

Basic Detail Report

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Title

Rijksdaalder of West Friesland, United Provinces of the Netherlands, from the wreck of the BATAVIA

Date

1609

Medium

Silver

Dimensions

Overall: 26.76 g, 40 mm

Name

Coin

History

The BATAVIA was built for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and in October 1628 set sail on its maiden voyage from Texel in the Netherlands for Batavia in the Dutch East Indies (present day Jakarta, Indonesia). For the voyage out, it was carrying trade goods and chests of silver coins. In command was Francis Pelsaert, and Ariaen Jacobsz was skipper. The relationship between these men was acrimonious and deteriorated further during the voyage to a point where Jacobsz plotted with fellow crew member Jeronimus Cornelisz to mutiny and seize the ship. On board were approximately 332 crew, soldiers, and passengers. After calling at the Cape of Good Hope, Jacobsz purposely steered BATAVIA off course to separate the ship from the rest of the fleet, while at the same time gathering a group of men to carry out his plan. However, the plan was thrown into confusion when the BATAVIA struck a reef in the Abrolhos Islands, off the Western Australia coast on 4 June 1629. The ship was unable to be re floated and soon started breaking up. The crew and passengers were ferried to nearby islands using the ships two smaller boats, taking with them limited water and food supplies. Safe from immediate danger, Pelsaert organised a reconnaissance trip to the mainland to search for water, but when this failed, he made the fateful decision to sail directly to Batavia to seek rescue. He took with him skipper Jacobsz, and 46 crew and passengers. They reached Batavia on 7th July 1629 where Jacobsz was promptly placed in prison as a result of his conduct. Back in the Abrolhos Islands, Jeronimus Cornelisz took control of the remaining 268 survivors. Still plotting mutiny, he effectively isolated soldiers (loyal to the Pelsaert and the VOC) from the main group of survivors by sending them to another island in search of water. He then proceeded to murder any of the remaining survivors who resisted his authority. In all, 125 men, women and children were killed. In the meantime, the soldiers (under the disciplined leadership of Webbie Hayes) had found water and food on their island. From They soon learnt of the killings on the neighbouring island, and realising Cornelisz's deception, prepared themselves for a fight, constructing a fortified position. This soon eventuated as Cornelisz's supplies began to run low. Several battles ensued in which Hayes's men successfully defended

their position. Such was the situation when the rescue ship SARDAM (carrying commander Pelsaert) appeared off the islands. Order was soon restored and Cornelisz and some of his men were tried and executed. Two men were marooned on the mainland. When the SARDAM finally returned to Batavia, commander Pelsaert was held responsible for the loss of the BATAVIA and his assets were seized. He died a year later. The shipwreck of the BATAVIA was discovered in 1963 and is protected under the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976.