



## Fact sheet What a Discovery!

In 1502 *Joao da Nova Castella* was sailing home to Portugal from India on the prevailing southeast winds. He was one of many Portuguese who sailed across uncharted seas and made maps of unknown lands while trading in Asia. On 21 May he sighted the island you are standing on. He named it *Santa Hellena* because 21<sup>st</sup> May was her feast day.

*Da Nova* anchored his ship, a *carrack*, near present day Jamestown. Ashore he and his crew found fresh water, forests of gumwood trees, and many birds - but no inhabitants. He realized that this island was ideal for refreshing future sailors. For the next few decades the Portuguese kept its discovery and location to themselves.

### Who was Helena and why was she a saint?

Helena was born in 250 A.D. in what we now call Turkey. An innkeeper, she married the Emperor and their son was the famous Emperor Constantine. At the age of 75 she made a pilgrimage to Palestine and built churches on holy sites.