

Tales of the *Duyfken* - Willem Janszoon and the Dutch explorers



Sources: 1606 An Epic Adventure Evan McHugh Wikipedia

FOR those following the Tales of the *Duyfken*, you will recall in last month's *Have a Go News* that the

crew of *Duyfken* had sighted land after a couple of challenging months sailing eastward through the shoals and

islands of Indonesia. These waters were uncharted at the time and so these skilled mariners relied on the keen

eyes of the crewman who had been sent aloft the mast to look for changes in the water colour, a sure sign that potential obstacles lay ahead.

At the time of sighting land again the crew of *Duyfken* were quite unaware that they had come across a new continent. To them the land mass that lay before them was simply an extension of New Guinea. This was understandable as they had no knowledge of the stretch of water between New Guinea and the tip of Cape York, the strait we know today as Torres Strait.

As history would have it, the ship's log and the charts of this voyage were lost, although in the 1670s copies of the original chart were made giving some sense to the scope of Janszoon's expedi-

tion. This chart also reveals to us the point at which the crew of *Duyfken* made their first landfall, the mouth of the Penefather River, an area some 150km south of the tip of the Cape York Peninsula.

And they knew they were not alone. Smoke in the distance suggested that this land was inhabited, by who they were yet to know. Ashore what the crew discovered was unimpressive. Their mission was to look for opportunities to trade...spices and gold being the order of the day. What they found was swampy and infertile land that offered no commercial value...and yet today this same area offers up mining treasures in the form of bauxite, the raw material for aluminium.

The voyage progressed southward, with Janszoon and the *Duyfken* crew charting some 350km of coastline. They put names to Vliege Bay (now known as Albatross Bay), Dubbel Rev (meaning Double River) and Cabo Keerweer (Cape Turn-about).

It was here at Cape Keerweer that the *Duyfken* crew encountered the local Wik people, an Aboriginal community that to this day still tell the stories of the Dutch visit in 1606, stories that have been passed down through the elders.

As the stories go this encounter did not go well... "if the Dutchmen had behaved properly, we would not have killed them...but they took our wives". Lives were lost on both sides. Not the best of

beginnings for Europeans in this new land.

With little in the way of tradable product, and locals that were less than impressed with the Dutch arrival, it was time for *Duyfken* to retrace her steps and set sail for Banda, still not aware that they had set foot on a new continent.

This would soon change...

Inspired to sail aboard the replica of *Duyfken* then go to www.duyfken.com/sailing

