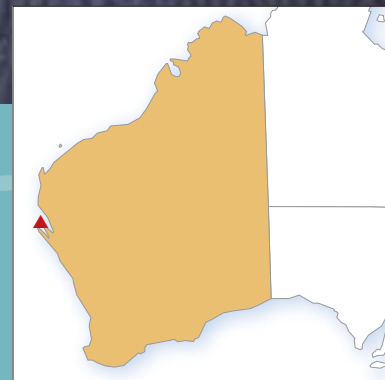


Cape Inscription



Date of inscription: 6 April 2006

Dirk Hartog Landing Site 1616

– Cape Inscription Area, Western Australia

Captain Dirk Hartog of the Dutch East India Company's ship, *Eendracht*, had been following the faster southern route to the port of Batavia in the East Indies (Indonesia). Sailing too far east, on 25 October 1616 Hartog landed at what is now known as Cape Inscription.

Cape Inscription lies at the north western tip of Dirk Hartog Island, surrounded by steep limestone cliffs, white sandy beaches and the Indian Ocean. It forms the western edge of Shark Bay.

Hartog and his crew became the first Europeans to land on the west coast of Australia and during the next 250 years a series of landings and surveys were conducted by many notable explorers.

He then left a pewter plate inscribed with a record of his visit nailed to a post in a rock cleft. Now preserved in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the plate is the oldest physical record of a European landing in Australia.

Hartog sailed north to chart part of the Western Australia coastline. As a result, this part of the coastline appeared on world maps for the first time, replacing the mythical southern continent of Terra Australis Incognita.

Hartog's plate was discovered 81 years later when Willem de Vlamingh landed at Dirk Hartog Island on 4 February 1697. Also with the Dutch East India Company, Vlamingh's mission was to chart the south-west coast of New Holland to aid navigation on the route to the East Indies. Vlamingh replaced Hartog's pewter plate with another one inscribed with a record of his own visit.

Vlamingh's plate was found in 1801 by Baron Emanuel Hamelin, a member of Nicholas Baudin's French expedition, who added his own inscription on a piece of lead sheet nailed to the post.

Vlamingh's plate was removed by Louis de Freycinet, one of Hamelin's junior officer's, who had returned to Cape Inscription in his own ship in 1818. The plate was subsequently returned to Australia by the French Government in 1947.

British navigator and son of a former Governor of New South Wales, Philip Parker King, also left a record of his visit to Cape Inscription in 1822. King was attempting to complete the charting of the Australian coastline commenced by Matthew Flinders' 1801 voyage in HMS *Investigator*.

Captain Henry Mangles Denham, an experienced Naval hydrographic survey officer, also visited Cape Inscription and Shark Bay in 1858 in HMS *Herald* to complete the first naval hydrographic charts of the Western Australian coastline.

The charting of the Australian coastline by these navigators had a profound effect on cartography and added to the growing pool of knowledge about the great southern continent.

In addition to Cape Inscription, two sites on Dirk Hartog Island – Dampier Landing and Turtle Bay – are among the most important historical locations in Australia.

In 1699 British navigator and naturalist, William Dampier, landed on the north-western side of the island at the place now known as Dampier Landing. Dampier named Shark Bay, and made the first scientific collection of Australian plants, marking the beginnings of scientific interest in Australian botany.

In 1772 French navigator, Francois de Saint-Allouarn, landed at Turtle Bay. He buried two bottles, one containing a parchment claiming the west coast of New Holland for France. Each bottle was sealed with a silver French coin under a lead cap. In 1998 one of the bottles together with its coin and lead cap was recovered, but contained no parchment.

In 1991, Dirk Hartog Island was included in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area in recognition of its outstanding natural universal values.