

HOBART TASMANIA  
Tuesday 11 February 2003

## THE RECHERCHE BAY HISTORIC SITE

Yesterday I was taken to inspect a number of archaeological sites on a peninsula in Recherche Bay. This is a group of sites which in my opinion is of state, national, and international significance. They include sites of the French d'Entrecasteaux Expedition of 1792 and 1793, a convict coalmine, a logging tramway and log chute, and a farm site of about 1900.

The most significant of these is the French garden site. Because the French expedition was anchored here for only five weeks in 1792 from 21 April-28 May and again for five weeks from 21 January-27 February in 1793, I didn't think that any evidence of their stay would remain. But the site of the garden is most visible. It is clearly outlined with stone boulders forming a rectangular shape, with two square plinths in the centre. There is no doubt that this is the site of the garden, as a detailed description of the garden plants and its size was recorded in one of the expedition journals. This site is of great significance to Tasmania and the Australian mainland, and is of international significance in terms of the history of European Colonialism.

During their stay the members of the expedition had extended interactions with the Aborigines who owned that territory. The journal of the botanist Labillardiere gives detailed descriptions of the appearance and daily life of the Aboriginal people, and this account is renowned as one of the major sources of traditional Aboriginal culture. This site is therefore one of the earliest and most significant Aboriginal contact sites in Australia.

Labillardiere's journal gives accounts of the criss-crossing of the peninsula by the French explorers, botanists, and naturalists. Like Botany Bay, the Recherche Peninsula is a major site in the history of botany in Australia, as hundreds of plants were collected and named. To Tasmania it is of particular interest as this is the type site of the Bluegum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), Tasmania's floral emblem.

Any plans for logging this peninsula must be rescinded to protect its historic values. It requires immediate protection and thorough professional assessment including the preparation of a conservation management plan. It is clearly of great historic, scientific, and community value.

Anne Bickford

Historical Archaeologist  
135 Catherine St. Leichhardt NSW 2040  
Ph. 02 9569 9672, email abickford@mpx.com.au

NSW State Delegate, National Executive Committee of the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc.  
Research Associate Department of Archaeology University of Sydney

Formerly:  
Chairperson, NSW Executive Committee of the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc.  
Member of the Archaeological Advisory Panel to the Heritage Council of NSW  
Executive Member Australian Archaeological Association  
Treasurer Australia ICOMOS  
Member of the Burra Charter Drafting Committee Australia ICOMOS