

Story: European discovery of New Zealand

## Page 3. Tasman's achievement

Info

### The naming of New Zealand

Abel Tasman called the land he had discovered **Staten Landt**, believing it might be linked to a Staten Landt close to Cape Horn, discovered in 1616 by another Dutch navigator, Jacob Le Maire. In 1643, Hendrik Brouwer showed that Le Maire's Staten Landt was a small island, and not the eastern edge of an undiscovered continent. Subsequently, Joan Blaeu, official Dutch cartographer to the Dutch East India Company, conferred the name Nieuw Zeeland (Nova Zeelandia in Latin) on the land Tasman had discovered. Zeeland was one of two maritime provinces in the Netherlands; Australia was already known to the Dutch as New Holland. 'Nieuw Zeeland' stuck.

### A subsequent voyage thwarted

In 1643 another voyage was planned, and there was talk of finding 'a more persistent successor' to Abel Tasman and Franz Visscher. Nevertheless, they were appointed to make the expedition in 1644, but it was confined to the north coast of Australia and the south coast of New Guinea. Tasman was denied the opportunity to build on the achievements of his great voyage of 1642–43 by exploring further east. The Dutch never followed up Tasman's discovery of New Zealand. He had not found any land which would provide the material profit the Dutch East India Company had hoped for.

Tasman's New Zealand was only a 'ragged line' on the world map, which might or might not be the coast of the unknown southern land. Despite the uncertainty, Tasman's achievement was considerable. No European before him had sailed south of 27° between the east coast of Australia and the Juan Fernandez Islands off Chile. He had sailed all the way around Australia and proved that it was not part of a larger continent. New Holland became the 'known' south land; an 'unknown' south land might still stretch east from Tasman's 'ragged line': 'We trust', Tasman had written, 'that this is the mainland coast of the unknown south land'.<sup>1</sup>

### Tasman and New Zealand

Tasman spent the rest of his life in the East Indies. In the words of the historian J. C. Beaglehole, 'New Zealand played but a small part in Tasman's life, as he played but a small part in its history'.<sup>2</sup> His contribution was significant, nonetheless. He may have merely set the scene for Captain Cook's greater achievement, but discovering Tasmania and then New Zealand was a notable feat. It was Tasman who opened the way for the European history of New Zealand.

otes:

1. Quoted in Andrew Sharp, *The voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 124–5. >
  2. J. C. Beaglehole, *The discovery of New Zealand*. Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1939, p. 36. >
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