

Laperouse

Friends of the Laperouse Museum



Members Quarterly Newsletter

January/February/March, 1991 - Vol. One, Numbers 3 & 4

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Your President is on holidays, so this is your Vice-President and Editor writing. I welcome this opportunity to thank all who sent me such warm and kind messages of sympathy.

We are grateful to Professor Clancy for lending the fine collection of antique maps now on display in the "Unknown Pacific Ocean Room" and thank him for his enlightening talk on their significance.

Having regrouped, your Committee is now in full swing with multiple plans and projects for 1991. The most important project remains the restoration of the *Instrument Room* at Cable Station; our hopes and plans are moving ahead in the right direction.

For Laperouse Day, each 23rd February, we are planning to hold an annual event: a *Sunset Soiree* with a different theme each year - one year a masked ball, the next a prom concert and so on. Your suggestions and ideas are always welcome.

This year however, Laperouse Day and the Museum's third birthday will be commemorated with a short ceremony at the monument and the unveiling of a plaque to Pierre to be placed by the Curator in the reception area. The unveiling is to be followed by lunch at Danny's restaurant - please see alongside for details and return your booking form *vite vite*... All guests are most welcome.

Thank you for your continued support.

Carole Roussel

THE FRIENDS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Professor Clancy introducing his map collection

The second Sunday of November was once again a perfect day at La Perouse for a post-AGM picnic. This year, there was the added bonus of a brief but fascinating introduction by Professor Robert Clancy to the rare and beautiful maps he is lending the Museum for display in the "Unknown Pacific Ocean Room".

He began by congratulating Jennifer Carter, the Museum's curator, on her wise and excellent choice of maps so relevant to the central theme of the Museum.

Professor Clancy also mentioned that his special collection of rare French maps would be exhibited at the Laperouse Museum in November 1991 as part of the World Conference on Cartography to be held in Sydney. It is hoped the central instrument room will be restored in time to share the prestige of this Conference display with the State

Library of N.S.W. and the S.H. Ervin Gallery on Observatory Hill. It will certainly attract many visitors to the Museum.

Two new committee members were elected at the AGM. They are David and Daniele Elfassy, staunch Friends and supporters of the Museum for many years.

At the picnic the Friends enjoyed wines selected and supplied at special price by Wyndham Estate.

LAPEROUSE DAY

Saturday 23rd February, 1991

ALL WELCOME!

11am: Annual ceremony at Monument

11.30am: Unveiling of the plaque to

Pierre Roussel in Museum foyer

12noon: Friend's Lunch at DANNY'S

FOR RESERVATION, see enclosure

MUSEUM NEWS (information compiled for the benefit of the Friends by the Staff of the Museum)

In summer the La Perouse peninsula attracts more people and so for the Museum it is a busy time of year. A spring time staff working bee included new and improved plantings in the Cable Station garden. By adding a large number of plants we hope to have enhanced the appearance of the building.

The good weather ensured the success of the Friends picnic, and everyone including the museum staff thoroughly enjoyed Professor Clancy's interesting and informative talk about his magnificent maps.

Two French naval vessels *Laplace* and *La Glorieuse* which were visiting Sydney from New Caledonia continued the tradition of a wreath-laying ceremony at the La Perouse Monument on Friday 2nd November, 1990. The recently appointed Military Attache to the Embassy of France, Commandant Leborgne, was in attendance with his wife. Like their predecessors Commandant and Mme Jean-Jacques then, they were most enthusiastic and supportive and we look forward to their continued interest. The ceremony was followed by a visit to the Museum and the Aboriginal Art Gallery where the visitors were treated to a dramatic boomerang throwing display.

We were also delighted to welcome recently Russell Shelton, the author of "*From Hudson Bay to Botany Bay - The Lost Frigates of Laperouse*". His visit was a great success and he kindly autographed numerous copies of his book which have all been sold. The regular edition is still available at the Museum for \$19.95 per copy (less 10% for Friends).

Throughout January, following the busy Christmas season, we have been running the Holiday Programme sponsored by James Hardie Industries Ltd.

FAREWELL DOLLA! With this report, *Dolla Merrilees* said goodbye to the Friends, stressing how much she enjoyed her three years as Interpretive Assistant and wishing the Museum and its Friends every success in the future. The new Interpretive Assistant is *Justine Spence*.

La Perouse to Eleonore (from page 3)

To the earth and the lizard-coloured
Trees. I close my eyes, see the spears
Vibrating against the sky like pieces
Cut suddenly from a skipping-rope.
Dagelet's words return again, from
The evening we buried poor Receveur -
It is as if we had sailed off the
World and hurried like sleepwalkers
Into space, relying on God and
Flimsy instruments to catch us
If we fall. Out to sea I have
Often seen fish rise and swallow
A star as it hesitates on the surface.
We are surrounded by fluid
Monuments, transcribing them as
Line on maps, the cartographers'
Delirious calligraphy, tiny dotted
Arrows that struggle toward destinations.

Our eyes are clear now of flies
And rain. The "Astralabe" rides high
On the waves near cousin "Boussole", its
Sails straining like an angel's wings
On the Day of Judgement. There
Cannot be much more left to discover.
Or perhaps everything, after all.
Behind us a new Europe of sorts
Is growing, my letters and memoirs
Safe in its keeping. Eleonore,
My Penelope, perhaps you will not
Have long to wait: I have ignored
Omens of albatross and loon,
Outstared the prying leviathans
That come spouting near us, wondered
What happens in Paris every noon.

Perhaps you will not recognize me
When you see me, my teeth and hair
Having already decided to depart
The body. There are certain things
I cannot command. The water
We took on at Botany Bay is
Keeping me well, we are all
Stronger for our rest: our longboats
Are repaired, journey's end in sight.
The Friendly Islands, by and large,
Were aptly named. The colony
Of the heart, suburbs of trust
On love's foundation, continues
To grow. We are keen to see
Each dawn as we draw northwards.

My thoughts turn like migrating birds
To you and the music of my homeland,
Sunlight dancing on the leaves
Of Spring, the augmentations to
Mankind's knowledge that we bring,
The delight of endless sorting out ...

There are cries of cyclone, that
Wrecking god, swart sleeping reefs
Smothered in its cape and not
Alerting us; the compass does
A contorted-puppet jig, spray
Like sparks whips across the deck.
Dizzy stars are sucked from out
The sky, grey columns of air
Come tumbling over us. In the morning
I will return to this: even our
Momentary upsets must be recorded.
Ink and ocean one dark blood.

first published in POETRY AUSTRALIA
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*Bien je vous embrasse et vous aime de tout mon coeur
Laperouse*



..... STOP PRESS

**Laperouse Museum exhibition
in central Sydney**

"Small Museums in the Sydney District"
features a display from the Laperouse
Museum at the CHAPTER HALL
MUSEUM, adjacent to St Mary's
Cathedral, St Mary's Road off College
Street, Sydney 2000.

Hours: Wed to Friday 10am - 4pm
Saturday and Sunday 12noon-5pm
Admission: Adults \$2 Concession \$1

**A la recherche de Laperouse
Vanikoro 90**

Film and commentary on a diving
expedition to the wreck of *La Boussole*
and its subsequent misfortunes,
presented in French by Mr Jean
Guillou, secretary of the Association
Salomon, New Caledonia.

AT: Alliance Francaise de Sydney
257 Clarence St, Sydney, 2000
ON: Thursday 28 February at 12.30pm



LA PEROUSE TO ELEONORE

by Shane McCauley



"A man must thorowly sound himselfe, and dive into his heart, and there see by what wards or springs the mortions stirre."
Montaigne

An unknown land, like a second child,
Is in danger of comparisons; the
Smallest impropriety can suddenly
Seem an imposition. As the sultry
Air lifted from the clipping waves,
Too far in the lore of travels to succumb
To unnecessary awe, we made
Slow going through the Heads, the
Land itself a partly unwrapped gift,
A place for those out of place.

We had soaked up a few mysteries
With our scientific blotting paper,
Five scientists, their repute like shining
Edges on their breasts, instruments
Like things of torture clamped to their
Sides. The map-makers made, artists
Gave thin shape to a continuing
Bestiary. The world unravelled for
Us like wayward yarn, we the kittens
In its wake, pursuing the illimitable.
Human wants can be made very small
If necessary. If absolutely necessary.

Two and half years from Europe,
Three days into a new land, we found
Other Europeans, an English squadron
Bobbing on a grey tide, their tents
Like insect larvac, and everywhere
Bustle and rude noise. The trees were
Toppling, as if the earth itself were
Being dismasted and then marooned.

It was not long before we turned back
Those whose intuitions were too
Finely tuned. It was certainly a
Landscape to suit more desperate
Men, and we mused that if any
Could wring water from crisp sands
It would be these, these who would
Take their cravings for a patch of
Dirt deep into this land's guts;
These crazed ones (as we told their
Better) had cold light for eyes,
Could combat whatever monstrosities
Might confront them there ...

You have called me a correct, an
Upright man, one who wears duty
In places of epaulettes, and yet
Duty is, after all, such as cannot
Be brushed away like cobwebs,
Though it adhere like cobweb; I
Have had to lock up certain things

In the bank vault of memory,
Lest I pine, lest I grasp at shadows
Or wind or plunge into a deeper sea.

New Holland provided distraction enough
Here we gazed upon a colony
In the making, flags and trumpets
Like icing on a non-existent cake,
The dark Indian inhabitants breathing
Blackness among the trees, anachronistic
And treacherous, hurling their darts
After taking our gifts; I have given
The English Captain latitude and
Longitude of Maouna, told him to
Beware the perfidious caresses of
These dark skins with their swivelling
Languages pre-Eden innocence disguising
Cunning like butter over a blade.



As I write, it is night-time again,
We prepare for dinner, going
Through our own rituals, carrying
Civilization in us as doe-eyed women
Carry their ripening embryos ... it
Is not long since the sea at night
Was haunted by eucalyptus waves
Out-mastering both tar and brine.

Ashore in Botany Bay we made
A small camp behind palisadoes,
Received English lieutenants aboard
Ship for amicable converse, grew
Drowsy together over good wine
In this outpost more like a new
Planet, something more impossible
Than anything in good Cyrano's
Dreaming, learned of these English
Ships - "Friendship", "Scarborough",
"Lady Penrhyn", others - colonists
And outcasts becoming one, received
Kind but ineffectual offers of help:
Spearheads of colonization had
Their own difficulties, tasks different
From those of navigators, explorers.

Small traditions in such wilderness
Become necessities - how else match
Expedience with risk, imagination
With administration, promise securities
Beyond bombast and mere hope?
The arms we held out to each other
Were at least clean to the elbow.
Dearest Eleonore, sometimes my head
Seems too small to contain its
Incidents - the children I have
Seen in so many lands remind
Me so achingly of you, and I go
To discuss the latest discoveries
With Dagelet, or remember words
Sent sprinkling out to the southern
Skies as he probed the aquarium
Of night with his telescope, comforted
By his amazement, forgetting alike
Times of fear, courage, even tenderness

Our stockade was the construction
Of a child intent on elaborations,
The harbourer of petty secrets, lost
Without something to protect. By day
The cannon pointed their barrels out
Over the dolphins and sleek mermaids
Of fervid daydreaming; at night Dagelet
Sent his eyes travelling to the stars,
Feeling ancient puzzlement and longings
At odds with his neat frock-coat,
The lace at his cuff: nothing malignant
Out there, he once said, but things
Benign can gnaw too, keep one awake.

Joseph, I said, remembering Massacre
Bay, accidents, we have lost good
Men on this voyage, what else can
We expect? The stars can tell us
Everything but that, he said, and
I saw the candle light his teeth.
The torn and scarred body of reality
Has displaced forever those fluffy
Words puffed around in philosophes' salons.
I remember Lamanon saying how
Natural, how good, were smiling savages;
A day later he was dead at their
Hands. Natural, certainly; good, no.

The air begins to conspire against
Us, I struggle to preserve the
Outline of your face. In front of
Me, de Vancy's sketches of more
Recent memories, creatures closer
(continued page 2)

LAPEROUSE

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Friends of the Laperouse Museum

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Card(1/12th)

Please send copy camera-ready to
the Editor at least one month
prior to publication date.

FOUND: Moonstone bracelet
found near Museum on Friends'
AGM Picnic Day - 11 Nov 1990.
Contact Carole Roussel: (02) 389-8010

CURATORIAL NOTES

The museum has been most fortunate recently in receiving a donation of a 19th century French engraving of an Aborigine named "Timbere". The exact source of this portrait is unknown, but it is likely to have been taken from the popular type of 19th century publication showing the variety of physical presentation observed in the "new world". These publications illustrated different racial types as well as head-dress, tattooing, or costume styles.

The most interesting aspect of this print is the name "Timbere" which is a family name in the suburb of Laperouse. The Timbery family will be invited to a special visit to the museum to see the print on display.

We are grateful to Professor Robert and Mrs Christine Clancy for finding the print of "Timbere" which is in very good condition, and for donating it to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Their continued interest and support is most welcome.

While a lot of my time is currently spent working on the forthcoming Captain Cook Exhibition in the Discovery Place, Kurnell, I am still finding time to promote the museum through the museum community.

I have recently been elected Vice-President of the Museums Association of Australia (N.S.W. Branch) and through this organisation I am able to ensure the professional community is aware of our museum, and of the particular needs and problems of smaller museums. We regularly receive visitors from the professional community, including an annual study day from the University of Sydney Post-Graduate Museum Studies Course, to study the unique style and presentation of the Laperouse Museum.

Jennifer Carter
Curator/Manager
LAPEROUSE MUSEUM

Museums 2000

Enclosed in this newsletter is a copy of the "Museums 2000" brochure. This project is an initiative of the World Federation and has resulted in the production of an excellent series of Museum Guides.

LETTERS OF SYMPATHY

(extracts from letters received since the publication of the August '90 edition)

27th September, 1990

On behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and particularly the Laperouse Museum staff, I would like to extend our sympathy and respect to Carole and Philippe on the death of Pierre Roussel.

Pierre was the inspiration of the Laperouse Museum, and his continued enthusiasm and support ensured its success. We will all miss him greatly.

Malin Blazejowski
Superintendent, Sydney District

Mardi 21 Août 1990

Chère Madame,

En rentrant de France, nous avons appris la triste nouvelle. Nul doute que Pierre sera regretté par tous ceux qui le connaissaient.

Mon épouse et moi-même, ainsi que tous les membres de l'Association Franco-Australienne vous présentons nos sincères condoléances...

Olivier Foubert
Adelaide, S.A.

Telegram: 7 August 1990

Apprends par le journal le décès de Monsieur Roussel. Vous exprime à mon nom personnel et au nom de l'Association Laperouse toute notre peine. Nous garderons le souvenir d'un homme enthousiaste, amical et passionné...

Pierre Amalric
Albi, France



Paris, le 14 Juillet 1990

J'ai appris avec une profonde tristesse le décès de Pierre. Nous le savions très malade, mais sa disparition si brutale est un coup douloureux... Pierre était un ami merveilleux, enthousiaste et généreux ...

... Le Musée de la Marine pleure un grand ami que nous aimons beaucoup ...

Francois Bellec
Directeur, Musée de la Marine, Paris