

Portuguese discover Australia?

Australian history books have long held the view that Captain James Cook was the first European to chart the eastern coastline of Australia. Can we be completely sure this is true?

At the time Cook discovered Australia (1770), and earlier, there were many European explorers roaming the high seas — heading into uncharted waters, and establishing trade routes and settlements. Portugal was a major world power during the Renaissance and was jostling with Spain over control of new territory each might discover.

Any Portuguese sailors venturing down Australia's eastern coastline would have produced maps of some sort. None can be produced as evidence today, however, as any that might have existed were probably destroyed in a huge fire in Lisbon in 1755. However, a map called the Dauphin Map, drawn at Dieppe in France in 1536, is thought to have been based on an old Portuguese map, or maps (see References). It shows a land mass called Jave la Grande. When this map is redrawn to the Mercator projection, it closely resembles Australia's eastern and southern coastline (as far west as Warrnambool). Some hold the view that it is evidence the Portuguese *did* map the eastern coast of Australia long before Cook was even born!

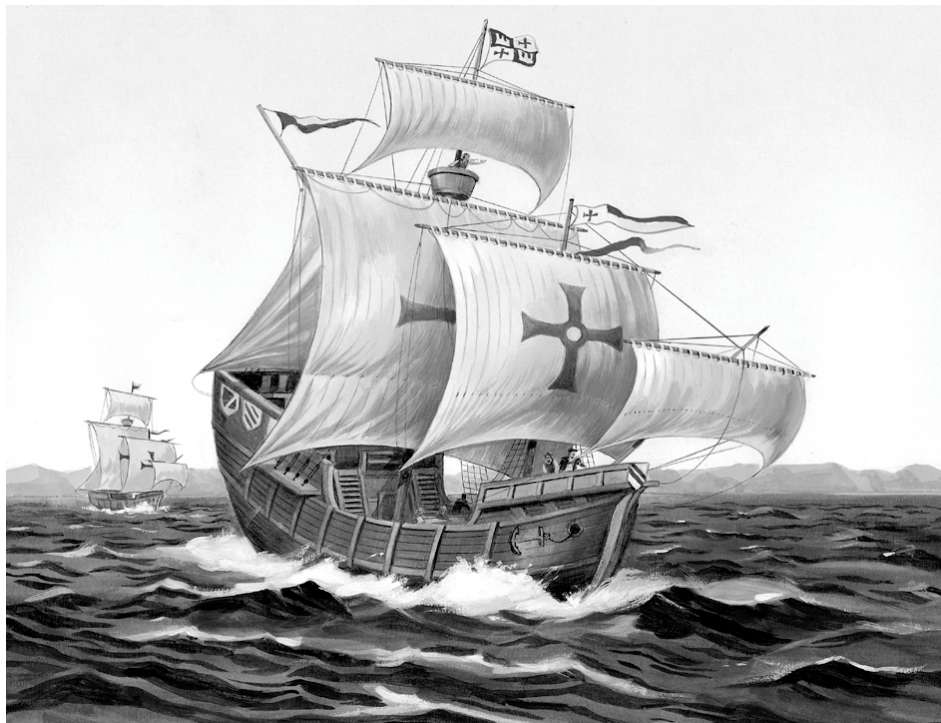
Christovoa Mendonca was a Portuguese sailor sent by Prince Henry of Portugal in 1520 to find out what land might exist on the other side of the world. Only two of his three ships returned. Were charts he produced among those mapmakers used to produce the Dauphin Map? Was his missing ship



wrecked near Warrnambool, as 27 people reportedly said, and now buried amongst its sand dunes? Many people today believe so.

Here's another point to consider. After Captain Cook ran aground on the Barrier Reef in 1770, he did not head for the nearest land (lying due west) as a sailor in uncharted waters might be likely to do. Instead, he turned north-west, seeming to head for a sheltered part of the coastline he was not supposed to have known about! After finding the present Cooktown harbour, he wrote in his diary: *'I found the harbour smaller than I had been told, but very useful for our needs'*. How did he know the harbour existed? Did he have access to a copy of the Dauphin Map?

If the remains of a Portuguese caravel were ever found near



Warrnambool, our historians would need to rewrite history. This discovery would prove that Cook was not the first European to chart Australia's eastern coastline. So far, however, numerous searches, including those prompted by a reward of \$250 000 offered by the Victorian Government in 1992, have failed to solve the mystery.



As a good historian, you will not believe everything you hear or read as fact. You will carefully review *all* the available evidence and then form your own conclusion. This is what history is all about! With this in mind, complete the following activities.

1. What is evidence for a historian?
.....
.....
2. What is the difference between primary and secondary evidence? Provide three examples of each (in general terms).
.....
.....
.....
3. Is the Dauphin Map a piece of primary or secondary evidence? Think about your answer carefully.
.....
.....
4. Look at a map in your atlas of Australia's eastern and south-eastern coastline. Compare it with the versions of the Dauphin map shown in *SOSE Alive 3* and in worksheet 6 of *SOSE Worksheets for Multiple Intelligences 3*. What conclusions can you reach? Think about the evidence you are using to reach these conclusions.
.....
.....
.....
5. Mendonca, if sailing down Australia's eastern coastline, would have been travelling through uncharted waters and would — like anyone who discovers something new — have been excited about his find. He would have also been secretive, as, according to the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, eastern Australia was Spanish territory to explore, not Portuguese. In the light of information provided here (and in sources listed in the References), complete one of these activities. Attach an extra lined page to this worksheet if you need to.
 - Create a series of diary/journal entries that Mendonca might have written about his discovery of Australia's eastern coastline. Remember the year is 1520.
 - Mendonca has returned to Portugal and is talking to his superiors about his experiences. With three or four others, create a role play of their conversation(s) and proposed actions.
 - Imagine that both Cook and Mendonca are still alive today. Being very, very old men they would probably be spending a lot of time reminiscing about their seafaring adventures. Today, they are arguing fiercely about who charted Australia's coastline first. Write down or act out their conversation......
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

References: *SOSE Alive 3*, pp. 26–7 • *SOSE Worksheets for Multiple Intelligences 3*, worksheet 6