

French–Australian Shared Histories

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Imagination | Exploration | Memory



French contribution to the discovery of Australia

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French travellers have written one of the chapters in the discovery of Australia. Their extensively researched expeditions in the southern hemisphere in the late 18th and early 19th centuries provide us with first-hand sources on Australia and its original population prior to British colonisation, or at its very beginning. These resources are preserved in France, the majority of them specifically at the National Archives in Paris.

In the 16th century, discoveries were Spanish and Portuguese, and would be more or less forgotten. Later, it was mainly the Dutch who, in an effort to reach their colonies in Indonesia, ventured into this corner of the world and spotted the western and southern coasts of Australia, and named it New Holland in 1606. Tasman explored Tasmania in 1642 for the East India Company; it was he who named it 'Van Diemen's Land'. The English also discovered New Holland: Dampier visited the north-west coast in 1698 and Cook in particular discovered Botany Bay in 1770 during his first voyage [1768-1771], and took possession of the entire east coast of New Holland in the name of Great Britain.

The attraction of this area – as well as an allegedly immense southern continent (a French conviction based on Paulmier de Gonneville's travel history dating back to the early 16th century), located perhaps further beyond and supposedly counterbalancing the lands of the northern hemisphere – was gaining momentum in France in the 18th century thanks to the work of President de Brosses who published in 1756 his *Navigation History of the Austral lands [...]*¹, a compilation of all known voyages in the South Seas, and in which he encouraged the discovery of the southern continent. He may have coined the terms 'Australasia' and 'Polynesia'.

Research of this fifth part of the world was not only pursuing scientific goals but also commercial objectives; the idea was to find trade routes to China with ports of call for vessels, which helped circumvent the Dutch Indies. It was also to discover spices to bypass the Dutch who monopolised this trade from the Moluccas.

The Franco–English rivalry would become ubiquitous, especially after the Treaty of Paris which, at the end of the Seven Years' War, dispossessed France of its first colonial empire – hence the search for a southern France. On the other hand, Britain had lost some of its North American colonies in 1783 and had set its sights on some compensation in the South. English and French expeditions often intersected or went hand in hand. There were also major upheavals for France with an institutional breakdown that impacted on the organisation and running of these voyages and even on the reception of documents or collection of products. Many experienced tragic episodes, accidents, and saw their crews decimated by scurvy or dysentery. Significantly, most of the expedition leaders died during their voyage, including Baudin at the very beginning of the 19th century.

¹ Brosses (Charles de), *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes contenant ce que l'on sçait des mœurs et des productions des contrées découvertes jusqu'à ce jour ; et où il est traité de l'utilité d'y faire de plus amples découvertes et des moyens d'y former un établissement*, Paris, 1756, 2 vol.

Let's recall the main phases of French explorations to the south, between Indian and Pacific Oceans.²

In 1738–39, an officer of the East India Company, Bouvet de Lozier, thought he had discovered the southern continent, but what he called Cape Circoncision was in fact only part of a small island bearing his name (Bouvet Island, 500km south-southwest of the Cape of Good Hope, and now Norwegian). Bougainville who, from 1766 to 1769, undertook the first round-the-world tour organised by the Royal Navy, with the *Boudeuse* and *l'Etoile*. According to his own instructions (drafted by himself then revised by the Navy) he had to surrender the Malouines Islands (Falkland Islands) to Spain (putting an end to a failed colonisation attempt) and then travel to China via the South Sea, and on the way surveying the lands between the Indies and the West Coast of America in the Pacific Ocean 'of which various parts were sighted by navigators and named Van Diemen's Land, New Holland, Carpentaria, Land of the Holy Spirit, New Guinea [...].³ Not only must he bring back maps but also samples and drawings. Besides, for the first time, there came on board a naturalist, an astronomer, and a cartographer. Bougainville was then to plant posts with the arms of France and draw up deeds of possession in the name of the king in these unknown places, this without establishing a settlement, which corresponded to an already old – and contested – conception of international law (later on, it would be settlement that caused possession).

After a long voyage marked in particular by a brief but famous stay in Tahiti or 'New Cythera', Bougainville came across the Great Barrier Reef in the north-east of Australia in early June 1768. However, estimating the coast dangerous and the land thankless, he preferred to leave it without attempting to approach at any point. Could this be a first missed opportunity? The particular result of this trip was the spread of the myth of the good savage and the superiority of Mother Nature over civilisation, an idea that was very successful in the late 18th century, and fuelled debates during the expeditions before being repeatedly debunked.

Next came two expeditions that had a rather commercial purpose, and whose protagonists were formerly of the East India Company; their passage affected especially New Zealand. Surville's expedition (1767–71) was a totally private affair, and went in search of the fabulous land of Davis on the *Saint-Jean-Baptiste*. Surville was the first Frenchman to disembark in New Zealand and meet the Maori. There followed the Marion-Dufresne expedition, with a contribution from the Royal Navy. The second objective of Marion-Dufresne's trip was looking for southern lands in the southern Indian Ocean and then new trade routes to the Pacific via Tasmania and New Zealand. The first objective of the journey failed: it had been to take Auturu home to Tahiti, after he had been taken to France by Bougainville, however, the Tahitian died at the beginning of the expedition. The expedition was marked by the massacre of Marion-Dufresne and some 20 sailors by the Maori in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand (June 12, 1772). New Zealand and the Maori gained a very bad reputation and were considered unworthy of interest! Before heading to New Zealand, the expedition had made stops in the south-east of Tasmania for wood and water and had approached Aborigines in Frederick Hendrick Bay (6–10 March 1772). This first meeting between Aborigines and Europeans, friendly at first, deteriorated for unknown reasons: stones and spears were thrown against gunshots with at least one shot dead; also quite discouraging beginnings.

² Taillemite (Étienne), *Marins français à la découverte du monde de Jacques Cartier à Dumont d'Urville*, Paris, 1999.

³ Taillemite (Étienne), *Bougainville et ses compagnons autour du monde, 1766-1769 : journaux de navigation établis et commentés par ...*, Paris, 1977, 2006.

However, a few days later, an officer of the Royal Navy, Louis François Alleno de Saint-Allouarn, landed on the west of Australia.

Saint-Allouarn was at the time part of the Kerguelen expedition (aboard the *Fortune*), which was searching for the southern continent. Kerguelen believed he had discovered it on February 12, 1772 (however it actually was the archipelago that now bears his name), and returned to Ile de France without doing any more exploration by abandoning the second vessel (the *Gros-Ventre*) under the command of Saint-Allouarn. The latter decided to continue his route along the 40th south parallel and was the first Frenchman to reach the west coast of New Holland, first near Cape Leeuwin where he was unable to land, and then further north in Shark Bay where he dropped anchor from 30 March to 18 April, 1772. A plan was developed by the ensign Rosily-Mesros, a discovery attempt took place, and although it was discouraging because no water was found, traces of human presence were detected, but nothing more. However, before leaving, Saint-Allouarn took possession of the territory in the name of the King of France, following the customary procedures, on the island of Dirk Hartog (the bottle buried on this occasion was found with 2 écus in the image of Louis XV in 1998). Saint-Allouarn died on his return to the Ile de France and his discovery fell into obscurity.

Over the following 20 years, three major scientific expeditions, organised and financed by the government, followed each other successively, each leading to the next. The outbreak of the Revolution during this period caused institutional upheaval but men remained in place, including Claret de Fleurieu who held various positions in the Navy under the monarchy and during the Revolution and wrote the nautical instructions for the three trips. These expeditions were endowed with significant material and human resources and received detailed instructions from the Navy and the major scientific institutions. They were characterised by the presence on board of non-Navy scientists, for whom books and scientific equipment must be stored, and not without difficulty as there were about 10 for La Pérouse and D'Entrecasteaux, and some 20 for Baudin, creating some cohabitation problems with the crew. To cartographers and astronomical engineers were added naturalists, specialists of the three orders: plant, mineral and animal according to Linnaeus' classification (botanists, mineralogists, zoologists), then also gardeners who were in charge of the transport of plants, including live plants, as well as one or more designers to consign landscapes, Indigenous people encountered, remarkable objects, etc. to perpetuity. Increasing attention was paid to the population, their way of life and their production. The instructions were to treat them humanely and included advice on how to start practising anthropology in the field. The scientific aspect seemed therefore paramount; however, commercial or political interests were always present in the background.

La Pérouse, the renowned naval officer, was ordered by King Louis XVI to replicate and improve on Cook's voyages, a very ambitious project but, after the American War, the French Navy was at its peak. The original purpose of the expedition was to ascertain the potential of a North American-Chinese trade in hides. This rapidly turned into a large-scale circumnavigation journey, since it was neither more nor less the completion of the exploration of the seas. La Pérouse received a great many instructions from the King, the Academy of Sciences, the Jardin des Plantes (Botanical Garden), and the Royal Society of Medicine. The scientific aspect, geographic exploration, cartography, study of the population, was to be paired with a kind of political and economic espionage of the visited countries, in particular the

European institutions, and the search for sites for the establishment of trading posts and ports of call for French vessels. La Pérouse was also to find out about English settlement projects in New Zealand and visit the coast of New Holland from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Van Diemen's Land via the west, in order to discover the as-yet unexplored south coast. In fact, La Pérouse was unable to realise this project, as he was under considerable strain by the time his two vessels, the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe*, reached Botany Bay on 26 January 1788, after two and a half years of travel. Twelve members of the expedition had been massacred shortly before at Tutuila, in the Navigator Islands [now American Samoa]. The English, who had just arrived at Botany Bay, settled the first colony of convicts a little further north in Port Jackson under the orders of Captain Phillip. Having failed to explore New Holland, La Pérouse was able to observe the beginnings of English settlement. As for his meeting with the Aborigines, it left him with a very negative impression. He wrote in his last letter of 7 February 1788 addressed to Fleurieu: 'the Indians of New Holland although very weak and few, are like all savages, very mean and would burn our boats if they could. They threw spears at us only a minute after receiving our gifts and our embraces. I am a hundred times angrier with the philosophers who praise them than against the Indians themselves'.⁴

The expedition of La Pérouse went down with all hands, shortly afterwards, in Vanikoro, in the Santa Cruz Islands. Quite quickly, as early as 1791, following a petition of the Natural History Society, the National Assembly decided to send a new expedition looking for him, which proved to be much more important in regard to the discovery of Australia and its natives. Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, the former governor of the Mascarenes Islands and an experienced navigator (notably, he had managed a navigation against the monsoon), was appointed to lead the expedition, and was also responsible for the continuation of La Pérouse's scientific work whose results had been largely lost. With two vessels, the *Recherche* and the *Espérance*, he was to visit the unknown land of southern New Holland after crossing the Cape of Good Hope, go to Van Diemen's Land and over two different expeditions because of climatic conditions and currents, survey the north and west of New Holland. In the meantime, he was also to approach the west of New Caledonia. It was, once again, an essentially scientific expedition but D'Entrecasteaux was also asked to visit carefully the European colonies where he would anchor. D'Entrecasteaux did not find La Pérouse's expedition, but having arrived south-east of Van Diemen's Land, he discovered fortuitously the canal which bears his name, that separates the main island and Bruny Island (which also bears his name). The expedition explored this canal which seemed to them to offer a succession of magnificent shelters and stopped over two periods (21 April to 16 May 1792 and 21 January to 13 February 1793) at the ports known as A (North) and B (South) in the so-called Discovery Bay (Baie de la Recherche), where gardener Félix Lahaie planted a garden. It was here, in this privileged environment in the canal, that during the second stay in particular (in February 1793), well-documented encounters of a rather exceptional quality occurred between the Aborigines and the French who kept an enthusiastic souvenir of these 'good natives'; we had finally met good savages. The artist Piron would draw rather intimate scenes including the 'meal of the savages'.⁵ Between these two stays in the canal, D'Entrecasteaux, still searching for La Pérouse, explored the western part of the south coast of New Holland from the south-western end called Pointe d'Entrecasteaux to the bay where the vessels were able to shelter during a storm, which was given the name of Esperance Bay. He was then forced to stop his survey of the south coast. These were his contributions to the discovery of Australia, which benefited from the remarkable hydrographic work of Beautemps-Beaupré. The latter,

⁴ AN MAR/3JJ/389, fol. 364-369.

⁵ AN MAR/5JJ/4.

avoiding the compass as much as possible and multiplying sketches and graphs, was able to perfect his methods for developing and constructing maps, combining astronomical bearings with compass bearings, thus becoming the 'father of modern hydrography'. The end of the expedition was very arduous; after the death of both commanders (D'Entrecasteaux and Huon de Kermadec) it broke up in Surabaya on the island of Java and both the surviving participants and the archives and collections had an eventful and scattered return to France. The English took the Dutch vessel which was bringing documents and collections back to Europe, and they were particularly interested in Beautemps-Beaupré's maps, which Dalrymple immediately copied and which Flinders probably knew about.⁶

A few years later, in 1800, Baudin, much better known in Australia than D'Entrecasteaux, presented a new circumnavigation voyage project. Bonaparte, First Consul at the time, reduced it to New Holland, where Baudin was to survey the unexplored shores to the south, to the south-west, to the north-west, and especially the straits separating it from Tasmania to the south (Flinders had just proved it to be an island during his 1798–99 campaign) and New Guinea to the north. He was to explore the interior of Tasmania in search of plants and animals that could be acclimatised in France. The transport of plants was somewhat of a specialty of Baudin's. The instructions also included, among other things, an anthropological aspect developed by Girardo of the Observers of Man's Society, which advocated a study of the moral man including language, modes of expression, living conditions and standards, moral and intellectual life, faculties, family and society in general, in political, economic, moral and religious terms, etc. This was an innovative program when compared with Cuvier's, which had only considered the physical aspect, and involved prolonged contacts with the populations under study. It only began taking shape in Timor. Noteworthy among the cast of scientists on board (there were 22 initially but many deserted already at the Ile de France), was the naturalist François Péron who had studied medicine and zoology and who would attempt to consider the savages under a scientific lens (he measured their strength with the help of a dynamometer) and finally rejected the idea of any advantage of nature over civilisation. As usual, this voyage also had a political component: Baudin had to learn about English settlements. During his trip, which was interrupted by visits to Timor and Port Jackson, Baudin carried out three campaigns around New Holland with the *Geographe* and the *Naturaliste*, then the *Casuarina*. The report was rather mixed in terms of geographical discovery, despite the good quality of the mapping work carried out mainly by Louis de Freycinet and Boullanger helped by Faure. On the assets side of the expedition: charting of the Swan River and Shark Bay (a number of French toponyms is a testimony of the passage of the French in Shark Bay); the verification and enhancement of Beautemps-Beaupré's works in the Entrecasteaux canal with the survey of the Maria Island (where they found some tombs), the survey of a part of the south coast of Australia (Freycinet's Terre Napoléon) between the area reached by D'Entrecasteaux and Wilson's Promontory (east of Melbourne), as well as Kangaroo Island (Decrès Island) near Adelaide, and the indication of poorly known coastlines (Hunter, King, Maria, Kangaroo Islands).⁷ Baudin had to give up the exploration of the Gulf of Carpentaria because of unfavourable weather conditions, which Flinders did later. Freycinet was able to publish the first complete or almost complete map of Australia in 1811, because Flinders, who circumnavigated Australia, was held up on his return, for nearly seven years on the Ile de France. On the scientific side, the balance is improved thanks to the establishment of the largest collections of natural history reported so far; they included mounted animals in life-like poses, stuffed animals, or animals preserved in alcohol, and even live

⁶ Maps prepared during the voyage: AN MAP/6JJ/2 and 3.

⁷ Maps drawn during the voyage: AN MAP/6JJ/4 and 5.

animals bought or captured (kangaroos, wombats, emus, of which 23 were on board the *Naturaliste*). To these were added animals bought on the Ile de France and at the Cape of Good Hope for Madame Bonaparte, 2500 plant species (dried or living plants, as well as seeds to be distributed in France and Europe), marine plants, live corals, insects, and shells, 14 cases of minerals, some weapons and utensils of the savages. Unfortunately not all of this arrived in good condition; furthermore, a large part of the collection was taken for the First Consul's wife and sent to Malmaison, including all ethnographic objects allocated to her and which disappeared during the Prussian invasion in 1814 or in 1829, at the time of the furniture sale of Malmaison, the former empress' residence. An inventory drawn up by François Péron of the objects sent to Malmaison included 206 anthropological and ethnographic pieces, including 38 coming from New Holland and Tasmania, all of which is quite unfortunate.⁸

Today, thanks to their quality, the drawings of Lesueur and Petit make a significant contribution to the notoriety of this trip. Viewed from a different angle, Baudin's expedition also highlights the Anglo-French rivalry in these 'new new worlds'. The famous encounter between Baudin and Flinders, which occurred at the bay thereafter called Encounter Bay, on 8 April 1802, was not a coincidence. Flinders was dispatched in anticipation of Baudin's arrival to prevent a French settlement on the west coast of New Holland; likewise when Baudin left Port Jackson for King Island, an English ship [the *Cumberland*] rushed after him to check his destination, planted the English flag under his nose, and then hurried to proclaim Tasmania English soil. For their part, not only did the French admire the rapid development of New South Wales and observe with interest its convict colony model, but they also took note of Sydney's weak defences. Hamelin, in charge of the *Naturaliste*, even prepared a plan of attack. And all this was based on the news coming from Europe, now peace, now war... However, the French Government had other concerns anyway and the return of the expedition was not greeted too enthusiastically in France.

The following years are no longer favourable to overseas adventures: there will be no longer great circumnavigation trips before the Restoration, when they resume with Freycinet's voyage in 1817; in Taillemite's words, 'most of the geography of the Pacific is already mapped'. There are not many great geographical discoveries to be made: for the government of the Restoration, all that remains is to restore the prestige of the Navy, without any particular thought for conquest or colonisation. They are still, especially at the beginning, great scientific trips with impressive research programs set up by the Academy of Sciences under the influence of the scientist François Arago, including a wide range of fields of study: hydrography, meteorology as well as botany and zoology; however, there will be no more scientists on board. Marine officers, possibly assisted by a hydrographer (these became a corps in 1814) are now able to take on the cartography work while the doctors and pharmacists of the Navy work as naturalists. As previously, cartographic documents are drawn up and important naturalist collections are brought back.

As for these last great sailing voyages of the French Navy organised by Tupinier, Director of Ports and Arsenals, and by the Ministers Portal (1818-1821) and Rosamel (September 1836-March 1839), the following deserve a mention:

- Freycinet on the *Uranie* and the *Physicienne* (1817–20)

⁸ Hamy (Ernest-Théodore, «Les collections anthropologiques et ethnographiques du voyage de découvertes aux terres australes (1801-1804)», in the *Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive*, 1906, n°1, p 24-34, online at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54225389/f32.item>

- Duperrey, seconded by Dumont d'Urville, on the *Coquille* (1822–25)
- Hyacinthe de Bougainville, on the *Thetis* and *Espérance* whose mission was not only devoted to hydrography but also included political and diplomatic dimensions (1824–26)
- Laplace on the *Favorite* (1829–32), whose trip on the *Artémise* (1837–40) did not have a very strong scientific component
- Dumont d'Urville on the *Astrolabe* (1826–29) and later on the *Astrolabe* and *Zélée* with Jacquinot (1837–40); these two voyages to the South, with the first one mainly about Australia, are again great scientific expeditions
- the Dupetit-Thouars expedition on the *Vénus* (1836–39) produced important hydrographic work (the natural history collections were the result of individual initiatives). It also brought back a significant amount of information about diplomacy, fishing and trade, as well as details of the prison administration in Sydney, where the expedition stayed from 24 November to 28 December 1838.

More than discoverers, these navigators were now observers; however, they continued to add information about New Holland and Van Diemen's Land, which became an important stop on their journey.

Freycinet, whose trip was mainly focused on physical sciences since he had to study the configuration of the earth, with special attention to magnetism, completed some aspects of Baudin's journey in which he had participated. He explored Shark Bay including Cape Peron where in September 1819 he met some Aborigines who left him with a disappointing impression. This was confirmed in Port Jackson in November 1819, where he found that half-savages influenced by Europeans were even worse since they added drunkenness to ugliness and brutal manners. Freycinet and his companions travelled to the Blue Mountains and watched carefully the new settlement system put in place by Governor Macquarie. In fact, Freycinet urged France to take inspiration from the English example. This trip was illustrated by the drawings of Jacques Arago (brother of the scientist) who published them in a successful book.

Duperrey led an expedition with a universal mission to embrace all sciences. At the time it was hailed as a great scientific success but it is especially known nowadays thanks to the drawings of Louis Lejeune, some of which depict animals of Tasmania and New Holland as well as the Aborigines, although this is far from Piron's idyllic image.

Before embarking on the exploration of the Pacific, which is at the core of his first expedition to the South Seas on the *Astrolabe* (1826–29), Dumont-d'Urville spent another three weeks in King George's Bay (in October 1826) to broaden the geographical, botanical, zoological and ethnographic knowledge of the south coast of Australia, and sent four boxes of natural history from Port Jackson. His impressions of the Aborigines were also quite negative. The future admiral Edmond Pâris, then a student in the Navy, was interested in the canoes of which he discovered a first rudimentary example in Jervis Bay. He classified them into several categories according to the presence or absence of outriggers. He used this classification as a basis for a somewhat haphazard division of the Pacific in four zones, Malaysia, Melanesia (including Australia), Micronesia and Polynesia. This classification was

inspired or even imposed by Dumont d'Urville who viewed anthropology under purely racial criteria.⁹

On the political front, they had to be content with observing the progress of the English presence in the South Seas, especially the rapid development of the colony of New South Wales and the taking over of New Zealand in 1840, although they were still seeking potential ports of call for the Navy. In fact, it seems that the French naval officers were more ambitious than their own government: until 1829, when England affirmed its sovereignty over Western Australia, they contemplated the idea of settlement in Australia, other than in New South Wales, particularly on the west coast. Their idea was to find sites for a colony or a place for the deportation of criminals, and ports of call for the Navy. It was they who, from the July Monarchy, were behind the French expansion towards New Caledonia and Polynesia under the guise of protecting French commercial interests (in particular in the matter of whaling) as well as the missions.

These voyages to the south led to the accumulation of materials, documents, accounts, maps, scientific observations, as well as naturalistic collections, which constitute firsthand resources for the discovery of Australia. To identify and use them as best as possible, we must first examine the main institutions that were actors or stakeholders in these expeditions, and explore their heritage collections, keeping in mind that the troubled political context and the tragedies surrounding these expeditions sometimes delayed or prevented the gathering of documents and collections, which does not always help the task of researchers. Such was the case of the D'Entrecasteaux expedition.

The first of these institutions is the Ministry of the Navy (State Secretariat of the Navy under the former 'Ancien' Regime, Ministry of the Navy and Colonies in 1791); the Ministry organised most of these voyages, issued orders, centralised instructions and collected most of the documents. The institutional breakdown characteristic of the Revolution was reflected in the central archives: the archives of the Ancien Régime are at the National Archives where they were deposited in 1899, whereas the archives of the following period have been preserved since 2002 by the Historical Department of Defence in Vincennes. All of this, however, is much richer for the second period (especially in the BB4 sub-series in Vincennes) than for the Ancien Régime (only eight cartons in sub-series MAR/B/4): it contains the documents relating to ship armament preparations, crew selection, instructions, correspondence from the expeditions, reports made upon their return, information on the transport of collections, nature of the accounts, etc.

When the expeditions came back, all the documents produced were handed to the state; it was out of the question for any member of the expedition, including scientists and naturalists, to keep papers or diaries written for their own personal use. It is true that there was a need to keep discoveries secret for some time especially in regards to cartography; nautical documents were to be delivered to the Naval Chart and Plan Depot (or General Navy Depot). This department (today known as the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the Navy) was created in 1720 to preserve nautical documentation, charts and logbooks mainly, used to correct and improve nautical charts, and became a scholarly, map-producing institution. It supplied our navigators with the most recent instruments, a library containing extracts from journals of French and foreign sailors who had preceded them and sets of maps which they were also

⁹ See the work by Géraldine Barron-Fortier, especially her thesis defended in 2015: *Entre tradition et innovation: itinéraire d'un marin Edmond Pâris (1806-1893)*, currently available online at: <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01142005>

required to correct. It is therefore logical that the maps were to be delivered upon their return, with logbooks and navigation diaries, hydrographic, geographical, astronomical and meteorological observations, geographical bearings and coastline views, even notes and drafts, in short, anything that could advance the knowledge of the seas and the progress of navigation. The archives of this department (from its origins to 1870) were mostly moved from 1920 to the National Archives where they form the JJ series (Hydrographic Service of the Navy) which is divided into several sub-series. Sub-series 4JJ is devoted to logbooks, but a sub-series 5JJ was specifically created for circumnavigation and hydrographic missions subsequent to the Revolution where any material received since D'Entrecasteaux may be found (4JJ can be consulted for the earlier period to Bougainville). Cartographic documents are sub-series 6JJ. Furthermore, 3JJ, a large sub-series of extracts prepared at the Depot, also preserves (without revolutionary cuts) many original documents, for example the La Pérouse journals. This resource is well known; the journals of the Baudin expedition, for example, have been published for the most part under the auspices of the University of Sydney, but there are still treasures to be discovered: next to rather austere documents covered with numerical notations, others accurately show hydrography work in progress. Such is the case, for example, of Beautemps-Beaupré's diary.¹⁰ Baudin's sea journal¹¹ is presented in the traditional 1786 form, with the technical aspects on the left page, and the narrative part on the right page, while his historical journal¹² is already formatted for printing. Some journals are anthropological treasure troves, such as the anchorage diary¹³ of D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau in Discovery Bay which contains many annotations of Tasmanian Aborigines attempting to build vocabularies by involving some sailors; D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau also took the physical measurements of some Aborigines.¹⁴ The peculiarity of D'Entrecasteaux's expedition is the presence of a few sailors' journals (notably Nicolas Ladroux, sail sailor, and Feron, naval gunner) as well as the gardener Lahaye's journal, all of which give unembellished opinions.¹⁵ Series JJ also contains coastline views and drawings by Piron, Lesueur, and Sainson, while in cartographic sub-series 6JJ it is possible to follow the evolution of the charts thanks to the tracings and drafts, and to the notes to such drafts, until they are 'good to engrave'. Significantly, some prestigious documents were taken to the library, which was transferred to the Defence Historical Department at Vincennes: this is where La Pérouse and Duperrey's expedition drawings (by Prévost, Blondéla, Duchy of Vancy and Lejeune) may be found.

The documents produced by the naturalists were to be allocated to the Museum of Natural History, to be studied by the 12 Chairs of the establishment which in 1793 had replaced the Jardin des Rois (Kings' Garden). Museum professors (Cuvier, Lacpede, Jussieu, etc) or Thouin, botanist of the king's garden, before them, had previously written the instructions for them. The manuscripts of the museum's library contain notes, journals and memoirs from these naturalists, for example Riche's papers for D'Entrecasteaux and Riédle's papers for Baudin, as well as documents relating to the preparation of expeditions from the naturalist's perspective. Parts of the Museum archives were taken to the National Archives where they form series AJ/15, now held at Pierrefite sur Seine; this is where the minutes of the teachers' meetings and the files on travellers and explorers may be found, for example the

¹⁰ AN MAR/5JJ/19.

¹¹ AN MAR/5JJ/36 à 40/A.

¹² AN MAR/5JJ/35, 40/B, 40/C and 40/D.

¹³ AN MAR/5JJ/13/F.

¹⁴ AN MAR/5JJ/6.

¹⁵ AN MAR/3JJ/397.

Baudin file¹⁶ which contains letters written to Jussieu during the voyage and three drawings by Lesueur.

The Academy of Science also issued instructions and approved the reports made during these expeditions; the minutes of these meetings and the records of expedition members are available in its archives.

The collections of plants, animals and minerals were also expected to return to the Natural History Museum although this was less clear-cut: indeed, some considered themselves the owners of the collections they had collected, which were, for them, both work instruments and capital. Records on the distribution of natural history collections can be found in the Department of Public Education's holdings in the National Archives (F/17) but the timing was difficult for these collections because of their arrival after the Revolution's seizures and the journeys themselves; classifications were in their infancy and inventories non-existent. Before 1850 natural history collections are hard to find. It's even worse when it comes to ethnographic collections – we saw the fate of the objects allocated to the future empress. Moreover, there was no policy on this topic; in fact, it had been decided in 1797 to exclude man-made artefacts from the (Museum's) naturalist collections and to gather them in an Antiques museum set up within the National Library in the midst of Greco-Roman antiquities in an effort to compare the ancient and the exotic. This museum disappeared very quickly and there remains no trace of any objects that may have been allocated to it. Under the 'Restoration', ethnographic objects were intended for the naval museum of the Louvre but there is no trace of objects from Oceania in the archives of this museum.¹⁷

Collections may have been sold, like the herbarium of Houtou de La Billardière (naturalist of the D'Entrecasteaux expedition) found today at the Natural History Museum of Florence; journals or memoirs could also have escaped the institutions: journals remained in family archives or were borrowed for the writing of accounts and not returned; Péron's papers are kept at Le Havre Natural History Museum because of his friendship with the painter Lesueur, who was from Le Havre, and curator of this museum. Some documents were returned by extraordinary means to archives and public collections, such as those in the Bougainville collection (AN 155AP) or Piron's drawings, most of which are preserved at the Musée du quai Branly.

We can fall back on luxurious, increasingly voluminous printed accounts, of the voyages, paid by the Navy, many of which have been uploaded online, especially on the site of the National Library of France. These prestigious works present the official version of this story, and are also useful; the accounts are separate from the more technical volumes and accompanied in particular by plates and atlases reproducing the engraved works of the draughtsmen and hydrographers. For example, we can also trace missing objects; however, a comparison with the originals highlights the interest of the latter with regard to the drawings in particular, which were not always well understood by the engravers. The accounts also try to set the toponyms and reflect the war of names that may have taken place between the French and the English: Freycinet who had discovered the south coast part of Australia called Terre Napoléon borrowed toponyms from the Bonaparte family in his first edition, then had to change them back in the second, editing and picking up the English names.

¹⁶ AN AJ/15/569.

¹⁷ See: Dageron (Bertrand), *Collections naturalistes entre science et empires (1763-1804)*, Paris, 2009.

This documentation was well decrypted on the Australian side but since we are talking about the French contribution here, let us remember that a whole generation of students from the Ecole des Chartes (School of Charts) left important work that was used in particular by Étienne Taillemite: those devoted to La Pérouse and D'Entrecasteaux by Catherine Gaziello and Hélène Richard were published, but this is not the case for the thesis relating to the travels of Baudin, Freycinet, Laplace, Dupetit-Thouars' by Benoît Van Reeth, Catherine Allaire, Géraldine Barron, and Hélène Blais.¹⁸ We can also mention the works of Olivier Chapuis¹⁹ on mapping, Bertrand Daugeron on the history of collections and the anthropological aspect of some travels,²⁰ those of the staff at the Le Havre Museum, including Jacqueline Bonnemains²¹ who published a very beautiful edition of the historic journal of Baudin. In paying tribute to them, we ought not to forget the other researchers, French or not, who have worked and continue to work on these voyages.

Our very modest contribution at the National Archives consists in uploading online the inventories of these different resources as well as images of certain documents, logbooks, maps, coastline views, and drawings, particularly to further advance the knowledge of the history of Australia at the same time as the history of France since our topic is an equally shared history of both countries.

¹⁸ Gaziello (Catherine), *L'expédition de Lapérouse (1785-1788) réplique française aux voyages de Cook*, Paris, 1984.

Richard (Hélène), *Le voyage de d'Entrecasteaux à la recherche de Lapérouse, une grande expédition scientifique au temps de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1986.

Van Reeth (Benoît), *Nicolas Baudin et le voyage aux terres australes (1800-1804)*, thesis of the School of Charts, 1984 (see Positions of theses [...], 1984).

Allaire (Catherine), *L'expédition Freycinet à bord des corvettes l'Uranie et la Physicienne (1800-1820) : traditions et nouveautés de la circumnavigation française au temps de la marine à voiles*, thesis of the School of Charts, 1989 (see Positions of theses [...], 1989).

Blais (Hélène), *Les voyages d'Abel Dupetit-Thouars et les débuts de l'expansion française dans le Pacifique (1835-1845)*, thesis of the School of Charts, 1996 (see Positions of theses [...], 1996).

Barron (Géraldine), *Les voyages autour du monde de Cyrille-Pierre-Théodore Laplace. Les campagnes de la Favorite (1829-1832) et de l'Artémise (1837-1840)*, thesis of the School of Charts, 1998 (see Positions of theses [...], 1998).

¹⁹ Chapuis (Olivier), *À la mer comme au ciel, Beautemps-Beaupré et la naissance de l'hydrographie moderne, 1700-1850 : l'émergence de la précision en navigation et dans la cartographie marine*, Paris, 1999.

²⁰ Daugeron (Bertrand), *Collections naturalistes entre science et empires (1763-1804)*, Paris, 2009 ainsi que : *À la recherche de l'"Espérance" revisiter la recherche des Aborigènes tasmaniens avec les Français, 1772-1802*, Paris, 2014

²¹ Bonnemains (Jacqueline), *Mon voyage aux terres australes, journal personnel du commandant Baudin, texte établi avec la collab. de Jean-Marc Argentin, ... et Martine Marin*, Paris, 2000