



# L'expédition

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PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF 'THE FRIENDS OF THE LAPEROUSE MUSEUM INC'

PO Box 475, Matraville NSW 2036, AUSTRALIA

JUNE 2007

## ***FRIENDS REVISITED !***

After several years in the wilderness, Friends of the Laperouse Museum Inc. (FOLM) is in the process of renewal with the aim of re-establishing the vital role of support and promotion of the Laperouse Museum by working in partnership with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and the community, to develop the Cable Station and Museum and as a centre of excellence with a focus for community and visitors to La Perouse.

The Laperouse Museum was established by the Laperouse Association for the Australian Bicentenary to commemorate the history of the Pacific Expedition of Monsieur de Laperouse who arrived at Botany Bay in January 1788 to observe the establishment of the colony of New South Wales. Friends of the Laperouse Museum was then established to maintain a supporting role. The historic 1882 Cable Station at La Perouse accommodates the museum and stands adjacent to the place where the French constructed two long boats during their six week stay, in preparation for the next leg of their journey.

The Cable Station, Bare Island and the La Perouse Monuments form part of the Botany Bay National Park managed by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC).

The Cable Station now boasts a dedicated exhibition space in the East Wing with periodic exhibitions representing a range of themes relating to the Local History and Culture, including Indigenous History and Culture, the Environment and Art.

Any one with a passion for the diverse history of La Perouse (the place) and the story of the extraordinary Laperouse Expedition will want to join the Friends of the Laperouse Museum and participate in its activities.

Those wishing to volunteer may gain valuable museum experience while assisting the Curator in a wide range of activities.

## ***So what are the benefits ?***

Members gain complimentary entry to the Laperouse Museum and Visitor Centre, invitations to exhibition openings, talks, presentations, functions, meetings and annual events (eg. Bastille Day, Receveur Mass) while providing vital support to the Museum and Cable Station.

**New members are very welcome !**

## COLLECTION REVIEW - The Bilge Pumps



In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Kings Vessels were equipped with pumps which allowed the removal of water from the bottom of the ship (the bilge). Each pump was approx. 10 metres in height and composed of three parts: 2 parts constructed of wood either end of a central bronze cylinder.

There were 6 pumps on each ship, 4 around the main mast and 2 around the mizzen mast.

Visitors to the museum may wonder about the two large flanged pipes which stand in the corner of one of the rooms (pictured).

These represent the pumping chamber of a Bilge Pump, recovered from the wreck of the *Astrolabe* by diver, Reece Discombe in 1964. According to Reece the two pieces were found bolted together and were separated to aid in their recovery, suggesting that the two pieces make up one unit.

In discussion with Reece last year, he informed me of the presentation of the pump chambers displayed in the Maritime Museum in Noumea.

I Subsequently contacted Valérie Vattier, Director of the Maritime History Museum of New Caledonia who kindly provided me with interpretation and diagrams of the ships Bilge Pumps together with photographs of the two identical pump sections in Noumea. This will assist us in developing an appropriate interpretation for the Laperouse Museum.

This highlights the importance of communication, co-operation and friendship between the Friends, the Museums and Laperouse Researchers around the world to assist each other and share in knowledge and understanding. *Thank you Reece and thank you Valérie !*

### GREG BOND

Editor & Researcher (FOLM)

## EXHIBITIONS AT LAPEROUSE MUSEUM

### NEW EXHIBITION !

#### Lycée Condorcet Art Exhibition

30<sup>th</sup> May – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2007



Lycée Condorcet presented a very impressive exhibition in June 2006 with themes based on the Marine Environment. Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007 marked the opening of their latest works with a very Australian flavour including Bushrangers, Aboriginal Motifs, fabric design and much, much more !

The work is very impressive and a credit to the children. Their fine work is a reflection of the children's talent and the dedication and care of the teachers and parents of Lycée Condorcet (French School of Sydney).

Museum Curator, Elizabeth Broomhead has proposed this as an annual event which maintains an important link with the local French Community.

## Zoom in Underwater at Bare Island

Sponsored by PADI Asia Pacific

11<sup>th</sup> April – 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 **(NOW CLOSED)**

Following PADI's successful Digital Underwater Photographic Competition "Zoom in to Win" held at Bare Island, PADI provided an exhibition of the photographs taken during the competition. The exhibition showcased the remarkable and diverse marine life of Bare Island through 30 underwater images. The exhibition reinforced the fact that Bare Island is one of the premier dive sites in Sydney. Thank you PADI, Congratulations Competitors.



Begin your diving Adventure today !  
To locate your nearest PADI Dive  
Centre, visit [www.padi.com](http://www.padi.com)



## PÈRE RECEVEUR MASS



The Annual Père Receveur Mass was held on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 and it continues to draw a large attendance each year.

Père Receveur of the Laperouse Expedition died at Botany Bay on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1788 and his gravesite stands adjacent to the museum.

The Annual Mass commemorates Receveur on the anniversary of his death and recreates the first mass held on Australian soil by the Officers and crew of the French expedition.

The event is hosted each year by the St Andrews Catholic Church of Malabar and supported by Randwick City Council. The Mass is followed by a sausage sizzle provided by the Lions Club of Maroubra, and refreshments provided by Friends of the Laperouse Museum. Mark this in on your calendar for each year, this is a great community event.

### NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Laperouse Museum Inc.  
Will be held at La Perouse Public School, Yarra Bay Road, Phillip Bay  
at 6.00pm on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2007

#### FRIENDS OF THE LAPEROUSE MUSEUM INC. Management Committee 2006 – 2007

Interim president: Chris Bastic  
Treasurer: Cam Dezarnaulds  
Secretary: Gail Tring  
Minute Secretary: Dawn Emerson

Ordinary Members:  
Flavia Abela, Greg Bond (Editor), Lily Bond, Bob Brooks,  
Cliff Emerson, Ken Finn, Lynda Newnam, Dr. Peter Orlovich,  
Doug Smith

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## LOSS OF TWO GREAT FRIENDS



### VALE - Reece Discombe (1919 - 2007)

In 1941 New Zealand born, Reece Discombe went to the New Hebrides at the age of 22 years as mechanic on board a salvage vessel. This visit which would instil a passion for the South Sea Islands was an event which would shape his future.

Reece took up residence in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) in 1947 and worked as a salvage diver. Work began in Santo the following year on salvage work on the wreck of the USS 'President Coolidge' where Reece was engaged on the recovery of equipment including the two 15ton propellers,

Diesel Generators, etc, including the removal of 650 tons of oil. It was here working on the ship that he would forge a life long friendship with well know diver Alan Power of Santo.

He travelled at regular intervals between Vanuatu, NZ and Sydney and participated in his most loved sport 'Midget Speed Car Racing' and would often be found racing at the Sydney Speedway. He had met his love Jean during the war and during a visit to Sydney in 1950 the two married at the Sydney Registry Office. They would then make their home and raise a family in Port Vila in present day Vanuatu.

Reece would spend 40 years in salvage, particularly in the post war years with the recovery of U.S. plant & equipment for which he received a commendation from the U.S. Government. Reece developed engineering activities, including the construction of Port Vila Oil Terminal and the Overseas Passenger Terminal. He served as an Assessor in the Port Vila Court and participated in a range of community activities. His contribution to the New Hebrides was recognised with his award of an OBE in 1980, when Vanuatu gained its Independence from Britain and France. In 1981 Jean and Reece became Citizens of the new Republic of Vanuatu.

During the 50's, the French Commissioner of the New Hebrides, Pierre Antoniaz was being trained by Reece as a diver and the two had become good friends. Reece had always had a fascination about the fate of the Laperouse Expedition and one day made a challenge to Pierre, where he said **"...if you really want to learn to dive then how about we go down to Vanikoro and look for your lost comrades."** In 1958 Pierre commandeered an official vessel and they made their way to the island of Vanikoro (Solomon Islands) where the unexplored wreckage was located by Irish Trader Peter Dillon in 1827.

With a party of four divers led by Reece, wreckage of the Astrolabe was located on the first day of diving in shallow water inside the reef. Reece would return the following year (1959), one of many of his expeditions to the site. In 1962 Reece worked at Vanikoro on a salvage operation for Lloyds of London to recover discharged cargo from a Norwegian Ship. He occupied the spare time searching for more evidence of the Laperouse Wrecks and discovered the wreckage of Boussole. He kept his find a secret until it was published in 'Pix Magazine' in 1964, two years later, which created some anxiety amongst some French Officials.

However, Reece's dedication to research and discovery of the wrecks, earned him a 'National Order of Merit' in the Order of Officer, presented personally by General de Gaulle on his visit to Port Vila in 1966.

The work begun by Reece at the wreck site in 1958 before modern technology, is carried on today by the 'Association Salomon' in New Caledonia with advanced archaeological and scientific resources and expertise. The recent discoveries on the wrecks have been outstanding. Had it not been for Reece and his challenge to Pierre we may not have the knowledge and understanding of the fate of the ships that we have today.

Reece had been unwell recently and was diagnosed with cancer requiring major surgery. After several months he had not recovered and passed away on Friday night, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007.

Thank you Reece for your trust and friendship and sharing your life and your discoveries, you were a good friend and we will maintain your history and your passion for Laperouse.

GREG BOND.



## VALE - John Winch (1944 - 2007)

“In 1975 John Winch and his wife, Madeleine took over a 300 year old cottage on the island of Paros in Greece. There was no running water, just a “well up the hill”, no electricity, the couple living on a shoestring. Their only one luxury the local Ouzo which they sipped sparingly as the sun went down.

Each day John walked 8 kilometres to another old stone house, soaking up the colours and contours of the landscape. Here was his studio.



Winch, who has died at 62, had wanted to become an artist since his schooldays in Parramatta.

He travelled the world storing up images to inspire countless works of art: paintings, drawings, etchings, engravings, ceramics, sculptures and book illustrations. These were to provide the basis for exhibitions in Australia and overseas.

He and Madeleine, a fellow artist and daughter of the prominent ballet and opera orchestra conductor, Eric Clapham, travelled widely, sometimes in a Kombi van, living for months in Spain and Portugal. They eventually settled in Sydney, before discovering the tiny town of Ironbarks – the site of Banjo Paterson’s poem, now Stuart Town in Central Western NSW. They bought the old general store which they turned into working studios. Last year they set up their country residence as the Stuart Town Studios, where developing artists could work.

John Winch had more than 80 one-man exhibitions and is featured in many Australian galleries, in museums in New York and Paris, in university collections and public and government buildings, including Parliament House, Canberra. He has been a finalist in the Sulman, Wynne and Dobell prizes. His wards include the new England Art Museum Painting Prize and the 2000 Kedumba Drawing Award for an intriguing collection of large illustrated envelopes stamped and posted in Paris to himself in Australia.

In Aubusson, France, he designed the tapestry for the Laperouse Museum, a beautiful work, which features in the museum today.

In 1988 John illustrated a children’s picture book, *One Sunday*, by Libby Gleeson. His enthusiasm for this new art form was such that he went on to write and illustrate a dozen books of his own, published in Australia and New York. *Run, Hare, Run !*, based on the famous painting by Albrecht Durer, was shortlisted in the 2006 Children’s Book Council Awards.

Winch, an athletic man who regularly swam, was diagnosed late last year with mesothelioma. He is survived by Madeleine, their two daughters, Martina and Jessie, four-month old granddaughter, Coco, and his sister, Carol.”

The memory of John will live on through his outstanding works and continue to inspire others into the future.

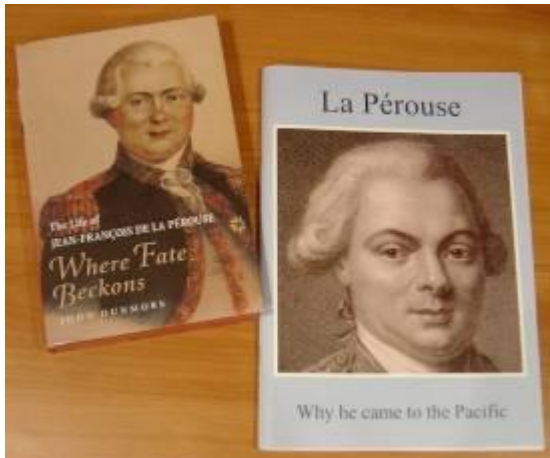
EXTRACTS FROM MAURICE SAXBY  
 Sydney Morning Herald, Mon. 23 April 2007

**PAGE 4: Louise Minutillo, Reece Discombe  
 & Greg Bond at Rose Bay, 25.3.04**

**ABOVE: John & Madeleine with Tapestry  
 at Laperouse Museum, 19.2.06**

*Photographs by Greg Bond, FOLM.*

## NEW IN BOOKS



The Life of Jean-François de Lapérouse  
*“Where Fate Beckons”*  
 by John Dunmore (ABC Books 2006)  
 ABC Shops: \$45

John Dunmore is Professor Emeritus of French at Massey University, NZ, who has written more than 20 books on French navigation in the Pacific. This biography “tells the story of a remarkable life” and provides insight into the “world of French colonisation, exploration and society in the years leading up to the Revolution”.

La Pérouse  
*“Why he came to the Pacific”*  
 by Geoffrey Lewis (Randwick & District Historical Soc. 2006)  
 R&DHS: \$15 / also available at Laperouse Museum

Geoffrey Lewis lectured in Economics at Sydney University 1973-1978 then left academia for the Computer Industry. He established his company Custom-Made Software P/L in 1983. Geoffrey is President of the Philatelic Society of NSW and Honorary Treasurer of the Randwick & District Historical Society. In this wonderful book Geoffrey sets out to investigate the motives for the Laperouse Expedition.

Congratulations Geoffrey !

**The Randwick & District Historical Society Inc. has its new headquarters located on the Second Floor, Bowen Library Building, corner of Anzac Parade and Gale Road, Maroubra Junction.**

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