



'The story' - fact sheet

Vertaling: "CAPE HORN; 1616 –
400 years – 2016"

The story of the discovery of Cape Horn

It was the year 1615 and there was a favorable wind. With two vessels - *De Eendracht* (The Concord) and *De Hoorn* (The Horn) - Jacob Le Maire and Willem Cornelisz Schouten embarked on a new adventure together with their crew, and they left the port of Hoorn...

This expedition had its origins in a secret dream of Jacob's father, Isaac Le Maire. He wanted to find a new route to the East in order to circumvent the monopoly of the VOC (Dutch East India Company). During the Eighty Years' War, Isaac Le Maire fled from Antwerp to Amsterdam, where he became the co-founder and large shareholder of the VOC in 1602. However, his career did not last long. Being accused of embezzlement, Le Maire was forced to leave the VOC in 1609, and he fled again - to Egmond this time.

Le Maire, however, did not sit around doing nothing. Although the VOC had the patent on the trade routes to the East via the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and the Strait of Magellan (South America), it was suspected that there was an undiscovered route south of the Strait of Magellan, a passage near the Land of the South. Determined to break the monopoly of the VOC, Isaac Le Maire organised a secret expedition with befriended cartographers and Willem Schouten. The *Austraalse Compagnie* - named after *Terra Australis Incognita*, or the unknown Land of the South - was founded. He put his son Jacob in charge of the expedition, and Willem and his brother were appointed as shipmasters.

On June 14, 1615, the vessels departed. However, the adventure, which had a successful start, quickly turned into an arduous undertaking, enduring setbacks such as endless hours of waiting for favourable winds off the coast of Sierra Leone, and many watery graves. They defied enormous waves that seemed to split the boat into two, went ashore to look for drinking water - to no avail - and looked death in the face during a collision with a large sea monster, which was presumably a narwhal driven off course. On top of that, they lost *de Hoorn*, which caught fire during the caulking. For a short while, the Land of the South seemed endlessly far away. On January 29, however, over 7 months after their departure, they finally discovered the new route and rounded the southernmost tip of today's Chile - called Cape Horn from then on - with *de Eendracht*. It was a homage to the home port.

However, the journey did not end at Cape Horn. The open sea caused confusion, as there was no sign of *Terra Australis*. Unfortunately, the Land of the South was not found, partly because Willem Schouten preferred to continue the journey to the Indies. They sailed past many islands and spent endless days on the rough open sea. Above New Guinea, a VOC vessel was lying in wait for them and took them to Java. The rumours about the expedition had reached the VOC as well. In Batavia, Jan Pieterszoon Coen confiscated the vessel and all properties on board, and Le Maire and Schouten were arrested for violation of the patent. The VOC refused to believe that a new route was discovered.

De Eendracht and its crew were left behind on Java. Some of them were subsequently employed by the VOC and defected. Le Maire's two sons, as well as Willem Schouten and a dozen crewmembers were put on the first fleet to the Netherlands, where a lengthy trial was awaiting the Le Maire family. Jacob Le Maire, however, did not survive this journey and found his watery grave on the way back to the Netherlands.

Now - four hundred years later - the adventure continues...

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