

# MACKAY ON MONEY (AND OTHER THINGS)

BY AUTHORISED FINANCIAL ADVISER CHRIS MACKAY

**M**y recent article on Tulipomania talked a bit about my kids' Dutch ancestors. In 2007, we visited the island of Terschelling in the north of Holland. This is where their great great grandfather and great great grandmother had emigrated to New Zealand from. It's a beautiful place, a bit like Waiheke Island, and well frequented these days by tourists.

The kids' great great great grandfather Dr Rudolf Vlietstra was a medico on the island. Turns out he was crook for a long time and in 1849 died too young aged 39 leaving his family in the financial cactus. These days, having taken the advice of a Financial Adviser he would have had Income Protection and Total and Permanent Disability cover and a truckload of Life Insurance as well as Trauma Insurance. As it was, he left his wife of 18 years in a very penurious position. We're not quite sure what killed him (probably tuberculosis), but he died devoid we assume of any insurance

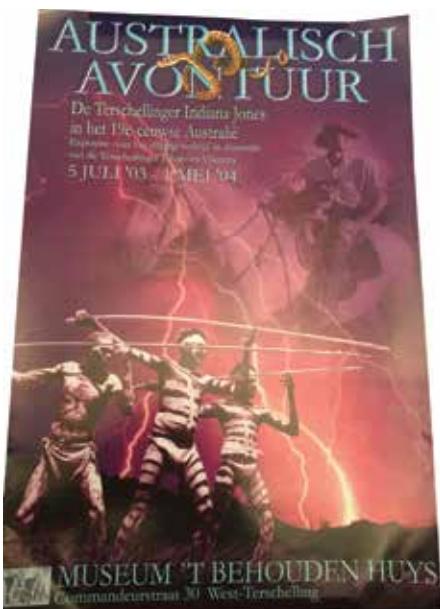
protection just when he should have been earning top guilders. We do know in 1832, the Terschelling Town Council offered him the job of surgeon and obstetrician for East Terschelling on an annual income of two hundred and fifty guilders plus house.

I've recently discovered the first life assurance office was set up in France in 1787, in Holland in 1807, Italy 1826, Germany 1827, Austria 1839, Denmark 1842, Norway 1847 and Australia in 1849. So the Dutch did have insurance capability early in the 1800s but the good doctor no doubt felt he was bullet proof – just like so many Kiwis today!



We visited the local museum in Terschelling being aware a Vlietstra cousin, Dr Ron Vlietstra, (a Kiwi who ended up at the world famous Mayo Clinic as a top Cardiologist) had done considerable investigation and discovered by clever research that his and also my missus' great grandfather Johannes Vlietstra way back in 1868 had "published a vivid account of 13

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years of adventures in the Far East and in Australia".

The people at the museum were well aware of this book and were very proud of their local lad, Johannes Vlietstra. They told us he had recently starred posthumously in some sort of exhibition they had run and he was known as "the Indiana Jones of Terschelling".

Well, Ron Vlietstra had Johannes' book translated into English and in 2002 published it within his own book "Dutchman's Gold – Finding the Lost Nugget".

And for your delectation, with the odd edit from me, here is Johannes' preface and first chapter from "A long sea voyage of almost two years and a sojourn of eleven years in Australia. For my Mother's profit." By J Vlietstra. Published by J. F. V. Behrns, Harlingen 1868.

#### PREFACE

Reading the account of a long sea voyage made me decide to publish something similar. This decision was strengthened all the more by my familiarity with the lifestyles and customs of the people in Australia, where I lived for eleven years.

Since I took notes of everything I saw and heard from the day of arrival, I think I am in a good position to give a detailed account. Given that people know little about that part of the world, and since only the coastal areas are described in even the most detailed

geographical reference works, I believe that my publication will be quite illuminating. Many a reader will probably search his map of Australia in vain looking for some of the remote places mentioned in this little book.

Whatever shortcomings my description may have, it has the value that it is not a second-hand account of events; everything has been observed and experienced first-hand.

This would have been a sufficient introduction, but for the remark underneath the title that the book's profits are intended for my mother. I should therefore explain myself.

I am the oldest son of J. R. Vlietstra, physician, surgeon and obstetrician in Oost-Terschelling (East Terschelling), who died in 1849 after a long illness. My mother [Grietje] is the daughter of J. S. Attama, who during the last years of his life was the Reverend in Warns,

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Friesland. Like many others I respect her highly for her pure religious standards. With his death she was left to care for five children, compounding the already needy circumstances caused by my father's long illness.

Since I am the oldest son, I consider it my duty to contribute somehow to my beloved mother's income, or at least, to try to relieve her from the burden of taking care of me. Because the main source of income in Terschelling is either sailing the seas or cultivating the land, I chose the former and departed [on a ship]. On my arrival there I was fairly soon hired as a cabin boy on a ship sailing for Naples and Palermo in the Mediterranean Sea. Having finished this first sea voyage successfully, I decided, after having spent the winter at my mother's, to return to Amsterdam with the same objective. But this second time I was less fortunate, because trade was largely at a standstill at the time. I had no other choice than to return to Terschelling.

Concerned about being a burden to my mother made me decide a couple of weeks later to return once more to Amsterdam for another attempt. Failing to get employment on a ship, I went into service for an innkeeper. Thus, despite my small earnings, I relieved my mother of a big burden. Since I was treated very well there, I stayed for two years. I would have stayed longer, but the low wages forced me [to] look for work at sea once again. This time the trade was more lively and I was successful. I set off on my big sea voyage to Australia in the spring of 1853, after bidding farewell to my mother, brother and sisters, not suspecting I would not again set foot on native soil until 1865.

I conclude with the wish that this little book may be well received, and compensate my mother in some degree for the loss of extra income her eldest son might have provided over a period of 15 years.

#### CHAPTER 1

My sea voyage and first adventures in Australia after deserting the ship.

In the spring of 1853 I embarked on the ship "The Malvine" [a schooner-brig of 147 tons] bound for Australia under Captain de Jong, as ship's steward. At first we had a very successful journey with excellent weather, and were making fast progress, until we reached the equator. From that moment on we suffered through three weeks of complete calm. After floating around for that entire period, so much wind got up that the ship could hardly stand it.

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However it was a favourable wind, and we sailed before it, reaching Hobson's Bay, or Williamstown, in 102 days. Our destination was Melbourne, but in those days no vessel with a displacement of more than 150 tons could sail up the river because of its shallowness, so we had to stay put in the bay, about an hour's distance from the city.

When we had been lying there a couple of days, four members of the crew, three sailors and the cook, seized control of the boat and fled, and we never heard anything about them again. The captain, being afraid that others might follow their example told us, in an effort to scare us, that they were on the Hulk. The Hulk is an old discarded ship, serving as a prison for runaway crew and other people who have received a light sentence for some crime or other. A week later another crew member ran off. The ship's carpenter told us that we were close to some gold fields. Thinking he could earn more by looking for gold, he also worked out a plan to leave us. The captain, forewarned, summoned the water-police and they took him, handcuffed, into custody on the Hulk.

After the cook had run off, the captain put me in charge of his job, so I became cook as well as ship's steward. We also had five fewer men, and despite this substantial reduction of our crew, we still had to sail from Melbourne to Batavia [the capital of what is now Indonesia and now named Jakarta]. As an enticement the captain promised us a considerable amount of money if we did our best to return to Holland safely, adding that he would give it to us personally if the ship-owners refused to pay up. As confirmation he drafted a contract, which we all signed. Finally four more men from that region, called Manilenos, came aboard, but they did not really save us much work, because, in the first place, we could not understand them and, in the second place, they were totally useless in bad weather. They belonged to the Tartar race and were yellowish-brown in color.

After a month we reached the Dutch East Indies and from there, after unloading old and loading new cargo, we sailed for China. Our "yellow-boys" stayed with us, but on arrival we lost one through death. As the Chinese objected to him being buried on land, we had endless trouble finding a place to bury him. In the end we decided to try it at night, and we succeeded.

The captain hired two Scots and an American there. The Scots were nice people, but the American [his name was Donald] was a nasty character. A day before he boarded our ship he had killed three Chinese in a quarrel. Once we were at sea he made trouble

every day. I kept quiet and thus managed to get on reasonably well with him; he often even helped me sharpen the knives.

In the meantime another potential disaster was coming my way. At first the helmsman was very kind to me, but this soon wore off. The reason was that he had become an alcoholic. The captain often asked me what was happening to the gin, to which I replied that he surely could guess. He then ordered me to give the helmsman only four drinks when he was on duty and to keep the keys to the pantry with me. I did as I was told, but the fellow kept bothering me. Sometimes I gave in to his craving, but if I refused he found all sorts of excuses

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to get it somehow. When the weather was good I would go to bed at night, knowing I had a lot of work to do the next day. When I was asleep he would come and tell me that something had fallen in the cabin or the galley. I would go investigate and fasten whatever was loose but when I returned to the deck, he would demand a drink. If I had the opportunity I would give him one, but in the end it started to frustrate me. I thought, "If I give him a drink each time, things will keep on falling and getting loose". When I stopped responding, he tried four more times, then gave up. But he did get more and more embittered with me, even to the extent that it became dangerous.

Once while I was up at the helm, the helmsman sent me aloft to fasten something. I replied that even though that wasn't my job I would follow his orders. I went up as fast as I could, and, as I was busy doing the job, he set the sails in such a way that the whole lot tumbled all over me. Since there was a strong wind blowing, had I not managed to steady myself I would have been knocked

down onto the deck, or into the sea, by the impact. I was furious and accused him of trying to drown me. The captain, awakened by the racket, came up, and learning that it concerned me, he said to the helmsman, "Are you attempting to help Vlietstra pass into eternity in this manner? I would rather lose four rogues like you than one Vlietstra", and he kicked him into the hold, calling after him, "You would be better off sailing as a cabin boy than as a helmsman." After that time there was no love lost between the two of them. The captain often told him, "When we arrive in Australia again, run away and I will not try to find you".

At last we came to Tasmania, an island belonging to Australia, and entered the town of Launceston. We had been there for three weeks when I got into trouble with the helmsman once more. I thought, "This can't continue. The helmsman has no intention of running away, so I will put an end to it by running away myself." Hastily I put my clothes into two sacks, that being easier than having to drag along a chest. The captain happened to have gone ashore that day and was not due to return until the following day. I also learnt that one of the ordinary seamen had made up his mind to run away as well. I told him my plan and we agreed to try our luck that evening. He would go first and wait for me at a certain house.

Towards nightfall the man who was standing guard that night came aboard. This made it very difficult for me to execute my plan. With the helmsman I would have known how to go about it. As long as I put his drink in front of him I would be allowed to leave or get anything I asked for. He even said to me, "If you want to run away, you

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## MINISTER IMPRESSED WITH APPROACH TO WATER SUPPLY



**Local Government Minister Nanaia Mahuta has praised the work being done to manage water across Hutt Valley and the wider region, during a recent visit to the Waterloo Treatment Plant in Lower Hutt.**

Minister Mahuta is pictured above with Wellington Water Chair David Wright, Water Committee Chair David Bassett and Wellington Water's Mark Kinzig. She was visiting the plant to review progress on the \$12million water supply resilience project managed by Wellington Water and co-funded by central government and the Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt, Porirua and Wellington City Councils. It aims to build an emergency water supply network that will provide safe drinking water from day eight after a major earthquake.

Minister Mahuta said she was impressed by the strategic approach being taken to tackling the challenge.

Deputy Mayor of Lower Hutt and Chair of the Water Committee that oversees Wellington Water David Bassett thanked the Minister for her interest, and confirmed Wellington Water's willingness to help in improving water service delivery and management.



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Passenger and survivor Judy Feldon shows her passenger ticket from the *Wahine* to Lower Hutt Mayor Ray Wallace (right) and Deputy Mayor David Bassett and Wahine 50 Trust organiser Rhys Jones during the 50th commemorations at Eastbourne. See also page 16.

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should try it tonight", to which I added, "And you would laugh up your sleeve, surely, if you could get the key to the pantry." But the matter rested there since he had no inkling of my plan. So the important thing was to mislead the guard. As it was my habit to put his food and drink near the roof of the cabin, I now put it in a different place, so he had to search around for a while to find it. I used that time to throw my sacks for clothes on board an awaiting boat, where two men, sent by my sailor friend, were ready to catch them and to take me aboard.

I met my sailor companion in the pre-arranged house, in which a woman and her four children lived. She was extremely kind. We decided to leave our clothes with her until our return, as payment for the meal we had eaten. We did not dare to stay longer, fearing that the captain would order the police to search for us. We took to the road without knowing where we were going. We walked for quite a while, and since it was mountainous, this meant climbing over many hills. Finally, after traversing a large forest, we reached a more developed road. Now exhausted, we decided to have a rest at the first opportunity.

We had heard the day before we set out, that there were a lot of people in this area who had been convicts. Therefore we were somewhat apprehensive as we walked and we decided, once we found a place to rest, to take turns standing guard. After we had lain there for about an hour, we heard something coming towards us from the nearby forest. Not knowing that it was one of the wild animals called kangaroos, which are commonplace there, we immediately thought of convicts and said to each other, "If it is one of them, there are surely more to follow." As it came closer, we could hear the dry branches snap. We braced ourselves. The kangaroo came so close that I looked right up at it. The animal saw me, and being very shy, it took flight, hitting the ground fiercely with its tail. It is a large animal with a long tail. Standing upright it has the height of a grown man, but it is not a predator. Still thinking of the convicts we said to each other, "If they too are so easily scared, then we'll surely make it." At dawn we went on our way again and were very pleased, after an hour's hike, to come to some houses and a village.

### NEXT PUBLICATION – CHAPTER TWO.

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