

**Book Club of California**

**Quarterly News-Letter Vol. LXV Number 4, Fall 2000**

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Australian Maritime Series No. 5, a handsomely-printed facsimile publication of Jacob Le Maire, *Mirror of the Australian Navigation, Being an Account of the Voyage of Jacob Le Maire and Willem Schouten* [Amsterdam 1622; 96 pages] coupled with an English translation by Alexander Dalrymple (London, 1770; 65 pages), edited by Dr. Edward Duyker. Sydney: Hordern House for the Australian National Maritime Museum, 1999): 196 pages; 15 illustrations, many in color; 12 x 7 ¾ inches; 950 copies including 50 deluxe; Australian \$248 (about \$150). Order from Hordern House, 77 Victoria Street, Potts Point, Sydney, New South Wales 2001, Australia, or [www.horden.com](http://www.horden.com)

Merchant Isaac Le Maire of Hoorn, Holland, was an odd duck; more like the Australian duck-billed platypus. When he died, aged about sixty-five, in 1624, his tombstone memorialised his eccentricities: "During his trading life in all the quarters of the world," the carved stone declared, he "has been so richly blessed by God, that in thirty years he lost over 1,500,000 Guilden."

Such quirkiness needs a master editor. Dr. Edward Duyker, a New South Wales History Fellow and author of *The Dutch in Australia*, a 1987 study of early Dutch voyages in the surrounding seas, is such an expert.

First, some background. In the sixteenth-century, Portuguese monopolised the spice trade through control of sea routes via the Cape of Good Hope. In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch leapfrogged to the source of nutmeg and pepper, the Spice Islands. With the backing of the States-General, the governing body of the Netherlands, the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) formed in 1602. Under Dutch law, VOC exploration of distant lands gave it exclusive rights to Indonesian trade through its newly discovered harbors. The company grew to be the largest in the world; upon its dissolution in 1798, the Dutch government took control of its colonies.

In 1605-1606 Portuguese navigator Pedro Ferdinandez de Quiro crossed the great Pacific to discover unknown lands in the South Seas. One he named "Australia." Since Roman times, geographers had predicted a great counterbalancing southern continent, using "auster," the "south wind" as an adjective; Quiro became the first to make it a noun, tied to a geographic spot. Was this the true "Australia"? Map makers faced a huge void in their charts.

Merchant Isaac Le Maire had a dream; Quiro showed the way. Not only would Le Maire find a new route to the Pacific, avoiding the VOC-claimed Strait of Magellan, but marvellously, he would discover the missing continent, abundant in treasured spices, and forever break the VOC East Indian monopoly.

Forming The Australian Company, Le Maire received from the States-General rights to any new passages and harbors discovered and outfitted two ships. The command of the expedition went to thirty-year-old Jacob Le Maire, the eldest of Isaac's twenty-two children (more congratulations are due wife Maria!), who had made one trading voyage to the tip of Africa. Navigator Willem Schouten, veteran of three trips to the East Indies,

captained the three-masted, 220-ton Eendracht (or "Concord") and her crew of sixty-five men, while Jan Le Maire claimed the smaller 110-ton Hoorn and twenty-two men. On June 14, 1615, the ships departed on their gold-seeking mission - or so the crew thought. Passing by Africa, they took aboard bananas and lemons at Sierra Leone, auspicious for a healthy voyage. Eventually, only three men died en route to the Spice Islands. Crossing the Atlantic to South America, in December the ships prepared for their great adventure. While careened so that her fouled bottom could be cleaned by fire, the Hoorn burnt, and the Eendracht sailed alone, south along a coast of unknown length. On January 25, 1616, the ship entered the Strait of Le Maire, separating Tierra del Fuego from Staten Landt (named for the States-General), and on January 29, 1616, the men of Hoorn became the first Cape Homers, as that famed feature gained the name of their home port.

Following Quiro's lead, a solitary three-master headed across the wide expanse of the Pacific. The voyage began to prove unhealthy for Le Maire when Jan died. The Eendracht arrived at the Molucca Islands on September 17, 1616, and while it was warmly welcomed, the East Indies Company governor naturally refused permission to trade. A harsher reception awaited when they dropped anchor at Jakarta on October 29. Jan Pietersz Coen, President of the Council of the Indies and later Governor-General, refused to believe that Le Maire and Schouten had found a new passage to the Pacific. He seized their ship and sent the two commanders and twenty of the crew who did not wish to join the VOC home on an East Indiaman commanded by Joris van Speilbergen. In December 1616, Jacob Le Maire followed brother Jan in death; of the four lost on this round-the-world trip, two were Le Maires.

What Quixotic idea did merchant Isaac Le Maire have to break the VOC monopoly? Certainly sending a ship to ports to which the Dutch East Indies Company had exclusive rights was not the way to do it. Though Le Maire received full compensation, plus interest for the Eendracht, VOC navigators had already claimed enough of the surrounding lands to keep their monopoly. Undoubtedly, Le Maire's priority appeared in the name of his adventurous firm, "The Australian Company."

Navigator Willem Schouten rushed to print in 1618 with a popular, readable journal of the voyage that went through many editions; Captain van Speilbergen followed with his Voyage Around the World, 1614-1617 in 1619, and in 1622, the Le Maires published their account, which is reproduced here in heavy, black, gothic letters. Much of the preliminary narrative feuds with Schouten over the quick glory gained by the master mariner, but recent scholarship shows that Jacob Le Maire kept the only log; Schouten reworked it. In contrast with Schouten's 1618 publication, Le Maire's version had limited circulation; a few presentation copies contained graphic, informative hand-colored plates, reproduced in this edition. Map collectors will enjoy especially the track of the Eendracht rounding a pink Caap Hoorn.

This Dutch book might have remained an unknown antiquarian curiosity except for Alexander Dalrymple, the dynamo behind eighteenth-century English exploration of the Pacific. Dalrymple believed passionately there was a Southern Continent, an "Australia," and set about proving it. He compiled accounts, reconciled conflicting navigation, and (as *An Account of the Discoveries Made in the South Pacific Ocean Previous to 1764* (1767); No. 3 of the Australian Maritime Series) published sailing directions for the South Seas. Dalrymple hoped to culminate his career leading the Australian discovery

expedition, but command went to doughty Captain James Cook. Alexander Dalrymple, like Isaac, Jacob, and Jan Le Maire and Willem Schouten before him, had dreamed the dream-and it turned out true. Although the Le Maires found no Australia, gained no fortune, and lost two sons, ever afterward, any deepwater sailor worth his salt knew that intrepid Hollanders had rounded South America before him.