

OFFICIAL SIGHTINGS OF **THE FLYING DUTCHMAN**



In 1881, King George V came across the *Flying Dutchman* while he was traveling in HMS Bacchante. The Royal Navy ship was near the tip of Africa when this spirit ship appeared out of nowhere. In line with the legend, after the appearance of the *Flying Dutchman* disaster followed as a man fell from the ship and was “smashed into atoms”. Later on, Reverend John Neale Dalton helped Prince George publish his account as *The Cruise of H.M.S Bacchante*. Not only did Bacchante see the ghost ship but also Cleopatra and Tourmaline which were sailing as a part of the squadron.

On July 11, 1881, when one of the eye-witnesses was Prince George, later to become King George V. He was to see it whilst serving as a naval cadet on board H.M.S. Bacchante. The prince, himself, made the entry in the ship’s log describing the encounter. The log now preserved in Royal Navy archives:

“During the middle watch the so-called *Flying Dutchman* crossed our bows. She first appeared as a strange red light, as if a ship all aglow, in the midst of which light her spars, masts and sails, seemingly those of a normal brig, some 200 yards distant from us, stood out in strong relief as she came up. Our lookout man on the forecastle

reported her close to our port bow, where also the officer of the watch from the bridge clearly saw her, as did our quarter-deck midshipman, who was sent forward at once to the forecastle to report back. But on reaching there, no vestige, nor any sign of the ship, was to be seen either near or away on the horizon”.

Also in 1881, a Swedish merchantman under the command of Captain Larsen, encountered the *Flying Dutchman*. Captain Larsen’s ship had been battling a storm as she rounded the Cape on her journey from Australia. Shortly before dawn an eerie glow appeared in the sky and the captain sent a man up the mast to see its cause. The lookout fell from his perch and crashed headlong onto the deck. He died several minutes later having whispered the words “*Flying Dutchman*.”

In 1884, the American tea clipper *Relentless*, sailing for New York, sighted the *Flying Dutchman* 300 miles south of the Cape of Good Hope. The captain, Daniel Sheaver, ordered the ship to alter course so that he could get a better look but the helmsman died when they were 400 yards away from the phantom ship. That same night a fierce gale hit the *Relentless* and three seamen were washed overboard and were never seen again.

In January 1911, the Scottish whaling steamer *Orkney Belle* encountered the *Flying Dutchman*. The second mate described her giant sails swelling in a non-existent breeze. The *Orkney Belle* was that close to the *Flying Dutchman* that at one time it was thought that the two vessels must collide. As the *Flying Dutchman* sailed by, several of the *Orkney Belle*’s crew clearly saw her name on the stern. Three bells were heard from the phantom vessel; she heeled to starboard and vanished into the mist. In 1914 the *Orkney Belle* was one of the first British ships to be sunk in action by the German Navy on the outbreak of hostilities.

In March 1939, no less than sixty people at False Bay in South Africa had a complete view of the *Flying Dutchman* as she appeared to sail straight for the sands of Strandfontein. However, before it could hit the beach, the ship vanished into thin air as mysteriously as it had appeared.

In 1942, the commander of German U-boat submarines, Admiral Carl Doenitz, officially reported to the German High Command that the crews of some U-boats had encountered the *Flying Dutchman* east of the Suez Canal in Egypt; the terrified crews said that they would rather face the entire might of the Allied warships in the North Atlantic Ocean than be confronted again by the *Flying Dutchman*.

In September 1942, four people sitting on their balcony at Mouille Point, Cape Town, saw the same phantom vessel sail into Table Bay and disappear behind Robben Island.

One spring morning in 1943, the Australian naval escort boat, H.M.A.S. Beresford, sailing westwards towards the Cape of Good Hope, broke radio silence to broadcast a two-worded message - "*Flying Dutchman*". Then there was complete silence and neither the boat nor its crew of 34 men was ever seen again.

In October 1959, the Dutch freighter, Straat Magelhaen, captained by Captain P. Algra, came into contact with the *Flying Dutchman*. The ghostly vessel's sails were fully spread and a man could be seen clearly at the wheel. So sudden was the appearance of the ghostly ship that there was no chance of Captain Algra taking action to avoid the situation. However, just as the two vessels were about to collide, the *Flying Dutchman* vanished into the darkness.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN in *ENCYCLOPEDIA and DICTIONARY*

This motion picture, which is a modern depiction of the legend, shall further immortalize the Flying Dutchman in the annals of human civilization

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Flying Dutchman


legendary ship

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Flying Dutchman, in European maritime [legend](#), spectre [ship](#) doomed to sail forever; its appearance to seamen is believed to signal [imminent](#) disaster. In the most common version, the captain, Vanderdecken, gambles his salvation on a rash pledge to round the [Cape of Good Hope](#) during a storm and so is condemned to that course for eternity; it is this rendering which forms the basis of the opera *Der fliegende Holländer* (1843) by the German composer Richard [Wagner](#).

Another [legend](#) depicts a Captain Falkenberg sailing forever through the [North Sea](#), playing at dice for his soul with the devil. The dice-game motif recurs in the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) by the English poet [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#); the mariner sights a phantom ship on which Death and Life in Death play dice to win him. The Scottish writer [Sir Walter Scott](#) adapted the legend in his narrative poem *Rokeby* (1813); murder is committed on shipboard, and plague breaks out among the crew, closing all ports to the ship.


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OVERVIEW

Flying Dutchman

QUICK REFERENCE

Perhaps the most famous of all legends of the sea. There are several variations of it. The most usual story is that of a Dutch skipper, Captain Vanderdecken, who, on a voyage home from Batavia and faced with a howling gale, swore by Donner and Blitzen that he would beat into Table Bay in spite of God's wrath. His ship foundered as he had this oath on his lips, and he was condemned to go on sailing until eternity in his attempt to reach Table Bay. The spectre of his ship is supposed to haunt the waters round the Cape of Good Hope and a strong superstition among sailors is that anyone who sets eyes upon her will die by shipwreck. A German legend concerns a Herr von Falkenberg condemned to sail for ever around the North Sea in a ship without helm or helmsman and playing dice with the devil for his soul. A similar Dutch legend equates the Flying Dutchman with the ghost of the Dutch seaman van Straaten.

The theme of the Flying Dutchman has been used by novelists, poets, and dramatists in marine literature, among the best known being Captain Marryat in his book *The Phantom Ship*, Scott in his poem 'Rokeby', and Wagner in his opera *Der Fliegende Holländer*. In the opera the captain, Vanderdecken, is allowed ashore once every seven years to find a woman whose love alone can redeem him.

The origin of the legend is uncertain but it is possibly derived from a Norse saga which tells of the Viking Stöte who, having stolen a ring from the gods, was found later as a skeleton in a robe of fire seated on the mainmast of a black spectral ship. **Show Less**

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Flying Dutchman

A name that can apply either to a legendary ship, whose ghostly wreckage is said to be sometimes seen in times of bad weather near the Cape of Good Hope, or to the captain of this ship, who must sail until Judgment Day.

I swear, I saw the Flying Dutchman during that last storm.

Every time I take out my boat, I'm reminded of the Flying Dutchman, and how he is doomed to sail the seas until kingdom come.

See also: [Dutchman](#), [flying](#)

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The Flying Dutchman

Sailors in Holland long believed that a Dutch skipper named van Straaten was condemned as a penalty for his sins to sail for year after year through the seas around the Cape of Storms (an early name for the Cape of Good Hope). Crews returning to the Zuyder Zee (the northern coast of the Netherlands) after voyaging in this region used to declare that they had seen van Straaten's mysterious craft and fled from it in terror. The legend is a very old one, although its exact date is not known. The story is found in Dutch, German, and other folklore.

Several German versions call the ill-fated seaman von Falkenberg and maintain that it was not near South Africa but in the North Sea that his spectral ship commonly hovered. Others contend further that the devil paid periodic visits to the captain on board his ship and frequently the two were seen playing dice on deck, the stakes being von Falkenberg's soul.

The tale soon found its way from folklore into actual literature; among the greatest of writers utilizing it was Heinrich Heine. In his rendering the sailor has a chance of salvation; that is, the fates allow him to walk on land again once every seven years. If during his brief period of respite he contrives to win the affection of a pure maiden, liberation from perennial sea-wandering will be granted him as reward.

Heine's form of the story appealed greatly to the composer Richard Wagner, who always regarded women devoutly as a regenerating force, and the great composer based his opera *Der Fliegende Holländer* on Heine's version. It is set in the North Sea, and the sailor is called van Derdecken; the maiden to whom he makes advances is Senta. This opera was first staged at Dresden in 1843, and although it did not win speedy appreciation, it became popular in the course of time. The novelist Frederick Marryat also wrote his story *The Phantom Ship* (1839) on the subject of the *Flying Dutchman*.

During the nineteenth century, there were reliable reports of sightings of the *Flying Dutchman*. An English ship's log of 1835 stated that the captain and ship's crew saw the vessel bearing down on them "with all sails set" during a heavy gale. Another entry in the log of the *Bacchante* in 1881 reported that the *Flying Dutchman* crossed their bows, glowing with a strange red light before suddenly disappearing into a clear, calm night. Thirteen persons saw the phantom vessel, and two other ships in the vicinity reported seeing a strange red light.