

Laperouse

Friends of the Laperouse Museum



Members Quarterly Newsletter

January - February - March, 1993 - Vol. Three, No. 3

President's Message

First, let me say what a tremendous honour it was to be invited to take this major role in the administration of The Friends of the Laperouse Museum who have indeed been the life of the genesis of this marvellous institution.

The hard work by so many of the Friends, together with the generosity of a great number of French companies in Australia, have placed the Friends in a strong position to take forward the Laperouse Museum as a living collection reminding us of the important contribution made by the French navigators to our understanding of the geography of the Pacific region.

It is a great pleasure for me to do my best to help promote the Museum through the Friends. The restoration of the Instrument Room - Exhibition Annex is the next important project that will now go ahead, through the efforts and generosity of the Friends of the Laperouse Museum.

Robert Clancy

COMING EVENTS

Friday 19 February

- 6.30 pm Drinks on board
La Glorieuse by invitation

Tuesday 23 February
Laperouse Day

- 11 am Ceremony at the Monument
with participation of French Navy &
crew of *La Glorieuse*.

- 11.30 am Reception for visitors &
official guests hosted by the Mayor of
Randwick, Mrs Margaret Martin.

THE LAPEROUSE TAPESTRY AT LAST!

A FINE WELCOME FOR A SUPERB WORK OF ART



All smiles, from left to right: John Winch (the tapestry's artist - designer), the Hon. Mrs. Patricia Forsythe, MLC, M. Michel Legras, Consul Général for France and Mr Bill Gillooly, Director of NPWS.

GRAND PIQUE-NIQUE SUNDAY 8 NOV. 1992

"It never rains on the Laperouse picnic day" said Carole serenely, a couple of days before the event as the rain poured down during what was probably the coldest and wettest Sydney spring in living memory. I lugubriously imagined picnicking at Botany Bay in such conditions, convinced that this time luck was running out for the Laperouse *pique-nique* just as it had for its namesake. But, sure enough, Sunday dawned fine, the harbinger of a glorious sunny Spring day. Obviously whoever or whatever (the El Nino current?) controls the climate, loves the French!

At Botany Bay, the grass was a brilliant green and in the bright clear air the bay glittered blue and gold, a perfect setting for a great day. Parties arrived toting laden picnic baskets and selected patches of lawn in front of the Museum for their Australian "*Déjeuner sur l'herbe*", (with the obvious difference that the women were clothed and the men more appropriately clad). First item on the agenda was the unveiling by M. Michel Legras, Consul-Général for France in Sydney, of the stunning tapestry designed by John Winch, expertly woven in the workshops of Tapisseries de France and on permanent loan to the Museum. During this time the drinks marquis was quickly erected and began dispensing wine and Pernod, mineral water, French bread & cheese - all delectable and all generously donated, in the following order, by Orlando-Wyndham, Perrier, La Gerbe d'Or and Unicorn Frencheese - to an appreciative and enthusiastic clientèle. Late in the lovely spring afternoon, everyone, sunburnt and in mellow mood, after also buying tickets in the tombola in aid of the Museum, reluctantly started to trek home. The verdict was that it had been a great Laperouse *pique-nique* day and that a good time had been had by all.

Helen Rosenman

Museum News

The Lapérouse Museum staff would like to take this opportunity to welcome new members of the Friends committee. We look forward to working together in 1993.

During January, **Diana and Afonso** conducted our regular summer Tours Programme of Botany Bay National Park. The tour "Close Encounters at Botany Bay" attracted a lot of interest - many visitors want to know more about the achievements of the Lapérouse expedition which this tour highlights. The increasing appreciation of the special role French explorers and navigators played in the early days of European exploration of Australia's coastline is most satisfying.

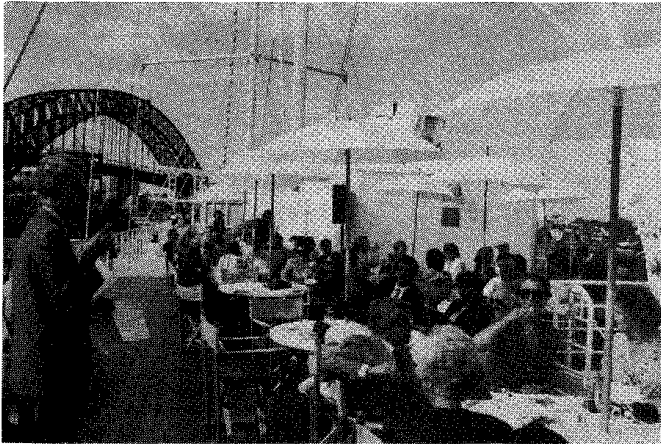
The Aboriginal Art Gallery & Museum next door to us offer a wonderful contrast of experiences, and the regular Sunday craft market they organised in November and December last year encouraged more visitors to the area - both tourists and Sydneysiders alike. During the same period, on the verandah of the Cable Station, **Frank Carleton** organised a sale of second-hand books with a French focus which added to the colourful carnival atmosphere.

February is a special month for the Lapérouse Museum. Events of interest to the Friends include a **Mass to be held on the verandah of the Cable Station on Sunday 14 February at 11am** and the **Père Receveur Commemoration ceremony on the same day at 3pm.**

Lapérouse Day on Tuesday 23 February will be celebrated with a ceremony at the Monument at 11am and all Friends are invited to attend. We anticipate a visit from the French Navy and the local La Perouse School dance group may perform for us after the ceremony. The Mayor of Randwick, **Alderman Margaret Martin**, will host the party afterwards.

The Museum staff enjoy meeting members of the Friends. Do contact us in advance if you would like to arrange a guided tour at any time for yourself and others. We would love to hear from you.

YSL FASHION SHOW & THÉ DANSANT ON BOARD CLUB MED 2 10 December 1992



The Friend's first-ever fund-raising event was a sparkling success. The sunshine tempered by a cool breeze, the fancy new sailing cruise-ship, the smiling guests, the beautiful models chosen by YSL to show their oh! so elegant Variation range and accessories, the colourful cocktails, tempting food and stylish service provided by Club Med 2, the ice-cold champagne donated by our great Friend, **Nicolas Feuillatte**, everything combined to mirror the splendour of Sydney harbour perfectly framed by the bridge and the Opera House.

We thank all who came and so obviously enjoyed themselves, and all who, though unable to attend, nevertheless supported the event by buying tickets in the Grand

Tombola. Altogether some \$9,500 dollars have been added to the fund for the Instrument Room restoration project.

We thank our patron, the **Hon. Gough Whitlam**, for drawing the Grand Tombola winning tickets with such humour and enthusiasm, **Assoc. Prof. Ross Steele** for being such a cool M.C., and our many generous friends and supporters who donated all the wonderful prizes.

For their generous sponsorship and help, the Friends thank: **CLUB MED, CHAMPAGNE NICOLAS FEUILLATTE, SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE AUSTRALIA, YSL ACCESSORIES, GRACE BROS DESIGNER GALLERY, PHILIPPE XAVIER Hairdressers & PETER CAINE, photographer.**

GRAND TOMBOLA PRIZE WINNERS

- Ms Kathy Creswell** (No. 1871) GROUPE AIR-FRANCE and CLUB MED combined holiday - air travel & 7 days accomodation for two at Club Med Chateau Royal, Nouméa.
- Mrs Katrina Angus** (No. 2262) ACCOR AUSTRALIA Opal Cove Resort, Coffis Harbour -week-end for two.
- Alderman Margaret Martin**, Mayor of Randwick (No. 1683) LOUIS VUITTON - sac jeune fille.
- Mrs Janik Bouthelier** (No. 1350) DECLEOR PARIS - basket of 8 fundamental skin-care beauty products.
- Mrs Marcel Errard** (No. 1725) DECLEOR PARIS - travel kit with 4 beauty products & 1 fragrance.
- Mrs Amanda Crutchley** (No. 2281) JOHN WINCH - framed etching.
- Mrs Vivienne Alcaine** (No. 2318) TRIMEX PTY LTD - basket of Clarins natural care & beauty products.
- Ms Kate Fox** (No. 1688) PECHINEY PACIFIC - set of French crystal champagne flutes.
- Ms Helen Carruthers** (No. 2057) BNP AUSTRALIA - 2 framed prints from the Lesueur collection.
- Mr Michael Summers** (No. 1889) YVES SAINT LAURENT ACCESSORIES - silk shawl & earrings.
- Ms Sylvie Patinec** (No. 2143) PARIBAS GROUP (AUST.) - Mercator-fonds edition art book: Magritte.
- Prouvost Lefebvre & Co.** (No. 1361) STADIA HANDCRAFTS - Liberty of London tapestry cushion kit.
- Mrs Thérèse Griffin** (No. 1002) FRANCOISE ESTERHAZY DESIGN knitted cotton top with sequins & beads
- Prouvost Lefebvre & Co.** (No. 1364) HERMES - silk tie.
- Mr Gary Simpson** (No. 1562) NICOLE C.V. FASHION - appliqué T-shirt & short outfit.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

THE IMPACT OF LAPÉROUSE ON MAPPING OF THE AUSTRALIAN-PACIFIC REGION BY THE FRENCH (Conclusion)

Précis of Address given by Rear-Admiral François Bellec, NSW State Library, 18 November, 1991

We turn now to the examination of the accuracy of the geographic co-ordinates before and after the Lapérouse expedition, a problem which King Louis XVI, passionately interested in geography, considered very important. The predecessor of the French Hydrographic Service, the *Dépot Général des Cartes, Plans et Journaux pour la Navigation*, had been founded in 1720. In 1752 the newly created *Académie de la Marine* concentrated on the development of scientific procedures in every aspect of navigation and shipbuilding. In 1795, the French *Bureau des Longitudes* was created to assist the *Académie des Sciences* in the fields of magnetism, horology and navigation.

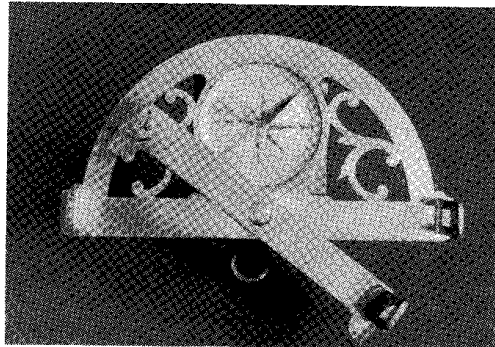
Graphometer, signed Lennel 1781

By the time Lapérouse set sail in 1785 navigation methods had greatly improved. The French theoretician Bouguer had developed the method of circum-meridian and exmeridian observations to measure latitude more accurately. Lapérouse had sextants from Ramsden, then Europe's best instrument maker. Two complementary methods of fixing longitude had been in use for some time. The lunar distances method had been adopted 20 years earlier when the British Astronomer Royal, Nevil Masklyn had published a set of astronomical tables known as the Nautical Almanac. From this, and the ideas of the German Mayer, in France Charles Borda and Etienne Lenoir developed the reflecting circle. Lapérouse carried five precision chronometers by Berthoud, who had further developed the invention of the British clockmaker Harrison. Longitude could now be measured accurately to within 15 minutes. Back in 1772, Saint-Allouarn was 3 degrees out (about 2 days sailing) in positioning Dirk Hartog Island in Shark Bay. It should also be noted that despite this improved accuracy, Cook and Lapérouse had to sail prudently because their charts were wrong; and that their own estimated bearings and distances from any uncharted coastline were as doubtful as any in the past. Conservative sailors were slow to adopt new developments in navigation aids; even Mercator's maps only came into general use at sea towards the end of the XVIIth Century, more than a century after their publication in the first modern atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. Certainly the instruments for measuring altitude were better, but Cook and Lapérouse approached islands and harbours using their only credible co-ordinate: latitude. Despite their chronometers they were still the heirs of Columbus.

From June to September 1786, Lapérouse surveyed the American coast from the open sea. He was searching for a strait from east to west through America that was thought might exist. This was an old hypothesis: the Portuguese had hoped to find a strait through Africa, likewise Baudin and Flinders would look for a north-south passage through the centre of Australia. The saving in time would be large in the era of sail, hence the centuries-long search for non-existent short cuts.

Unfortunately Lapérouse, pressed for time, could not explore and chart in detail this indented coastline. Nevertheless, the difference between Lapérouse's geographic co-ordinates and modern charts show a maximum error of 6 minutes in latitude and 14 minutes in longitude, or less than two hours sailing. Lapérouse himself estimated that his maximum margin of error was below 15 minutes. Actually his average results were even better, as they were in the order of +1.5 minutes latitude and 7.3 minutes in longitude. As far as I know, no-one has ever studied the reasons for these errors. Instruments, methods, astronomical tables, optical corrections could have been at fault. In any case the positions

calculated by Lapérouse were excellent, having regard to the period and to the fact that he was taking observations under sail and from out at sea. It should be noted that Lapérouse gave the exact latitude of the tragic Lituya Bay, Alaska, and was only 5 minutes out in longitude. These results were attained using astronomical quadrants on shore.



Baudin obtained exactly the same average results, the

maximum error being 10 minutes in latitude and 19 in longitude. So Lapérouse, using for the first time the new methods for determining longitude at sea, had immediately attained the accuracy expected from the new French system. My opinion is that Flinders achieved a better average of precision than Baudin when both sailed simultaneously, but separately, around Australia in the early 19th Century. Lapérouse was especially aware of the importance of his charting mission using the new methods developed by the French from 1768 onwards, and was enthusiastic about them.

I need only tell you that the combination of both our methods, observation of distance and chronometers, has completely solved the problem: the whole journey we sailed with less error in longitude than we had in our latitudes ten years ago when we used wooden octants...

This letter was the last written by Lapérouse from Botany Bay. It was dated 7 February 1788.

French expeditions around Australia were inspired by science and humanism... Even when they were at war with one another, France and Britain side by side surveyed the Pacific-Australian regions. We are proud to remember that France contributed to putting Australia on the definitive map of the world.

NEXT ISSUE: Bob Bowdley's article from the M/V Coriolis, Vanuatu "In Search of Boussole"

LAPÉROUSE

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Friends of the Lapérouse Museum

Editor: Carole Roussel
Tel: (02) 389-8010
Publisher: Friends of the Lapérouse
Museum, c/- 11/23 McLeod St
Mosman NSW 2088
Design: Stadia Graphics

Friends of the Lapérouse Museum Limited (A.C.N. 003-547-699)

was established in 1989.

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Dr. Helen Rosenman

Assoc. Prof. Ross Steele

NPWS: Peter Shadie
Curator: Jennifer Carter

STAN DE HAUTECLOCQUE's letter of resignation - 12 October 92

Dear Carole,

It is with regret that I confirm my wish not to seek re-election on the Friends Committee at the next A.G.M. scheduled for Sunday 8th November, 1992. Consequently, my function of Treasurer will expire on that day. Obviously, I will be happy to help the new Treasurer taking over the responsibilities that I have assumed during the last three years.

It has been a great honour and a rewarding experience to serve, first under Pierre for the establishment of the Lapérouse Museum and then, under John Holt and Peter Orlovich as presidents of the Friends' organization, and under you personally as editor of our "Lapérouse Newsletter". I can look back with pride at what has been achieved in the eight years of my involvement with the Museum which represents for me an important symbol of the historical ties which link *ma patrie* France and my country of adoption Australia.

Please rest assured that I will remain a Friend of the Museum for life.

AGM NEWS

PROFESSOR ROBERT CLANCY was elected President of the Friends of the Lapérouse Museum Limited at the AGM held on 8 November 1992, **Dr Peter Orlovich** having decided not to seek re-election to a further term of office. Peter will remain a valuable committee member, continuing to offer his advice and expertise in many areas of historical and regional importance. The Friends wish him well with his teaching commitments in Papua New Guinea and thank him for his year of service.

Robert Clancy is Professor of Pathology at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Newcastle, and Director of the Hunter Immunology Unit. He was co-convenor of the International Cartography Conference held in Sydney in November 1991. The Friends offered him *Honorary Membership* in recognition of his great interest in the Museum and his generous loan of the rare, early maps from his private collection on display in the Discovery Room. We are fortunate indeed to have the benefit of Robert's dynamism, vast knowledge and passion for the voyages of discovery and the charting of Australian and Pacific shores.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS elected are:

- **YVONNE O'SHEA**, a past Alderman on Randwick Council, also elected Treasurer.

- **ROSS STEELE**, Associate Professor in the Department of French Studies, University of Sydney and member of the NSW Arts Advisory Council.

- **JOHN MCCOLL**, elected member to the Conseil Supérieur des Français de l'étranger for Australia and the South Pacific, with over 20 years of senior banking experience with BNP.

- **HELEN ROSENMAN**, PhD., tutor, then visiting lecturer at Macquarie University 1969-1980. First comprehensive translation and editing of the "Voyages of Dumont d'Urville" in 2 vols, Melbourne University Press 1987, re-published 1992 in soft-covered abridged version.

RESIGNATIONS were received with regret from the **Hon. John Holt**, who has been appointed a judge, **Stan de Hauteclocque**, a devastating loss, and **Danièle Elfassy**.

Letter from **Gary L Simpson**, chairman of the Arts Advisory Council, NSW Ministry of the Arts - 5 November 1992

Dear Carole,

Thank you for arranging a visit to the Lapérouse Museum last month. I was, as you could no doubt tell, very impressed with the set up. Please pass on my congratulations to all concerned.

"Pacific Explorer" was fascinating. How ignorant I was of early French exploration in the area ... (together, I suspect, with the majority of my country persons!). The book is beautifully written and very well researched. It was a pleasure to read.

Thank you too for sending me a copy of the Members' Quarterly Newsletter. I am pleased to be kept informed about the group's activities. I so much enjoyed meeting you and look forward to seeing you again soon. Yours sincerely...

Editor's note: Gary wrote an article on *Père Receveur* for the February 1993 issue of "Country Style".

AFFM Inc.

The Australian Federation of Friends of Museums held its AGM on 20 November 1992 in Melbourne. **Caroline Serventy**, President, and **Elizabeth Madsen**, Honorary Secretary, were both re-elected to a further term of office. We wish them well & congratulate them on their achievements.

A complete list of reciprocal benefits offered or available to you through your Friends of the Lapérouse Museum membership will appear in the next newsletter. The following information from AFFM could be of great interest to any Friends planning a trip to Europe in May-June this year. So read on and be tempted...!

World Friends of Museums meet in Italy. From 1-6 June, 1993, the 8th Congress of the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM) will be held in Treviso, Italy - a charming walled town half an hour's travel from Venice.

The Congress is open to any member of a society whose national organisation is affiliated to WFFM. The Australian Federation of Friends has organised a 23-day tour of Italy which includes attendance at the five-day Congress, a one-week sojourn at the palace/villa complex of Castello di Montegufoni in central Italy and a coach itinerary that visits Assisi, Pisa, Florence, Siena, San Gimignano, Arezzo, Urbino, Ravenna and Venice. Full details of the itinerary and booking information are available from **AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD**, PO Box 2217, St Kilda West, Vic 3182. Tel: (03) 537-1394