

'The Tasman Map'

A presentation by Ian Burnet, 2 February 2022

Reviewed by Richard Orr



John Hancox with author Ian Burnet, photo by Rene Chapman

The speaker at the recent Cruising Division dinner was Ian Burnet, an accomplished author on the Spice Islands and the trade in spices, which led to the early European colonisation of Indonesia and the discovery of Australia.

Ian chose as his topic the Tasman Map and the extraordinary series of events which led to this historically significant record of discovery being acquired by the Mitchell Library. (The original is currently on display as the centrepiece of

the Library's world class map exhibition of the exploration of the Pacific and the search for the 'Great South Land'.)

Many of us on a visit to the Mitchell Library, have wondered at the magnificent marble mosaic of the Tasman Map covering the floor of the vestibule entrance.



Ian brought to life how the Tasman Map came into existence and how it passed through the hands of a number of parties, until it came into the possession of Prince Roland Bonaparte, the grand-nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, and was absorbed into his vast collection, disappearing from history.

The origins of the 'Bonaparte' Tasman Map reside with Abel Tasman's voyages of exploration in 1642-3 and 1644 under direction of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Governor Anthony van Diemen to command a small fleet of two ships and go in search of 'Terra Australis Incognita', the undiscovered South Land, "In order to the direct discovery of same and to the consequent opening up of important countries or leastwise of convenient routes to well known opulent markets."



Destiny appears to have played its part.

Ian described how in 1926, the anthropologist and welfare worker Daisy Bates read a magazine article on the story of the map (in the most unlikely of places - an Aboriginal Camp near the Oldeia Siding in the South Australian portion of the Nullarbor Plane) and noted that Prince Roland was intending to bequeath the map to the Australian Government. She brought the article to the attention of the Library, and this sparked a competition between the National Library and the Mitchel to obtain it. The Mitchel ultimately won the prize.

The Cruising Division audience was clearly enthralled, as Ian recounted sections of his new book titled 'The Tasman Map' which draws upon Tasman's journals of the voyage.

The orders were to sail west from Batavia to Mauritius, take on stores and repairs, then sail south to latitude 52 degrees and if no land were found, to then turn east to longitude 220 degrees in line with the eastern point of Nova

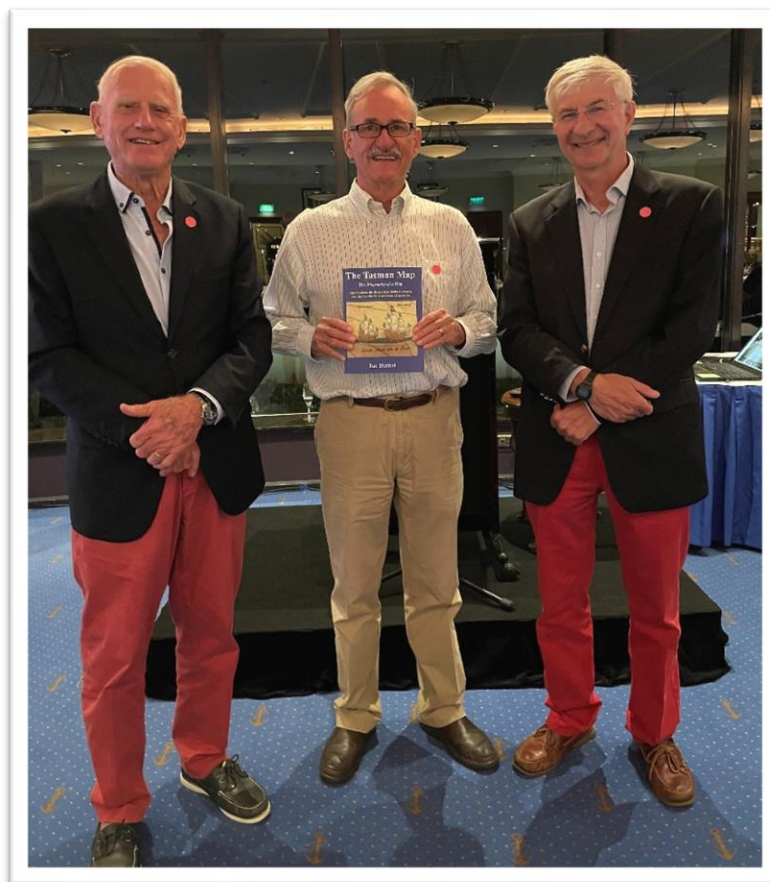


Guinea. The hardships endured in appalling freezing conditions of snow, huge seas, storms and gales, (in the 'Roaring Forties') as the two ships, the flagship *Heemskerck* of 60 crew and the armed transport the *Zeehaen* commanded by Francois Vissscher, ran before the wind in uncharted seas, across the Australian Bight. Unfortunately, they were out of sight of the mainland in the Southern Ocean.

Eventually, high laying land was sighted on 24th November, which was the West coast of Tasmania, near Macquarie Harbour. Tasman named the land Van Diemens Land in honour of the Governor.

After charting the southern and western coasts, he continued the expedition to the east, discovering Staten Landt, which we know today as New Zealand.

It was from this, and the subsequent voyage in 1644, that the Tasman Map was subsequently prepared in Batavia, Jakarta, charting most of the Australian continent.

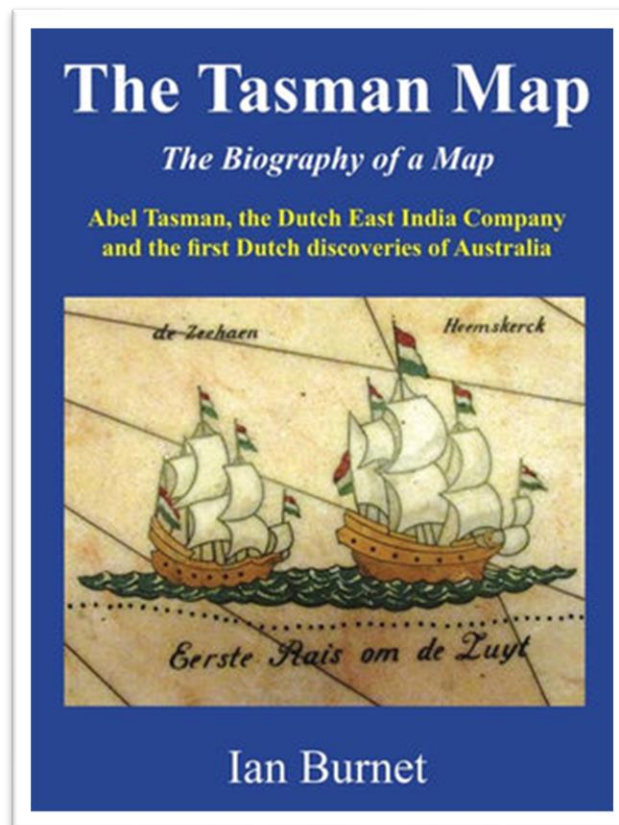


John Hancox, Ian Burnet, John Taylor, photo by Rene Chapman



The evening concluded with many questions from the audience, including whether Cook had Tasman's Map on board the *Endeavour* in 1770?

In his book, Ian recounts the history of the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English discoveries, and the trade on Australia's doorstep in the Moluccas and the Spice Islands, which ultimately led to the discovery of Australia in 1606 by Willem Janzoon in the *Duyfken*.



Having read the book, I can recommend it as being thoroughly researched and an enlightening historical record of how Australia came to be.

Ian Burnet is a Geologist and has lived in the Spice Islands of Indonesia for some 30 years. He is the author of a number of books on the Spice Islands and has become a recognised authority on the history of the European colonisation of Indonesia.

'The Spice Islands', 'East Indies', 'Archipelago- A Journey Across Indonesia' and 'Where Australia Collides with Asia'.