

THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Official Bi-monthly newsletter of the VOC Historical Society, Perth, Western Australia.

Affiliate Member of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc).



VOLUME 8 ISSUE 3

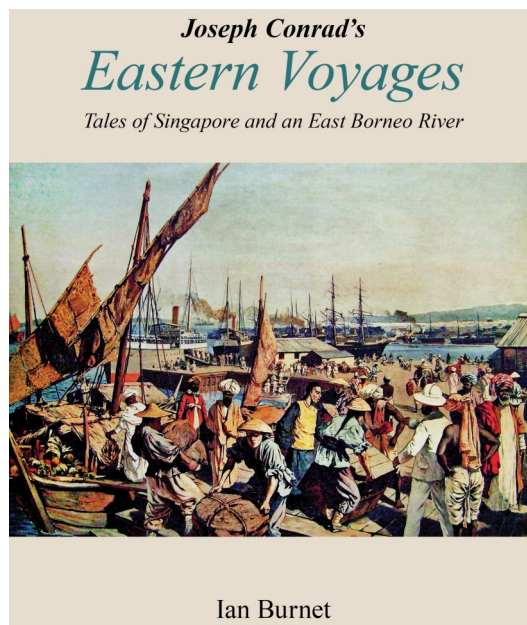
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May-June 2021

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Joseph Conrad's EASTERN VOYAGES Tales of Singapore and an East Borneo river May 9, 2021 by Ian Burnet. (Member & Supporter VOCHS)

The life of Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski reads like an adventure story, an adventure story written by somebody like Joseph Conrad.



During the twenty years from the time that he left Poland in October 1874 until he signed off his last vessel in January 1894, Konrad had worked in ships. For fifteen of those years he served under the Red Ensign as a British merchant seaman and Konrad describes it as 'the finest day in his life' when in 1880 and at the age of twenty-three he received his certificate as a second mate in the British Merchant Navy. Eventually Konrad would make his home in England and apply for British nationality which was granted in 1886.

Konrad's favoured destination was Asia, the bustling transit port of Singapore, the remote islands and ports of the Dutch East Indies. It was from Singapore that he made four voyages as first mate on the steamship *Vidar* to a small trading post which was forty miles up a river on the east coast of Borneo. A river and a settlement which he described as 'One of the last, forgotten, unknown places on earth' and where he would meet the people, places and events that he describes in his first novels.

Towards the end of his sailing career, at the age of 35, with no ship and no immediate prospect of a command, his days were empty. Idle

in London he began to write of his experiences of the people he had met at that isolated trading post on the Berau River in Eastern Borneo. The idea of writing an entire book was then outside his imagination, but the characters he had met in Borneo began to visit him in the front sitting room of his furnished apartment in a Pimlico square.

About half of everything Joseph Conrad ever wrote takes place in South-East Asia, six novels, plus more than a dozen short stories and novellas, which are all evocative of the exotic east. Although his love was for sailing ships and the world's great oceans, his voyages on the tramp ship *Vidar* to the Java Sea, the Macassar Strait and the east coast of Borneo, inspired more of Conrad's fiction than any other period in his life. His Borneo books – *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue* were all based the places he had visited, the stories he had heard, and the people he had met during his voyages in the Indonesian archipelago. It is his excellent visual memory of people, landscape, estuaries, rivers, climate, jungle foliage, commerce, local politics, religion and dress that bring his fictional world to life.

In *Almayer's Folly* Conrad introduces us to the anti-hero of his first two novels, who is based on a Dutchman born in Java known as Charles Olmeijer, the resident trader of that small outpost on the Berau River. He left a deep impression on Conrad because of the vastness of his ambitions compared to his derelict appearance and his actual situation. Conrad later wrote that 'If I had not got to know Almayer pretty well, it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print'.

Almayer's Folly, was published in 1895 under the anglicised name of Joseph Conrad and he then devoting

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himself full-time to writing. He wrote deadlines and anxious about money. interrupted by agonising periods of illnesses, he went on to write some world's greatest short fiction. His only obtained commercial success publication of *Chance*, one of his few Conrad was important because he up with the popular myths of the became British but viewed the world was one of the first English writers of assumptions of superiority that had Empire, colonials and colonial life.



is as the English critic Walter Allen wrote – ‘Conrad’s best work represents a body of achievement unequalled in English fiction this century by any writer except Henry James’. While Henry James wrote in a letter to Conrad – ‘No one has known – for intellectual use – the things you know, and you have, as the artist of the whole matter, an authority that no one has approached’. Conrad’s greatness lies in his ability to create an absolutely convincing illusion of reality and for Joseph Conrad his greatest honour was to have his novels regarded as English classics in his own lifetime and despite the fact that English was not his native language. My interest in Conrad began when I arrived in Indonesia from the sea and as a young man around the same age as Joseph Conrad. During my years of residence and my travels throughout the archipelago, I, like Conrad, fell in love with its peoples, its extraordinary mixture of races, religions, languages, cultures and its endlessly fascinating history.

In his writing Conrad was able to convert actual events of his own experience into enduring fiction and he once said that everything about his life can be found in his books. Because the material for his tales of Singapore and a Borneo River are mainly autobiographical, in the following chapters I am able to use a mixture of my words, together with his, to tell this story of Joseph Conrad’s eastern voyages and how he made the connection between his own life experiences and the characters and events in his first novels.

Almayer’s Folly, *The Outcast of the Islands* and *The Rescue* are often referred to as the Lingard Trilogy because of the continuing role of Tom Lingard, the ‘Rajah Laut’ or ‘King of the Sea’. It should be noted that the narrative sequence of these novels is in the reverse of the order in which they were written. In the latter part of this book I have taken the liberty to place the parts of these novels into their proper narrative sequence and focus on the back-story of his characters, which will, I hope, make it easier for readers to discover or rediscover Conrad’s genius.

<https://ianburnetbooks.com>



The trading ship *Vidar* docked in Macassar,
J.C.Rappard 1883

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The Forgotten Disaster at Ritchie's Reef.

By Peter Reynders (Member and Supporter of VOCHS)

Introduction

News in hydrographic publications that modern autonomous search technology helped discover 'historically significant shipwrecks', such as by RV *Petrel* finding USS *Lexington* and *Juneau* shipwrecks in the Pacific, are of interest. But they invariably focus just on the technology used. Why and to what extent the wrecks are historically actually significant, and when and why they went to the bottom of the ocean, is often not included. In these two cases its writers may have assumed, rightly no doubt, that the reader is interested in the hydrographic technology and not in hydrographic history. It is assumed there's little interest by hydrographers in why these wrecks should be found at all, nor therefore in the underlying history of hydrography. Be that as it may. (1)

The extraordinary case where the location of a peace time shipping disaster, of a single vessel at a hitherto unknown dangerous shallow reef, was post-event apparently deliberately reported for the wrong location and hence placed on maritime maps a thousand kilometers from where it occurred, is surely amazing enough for the hydrographic practitioner. If the discovery of the captain's false reporting and the reef's correct location then took over three centuries, it may also be amazing enough for anybody to take note. If, in addition, the case concerns the first recorded shipwreck in the history of our continent, as here, one would suspect that it be written up in standard history books and in the school curriculum. Even more so, if on top of all this it concerns the first Englishmen ever to come here one could expect that most people would have heard about it. Evidently not so. I will tell the story here again in the hope that this will change.

The name of the first Englishman to sail to Australia was neither James nor William, but John. His 'visit' was the subject of a limited number of articles published over the last nine decades, after the wreck's location had finally been determined (2). This includes Marriot I. Lee's 1934 article *The first Sighting of Australia by the English*, and Jeremy N. Green's 1977 archeological review of the event. It is also mentioned in some later publications, including a 2004 inclusion on AOTM's website in the "Landings List". This is a concise list of the earliest ships recorded to have come to our continent before the charting of its coast had been sufficiently



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completed so its size could be determined. (<http://www.australiaonthemap.org.au/landings-list/>)

To date the 1622 event has not become part of the general knowledge of Australians. In 2011, I asked by way of interactive question to a symposium audience of over 300 people rather well informed about maritime history: who the first Englishman was who sailed into Australian waters? Nobody responded with the right name and when I revealed it, there was a murmur of surprise.

This article tells the story of this early event, and tries to argue that with the 400th anniversary of the visit, in 2022, a good opportunity will arise to draw wider attention to it, in order to help exterminate this blank in our collective memory. But the deck could be stacked against it for this to happen: The perception of the character of the captain in question and the messy associated decision making of the early English East India Company (E.I.C.), that seems to emerge from the research, as well as the widely known case of an even worse maritime disaster just seven years later, make it unlikely that such 'commemoration' will occur in whatever form. I will try to convince the reader that paying public attention to this historic event would be desirable and appropriate in 2022.

John and his vessel

Who was this John? He was John Brookes, the Master of the E.I.C vessel *Triall*, which sailed from Plymouth, England on 4 September, 1621, with a crew of 143, bound for the Indies. The ship had recently either been built for, or bought by the E.I.C. and had a cargo of 'small items', such as sheathing nails, hunting horns, cartridges and sheet lead. Brookes was to sail the 'Brouwer route', which the E.I.C. had recently become aware of. (3)

In historic documents and articles *Triall* has also been spelled *Trial*, *Tryall* or *Tryal*. Brookes also as *Brooks*, *Brooke* or *Broock*.

How did the E.I.C hear about the Brouwer route?

Readers may be familiar with the history and details of the Brouwer Route. Many Australian publications that helped commemorate the 400-year anniversary of the visit of Dirk Hartog as first European to visit the Australian west coast, explained it. The Brouwer Route discovery led to its adoption by the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) and its elaborate 1617 order to use it, that is, all VOC ships were to sail to Java via the southern Indian Ocean.

Early concerns of the dangers of this route, were also invariably explained in these "Hartog" texts. The use of dead reckoning to determine longitude could give very different results for where ships would actually be located on the long eastwards stretch. In 1620, another EIC Captain, Humfry Fitzherbert, Commander of an E.I.C. flotilla bound for Bantam was told about the Brouwer Route by Cornelis Kunst, Master of VOC ship *Schiedam*. They had a friendly chance meeting on land at Cape of Good Hope, where the *Schiedam* from *Delft* and bound for the Indies, had also stopped for refreshments. The *Schiedam* and the E.I.C. flotilla, consisting of the vessels *Unity*, *Bear* and *Royal Exchange*, even left the Cape together on 26 July, 1620.(4) Captain Kunst showed the Brits how to sail to the right latitude, in order to follow the Brouwer route to the Indies making use of the Roaring Forties. and when to turn north to Sunda Strait. All this was hitherto unknown to the EIC.

Thus, Kunst 'spilled the beans' of a competitive edge developed by the VOC, to a competing foreign company. Sailing to the Indies months faster saved lives and cost, and also avoided encounters with hostile Portuguese vessels. For a century the Portuguese had been sailing to the Indies along the East African coast and the Asian south coast. Only from 1595 had Dutch vessels begun to trade on the Far East. Their half dozen or so trading companies, which had started to compete with each other by the turn of the century, had been amalgamated into one, the V.O.C., on 20 March, 1602. The E.I.C., the first English company trading on the Far East, had been founded less than fourteen months before, on 31 December 1600.

Thus, Captain Fitzherbert became the first Englishman to sail the Brouwer Route, two decades after Hendrik Brouwer had conceived the idea of it and just three years after VOC vessels had routinely started using it.

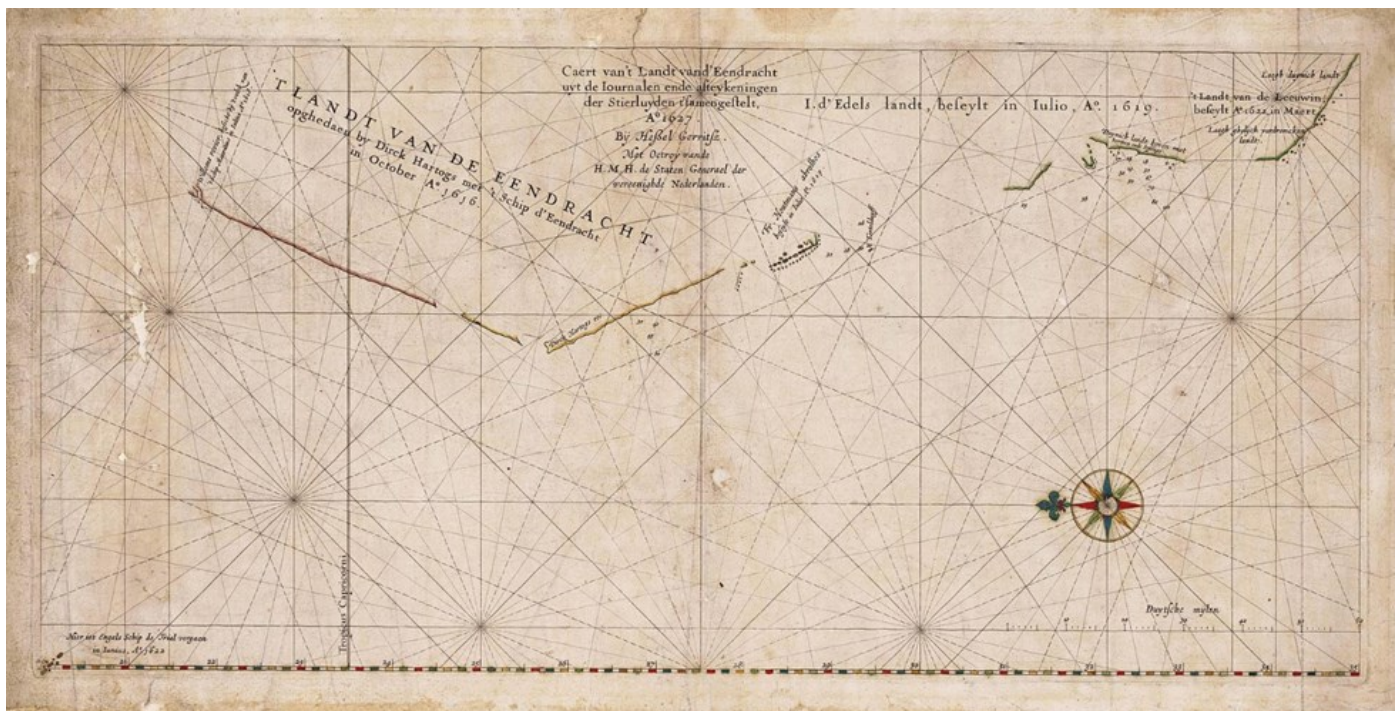
Brookes and the wrecking of the *Triall*

When Brookes arrived at the Cape, he nor any of his crew had ever sailed the Brouwer route, but he had been

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instructed to do so using the Fitzherbert journal. At the Cape he saw another E.I.C. East Indiaman, the *Charles*, returning to England from the Indies under Captain Bickle. He tried to arrange whether one of the mates of Bickle's ship would sail with him to show the route. Bickle agreed to ask them. Understandably, none of the 'mates' allegedly familiar with the navigation of the route volunteered. After all, service in the Indies was not exactly a holiday and the men were keen to go home and were already halfway there.

Brookes, guided by just the journal of Fitzherbert's voyage describing the route, reportedly left the Cape on 19 March 1621, sailing further south to latitude 39 degrees, then east on that parallel. In early May he steered north to where he hoped to head to Java, as Fitzherbert had reported to have done, but strong NE winds from 5



to 24 May prevented the *Triall* from reaching Java. Brookes steered NE instead. The ship then struck rocks, most below the surface, on the 25th at 11 o'clock at night. Brookes later reported the mayhem on board, claiming 60 men were on deck, and that he managed with some men to get the 'skiff' into the water. He claimed to have been involved to get the longboat in the water too, claimed to have done all he could to save as many lives as he could, climbed down a rope to the skiff at 3 in the morning and 'got off' at 4 o'clock. At 4.30 the front part of the ship broke up. All according to Brookes. (5)

On June 25, 1622, Brookes arrived at Batavia (Java) with 9 crew in the skiff, one of them a boy, apparently his son. The ship's 'Factor', Thomas Bright, in charge of the longboat, arrived there with 35 other men three days later. As 4 people had reportedly died on the voyage before the shipwreck, just 46 people had survived from the remaining 139, meaning 93 must not have survived the wreckage. Both men reported they had first landed on small islands nearby (6).

Brookes alleged deceptions

The letters of Thomas Bright tell a different story than Brookes' reporting, suggesting Brookes left the crew to fend for themselves. He also suggested Brookes was guilty of theft of the ship's valuables. He wrote that Brookes left in the skiff and did neither help save as many men as possible nor saw the longboat into the water. He implied also that Brookes clearly falsified the route he took, to hide that he had not strictly followed the route of Captain Fitzherbert he had been ordered to follow.

Once in the Indies, Brookes was sent on an exploration sojourn around Sumatra by the E.I.C. Manager or Governor in the Indies, and assisted in careening some ships. He was then made the 'Commander' of the

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vessel *Moone*, which he reportedly considered needing careening too as it would otherwise mean the end of the vessel. It indeed had been worked very hard in the Indies from 1618, including in a sea battle. The vessel did various further jobs in Asia under Brookes.

The *Moone* with Brookes as part of or perhaps even as the commander of a flotilla of E.I.C. ships left for England on 15 February 1625 with E.I.C. Manager Brockenden on board. Brockenden died and was buried at the Cape, but his possessions remained on board. In September 1625 the flotilla of E.I.C vessels from the Indies arrived in England but without the *Moone*. It had been lost close to home. Serious charges were laid against Brookes and his ship's-master, named Churchman, for negligence and willfully casting away the *Moone* near Dover roadstead.

Another sailor had claimed he had overheard Brookes saying at the Cape of Good Hope that he would 'turn the nose of the ship the wrong way' and that he 'wished the ship were at Ligore', a known Pirate hideout. Both Brookes and Churchman were imprisoned in Dover Castle, from where Brookes commenced his petition to come to trial and preparation of his defense. Brookes argued to the court in a long statement that he had been falsely accused, that the loss of the vessel was an accident, that the ship's condition was 'weakened' and 'she was eaten by the worms'. Also, that he at the earlier incident with the *Triall* had followed "punctually" the route of the Fitzherbert Journal. The case was very drawn out, so the two men were in jail for many months. It became increasingly complicated for Brookes, also by theft allegations regarding property of the dead Brockenden, including relating to 'diamonds'. Brookes' son declared to the Court he had himself taken them, rather than Brookes.

It appears the company did not diligently pursue the prosecution, and Brookes and Churchman were released from the company and all suits against them over the loss of the *Moone* and the *Triall* were dropped on 18 August 1626. The company even had to pay the son his unpaid wages (ten pounds) as Brookes had petitioned, even though the son had confessed to stealing. The company also had a problem with a contractor, one Jacob Johnson, who was to dive for the contents of the shallow submerged *Moone* and was found to have done that job only partially or sold much of it. This matter was resolved in December of that year with again an embarrassing outcome for the E.I.C., which finished up with only about 10 % of the valuable cargo of pepper. (7)

Brookes appears to 20th century researchers as rather devious in his handling of both ships and was accused of lying, theft and multiple incompetence. The E.I.C. appears from it inefficient and disorganized and its management the cause of much of its problems. At least Bright emerged from it as a hero.

The finding of the *Triall's* wreck site.

The loss of the *Triall* caused concern for the ships of the E.I.C and of the V.O.C., the only companies who used the Brouwer route. Brookes had told the E.I.C and the VOC authorities in Batavia that they lost and abandoned their ship with 97 men... "on certain rocks situated in latitude 20 degrees 10 min South and the longitude of the western extremity of Java". He also indicated these rocks to be located near a number of broken islands, lying very wide and broad, S. East and N. West, lying near a certain larger island.

Brookes however did not provide the correct location of the spot of the fatal rocks, but one substantially further west, apparently to try and hide the fact that he had followed a different route than that of the Fitzherbert Journal. He also threw further doubt on the idea that the earlier (Dutch) visitors had found a safe route. As a result, the wreck site was placed on maps, including on the VOC maps, in the wrong position. It then ended upon the well-known 1627 Hessel Gerrits map of the west coast of 'Eendrachtland' as the mainland was then known as. It shows what had been charted of the west coast by then by the various European visitors. Nobody could find any shallow reefs or rocks or islands in the location indicated by Brookes. Not even captains specifically instructed to look for them found any, simply because there weren't any there. It remained a perplexing mystery for three centuries.

Finally in the 20th century, did the reference to the small islands, shoals and a large island to the South East provided by Brookes and Bright, help determine the location as being near the current Monte Bello Islands and

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Barrow Island. This was the contribution of Marriot I. Lee in 1934. The archaeological investigation carefully confirmed the site, as it found items consistent with those that would have been on the *Trial* and consistent with the period. The location was by then called Ritchie's Reef, but was renamed Tryal Rocks in 1969, as a first (W.A.) Government recognition, not of the men yet but of the vessel.

Should this event be commemorated in 2022?

The 20th century research put strong suspicion on Brookes for being devious, and on the E.I.C. as disorganized at that point in time. In his own time and being subjected to the scrutiny of a court, Brookes was not convicted. So, the possibility of Brookes having just made an error in misplacing the wreckage location by 1000 kilometers, is still to be considered, particularly should new information come to hand.

How important are 'firsts' in Australian history? This one is definitely a significant historic event. There were more like it to come, both visiting ships and wrecks, but without the primacy status. When the question arises, many of us have a mindset to wrongly put another mariner's name in the place of the first Englishman to come here. Brookes left most of his crew behind and departed earlier than most of the survivors. Over two-thirds



perished. It too is a rare event as captains go, but like shipwrecks, of the wrong kind.

Perhaps because the event has remained so obscure, not many other historians have invested time and resources to find out details about the two men, their background, or the rest of their lives, which remain unknown. As both men reported to have landed on an island immediately after leaving the wreckage, they both did land in what is now Australia.

Due to the obscurity of the event, Brookes has not featured on an Australian postage stamp, like both Dampier and Cook. Dampier first served on what has been called a pirate's vessel at his first visit and was a navy Captain on his second.. Brookes 'visit by chance', much earlier than either, had a technologically less sophisticated craft and equipment. But we realize that his visit is hardly 'recognized' in the sequence of

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Australia's maritime history. Not by the Brits, nor in Australia. And organizing an event to commemorate Brookes' visit feels like planning a birthday party where nobody might turn up. There's no monument, not even a modest plaque, that commemorates the almost 100 sailors who sailed for country and company aboard the *Triall* and lost their lives on those rocks. There's no story in any school history book praising the bravery of crew member Thomas Bright, for saving a few dozen men after apparently having been deserted by their Captain.

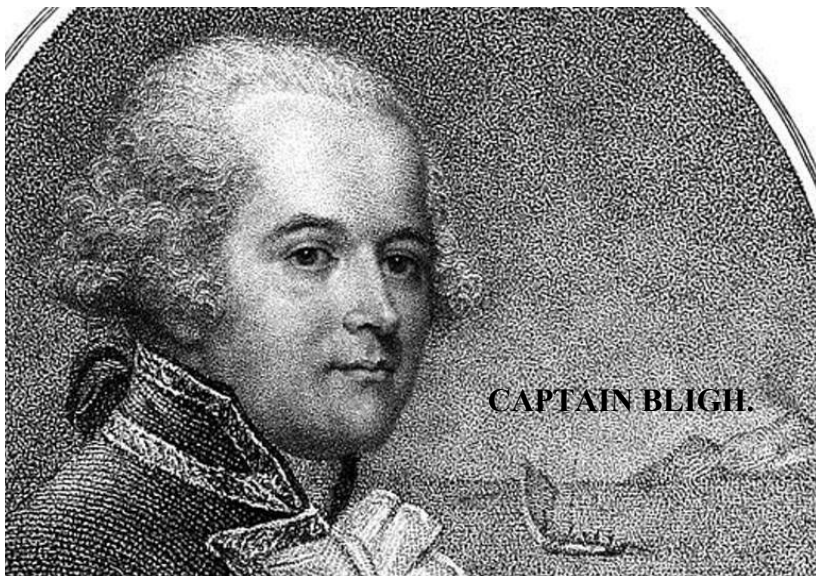
Is the bad image of the man Brookes the reason to keep him under the carpet? History acknowledges villains contrasted with heroes, and victims, where the unremarkable rest of us remains under the radar. We acknowledge Ned Kelly, who was a convicted and executed criminal. The very evil Jeronimus Corneliszoon mutinied and killed after the *Batavia* had been wrecked, also on a tiny Island off the WA coast, just seven years after the *Triall's* disaster. He was executed there following Australia's first recorded legal review cum court-martial. We know how this villain was outsmarted by the emerging hero, Wiebbe Hayes. A documentary of the already well known *Batavia* shipwreck and subsequent mutiny was recently (August 2018) shown on SBS. There is also a strong rumor a theatre movie will be made of this as well. Here's a quote from a recent newsletter (August 2018) from the Netherlands' Embassy in Australia:

The massacre that took place among the survivors afterwards has made it (the Batavia) famous, and a replica of the ship has been built in the Netherlands. The (NSW) State Library has one of the oldest publications that was written about the Batavia, namely from 1647!

Should this be the only reason for its fame? What is more uncomfortable than an underlying cause for commemoration or building a replica vessel being a massacre? Should we then continue to pretend the *Triall* is not part of our European-Australian past because the Captain is perceived villainous? Both stories received more clarity from extensive and published archeological research in the 20th century. Just one of these two has

wide notoriety and public resonance, also reflected in its numerous museum exhibits. The other, the one of the *Triall*, remains obscure.

Captain Bligh sailed in a small boat with 14 men to Timor, also after a dramatic event east of Australia, also a mutiny. From this resonates the name Fletcher Christian, the head-mutineer, hence another villain, his notoriety clearly assisted by that mutiny's best-selling books and movies. Brookes, similar to Bligh, rowed a few thousand kilometers to the Indies with just eight men and a boy in the much smaller skiff, less food and water, about two centuries earlier. Bright, not even a navigator, did the same with 35 men in a longboat. That too is a huge feat. Nothing



seems to publicly resonate from that.

Perhaps what is required to inform the public, is a well written historical history book or historical novel about the *Triall's* final journey, that becomes a bestseller. The two main papers presently conveying the story are hard going, at least for me, and certainly not exciting reading for the average person. I found it a struggle to understand the archaeological paper of some 60 pages, with no doubt scientifically very prudent and sound conclusions. One reason was that it did not provide a translation to modern English of the massive number of quotes of primary source material, transcribed from early 17th century handwritten English. Any further archaeological finds on the rocks should be given wide publicity as well.

One little known recognition is that in recent years the gas field on Trial Rocks Terrace near Barrow Island was

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named after Brookes and the first well in it after Bright. Another is that quite recently a very brief entry on this Brooke(s) turned up on Wikipedia (8). There appears to be some slight momentum in getting this event from under the carpet.

What forms could any commemorative activity take in 2022?

If the objective is to have this historic event line itself up in the minds of Australians with similar public resonance as other early encounters with our coast, we need an effort with a strong informative and educational component that tells the story in some unforgettable way. It should not remain 'hidden in W.A.' as a state matter. There may be an injection into the education system, at least in the form of an exciting text, for history teachers to use. National and State Governments could assist there. History organizations including AOTM could assist in preparing a lecture.. TV channels may be approached to show a program about the so far obscure but newsworthy event and show it in 2022, if producers would build one.

The experienced Australian historical novel writers that have produced books on similar events maybe approached with an argument that they could help Australia know its history better if they rose to the challenge on this one. A concise telling of the story could be prepared with a suitable illustration, by way of 2022 media release.

The British Government could be approached with the question whether they would not see it as appropriate to provide a brass commemorative plaque or modest obelisk, somewhere along the W.A. coast opposite the Monte Bellos, to commemorate Britain's forgotten English victims of the calamity. The huge 'first contact monument' near Weipa is also in a remote location, but visited and photographed by visitors regularly. A Triall Monument along the main road west of the Town of Dampier would have the same limited but effective function. A modest second one in the Australian capital to make it more visible could be added.

Then there surely are many additional 'creative' ideas for events or activities that could be organized. If you have any ideas or suggestions (and there must be many), do send me an email at: pbreynders@yahoo.com.au.

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John Brooke



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THE FOURTH ANGLO-ENGLISH TRADE WAR

The nail in the coffin of the VOC.

By Monica de Knecht. (Member & Supporter of VOCHS)



John Adams, 2nd President of the United States.
Image courtesy of Fine Art America

It has been said that the end of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie was due to a number of factors, including corruption, cost-cutting, unwillingness to become up to date in management and shipbuilding, foreign sailors on board and, of course, at the end the Batavia Republic culling it, as it became too heavy a cost on the state. It was an entity that had been born to create a ‘fundraising arms’ for the Staten Generaal and the Stadhouder. It was not created to be a financial burden.

However the ‘final nail in the coffin’ of this great multinational corporation was the fourth Anglo-English trade war. At that time the English had already severed their own East India Company in 1858, due to the Indian Rebellion and so they were now the colonial masters of India and this was the sunrise of the “British Raj” and the beginning of its great Colonial Empire.

FOURTH ANGLO-DUTCH WAR This war was contemporary with the War of American Independence and it broke out over British and Dutch disagreements on the legality and conduct of Dutch trade with Britain’s enemies in that war. Even though the Dutch republic had not

entered into a formal alliance with the United States and their allies, U.S. ambassador (and future president), John Adams, managed to establish diplomatic relations with the Dutch Republic, making it the second European country to sensitively recognize the Continental Congress in April 1782. In October 1782, a treaty of amity and commerce was concluded as well.

THE FALLING OUT OF OLD FRIENDS. Although Great Britain and the Dutch republic had been allies since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when a Dutchman had sat on the English throne; the Dutch had, to their chagrin, become the junior partner in the alliance, losing their former dominance of world trade to the British. During the Second Stadhouderless period, the Dutch republic had more or less abdicated its presence's as a major power and this became most evident to the rest of Europe, during the War of the Austrian Succession; even though near the end of that war in 1747, an Orangist revolution restored the stadhouderate with vastly increased powers for the stadhouder, with the office becoming hereditary. This did not lead to a resurgence of the republic as a major power, because many Dutch saw the mismanagement of the regency during the minority of William V and during his own reign.

Because of the stubborn neutrality of the Dutch, during the Seven Years’ War, it neglected both its army and navy. The stadhouderian regime was pro-British as the stadhouder was the grandson of King George II of Great Britain. His Dutch opponents, for that very reason favoured France and the opponents were very strong in the Staten-Generaal of the Netherlands.

FUELLING THE CONTINENTAL AND FRENCH ARMIES AGAINST THE BRITISH At first the British considered the Dutch their allies in an attempt to stamp out the rebellion in their North American Thirteen Colonies. They attempted to borrow the mercenary Scotch Brigade of the Dutch States Army for use in the Americas, in a similar manner to the Hessian and Brunswicker contingents they hired and deployed. But this was stymied by Baron Joan van der Capellen tot den Pol and the Dutch sympathizers, who managed to persuade the Staten-Generaal to refuse the British request .

The wheel had now turned full circle and in the wake of the crumbling VOC, the



Arms of the Staten-Generaal (wikipedia)

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The nail in the coffin of the VOC.



Baron Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol. Image courtesy Wikipedia

individual Merchants, who had become united, in the VOC, now started to fill their own purses, as before the VOC's rise; (especially those from Amsterdam, and now started to become involved in supplying arms and munitions to the rebels, soon after the start of the American Revolutionary War with Great Britain. This trade was conducted, in the main via, the *entrepôt* (or warehouse) of St. Eustatius, an island colony of the Dutch West India Company, in the Caribbean. There, American colonial wares, such as tobacco and indigo, were imported (against the British Navigation Acts) and re-exported to Europe. For their return cargo, the Americans purchased arms, munitions and naval stores brought to the island by Dutch and French merchants. To really add 'salt to the wound', the governor of that island, Johannes de Graeff, was the first to salute the flag of the United States, which naturally led to growing British suspicions of the Dutch. In 1778, the Dutch refused to be bullied to fight on Britain's side, against the French. The British desperately tried to invoke a



Johannes de Graeff
Image Wikipedia

number of their old treaties, to try and force the republic to support them with military might, but as in the Seven Years' War, the Dutch obstinately refused.

After the French declared war on Britain, the Amsterdam merchants also traded with the French. The French needed the supplies for their naval construction, but were prevented from obtaining those themselves, due to the blockade of the Royal Navy. The canny Dutch were privileged by a concession obtained after their victory in the Second Anglo-Dutch War, known as the principle of "free ship, free goods", which was enshrined in the Anglo-Dutch Commercial Treaty of 1668 and reconfirmed in the Treaty of Westminster of 1674. This treaty exempted all, but narrowly defined "contraband" goods, carried in Dutch ships, from confiscation by the British prize courts, in wars in which the Dutch remained neutral. According to the treaty, ship's timbers, masts, spars, canvas, tar, rope and pitch, were not contraband and the Dutch were free to continue their trade with France in these goods. Because of the still-important role of the Dutch in the European carrying trade, this opened up a huge loophole in the British embargo. The British, therefore, unilaterally declared naval stores to be contraband and enforced their embargo by arresting Dutch and other 'neutral' ships on the high seas.

DUTCH PROTESTS The affected Dutch merchants strongly protested and demanded institution of convoys, escorted by the Dutch Navy, to protect them against the Royal Navy and British privateers. According to customary international law, such convoys were exempt from the right of Visit and Search by belligerents. At first the stadhouder managed to prevent this, but strong diplomatic pressure by France, that selectively applied economic sanctions to the Dutch cities that supported the stadhouder, forced his hand in November 1779.

PLS GO TO PAGE 14

The Staten-Generaal now ordered him to provide the escorts and the first convoy, under command of Rear

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Neptunus, De Fransche, of Nieuwe Atlas van de Zeekarten, opgenomen en gegraveerd door uitsrukkelyke order des Konings, tot het gebruik van zyne zeemachten ... Overgezien ... door de Heeren Pene, Cassini, en anderen.

Zee Atlas tot het gebruik van de vlooten des Konings van Groot Britanje ...

- Vervolg van de Neptunus, of Zee Atlas van de Nieuwe Zee-Karten;

Opgenomen door Uitdrukkelyke Order der Koningen van Portugaal ...

En in't light gebraght door de sorge van wylen d'Heer d'Ablancourt ...

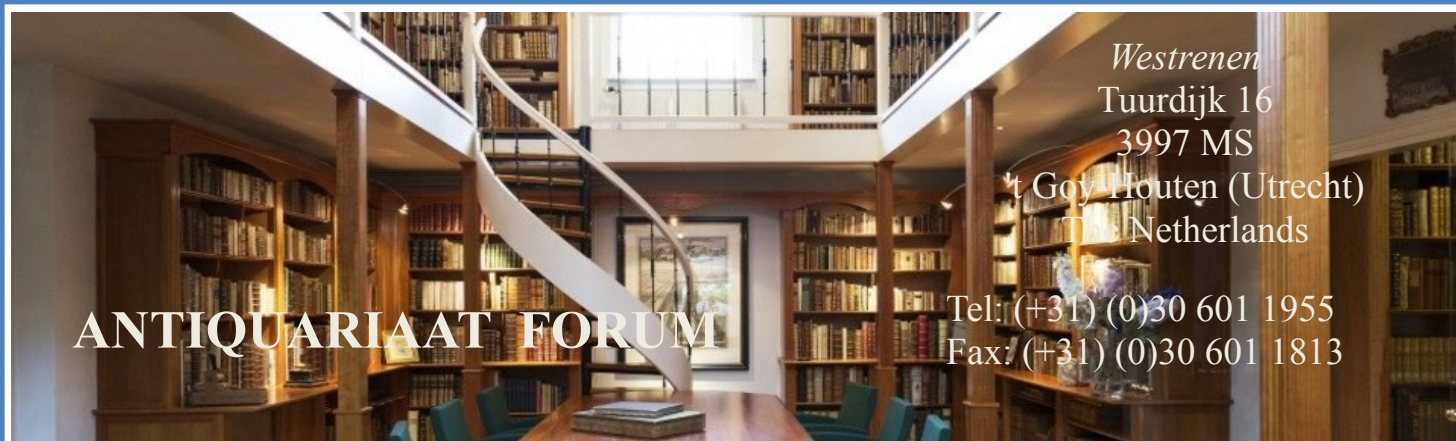
Amsterdam, Pieter Mortier, 1693-1700. 3 parts in 2 volumes. Elephant folio

(527 x 650 cm). With richly engraved allegorical frontispiece by Jan van Vianen, large engraving of a sailing ship on title, full-page engraved plate of scales, full-page engraved view of an admiral's ship and series of 18 numbered full-page views of ships, 12 full-page plates of flags, double-page

engraved chart of the world, and 29 double-page engraved charts of the coasts of Europe; beautiful engraved frontispiece by Romeyn de Hooghe, large engraving of a sailing ship on title and 9 full-page and double-page charts of the coasts of the English Channel, including a splendid large folding chart of the coasts of the Mediterranean with a large number of views and plans of the Mediterranean towns in the borders by Romeyn de Hooghe in the second part; and engraved coat-of-arms of Amsterdam on title, full-page engraved plate of the winds, and 34 mostly double-page engraved charts of the coasts outside Europe, of Africa, Asia, and America in the third part, all engravings, including the vignettes on titles, the plates of scales and the winds, all magnificently coloured and heightened in gold throughout by a strictly contemporary hand. Contemporary richly gilt marbled calf.

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First edition of the undoubtedly most beautiful and most spectacular sea-atlas of the 17th century, a complete and unusually well-preserved copy with noble provenance: the engravings in publishers colour and heightened in gold, bound in decorative publishers gilt marbled-leather bindings. "The Neptune François and its second part Cartes Marines à l'usage du Roy de la Grande Bretagne was the most expensive sea-atlas ever published in Amsterdam in the 17th century. Its charts are larger and more lavishly decorated than those of any preceding book of this kind. For the engraving and etching Mortier had recruited the most qualified artists ... In 1700, Mortier brought out a third volume with charts of the outer-European waters, of French origin edited by N. P. d'Ablancourt: Suite de Neptune François. Apart from the first volume which had a second edition in 1703, none of the atlases was republished. This magnificent work was intended more as a show-piece than something to be used by the pilots at sea" (Koeman). The second part was engraved by Romeyn de Hooghe, the prolific late Dutch Baroque painter: "This volume is usually bound together with the first part, the Neptune François. It only contains nine large charts, but this small number represents the most spectacular type of maritime cartography ever produced in 17th century Amsterdam" (Koeman). In addition to the charts called for by the table of contents, part one has a fine world map (Shirley 559). The 3 plates of ships listed at the beginning of the table will be found in part 3, which thus has 19 plates of ships instead of the 18 called for by the table and the 12 (!) mentioned by Koeman. Hardly any browning or foxing; a few light creases to gutters. As usual the copper green colouring in volume one has turned into a brownish hue and caused acidic damage to a few small sections of six maps. Extremely rare: the last comparable copy on the market was the Wardington copy, sold at Sotheby's in 2006 (lot 318), where it commanded £209,600 (also boasting a noble German provenance, with the colouring and binding like ours).

From a southern German castle library with small 18th century bookplate pasted to verso of both engraved titles; old shelfmark pencilled to inside of covers. Bindings only slightly worn. *Koeman M. Mor 3, 6 & 8. Cf. Pastoureau, Neptune Ba.*



THE FOURTH ANGLO-ENGLISH TRADE WAR

The nail in the coffin of the VOC.

Admiral Lodewijk van Bylandt, sailed in December. This led to the humiliating Affair of Fielding and Bylandt on 31 December, which enraged Dutch public opinion and totally undermined the stadhouder's position. This incident motivated the Dutch to seek admission to the First League of Armed Neutrality, which concretely protected the principle of 'free ship, free goods', especially after Britain formally rescinded the



Catherine the Great of Russia.
Image courtesy of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Commercial Treaty of 1668. The Dutch thereby, hoped to gain the armed support of the other members of the League to maintain their neutral status. WAR. The British Government saw the danger of this clever move by the Dutch. It could embroil Great Britain in war with Russia and the Nordic powers, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Therefore they declared war on the republic, shortly after it announced its intentions in December 1780. To stymie Russia from coming to the aid of the Dutch, (something Empress Catharine II of Russia was not keen on, either); the British Government cited a number of grievances that were ostensibly unrelated to the Dutch accession to the league. A key one of these was the shelter the Dutch had (reluctantly) given to the American privateer, John Paul Jones in 1779. Another crucial grievance was that among the effects of Henry Laurens, an American diplomat, apprehended by the British cruiser HMS Vestal, they had found proof that the Continental Congress wanted him to establish diplomatic relations with the Dutch Republic. Clearly the Dutch were not neutral at all. WAR'S PROGRESS. Dutch naval power had been in steady decline since 1712. The fleet had been neglected and the Dutch navy had only 20 ships of the line at the start of the conflict. This was no match for the British Royal Navy. Also they were short on recruits,

the reason being the cheese sparingness of the Staten-Generaal – they paid much lower wages than the merchant marines and at this time did not use impressment or shanghaiing like the Royal Navy. Their ships were diminished even more, when several ships were captured by the British in the West Indies, as the Dutch were unaware the war had started. The inferiority of the Dutch fleet and its state of 'unreadiness' was a frequently reiterated excuse of the Dutch naval commanders to keep their fleets at anchor. Thereby the British dominated the North Sea, with little or no problems. Within a few weeks of the beginning of the war, more than 200 Dutch merchantmen, with cargo to the amount of 15 million guilders had been captured by the British and 300 more were locked up in foreign ports.

THREE THEATRES OF WAR. The war was fought in three main theatres, the West Indies, The European Waters and Asia. Britain blockaded the Dutch ports in Europe and embarked on expeditions to seize Dutch colonial properties throughout the world. They were successful in all but the Dutch castle at Elmina on the Africa's Gold Coast (modern Ghana) failed. Many Dutch territories in the West Indies were taken by the British, but some, like Curaçao, were not even attempted, due to their defensive strength.

WEST INDIES As far as the Dutch were concerned the war in the West Indies was over almost before it had begun. The crafty British struck, as has been said, before the Dutch even knew that the two nations were at war. The British did make an attempt to capture the Dutch Leeward Antilles, but they remained strongly in Dutch hands, as did Suriname, though neighbouring Berbice, Dererara and Essequibo were taken by the British in 1781. However, all these were retaken by French Captain, Armand de Kersaint in 1782 and restored to the Dutch after the war.

EUROPEAN WATERS In European waters, no major battles were fought, except for the Dogger-Bank



William V, Stadhouder and Prince of Orange by John Hoppner,
Image courtesy of Royal Collection Trust.

THE FOURTH ANGLO-ENGLISH TRADE WAR

The nail in the coffin of the VOC.

skirmish. The British blockade encountered little opposition from the Dutch fleet. However, because of this and their ships suffering from severe wear and tear and such a large number of ships to be used to maintain their naval superiority in the North Sea; the already overstretched Royal Navy was even more strained after 1781. The ships were needed to be used against the French, Americans and Spaniards in other wars. This may well have contributed to a number of naval defeats the British suffered after 1781, including the loss of their American colonies.



Battle of Dogger Bank - Image in the National Maritime Museum., Greenwich , London, England

ASIAN WATERS Of course, the worst debacles for the Dutch happened in Asian waters. The VOC had been responsible for defending its own colonies east of the Cape colony, but for the first time, had to request assistance from a depleted Dutch navy. This was not enough to prevent Britain from taking effective control of the Dutch colonies in the Indian Subcontinent. In early 1782, Sir Edward Hughes captured Trincomalee on the eastern coast of Ceylon, considered to be the finest harbour in the Bay of Bengal.

In March, 1781, British Admiral George Johnstone was unable to capture the Cape Colony, due to the French commander Bailli de Suffren receiving intelligence about it and Johnstone and Suffren met in

battle in the Cape Verde Islands. Suffren was able to arrive before Johnstone and the strength of his troops, dissuaded Johnstone from attacking. He had to be content to just capture a number of VOC ships in the nearby Saldanha Bay, returning to North Atlantic waters.

Suffren and Sir Edward Hughes met in battle and fought a number of actions, with Suffren unable to capture Negapatnam, but did recapture Trincomalee and fought in battle several days later. The two fleets withdrew, meeting again in 1783, but preliminary peace between France and Britain ended hostilities in India.

In August 1781, the directors of the British company at Fort Marlborough received instructions from Bombay to destroy all of the Dutch outposts on the west coast of Sumatra. Henry Botham, one of the Directors, commandeered the fleet of five East Indiamen arriving co- incidentally. He sailed for Padang with 100 company soldiers. On 18th August, Jacob van Heemsk, the VOC chief resident at Padang, surrendered all of the west coast outposts, without a fight, unaware that Botham's force was comparatively weak. The capture netted the British 500,000 florins in goods and money. The fortress at Padang was destroyed, before the town was returned to VOC control in 1784.

CEASEFIRE AND TREATY OF PARIS The republic did not form a military alliance with France and her allies before the end of the war. A treaty of amity and commerce, was however, concluded with the Americans in October 1782, after American ambassador John Adams managed to obtain diplomatic recognition of the American republic from the Staten-Generaal, in April 1782. The republic was the 2nd European power, after France, to recognise the United States.

The Dutch Republic involved itself in the peace congress that the French foreign minister, Charles Gravier, the Comte de Vergennes, had organised. The sly Comte had organised a separate treaty with the British. Therefore, the Dutch demands were not met by the French. who went ahead with a separate signing with their other allies, including the British. They were therefore in a very weak position and had to sign a separate peace before the general treaty was signed. The republic then joined the truce in January 1783. The signing of the Treaty of Paris (1783-1784), made Negapatnam, in India, a British colony, but Ceylon was restored to Dutch control.

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THE FOURTH ANGLO-ENGLISH TRADE WAR *The nail in the coffin of the VOC.*

The British gained the right of free trade with part of the Dutch East Indies, their major target. The French also returned the other Dutch colonies they had recaptured from the British, including the ones in the West Indies. THE END OF THE OLD DUTCH REPUBLIC AND THE VOC. This 4th war with the British was a disaster for the Netherlands, particularly economically. It proved to be the end of the mighty Dutch sea power. Someone had to be a scapegoat and it was conveniently blamed on the Stadhouder's mismanagement. His opponents merged into the Patriot Party and managed to strongly diminish the Stadhouder's powers. However the British and the Prussians came to the aid of the old adversary cum ally and drove the Patriots abroad.



Bailli de Suffren, French Admiral
Image courtesy of Maritime Logistics
Professional posted 26/5/2015

However they returned with the help of the French, now against Britain, in 1795, bolstered by the French revolutionary armies and established a Batavian Republic in place of the old Dutch republic. The War sounded the death knell also of the VOC, as it was already in tatters, but now it totally collapsed.

Maybe the only satisfaction that the Dutch may have gleaned is that it also proved to be a huge factor in Britain losing her most valuable colony. It was said that King George III never fully recovered from the loss of America. In children's History books he was known as the Mad King who lost America.

The old King refused to abdicate, even after his son, the Prince Regent took over most of his duties. The old King died, blind, deaf and mad at Windsor Castle, in 1820, after he had been on the throne for 60 years.

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“Life aboard a VOC ship in the 17th Century”.

The VOC in its hey-day during the 17th century, had a great variety of ships sailing, built for all kind of purposes: like searching for new trading possibilities, mapping of coastal areas which might be of interest, vessels designed to carry cargo, as well as the top range ‘retour ships’, those magnificent 800 ton vessels, carrying both cargo and passengers. Most ships were armed with cannon to protect themselves from pirates or enemy forces.



Life on these vessels was rough and rather primitive as we see it at present. Quarters were cramped, closely shared by (often) cargo, humans and rats, as well as other vermin like lice etc. Hygiene was also a challenge; most crew members had only one set of clothing. Washing themselves and their clothing was a problem on the high seas, Salt building up in clothes and skin would cause all kinds of disease. Sleeping was where-ever there was room, in between the guns, coils of rope, anchors and some live-stock at the start of the long voyage. It happened at times that sailors suffocated and died due to lack of oxygen while sleeping below deck; especially in rough seas, when the gun-ports close to sea-level had to be closed

because of possible flooding.



The food stored on ships had to last a long time. Hard biscuits would last, however they attracted weevils and other insects, borrowing themselves into this food. Salted meat was a staple; beef and pork were stored in casks with brine or directly with layers of salt. Vegetables did not last long. So it became quite normal that during these long voyages to Batavia crew members would succumb to diseases through malnutrition like infections and even scurvy, killing thousands of crew members over the years. When becalmed for extended periods, some vessels

had barely enough crew who were fit to manage the sails. Also viruses and infections spread by sexual contact were rampant and caused crew members unable to fulfil their required duties.

But a steady supply of sailors and soldiers was always available. There was food available on a regular basis (when weather permitted), when many at home were not so lucky. As well there was a glimmer of hope to do some profitable (illegal) trading on their own accord.

To conclude there was the promise of comradeship, adventure and revelry in exotic lands, and even the possibility of gaining some wealth.



Article by Gerard Woerlee (Dec'd) Written for the VOCHS March 2014.

THE VOCHS Bi-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The Garden of Good and Evil — Indonesia's Fabled Spice Islands

By Ian Burnet www.ianburnetbooks.com ; www.spiceislandsblog.com

PARADISE LOST

Imagine if you will, a tropical Paradise: a miniscule string of emerald green islands immersed in an aquamarine equatorial waters, far from the cares of outside world. The shorelines of these lush island gems playfully alternate between dense jungle, volcanic lava flow, dramatic cliffs, and white dreamy beaches. The warm equatorial sun, and rich volcanic nutrients have all magically combined to create pristine and colourful sub-aqua wonderland. In fact, the water is so clear that one can see the brilliant coral reefs and teeming fish life from the surface of the sparkling turquoise sea.

This land is rich and verdant, the dark soil of the islands enriched by neighbouring Gunung Api, whose conical volcanic peak soars out of the sea like a towering beacon keeping watch over the resident farmers and fishermen of the island chain. An enticing scent stirs on the equatorial breeze, radiating from the thick jade forest that covers the island slopes. Here, under the shady canopy of the towering Kanari forest thrives an abundance of trees whose leaves shake and gyrate with the clumsy movements of resident wild pigeons who emit a loud booming cry as they snack on the plentiful yellow fruits that adorn its branches.

Swollen and juicy, a globular peach- like fruit swells with ripeness until bursting open down the middle to



reveal a black, glossy nut enclosed in a brilliant crimson lace. The branch buckles under the weight of this ripened orb until the twig snaps and the newly freed fruit lands softly on the lush and verdant forest floor below. This fruit might seem like an insignificant product of nature, but its discovery and journey past its native islands is pregnant with consequence both for the people of these islands and those outside world. If this image of the Banda Islands seem like a tropical Eden, then this is a portrait of the garden before the fall, only instead of an apple, it was the nutmeg tree that tempted mankind with its irresistible fruit.

Nutmeg, Mace and Cloves were both a blessing and a curse to their native Moluccan islands. These Islands were so favoured with thick with fragrant clove forests and bountiful nutmeg trees that they would soon be known the world over as “The Spice Islands.” The aroma of this fragrant island bounty could be smelled on the breeze far out at sea, inviting close and unwanted attention

from those who would do anything to take it. It seemed to some that the Spice Islands were ripe for the picking. The huge impact that these tiny and remote islands had on the European continent at that time was immense, since the search for them gave rise to the Great Age of Discovery and enormous leaps in science, cartography and naval exploration. But the early European spice trade was also remarkable for its competitive ferocity as the great nations of Europe viciously struggled and fought for control of this lucrative market. Perhaps no other trade was so contested and no other group of commodities so exercised nations or so changed the course of history. The pursuit of profit and the desire to monopolize the trade of a few unessential luxury items would eventually be the demise of what was once a peaceful paradise. In a sad twist of fate, the very fruit that had brought life to the locals, also made life in Eden a living hell.

But once Eve had her first taste of that intoxicating spicy fruit, there was no turning back for Indonesia's Eden.

A TASTE FOR TROPICS

In Medieval Times and throughout the Renaissance, spices were highly prized and coveted in Europe. The problem for consumers was that the north's temperate climate limited locally grown spices to mustard. Only

The Garden of Good and Evil — Indonesia's Fabled Spice Islands

warm, tropical climates could produce the double-rainbow of intoxicating spices desired to liven up bland banquets. Therefore spices had to travel great distances and were hard to come by. That rarity commanded a hefty premium, so having these pungent products on the table was a truly a symbol of wealth and extravagance. But the wealthy were gaga over spices for more than their distinct taste. In particular, Nutmeg, Mace and cloves were used as aphrodisiacs, and nutmeg even doubled as a hallucinogen. In Elizabethan times, it was all the rage to wear a collection of these precious twigs and berries around one's neck as a lucky gambling charm or to prevent and cure countless ailments and diseases. It was even thought that nutmeg and cloves effectively ward off the bubonic plague, which only made the popularity of these "it- items" skyrocket further.

A SPICY SECRET

For most of history, what endowed spices with their unique appeal was the mystery of where they came from. Gradually the source of most spices found in Europe's markets was revealed, but by the later Middle Ages, only 3 of the finest spices still eluded geographical identification: cloves, nutmeg, and mace.

Arab traders brought these three spices to Europe's markets via on the overland "Spice Route." On this long voyage, the spices passed through the hands of countless middlemen, multiplying the price of the goods with each transaction. By the time the Asian spices reached Venetian merchants, the Arab traders were selling their wares at nearly a 6,000 percent mark-up. These spices had literally become worth their weight in gold, but Nutmeg, Mace and Clove were so highly coveted by Europe's elite that the supply still couldn't match the demand.

The Arab traders never divulged the exact location of their secret source of fragrant fortune, and no European was able to deduce their location. Discovering this highly-guarded mystery source provoked speculation, and was perceived as a challenge to many. All that was known about these exotic goods was that they hailed from islands that were unfathomably remote and far away, the fabled 'Spice- Islands' of the Indies.



A TREASURE MAP TO THE ISLANDS OF SPICE

As the Arabs, Chinese and Javanese traders already knew, these mythical "Spice Islands" laid in the labyrinth

The Garden of Good and Evil — Indonesia's Fabled Spice Islands

of the South Pacific in what is now the province of Maluku in eastern Indonesia. While cloves were more abundant and could be found scattered around several islands in The Mollucas (Maluku,) Nutmeg and Mace were native to just ten miniscule volcanic islands, surrounded by a vast expanse of ocean. Laying just below equator and 800km north of Darwin, “the Banda Islands” historically were one of the remotest locations imaginable. It would seem that isolation gave nutmeg, mace and cloves their unique character and intoxicating influence, which the outside world found so irresistible.

NATURE'S MARKETPLACE

Though isolated, the Moluccan islands have attracted regional and international traders for more than 3,000 years, long before Europeans had even heard of the Spice Islands. The Bandanese were already long a part of an Indonesia-wide trading network, taking cargo as far as Malacca. The gifted sailors of Indonesia relied on the 6 month trade winds to carry them back and forth across the Archipelago.

Before Europeans arrived, the people of the Spice Islands were able to trade their spices for everyday necessities needed for survival. The Javanese, Arab, and Indian traders for example brought indispensable traditional trade products such as rice and cloth, and even such useful treasures as steel knives, copper, medicines and prized Chinese porcelain. In comparison, the trade items that would later be offered by the Dutch traders included heavy woollens, damasks, and unwanted manufactured goods, which were useless to the people of these tropical islands.

THE SULTANS OF SPICE

The volcanic islands of Tidore and Ternate were to become the capitals of the clove producing Mollucas. The combination of fertile volcanic soil and the province's location right on the Equator has resulted in an extremely lush vegetation covering these islands, whether it is primary rainforest or spice plantation. The clove, like most understory trees, it is unable to regenerate under the full tropical sun and its seed is only viable for a short period – which may explain its limited distribution to these tiny islands.

The natives of the Mollucas had long traded spices with other Asian nations, but as China's interest in regional maritime dominance waned in the late 15th Century, regional trade became dominated by Arab traders. The Arabs not only brought with them Islam, but also a new technique of social organization, the sultanate, which replaced traditional Mollucan councils of local rich men (orang kaya) on the more significant islands such as Tidore and Ternate. The adoption of a Sultanate system by the clove islands would prove to be more effective in dealing with the outsiders that would come.

CLOVE ME TENDER

In Moluccan folklore, villagers treated blossoming clove trees “like a pregnant woman,” taking great care was not to alarm them lest the tree drop its fruit too soon like the untimely delivery of a woman who has been frightened in her pregnancy. Although modern attitudes have changed, in some villages a clove tree is still planted at the birth of a baby, with the belief that if the tree flourishes, so will the child.

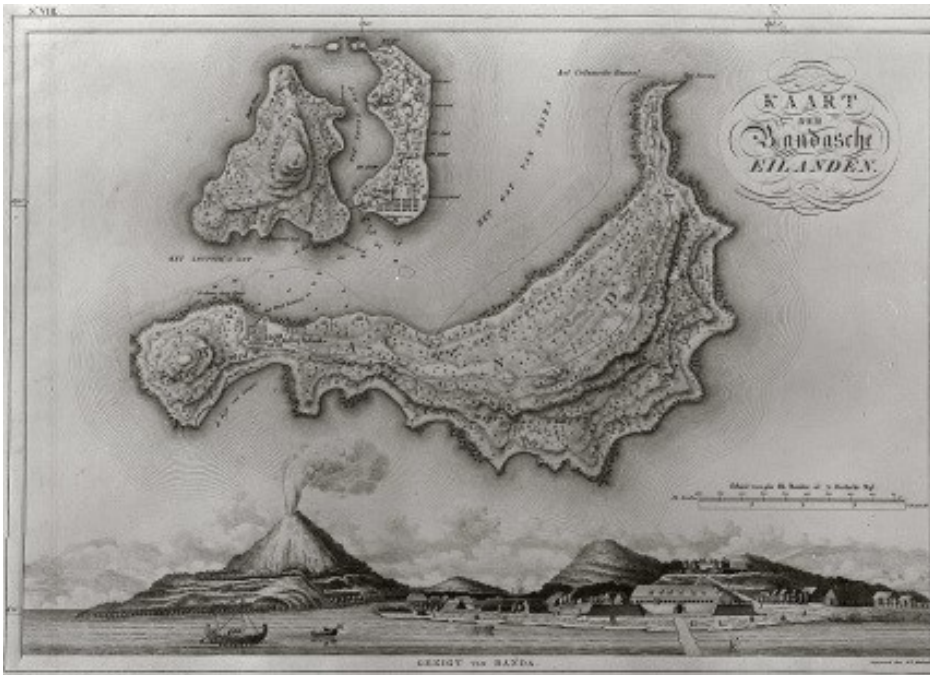
The clove spice is actually the unopened flower bud of the evergreen clove tree, which gradually turn from green to pink to signal that they are ripe for the picking. Once collected the buds are dried in the sun until they turn brown in colour. It takes more than 3000 highly valued flower buds to produce one kilo of dried cloves, which may explain why they are so valuable.

With their round, flat top and tapered stem, cloves resemble tiny nails, in fact, the spice gets its name from the French word “clou” which means nail. But don't be fooled by its “tough” name, although cloves have hard exterior, their flesh features a rich oily compound which is the source of which their warm flavour and sweet aroma that evokes the sultry tropical climates where they are grown. Since Ancient times cloves and their oil have been used for their antibacterial and analgesic properties, which were especially valued in a world without medicine. Even today clove essential oil is used for cosmetics, dentistry, medicine, and as a clearing agent in microscopy.



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The Garden of Good and Evil — Indonesia's Fabled Spice Islands



THE ORANG KAYA AND THE CASE OF THE CURIOUS NUT

Before the arrival of Europeans, Banda had an oligarchic form of government led by orang kaya ('rich men') that was never replaced by a Sultanate system like it's Moluccan neighbors to the north. The Bandanese had an active and independent role in trade throughout the archipelago, making their living by trading spices from the Nutmeg trees that were only indigenous only to their little islands. A single mature tree could produce up to 2,000 nutmegs per year for up to 75 years. Since nutmeg has no particular season, it's harvest supplied the Banda islanders with a steady harvest, and subsequently a steady income year round.

Although *Myristica* is a genus found all over Asia, no other species achieves the special powers of the *Myristica Fragrans*, or nutmeg tree. The mere existence of this magical tree on these impossibly remote islands is an incredibly unlikely phenomenon. The Bandas are surrounded by ocean, and unlike the coconut, the nutmeg isn't a "seafaring nut." Floating in the salty sea to a nearby island would have the same sterilizing effect as pickling the pepper. Additionally a nutmeg seed needs both male and female trees to germinate. The odds of this unusual species of arriving on a wayward desert isle and happening to find and couple with another of its kind are beyond extraordinary. Perhaps the bland ancestral nutmeg, arrived by chance at the windswept volcanoes and became concentrated and intense, like a pool of elixir evaporating in the sun. The Bandanese were indeed were in a rare position to have such a mixed blessing from nature in their possession.

NUTTY FOR NUTMEG

The nutmeg fruit, resembling an apricot or a large plum, is the only tropical fruit that is the source of two different spices. When ripe, the fruit bursts open to reveal the seed. The glistening wet aril, is what we know as the mace. This soft, red, and lacy placenta clings to the shell of the glossy black nutmeg like a hand with its fingers holding so tightly that they leave little indentations to show where they've been. After collection, the mace is peeled away from the nutmeg seed, and each is dried in the sun. Once dry, the nutmeg seed rattles within its smooth, mace-embossed outer shell, and oxidization has turned the mace from a brilliant scarlet, to a rusty red-orange.

A Bandanese legend claims that the nutmeg's musky scent is so overpowering when ripe, that it causes Birds of Paradise to fall to the ground. Indeed, the name nutmeg comes from Latin, *nux muscat*, meaning musky nut. It turns out that the nutmeg is indeed intoxicating. The spice has long been ingested for it's hallucinogenic qualities, but the side effects are so unpleasant that it is generally only used by those with no access to other drugs, such as soldiers and prison inmates. Nutmeg overdoses had become such a problem in US prisons that

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The Garden of Good and Evil — Indonesia's Fabled Spice Islands

the spice had to be banned from their kitchens.
No wonder it had such an intoxicating effect...

THE PRICE PAID OF SPICE

By trading with Muslim states, Venice had come to monopolize the spice trade in Europe between 1200 and 1500. After traditional overland connections were disrupted by a war between the Mongols and the Turks, Venice turned to dominate Mediterranean seaways to ports such as Alexandria. The rest of Europe had enough of paying the Venetians top dollar for their spices. Finally, it was a financial incentive to discover an alternative to Venice's spice monopoly of this most lucrative business that was possibly the single most important factor precipitating Europe's Age of Exploration.

The Gold Rush was on.

The great nations of Renaissance Europe would take to the seas in a quest to beat all quests. The race to the Spice Islands of the exited monopolists fired up patriots and coaxed investors to risk all they had to find this proverbial Pot of Gold at the end of the rainbow. But it would be the Spice Islands themselves that in the end would pay the biggest price. The Great Age of Discovery was on its way bringing the unsuspecting inhabitants of The Spice Islands just a step away from meeting their doom.

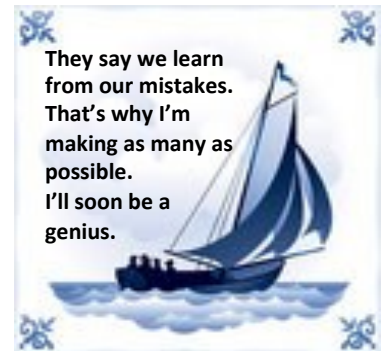


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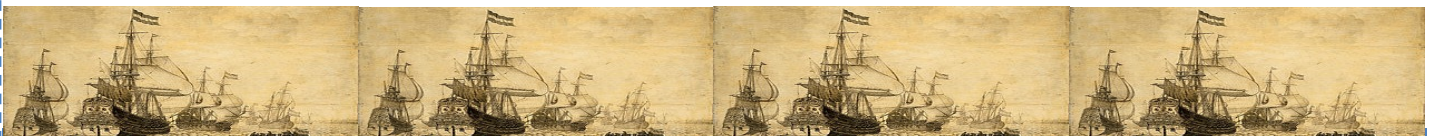
From the Editor:

Dear Members, Friends and Supporters of the VOCHS
Well, it is really beginning to cool off now with lots of rain, flooding in some cases.
I hope that you have all managed to stay safe and coped with the lockdowns as well.
Enjoy your read. I have enjoyed putting the newsletter together for you.
Remember if you have something interesting to share with all of us please let me know.

Cheers
Henny
Secretary and Editor for the VOCHS



If you find any of our 'deliberate mistakes' in this newsletter please know that "Mistakes are lessons of Wisdom".



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Thank you....