



TASMANIAN | Land | CONSERVANCY

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Savages of Cape Dieman preparing their meal, Piron, Date 1800. (c) Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania.

Many of the readers of this newsletter will remember the early editions when TLC had only a few dollars in the bank. How amazing that with a loan from Dick and Pip Smith we can now embark on a \$2.5 million historic land purchase and management project at Recherche Bay in Tasmania's far south.

The plan to log the north-eastern peninsula of Recherche Bay and build a road through the adjacent Southport Lagoon Conservation area has been a contentious issue in Tasmania for several years. This land purchase is a wonderful solution for conservation that generously compensates the previous owners of the land. It highlights the emerging role of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy in brokering honest deals with private land owners that secure our most treasured places.

The 143 hectares of land is an integral part of a landscape that can only be described as a natural and historic treasure. It is the site where the French scientific expedition led by D'entrecasteaux based itself for two five-week periods of repairs and scientific research in 1792 and 1793, ten years before Hobart was established. Australia's first scientific experiments were carried out on the shores of the bay; over 100 new plant species including

the Tasmanian Blue gum were first discovered in the area by Labillardiere, and Tasmania's first garden was planted here.

The land itself and the surrounding Southport Lagoon conservation area have important natural values. A pair of White bellied sea eagles nest every year within the boundaries of the new reserve and the land provides habitat for a number of other threatened bird species.

Now that the land has been bought by TLC the road that had started to be built through the adjacent conservation area will be restored to native vegetation by the State Government. This will help to protect a critically endangered plant species that could have been made extinct if unauthorised four wheel drive vehicles had gained better access to the area via the planned road.

TLC will now own the land as a reserve and will develop a management plan over coming months. In the future we hope to be able to facilitate access for visitors so that the interesting story of the French expeditions and the natural values can be enjoyed by all.

Nathan Males.



Recherche Bay



The North-eastern peninsula, most of which has now been purchased by TLC. The water to the left is Black Swan lagoon, Recherche Bay is to the right.
Photo: Bob Brown

The Editor visits the site of first contact between Europeans and aboriginal Tasmanians.

Rounding the point towards Black Swan Lagoon we slid through water the texture of olive oil in our shrill finnie. Leatherjacket and morwong dashed into kelp beneath the boat as we passed Mutton Rocks. Mount La Perouse and Pindar's Peak dominated the skyline.

We clambered out of the boat and waded ashore onto a beach where Rear Admiral Bruni d'Entrecasteaux set up camp in April 1792. I fancied I could hear the distant shouts of French sailors and, unchanged as it was for these past 214 years, could easily imagine the Recherché and Esperance laying at anchor in Port du Nord (now called Coal Pit Bight).

It is here, after an eight month sojourn, the French returned to the place where the Lyluequonny had earlier so easily eluded the sailors. The expedition botanist, Jacques-Julien Labillardiere and the 'savages' came face to face in an historic meeting.

Thanks mainly to the extensive diaries of Labillardiere we now know so much about the Lyluequonny.

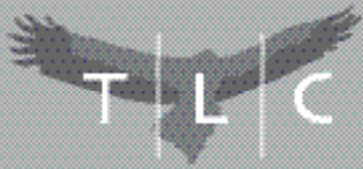
Their diet was of wallaby, abalone, mussels, crayfish, swan and mutton-birds. They travelled between South East Cape and Southport Lagoon managing the land with fire. They paddled their bark canoes between Maatsuyker, Bruny and the Acteons. The French learnt a great amount about the social lives of the Lyluequonny: the men hunted and gathered on shore while the women dived, and were observed to be wonderful parents. "We have much to learn from these people", Labillardiere opined.

Walking along Crescent Beach towards the garden created by Felix Lahaie, official gardener to the expedition, and rediscovered in 2003 was an intense experience.

Climbing up off the beach toward the site, my heart racing inside my chest, I came upon what is surely the oldest European structure in Tasmania. The garden, perfectly formed with rock sidings, had been planted with chicory, lentils, sorrel, radish, mustard and potatoes.

Unlike the viewing of a museum exhibit behind glass or a grand castle among a stream of tourists, this was one of those moments where one actually connects with the past.

Motoring back to Catamaran I felt a deep sense of continuity - of history over millennia and of history still being made.



Recherche Bay

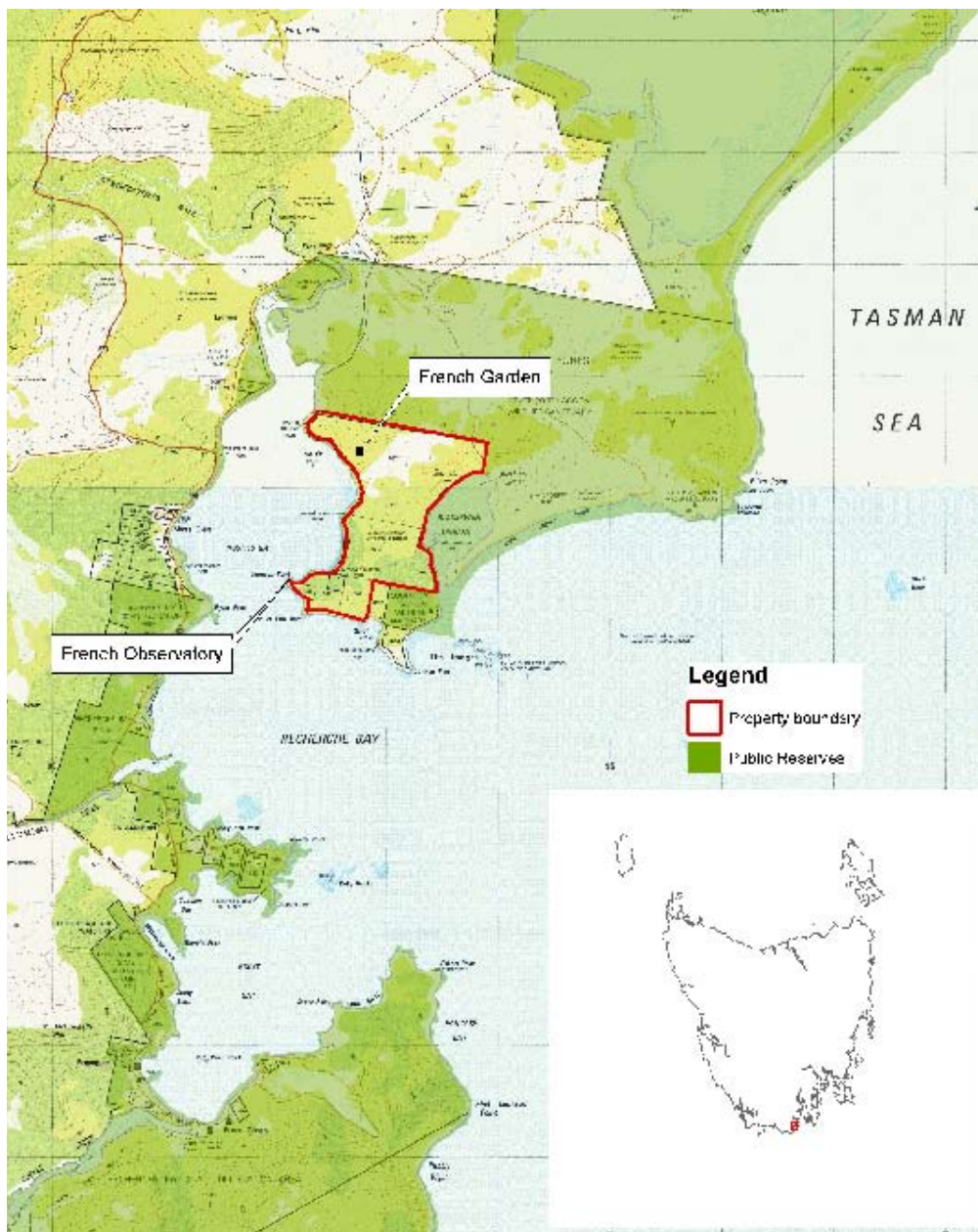
Nathan Males on the historic deal

The purchase of Recherche Bay Reserve occurred after a many long months of negotiation. Negotiations with the previous owners were initiated by Bob Brown. He contacted Dick and Pip Smith which resulted in their incredibly generous financial package in which they have donated the deposit for the land and made available a loan for the balance so that it could be purchased while fundraising was under way.

Realising that stamp duty would be a substantial additional cost and that issues like the restoration of the road needed to be considered, discussions began with Paul Lennon the premier of Tasmania. Paul Lennon personally finalised the deal with the previous owners and his government has committed funds towards the purchase, funds for the road restoration, funds to pay the stamp duty and administrative assistance for the TLC.

TLC is now raising funds to repay the loans to Dick and Pip Smith. People who made pledges to Bob Brown to support the purchase along with other donors have already contributed over \$250,000. Of course, the total target is a challenge for TLC and we expect to be raising funds for at least 6 months to complete the purchase arrangements.

Through our management planning process including the local community and the previous owners, TLC will consider some low impact visitor infrastructure such as a board walk and interpretive signage. We hope that we can be part of promoting new visitor and tourism opportunities in the region. Very little is currently known about the French visits to the area and it is undoubtedly a story of enormous international interest.



North-eastern peninsula. Photo: Bob Brown



Revolving Fund

Jim Mulcahy reports the planned purchase of another King Island property

King Island

The Major news on the revolving fund front is the impending purchase of another revolving reserve on King Island. Having received planning approval for the excision of the current owner's house, it is now only a matter of red tape.

If you like the idea of owning 135ha of endangered Blie gum forest on King Island with great views and only a short walk from beautiful Colliers Beach, then contact the office for further details.

A second revolving fund purchase on King Island is also likely in the near future.

Port Sorell (NE Tas)

The Dorothy Reeves Reserve at Port Sorell is still waiting for the right people to come along.

If you know of anyone looking for land in the north of the State, please encourage them to consider this amazing 19 ha property with 9 threatened species and 36 species of native orchid.



Colliers Beach, King Island. Photo: Matt Newton

Species Focus - Tasmania's Eagles



White Bellied Sea Eagle, Photo: Dave Watts

Tasmania has two eagle species - the Tasmanian wedge tailed eagle and the White bellied sea eagle. Both species are threatened; the Wedge tailed eagle is considered endangered while the sea eagle is listed as vulnerable. Most of the sea eagles prefer coastal habitat while Wedge tailed eagles prefer inland sites.

More information is known about Wedge tailed eagles and the synopsis is bleak. Less than 1500 birds remain in Tasmania and of these only about 400 pairs breed. The population is continuing to decline as nest sites are disturbed, habitat is cleared and individuals meet early deaths entangled in power lines.

Sea eagles face similar threats as well as additional challenges like getting tangled in fishing nets and disturbance from recreational boats near their coastal nest sites. A pair of White bellied sea eagles nest on TLC's reserve at Recherche Bay and are known to have successfully reared their chicks in the last two seasons.