

The Recherche Bay Protection Group are nominating the whole of the NE Peninsula for protection and assert that the whole area and each designated and specific site satisfies each one of the criteria of the Tasmanian Heritage Register as outlined in the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995

#### PART 4 - TASMANIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

Required criteria for entry in Register

16. The Heritage Council may enter a place of historic cultural heritage significance in the Heritage

Register if, in its opinion, it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) it is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Tasmania's history;
- (b) it demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Tasmania's heritage;
- (c) it has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history;
- (d) It is important as a representative in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of cultural places.
- (e) It is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;
- (f) it has strong or special meaning for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;
- (g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person, a group or an organisation that was important in Tasmania's history.

We addressed the criteria so as to establish the heritage significance of the area with attention to, but not limited by:

- the French scientific and exploratory expedition of d'Entrecasteaux,
- The history of science, with attention to the Enlightenment period and the fields of biology, botany, zoology, geography, geology, anthropology, geomagnetism, navigation, astronomy, and cartography,
- The early interaction of European and Aboriginal people in Australia, and the history of Tasmania (including, but not limited to,

### **Summary of the Historical background and events: The d'Entrecasteaux Expedition in Recherche Bay.**

On September 28<sup>th</sup> 1791 two ships sailed from Brest. Significantly renamed *Recherche* and *Espérance*, they represented the hopes and aspirations of an emerging new revolutionary order. France was experiencing a time of great change. King Louis XVI and his family were no longer autocratic rulers and a more egalitarian Constituent Assembly was in place. Several years before Comte de La Pérouse had led an expedition of exploration and scientific research into the Pacific. By 1791 he hadn't been heard of for three years not since sending dispatches home from Botany Bay. In response to this an expedition was mounted under the command of Rear- Admiral Bruni d'Entrecasteaux to discover the fate of La Pérouse and to engage in scientific study in the South Pacific. He chose his close friend and fellow officer, Huon de Kermadec to command the *Espérance*. Some of the best French scientists applied to join the Expedition, no expense was spared in outfitting the ships and every crew member was deliberately chosen to ensure a successful voyage. By and large most of the officers were Royalists and most of the scientists were Republicans, reflecting the current political trend in France.

After a short stay at Capetown they found that due to contrary winds they were unable to sail east across the northern coast of New Holland. D'Entrecasteaux decided to make for the one safe harbour shown on the charts left by Captains Cook and Bligh, Adventure Bay in southern Van Diemen's Land.

Battered by unrelenting storms the two bedraggled vessels sighted the coast on Van Diemen's Land on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 1792. Due to a navigational error, 19° west instead of 19° East the ships found themselves outside the entrance to a large harbour. Concerned over unfavourable winds and nearby threatening reefs d'Entrecasteaux sent long boats ahead into the bay to do soundings while the two ships tacked for two hours across the entrance. At 4:50 the Admiral signaled 'anchors down' and the weary crew complied. But where were they?

The next day the two ships were towed by their long boats into the northern arm of the bay just beyond the present Bennett's Point named by the Hydrographer, Beautemps-Beaupré, Port du Nord.

So impressed by the beauty and tranquillity of their surrounding the normally unemotional d'Entrecasteaux was moved to record in his journal:

"...Trees of an immense height and proportionate diameter, their branchless trunks covered with evergreen foliage, some looking as old as the world; "...Nature in all her vigour, and yet in a state of decay, seems to offer to the imagination something more picturesque and more imposing than the sight of this same nature bedecked by the hand of civilised man. "Wishing only to preserve her beauties we destroy her charm, we rob her of that power which is hers alone, the secret of preserving in eternal age eternal youth."

Over the next 26 days the Bay saw much activity. The ships were careened, timber was cut for repairs and the making of charcoal. The botanists Labillardière, Riche and Ventenat busily collected, catalogued and preserved hundreds of hitherto unknown flora and fauna including the Eucalyptus Globulus, Tasmanian Blue gum which later on became the state emblem. Hydrographers Beautemps-Beaupré, Willaumez and others set off in the long boats to chart previously unknown parts of the coast. Their maps were used for generations by other mariners. Rossel set up an observatory on what is now Bennett's Point and discovered Geo-magnetism of great significance to navigational science concerning the variation of magnetic inclination with latitude. An event commemorated by the unveiling of a plaque on the site by the CSIRO during a seminar held in Hobart in 1992.

Felix Delahaie, as the gardener had been issued seeds to plant in the New World with view to enlighten and improve the eating habits of the native people. He dug a plot of nine metres by four and planted celery, onions, cress, chervil and potatoes. This first garden in Tasmania was planted just north of where the ships were anchored and was last sited by Lady Jane Franklin in the 1840's.

During the expedition's stay another event may have occurred. The steward on board the Recherche, Louis Girardin, was a small quiet man who kept to himself and had the unusual privilege on sleeping alone in the stewards cabin. This is significant because Louis was actually a woman. Marie-Louise-Victoire Girardin was born in 1754 in Versailles daughter of a court official. Married and widowed in her twenties she had a child out of wedlock to a faithless lover and to escape her Father's wrath donned men's clothing and fled to Brest. With the aid of Captain de Kermadec's sister who was a family friend and certainly with the knowledge of the Captain and probably Admiral d'Entrecasteaux she was given a position on a French naval vessel. When a mutiny broke out on board she was transferred to the Recherche. Most people on board did not know her true identity although some suspected. One of the pilots tormented her about her lack of beard and effeminate demeanor and she was driven to challenge him to a duel. There is a very strong possibility that this event took place near the area where the ships were anchored.

As the ships left the Bay on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May their one regret may have been that although they had seen evidence of native habitation no contact had been made.

Over the following nine months the ships sailed north-east touching briefly the northern tip of New Zealand and west again finding no sign of the missing La Pérouse.

Deprivation and hardship began to take its toll. Scurvy, dysentery and tropical diseases picked up in Amboina as well as the failing health of their leaders led to an escalation in political dissention.

Early January 1793 found the ships anchored off Esperance Bay in Western Australia. Unable to find water and unwilling to risk the treacherous coast further east, d'Entrecasteaux, no doubt fondly recalling the beautiful, safe and abundant Port du Nord, commanded his ships to return.

On the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1793 the Espérance followed by the Recherche entered the Bay which now bears her name. This time the ships anchored at what is now Rocky Bay on the southern side. The astronomers set up their tents on the point and the botanist went across the harbour to the area they had been to the year before. They collected live specimens as well as seeds. Many seeds were planted later on by Delahaie in Empress Josephine's garden at Malmaison where he became chief gardener.

Shortly after their arrival a gunner from the *Espérance* died of tuberculosis and was buried ashore. Where his grave is we don't know but this was the first European to be buried in Tasmania that we are aware of.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February the botanists and their assistants were working near Southport Lagoon when they noticed the approach of a large group of natives. Appearing to be peaceful the Frenchmen laid down their weapons and approached the group of about 40 men, women and children. Over the next while a number of items were exchanged and a good humoured rapport was established between the two groups. Labillardière noticed that the only item of clothing worn by the natives belonged to a young woman. Coveting it he offered her a pair of trousers in its stead. Shyly she fled but was brought back by her laughing companions. In an effort to show the young woman how the trousers were worn the botanist, with all the decorum he could muster, helped her to don them while she rested both hands on his shoulders.

Over the next few days several friendly meetings were had between the Europeans. The highlight of the meetings was a major al fresco type picnic held at the southern end of Black Swan Lagoon involving over 40 aborigines and as many Frenchmen. The native people were friendly, generous, uninhibited, sociable, unguarded and engaging. They allowed Labillardière's assistants to measure their body parts, for example. The women allowed the Frenchmen to play with their babies. The natives and visitors held spear throwing contests and running races. In the meantime some of the sailors had been sent ashore for their compulsory daily swim. Many were naked. The aborigines noted that all were men. Where were the women? In this uninhibited atmosphere, some of the aborigines assuming that the clothed Frenchmen must be women and began to conduct examinations. Songs were sung by both parties and dances were joined. The French worked on a large vocabulary and sketched the natives.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February the ships sailed out of Recherche Bay and made their way north charting new areas as they went. Over the next few months the expedition passed near to the Santa Cruz Islands little knowing that was the site of wrecked ships of La Pérouse.

D'Entrecasteaux and de Kermadec died within weeks of each other and by the time the expedition staggered into the Dutch colony of Batavia most of the Frenchmen were ill with scurvy and dysentery and the ships were in a state of disrepair. Upon their arrival in the Dutch colony they found that France was now at war with Holland and in a series of negotiations it was deemed necessary to sell the ships to pay for supplies. The Republicans amongst them were imprisoned.

Over the next few years the members of the expedition that survived the tropical diseases or chose to make their homes elsewhere eventually made their way back to France. Several of them published their journals and Labillardière published his botanical discoveries and an atlas.

Although, to a great extent the, the discoveries of the D'Entrecasteaux Expedition have been forgotten elsewhere, here in southern Tasmania the names of d'Entrecasteaux, Huon de Kermadec, Recherche, Esperance, Ventenat, Labillardière Riche and Rossel are part of our topographical and botanical world.

#### **Why was this historically significant then?**

- **La Perouse was a French National hero\***
- **The La Perouse expedition had been sent out by Louis XVI. Though a virtual prisoner of the Revolution, Louis XVI actively prepared the instructions for the d'Entrecasteaux expedition.**
- **Some of the Louis XVI's last recorded words on the way up the scaffold to the guillotine were ,”Has there been any word of La Perouse?” Ironically this day 22/1/1793 was the day the Recherche and the Esperance returned to Recherche Bay Tasmania and the 1<sup>st</sup> white person died and was buried there.**
- **D'Entrecasteaux was France's most senior leader of French expeditions to the Pacific with a distinguished career.**
- **The d'Entrecasteaux expedition sent to look for La Perouse was the biggest peaceful International endeavour undertaken by the new Revolutionary French National Assembly. It was one of the largest exploration missions undertaken by the French., in fact the biggest International rescue mission undertaken until the search for Sir John Franklin's expedition lost in the North West Passage 50 years later .The expedition was the showcase of a new order and its scientists were imbued by Enlightenment thinking. The Enlightenment was the pivotal cortex of Western thinking that changed the way we looked at the world. It was a response to chaos and destruction.\***
- **The expedition was “one of the most intriguing micro-histories of the Revolution.” \*Duyker.**

- Despite all the events that could have led to loss of the expeditions logs, diaries, letters, maps, and the scientific collections, the historical record of the d'Entrecasteaux Expedition is complete and extant in the great museums and collections still housed in France, Italy and elsewhere.

Why is this history significant to us today?

- If the French came back to Recherche Bay today they could still recognise it as it was when they visited.
- Globally we have entered into a new age of enlightenment and a new way of looking at the world.
- Like the French Revolution we have entered an age of Terror and to have safe havens like Recherche Bay and its hinterland to actively promote Tasmania as a place of peaceful cultural / historical eco tourism is an important window of opportunity. At Recherche Bay, properly considered and managed low footprint interpretive sites celebrating the achievements of the expedition in situ would be an Icon of Brand Tasmania.
- This would be the well spring of regional eco/tourism based on the French history. A 'garden of economic riches'.
- The failure of the relevant authorities to identify the significance of the land is inexcusable as this is well documented in several texts. This failure has led to inappropriate land use decisions such as the imminent clear felling of the site.
- There is a compelling case for the protection of this history from a global perspective. An historic peaceful encounter with Tasmanian Aboriginal people in a peaceful place at the 'extremity of the globe'. ( D'ent. Diary 1792). Scientists, naturalists, enlightened thinkers soaked in the wonders and diversity of this place. Each and every person who goes there still has this opportunity. To bulldoze and clearfell and burn and poison all this potential would be a crime against the future.

## **Type Locality: The NE Peninsula as a Botanical Museum. Labillardiere and Tasmania's Flora**

It is imperative that the type locality remain intact so that the historical, cultural heritage values can be maximized. Labillardiere's 'type locality' where he first identified & named plants including *Eucalyptus globulus*. It is imperative to include the 'type locality' terrain and the diaries of Labillardiere track his movements across the whole area. The naturalists criss-crossed the entire Peninsula for five weeks on this first visit. They returned again the following year. Elsewhere in Australia important 'type localities are lost'. The most notable is Botany Bay the 'type locality' of Sir Joseph Banks, the land being lost under suburban sprawl and the Kurnell Oil refinery. With this site there is the opportunity to preserve intact the type locality where a major grouping of Tasmanian plants were identified. The naturalists continuously criss-crossed this whole area collecting specimens which were later planted by Felix Lahaie himself for Empress Josephine at Malmaison. This garden was the most important botanic collection of Australian plants in Europe. British history text books lead us to believe that Sir Joseph Banks was the pre-eminent Botanist of his age but he basically a collector and encourager but many of his collections were never planted. It was Banks, however, who ultimately facilitated the return of the French collections, captured by the Dutch and later by the British, to their rightful owners.

The first history of the flora of Australia was published by Labillardiere in 1800 and the largest contributions to it came from the NE peninsula of Recherche Bay.

A survey of genetic matching would link the specimens at Malmasion and elsewhere in France with the largely still intact Peninsula. It has been alleged that 19thC logging operations have degraded the area but this is not the case. Kemsley had a very small operation on the coast circa 1900 but this was largely used to provide a jetty outlet in deep water for his leases which were some miles away. Gourlay [ 1904-7] had a very small spot mill at the southern tip of the peninsula and made almost no impression. Henry Jones & Co IXL began to build a new mill in 1911 but it was never finished and never used.

There is widespread state, national and International Support for this unique and revealing corner of history to be protected. There is already 4WD damage to this general area around Black Swan and Southport Lagoon Conservation zones. See attached images.