



Newsletter Spring 2007

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From the 2nd until the 22nd of January 2007 we, David Bouman en Marco Roling, travelled to Cape Town for the third campaign in order to continue research on De Gouden Buys together with archaeology colleagues Jonathan Sharfman en Shawn Berry of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). In this newsletter we provide information on the most important results of this campaign and the planned activities.

The second aerial survey

After having done an earlier aerial survey in 2006, which was performed along the coastline over a distance of forty kilometers, we decided this time to a survey over a smaller area above deeper water (max. 15 meters). We agreed on an area about ten square kilometers around Wamakersvlei, the place most likely where Daniël Silleman landed together with the other six survivors at the time De Gouden Buys was anchored in the St. Helena bay.



Aerial survey at Wamakersvlei, St. Helena bay (photo: M. Roling)

After some unexpected bureaucratic delay the Cessna of the Council for GeoScience flew in our presence the required kilometers. During our standby time in the boat on the water we had the opportunity to perform a drift experiment. With a moderate wind we measured that our boat drifted to the shore already with a speed of about one to one and a half kilometers per hour. This is interesting because De Gouden Buys got loose of it's anckers and drifted ashore and that's
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why it is good to know how fast that might have happened and in what direction considering the prevailing winds at this time of the year. Unfortunately the aerial survey did not give us any new magnetometrical anomalies to dive on. We had hoped to trace one of the anchors in this area to give us a good reference point for a more detailed underwater search in the surrounding area.

A big metal object near Rocherpan

In March 2006 we had already proved that it is possible to detect a metal object in the surf zone by means of an aerial survey, but because of limited time and resources we were not able to actually identify the object at that time. With the help of the local Historical Society Velddrif we were able to get a digger loader onto the beach in order to get to the object in the surf zone at low tide.



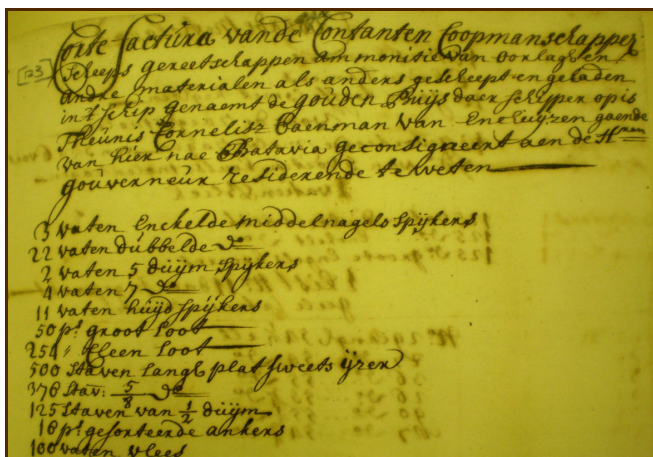
Rocherpan, in front the metal object (photo: M. Roling)

This had an astonishing result, but the weldings and bolts on the iron object made it clear that we did not find the remains of De Gouden Buys. Because the driver of the digger loader indicated that he thought only a small part was taken up of an even bigger object it is likely that we are dealing with a local fishing boat that wrecked here and which is buried now in the sand approximately a meter or deeper. The object looked pretty much like an oil tank or maybe part of the engine.

We take the opportunity here to express our greatest thanks to the local people who supported us with this machinery and helped us out that day. We hope to work with them again in the near future.

The cargo list of De Gouden Buys

In the state archives of Cape Town we had again requested to see a great number of documents that refer to De Gouden Buys. The most important phrases have been photographed for our own archive and for transcription and publication at a later stage. We did not find any new clues on the exact location of the wreck. We did find however, an unique letter sent by the chamber of Enkhuizen in 1694 to the Cape of Good Hope. In this letter the chamber makes inquiries about an amount of 178 pieces of eight that were given to the skipper Baanman to buy supplies during the long journey to Batavia. From statements about the salvage attempts of De Gouden Buys in 1694 it was apparently not clear what had happened with this money. Because De Gouden Buys never made it to the Cape the coins should have been still on board during the salvaging of 1694. But in the salvage documents they don't appear. Did they vanish mysteriously during the salvaging? Or have they never been found and are they still on De Gouden Buys wreck site?



The first part of the cargo list (photo: M. Roling)

The archives of the chamber Enkhuizen before 1700 are lost so we cannot answer this question. But as an attachment to the letter there was a complete list of the cargo and inventory onboard De Gouden Buys. Now we have a good understanding of what the ship was carrying in the first place. We know now for example that there were eighteen anchors aboard the ship. Together with the salvage documents of De Gouden Buys we can also make a detailed list of items that were left behind after the salvage operation. This letter was definitely a major find and a highlight of the campaign because until now a cargo list of De Gouden Buys was not known of nor published!

Spring low tide

Robin Ellis of the local Historical Society Velddrif organized a short survey on the 19th and 20th of March 2007, when there was an extreme equinoctial low tide. An ultralight airplane was used and six people inspecting the beach locally. The advantage of a small craft like that is that it does not need an formal airstrip for taking off and landing and it is very manouverable in the air and can fly at low altitude.

The idea was to fly along the coastline looking for dark spots on the sandy seabed in the water that can indicate a wreck site. The people on the beach had the opportunity to

walk into the surf zone further than normal to search for wooden beams or other objects sticking out of the sand.



Landing at Dwarskersbos, St. Helena bay (photo: G. Coetzee)

From the air a suspected wreck site was indeed observed at the location where we made an inspection dive in March 2006 and where we already found iron objects on the seafloor. We identified these back then as modern pieces of a fishing boat and not belonging to a seventeenth century East-Indiaman. Nothing else of importance was seen from the air and or from the beach, also due to a bad visibility of the water. But still this attempt was worthwhile and a good experience to everyone involved. Part of the coast was inspected in a different way and it is surely a good thing to repeat it again in future bringing video along and more manpower.

Plans for the near future

- ✿ A group of local police divers will dive on a given number of locations as a training exercise and make a brief inspection of the site.
- ✿ Local fishermen and other people living in Velddrif and in near villages will be asked for information about places where currently or in the past fishing nets were broken. This can be a lead to irregularities of the seabed that in turn can be caused by remains of a shipwreck.
- ✿ The coming months we will participate in setting up a middle(long) term program for collaboration between the Netherlands and South Africa on cultural heritage management and underwater archaeology in particular. This program is the baseline on which the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in particularly will support projects in the future.

We need your support!

In order to continue our research about De Gouden Buys we really need sponsorships. At this moment we cannot count on support of the Dutch government and we need real financial aid for preparing campaigns and publishing our results.

We would appreciate your help and invite you to support our project. Please contact us on our website www.degoudenbuys.nl.

David Bouman and Marco Roling