

# Laperouse

Friends of the Laperouse Museum



Members Quarterly Newsletter

August 1997 Vol.6, No 2

## PRESIDENT'S COMMUNIQUE

28 July 1997

Dear Friends

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

The last two years seem to me to have been a time of suspended animation, where those of us committed to a vision of a reinvigorated Laperouse Museum have lived with the promise of a 'new deal' for the Museum within a framework consistent with the founding ideas. Alas, I am as yet unable to allay the anxieties which have been so destructive to our efforts to support and enhance the role and function of our Museum. Despite a frustrating and protracted period of uncertainty followed by an announcement from the Premier that a new integrated museum, based on the principles underpinning the Laperouse Museum, would be developed under the stewardship of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, little appears to have changed. I have always held that the ambivalence towards the Museum over many years reflected both an admitted conviction that 'museums were not the core business of NPWS', and the tenuous financial status of the Service. We had all expected that with the resolution of the 'core business' issue and promises of a new leadership focussed on the Museum, the corner of uncertainty had been turned.

Two developments, however, cause concern. First, most of the \$20,000 provided by the Premier, appears to have been spent on a consultant to tell us what to do with the Laperouse Museum, continuing the vacillation and uncertainty that we thought was behind us. My offer of free advice was (surprisingly) not accepted! Second, the job description for the new 'Museum Curator-in-Chief' would be the non-event of the year — an impossible list of activities ranging from responsibility for all native sites in Sydney to NPWS cultural activities with no focus at all on the Laperouse Museum.

**More than at any other time your support is needed. It would be helpful if the extent of our concern about the way the Museum is being neglected could be transmitted to the Premier (Fax No: 9228 3935) and to Ms Robyn Kruk, Director, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (Fax No: 9585 6455).** As an absolute minimum we need a commitment to honour the promise of a Laperouse Museum-based senior curator dedicated to the day-to-day events of the Museum, and a plan to repair the structural damage that is present. Is that asking too much? I think not! If we cannot get this level of commitment, then I believe we do indeed have a serious problem about the viability of the Museum.

### FAX YOUR CONCERNS NOW! THAT WILL HELP IMMENSELY.

With best wishes, yours sincerely

Robert Clancy - President, Friends of the Laperouse Museum Incorporated

## COMING EVENTS

### Thursday 18 September 1997

- 5 pm - launching and presentation of *Laperouse CD ROM* at the French School of Sydney 88 Cooper St. Maroubra Junction.
- 6.30 pm - cocktails at Museum to welcome and meet **M. Jean-Claude Poinboeuf**, Consul General for France, and **Mme Poinboeuf**

### Sunday 9 November 1997

- 11 am - AGM followed by the annual *grand pique-nique* with guest speaker from **Association Salomon**, Noumea.

### REDISCOVERING THE PACIFIC WITH LAPEROUSE CD ROM

Late last year two teachers from the French School of Sydney, **Christophe Pellegrinelli** and **Loic Piquiot**, took their Year 5 pupils to visit the Laperouse Museum. They had prepared a simple questionnaire to help the children discover the Museum room by room, but never expected the children to respond and react with so much enthusiasm and curiosity.



Inspired by this experience to further exploit the many pedagogical facets inherent in the Museum, Christophe and Loic decided to venture into the world of CD ROM creation. Using the famous **Monsiau** painting of *Laperouse receiving his instructions from Louis XVI* as their point of departure, they have journeyed through the length and breadth of the Laperouse expedition and its place in history.

Loic and Christophe were happy to associate the children with every stage of their journey. Their joint efforts have produced a most interesting, visually stunning and comprehensive hour and a half of instructive entertainment — a just reward for all the weekends and late night vigils invested in what they modestly describe as 'a trial run'.

Soon they hope to have an English version of the *Laperouse CD ROM*, but a copy of the French version (suitable for Pentium PC or Windows 95) can be ordered from the French School of Sydney for just \$30. So, to improve your French, broaden your knowledge of history, rediscover the Pacific with Laperouse... and have fun... contact the school office on (02) 9344 8692.



### FAREWELL COCKTAILS

His three years as Consul General for France suddenly at an end, the Friends held a cocktail party in the Instrument Room on Thursday 10 July to bid a fond farewell to **M. Thierry Vitcau** and his wife, **Catherine**. Our President spoke briefly to thank Thierry for his deep concern and outspoken support for the Museum in the political and social arena. He then wished them both happiness and good fortune in their next posting, the great maritime city of Lisbon. We have all enjoyed their company and family participation in Museum events, not to mention the wonderful home-cooked dishes Catherine has always contributed to our annual pique-niques.

### LAPEROUSE DAY 1997



There was a special atmosphere this year at the annual 25 February celebrations heralded by **M. Jean Huillery**, accomplished piper and principal of the French School of Sydney. The poignant strains of the bagpipes spoke of the Celtic heritage of so many sailors past and present to the hearts and souls of all who gathered at the Laperouse monument to pay tribute to the great navigator, his crew, and the spirit of his expedition.

Speeches by **Mr Peter Shadie**, NPWS acting regional manager, and **M. Thierry Vitcau**, Consul General for France, were

followed by the laying of several wreaths. Afterwards the Mayor of Randwick, **Councillor Margaret Martin**, hosted a warm reception for guests and Friends to celebrate both the occasion and Randwick's ties with Albi, the birthplace of Laperouse.

perrier

ORLANDO  
TRILOGY

ORLANDO  
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The Friends of the Laperouse Museum thank Orlando-Wyndham and Perrier for their generous sponsorship.

### A MARITIME MUSEUM FOR NEW CALEDONIA



There will be great excitement in March or April next year when the long awaited Museum of Maritime History is inaugurated in Noumea, New Caledonia. It will house and exhibit for the first time the vast Laperouse treasure recovered in 1990 from the wrecks of **la Boussole** and **l'Astrolabe** by a joint expedition — a team of marine archeologists, divers and specialists in the history of the Pacific led by **Alain Conan**, president of the **Association Salomon**.

It was only in August last year that the thousands of objects, so painstakingly brought to the surface only to be locked away in a prison cell on Vanikoro, were at last released by the Solomon Islands authorities into the care of the expedition organisers. Just imagine their triumphant return to Noumea with some 350 kilos of relics, and also consider how much expertise and loving care they are investing in the handling and restoration of objects which have lain immersed, trapped on the reefs of Vanikoro for more than two centuries.

The Museum of Maritime History in Noumea will subsequently curate and arrange loans and exhibitions of the treasures to interested museums and organisations in the Pacific, Asia, and Europe. May the Laperouse Museum be first on their list!



In the meantime the **Editions d'Art Calédoniennes** have produced a finely bound and illustrated limited edition (2000 copies), **A-t-on des nouvelles de Monsieur de Lapérouse**, documenting the Association Salomon's extensive research into the Laperouse story and its many expeditions to Vanikoro. This collector's item was appropriately launched at a lavish gala dinner held in the Laperouse Museum hosted by **AOM French Airlines** of Sydney and Noumea on 19 July.

**A-t-on des nouvelles de Monsieur de Lapérouse** - AUS \$ 70, CFP 6000, FF 440.

Send address (clearly printed) and cheque to: **Association Salomon, BP 4215, Noumea, New Caledonia**.

In front of his famous ancestor's portrait, **M. Henri de Bonzac de Bougainville** was recently a most distinguished visitor to the Museum whilst in Australia with a delegation from the French Ministry for Defence. He was overjoyed to discover how well the Laperouse Museum, with its fine antique map collection, documents the history of Pacific exploration. He then contemplated with emotion the Laperouse monument conceived by **Hyacinthe de Bougainville**, the great navigator's son, in 1825.



### A LESUEUR EXHIBITION FOR SYDNEY

As a forerunner to the bicentenary of the **Baudin** expedition (1801) the Museum of Sydney will be showing 40 works from the **Lesueur** collection, on loan from the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle in Le Havre, from December 1998 - March 1999

### CAROLE ROUSSEL RETIRES

After 14 years of service and commitment to the Laperouse Museum "cause", I have decided to retire from the Friends' committee as from the 1997 AGM to be held early in November. I have an exciting new project in mind and must have the time and peace of mind to explore it more fully.

Like all those who were a part of the Laperouse Association for the Bicentenary, I will always remember with great satisfaction and emotion the splendid opening ceremony on 23 February 1988. On that perfect summer afternoon the **Hon. Bob Carr** received the gift of the Laperouse Museum to the people of his electorate, NSW and Australia. It represented a \$1.25m. investment and 'joint venture' of both French and Australian individuals, governments and the French business community — a fitting tribute to mark 200 years of friendship and co-operation between the two nations.

Though the Museum has failed to develop and mature, due to neglect and lack of interest and management by the NPWS, it has retained its gemlike quality and exquisitely tasteful decor,

and there has always been some satisfaction in the many favourable comments received over the years from appreciative visitors. It has also raised the tone of the whole La Perouse neighbourhood and is favourably considered by the indigenous residents. And yet, despite all the objections from the Friends and community leaders, it is to be reduced in size, content and importance to make way for increased NPWS administration and information displays. Having been so closely associated with the Museum's creation, I am confident everyone will understand that I simply can't stand by and watch its downgrading.

To all the Museum's staunch Friends, I would like to say a huge thank you for the interest, personal contributions and support you bring to our association. It has been wonderful just knowing you.

Please write and send your letters and faxes of protest to the Premier, Mr Bob Carr — yes, the same man who gladly received the Deed of Gift just nine years ago!

Yours most sincerely

*Carole Roussel*

### LA PEROUSE REVISITED by Yvonne Elliott

When I was a child I can remember travelling out to La Perouse on a tram, with my parents. It was a very long trip and I believed that we were going to the end of the world. It was a very exciting place, being almost surrounded by the ocean, and to a child from the middle of the eastern suburbs, it was remote and magical. We watched the aboriginals throw their boomerangs, and ate out picnic lunch. No tea houses or cafes then, even if we could have afforded them.

Today when I arrive at La Perouse from the wicks of suburbia, I still feel that same magical, remote sensation. The Museum, standing alone in the middle of the peninsula seems like an ancient sentinel watching over the bay.

I imagine that this isolated place must still look much the same as it did when Laperouse first arrived. The wind still roars, the waves still thrash onto the rocks, the birds still swoop, and the sand still covers everything. Only the occasional roar of an aeroplane reminds us that we are in the 20th Century.

For those, like me, who love to travel back in time, the Museum is the perfect place to travel back 200 years and relive the excitement of the blending of diverse cultures and of the beginning of a new country and a new people.

### NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- **Councillor Chris Bastic**, past Mayor of Randwick and enthusiastic supporter of the Laperouse Museum and all it stands for.
  - **Dr Maurice Blackman**, Senior Lecturer and Head of Department of French at the University of NSW, with special research interest in the history of Australian-French connections.
  - **Dr John Buchanan**, a Councillor with Randwick City Council and active member of the Friends since the beginning.
  - **Councillor Margaret Martin**, Mayor of Randwick and a strong Laperouse Museum supporter.
  - **Annette Robinson**, Cam Dezarnaulds' sister, has many French connections through the family in New Caledonia.
- Regretfully, **Michele de Tarle** resigned after many years of extremely active service first as Secretary then Treasurer and Vice-President. We miss her.

### CURATOR'S REPORT

Ministry for the Arts Museums Programs Manager, **David Ellis**, has advised that we have been successful in securing a \$20,000 grant for the Museum-Cable Station Interpretation plan.

Desmond Freeman Associates has been contracted to prepare the interpretation plan and will be contacting key stakeholders seeking their views and input over the next month or two.

The Sydney South Visitors Services unit organised a Bare Island open day on 12 July 1997 with cannon firing re-enactments and displays from the Randwick Historical Society, St Johns Ambulance and the Bare Island collection. The Port was featured on the Today Program and the 7 news. Later in the year they plan a Museum open day with candlelit tours at dusk.

The French ex-Servicemen's Association held the annual Bastille Day ceremony at the monument to Laperouse followed by a brief morning tea in the Instrument Room. On Friday 18 July a group from **AOM French Airlines** held a gala dinner in the Instrument Room and guests were treated to a period dress candlelit tour of the Museum. They had a fabulous night and commented on how beautifully the Museum was presented.

The Overseas Telecommunications Veterans Association recently donated a collection of telegraphy instruments from the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company. Some of the objects will go on temporary display in the Instrument Room with the local history objects. The displays are open to visitors and are used to orientate school groups before tours of the Museum, the monuments and the Watch Tower.

Similarly the Museum has received a collection of objects related to the local history of La Perouse. These include a 180° panoramic photograph of the La Perouse peninsula, a cordial dispensing flask from the La Loop café, ornate illuminated side plates in the Colonnades restaurant and a wonderful photograph of Frenchmans Beach c.1922.

If any of the Friends have objects, books or prints they feel would be interesting for interpretation and display please contact me on 9311 3379.

Stephen Thompson - Curator

### Laperouse

*Newsletter of the Friends of the Laperouse Museum*

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