrative Asian trading network. Their objective was to ship products such as spices, silk, porcelain and tea back to Europe.

The ships followed a route through the southern part of the Indian Ocean along the west coast of Australia on their way to the VOC headquarters in Batavia (now Jakarta) on Java. Some navigators from the VOC made landfall on Australian shores. Most landings were part of deliberate explorations. Others were involuntary and resulted in disastrous loss of ships and lives.

In 1629 VOC-ship the *Batavia* shipwrecked, followed by the *Vergulde Draeck* (1656), the *Zuytdorp* (1712) and the *Zeewijk* (1727). Their sites were discovered and excavated in the 1970's. Artefacts recovered from these wrecks include silver coins, bricks, lead ingots, canon balls, amber and pitch, as well as rare objects owned by crew and passengers such as navigational instruments and ornaments.

Each of these objects forms a window into the functions of the VOC vessels and life aboard these ships. But above all, they are the silent witnesses of the dramatic events that took place 400 years ago. Together, they tell a fascinating story of our joint past and the shared cultural heritage of Australia and the Netherlands.



Engravings from the mid-17th century "The Unlucky Voyage of the Ship Batavia": the wrecked ship Batavia.



For defence the ships carried special chain shots. © CIE



Barber bowl used by the crew for shaving during the journey. © CIE



Square glass bottles were often used due to the limited space on board. © CIE

## ***Zeewijk*** (1727)

The history of the *Zeewijk* tells a fascinating story of survival and perseverance in times of extreme hardship.

The *Zeewijk* had left the port of Flushing, Holland, on the 7th of November 1726 with 212 people on board. Its cargo consisted of ten chests of coins and building supplies. Like VOC-ship the *Batavia*, the *Zeewijk* was on her maiden voyage to Batavia when she struck reef in the Houtman Abrolhos on 9th June 1727.

Of all the VOC-ships lost off the Western Australian coast, the men on the *Zeewijk* fared the best after crashing onto a reef on the 9th of June 1727. Although the vessel was badly damaged it did not break up, unlike the other ships. This enabled the men to access its cargo of provisions.

The crew found refuge on an island (today's Gun Island) and sent a number of men to Batavia in the *Zeewijk's* longboat. Regrettably, they disappeared forever, leaving 88 survivors behind.

While the provisions of the wreck lasted, the remaining survivors managed over the subsequent four months to construct a small sailing vessel named *Sloepie*. After nine months, they were able to depart and successfully made their way back to Batavia on 30 April 1728.

Today the wreck of the *Zeewijk* lies in heavy surf, breakers and strong currents four kilometres off the Western Australian coast. Its wreckage lies scattered along Half Moon Reef. Relics from survivor camps were discovered as early as 1840, but it was not until 1968 that the wreck site was finally identified.



Between 1974 and 1977 the Western Australian Museum conducted land and underwater surveys and excavations. Artefacts recovered from the *Zeewijk* include pieces of rigging, cannons, kegs of nails, wine glasses and ceramics. Artefacts found at the land site include glass, bone, ceramics and metal objects.

*Batavia's* main anchor still lies on Morning Reef, Houtman's Abrolhos. Photo: Patrick Baker © WAMM (1977)



*Musket balls and cannon balls used to defend the ship.* © CIE



*Tap, decorated with a "fleur de lis".* © CIE



*Selection of the wide range of objects found such as buckles, fishing hooks and scissors.* © CIE





Ballast & building bricks. © CIE

## UNFINISHED VOYAGES

### *Zuytdorp* (1712)

In the summer of 1711 the *Zuytdorp* left Zeeland in the Netherlands with 316 people on board. It carried a special cargo of 250,000 newly minted guilders for the VOC in Asia. Because of unfavourable conditions off the coast of Africa 112 people on board had died by the time she reached Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. As a result, the *Zuytdorp* was forced to enlist over a hundred new men at the Cape and only left in April 1712 for Batavia. The *Zuytdorp* was subsequently lost without trace, until its wreck was discovered in 1964.

What happened to the *Zuytdorp*'s survivors after the wrecking is not known. They probably explored the area up to 30 kilometres from the wreck, leaving items behind. It is also very likely that they were discovered by local Indigenous people, who in 1834 told stories of white people camping and trading biscuits. Other evidence of early contact with indigenous people is the occurrence of a disease in the region, which was prevalent at the Cape of Good Hope in the 17th century. Legends about red or fair-haired Indigenous people also persist.

The wreck of the *Zuytdorp* was discovered in 1964 on an exposed reef between the coastal towns of Kalbarri and Geraldton. Years earlier, wreckage of the *Zuytdorp* and two camp sites had been located on shore. Both were identified as *Zuytdorp* survivor sites in 1927 and 1954.

Between 1971 and the late 1990s the Western Australian Museum carried out extensive archaeological investigations on the *Zuytdorp* sites. Their findings are most conclusive about the actual wrecking of the vessel, but still sketchy regarding the events that occurred on shore.



Museum diver Jim Stewart with Beardman Jug from Batavia. Photo: Jeremy Green © WAMM (1973)





Beard man jug often found in wreckages of VOC ships. The name originates from the iconography on the jug. © CIE

## **Batavia (1629)**

The VOC's flagship *Batavia* was the first Dutch ship to perish off the west coast of Australia. She left from Texel in the Netherlands on her maiden voyage in 1628 among a fleet of seven ships. Its main cargo consisted of silver coins, but also carried pre-fabricated sandstone blocks for a gate for the new city of Batavia as well as two antiquities belonging to the artist Rubens that was intended for sale to an Indian Moghul ruler.

When she shipwrecked in 1629, the *Batavia* broke apart drowning 40 people. A burgeoning mutiny slowly unfolded whilst its crew tried to salvage the remaining cargo. Its 250 survivors were transported onto two small reef islands in the Houtman Abrolhos archipelago, after which a party of 47 men, including the ship's commander departed in search of water and rescue. Their incredible journey in a longboat through uncharted waters brought them to Batavia.

Returning to the wreckage site three months later, they found that in their absence 125 men, women and children had been gradually massacred, women raped and cargo looted. A number of ringleaders of these atrocities were put to the gallows and two men were left behind as punishment.

On the 5th of December 1629 the rescue ship *Sardam* returned to Batavia with the remaining survivors and salvaged cargo of coins and jewels. Only 122 people survived the shipwreck of the *Batavia*.

The wreck of the *Batavia* was discovered 300 hundred years later in 1963 on Morning Reef near Beacon Island. Excavations and extensive archaeological and forensic analyses now link graves and artefacts from the *Batavia* with the events following the *Batavia* shipwrecking.



Engravings from "The Unlucky Voyage of the Ship Batavia" - "Ongeluckige Voyagie van't Schip Batavia".

## ***Vergulde Draeck* (1656)**

The *Vergulde Draeck* left the Dutch port of Texel in a fleet on the 4th of October 1655. She carried a crew of about 193 men with a cargo of trading goods and eight chests of silver coins. In April 1656 she would meet her destiny on the shores of Western Australia.

When the vessel crashed onto the reef it broke up immediately. Only 75 survivors managed to reach the shore in a schuyt (longboat). The only items they could salvage were a few washed-up provisions. The skipper dispatched a party of six men in the small rowing boat to seek help in Batavia.

In 1658 a rescue attempt was undertaken. Two ships, the *Wackende Boey* and *Emeloort*, were equipped at Batavia with provisions for six months. They received strict instructions to search for survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck* and salvage the cargo from the wreck. They were unsuccessful, although one ship managed to locate pieces of wreckage.

Ultimately the remains of the *Vergulde Draeck* were discovered in 1963 by spear-fishing skindivers. Between 1972 and 1983 the staff of the Western Australian Museum retrieved many artefacts from the wreckage site. The collection includes large numbers of ballast bricks, clay pipes, stoneware, wooden and metal fragments as well as elephant tusks, leather shoes and many coins. The only evidence of the potential fate of the survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck* surfaced in 1931, when a boy found 40 Japanese and Dutch silver coins dating from 1619 to 1655 in sand hills north of Cape Leschenault.



*"Ivory and brass Seal of Batavia's preacher, Gijsbert Bastiaensz. Photo: Patrick Baker © WAMM (1989)*



*Clay pipe. © CIE*



*Numerous candlesticks like this one, in different conditions, have been found on board. © CIE*



*Trade supplies, such as ivory elephant tusks, were often found on board. © CIE*