



'Adventure and Discovery in the Spice Islands'
A presentation by Richard Orr, 26 October 2022
Report by Stephen Thomas

Richard Orr is a long-time Member of the Squadron and his presentation on the 'Adventure and Discovery in the Spice Islands' attracted an audience of 64 of whom 53 stayed for dinner in the CCA afterwards.



Richard Orr (L) with Glen Madsen

Several years ago, Richard was fortunate enough to be invited to sail a circumnavigation of Australia on the yacht *Patricia 7*. On the passage from Escape River, at the top of Cape York Peninsular, to Gove, he became fascinated at the number of place names that were of Dutch origin. And so began his study of the Dutch activity in the Spice Islands.

The Dutch East Indies Company, or VOC, was formed in 1602 and was granted a monopoly of all trade by the Dutch Government. The Company issued shares and was so successful that these shares paid a dividend of 40%.

In 1511 the Portuguese became the first Europeans to set foot on the Banda Islands which were rich in nutmeg and cloves. Nutmeg was so valuable in Europe, that a small sackful could buy a house in Amsterdam - a mark up of some 60,000%!



Attracted by the value of the spice trade, VOC set up bases in Ambon and constructed fortifications throughout the Spice Islands protect their monopoly.



Willem Janszoon, born in 1570 and a student of mathematics and navigation, was engaged by the VOC to sail in 1603 as Captain of the *Duyfken* from the Netherlands to the East Indies to search for islands to the west of New Guinea.

In 1605 the *Duyfken* crossed the eastern end of the Arafura Sea and into the Gulf of Carpentaria and made landfall at the Pennefather River on the Western Shore of Cape York. This is the first recorded European landfall on the Australian continent and produced extensive charts of the area. These charts are in the Mitchell Library.

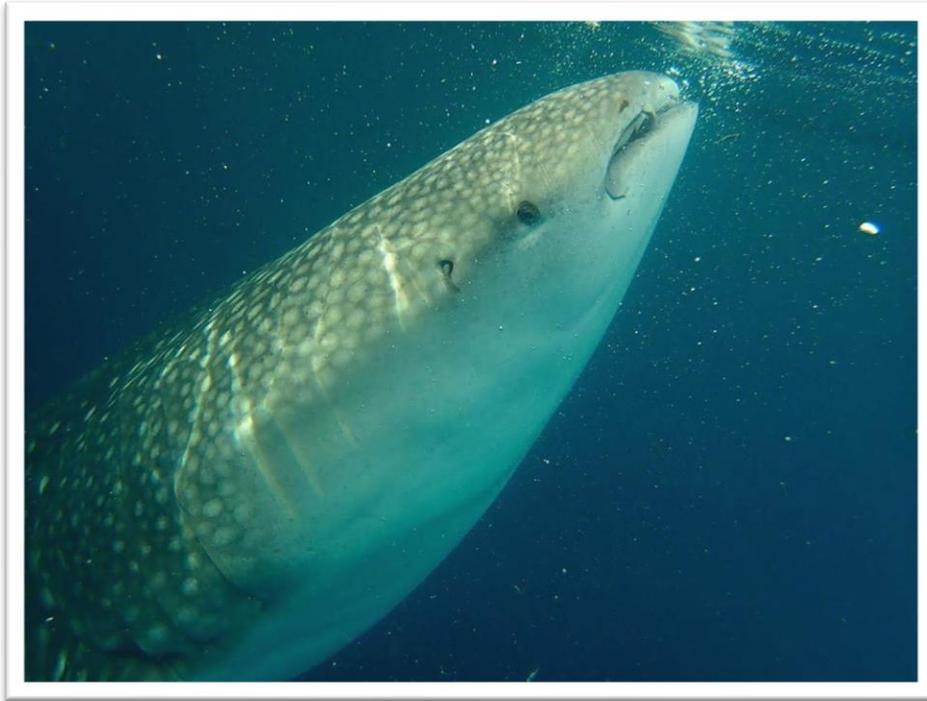
Jaszoon made a subsequent voyage to Australia in 1618 and charted most of Western and Southern Australia. He returned to the Netherlands and was appointed a member of the Council of the Indies and served as Admiral of the Dutch fleet.

The VOC continued to trade and fortify the Spice Islands till it was disbanded in 1798.

The second part of Richard's talk was about his Spice Islands cruise on the Bugis Schooner *Ombak Putih* (see seatrekballi.com). Bugis schooners are still used by the Indonesians today for trade around the Indonesian archipelago, particularly for timber. However, this is no ordinary Bugis schooner - it has 12 cabins all with ensuites, air-conditioning and approximately 400 sq. meters of public space.



Richard's cruise visited many of the Spice Islands where he was able to mingle with the local people, including the Sultans of the Islands, and visit their palaces. He visited the VOC fortifications and warehouses, snorkelled over pristine coral reefs, swam with whale sharks ... all the time enjoying the service and relaxation on board the *Ombak Putih*.



This cruise acknowledged the work of Russel Wallace, an explorer, geographer, anthropologist and illustrator. He did extensive field work in the Malay Archipelago where he identified the Wallace Line - where the western side has animals of Asian origin and the eastern side where the fauna reflect Australasia.

Richard finished by strongly recommending this cruise all attendees.