

### Batavia

Wrecked in 1629 on Morning Reef in the Abrolhos Islands. Mutineers massacred 125 people before Commander Francisco Pelsaert returned with a rescue team. Only 116 of the original 316 on board survived.



### Vergulde Draeck

Struck a reef near Ledge Point in 1656. Only 75 of the crew of 193 made it to safety. Seven of the crew then made it to Batavia and searches for the others were launched without success.



### Zeewijk

Hit a reef on the west side of the Pelsaert group in the Abrolhos Islands in June, 1727. A small vessel was made on the island out of the ship's wreckage and 82 men reached the Sunda Strait in April 1728.



### Zuytdorp


Lost without a trace in 1712. Relics found on shore in 1927 indicated survivors made camp and the wreck was later discovered on the cliffs south of Shark Bay.





SOURCE: WA MARITIME MUSEUM, COURTESY CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE ACTIVITIES, LEIDEN, ANNE BOESCHOTEN.

# Treasures of the deep to return



**MALCOLM QUEKETT  
AMSTERDAM**

They sailed south from Africa's Cape of Good Hope, then east, running hard on the trade winds that drove them towards WA. Then they would turn and head north on their quest for spices to trade from what is now Indonesia. But sometimes they didn't make it. Sometimes, sailing as they were without the aid of modern navigational instruments, they were blown too far to the east and were ripped apart by the reefs and pounded by the swell which smashes into our rugged coast. Sometimes those aboard survived and escaped north to Batavia, as it was then known, on boats launched from their ships. Others were left on remote islands and later rescued. Some perished.

Much of the ships' cargoes ended up on the seabed, or wedged in rocks and hollows where they lay, disturbed only by time and tides, for hundreds of years.

Then, one by one, the four wrecked ships of the Dutch East India Company were found off the WA coast and began to give up their treasures.

The Australian Netherlands Committee on Old Dutch Shipwrecks was set up and artefacts from the ships were distributed to the WA Maritime Museum in Fremantle, the National Maritime Museum in Sydney, the Geld Museum in Utrecht and the Scheepvaart Museum in Amsterdam.

Now, the Netherlands ANCODS artefacts are to be sent back to Australia as part of its aim of furthering mutual cultural heritage and encouraging communication and research.

And what treasures are headed our way.

*The West Australian* can today reveal some of the highlights of the collection of 241 artefacts and 685



Treasures: Curator Linn Borghuis with glass relics. Picture: Anne Boeschoten

coins, which were salvaged from wrecks of the Batavia (1629), Vergulde Draeck (1656), Zuytdorp (1712) and Zeewijk (1727).

The collection provides valuable insights into seafaring and society in the 17th and 18th centuries, about how the ships operated and glimpses into the personal habits of those who sailed in them.

They smoked. There are a number of delicate clay pipes, they drank from ceramic jugs and used candlestick holders.

There was all manner of weaponry, from deadly-looking musket balls to impressive, weighty cannon balls.

They carried much coloured glassware, used knives with ivory handles and early pencils made of coal. There were copper plates and canisters, delicate items such as tiny scissors and spoons and weighty bulk cargo, such as slate and bricks.

And of course, coins, some of which would be carried to buy spices and others which may have been from personal collections.

Curiously, they include coins not only from the Netherlands, but also from Bolivia and Mexico.

When the Federal Government announced the repatriation plan last year, it said the collection represented "the largest maritime artefact endowment Australia has ever received".

The collection is being lovingly prepared for its journey by the

Centre for International Heritage Activities in the town of Leiden, south of Amsterdam.

The centre is an independent, non-profit organisation for international knowledge exchange about the heritage of the European expansions and international heritage co-operation.

The centre, which will co-ordinate the repatriation, manages international heritage programs.

It is working on an ANCODS online database to allow access to the collection when the objects are no longer in the Netherlands.

Project co-ordinator Linn Borghuis said it was considered easier to research and collaborate on collections if they were kept together, rather than being split up, thus the decision had been taken to send it back to Australia.

It was hoped the collection would arrive in Australia later this year.

Environment and Heritage Minister Peter Garrett said the objects would be kept as close as possible to the wrecks from which they were salvaged.



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