

Dutch Discoveries Across the Water: the First Real Maps of New Holland from 1606!

John Brock (Australia)

SUMMARY

The early seafarers expected to sail off the edge of the world if they ventured too far south or be gobbled up by unspeakable sea monsters which were imagined to ply the south seas in wait for hapless sailors. However the ancient mariners and earliest cartographers also dreamed of a Great South Land full of riches and beautiful damsels thriving amongst a lush environment surrounded by exotic flora and fauna fuelling the visions of the expectant sponsors of a flood of southern explorations, some indeed coming to disastrous ends while others met with disappointment and disillusionment.

When the Dutch East India Company was formed in 1602 in Amsterdam it quickly dispatched much of its vast fleet of vessels southward in search of riches and discovery. Establishing its southern base in Batavia (modern day Jakarta in Indonesia) the Great South Land beckoned just a gentle breeze away awaiting revelations for the Dutch mariners so the first reliable charting of New Holland began in 1606 with Willem Jansz mapping about 120 kilometres of the western side of Cape York filing his work away as an extension of Papua New Guinea until it was discovered hundreds of years later to actually be part of Australia!

From this point onwards right up until the last years of the 17th Century the Dutch fascination with investigating this vast southern giant continent carried on in earnest with many ships coming to an unsavoury demise on the west coast after over-shooting the easterly passage to crash into the dangerous reefs all along the lengthy western coastline, such as the ill-fated Batavia, and numerous other craft meeting their doom in the treacherous waters. However there were some fruitful expeditions by Dirk Hartog (1616), Abel Tasman (1642-44) and various other adventurers from The Netherlands who charted extensive stretches of the Australian southern, western and northern limits, but none of them reported back favourably such that any proposed settlement of the south

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land was entirely discouraged.

In this paper I will list the full complement of Dutch expeditions to New Holland showing their routes and times as well as detailing the many place names which can be attributed to the host of discoveries made by the Dutch captains and ships which braved our perilous waterways during this time of marine enlightenment.

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