Cornelisz and his men were brutally punished. Most were tortured and keel-hauled (dragged under the bottom of the ship on a long rope). The ringleaders had their hands cut off and then they were hanged. Two men were abandoned on the shore of Western Australia, never to be seen again.

‘Abrolhos’ comes from a Portuguese word meaning ‘Look out!’ or ‘Beware!’.

**ABEL JANSZOON TASMAN**

Born Holland, 1603; died Dutch East Indies, 1659
Discovered Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), New Zealand, Friendly Islands, Fiji and part of Australia’s northern coast

On 12 December 1641 the Governor of the Dutch East Indies, Anthony Van Diemen, wrote to his superiors in Holland. ‘Noble worshipful wise provident and very discreet gentlemen’, he wrote (he obviously wanted something!). ‘We feel earnestly inclined to the discovery of the South-land…’

Van Diemen wanted to discover new countries to trade with. The Dutch government approved his plan, so he sent two ships under the command of Abel Janszoon Tasman. Tasman was already known as a capable and trustworthy commander. This expedition would establish him as one of the world’s great explorers.

Having sailed south-west from Batavia, the two ships loaded up with extra supplies at Mauritius (off Africa) then headed south to the ‘Roaring Forties’. (These are strong westerly winds at 40-49 degrees latitude, and they could really give a sailing ship a burst of speed.) On 24 November the crew sighted land: two high mountains which Tasman named after his two ships, Mount Heemskirk and Mount Zeehaen. He called the land itself Van Diemen’s Land, but we now know it as Tasmania.

Later, a small group went ashore and saw some notches cut about 1 1/2 metres apart into a tree trunk. It looked like a ladder for a giant, and Tasman’s men wondered if the place was occupied by very tall people!

He continued around the south of Van Diemen’s Land to as far as Maria Island and at Prince of Wales Bay sent the ship’s carpenter to swim through the surf and put up a pole claiming ownership. Then he sailed eastwards, out to sea. On 13 December 1642 he discovered New Zealand – he was the first European to do so – and named it Staten Landt. Maoris killed four of the crew at a place Tasman later named Murderers’ Bay. Tasman then visited the Friendly Islands (where the sailors bartered with the locals, swapping one nail for three to four coconuts) and Fiji. He returned to Batavia along the north coast of New Guinea, and so missed the strait between the Great South Land and New Guinea, now called Torres Strait.

This voyage into unknown waters had
shown more clearly the size and position of the 'Great South Land', and it had been achieved with little trouble and few accidents. All the same, Tasman's employers were not pleased, because he had not brought back news of any gold or silver or other valuable trading goods.

In 1644 Tasman was given another chance, and with three ships this time, he set sail for Cape York. Missing Torres Strait a second time, he followed the coast from the Gulf of Carpentaria, round Arnhem Land to Shark Bay before returning home. Again he was empty-handed; they had met only 'naked beach-roving wretches, destitute even of rice, and not possessed of any fruits worth mentioning', he wrote. The Dutch traders lost interest in this barren and apparently useless country.

Tasman gave up exploring and became a wealthy trader. He lived in Batavia until his death in 1659.

He first came to New Holland as an officer on the Cygnet, near the end of a long voyage of adventure and piracy spanning most of the known world and a good bit of the unknown. On 5 January 1688 he went ashore at Cape Leveque, near what is now Broome, and explored King Sound and the Buccaneer Archipelago. After he got home in 1691 he wrote a book about his travels called A New Voyage Around the World. The book was based on notes carefully stowed in bamboo tubes and sealed with candle-wax so they wouldn't get wet.

He then persuaded the British Royal Navy to give him command of the warship Roebuck for a further voyage of exploration to New Holland.

The Roebuck set sail on 4 January 1699. Dampier soon quarrelled with the first mate, George Fisher, who objected to serving under a former pirate. Eventually Dampier lost his temper, thrashed Fisher with a cane and then locked him in his cabin until he could put him ashore in South America.

On 1 August Dampier reached New Holland, at Shark Bay, and sailed north-east. In September he discovered and named Roeback Bay.

As the Dutch lost interest in New Holland, the English moved in.

One of the earliest was William Dampier. He was a sort of seventeenth-century hooligan, a hot-tempered violent man, a pirate and the first person to sail three times round the world.

A leaky ship and an unhappy, mutinous crew forced Dampier to head for home. At the Ascension Islands the Roebuck sank. When he got back to England Dampier was court-martialled for his behaviour during the voyage and he was fined all his pay. His second book, A Voyage to New Holland, was published in 1703.

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**William Dampier**

Born England, 1652; died England, 1715
Discovered Roebuck Bay; and wrote two fascinating books about his world travels