

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 38 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND

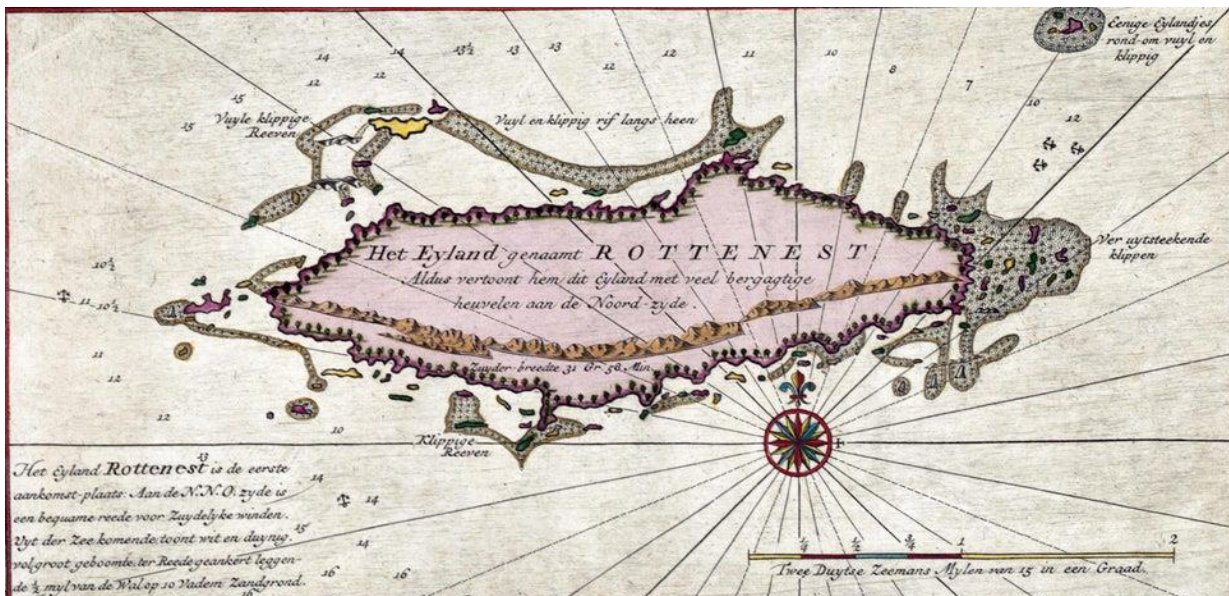


The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020.

Now that the Island is again open to visitors, these Virtual Visits are continuing in 2021 to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.

Enjoy, reflect and share.

MAPPING ROTTNEST – WHEN NORTH IS NOT ALWAYS UP

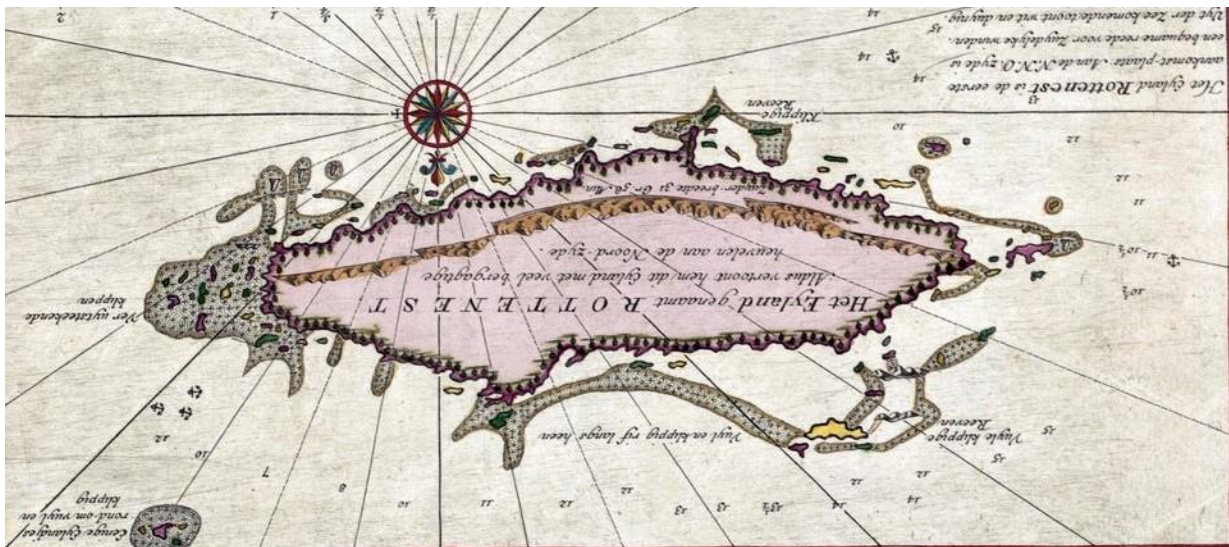


The Exploration exhibit in the Wadjemup Museum concisely summarises the exploration of the Island that took place for over 200 years from 1619 to 1829. The accompanying illustration is a map published in 1753 by Johannes van Keulin. The detail of the Island had been copied from an original drawn by Victor Victorszoon, the artist, draftsman and 'consoler of the sick' on the *Geelvinck*, one of the three ships of Wilhelm de Vlamingh's 1697 expedition along the coast of Western Australia

The text annotations on Victorszoon's original map describe some of the voyage's discoveries, including Rottnest Island and the Swan River, which was so named for the first time on the map. The name, 't Eylandt 't Rottenest, literally means *the Island of the Rats' Nest*, a designation which remains today in a slightly modified form as Rottnest Island.

To anyone familiar with the topography and marine environment of Rottneest, the map does not appear to be a very accurate representation of the Island and therein lies an interesting story.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION



A 180 degree rotation of the image makes much more sense, with the rocks off Bathurst Point, Natural Jetty and the reefs of Salmon Bay becoming more clearly distinguishable.

How did this orientation reversal come to be? A detailed account is contained in Philip Playford's book *Voyage of Discovery to Terra Australis*, which is summarised here.

Victorszoon's 1697 map of the South Land incorporates a detailed insert map of Rottneest Island. In Dr Playford's analysis, Victorszoon was a skilled artist and draftsman but not a professional cartographer. In particular, he did not always follow the convention of orienting all captions right way up in relation to North. For some unknown reason Victorszoon drew the captions upside down in relation to North on the insert map of Rottneest even though the water depths were written with conventional orientation. Thus when one reads the name of the Island on Victorszoon's original, the north pointer faces the bottom rather than the top of the page.

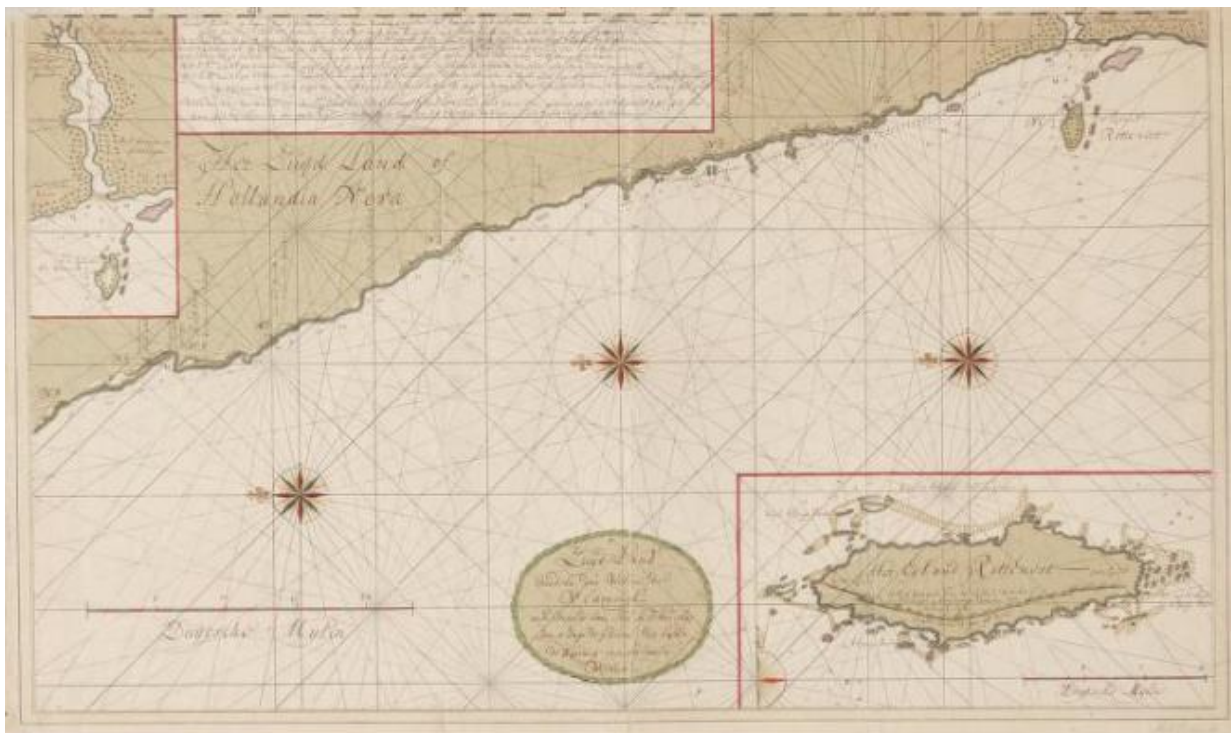
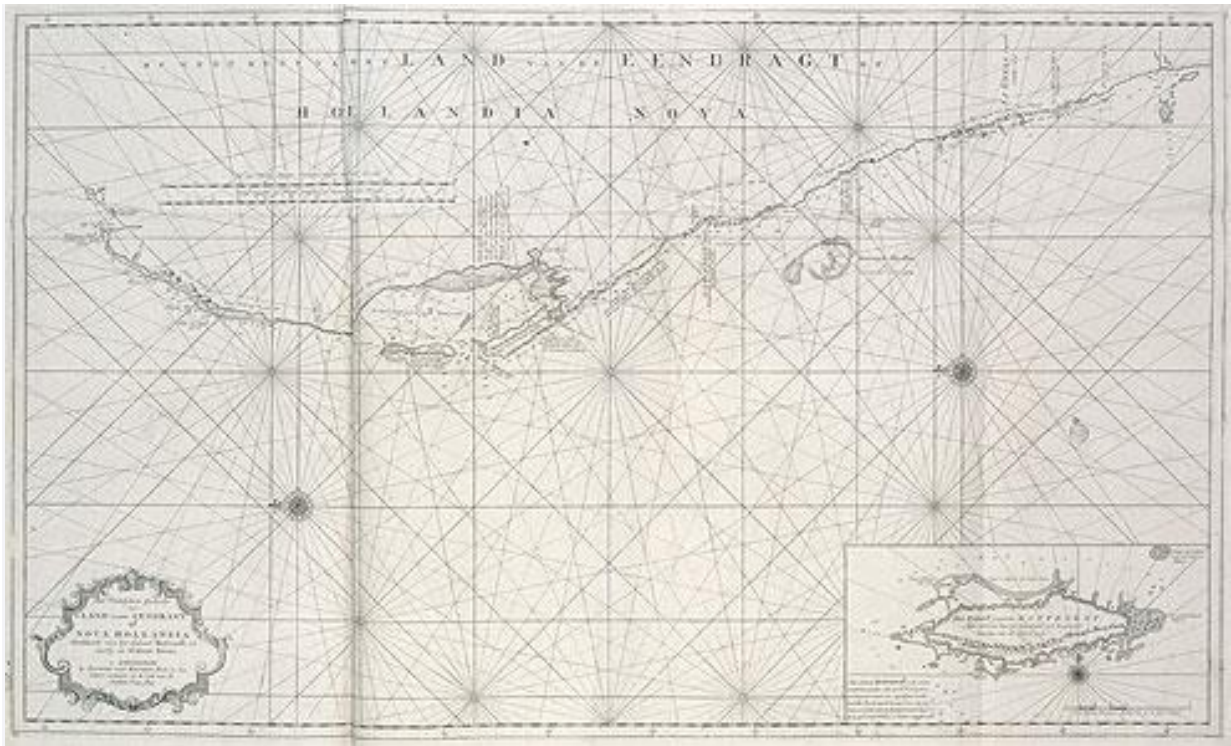
<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/discovery-by-dr-phil-playford-of-the-basin-as-vlamingh-s-first-landing-site-on-rotnest/>

This is clearly shown in the image in the above article from the Chapman Archive,

This variance from convention was not noticed when later cartographers Isaak de Graaf and Gerard van Keulin copied Victorszoon's map. This reversed orientation of Rottneest was carried forward into the first published map by Johannes van Keulin (son of Gerard).

The National Library of Australia holds two Dutch manuscript charts, produced as a result of a voyage to Australia by William de Vlamingh. The two charts, both named "The South Land explored by Willem de Vlamingh in January and February 1697", show 1500km of the Western Australian coastline, from Perth to Exmouth. They were drawn by the cartographer Gerard van Keulin from Victorszoon's original. They are beautifully done with rhumb lines and two coloured compass roses, drawn on standard issue gridded cartographic paper issued by

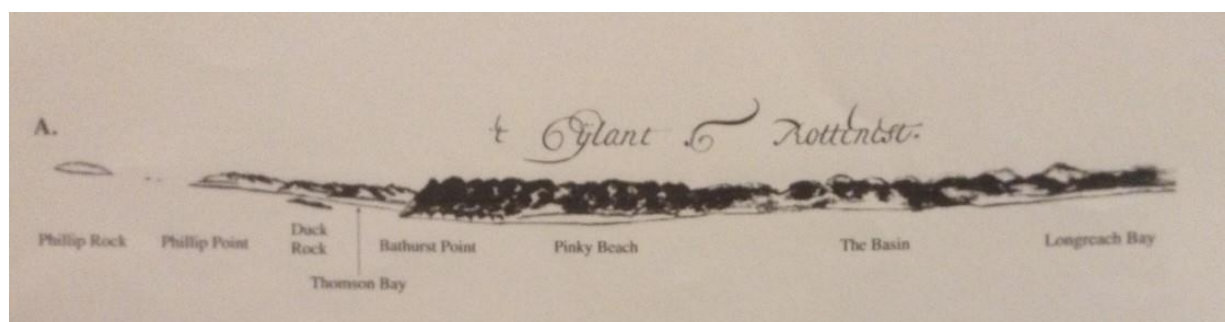
the VOC. The charts are remarkably accurate, to within a tenth a degree of latitude. The charts languished unrecognised in the vaults of the National Library of Australia for almost a century until being identified as 17th-century originals. They are possibly the oldest manuscript maps of any part of Australia to be held in Australian collections.



The charts - both named "The South Land explored by Willem de Vlamingh in January and February 1697" - were finally uncovered by Martin Woods, the museum's map curator. They were thought to be printed copies until 1981, when they were identified as hand-drawn originals by a visiting Dutch expert, Gunter Schilder, who was writing a

history of the Vlamingh voyage. Bizarrely, Professor Schilder did not inform the library of the charts' historic value. It was only when Dr Woods read Professor Schilder's 1985 book this year that he realised the library was holding hidden treasures.

On Vlamingh's advice, the Dutch ended any further exploration of Australia, assessing the country as too inhospitable and the Aborigines bereft of anything worth trading for. It was however, another drawing by Victor Victorzoon, that solved the mystery of where de Vlamingh ships made their original landing on Rottnest. The original watercolour sketch of the north shore of Rottnest as viewed from the anchorage of the *Geelvinck* from Phillip Rock to Longreach Bay is held in the Prins Hendrik Museum in Rotterdam



You can read for yourself, the adventure of discovery from the sea by Dr Playford, Mike Flood, Tom Derkson, Professor George Seddon and Peter Lynn two nautical miles off Pinky Beach in November 1995.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1996/01/01/the-rottnest-islander-vlamingh-s-landing-site-the-north-side-of-rottnest-not-the-south/>

Dr Playford's book on the Dutch explorations is long out of print but is available for reference in the RVGA Hub Library. There are over 80 references to Dutch explorations in the Chapman Archive and endless discoveries of maps and mapping on the internet. Amazing how an extended adventure can be prompted by a single illustration on an interpretive panel in the Wadjemup Museum.

SOME URLS FOR EXPLORATION

<https://www.nla.gov.au/faq/can-you-tell-me-about-the-dutch-manuscript-maps>

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/great-southern-find-maps-are-dutch-originals-20060821-gdo7y3.html>

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/bibliography/voyage-discovery-terra-australis-willem-de-vlamingh-1696-97>

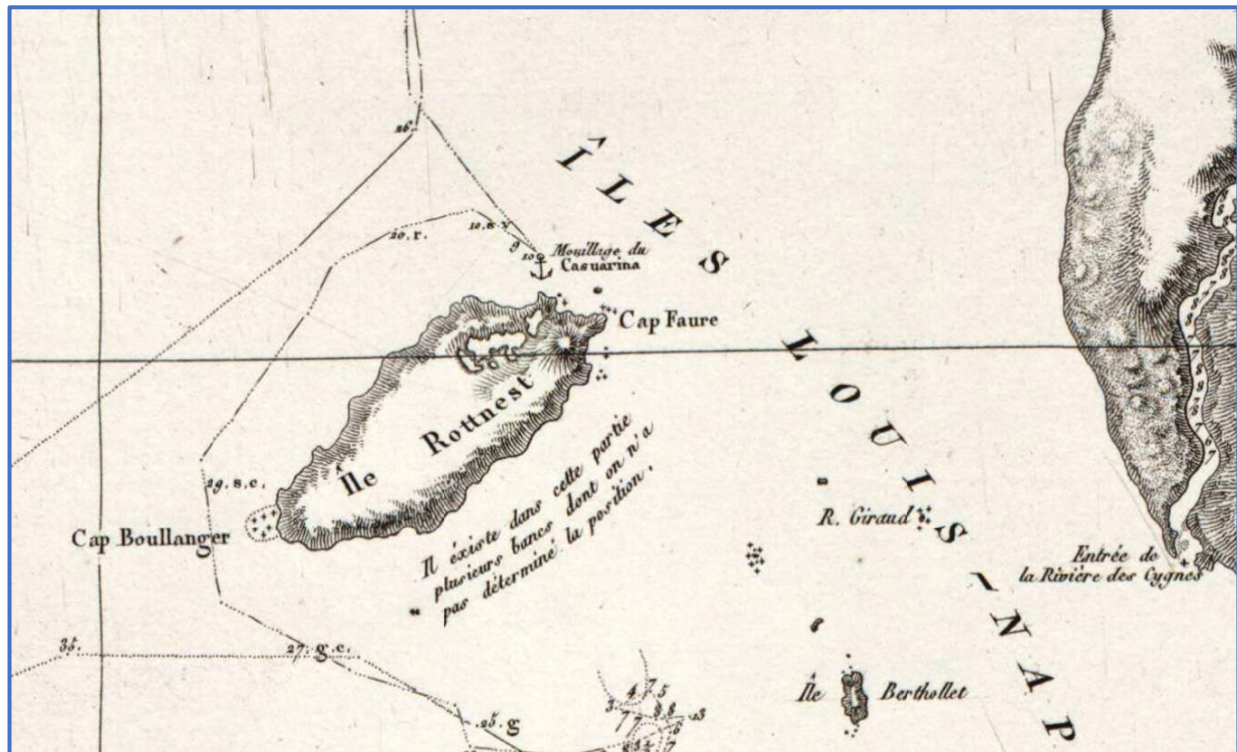
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17450/17450-h/17450-h.htm>

<https://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/events/exhibitions/2006/firstsight/images/s12.html>

<http://www.australiaonthemap.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/MapMatters8.pdf>

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/upside-down-sketch-by-victorzoon/>

https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g652297-d13949967-Reviews-Museum_Prins_Hendrik_de_Zeevaarder-Egmond_aan_Zee_North_Holland_Province.html



Successive voyages of exploration after de Vlamingh also chartered and named the island. That is another study as is the current dominant convention of orienting North to the top of the pages and using the Mercator projection, one method of depicting a curved surface in the flat.. The Mercator projection gives prominence to the Northern hemisphere and distorts the relative size of land masses. Is this another example of the lingering legacies of colonialism?

Greenland vs Africa



Mercator Projection



Actual Size