

Report on visit to the Netherlands  
1–16 October 1993  
for the  
Australian Academy of the Humanities

by

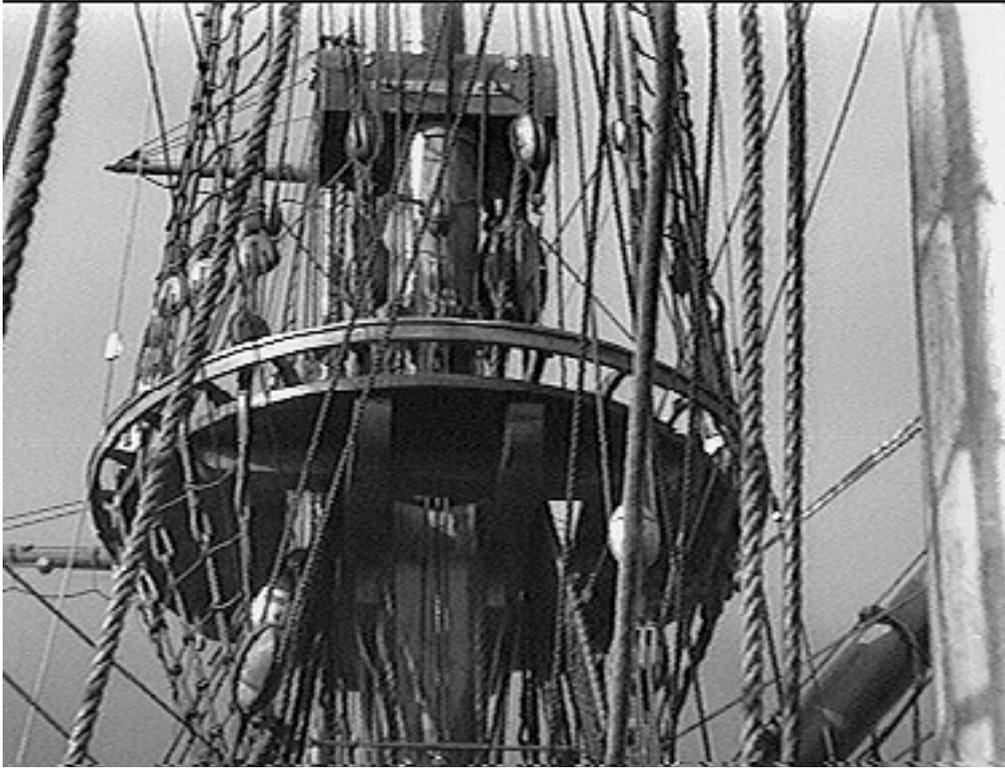
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1993

## Research Topic



### Introduction

The Maritime Archaeological, Historical and Ethnographic Investigation of Maritime Technology in the Pre-Modern Period, with Particular Reference to the *Batavia* and shell-first construction.

Over the past fifteen years I have been involved with a number of other colleagues, in maritime archaeological projects related to the study of Dutch shipwrecks on the Western Australian coast. This work has involved the study of shipbuilding, maritime archaeology and maritime technology and has, over the years, been partially funded by ARC grants. This has resulted in an impressive research programme and numerous developments involving the field of maritime archaeology and maritime history. Initially I held an ARGC Project Grant related to the work of the Western Australian Maritime Museum on the Dutch shipwrecks. This work identified a maritime archaeological research project related to this Dutch wreck material. The project firstly studied European ships involved in the Asiatic trade; the VOC ships. However, the recovery and reconstruction of a section of the *Batavia* enabled the study of the construction of one particular vessel in great detail, together with the artefact assemblage associated with that site. Following a three month visit to the Lelystad Project, in the Netherlands, where a replica of the *Batavia* was being built according to historical records, a more broad ranging project was formulated involving the study of trade and maritime technology through maritime archaeology and maritime history. As a result, a reciprocal research programme between the Lelystad Project and the Western Australian Maritime Museum has developed. Clearly the study of these two ‘versions’ of the *Batavia* is of great significance.

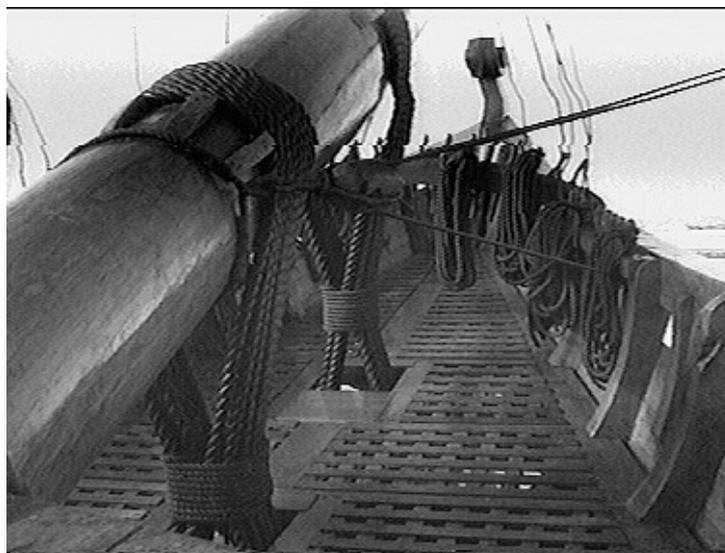
This research has not only implications for our understanding of the history of European technology, but it is vital to our understanding of the processes of maritime trade that

were central to cultural diffusion and adaptation of the Europeans throughout the maritime littoral of the world, but is also relevant to the development of the VOC in the Netherlands. In particular the *Batavia* represents one of the only examples of a VOC ship that has been excavated in an archaeological manner and is at present available for display and for academic research.

Australia's relevance in the international field of maritime archaeological research needs to be appreciated and supported. Of all humanities research within Australia, maritime archaeology has to be one of the most significant new research areas that has one of the best track records as a discipline. This application addresses this area through the study of European ships in the pre-modern time and will involve Australians in an area of special expertise. The results of this work will provide a better understanding of Europe by Australians through publications, lectures, museum displays, university and school courses and through the media in general.

Maritime trade has played an essential part in the development of societies bordering the oceans of the world. Ships carry not just material trade goods, but armies, religions, thought, technology, culture and change. Through the study of this method of transportation we hope to achieve a greater understanding of our past. Australia has a unique position in this field of study and has pioneered much of the development of maritime archaeological expertise on an international level. This application is designed to follow-on the initial programme in increasing Australia's awareness of its relevance in European maritime heritage. It is now widely accepted that maritime archaeology and its associated sub-disciplines provide a new source of information that enriches our knowledge of the past.

It is hoped that during the period of the grant, investigators will be able to participate in a number of major projects. It is important to emphasize that Dutch wreck programme in Western Australia, has collaborated with a number of major international underwater archaeological projects associated with the VOC. Additionally, it is the result of this programme that Australia, as a whole, has a major maritime archaeological programme that is second to none. Without the support of this grant, it will be impossible to maintain the key Australian presence within the field of study, or benefit from the long-term research significance over the next decades. Through previous involvement, the project team is developing collaborative research projects, which are relevant to this proposal, with the following organizations: the Netherlands Scheepvaart Museum and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam and the *Batavia* Project at Lelystad.



## Itinerary



### **Saturday 2 October**

Arrived Schipol Airport, met Robert Parthesius. Visit to Amsterdam, tour of city.

### **Sunday 3 October**

Discussions with Robert about programme in the Netherlands, commenced planning paper on 17th century shipbuilding traditions relating to historical and archaeological information.

### **Monday 4 October**

Visit to Lelystad *Batavia* Project, tour of the ship, further discussions about programme for the next two weeks. Meeting with Willem Vos, the Lelystad Project director. Decision to make a five-part programme to include: research in the archives to trace information relating to two shipwreck sites in Sri Lanka, research on shell-first ship construction, the construction and testing of a computer network system, the outline of a joint paper on experimental archaeology and the photo-documentation of the *Batavia* reconstruction.

### **Tuesday 5 October**

Lelystad, work on ship construction information. Transcription of information relating to the *Batavia* project, measurements and hull shapes. Documentation of measurements from Witsen and Van IJk for us in comparative research. Using a computer, tests were made against the length to beam ratios for the vessels.

### **Wednesday 6 October**

Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag. Archival search for information relating to the Great Basses and Galle Harbour wreck sites. Studied the Overgecomen brieven en papieren

from Batavia to find information on the *Hercules*, *Dolfijn* and the New Site in Galle Harbour; in addition searched for further information on the 1703 site on the Great Basses.

#### **Thursday 7 October**

Visit to the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Kloveniersburgwal to meet Dr R. des Bouvrie, Head of the Cabinet. Discussions with curator responsible for conservation of the paintings and murals in the Trippenhuys, the location of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Visit to meet the curator of Conservation at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Work at Lelystad

#### **Friday 8 October**

Lelystad to start the photo documentation of the *Batavia*. Commenced recording the interior of the hull using Hi8 video and 35 mm colour film. Note all illustrations used in this publication are captured from the video record via computer. Discussion with

#### **Saturday 9 October**

Visit to Kedelhaven Museum and Scheepsarcheologie Centrum. Attended a lecture and met the Director, Jaap Morel to discuss issues relating to the construction of the cogs found in the IJsselmeerpolders.

#### **Sunday 10 October**

#### **Monday 11 October**

Documentation of the interior of the *Batavia* replica using Hi8 video and 35 mm colour film. Discussion with Cees van Soestbergen about the wood carvings on the *Batavia*.

#### **Tuesday 12 October**

Discussion with Mr Jan-Piet Puype of the Koninklijk Nederland Leger- en Wapenmuseum, Delft, regarding cannon and gun carriage issues. Mr Puype advised that he had located another composite gun, similar to one found on the *Batavia* in the Artillery Museum in Lisbon.

#### **Wednesday 13 October**

Work in Amsterdam on planning of research programme relating to medieval ship construction and the comparison between the archaeological and historical records. Identification of the various components of the programme, in particular the literature available that can be utilised to study the issues.

#### **Thursday 14 October**

Meeting with Loderwijk Waagenar of the Amsterdams Historisch Museum to discuss the question of excavation of shipwrecks in Asia. In addition the Galle Harbour archaeological project was discussed and the relevance of the archival sources in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

#### **Friday 15 October**

Final meeting with staff at the Lelystad project. Discussions with Willem Vos about the proposed launching date for the *Batavia* and the future plans for the *Batavia* Wharf. Visit to Enckhuysen to look at traditional sailing vessels and to view the Dromadaris.

**Saturday 16 October**  
Departed Amsterdam

## Results of visit



A number of important results of the two week visit were achieved, briefly these can be listed as follows:

1. The establishment of a detailed record of the internal and external construction of the Lelystad *Batavia*, including photographic, video and measured information.
2. The planning stage for a research programme relating to the construction methods of 17th century ships in Europe and the comparison of this information with Asian-built vessels.
3. Research programme in the Algemeen Rijksarchief to locate and identify three of the shipwrecks in Sri Lanka which is part of an archaeological research programme.
4. The development of a uniform method of recording data between the two projects; in particular the computerization of information and standardization of terms.
5. The planning and methodology for the construction, in Australia, of a 1:10 research model to be built shell first, with the objective of understanding the problems and reasons behind the shell-first construction.
6. The planning of a translation programme for a number of important Dutch, 17th-century shipbuilding books.

### **The *Batavia* recording**

One of the main objectives of the programme was to exchange information between the two projects. In particular, the Lelystad programme is interested in the archaeological details from the excavation work in Australia. The Australian project is interested in information relating to construction of parts of the *Batavia* that are missing from the

wreck site. It is hoped that a comparison of this information will help to assess the relative significance of the two types of records.

### **Construction methods of 17th century ships**

As a result of the collaborative programme in the Netherlands, it has been appreciated that there is need to make a detailed study of the evidence for various types of ship construction. Research in Asia has identified that similar processes in the development of shipbuilding have occurred and there may well be common mechanisms or reasons for these developments. The proposed joint research project, formulated during this visit, is to investigate a series of areas that are common to both projects.

### **Archival research**

The Joint Sri Lanka–Australian Maritime Archaeological Research and Training Project located in 1992–3 a VOC shipwreck and an unidentified site in Galle Harbour and one wreck site on the Great Basses. Research in the Algemeen Rijksarchief in 1992 identified the vessel as the *Hercules* (1661), the other site has not been identified and is the subject of on-going archival research. The Great Basses site, known to have been lost around 1703, is also not identified. Both sites are of great historical, archaeological and cultural significance. It is planned that further research will be undertaken in this area later this year.

### **Data recording**

Both projects use computers to document the records and publish results. Following a series of discussions, it was agreed that a uniform method of reporting and recording would be undertaken. I assisted the Project in setting up a network of the Lelystad Project research group and gave advice on the use of various software programmes.

### **The 1:10 model of the *Batavia***

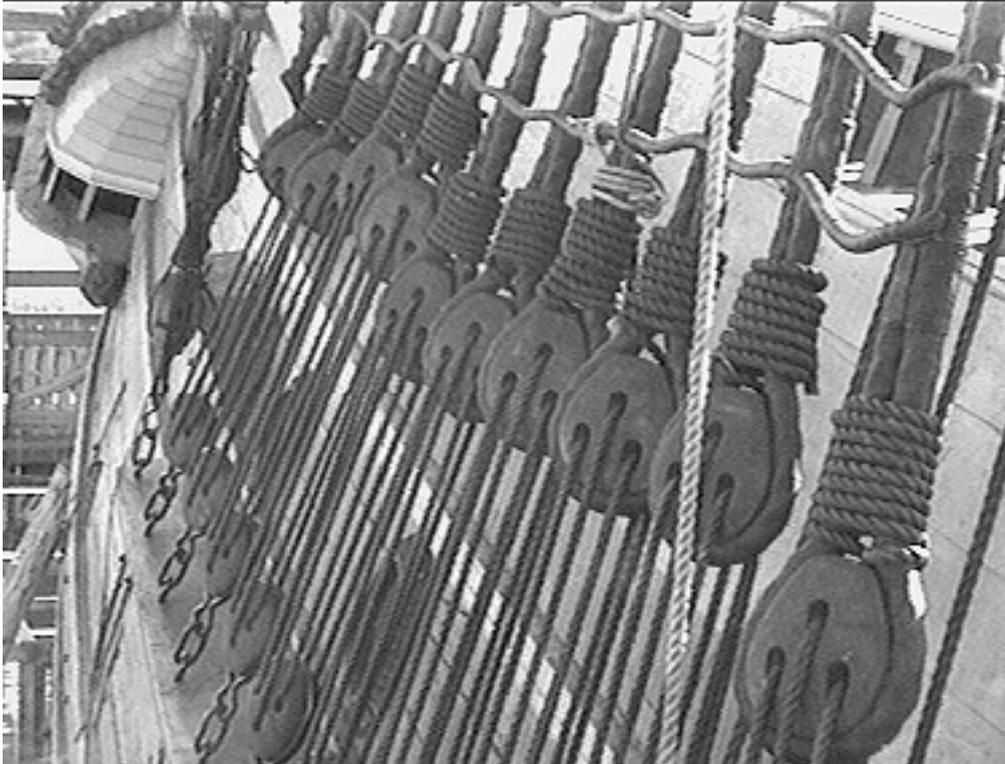
One of the most important parts of the project was the discussions relating to the planning of the construction of the 1:10 research model. This is a particularly important project as it is intended to help understand the methods of construction of the shell-first tradition.

### **The translation programme**

In discussion with the research team at Lelystad, it was resolved that a translation into English should be made of N. Witsen, 1690, *Architectura Navalis et Regimen Nauticum* published in Amsterdam and now available in reprint; and C. van IJk, 1697, *Nederlandsche Scheepsbouwkonst.*, also available in reprint. It was considered that this was an extremely important objective, because at the same time as making the relevant information available in English, it would be possible to build up a compendium of technical Dutch shipbuilding terms.

### **Assessment of success of visit**

It is difficult to assess the success of this visit after only a few weeks. Much of the planning undertaken during the visit has yet to be implemented or worked on. If the objectives worked on in the Netherlands are achieved, the project will be highly successful. During the time that I was in the Netherlands, I was fully occupied and accumulated a lot of new information. At the same time I was able to assist a number of scholars in the Netherlands who are working in the same field.



### **Publications arising from research**

The planking-first construction of the VOC ship *Batavia* : Green and Parthesius

The origins and geographical distribution of the shell-first construction: Green

The construction of a 1:10 shell-first model of the *Batavia*: Green

### **Recommendations**

1. That an approach be made to the Australian Academy for the Humanities to support a reciprocal visit of Robert Parthesius from the Lelystad Project to the Department of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum. The objective of this recommendation is that this will facilitate the recording of the details of the *Batavia* hull structure which will benefit the programme.
2. That funds be sought to assist in the translation of sections of two important Dutch 17th century shipbuilding manuals: Witsen, 1690, *Architectura Navalis et Regimen Nauticum* and van IJk, 1697, *Nederlandsche Scheepsbouwkonst..*
3. That the Netherlands and Australian research groups should actively seek funding to support this important and revolutionary archaeological research project.