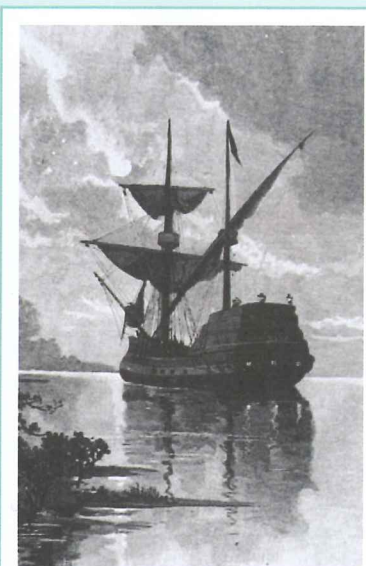


# Early Rejections

During the 1780s, the British government decided to establish a penal colony in New South Wales, the name by which the east coast of Australia was then known. However, Britain was not the first nation to think about colonising the vast island continent.

A wide range of people had visited Australia in the centuries before the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay. We know some of these trips occurred because records of the journeys still exist. However, historians believe there were other visits that are not part of recorded history. The evidence for these visits is not conclusive—in other words, there is some evidence that they occurred, but it is not strong enough to say that they really did happen.

Some historians think that the Chinese may have visited Australia in the early 1400s. It is known that the Chinese sailor Zheng He explored large parts of the world between 1405 and 1433. He sailed around the Indian Ocean, and may well have explored parts of Australia. Fishermen from Indonesia had also been regular visitors to northern Australia.



Willem Jansz's ship the *Duyfken* in the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1606.

Another theory is that the first European to chart the east coast of Australia was a Portuguese sailor called Cristovao de Mendonca. He set out from Malacca in 1521 with three caravels (sailing ships), on a mysterious voyage. The 'Mahogany Ship'—a shipwreck found on the Victorian coast in the 1800s but subsequently lost again under shifting sand dunes—has been put forward to support this theory. Some historians think it is one of de Mendonca's caravels. If the ship is ever found again this theory may be proved.

The first recorded visit by a European was by Willem Jansz, who sailed down the western coast of Cape York in northern Queensland in 1606. This visit was quickly followed by a succession of Dutch, Spanish, French and British sailors, including Torres (Spain), Cartensz (Holland), Tasman (Holland), Duquesne-Guitton (France), Bougainville (France) and Dampier (Britain).

So the British may not have been the first visitors to consider colonising Australia. The Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish and French may have all considered it, but decided against it.

### Already Colonised

Australia had already been colonised. Aboriginal people most likely landed on the northern shores of Australia at least 50 000 years ago. They had made a perilous journey from the islands of Indonesia, possibly Timor. We don't know how they achieved this feat, but it is possible that they travelled on rafts made from the logs of rainforest trees.

1 What was the east coast of Australia called in the 1780s?

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2 Circle the date on the timeline to show when Australia was first possibly visited by the Chinese.



3 Who was Cristovao de Mendonca?

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4 Shade **true** or **false** to answer the following.

- a Willem Jansz sailed the western coast of Cape York.
- b A caravel is a sailing ship.
- c Most explorers thought Australia was worth colonising.
- d Duquesne-Guitton was from Holland.

True	False
True	False
True	False
True	False

5 Circle the five peoples from the box below who may have considered colonising Australia.

Dutch	Canadians	Spanish	French
Portuguese	Chinese	Italians	Germans

6 When did the Aboriginal people most likely land on the northern shores of Australia?

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### Inference questions

7 Which of these is the best meaning for the word 'theory'?

- a evidence
- b proof
- c answer
- d idea

8 Why do you think that historians do not know about every visit to Australia by the Europeans before 1788?

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9 What do you think is meant by the term 'recorded history'?

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10 Why do you think some explorers may not have thought Australia was worth colonising?

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### Challenge Option

Locate Holland, France, Spain, Britain and China on a world map.