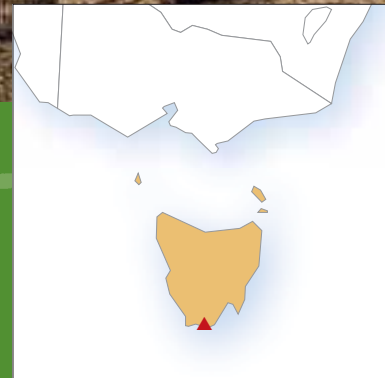
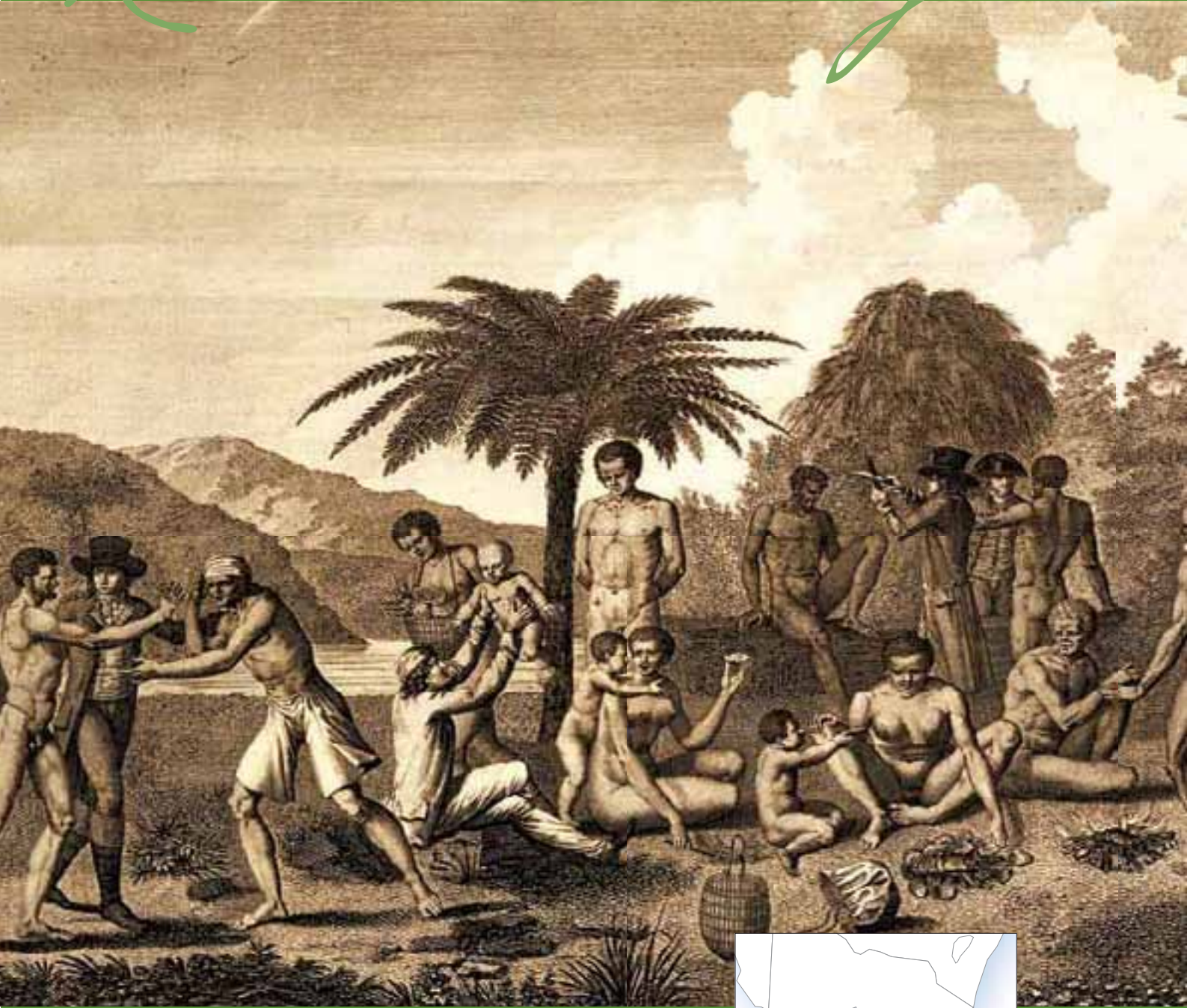


Recherche Bay



Date of inscription: 7 October 2005

Recherche Bay (North East Peninsula) Area, Tasmania

During the late 18th century Britain and France were competing to chart and explore new worlds. Speculation in Europe was rampant about Terra Australis Incognita, ‘the unknown southern land’.

In 1642 Captain Abel Tasman sailed around and roughly charted the south western and eastern coastline of the area he named Van Diemen’s Land and we now know as Tasmania. In 1644 Tasman was sent to establish the relationship between northern Australia and Papua New Guinea. Although he missed the opening of the Torres Strait, Tasman was able to complete the first accurate charting of the coast of northern Australia from Cape York in the east to North West Cape in the west.

In 1770 James Cook changed the world’s understanding of Terra Australis Incognita with his exploration aboard the *Endeavour*, charting around 3200 kilometres of coastline. His voyage dramatically expanded the world’s scientific understanding of the continent’s unique flora and fauna and led to increased interest from Europe.

Guided by Cook’s notes, French explorer, Comte de La Perouse, arrived in Botany Bay just days after the First Fleet, anchoring on 24 January 1788, and then sailed north with his two ships, disappearing without a trace.

Three years later, an expedition led by Bruni d’Entrecasteaux left France under orders from Louis XVI to try to find La Perouse and also to complete charts of the southern land. The expedition set sail in two 350-ton frigates, the *Recherche* and the *Esperance*.

Arriving in April 1792, the landing in this part of Van Diemen’s Land was the result of an accident. Following a violent storm, the French vessels mistook what was later named Recherche Bay for Adventure Bay, a safe harbour observed by Tasman, as a place to recuperate.

An extended search for La Perouse followed their departure from Recherche Bay and took them to New Caledonia, the Admiralty Islands, the Solomons, Bougainville and around New Guinea to the Moluccas. From there they sailed down the west coast of the Australian mainland, around the Great Australian Bight, stopping for repairs at St Francis Isle, before limping back to Recherche Bay in 1793 to repair the *Esperance* and to replenish water and other supplies.

Here they returned to the garden planted by Felix Lahaie in May 1792. It was the practice of European crews to plant gardens in destinations they visited to provide sustenance for other maritime adventurers. However, the French were also under instructions to establish European plants for the benefit of Indigenous people – a gift from the French people to the natives of the new land.

Their observations about contact with the Indigenous inhabitants – particularly in the journals of botanist Jacques Julien de Labillardiere later published in France – today remain the best accounts of Tasmanian Aboriginal society prior to European settlement.

Their observations were not limited to the Indigenous inhabitants. The physicist Elisabeth Paul Edouard de Rossel carried out pioneering work of worldwide importance in the field of geomagnetism, proving geomagnetism varied with latitude.

In 1804–06 Labillardiere also identified about 100 new plant species including the blue gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*, now Tasmania’s floral emblem, the flag iris, *Diplarrena moraea*, and the native cherry, *Exocarpus cupressiformis*. The publication of the botanical material collected by the d’Entrecasteaux expedition represented the first general publication extensively covering Australia’s flora to this extent. Much of Labillardiere’s Australian material came from Recherche Bay.

Following his return to France in 1800, Lahaie was appointed Head Gardener for Empress Josephine Bonaparte’s palace estate of Malmaison, just outside Paris. Here he planted a Tasmanian garden for the Empress.

The legacy of French explorers is with us today in Australian places named after La Perouse, Freycinet, Bougainville, Esperance and others. Reminders of the d’Entrecasteaux expedition live on in names such as Recherche Bay, Tasmania; the Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia; and Bruny Island, Tasmania.