

Laperouse

Friends of the Laperouse Museum



Members Quarterly Newsletter

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President's Letter

Dear Friends,

I would like to wish you on behalf of your Committee the best for Christmas and the New Year. I am sure that you will join with me, to wish for Laperouse Museum the best for 1997.

This year has not been a good year for the Museum, but there is, for the first time in eight years, a real chance that our Museum will begin to move forward after a long period of stasis.

For those who have not followed the events of 1996, let me summarise our current position. Your committee has been frustrated for many years by the lack of curatorial leadership and administrative framework underpinning development of the Museum. Our criticism has never been levelled at any individual, because job descriptions made it impossible for anyone to focus on the needs of the Museum. For example, there has never been a plan developed for the Museum, there have been no special exhibitions in eight years, there is no lecture or workshop programme for the Friends or interested people, no links have been developed with other professional institutes, and no leadership has been provided for the Friends to facilitate Museum development, acquisitions, etc. We recognised the central importance of the Instrument Room to enable the Museum to participate as a modern facility, and we provided over \$50,000 for the renovation of this room.

As a result of strong submissions from the Friends, the Ministry for the Arts held a workshop to examine a range of issues related to the Museum early in 1996, but unfortunately this process got off track - I summarised the details in my presentation to the Annual General Meeting in November. At that meeting I submitted my resignation, because of the failure to progress the future of the Museum.

Jennifer Carter, our first curator and now Manager of the Sydney District of the National Parks and Wildlife Service has, however, made some important commitments. She proposed at the AGM to establish a position which will have curatorial responsibility throughout Sydney District but specifically for Laperouse Museum and the Quarantine Station at Manly. This position would in the first 12 months be based at Laperouse Museum. A second option may be a manager responsible for Laperouse Museum with full curatorial responsibilities solely for the Museum. The precise nature of the final position, which should be a permanent appointment, is dependent to some extent on the implications of an Options Paper to be considered by the Premier.

We decided to leave a call for nominations for Presidency and the Committee until Laperouse Day (February 23rd) when we should be in a position to assess both the promised option plan from the Government, and the development of Jennifer's commitment. I also have an encouraging letter from **Rear Admiral Bellec** regarding a travelling exhibition to include the Musée de la Marine (in Paris) and the Laperouse Museum. I hope all this means we are on the threshold of a new era! There has also been promised extensive renovations to the fabric of the building, so urgently needed.

So, the New Year will be of great importance to our Museum. Please put Laperouse Day (February 23rd) in your diary now, for the Extraordinary Meeting at which we will discuss the Government's Options Paper for the Museum, the future of the Museum, and re-elect our committee. We will send details of the meeting to you in the New Year, with any update on discussions relevant to the Museum's future.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely
Robert Clancy

Coming Events

• Père Receveur Celebration Mass - Sun. 16 February 1997

-11 am: will be held on the veranda and grounds in front of the Laperouse Museum.



Join with Father Pat, priest to Maroubra parish and Père Jan, priest to Sydney's francophone community.

Bring hats, chairs, rugs, children, friends and relations together with a picnic to enjoy afterwards... (sorry no dogs).

• Laperouse Day - Sun. 23 February 1997

-11 am: Ceremony at the monument.

-11.30 am: Reception followed by Friends of Laperouse Museum meeting **extraordinaire** in the Instrument Room.

M. Thierry Vitcu, Consul General for France attended the AGM. He spoke at length about his own and ILE the Ambassador for France. **M. Girard's** discussions and correspondence with the **Hon. Bob Carr** over the future of the Museum. With so many issues unresolved and the Options Paper prepared by **Mr David Ellis**, State Museums Manager, still awaiting the Premier's attention, Mr Vitcu undertook to send him yet another letter re-stating the concerns of France and the French community in Australia.



Organised and accompanied by **Mme Catherine Viteau**, wife of the Consul General for France, and **Mrs Marion Law** their president, a large group of members of the Sydney Consular Women's Club were among our most interested and appreciative visitors to the Museum this year.

Return of the French Navy

In October the French Navy's "**La Nivose**" paid a welcome return visit to Sydney. Her Captain with several officers and crew members joined the Attaché de Défense **Commandant Alamercury** and French war veterans for the traditional wreath-laying ceremony at the monument.

All were then welcomed in the Instrument Room for morning coffee by **Ms Jennifer Carter**, Manager of Sydney District of NPWS, and **Mr Stephen Thompson**, Acting Curator of the Museum. There was even time for a brief museum tour to re-discover their illustrious predecessor's great and tragic voyage.

A happy coincidence

While her husband **M. Dominique Bur** Haut Commissaire de la Republique in New Caledonia, met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs the **Hon. Alexander Downer**, to reaffirm the ties of friendship and goodwill between France and Australia, his wife **Mme Bur** found time to visit the Museum, the very symbol of these ties.

A parting gift

Yann and **Simone Tardif** have been especially generous friends of the Museum during their 6 years in Australia. Who could forget the time and effort they put in to making crêpes at a grand pique-nique one year! Thank you Yann and Simone for the beautiful print from the Laperouse Atlas which you donated to the Museum last year. It both enriches the Museum Collection and gives us all something to remember you by.

Planning a reception or a party?

Why not have it in the Museum or the Instrument Room?

- Laperouse Museum -cocktails **\$75.00** per hour only standing 75 minimum 3 hours
- Instrument Room -seats 75 **\$75.00** per hour includes venndah for drinks only
- 25% discount for members of Friends of Laperouse Museum
- No parking problems
- **Stephen Thompson**, the Museum Acting Curator can supply names and details of various caterers used to working on site with available facilities.

Letter from the Honourable Bob Carr MP to Charles Abela Chairman of Laperouse Precinct Committee and Friends committee member.

Dear Mr Abela,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December in which you reaffirmed your support for the Laperouse Museum and expressed your concerns for the need for community facilities as a part of the general use of the Cable Station.

I have now received and considered an options paper on the future operations of the Museum and have endorsed the recommendations made in it by the Ministry.

In summary the National Parks and Wildlife Service will retain management of the museum but broaden its functions to include that of a visitor centre which will incorporate the broader history of the area, including indigenous and English colonial and environmental themes, while retaining a more focussed French/Laperouse exhibition.

The building will be renamed the Laperouse Museum and Visitors Centre, Botany Bay National Park to reflect this broadening of functions.

I will ensure your concerns regarding community access to the Cable Station are brought to the attention of the Ministry for the Arts and the National Parks and Wildlife service. Over the coming months they will be working together to implement these changes and to assist in reshaping this museum into a more viable format which will meet the goals of the French and Aboriginal communities, Friends of the Museum and local community groups. Funds of up to \$20,000 will be made available by the Ministry for the Arts to assist in this process.

I believe the changes as outlined will enable the Laperouse Museum to become a vital resource for local communities and to represent the rich and varied history of this important precinct as well as continuing to be a focus for French celebrations in Australia.

Your continued interest in the museum is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Carr, MP
Premier and Minister for the Arts

Curator's report

The Cable Station exterior will be repainted during January 97. This will involve using a vinyl based paint that will allow the walls to breathe thus addressing the moisture problems in the walls of the galleries.

Tours continue to be healthy and we are getting increased Probus and specialised groups to the Museum.

The State Library will be collecting their painting *Louis XVI giving his instructions to Laperouse* in January 97 for a major exhibition at the Mitchell library titled "*Possessions*". During preparations for the exhibition the painting will under go major conservation work.

Stephen Thompson
Acting Curator

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