

# Australian National MARITIME MUSEUM

N E W S L E T T E R

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## DISCOVERY!

*Who "discovered" Australia?  
European navigators seeking, more than 400 years  
ago, to extend the frontiers of their known world?  
Asian seafarers from the lands north of the  
continent?  
Or Aborigines, moving south by land bridge or sea  
some 40 000 years ago?*

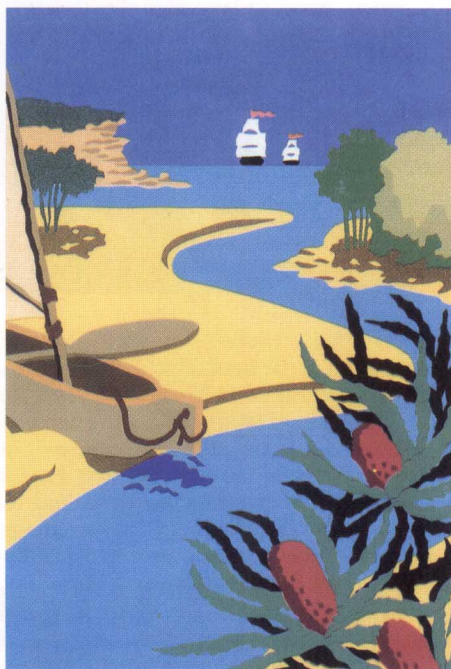
All these possibilities are explored in *Finding Australia*, one of the Australian National Maritime Museum's six opening exhibition themes. (The other themes are: Commerce, Navy, Leisure, Immigration, US-Australia maritime relations.) Martin Terry, Curator of the *Finding Australia* theme here explains how the story will be told.

### **ABORIGINAL ORIGINS EXPLORED**

The exhibition begins with an examination of Aboriginal beliefs as retained in their oral histories. Many of these oral histories explain the Aboriginal presence in Australia as deriving from ancestral beings who came ashore from the sea.

Debate continues as to whether the earliest Aborigines arrived at a time when Australia was linked by land to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea before a subsidence of the sea bed created the Timor and Arafura seas or whether they arrived by some kind of vessel — logs, rafts, or simple canoes. By whatever means they arrived, it is generally accepted that human occupation of Australia began at least 40 000 years ago.

The exhibition will use bark paintings, graphics and artefacts such as reed and bark canoes and mangrove-pole rafts to illustrate Aboriginal affinity with the sea. Spears, fish traps and dugong nets will illustrate how they wrest a living from the ocean and estuaries.



*This striking illustration by Eymont-Kin Yee Design of Sydney has been used on a special Finding Australia poster and postcard series.*

The role of Asian and Torres Strait seafarers in the settlement of Australia is also examined, and their influence on Aboriginal society and maritime technology. In par-

ticular, the development of the Makassan trepang (sea-slug or beche-de-mer) trade and the Makassan-Aboriginal relationship will be examined.

### **ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEANS**

With the arrival of Europeans in Australian waters — the first, the Portuguese, in the 16th century — the exhibition examines a different sort of myth: the stories taken back to Europe about the inhabitants of the legendary "Great South Land" talked about by the ancients.

The arrival of more sophisticated explorer-navigators in later centuries — and a decrease in public gullibility — saw the growth of a more rational bibliography of the South Seas. Artists accompanying such explorers as James Cook, for example, took back skilful and usually accurate impressions of the newly-discovered lands and their flora and fauna. The artist aboard Cook's *ENDEAVOUR*, Sydney Parkinson, produced beautiful and very detailed watercolours of flowers, birds, fish and animals.

The Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French and English are recalled by contemporary charts, paintings, books and accounts of voyages and examples of early navigating instruments and models of some of the ships involved.

**PRIME MINISTERS  
AT MUSEUM FOR  
AKARANA PRESENTATION**

**New Zealand's Bicentennial gift, the restored 1888 gaff cutter AKARANA, was formally presented to the Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, AC, by the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr David Lange, at a ceremony on the Museum site on August 20 — see back page.**



# The search for *Terra Australis Incognita*

... we were the first  
that ever burst  
into that silent sea ...

So said Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, and it is generally assumed that he was talking about the Pacific. Factually, it is recorded that the first European to see the Pacific was the Spaniard Vasco Nunez de Balboa, who was awed by the vast expanse of ocean westward of the Isthmus of Panama on 25 September 1513.

Balboa called it the "Great South Sea" and, wading in, claimed it and all the islands and continents it washed for the King of Spain. Men such as Balboa believed they could stake such sweeping claims. After all, in 1493 a Papal Bull had divided the world in two — the west for Spain, the east for Portugal. As the explorations of both nations progressed, these allocated hemispheres overlapped.

When Balboa sighted the Pacific, the Portuguese had already been edging towards it from the other direction: Vasco da Gama had pioneered the sea route from Portugal to India in 1497-98, extending the discovery of Bartholomew Diaz in 1487 that a vast ocean lay to the east of the Cape of Storms (Cape of Good Hope). The Portuguese within a few years had established a powerful trading empire from India to Malaya and the Moluccas (the Spice Islands).

Long before the Portuguese adventures, inquiring minds in Europe had been speculating on what lay on the other side of the earth — a *Terra Australis Incognita* — to balance the known land masses of Europe and North America. Claudius Ptolemy, the second-century Egyptian astronomer-geographer, had postulated the existence of a large land mass enclosing the Indian Ocean as a sort of lake.

## DRAKE IN THE PACIFIC

In the 15th century maps showed *Terra Australis* as a vast continent centred on the South Pole, extending as far north as latitude 60 degrees south, and in the Pacific almost to the Equator. As late as the 1760s the British Government would order Lieutenant James Cook to search for the legendary continent.

But long before Cook, of course, other English sailors had been sent on the same quest, among them Francis Drake

The Apotheosis  
of Captain Cook  
— a 1794  
etching by P.J. de  
Louthembourg.  
Photograph:  
ANMM.



(1543-1596). Drake is probably best remembered as the hero of the battle with the Spanish Armada of 1588 and as an indefatigable harasser of Spanish ships and colonies.

These exploits tend to obscure his greater claim to fame as the first English sailor to circumnavigate the globe and the fact that one of the objects of his circumnavigation was to discover the legendary continent of *Terra Australis Incognita*.

Financed by a syndicate headed by Queen Elizabeth 1, Drake sailed from Portsmouth in late 1577 in command of the 100 ton PELICAN, the ELIZABETH (80 tons); the MARIGOLD (30 tons) and two smaller supply ships. During the voyage Drake renamed the PELICAN the GOLDEN HIND in honour of one of his patrons, Sir Christopher Hatton, whose crest included a golden hind.

Many details of Drake's subsequent voyage are still obscure; they were deliberately suppressed at the time because much of his route lay through waters to which Spain claimed exclusive rights. Queen Elizabeth and her syndicate had planned the whole undertaking in great secrecy for this reason.

Drake entered the Pacific through the Straits of Magellan. He had destroyed his two small supply ships before attempting the straits, and soon lost two more vessels:

the MARIGOLD sank with all hands, and ELIZABETH, driven back by storms, sailed for home. Drake, his expedition now reduced to the GOLDEN HIND, sailed along the western coast of South America — plundering Spanish ships and settlements en route — and then sailed as far as 48 degrees north latitude, seeking a homeward passage over the top of the north American continent.

Foiled, because no such passage existed, he sailed south again and spent a month on the Californian coast, refitting and revictualling. In what is now Drake's Bay, north of San Francisco, he left a plaque claiming "New Albion" for Queen Elizabeth before setting out for home across the vastness of the North Pacific. His route took him via the Philippines, the Moluccas and the Cape of Good Hope.

Drake arrived back in Plymouth to acclaim and a knighthood in late 1580, three years after setting out. His voyage had been a remarkable one in terms of courage and endurance (and profit: members of the syndicate earned 47 pounds on every pound they had invested, thanks largely to Drake's depredations against the Spanish). From the point of view of exploration and discovery it had added little to man's knowledge: *Terra Australis Incognita* remained as elusive as ever.

## LIBRARY HOURS

● The Australian National Maritime Museum Library is open to the public between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday. As reader places are limited, admission is by appointment only. Frances Prentice may be contacted on (02) 27 9111 extension 50.



## OPENING A SPANISH LAKE

Early in the 16th Century a dispute arose between the Portuguese and the Spaniards about the Spice Islands — in whose sphere of influence did they lie? A young Portuguese who had become a naturalised Spaniard, Ferdinand Magellan, who had visited the islands with a Portuguese expedition, offered to show the Spaniards a shorter route to them — and by doing so to prove that they lay within Spain's sphere.

After months of debate, the young King Charles of Spain (later Emperor Charles V) accepted Magellan's offer and in 1519 Magellan in the *TRINIDAD* (110 tons) led the *SANTO ANTONIO* (120 tons); *CONCEPCION* (90 tons); *VICTORIA* (85 tons) and *SANTIAGO* (75 tons) out of the mouth of the Guadalquivir River and south-westwards across the Atlantic on what some historians have called the greatest single voyage in history.

Despite leaky ships, a bloody mutiny, and the usual hazards of 16th Century maritime travel, Magellan "burst into that silent sea" through the straits now named after him in November 1520 — more than a year after leaving Spain.

Magellan had a harrowing crossing of the Pacific. The stores loaded in Spain had been inadequate. Scurvy attacked the crew, Rats and sawdust were eaten, as was the rawhide

used to prevent the rigging chafing on the yards.

Magellan seems to have reached the Tuamotus in January 1521 and the Marianas group a few weeks later. After a month or two the little fleet sailed through the southern Philippines (although they were not given that name, after the Emperor of Spain's son, Prince Philip, until 1542) and entered the port of Cebu. He was killed on the island of Mactan, near Cebu, while trying to impress the Rajah of Cebu's authority on a dissident chief. Thus ended the life of the first man to almost circumnavigate the globe, and the first great Pacific explorer.

The remnants of the expedition — 170 of the original starters had died — were brought back to Spain in 1522 by Juan Sebastian del Cano, a pilot, who had been involved a year before in the abortive mutiny against Magellan. Del Cano's memory has survived the years — one of the ships in the Tall Ships Race which arrived in Sydney this year was the Spanish sail training ship *JUAN SEBASTIAN DEL CANO*.

(Magellan, incidentally, failed in one of his original objects — to prove that the Spice Islands belonged to Spain. Under the *Tordesillas Capitulation* of 1494, the islands were deemed to be within the Portuguese limits, and Spain abandoned its claim).

In the years following Magellan's death the Spanish sent out several expeditions across the northern Pacific from their colon-

ies in Mexico. In 1565 the Spanish founded a permanent settlement in the Philippines and established a regular trade route between the Philippines and Mexico.

## THE SEARCH FOR KING SOLOMON'S MINES

It was the thirst for gold more than knowledge which fired many early explorers — or at least their patrons.

For many years stories had circulated in Europe that the source of King Solomon's gold — the land of Ophir — was a group of islands in the Pacific, and in 1567 a Spanish expedition set out from Callao, Peru, to find them, although the officially declared aim was to "convert all infidels to Christianity".

The expedition consisted of two ships — the *LOS REYES* (250 tons) and the *TODOS SANTOS* (107 tons) — under the command of Alvaro de Mendana.

For two months the ships wandered across the Pacific without sighting land. There was dissension between Mendana, who was only 25, and his second in command, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa. Their first landfall is believed to have been the Ellice Islands (now Kiribati) and soon after, 80 days out of Callao, they reached a large group of islands. Mendana named several of them as he sailed along — Santa Ysabel, Guadalcanal, San Cristobal.

Relations with the natives fluctuated from hospitality to hostility. All attempts at con-

## Rare 'mermaid' for Museum

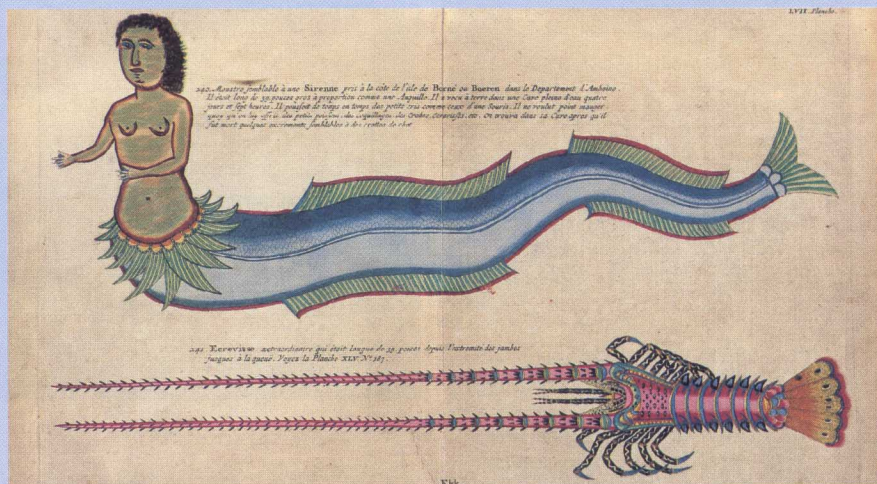
A hand-coloured 18th century engraving of a "monster resembling a Siren" is a recent, unusual acquisition by the Museum. The figure, which shows a woman's head, arms and torso surmounting a very long, eel-like tail, was part of a rare publication illustrating marine life in the East Indies. Depicted below the mermaid is a spiny lobster.

"The mermaid will be displayed in a small section on myths and legends that refer to this region," said curator of the Finding Australia exhibition, Martin Terry.

Voyages of discovery in the Age of Enlightenment may have sparked interest in natural history and encouraged scientific observation, but the uncharted world remained a powerful stimulus to the imagination. Writers and artists still created fanciful lands and creatures — like the Museum's mermaid.

"This section will make reference to stories like Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels, which drew inspiration from the voyages of William Dampier," said Martin Terry. "The mermaid will illustrate the belief in strange creatures in unknown seas."

The Museum's mermaid was drawn by Samuel Fallours who was employed by



*The Fallours mermaid and crayfish. Photograph: ANMM*

the Dutch East Indies Company governors of Ambon to illustrate curiosities of natural history. Fallours' art was first published in Paris, 1718, in a remarkable work entitled *'Fishes, Crayfishes and Crabs, of Diverse Coloration and Extraordinary Form, Which Are to be Found About the Islands of the Moluccas and on the Coasts of Southern Lands.'*

Many of the species illustrated are identifiable today, but the artist's captions make it clear that his experience of them was not always first-hand, contrary to his claims. Fallours' mermaid "... lived in a tub of water for days ... and occasionally uttered cries like those of a

mouse". It is now thought to have been a dugong. The spiny lobster, identified now as *Panulirus ornatus*, was called by Fallours "the mountain crayfish" which "climb(s) into the trees to eat fruit" and which spawns eggs of "sky-blue, speckled with red spots, and are as big as pigeon eggs".

Elsewhere he illustrates a walking fish that "followed me everywhere with great familiarity, much like a little dog".

The Museum's engraving, hand-coloured in vibrant, clear pastel tones, was located in a Sydney print dealer's premises, and came from the 1754 edition of the rare book.



## ◀ THE SOLOMONS

version — there were four Franciscan friars with the expedition — failed, and after spending some months cruising among the islands, plagued by scanty supplies and increasing illness among his crew, and with no sign of the legendary gold mines, Mendana set sail for home. No other Europeans were to visit the islands for 200 years.

Mendana had a nightmare voyage back to Callao. His ships leaked and laboured, his men almost starved and many died from scurvy. They arrived back in Callao almost 23 months after setting out. By any standards, Mendana had made a great voyage, but the official view of the islands he discovered was unenthusiastic. A Callao bureaucrat wrote to the king of Spain: "In my opinion, they were of little importance ... in the course of these discoveries they found no specimens of spices, nor of gold and silver, nor of merchandise, nor of any other source of profit."

But along the waterfront of Callao people believed otherwise. Stories spread through Peru and the other Spanish possessions in South America of "Indians with golden clubs" and "golden river beds" in Guadalcanal.

Soon, what Mendana's pilots has prosaically named the Western Islands came to be known as the Isles of Solomon — or, as they are called today, the Solomons. ∞

The most unusual of the Museum's floating collection is this Indonesian sailing craft, right, known as a *lete-lete*. SEKAR AMAN, right, ("Flower of Security") is an example of the traditional, engineless *perahu*s that are still sailed into Australian waters by Indonesian subsistence fishermen, permitted to gather trepang off the Kimberley coast of northern Western Australia under an agreement between the Australian and Indonesian governments. It was trepang fishermen from Makassar in Indonesia who made the first known Asian maritime contacts with Australia, long before the coming of European settlers (see main story). While the Makassans are no longer involved in the Australian trepang fisheries, sailors from the island communities of Roti, near Timor, and Raas, near Java, are the inheritors of this centuries-old tradition of Asian-Australian voyages. SEKAR AMAN, built by the seamen of RAAS, was constructed with the simplest of hand-tools in much the same way as the earlier Makassan boats. A study of this seafaring community, their boatbuilding and maritime trades — the first such research undertaken on Raas — has been prepared for the Museum, recording one of modern Indonesia's more traditional maritime societies.

## ASIAN SAILORS AND ARNHEM LAND PEOPLE

The foreigners came to Australia each year in sophisticated sailing vessels carrying up to 30 men. They set up an export fishery, employing Aboriginal people to help them. They traded tools, food and tobacco and they showed the people how to build better boats.

Sometimes, when they sailed home to their strange city with its bustling, international port, Arnhem Land people went with them. Their words entered the language of the clans, who painted and sang and danced the coming of the foreigners. They left children to some of the women, and so they became ancestors.

This is **not** a description of early contact with European traders — usually an unhappier encounter. It is an account of the first known Aboriginal commercial and cultural contacts with seamen from the world outside Australia and the Torres Strait islands. The visits started at least a century before Europeans began to commercially exploit Australian waters, and they came from a nearby South East Asian maritime culture that had seafaring traditions at least as old as those of Europe.

The story of this contact will be a sub-

theme in the Finding Australia exhibition. The sailors were Makassans from the island called Celebes in what to European explorers were the Isles of Spice, the Dutch East Indies or the Malay Archipelago — today's Indonesia. The Makassans sailed to Australia's north — known to them as *Marege* and *Jawa Kaya* — in search of a valuable species they called trepang. This is the sea-cucumber or *becbe-de-mer*, a member of the class *holothurioidea* which, despite its unappetising appearance, has been esteemed by Chinese gourmets for centuries as a delicacy and an aphrodisiac.

The Makassans sailed each year on the stormy north-west winds of the summer months, risking hurricanes to reach the Australian fishing grounds where they set up camps and enlisted Aboriginal labour to help them collect trepang. The catch was dried and smoked to preserve it.

At Makassar — a trading entrepot long known to the Chinese and later fought over by Portuguese and Dutch seekers of spice — trepang was sold to the annual Chinese trading junks. The first Chinese records of trepang date to the 1500s; together with carbon dates collected from Northern Territory trepang camps, this suggests a trade at least as old as the late 17th or early 18th centuries.

Matthew Flinders, charting northern Australia in the *INVESTIGATOR*, recorded the Makassans in 1803. The Museum's exhibition will feature a specially commissioned model of a *paduwakang*, the type of Makassan boat that Flinders may have encountered, with contemporary engravings of Makassan camps, and will describe the technology of this fishery.

The exhibition will also focus on the impact of this seasonal contact on Northern Territory Aboriginal society. While there



Trepang camp at Raffles Bay. An 1842 lithograph by Louis le Breton. Photograph: ANMM





*View of the Lousiades During a Storm. Etching, circa 1795, by Nicolas Ozanne. Photograph: ANMM.*

## A perilous business

**Remember, remember,  
the Bight of Benin:  
There's one comes out for twenty  
goes in!**

**T**his bitter little ditty warned of the dangers awaiting Europeans on "the White Man's Grave" — the coast of West Africa. It could have applied equally aptly to any of the early maritime explorers, for the cost they paid in lives was fearsome.

On the early Portuguese expeditions to the east in the late 15th and early 16th century, for example, a death rate of six of every seven people who sailed was common.

Sailors were no better off two centuries later: when Admiral George Anson returned to England in 1744 after a voyage around the world which had lasted almost four years, he brought back only 145 of the expedition's original complement. Of the rest, four had been killed in action — and 1300 had succumbed to disease and other

hazards of the sea.

Disease was the greatest killer. In the days before any form of food preservation other than pickling in brine was known, and long before anyone had heard of Vitamin C or even appreciated the need for vegetables in the diet, scurvy ran rampant through ships' crews. This vile deficiency disease led to horribly swollen gums, loose teeth, pulpy flesh, weakness, blindness and death.

Sailors who escaped scurvy died of typhus, malaria, yellow fever, tuberculosis and dysentery; ruptured themselves lifting heavy weights without mechanical aid, broke limbs and skulls in falls from the rigging in heavy weather; and developed rheumatism and arthritis from sleeping in sodden clothes in wet bunks under streams of water from leaking decks.

Ships were slow, hard to work and often rotting away beneath the sailors' feet. Seams would open in a gale and a large ship flood and sink like a stone.

Whole expeditions were swallowed up,

never to be seen again, in the vastness of the Pacific. In 1788, while the First Fleet was temporarily anchored in Botany Bay, a large and well-found French expedition appeared, led by the *Compte de la Perouse's* BOUSSOLE and ASTROLABE, on their way home after an extensive Pacific cruise of exploration commissioned by King Louis XVI. After a short stay in Botany Bay, the French ships sailed out into the Pacific — and, with their complement of 230 men, disappeared. More than 100 years later the mystery was solved when the wrecks of both ships were found at Vanikoro in the Solomons.

An earlier French explorer was luckier than La Perouse. In 1767 Louise Antoine de Bougainville sailed from Uruguay with LA BOUDESE AND L'ETOILE. He crossed the Pacific, exploring and claiming Tahiti, Samoa and the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) for France before returning safely home via New Britain, New Guinea, the Moluccas and Batavia in 1769. Bougainville lost only seven of his 200 men during the voyage, a remarkable achievement for the time.

The Museum has a painting by Gustave Alaux — *Bougainville in Tahiti* — which will be a major exhibit in the Finding Australia exhibition. The painting, apart from its intrinsic beauty, accuracy and realism, is important because, as Bougainville did not have an official artist on his voyage, there are few pictorial records of it.

Maps and charts of the world beyond Europe and the Mediterranean were rudimentary, more often the product of imagination than knowledge. Until the advent of the sextant in 1757, navigators relied on such instruments as astrolabes, armillary spheres, quadrants, traverse boards and cross-staffs. With these primitive instruments they could obtain measurements of latitude — the ship's position north or south of the equator. But for centuries the greatest obstacle to accurate navigation was the inability to determine longitude at sea. Longitude is a position on earth east or west of a "prime meridian" — for example, the Greenwich or zero degree meridian (although, until 1880, many nations set their own prime meridians).

This longitudinal position may be determined by astronomical observations and complicated trigonometry, or by determining the time difference between the navigator's noon and noon on the longitude of Greenwich. As the earth's speed of rotation on the polar axis is known, the difference between Greenwich time and local time could be used to calculate the ship's position relative to the Greenwich meridian. But this calculation required an accurate timepiece, and, until the advent of John Harrison's chronometer in the late 18th Century, sailors simply had no clock accurate enough.

• A Museum sponsor, Raymond Weil Geneve, is making a replica of the Harrison chronometer for the Museum. Raymond Weil is also supplying the museum's internal and external clocks.

## ASIAN SAILORS

were certainly clashes between the two very different cultures, relations were on fairly agreeable commercial terms. The Makassans had no intention of colonising Australia. They required access to territory, marine resources and some labour, and for this they traded iron knives, axes and spearheads, foodstuffs and technology, introducing smoking pipes, dugout canoes and sails. A dugout from Borroloola on the Gulf of Carpentaria and historic photographs of Northern Territory watercraft will be part of the exhibition.

Culturally the Makassans have left a lasting impression, some of which will be displayed in the Museum. Arnhem Land stone-line and rock art impressions tell of the visitors and their ships, still a popular

theme among contemporary artists on bark or other media.

Perhaps the most lasting impressions, however, have been linguistic ones. Makassan words remain in the languages of the Northern Territory, while the rich tradition of oral histories, song cycles and dance record the widening of cultural horizons that came with the Makassans — including the first opportunities for Aboriginal people to travel outside of Australia and the Torres Straits islands. They returned to tell of the strange world of the Makassans to the north.

The Makassan trepang trade lasted until the early 1900s, when they were excluded by Europeans who wished to monopolise it.





## Canoe reconstruction keeps Arnhem land maritime skills alive

A traditional seacraft from the Gulf of Carpentaria has been built by the Yanyuwa people of Borroloola, NT, for the Museum. The bark canoe, which was completed in May 1987, was the first such craft to be built by this Macarthur River community for many decades.

The Yanyuwa, who originally inhabited the Sir Edward Pellew island group in the south west Gulf of Carpentaria, were one of the most maritime-oriented Aboriginal groups in Australia. They used sea-going canoes like the Museum's bark canoe, as well as bark rafts and dugout timber canoes, for transport between the islands and the mainland, for fishing and for harpooning turtles and dugong.

For the building of this Borroloola sea-going bark canoe, called nariyarrku by the Yanyuwa, the old people of the community gave instruction to the younger builders (people in their fifties), describing the details and drawing the craft in the sand. A two metre-long model was built as a preliminary.

Four Yanyuwa people worked on the canoe project. They were Don Miller and his wife Jemina, David Isaac and Arthur King.

The Borroloola boat is one of the most complicated forms of bark canoe built in Australia. It is constructed of several panels of bark from the messmate tree (a eucalyptus) stitched together with twine. Distinctive features include cross-braces and thwarts within the hull, a false bark floor to keep the paddlers out of the bilge-water, and raised bow and stern sections functioning as splash boards.

The canoe is described in the Yanyuwa Tiger Shark Dreaming song:



Conservator Michael Staples, left, and Finding Australia Curator Martin Terry with the Borroloola bark canoe. Photograph: Victoria Fernandez/ANMM.

*Wulka ngarnia*  
*Kirraibul langarnia*  
(the bark canoe rides the waves,  
it gives itself to the waves  
as its bow is splashed)

The canoe, four metres long, is described by the Yanyuwa as a "one-turtle canoe" because of its size. It has been named na-Likajarrayindamara by builder Don Miller, "because that bark came from Likajarrayinda, that little jump-up [hill] to the east of Borroloola".

The construction has been documented to record these vanishing boat-building skills. Before being delivered to the Museum with a working assemblage of paddles, fishing gear, woomera and harpoon, the Borroloola canoe was taken on sea trials in Darwin by John Bradley of the Sacred Sites Authority in the NT capital. This was recorded as part of a film that the Authority produced on Booroloola.



Hunting Dugong. A 1987 linocut by Bede Tungutalum. Photograph: ANMM.

One might almost say the Dutch found Australia, or at least its western coast, by accident.

The Dutch were not looking for Terra Australis or the Great South Land. They were trying to find a trade route to the East.

The Portuguese kept their route via the Cape of Good Hope a secret. The Dutch tried and, like the English, failed to find a north-west passage to the East over the top of North America; eventually they defied the Portuguese and took the route around the Cape. In the late 16th century, Dutch ships reached the Philippines — where the crew of one of them were taken for pirates and killed.

In 1602 the United Dutch East India Company was formed and the random voyages to the east, financed by individual

## ENTER THE DUTCH

syndicates, gave way to organised expeditions with the backing of the powerful Company behind them.

The Portuguese were soon driven out of Java and Malacca and by the first decade of the 17th century the Dutch were in control of huge areas of the far east.

To get to Indonesia and the Spice Islands the Dutch ships would round the Cape and then run almost due east across the Indian Ocean, for 4000 miles before turning north. This cut many weeks off the earlier route, which had run along the coast of Africa or Madagascar until the south-west monsoon was picked up.

It was this trans-Indian Ocean route which brought the Dutch ships in sight of "New Holland", as it came to be called. In 1605 a pinnace, DUYFKEN, sailed from the Dutch colony of Bantam in Indonesia and coasted New Guinea, entered what is now Torres Strait and rounded Cape York.

The Dutch do not seem to have realised that the straits separated Papua New Guinea and the great land mass to the south and, in fact, Abel Tasman was despatched in 1644 to settle the question of whether the scantily-charted "South-land" was joined to Papua New Guinea. This was the second major voyage of discovery by this Dutch



navigator — in 1642 he had sailed south of the Australian mainland and Tasmania and explored the western coast of New Zealand.

It was 10 years before the Dutch decided to have a closer look at “New Holland”. In 1616 Dirck Hartog in EENDRACHT touched the coast south of the present Western Australian town of Carnarvon and sheltered behind an island which bears his name to this day.

No journal of Hartog’s voyage survives, but in 1627 the Dutch East Company produced a map of a strip of coastline — called “Land of Eendracht” covering an area from North-West Cape to about 28 degrees South. Gradually a picture was taking shape, although it was to be more than two centuries before all the lines were linked up by Matthew Flinders and a coherent whole emerged on the charts of the world.

Another Dutch ship, ZEEWULF, visited north-west Western Australia in 1618 and in 1622 the English came on the scene — a tragic debut, in the form of 46 survivors of the TRYALL who arrived in Batavia in small ship’s boats.

As Dutch traffic in the area increased so, naturally, given the wild and uncharted nature of the coast and the primitive



**Ships, a 1646 Dutch title-sheet engraving by Wenzel Hollar. Gift to the Museum by Vaughan Evans. Photograph: ANMM.**

navigational equipment of the day, did shipwrecks. Of all the wrecks, though, none was as horrifying as that of the BATAVIA, which went ashore in the Houtman Abrolhos group off the present Western Australian city of Geraldton in 1629.

The wreck was followed by mutiny,

bloodshed, torture, murder and, after survivors had carried the news to Batavia, savage reprisals. In recent years many artefacts have been recovered from the BATAVIA wreck, and the Museum will have a display on this and other Dutch wrecks.



## William Dampier and Robinson Crusoe

The first English navigator to take a serious look at the Australian coast, as it began emerging from the mists of legend, was William Dampier (1652-1715) a talented but controversial sailor and navigator.

After a short-lived career as a sugar plantation manager and wood-cutter in the West Indies, Dampier took to the sea and became a buccaneer, participating in raids on Spanish south and central American possessions. One piratical voyage to the South Seas eventually became a trip around the world.

On his return to England, Dampier published his journal, *A New Voyage Around the World*, of which the Museum has a copy. His observations on the winds and tides, and the flora and fauna of the places he visited so impressed the British Admiralty that in 1699 he was sent out in HMS ROEBUCK on what was intended to be a

voyage of exploration to “New Guinea, New Holland and *Terra Australis*”

Dampier made his Australian landfall on the far north-west of the continent, near the present Shark Bay, and coasted northwards to the Buccaneer Archipelago, which he had visited on his earlier circumnavigation.

Dampier noted that the land was “not very inviting” and then, finding only brackish water, was forced into Timor for food, fresh water and to repair the ROEBUCK.

After cruising along the western and northern coasts of Papua New Guinea, the ROEBUCK sailed for home, but sank off Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. Dampier and his crew got safely ashore and were rescued some time later by a passing English ship. Back in England, Dampier was courtmartialled for his conduct towards one of his officers, fined and declared unfit for further employment in the Royal Navy.

Despite his court-martial, though, Dampier’s reputation as a navigator was unimpaired, and in 1703 he was given command of a privately-financed privateering expedition to the South Pacific.

The voyage was a fiscal disaster, but Dampier entered, obliquely, the annals of English literature for providing the framework on which Daniel Defoe built his immortal *Robinson Crusoe*. The prototype of Defoe’s hero was Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish seaman aboard one of Dampier’s ships. After a violent disagreement Selkirk asked to be marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chile. There he remained for six years until two English ships, the DUKE and the DUCHESS, arrived at the island during the circumnavigation by the privateer Woodes Rogers. Some indication of the ill-feeling between Selkirk and Dampier may be gauged from the fact that when Selkirk heard that Dampier was aboard the DUKE as navigator, he demanded to be set ashore again! He was dissuaded, and returned safely to England.



Safely stored in Sydney until the Museum opens in 1989, when it will be an important item in the Finding Australia exhibition, is the largest surviving fragment of perhaps the most significant ship in Australian history — the stern-post of HM Bark ENDEAVOUR.

It was in ENDEAVOUR that Lieutenant James Cook, accompanied by the Royal Society’s Joseph Banks and assorted scientists and artists, cruised up the eastern coast of Australia in 1770. It was as a result of Banks’ glowing report on the potential of the country that led to the arrival of the First Fleet 18 years later.

## Fragile remnant of a famous ship

Cook had been sent to the Pacific in 1768 to convey Banks and his scientists to Tahiti, judged the most favourable place on the globe to watch the planet Venus transit the face of the sun. That done, Cook opened sealed instructions from the Admiralty which detailed the second objective of the expedition: to search for the fabled southern continent, *Terra Australis Incognita*.

Cook proved conclusively that the Great South Land as visualised by the ancients did not exist. He circled New

Zealand, charted the east coast of Australia and made it safely home in 1771, despite having run aground on the Great Barrier Reef. Cook’s subsequent voyages, in 1772-1775 and 1776-1780 were unquestionably of enormous scientific value — but, equally unquestionably, his first voyage (1768-1771) was, in its ultimate results, the most important for Australia.

The Finding Australia exhibition will include displays interpreting Cook and his voyages.





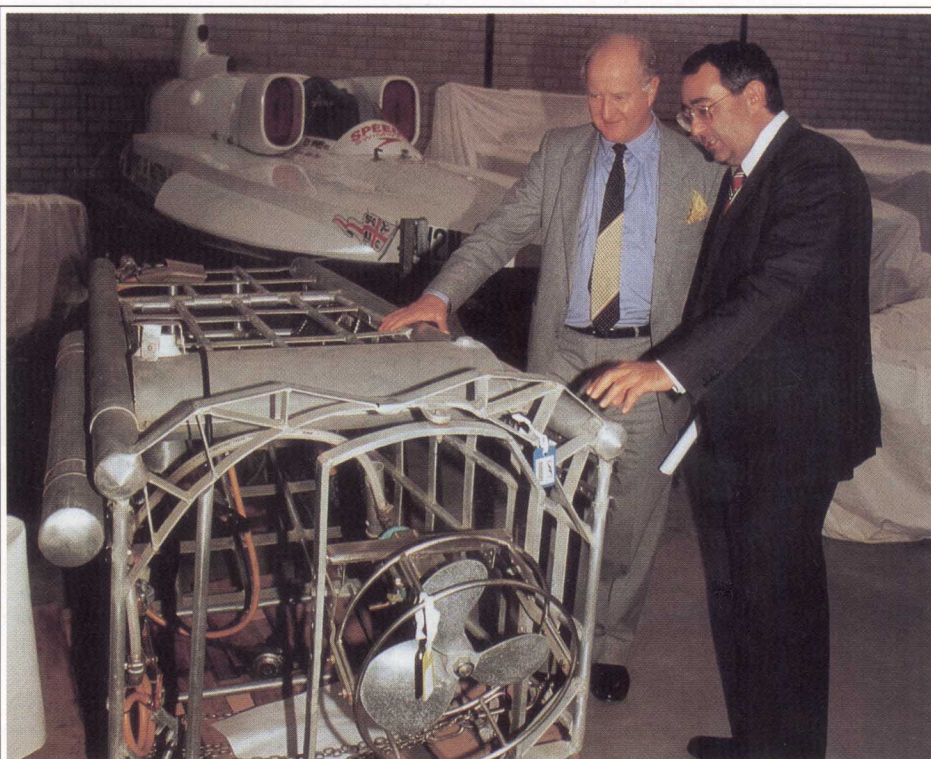
# Prime Ministers meet for AKARANA handover

Two Prime Ministers met on the southern wharf of the Australian National Maritime Museum on August 20 for the official handover and acceptance of New Zealand's Bicentennial gift to Australia, the 100-year-old gaff cutter AKARANA.

Prime Minister Hawke accepted the yacht on behalf of Australia from the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr David Lange. AKARANA itself lay alongside at pontoon at the Museum's southern wharf during the ceremony, after which the two Prime Ministers and the minister for Arts and Territories, Mr Gary Punch, were shown over the cutter by the Chairman of the Museum Interim Council, Mr Peter Doyle.

Among the guests at the ceremony were the New Zealand high Commissioner, Mr Graeme Ansell; the New Zealand Consul-General in Sydney, Dr Richard Grant, who was actively concerned in the AKARANA restoration project from its beginning; friends and corporate sponsors of the Museum; and members of the Sydney Maori community, who took part in a special sawn welcome for AKARANA when the cutter returned to Sydney in January.

After the ceremony, guests were served refreshments aboard the luxury charter catamaran MATILDA III, where a special AKARANA photographic display prepared by the Museum's exhibition staff was mounted.



**VISIT BY MINISTER** Minister for Arts and Territories the Hon. Clyde Holding MP with Interim Director of the Australian National Museum, Sergio Sergi, inspecting an abalone diver's cage in the Museum's collection. Photo: J. Mellefont, ANMM.

## Flinders film wins silver medal

The documentary *A Desperate Fortune: Matthew Flinders' Australia* won a silver medal at the annual awards night of the Australian Cinematography Society (Victorian Branch) in Melbourne in October.

The 48-minute documentary about the explorer who was the first person to regularly use the word "Australia" was made by A to Z Communications Pty Ltd and entirely financed by Switzerland Insurance. One of the world's largest underwriters of marine insurance, Switzerland Insurance has been established in Australia for more than 37 years, and was one of the earliest sponsors of the Australian National Maritime Museum.

*A Desperate Fortune: Matthew Flinders' Australia* was launched in Sydney in June in the presence of the then Minister for Arts and Territories, Mr Gary Punch; the Chairman of the Interim Council of the Museum, Mr Peter Doyle, AM and Members of the Interim Council; the Director of the Museum, Sergio Sergi; Museum staff; senior executives from Switzerland Insurance, A to

Z Communications and representatives from other corporate sponsors of the Museum.

Matthew Flinders is played by Michael Mundell; his fellow-explorer George Bass is played by Creed Christopher O'Hanlon, who also wrote the script. Flinders as a boy is played by Mundell's son, Alexander Hall, and William Martin, a young sailor who accompanied Bass and Flinders in TOM THUMB, is portrayed by Simon Mathew. The documentary was directed by Anthony Bowman and produced by Andrew Zielinski and Jack Smith. Narration is by Edward Woodward of *Callan* fame. The documentary was shot in England, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales.

After the launch, the documentary was formally presented to the Museum by Mr Don Booker, the then Managing Director of Switzerland Insurance. When the Museum is fully operational in late 1989, the documentary will be regularly screened in the Museum theatre and will be a major part of one of the opening "theme" exhibitions, Finding Australia.



**The then Minister for Arts and Territories, Mr Gary Punch, accepts the documentary *A Desperate Fortune: Matthew Flinders Australia* from the then Managing Director of Switzerland Insurance, Mr Don Booker.**

For further information, please contact the Public Affairs Branch — Inda Rolavs, Jack Bennet, Chris Francis, Jeff Mellefont, Fiona Halmarick — Australian National Maritime Museum, 9th floor, ADC House 189 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000; GPO Box 5131 Sydney 2001. Telephone (02) 27 9111 Fax: (02) 27 3846. Information in this Newsletter may be reproduced by the media.

## GIFT OF BOOKS

Publisher Kevin Weldon has joined the growing list of sponsors of the Museum with a gift of 60 copies of his best-selling book *The Last Frontier*. These will be used as gifts to prominent overseas visitors to the museum.