

The 'Little Dove' - Spicing up our maritime history



From left; Mike Lefroy on board the Duyfken conversing with school children - cargo below decks - Duyfken, moored at Fishing Boat Harbour

by Mike Lefroy

WHERE in the world can you find an authentic sea-going

replica of a Dutch ship of discovery moored 500 metres away from a museum full of Dutch shipwreck artefacts

from the coast of New Holland?

Well, right here – in Fremantle, Western Australia.

The little ship *Duyfken*, a much praised replica of the first European ship to reach Australian shores in 1606, is currently in a cosy berth behind Little Creatures in Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour. To the north, is an easy five minute walk to world-renowned Shipwrecks Galleries – part of the Western Australian Museum.

These two sites provide a compelling educational opportunity for students to learn about the early maritime history of Australia and in particular the stories of the Dutch sailors who charted our western coast.

Five years after Willem Janszoon, the captain of the *Duyfken* made landfall at Weipa in the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north of Australia, another Dutch ship's captain, Hendrick Brouwer, pioneered a new route to the Spice Islands.

Rather than hugging the African coast before venturing east in the equatorial regions to the Indonesian islands, he sailed south from Capetown, South Africa and discovered a maritime freeway - the strong westerly winds of the Roaring Forties. Finding the 40° latitude was no problem.

Working out where to turn north for the Spice Islands, a product of knowing your longitude was much

more difficult.

So, it was only a matter of time before a Dutch ship would reach our western coast. Dirk Hartog in the ship *Eendracht* was the first in 1616. He left his message on a pewter plate nailed to a post on what we now call Dirk Hartog Island.

Over the next two centuries, the shape and nature of this new continent, a task begun by the crew of *Duyfken*, was slowly revealed and mapped by maritime explorers from the Netherlands, England and France.

These and other fascinating stories unfold dramatically during tours of *Duyfken* and the Shipwrecks Galleries.

The *Duyfken* legacy is now a part of the Australian curriculum and, over the past two years, several thousand eager students have clambered over the ship and discovered this part of our maritime history.

You see *Duyfken* is a real sailing ship.

Visiting students go below decks into the world of a sailor from the 1600s.

Here they walk on loose packed 400-year old ballast bricks that line the floor.

They learn how bricks like these were loaded as ballast along with chests of silver coins at the homeport in the Netherlands and then sold for housing in the East Indies. The students smell samples of spices similar

to those loaded on board for the return trip to Europe.

They feel the planks and beams of European oak and discover how ships of that time were constructed.

They learn of life and death, praise and punishment.

On deck they visit the captain's tiny cabin, learn how to load a cannon, how to steer and navigate the ship, where to cook their meals and where to go to the toilet – a surprising experience for students of the 21st century.

The *Duyfken* Foundation has worked with *The West Australian* newspaper in education over the last two years to produce two free learning booklets for schools based on the *Duyfken* experience. These booklets highlight the importance of the 'Little Dove' as a unique educational tool.

We hope *Have a Go News* readers may like to share this experience with their families and grandchildren and bring them down to see her firsthand.

For more information about educational opportunities on *Duyfken*, including tours, day sails and volunteer guiding of school groups, check out the web site <http://www.duyfken.com/contact>