



# The Turtle Bay coin

Maritime Heritage Site Inspection Report



Dr M McCarthy: Curator of Maritime Archaeology  
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Report - Dept. of Maritime Archaeology  
WA Maritime Museum, No 138.

Cover illustration: The French coin and capsule (Photograph M. McCarthy).

## Contents

Acknowledgments.....	1
Background .....	2
Site location maps .....	3 & 4
Aims.....	5
Results .....	5
Description of Site.....	6-12
Site photographs and sketches .....	9-12
Site Identification Comments.....	13
Contemporary charts.....	14 & 15
Assessment of Site Significance .....	16
Management Considerations .....	16
Discussion.....	16-17
Ownership and Institutional responsibility .....	17-18
Recommendations.....	19
References.....	20

## Acknowledgments

Finders: Mr Tom Bradley, Mr Max Cramer, Mr Kim Cramer, Mr John Eckersley, M. Phillipe Godard, Mr Chris Shine.

Reporters of the find: Mr Max Cramer & Mr Les Moss.

Agents for M. Godard: Ms Holly Gibson (Personal Secretary) and Mr Didier Murcia(Lawyer).

Press agent for Mr Tom Bradley, Mr Max Cramer, Mr Kim Cramer, Mr John Eckersley and Mr Chris Shine: Ms Carol Vaillant.

Artefact analysis: Ms Myra Stanbury (WA Maritime Museum).

Artefact Handling: Ms Fairlie Sawday (WA Maritime Museum).

Helicopter pilot: Mr Dave Shaw.

Numismatic analyses: Professor Walter Bloom (Murdoch University), Mr John Sharples, Senior Curator (Australian Society Museum, Victoria).

Photographic assistance: Mr Pat Baker, Ms Corioli Souter (WA Maritime Museum).

Research notes: Mr Max Cramer, M. Phillipe Godard, Ms Myra Stanbury.

Timber sampling: Dr Ian Godfrey (WA Museum), Dr Bruce Maslin (Herbarium WA).

West Australian Newspapers: Mr Carmelo Amalfi, Mr John Mokritzki.

General advice and assistance: Associate Professor Jeremy Green (Head Department of Maritime Archaeology), Mr Graeme Henderson (Director, WA Maritime Museum), Dr Ian MacLeod (Head Department of Conservation, WA Museum), Professor Leslie Marchant, (Director of the France Australe Research Centre, Notre Dame University), Mr Tom O'Brien, Professor Phillip Playford and Mr Andrew Reeves (Executive Director WA Museum).

## Background

On Sunday 18 January reports of the finding of a silver French coin on Dirk Hartog Island were received by the Curator of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum. The reports were made by Mr Les Moss of Shark Bay and by Mr Max Cramer of Geraldton. Mr Moss, the Shire President, Shire of Shark Bay, had heard of the find through Mr Cramer and sources in Carnarvon. Mr Cramer, the driving force behind the Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association, advised that the finders were a team led by author Monsieur Phillippe Godard of Noumea and himself and that he had in his possession the coin, a lead capsule in which it had been contained, some sherds and other material. A date of 1766 on the coin and the context of the find at Turtle Bay indicated that if genuine, the material was associated with the annexation of this coast for France by de Saint Allouarn in March 1772. He was the first of the French explorers on this coast (Marchant, 1982: 64-6). St. Allouarn's crew landed at Turtle Bay and planted a bottle containing an annexation document and nearby two silver coins.<sup>1</sup> See Site identification comments and Figures 8a & 8b following).

The matter was complicated by the belief that explorer's relics and non-shipwreck sites were not material over which the Western Australian Maritime Museum had any legal claim through its legislation, however. As a result it also had no funds with which to deal with this particular contingency.<sup>2</sup> With institutional responsibility and funding unresolved, it was decided that the Curator of Maritime Archaeology would attempt to inspect the materials and the site, however. By then the finders had negotiated sole rights to the story with West Australian Newspapers and at Mr Cramer's suggestion, the Curator was invited to join both he and the press on a visit to the region. Though preliminary site inspections in the company of the press are considered problematic until all contentious issues are resolved, in this instance there appeared to be no other alternative.

On 20 January M. Godard's personal secretary, Ms Holly Gibson, lodged glass sherds (DHI 4126) and wood samples (DHI 4127) with the Maritime Museum. On the same evening the Curator joined Mr Carmelo Amalfi-journalist and Mr John Mokritzki-photographer and the team drove to Geraldton overnight in order to meet Mr Cramer early the next day. The four then proceeded on to Denham airport, flying by small two seater helicopter to the site on Dirk Hartog Island. Mr Mokritzki and Mr Cramer flew across to the island with the intention of taking photographs for the proposed news item. The Curator and Mr Amalfi followed on the next trip. A brief inspection of the site was conducted on the afternoon of Wednesday 21 January.

<sup>1</sup>Details of the French explorations appear in numerous historical accounts, the most recent Professor Leslie Marchant's seminal tome *France Australe* (1982).

<sup>2</sup>On 20/10/ 1982 the Western Australian Museum's Maritime Archaeology Advisory Committee (MAAC) meeting was advised that:

Confusion over legal responsibilities has prevented the Museum from effecting legal protection over any land sites the MAAC has considered to be of historic significance.

A paper presented to the Committee on 28/4/1983 expanded on the matter thus:

The use of the [Maritime Archaeology] Act to protect land sites raises some problems. The Maritime Archaeology Act was written to enable protection of sites associated with historic ships. Other important maritime sites are not covered

Subsequently attempts were made to upgrade the Maritime Archaeology Act and to expand the Maritime Museum's role in the management of non-shipwreck maritime archaeological and maritime heritage sites. (The latest is contained in A Reeves, Executive Director WA Museum, to Minister for the Arts, 29/6/1995). In the interim, attempts to keep positive and open links between the Museum and those interested in locating sites and relics were made with a view to their best management. Some examples are Mr Clive Trevan (formerly searching for the *L'Esperance* anchors at Esperance in the 1970s), Mr Tom O'Brien, *et al* (currently searching for anchors and the French *Chaloupe* at Busselton), the author Mr Rupert Gerritson (a report on the *chaloupe*), Prof Leslie Marchant and most recently the 2001 Committee commemorating the Baudin landings in 1801. Research, field assistance and technical advice was made available to those who sought it.

Figure 1  
Chart and Map excerpt: Showing Shark Bay and Turtle Bay to the north.

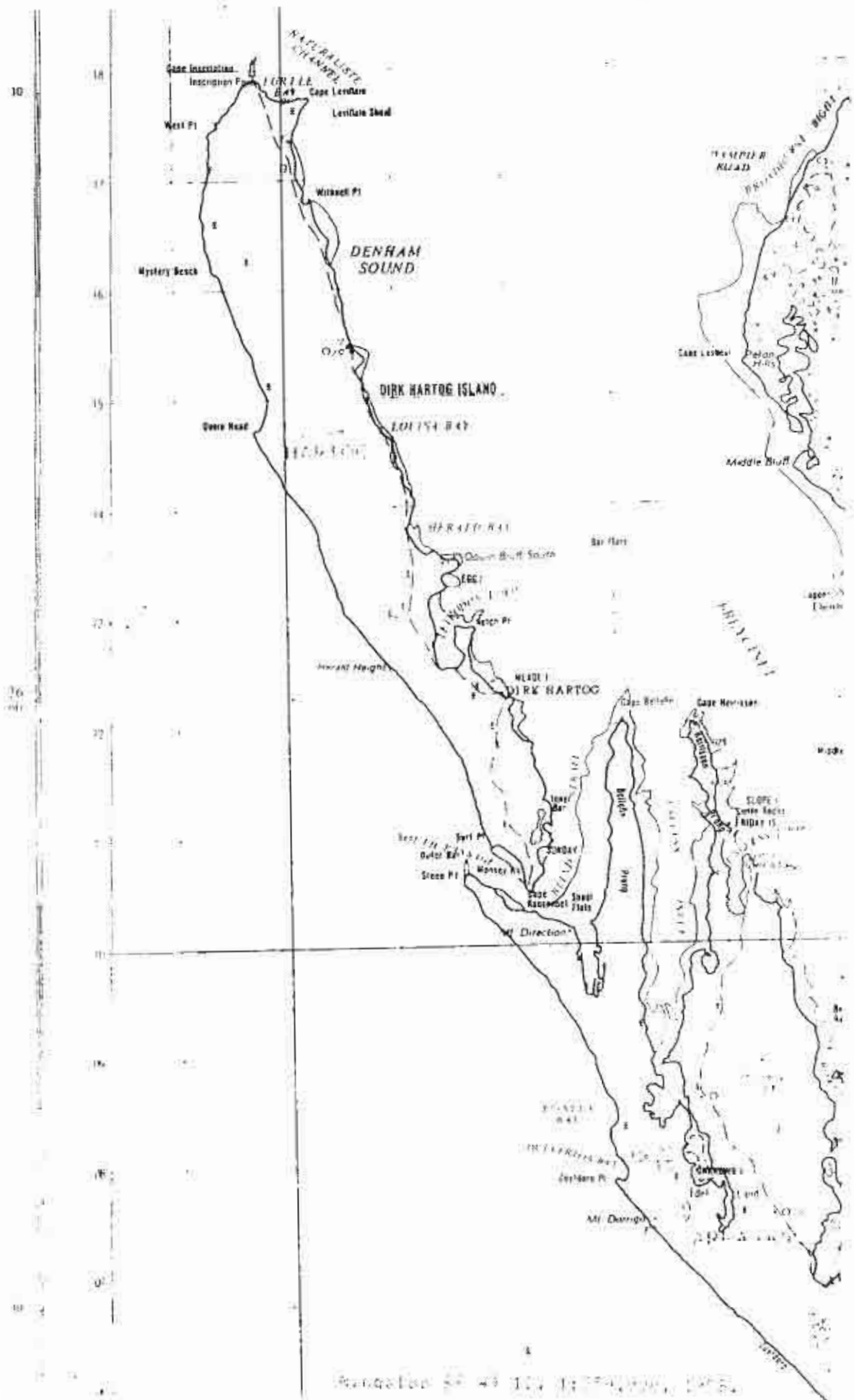
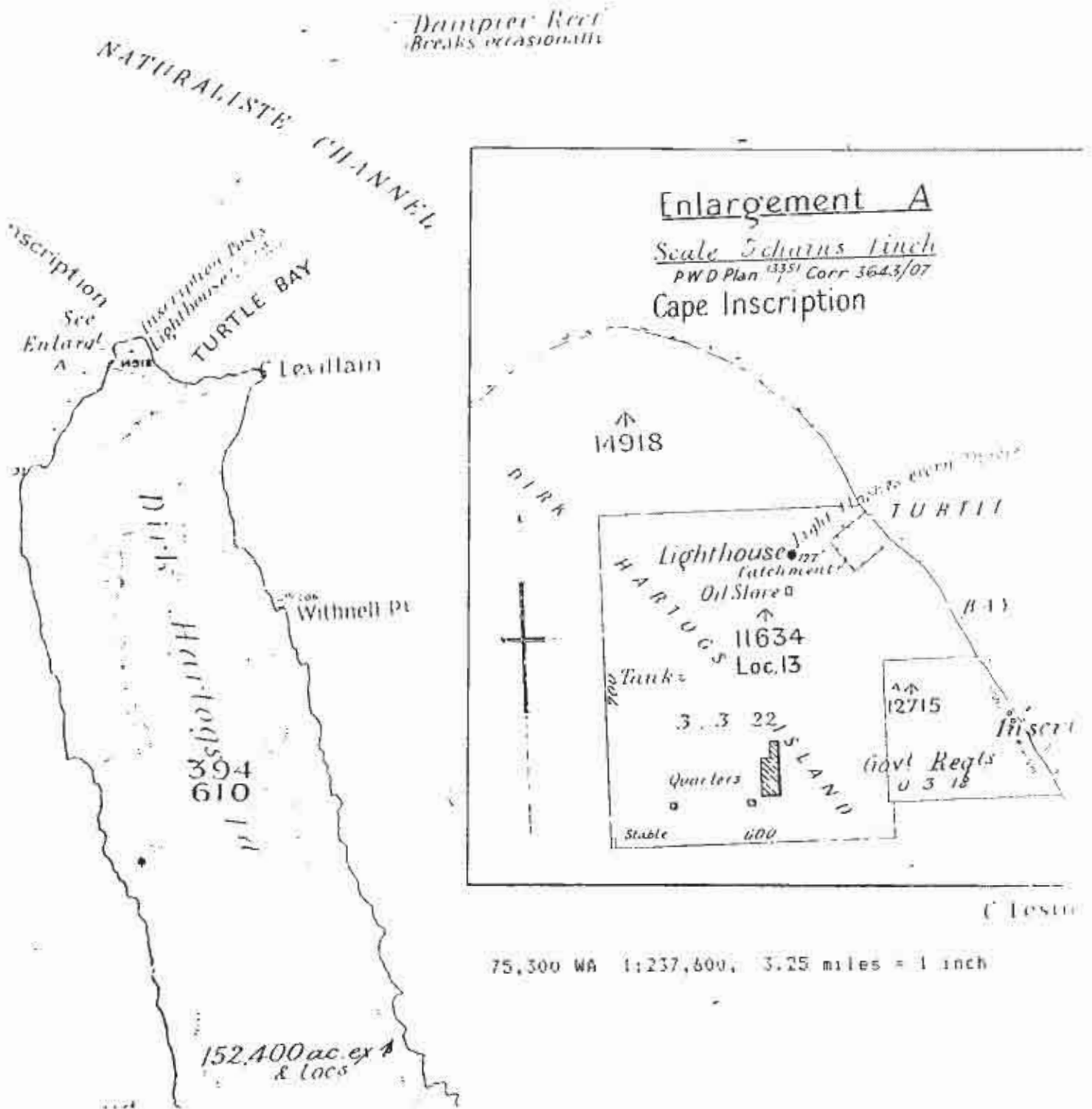


Figure 2  
Chart and Map excerpts: Showing Turtle Bay and the Commonwealth Lighthouse Reserves. The find is at the eastern end of Reserve 14918.



## Aims

The Museum's aim in this instance were:

- a) *To view the material held by Mr Cramer and to arrange for it to be properly handled, analysed and conserved, if necessary.*
- b) *To inspect the site.*
- c) *To be in a position to comment to heritage stakeholders in an informed manner on the situation and on the need (if any) for future action.*

## Results

i) The site was examined on Wednesday 21 January (See pages 6-13 following). It was evident that the position in which the find was made was a logical one for the French explorers to have chosen to fly their flag and to deposit material in the annexation process. As expected, there were no surface indications of the French visit, however. The site overlooks Turtle Bay and it is situated at the head of an easily-traversed gully up from the beach. For this reason, it is also a logical place for station hands and visitors to camp and as a result, evidence of modern contamination in the form of early and late 20th century materials scattered in and around the area was noted. The ashes of a large fire just above the site itself was another indication of modern campers having taken advantage of the location prior to the finder's visit.

ii) The coin and lead seal were examined and photographed at the Denham airport on the afternoon after the inspection. The capsule appeared to be a lead bottle seal and was apparently used to contain and protect the coin (See cover illustration). Mr Cramer had produced a replica of the capsule in lead soon after the original was located and was able to demonstrate how the original was used to encapsulated the coin. This proved a useful explanatory tool.

iv) On returning to Geraldton, three of the other finders (Mr Kim Cramer, Mr John Eckersley and Mr Tom Bradley) were interviewed with Mr Max Cramer at his home. Mr Chris Shine and M. Phillippe Godard were absent. Mr Cramer also kindly made photographs and research notes available for copying. During the interview each of the finders recounted how the materials were found. In accordance with agreements reached between the finders and the West Australian, Mr Mokritzki and Mr Amalfi were present at the interview and took both photographs and notes. This interview and the visit to the site were the basis of a number of newspaper articles which subsequently appeared in the West Australian (e.g. 22/1/1998; 24/1/1998).

iv) Ownership issues were briefly discussed at the same time. Aware of the apparent legal vacuum, Mr Cramer (Snr) claimed ownership on behalf of the group as a unit. Mr Cramer (Jnr) stressed the intention of the group not to allow the material out of Geraldton on the basis that the expedition was conducted under the auspices of the Geraldton-based Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association and in the light of previous 'ownership' problems with *Batavia* material now lodged in Fremantle. The matter was further clouded by confusion whether the land on which the coin was found was under State or Commonwealth jurisdiction. At the time it was believed that the land was under Commonwealth control, but was soon to be handed over to the State. While recognising that the finders had rights and that they required adequate recognition for their efforts, it was indicated by the Curator that a combination of Shark Bay, National and State interests were also to be considered. At the end of what concluded as an amicable discussion, the group accepted the need for verification of the find by appropriate specialists and the need for security and proper handling of the materials in the interim. Mr Cramer (Snr) then undertook to lodge the coin and its capsule with the WA Museum at Geraldton as soon as possible and not to keep it in his home beyond the morning after the interview. It was also evident that the group were keen to bind the WA Museum to an agreement that would see the return of the material to Geraldton after analysis and conservation.

The inspection report now follows.

## Site Name: **The Turtle Bay Coin site**

**File Name:** French Explorer's Relics.

**File No:** MA 173/73.

### Technical Data

**Date of Inspection:** 20-22/1/1998.

**Personnel:**

Dr M. McCarthy (WA Maritime Museum).  
Mr M. Cramer (Representative of the finders).  
Mr C. Amalfi (WA Newspapers).  
Mr J. Mokritzki (WA Newspapers).

Helicopter Pilot: Mr D. Shaw (Preston Helicopter Services).

**Approximate Location:**

On the ridge overlooking Turtle Bay, Dirk Hartog Island, c. 50 metres east of the old tram track.

**Charts:** AUS 331, Quobba Point to Geraldton.

**Maps:**

- i) Australia 1:100,000. Sheets 1446, 1447, 1547, 1546 (Edition 1), National Topographic Map Series (Inscription, Dorre, Quoin and Denham)<sup>3</sup>
- ii) Individually referenced maps and charts prepared for the Lighthouses of WA study (Cumming, Glasson and McCarthy, 1995).

**Plans:**

Sketches prepared for the lighthouse service. (Cumming, Glasson and McCarthy, 1995; Cape Inscription lighthouse entry).

**GPS:** 25° 29.97' S., 112° 59.30 (WGS 84).

**Sailing Directions:**

Proceed to Turtle Bay either by air, sea or by land from Dirk Hartog Station. An airstrip is maintained by the Station and a suitable helicopter landing site is available in the scrub adjacent the old cable winder hut at the terminus of the tramway which once lead down to the jetty. 4WD transport can be hired from Dirk Hartog Island after flying or sailing to the homestead. Alternatively the Station provides a vehicle ferry from Steep Point to the Island. Turtle Bay itself is a good anchorage, though the swells inshore can pose problems on landing. Strong southerly winds and seas in the summer months can seriously inhibit navigation by sea in the Shark Bay region generally and would preclude all but the use of large charter boats at this time.

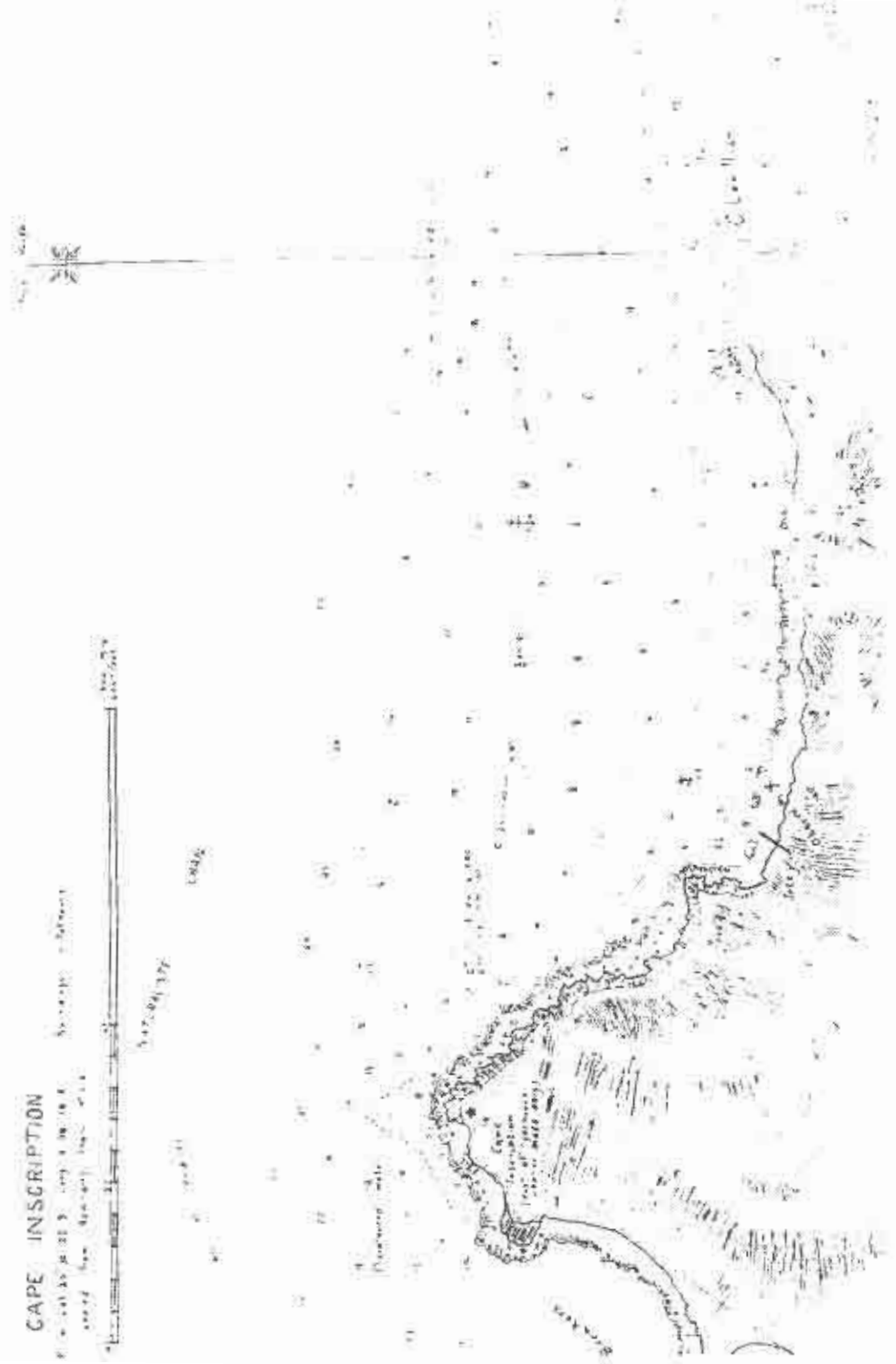
On arrival at Turtle Bay walk along, or up, the old tram rail to the ridge overlooking the bay itself. Stop and walk c. 50 metres along the ridge east to the site.

**Constraints:**

This inspection was constrained by the helicopter schedule and the need to keep baggage to an absolute minimum.

<sup>3</sup>Unfortunately the find is in the area of the join of these four maps.

Figure 3.  
 A Commonwealth lighthouse service map of Turtle Bay: Showing the anchorage, the jetty and the adjacent coast. (From Light stations of Western Australia, Vols. 1&2: Cape Inscription Lighthouse, in Cumming, *et al.*, 1995). The find is on the ridge to the east of the jetty and rail line near the legend 'Observ Pl.'. The solitary pile visible in Figures 5 & 6 is believed to be associated with this Observation place or platform.





## Description of the Site

The site lies at the start of a downhill slope on a sand and limestone ridge overlooking Turtle Bay and at a point 43-45 metres east of the remains of a tramway which once ran from the jetty to a 'winder shed' and on to the lighthouse. The 'find' was at the base of a large wattle bush which is one of three equally-large bushes occupying the ridge east of the tram line. The 'coin' bush is dead, the other two are alive.

A freshly disturbed area of ground c. 4m by 4m around the bush marks the site. It was evident that the area of the find had been excavated in a gross fashion, leaving a large area of disturbed ground around the bush and a considerable spoil mound (See Figure 6). The bush itself is c. 1.6m high by 2.8m wide on a N/S axis by 4m wide on an E/W axis. The primary focus of the excavation was an area of 2.6m by 1.5m at the foot of and under, the bush itself (Figure 7). Excavation had also been undertaken to the east and west of the bush and a smaller dig had occurred to the south i.e. uphill of the bush. A large spoil dump is visible on the slope to the south. On the western side of the tree were the excavator's discarded finds and here 'white' glass, tin can fragments and a conglomerate of oysters were seen on the spoil. Contaminatory materials e.g., modern glass sherds and can fragments were located to the west and down slope to the north-west of the coin find. Three metres down the slope on the spoil a 'white' glass top from the same bottle as the material mentioned early was visible. This was modern. Six metres south of the tree were the exposed remains of a large fire circa 2m X 1m in area with a small pile of stones to the east. This was apparently a relatively-modern camp that predated the finder's visit.

Before he departed with Mr Mokritzki, Mr Cramer indicated that the coin find was located c. 1.5m north of (to seaward) of the bush, c. 30cm deep in the soil and that his group had excavated down to bedrock using shovels on the morning after the find. The group had erected an interpretive sign commemorating St Allouarn on the spot and had also buried two modern French coins under it (See Figure 7).

The slope to the north (seaward) of the bush was also examined. Bottle glass and tin fragments were evident down the first two thirds of the slope. This slope finished at an area which flattened out before dropping steeply to a gully ahead of a mobile foredune. The materials appear to have been washed down the slope or thrown down in years past. The foredune and lower part of the slope are susceptible to wave action in very heavy seas.

In examining the terrain closely it becomes apparent that the site is at the head of a barely-discernible, but relatively-easily traversed gully that leads down the hill and onto the beach where a single pile is visible in the sand to the east of the jetty (Figure 6). The gully has apparently been formed by water movement and wind effects over the years. While the tendency is to view the tram track as the most obvious means of accessing the hilltop from the beach, it is evident that this gully once represented the easiest means of travel up and down the hill. On viewing the gully from the beach, this impression is reinforced. The dead bush clearly marks the ridge at the head of this gully (Figure 5).

Other metal detector strikes along the ridge were indicated by Mr Cramer. These had been excavated using a small shovel and were not proceeded with after the strike had been identified as modern contaminatory materials. Disturbance in these instances is limited to an area not much wider than a small hand-held shovel and little over 30cm deep.

An examination of one of the open faces on the north western side of the tree revealed indications of ash and charcoal fragments in a narrow band c. 20-40mm wide and c. 20 cm below the surface (See Figure 7). This was considered significant and needs be considered in the light of the comment from Mr Cramer that the coin was located 30 centimetres below the surface, albeit further down the slope.

### Site Photographs:

Colour Slides: WA Maritime Museum

Video and prints: Cramer/Godard collection

Colour photographs: WA Newspapers

**Figure 4: Looking from the coin tree towards the western end of the Bay.**  
The steep slopes in that vicinity are evident.  
(Photos 4-8 by M. McCarthy).



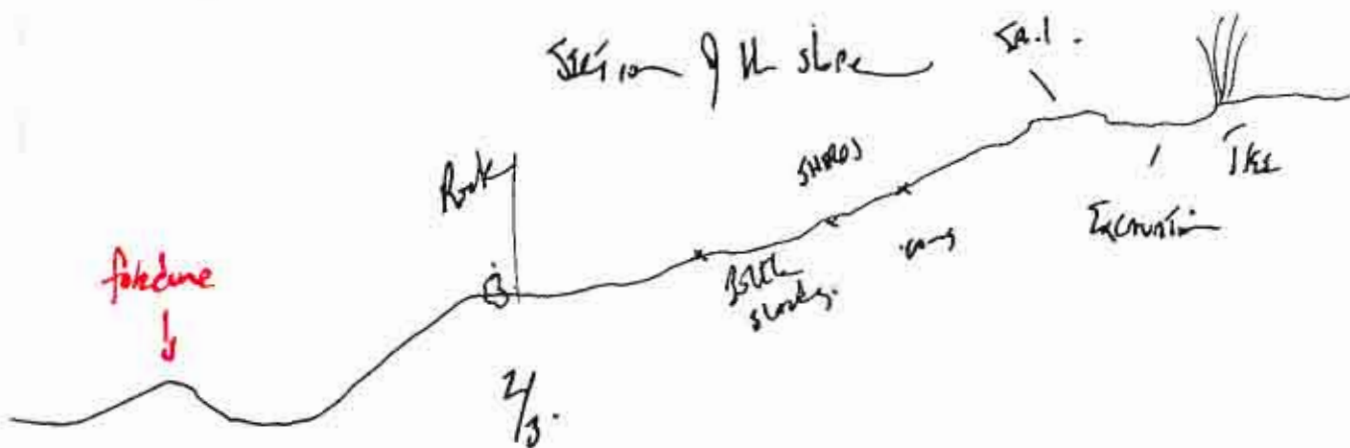
**Figure 5: Looking up the slope from a solitary pile east of the jetty.**  
The tree is visible at the head of the slope. A gully lies between the exposed foredune in the foreground and the vegetated uphill slope



Figure 6a: Looking down the slope from the coin tree.  
The jetty is to the left out of the picture. The solitary pile appears as a dot on the beach in front of the reef. The finder's spoil mound is in the foreground.



Figure 6b: A sketch showing the characteristics of the slope and the approximate location of the materials found on it (Wreck Inspection Daybook)

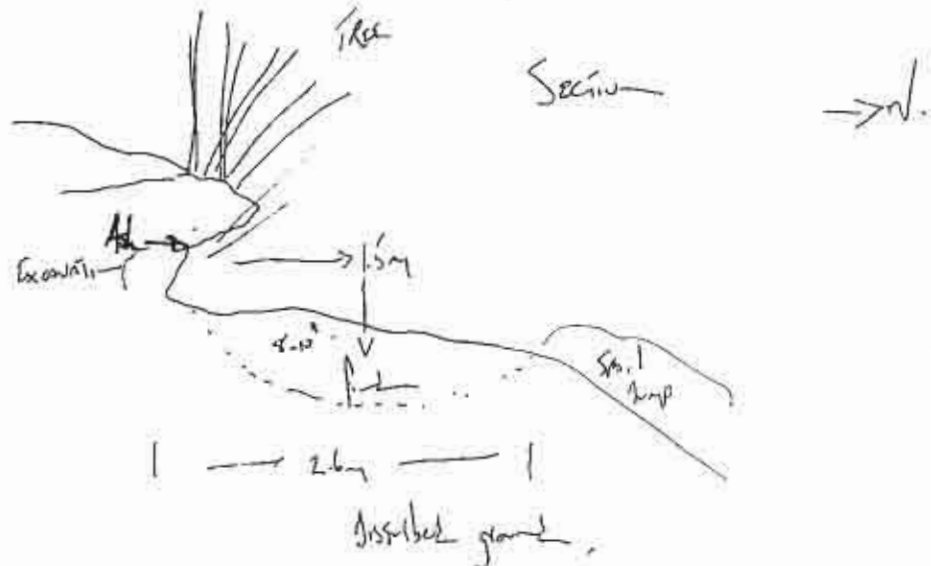


foredune.....rock.....2/3.....bottle sherds.....sherds.....cans.....spoil.....excavation.....tree

Figure 7a: The coin tree, the excavation and the interpretive sign. The sign was placed above the original find. A layer of ash was found in the exposed face to the right of the sign.



Figure 7b: A sketch showing a section through the excavation. (Wreck inspection daybook). An indication of the ash layer has been added.



excavation.....ash..... tree...find .....disturbed ground .....spoil dump

At the conclusion of the inspection, the site was rehabilitated by the Curator and Mr Amalfi within the time constraints imposed by the helicopter schedule and the sign was relocated to the tramline.

## Site Identification Comments

After viewing the photographs taken by WA Newspapers and the WA Maritime Museum on the day of this inspection, numismatist, Professor Walter Bloom of Murdoch University, indicated that the 1766 coin found was a common type in use through the French Revolution and until well after the Napoleonic wars. They are easily available in the modern day and have little commercial value in average condition.<sup>4</sup> He was also of the impression that an attempt had been made to clean the coin of debris (Bloom to McCarthy, pers. com). This was subsequently confirmed in a personal communication by Mr Cramer (Snr) to Dr Ian MacLeod, Head of the Department of Conservation at the Western Australian Museum and by a comparison of photographs taken by M. Godard before he left for Noumea and those taken on the afternoon of this inspection.

These conclusions require that the coin be verified as a *bona fide* relic of St Allouarn. The possibility of a link between the coin and later French explorers (such as Hamelin and de Freycinet, who became involved in the location, replacement and eventual removal of the de Vlamingh plate at Turtle Bay in 1801-3 and 1818) needs to be examined (e.g., Halls, 1974). The remote possibility that the coin was associated with the 10 week enforced stay of the crew of the whaler *Perseverant* which was wrecked at nearby Cape Levillain in March 1841 also needs to be assessed (Henderson, 1979: 184-186). A formal numismatic analysis on behalf of the Museum will await Professor Bloom's viewing of the coin itself.

While Ms Myra Stanbury, Artefact Manager of the Maritime Museum, has indicated that none of the bottle sherds found at the site are dateable to the French period at Shark Bay i.e., from 1772-1841, she is presently comparing it with other glassware and is examining the provenance of the lead capsule.<sup>5</sup> The latter is a vital clue, given that she found preliminary indications of lettering on its outer surface and a pattern on its inner when the coin was shown at a meeting she attended in Geraldton (Stanbury, in prep). The pattern is visible in the photograph on the cover of this report. Though this artefact may prove to be essential in the verification and dating process, Ms Stanbury is yet to examine it. Dr Ian Godfrey, of the Department of Conservation at the Museum, on the other hand, has concluded his report of the timber samples and has advised that Dr Bruce Maslin of Herbarium WA has identified the sample as *Acacia coriacea*. Dr Maslin also ventured the comment that while the type live around 50 years, a close relative of this timber (the Jam Wattle) native to the Eyre Peninsula had a lifespan of 'up to 250 years', with a lower lifespan generally expected due to the effect of grazing and fire.

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Preliminary indications are that the site is associated with one of the French explorers who visited Turtle Bay in the period 1772-1818. From the available evidence, it appears most likely to be St Allouarn, who on the morning of March 30 1772, sent part of his crew ashore at Turtle Bay with instructions to proceed at least 10 kilometres inland and to take possession of the land for France. The crew climbed the hill with some difficulty and saw many burnt trees and a sandy scrub-covered land.<sup>6</sup> On return to the coast (apparently near a point marked 'A' on a map produced by Ensign Rosily below) they took possession of the land by burying an annexation document in a bottle at the foot of a small tree. Nearby they placed two silver coins.<sup>7</sup> Later that afternoon others also went ashore and in the evening, a gunner's mate, who had died that day, was buried.<sup>8</sup> St Allouarn's vessel, the *Gros Ventre*, left Shark Bay eight days later, having lost two large anchors north of Cape Peron due to adverse conditions. These are yet to be located.

<sup>4</sup> Similar advice was received from Mr John Sharples, Senior Curator, Australian Society Museum, Victoria (Sharples to Henderson, 10/2/1998).

<sup>5</sup> Ms Stanbury is not convinced that the capsule is a bottle closure (Stanbury in prep.)

<sup>6</sup> The location of a band of ash 20 centimetres below the surface adjacent the 'find tree' and approximately 20-30 centimetres vertically above the original position of the coin may prove significant in this context.

<sup>7</sup> Most have hitherto misread the literature, believing that the coins were lodged in the bottle.

<sup>8</sup> From a translation of the original French documents, provided by M. Godard. French Explorer's Relics file, Department of Maritime Archaeology, WA Maritime Museum.

Figure 8a: The Rosily chart showing St Allouarn's voyage (From Appleyard and Manford, 1979: 22). Note the landing point 'A' and another 'A' inland.

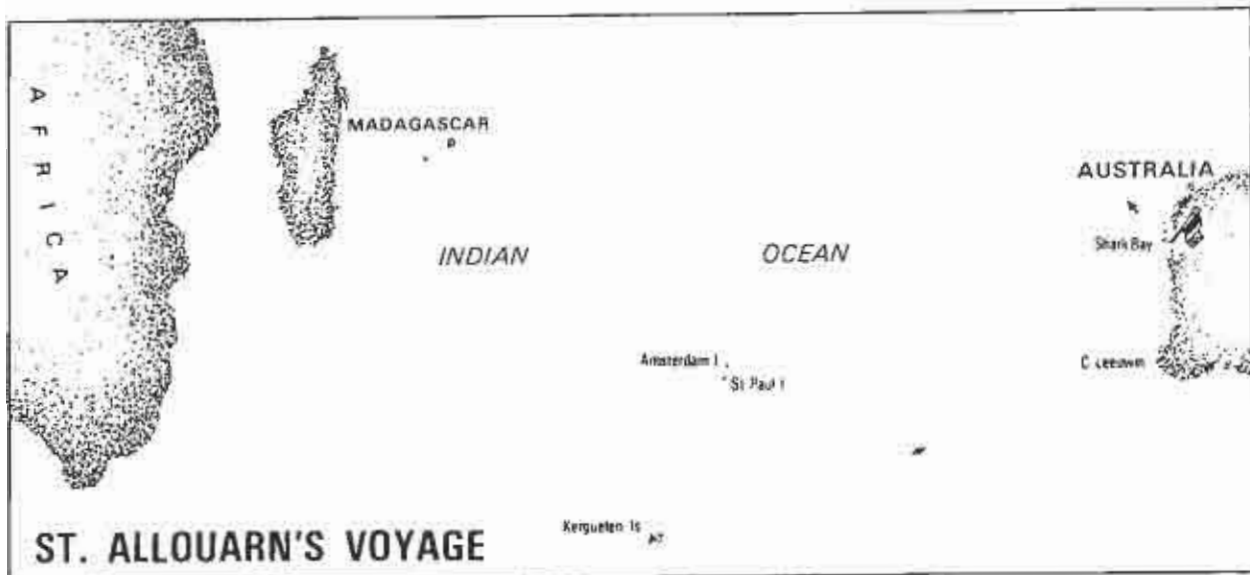


Fig. 1.9 The route taken by St Allouarn, 1772

Above: St Allouarn sailed *Gras Venture* from Kerguelen Is. to Cape Leeuwin, thence to Shark Bay

Right: A facsimile of Rosily's chart of Shark Bay, dated 1 April 1772, showing where the tricolor was raised and the land claimed for France. A party landed at the northern end of Dirk Hartog Island (A), where possession was taken of 'The land to the northwest' of their anchorage. St Allouarn then investigated waters between Bernier and Dorre islands (C) and the mainland (D) before leaving the continent for France

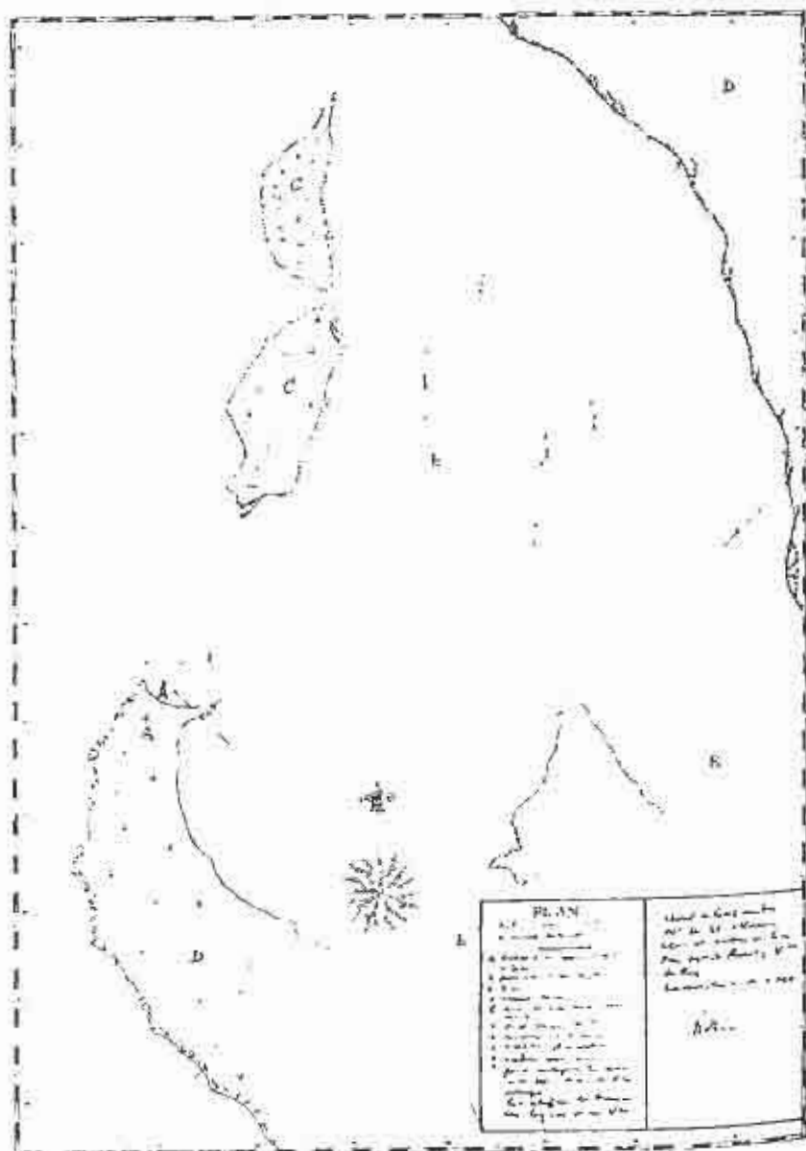
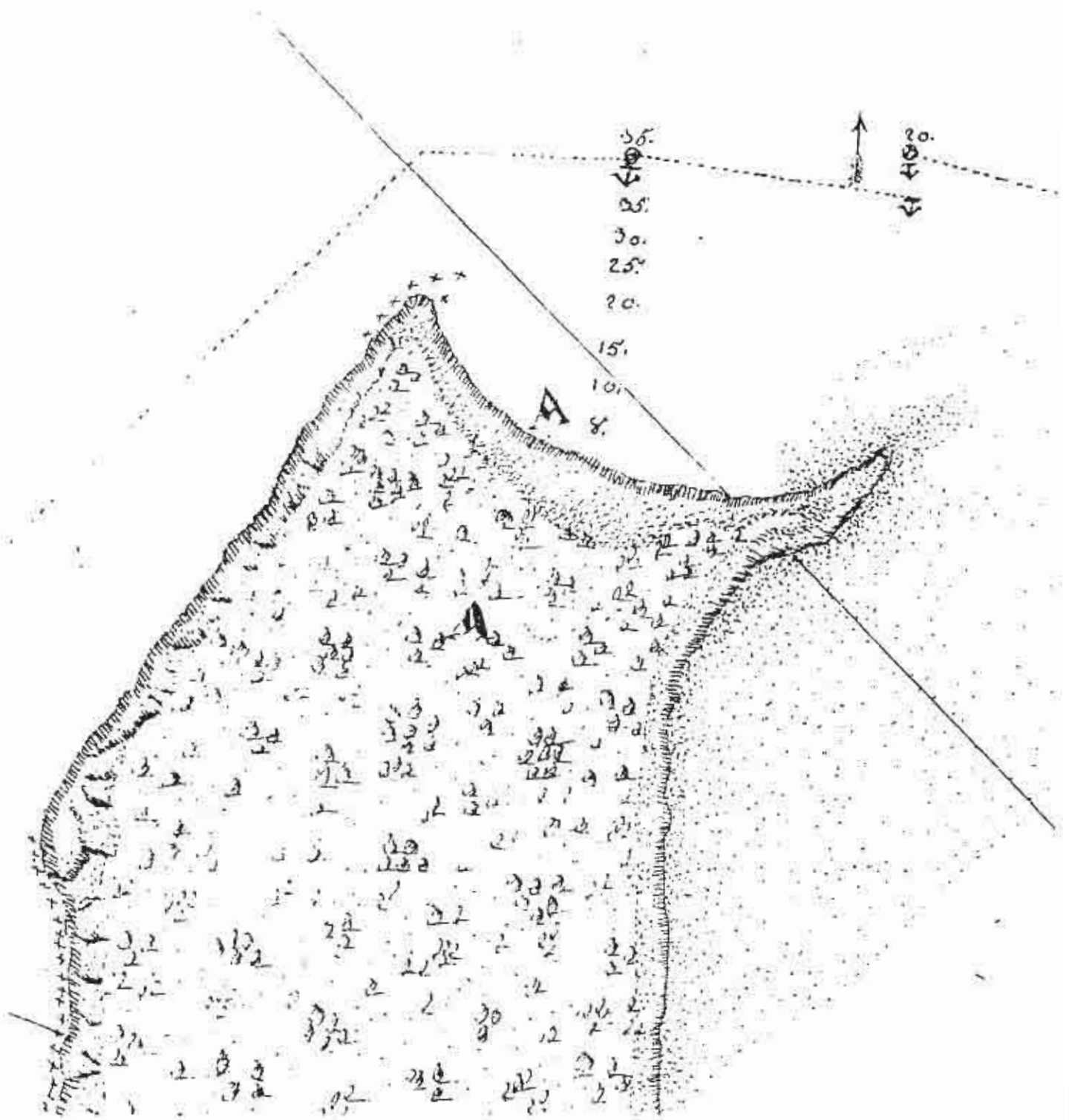


Figure 8b: Detail from the Rosily chart above, showing the landing point 'A' and another point 'A' marked inland. Though these are believed to point to the annexation place, the second 'A' inland is problematic and may not be to scale. (Enlargements kindly provided by Mr. Max Cramer and M. Phillipe Godard)





## Assessment of Site Significance

- (i) **Historical and Cultural:** If the materials can be traced to the French explorer St Allouarn, the coin site is one of the most significant yet found in this State and it will have regional and national importance as a result. There may also be French interest in the annexation process, in the site and the associated materials as expressions of their early explorations and colonial aspirations.
- (ii) **Technological:** The coin and capsule will provide material evidence of considerable interest to numismatists, archaeologists and corrosion specialists, at least.
- (iii) **Educational:** The site has the potential of being a focus for educational activity. There has been a great deal of public interest expressed in the find and this could eventually manifest itself in private visits and conducted tours. There are considerable possibilities to be examined with respect to the cultural tourism industry in the region.

## Management Considerations

- (i) **Natural forces:** There is a danger that winds and rain will continue the excavation process and that the site will not only become further exposed, but that it will become a 'blowout' extending along the ridge and down the hill. This has both ramifications for both the historical and natural environment and for any materials that remain.
- (ii) **Present and future human forces:** Unfortunately press photographs of the area, the press articles and the extent of the excavation, have rendered the site easily locatable and at considerable risk. Bottle and coin collectors will have found the press reports of considerable interest. Other French sites are now in the public eye. All are presently at risk. Visits to Turtle Bay are a regular feature of the Shark Bay tourist industry and the finding of the French coin has given that industry some further impetus, resulting in further human activity at the site.

## Discussion

### The location process

As indicated above, the find has come of something of a surprise, given that there had been earlier well-researched and well-equipped expeditions searching for the relics. The Rosily map has long-since been available and the activities of the French and Dutch explorers were well-known in Western Australian historical circles. Expeditions to locate the French sites on Dirk Hartog Island apparently date back to the days of the occupation of the area by lighthouse keepers around the turn of the century, for example.<sup>9</sup> There is anecdotal evidence to the effect that other French material was recovered from the area by station hands, though records of this event were apparently lost in a fire at Dirk Hartog Island Station (Moss pers. com.). In the 1970s and 1980s expeditions searching for the coins and bottle were led by Professor Leslie Marchant, now Director of the France Australe Research Centre at Notre Dame University (Marchant, pers. com.) and by M. George Lucas a former French diplomat. He was assisted by Mr John Sellinger of Shark

<sup>9</sup> The Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society contains numerous articles, some dating back to the early 1930s. These and accounts of previous expeditions are presently being compiled by Ms Stanbury.

Bay and by others interested in the maritime history of the region. Both groups used metal detectors and the latter received considerable press (e.g., An article by Mr Sellinger in *The West Australian* 14/1/1989). The Rosily map shown in Figures 8a&8b above appeared in that article.

The possibility of a hoax in the present instance is discounted on the basis of Mr Cramer's and M. Godard's links with the WA Museum, with heritage matters generally and with the *Batavia* saga. Mr Cramer is a well-known member of the community, a member of the Board of the WA Museum in Geraldton and a former Member of the Board of the Western Australian Maritime Museum. He had also previously notified the Western Australian Museum and the Shire of Shark Bay of the group's intentions to search the Turtle Bay area. M. Godard's is a noted author with a well-illustrated book on the *Batavia* wreck. Thus the *bona fides* of the finders are without question. The unlikely possibility of a hoax being perpetrated on them needs be considered however. This will need to await the assessment of the materials by corrosion and other scientists.

On quizzing the team on their success in the light of the failure of others, it became apparent that the Godard/Cramer team applied an informed mixture of research, re-analysis and commonsense. They reasoned, for example, that the French would have buried the annexation materials at a place where a flag (which the French raised in the annexation procedure) would have been visible from St Allouarn's vessel, the *Gros Ventre*. This was anchored to the north of the annexation point (see Figure 8a above), making it unlikely that the annexation took place inland. The line on which the annexation place lay was deduced from the French maps showing a sounding line into the bay and from contemporary descriptions which led the finders to conclude that the French landed at 'a bay within the bay' (pers. com., Cramer, *et. al.* to McCarthy). Having arrived at the ridge on Friday 16 January, the team set up a camp to the west of the tramline and then divided into three groups in order to search the most likely areas. The team utilised three detectors, including an SD 2000 Minelab metal detector of the type currently causing a reassessment of gold detecting leases formerly believed to have been 'worked-out'. These more-sensitive detectors have proved extraordinarily successful in the prospecting industry. This equipment together with the application of the logic above were apparently the key factors in the present success.<sup>10</sup>

The capsule in which the coin was enclosed was located at around 1.30PM on the same day. Mr Chris Shine and Mr Kim Cramer were proceeding in a westerly direction along the ridge, M. Phillipe Godard and Mr John Eckersley eastwards towards the eventual find. Mr Max Cramer and Mr Tom Bradley were making arrangements for dinner when the find was made (M. Cramer pers. com. & press release P. Godard, 21/1/1998). The metal detector operator was Mr John Eckersley and the capsule itself was dug up by M. Phillipe Godard who pocketed it in the belief that it was an 'old bottle top' consistent with other contamination of the area (cans, bullets etc.). All the finds were subsequently placed in a plastic container and on examination of the capsule, it became apparent that there was a coin contained within it. On the following day the team excavated the find site down to bedrock using shovels, but finding nothing of apparent significance. A video and colour prints of these events were produced by the finders. In his press release, M. Godard raised the possibility that the capsule could have even been discovered by previous visitors and/or searchers, but then discarded after being 'considered of no value' and that in these circumstances the bottle could also have been accidentally broken. The possible location of the second coin on the slope below the find was also flagged (Press release, P. Godard, 21/1/1998). These possibilities need be considered in the light of reports to Mr Les Moss, of the Maritime Heritage Association of Shark Bay, to the effect that French materials had been recovered by station hands, but that the records (and possibly the materials?) were destroyed in a fire.

<sup>10</sup> The finders advised that once they had identified the coin and capsule, they were rebuffed as a test of the equipment-producing only a minimum return. This indicates that traditional metal detectors would not have found the remains, providing some clue as to the reasons why others using metal detectors have failed in the past.

## Ownership and responsibility

### i) The materials

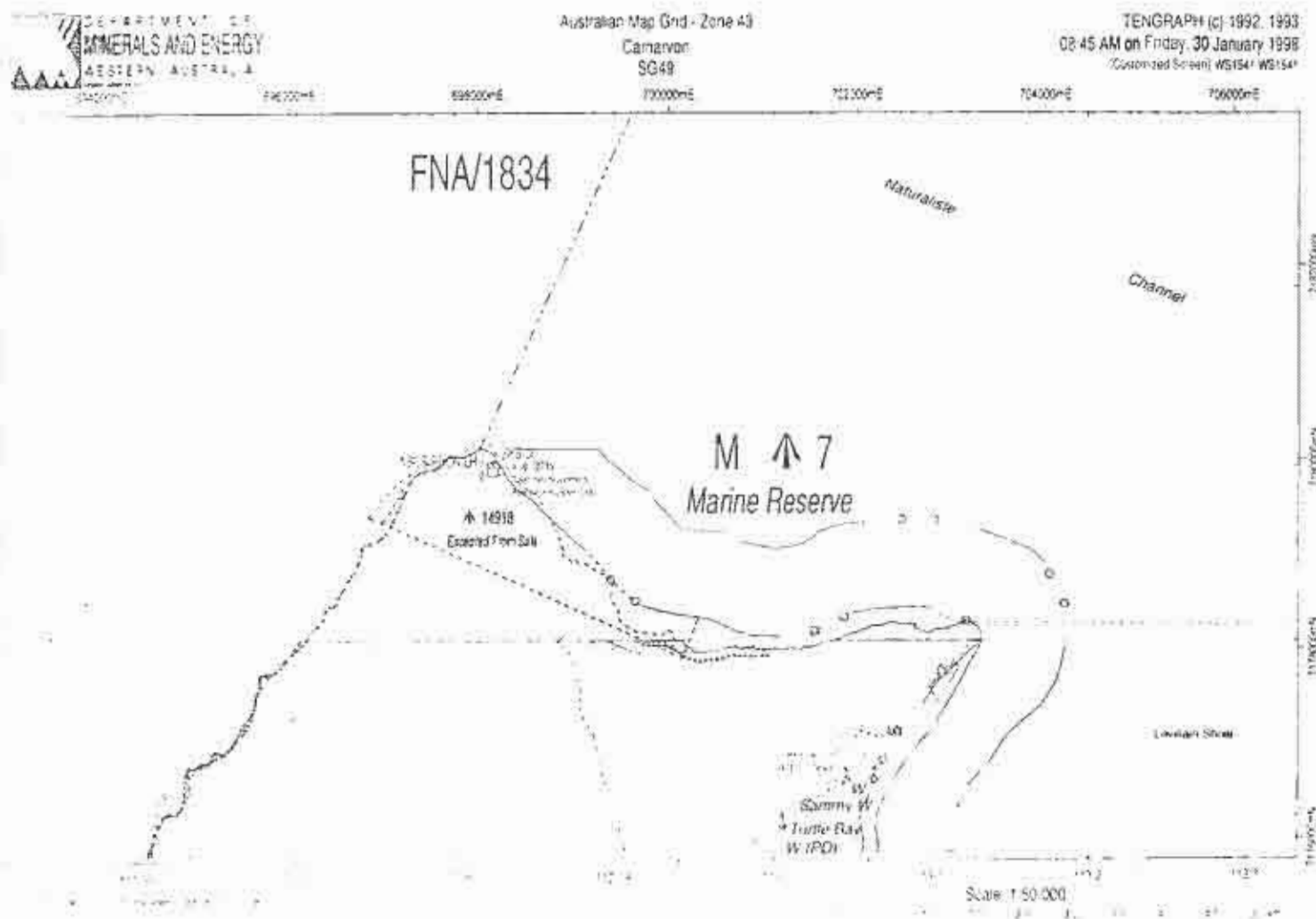
The thoughts of the finders present at the Wednesday 21 January inspection and subsequent interview are outlined above (see Page 5, item iv). After his return to Noumea, however, M. Godard indicated through his personal secretary, Ms Holly Gibson and his lawyer Mr Didier Mercier, that as co-finder of the coin, as chief researcher, the funder and as the initiator of the project, he was from the outset of the belief that the materials belonged to the State of Western Australia (pers. coms., to McCarthy, 22/1/1998). It was his desire that the materials be immediately gifted to the State with a view to them having maximum exposure within the State. It was also M. Godard's desire that the materials be sent immediately to the appropriate experts (historians, archaeologists, conservators and numismatists) in Fremantle for verification. These wishes appear at odds with those enunciated by his fellow finders and the matter clearly needs resolution within the finder's group itself.

The question of protective legislation and institutional responsibility for the materials found also needs to be resolved and examined against any claims to private ownership.

(ii) The Land: The issue of ownership on which the find was made appear to have been resolved. It appears certain that the discovery lies on Reserve 14918, which is under the control of the Western Australian State Agency, the Department of Land Administration (Playford to Reeves, 30/1/1998), see below. This leaves the question of legislative responsibility for the site to be resolved amongst State agencies and not amongst Commonwealth bodies as first thought.

### Figure 9 : Government Reserve 14918.

(The coin site is at the eastern end of the Reserve. Survivor's of the French whaler *Perseverant* camped behind the foredune approximately half a kilometre north of Sammy Outcrop, about 4 km south east of the coin site).



## Recommendations

- (i) The finders need be properly recognised by the State and by the institution responsible under the relevant Act, for their ingenuity in locating the material, for having continued to search where others failed and for reporting the find at the earliest possible opportunity. Rewards under the terms of the appropriate Act also need to be considered.
- (ii) The secure housing and expert examination of the coin and the capsule by metallurgists, archaeologists and numismatists, at least, needs be facilitated. In the interim the materials must be handled with a view to their containing surface and other indications of their provenance.
- (iii) The legislative situation requires immediate re-assessment with a view to both the protection of the site and the materials recovered. Once the question of ownership and legislative responsibility is settled, funds need to be secured in order to proceed as per (i) above and as follows.
  - (a) A metal-detector search of the area needs be implemented, thereby reducing the incentive for others to seek the materials remaining and to thereby further damage the site. This and an archaeological survey of the site, with provision for the rehabilitation of the excavated areas, needs be effected as soon as possible.
  - (b) A strategy designed to ensure the conservation, display and interpretation of the artefacts recovered from the site needs be implemented
- (iv) The site needs be gazetted as an Historic Site.
- (v) At the completion of this regime, interpretive material should be erected in the vicinity of the site. This should be presented in such a manner as to safeguard the site and to enhance the visitor experience.
- (vi) The site should be monitored on a regular basis.

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