

## Introduction

It is most rewarding as a researcher of Dutch classical shipbuilding, to find out that something I developed years ago unexpectedly gets a follow-up, especially when it happens on the other side of the planet. In the early nineties, I was asked to make a model of the ship on which Abel Tasman made his voyage around Australia in 1642. Though I am not particularly keen on building models in commission, this was an opportunity for me to test some ideas I had about shipbuilding methods in the 17th century. In New Zealand there was an active group of immigrants of Dutch origin who wanted to see a tangible reference to Tasman's accomplishment in the National Maritime Museum Hobson's Wharf in Auckland (NZ). It is no secret that in the Anglo-Saxon world only James Cook (1728-1779) is celebrated as the great discoverer of the Southern waters because of his journeys in 1768, 1772 and 1778, almost one and a half century after Dutch the explorations of the region.

Abel Tasman (1603-1659) acted in commission of the Dutch East India Company Governor-general Anthony van Diemen (1593-1645) in Batavia. He was ordered to research the Southland to see if there was anything of value for the Company's benefit and sailed with two ships, the yacht *Heemskerck* and the fluyt *Zeehaen*. First he went to Mauritius to do some additional business and next he sailed south to 50 degrees latitude and there turning east, hoping to find traces of the legendary countries Lucach, Beach and Maletur, which were supposed to be out there somewhere. Sailing on this latitude was too hard because of the weather and Tasman proceeded much more to the North. This appeared to be a lucky decision because he sighted Tasmania. He did not succeed to land on the island, but sent one of his crew ashore, who was a good swimmer, to plant a flag and then he sailed on. Without having seen a trace of Australia (leave alone the invented other countries) some time later he hit the west coast of New Zealand. Following the coast up north he arrived in a bay, which he would call 'Murderer's Bay' some days later and which he hastily kept behind him, leaving four of his crew killed by natives.

The encounter with the Maori's in this bay has always been described from a Western point of view. When Robert Jenkin wrote to me that he was working on a diorama of the fatal event I was struck by Ro-



bert's deep interest in the Maori history and he came with a report of the occasion which appeared to show much more understanding for the country's native inhabitants than I had ever found in Western literature. Moreover his diorama appeared to give a magnificent image of the circumstances the Dutch discoverers had to deal with.

I was entirely won when another New Zealander, Ron Aaron, appeared to have build a magnificent 1/25 model of the *Heemskerck*, using Cor Emke's drawings of the ship. The publisher 'Verloren' had published them together with a small book and disk about the project in 2000.

Like Jenkin's diorama the model is on display in Takaka in the Golden Bay Museum, as the area is renamed.

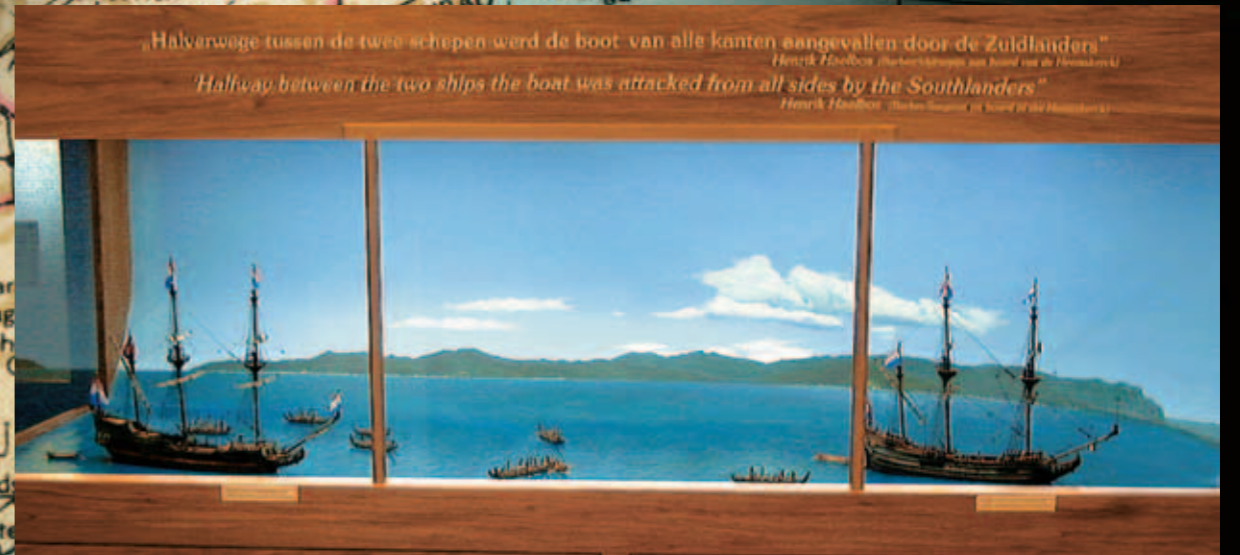
Thus appropriate attention is finally paid to the early Dutch presence in Southern waters both in Auckland and on the Southern island, giving some counterbalance to the wrong idea that Cook on his *Endeavour* was the only European exploring the southern hemisphere and the Dutch community in the country was more than rewarded for their efforts. For myself, I can hardly deny that it fills my heart with pride seeing how a project I have been working on for years is so beautifully reflected from a source I could never have predicted when I accepted the commission to build the two Tasman ships.

Ab Hoving, Alkmaar

# Strangers in Mohua

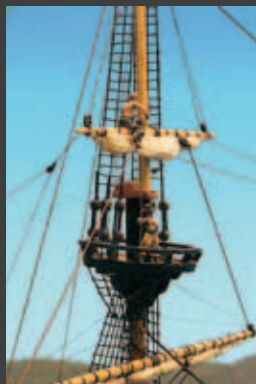
Robert Jenkin, Golden Bay, New-Zealand

Murder's Bay





On December 18th in 1642 Abel Tasman's two ships *Heemskerck* and *Zeehaen* sailed into a large open bay at the top of the south island of New Zealand. They were exploring for the VOC, the Dutch East India Company and five days earlier had sighted this new land. That morning they were anchored near a low sandy peninsula. The sheltered bay behind it is now Golden Bay and Maori called it Mohua. By midday on December 19th, the Dutch would name it Murderers' Bay. As they sailed closer to what seemed a likely anchorage they sent two open boats ahead to spy it out. The VOC had instructed them to contact, and befriend if possible, the people of newly discovered lands. Smoke rising on the shore suggested they now had the opportunity to try. By sunset, the two ships had anchored three kilometres from land. Fires were seen on shore and many native boats. The small Dutch boats sent on ahead now hastened back, with two canoes of natives following behind. The newcomers were Maori warriors, and their canoes, called waka hunua, had double hulls. Tasman could not see clearly; it was nearly dark, but unknown forces gathering around his ships would have been cause for some anxiety. Haelbos, a surgeon on the *Heemskerck*, later wrote; 'he only heard a horrid noise of harsh voices and a shrill sound, not unlike a trumpet'. In Europe, trumpets often sounded for peace embassies.



However, these were Maori war trumpets, and answering with trumpets of your own conveyed to Maori that you wanted war. This was a classic case of cultural confusion, perhaps one cause of bloodshed the next day: the Dutch replied with trumpets of their own. The Maori sounded theirs right back, repeatedly. Tasman may well have sensed they weren't very peaceable. He didn't know how numerous they were. In his account they blew on trumpets several times, then paddled back to shore, and after that he fired off the *Heemskerck's* upper guns, reloading them 'in order that we might prevent mischance'. Haelbos recalls it rather differently: 'The Dutch sailors called out to them, blew on trumpets and finally fired off a cannon. Then the Southlanders began to rave terribly, blew on a horn and returned to land.'

If this is the correct account, Tasman might well have hoped that cannon fire would overawe his visitors. More probably it just made matters worse. The Maori 'raving' could have been an angry haka (a fierce war song) promising revenge; the final horn blast might have signaled 'we are now at war'. But neither of these messages was understood. Next morning when the officers of both ships met in council on the *Heemskerck* they decided that the natives wanted friendship and accordingly the ships should move as close to shore as possible. Maori had made no friendly overtures at all, but had since early morning watched the Dutch like hawks, in silence, from nearby canoes.



As many as nine waka hunua were near the ships. These could have held over 100 warriors. *Heemskerck's* full complement was only 60 men and *Zeehaen's* only 50. Some ten of these including the most senior officers had crossed to *Heemskerck* when the council was convened. *Zeehaen* was just a cargo ship and lightly armed. Despite the Council's optimistic view, the *Zeehaen's* captain seemed to fear attack: he sent his small boat back with orders to prepare the guns, and, if the southlanders approached his ship, only allow a few of them on board. His boat conveyed his orders and came rowing back. At which the Maori saw a perfect opportunity to strike, and targeted the small boat, not the ship. Just seven sailors were on board the boat, and several waka suddenly converged on them. One, holding thirteen men, drove into them and quickly overpowered the seven Dutch.

Three of the sailors swam away and *Heemskerck's* large boat ultimately rescued them. From the two ships the Dutch shot hard with cannons and with muskets. Although the gunshots didn't hit the Maori they were driven off, and *Zeehaen's* boat was left to drift until the *Heemskerck's* boat recovered it. Of the two sailors who were left in it one was already dead; the other nearly so. One in the water either sunk or drowned. A fourth victim was stowed in a canoe and swiftly borne to land. Tasman wrote in his journal that this stolen man was dead. It's hard to see how he could know for sure. Those who escaped were swimming for their lives; those on the ships were hardly close enough to see the details of the attack. Haelbos informs us it took place half way between the ships, and ships at anchor in deep water would be quite some way apart. Now, since the natives had proved hostile, the Dutch weighed anchor and began to sail east. The winds were light; they could not sail fast. Twenty-two waka hunua

were seen near land, eleven of which 'swarming with people' now pursued the ships. In the foremost one standing Maori held up a white emblem, like a flag. By now there had been time for Maori to examine the sailor they had taken to the shore, perhaps discovering he was a human, though of quite a different kind. Maori, like Europeans, used white emblems as peace tokens. Of course, a peace sign at this juncture could have been a trick. Whatever the white token might have meant, the Dutch explorers had no trust in Maori any more. The *Zeehaen's* gunners shot the standing Maori down, at which all the canoes returned to land. A little later, further out to sea, the officers' council was again convened. It was decided to regard this land's inhabitants as enemies and on their maps the bay they'd left behind was labelled 'Murderers Bay'. Tasman did not set foot on this new land; only the stolen Dutchman ever went ashore. During the next two weeks the expedition mapped much of its northwest coast, and some years later Dutch cartographers gave it the name it has today: New Zealand.





Heemskerck

Tasman and Haelbos both confirm that four sailors were lost in Murderers Bay, but neither bothered to record their names. An anonymous sailor on the *Heemskerck* did so in his diary, but wrote just three; part of his entry reads: 'nine vessels full of people came from land, who we thought came to us to make peace and deal with us in friendship, but on the contrary to our great sorrow they have done three of our people to death.' Most commentators have assumed the Maori who drove off the Dutch were Ngati Tumatakokiri, then the inhabitants of Mohua. There is another possibility: they could have been a Maori expedition from another place. Perhaps they beached their waka on the beaches east of Mohua before or after crossing what is now Cook Strait. Maori used greenstone, a variety of jade, for tools and ornaments. The only source was on the south island's west coast. The double-hulled waka Tasman saw were not mere fishing craft. A waka hunua held more men and could sail better than a waka with a single hull. If each such waka hunua held between ten

and twenty men, and there were twenty-two or more of them, it seems unlikely they all came from Mohua, whose population at the time was small. Who were the Maori warriors that Tasman met? Were they from Mohua or somewhere else, perhaps a war-party? What happened to the sailor that they stole, and was he really dead? We cannot ever know these things for sure as the accounts we have are incomplete and sometimes contradictory. But the events in Murderers Bay did have important consequence: so off-putting were Dutch accounts of these New Zealanders that for 127 years no further Europeans saw fit visit them. In 1992, the 350th anniversary of Tasman's voyage of discovery was celebrated in The Netherlands, New Zealand and Tasmania as 'Abel Tasman Year'. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands arrived in Golden Bay in March, and visited The Golden Bay Museum, opened in 1990, two years earlier. After consulting Maori and the Dutch community, manager Mary Crockford decided to employ a local model maker with a love of history to build a diorama model for the new museum. It was to be three meters long and would contain 1/72 scale models of Tasman's ships and boats, his men, and seven waka hunua with Maori warriors. That model maker was myself; the building of the diorama took me seven years.

The waka hunua were not too difficult. Canoe hulls did not change a lot between 1642 and 1769, and prows and sterns from Tasman's era still survive in some museums. In my research I wrote to many waka experts, studied early drawings carefully, and visited museums from Auckland to Dunedin.

However, Tasman's boats and ships were much more difficult. In 1992 I found no books with plans or pictures that were adequate. In desperation I made drawings of my own, based largely on the work of Tasman's draughtsman, Isaac Gilsemans. By 1993 I'd built a model of the *Heemskerck*, but it didn't look quite right.



Then, just in time, I had a lucky break.

Ab Hoving, in The Netherlands, had built a model of the *Heemskerck* for the Auckland Maritime Museum. I wrote to him, asking for help, and this he generously gave. Our correspondence lasted all of seven years. Not until 1995 did he complete his *Zeehaen* model. That year, with help from him, I also finished mine. My stepping off point for the diorama as a whole was Gilsemans' 'view of Murderers Bay'. Between *Zeehaen* and *Heemskerck* he illustrates the attack on the small



boat. The background is the coast of Golden Bay. In front there is a close up view of one waka hunua and its Maori crew. The picture also shows what happened afterwards: the *Heemskerck*'s large boat rescuing the *Zeehaen*'s boat, the two ships under sail

heading east and some of the eleven waka that went after them. My diorama does not show the subsequent events. Apart from that I tried to make my models as compatible with Gilsemans' images as possible. I'm very grateful to the experts who assisted me. Without Ab Hoving in particular, *Heemskerck* and *Zeehaen* would have been inaccurate. The Golden Bay Museum now also holds, on permanent display, the *Heemskerck* model that Ron Aaron built, working from plans by Hoving and Cor Emke.

These days a lot of visitors are drawn to Golden Bay. Some come from Europe, some from Asia or America. In summer young explorers beach their sea kayaks on pale yellow sands where Tasman's men once saw a fleet of waka hunua. Models like those in Golden Bay Museum can help bring stories such as this to life.



Zeehaen

