The Uranie site(s)

Report of an inspection and the context of the survivor's camp, wreck and wreckage
emanating from the loss of
La Corvette du Roi L'Uranie
at the Falkland Islands in 1820

Dr M McCarthy
March 2002

With contributions from: D. Eynon, P. Godard, R. Sexton & J. Williams.

Report - Department of Maritime Archaeology
Western Australian Maritime Museum, No 160
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Cover illustration: *L'Uranie* at Raukak Island, Papua.
By Claude Niquet. From *Freyet*, 1822: plate 45.

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Expedition fundraisers
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Again mention is made of Mr Robert King’s role in facilitating the obtaining of a ‘Duty Fare’ on board the RAF Tristar flight from Brize Norton to Ascension Island, the Falkland Islands and return.
Preface

Just prior to the August 1999 William Dampier Tri-Centennial celebrations in Shark Bay, Western Australia, it was agreed that a multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional team should be developed in order to search for, and if possible document, two of Western Australia’s lost exploration vessels. These were HM Ship Roebeck (1701) that was abandoned at Ascension Island and the French exploration corvette L’Uranie (1820) that was lost in the Falkland Islands. The ships had conducted substantial explorations in Shark Bay, and both ships and their complement were considered highly significant in the context of European exploration of Shark Bay and the Australian coast in general. Present at the preliminary meeting were Councillor Les Moss, President, Shire of Shark Bay, author Hugh Edwards and M. McCarthy of the Western Australian Maritime Museum.

If permission could be obtained from the many stakeholders, the search was to be conducted under the auspices of the WA Maritime Museum and, if they so desired, other institutions (such as the Shire of Shark Bay, the Ascension and Falkland Island communities and their administrators).

The proposal was duly formalised at a celebration in which author Hugh Edwards’ book on the history of the Bay and botanist Alex George’s work on Dampier as Australia’s first natural historian were launched. Present on this occasion were Cr Moss, Dr Patrick Berry, then Acting Executive Director of the WA Museum, local business people, authors Mr Hugh Edwards and Alex George, Dr Serena Marner, Manager of the Fielding-Druce Herbarium at the Department of Plant Sciences in the University of Oxford where the Dampier collection is housed, a number of Shark Bay and Kimberley identities including fisherman Peter Sartori, pastors Helen and Peter Morgan, and the author. Unbeknown to the group, author, M. Philippe Godard had similar plans. On learning of each other’s intentions, he readily accepted the offer to join the team.

Subsequently the contact advising him of our interests, an invitation was extended to this office by His Honour, the Administrator of Ascension Island, Mr Geoffrey Fairhurst to begin work in preparing the expedition. This was to be conducted in association with Flt Lt Richard Burke of the RAF, who was appointed as liaison on behalf of both the Island Heritage Society, of which he is Secretary, and the Administrator himself. Contacts were subsequently established with the Falkland Island Administration and their heritage interests. The local civilian and service communities then expressed a desire to join in the proposed searches and to assist where possible. The British government also indicated its willingness to support the project as a non-disruption search and survey exercise through Ms Marion McQuaid at the Admiralty in the HMS Roebuck case and through Mr Robert King, the Receiver of Wreck at the Falklands and Mr John Smith, Curator of the Falkland Island Museum and National Trust in the Uranie instance. The French Consul in Western Australia and the office of the Ambassador in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, also indicated their support for the program as part of the Museum’s ‘French Connection’ studies.

While the Museum provided administrative support, equipment, and staff time to the program, funds and sponsorship still need to be obtained—the breakthrough coming with the involvement of Dr John William’s of Augusta, a long-time supporter of the Maritime Museum’s programs. He interested numerous friends and colleagues in supporting the venture, culminating in the receipt of substantial donations from Mr John Lashmar and Dr J. (Barney) Hanrahan that ensured the program could proceed.

Cr Les Moss, President of the Shire of Shark Bay, then obtained the financial support of Shark Bay interests, notably the Shire of Shark Bay, Shark Bay Salt and the Monkey Mia Resort. Then Richard and Sue Lushay proprietors of the camping supplier MainPeak Australia, provided a great deal of camping equipment and clothing gratis. Royal Brunei Airlines carried many crates of equipment at a greatly reduced rate and Qantas Airlines assisted with excess baggage. Mr Robert King Receiver of Wreck in the Falkland Islands, arranged a Duty Fare for each expedition member on the RAF Tristar run by Brize Norton to the islands and return, another substantial saving. That on Friday 2 March 2001 the team departed for the Falkland Islands and then Ascension Island in search of Western Australia’s ‘maritime heritage abroad’—L’Uranie and HM Ship Roebeck.
Introduction: The French and the Great South Land

The roots of the voyage of the French corvette L'Uranie in 1817-1820 date back to Paulmier de Gonneville in 1504. He thought, after experiencing a violent storm near the Cape of Good Hope, that he had chanced on the fabled Terra Australis Incognita, a vast southern land mass long postulated as a necessary balance to the continents in the northern hemisphere (Callander, 1768, vol. I). Thereafter called 'Gonneville Land' by the French, it became a focus for their maritime aspirations in the region and in 1738 Bouvet de Lozier set out in search of it but found only the barren island that now bears his name (Wood, 1922: 347; Marchant, 1998).

By then the Dutch, notably Dirk Hartog (1616), Carstensz (1623), Thijssen (1627), Abel Tasman (1642 & 1644) and Willem de Vlamingh (1697) had landed and charted much of the north, west and south coasts of what afterwards became known as New Holland. William Dampier also had a hand in the exploration of New Holland and he records landing on the north west coast in 1688. Though following the Dutch in dismissing the land and its inhabitants in a hugely popular and widely disseminated account—and thereby fixing the negative attitudes that were to remain commonly held for another century—he and his colleagues were the first Britons to land there (Dampier, 1697; Marchant, 1988).

The loss of territory to the British on the north American continent in the late 1750s caused the French to actively look elsewhere for colonies. In 1763 Louis Antoine de Bougainville, who had fought against the British in Canada and who was the first Frenchman to sail around the world, established a small colony at Port Louis on what he called the Iles Malouines in honour of the predominantly St Malo element amongst his colonists.

Figure 1: An un-provenanced contemporary view of the French settlement at Port Louis (Courtesy of Neil and Glenda Watson, of Long Island Farm, Uranie Bay)

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1 It needs be noted at this juncture that indigenous peoples generally find the notion that a place their ancestors had occupied over the ages was 'first discovered' by foreign travellers somewhat odd.
The British countered this in 1764 by sending Commodore John Byron who arrived early in the following year, and took possession of them for Britain. In that same year a British settlement was established on the West Falkland Islands and 1767 France ceded its rights to Port Louis in the East Falkland Islands to Spain, commencing a chain of events that has led to Argentina claiming the islands as Las Islas Malvinas. It was a disagreement that has had repercussions well into the modern day, and is one that also had ramifications for the *Uranie* voyage and for the survival of its castaways. In commenting on his visit to the area in 1820, the Antarctic explorer James Weddell stated that the colonists were an

...industrious and enterprising people, after having made considerable progress in fertilising the ground, were displaced by the Spaniards, who claimed the islands. They, however, partly through political motives...neglected the improvement of the country, and latterly entirely abandoned it (Weddell, 1827:94)

Continuing what in effect was a ‘superpower’ race for territory, in 1766 the British navy sent two ships under Wallis and Carteret to the south Pacific in search of the fabled southern continent, and the French despatched Bougainville with the same intention just three months later. While the French and the British found many islands in the Pacific, including Tahiti and Pitcairn, neither found the southern continent. The closest Bougainville came to Terra Australis was when he encountered the Great Barrier Reef adjacent to present-day Cooktown in far north Queensland. On his return home in 1769 Bougainville published an account entitled *A Voyage Round The World*, that increased French interest in the Pacific.

*Figure 2: Part of Bougainville’s chart showing New Holland around 1771. (From Wood, 1922:375)*
In the interim James Cook departed on a scientific voyage with secret instructions to explore the south Pacific. In completing his first exploration in the period 1768-1771, Cook called at Tahiti, circumnavigated New Zealand and then travelled along a vast land mass he claimed for Britain and named New South Wales. His proclamation was effected with little reference, as was the fashion throughout the world in those times, for the indigenous peoples and their rights.

This left unexplored the eastern part of the south coast, lying between New Holland and Cook’s New South Wales, and there existed a belief that a vast strait passed between New Holland and New South Wales. (Scott, 1914:53).

The annexation of New Holland for France

In 1771, two expeditions left Île de France for the Indian Ocean in search of Gonneville’s Land. One, led by Marion Dufresne, sailed to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) and as far as New Zealand, alerting France to their worth though as the names suggest both had been earlier discovered by the Dutch, in this case by Abel Tasman.

The other, a two-ship expedition was led by Y.J. de Kerguelen and it included as second in command, François de Saint Aloïs. The ships separated and Kerguelen, upon discovering what he thought to be Gonneville’s Land, hurried home to announce the discovery of what he called France Australe. Later, it proved to be a barren island that now bears his name. In the meantime Saint Aloïs, in Le Gros Ventre continued the search for Gonneville’s Land. Unsusahctual, he then made for the coast of New Holland, and in landing on Dirk Hartog Island at Dampier’s Shark Bay, Saint Aloïs annexed the coast for France in March 1772 (McCarthy, 1998; Godard and de Kerros, 2002; Marchant, 1998).

The La Pérouse and d’Entrecasteaux Expeditions

The young Napoleon Bonaparte applied for a place on the next French expedition to the region under the command of J.F. Galaup, comte de la Pérouse, but was lucky to be refused. The best equipped of all scientific forays, this two-ship expedition left French shores with a large contingent of scientists and naval personnel in 1785. After extensive explorations in the Pacific, they were ordered from Kamchatka to Botany Bay in New South Wales in order to observe the British landing there in 1788 (Wood, 1922:507). After doing so they departed for further work in the South Seas and were never seen again.

In this same period William Bligh was in these waters with HMS Bounty, following on from Dampier’s earlier revelations about the efficacies of breadfruit. After the infamous mutiny, Bligh was not to know that the Australian first fleet had landed successfully under the curious eyes of the French, and navigated in an open boat across the top of the continent to Timor and safety.

In September 1791 another well-equipped French expedition was sent under the command of J.A. Bruni d’Entrecasteaux with Le Recherche and
L’Espérance to continue the exploration and to search for La Pérouse. Amongst the complement were scientists, botanists, a gardener and hydrographers. On the south coast of New Holland, they took many natural science specimens, charted great skill and named many features. While they were to continue to give generally adverse accounts of New Holland, at Tasmania their descriptions of the land and people were to provide some relief to the predominantly negative reports of previous explorers. There d’Entrecasteaux observed that the tribe they encountered

...seems to offer the most perfect image of pristine society, in which men have not yet been stirred by passions, or corrupted by the vices caused by civilization... Oh! How much would those civilized people who boast about the extent of their knowledge, learn from this school of nature (Duyker & Duyker, 2001:xxviii).

Their visit followed that of George Vancouver, who left Plymouth in April 1791 for the north Pacific via the Indian Ocean and the south Pacific. He landed at, and named King George the Third Sound (Albany), then travelled for a short distance along the southern coast before being forced off it by bad weather.

In 1793 the d’Entrecasteaux expedition landed in the East Indies on its way home to news of the execution of King Louis XVI and a state of war between the new Republic and much of Europe. By then both commanders, d’Entrecasteaux, and his second-in-command, Huon de Kermadec, and many others had perished through illness. To make matters worse, the republicans on board were denounced by their shipmates, imprisoned by the Dutch, and both ships were sold to defray expenses. After being confiscated by the British, the extensive natural science collections, maps and charts eventually found their way back to France where the botanist J.J.H. de Labillardière’s Relation du Voyage à la Recherche de La Pérouse was published in 1799, going through three English editions and two German by 1804. Containing 265 black and white illustrations together with 13 plates by the renowned botanical artist P.J. Redouté, it was the first illustrated work after Dampier’s account of his voyage to New Holland in 1699 to capture the imagination of the Europeans in respect of the flora and fauna of the Southland. The expedition’s hydrographer Beaufremas-Beaupré then published his atlas in 1807 and his cartographic works were roundly praised (Duyker and Duyker, 2001).

The Baudin expedition

In 1800, with the approval of Napoleon, then First Consul, yet another two-ship expedition left France led by Nicolas Baudin. The two ships employed were Le Géographe under Baudin and Le Naturaliste under J.F.E. Hamelin. They had orders to continue the exploration of the Southland and were also required to examine the question whether the strait thought to lie
between the 'two great and nearly equal islands' of New Holland and New South Wales did exist (Scott, 1914:530). Though the charts of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition had yet to be published, Baudin was provided with preliminary engravings. The enterprise was also mightily hampered by having a microcosm of a fractured French society and in having many civilian scientists on board. Though many left the expedition in Mauritius, and returned home intent on poisoning Baudin's reputation, the explorations, which were conducted between 1801 through to 1803 resulted in many useful discoveries and anthropological observations, in important chart and map making, and in securing a vast number of natural science specimens. Despite these successes, it has taken a full two hundred years for Baudin to be favourably reassessed.

**Louis de Freycinet and the de Vlamingh plate**

On board Le Naturaliste was Sub-Lt Louis Freycinet.² While the ship was at Shark Bay he was sent by boat to conduct surveys of the area—work that he later continued while in command of Le Casuarina and later in L'Uranie. He also appears to have been on board when the ship's chief helmsman returned with an ancient inscribed pewter plate commemorating the landing of the Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh at Shark Bay in 1697. Having long-since fallen from its post, it had been accidently found lying half buried in the sand at the top of a prominent point overlooking the entrance to the bay. The discovery was of great historical significance, for on finding a similar plate deposited by Dirk Hartog in 1616, Vlamingh had the original inscription copied onto a new plate to which he appended an account of his own visit before erecting it at the same spot (Playford, 1998). He then sailed away with the original, beginning a chain of events that was later to include the visit of L'Uranie. Though the Naturaliste men found the Vlamingh plate lying in the sand, where it had fallen from the post, they recognised its importance and immediately brought it back for Hamelin to examine.

*Figure 3: The French discover the Vlamingh plate (From Jacob and Vellios, 1988:105)*

² In revolutionary times the 'de' in de Freycinet was omitted.
In objecting to the notion that the plate be removed to France, and in considering that to do otherwise would have been historical ‘vandalism’ (Marchant, 1998:176; Halls, 1974), Hamelin had Vlamingh’s plate and a plate of his own re-erected on new posts, the first at the Dutch explorer’s site and the second at an as yet undetermined location.

Freyssinet apparently did not approve of this precursor to modern museological thinking, and felt that it should have been removed for safekeeping in France, but was too junior to prevent the return of the relic to its original site. In recognising the importance of the site, Freyssinet’s chart of the region refers to the site as Cap de L’Inscription (Cape Inscription).

As unequivocal evidence of the prior landing of Europeans on their shores, the Hartog, Vlamingh and the Hamelin plates are relics of immense significance to Australians generally, and it has been said by one historian that:

The title deeds, so to speak, attesting European discovery of Western Australia are three pewter plates left at Cape Inscription, Shark Bay, on three separate occasion (Halls, 1974).

Figure 4: Sketch of the Hartog, Vlamingh and the Hamelin Plates (From Halls, 1974).

A marriage of science and strategic interests

During the explorations along the south coast Baudin encountered HMS Investigator commanded by the British navigator Matthew Flinders. He too was exploring that coast, attempting to fill in the gaps left by the Dutch, Dampier and Cook, and it was he who, just having sailed northwards up Spencer’s Gulf in what is now South Australia, had proved that a passage through to the Gulf of Carpentaria did not exist (Brown, 2000).
After leaving him on friendly terms, the French were forced to have an extended stay at Port Jackson in New South Wales due to the need to refit and re-provision the ships and due to scurvy and illness amongst the crew, especially those on Baudin’s ship. They were succoured by the British colonists, but later it became a worry to the Governor King that the Baudin expedition, while scientific in ethos, may also have had strategic elements, and possibly designs on Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) as a future French colony.

The duality is expressed in two separate utterances, the first of Baudin, the expedition leader, and the other by François Péron, the first ‘anthropologist’ in Australia (Marchant, 1988). Ironically, it was Baudin, a ‘Captain of the Blue’ who had proceeded through the ranks despite his ‘lowly’ birth who reflected post-revolutionary French sentiments of ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’ in expressing very strong, and in his own words ‘no doubt impolite’, views to Governor King in Sydney about the situation thus:

To my way of thinking, I have never been able to conceive that there was justice or even fairness on the part of Europeans in seizing, in the name of their governments, a land seen for the first time, when it was inhabited by men who have not always deserved the title of savages, or cannibals, that has been freely given them (Baudin to Governor King, 23/12/1802; (Quoted in Hunt and Carter, 1999).

On the other hand, and quite ironically, Péron the anthropologist was to urge the overthrow of the fledgling colony in his letters to Decaen, the Governor of Ile de France (Mauritius) thus:

Once the English Colony is conquered it can be easily defended by our troops against any attack with great force, and since the colony has enough subsistence it won’t starve of hunger because of enemy warships. Thus it will be strong enough to hold out against British land and sea forces. (Quoted in Hunt and Carter, 1999)

Further he advised Decaen that the colony ‘should be destroyed as soon as possible. Today we could destroy it easily; we shall not be able to do so in 25 years time’ (Letter quoted in Scott, 1914:315-337).

Of additional importance to this narrative setting the scene for the Uranie voyage and the role of Freycinet, Péron adds in a post script that:

M. Freycinet, the young officer, has especially concerned himself with examining all the points upon the coast of the environs of Port Jackson which are favourable to the landing of troops. He has collected particular information concerning the entrance to the port; and if ever the Government should think of putting into execution the project of destroying this freshly set trap of a great power, that distinguished officer would be of valuable assistance in such an operation;
Freycinet makes no mention of this in his personal journals, however.

Freycinet in command of *La Casuarina*

After recuperating at Port Jackson under the patronage of the beleaguered Governor King, Baudin was keen to continue his explorations. *Le Naturaliste* had proved a poor sailor, however, and it was sent home under Hamelin with the expedition’s collections and works. A small locally-built schooner *La Casuarina* was purchased in its stead and Freycinet was elevated above others, including his brother Henri, to command with a brief to proceed in company with *Le Géographe* and to undertake surveys in shallow waters as directed by Baudin.

In continuing along the south coast via Tasmania and then back up the west coast with Baudin Freycinet was to complete the surveys for many fine charts.

*Figure 5: Freycinet’s Chart of Shark Bay (WA Maritime Museum)*
Australian flora and fauna presented in France

Despite the opposition from scientists, many of the plant and animal specimens collected on the voyage and returned to France found their way to the Empress Joséphine's garden at Malmaison. There they proved an object of continual fascination, as this illustration showing swans, emus and Australian flora at Malmaison on the banks of the Seine, indicates.

*Figure 6: Malmaison and the Australian flora and fauna (Appearing in many works e.g., Hunt & Carter, 1999)*

As indicated, the famous botanical artist Pierre Joseph Redouté had earlier begun an association with Australian flora, painting specimens recovered by Labillardière and the gardener Félix Delahaye on the d'Entrecasteaux voyages (Hamilton, 1999).

According to one modern author the 'prominence' afforded Australian plants in the folios of colour plates of plants in *Jardin de la Maison* was 'extraordinary'. The following quote from Bernard Chevallier, the present Curator of the Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison & Bois-Préau best reflects the situation from the modern French perspective.

So great was the competition for the plants and animals from Australia that le Ministre de la Marine had himself to decide how to divide them between le Jardin des Plantes in Paris and Malmaison. Joséphine harvested the finest fruits of the expedition—which included numerous plant species new to Europe and which, with her customary generosity, she quickly distributed to the four quarters of France (Quoted in Hamilton, 1999, ix).

While many plants were recorded in beautiful drawings, especially by Redouté, the expedition's assistant gunners Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit also stunned Europe with their illustrations of the people and the animal life.
Despite publication in Europe at the start of the 19th century, these works and the collections are only now become generally known in Australia, in this year 2001, the Australian Bicentennial of Baudin and Hamelin’s visit.

Reference needs be made at this juncture to the work of Sir Joseph Banks and his artist Sydney Parkinson who were arguably ‘the first—after William Dampier—to bring attention in Europe to the Australian flora’. Though they voyaged with Cook in 1771, an illustrated work did not result in their lifetime and the 738 beautiful plates eventually produced as Banks’ Florilegium were not published until the 1980s (Hamilton, 1999:1).

Figure 7: French illustrations of Australian flora, fauna and its people (From Hunt & Carter, 1999; Hamilton, 1999)
In this brief celebration of the French contribution to the appreciation of the southland, its people, its flora and fauna, reference also needs to be made to the contribution of the artist Ferdinand Bauer and the naturalist Robert Brown who circumnavigated Australia with Matthew Flinders in his ship *Investigator* on a voyage that coincided with that of the Baudin expedition.
Bauer sketched over 1000 plants and 200 animals, but he unfortunately presented but a few in his *Illustrationes Florae Novae Hollandiae* that was published in 1813, to a 'disappointing response' (Watts, Ponnfrett & Mabberley, 1997:11).

It is fair to say that publication of the French images of the flora, fauna and of the Aboriginal people changed the perceptions that followed on from the Dutch and from William Dampier's widely disseminated and predominantly negative reactions to the land and its peoples.

That the art works had a significant and long lasting effect in France is indicated after the voyage when Rose de Freycinet's mother, in advising Rose when she too expressed negative reactions to the people encountered in New Holland said that she need 'look at the drawings in Baudin's voyage... and you will have a true idea of these people' (Quoted in Bassett: 1962:92).

**Cartes Générale de la Nouvelle Hollande et Terre Napoléon**

Thus in the wake of the Dutch and Dampier, the west, south, and south west coasts of New Holland were expertly mapped during expeditions led by the French explorers d'Entrecasteaux in 1792-3 and Baudin in the period 1801-1803. Many places on these coasts now bear French names in honour of expedition members or their supporters, and Louis de Freycinet was an integral part of it all. His *Carte Générale de la Nouvelle-Hollande* and *Carte Général de la Terre Napoléon à la Nouvelle-Hollande*, and *Carte de la Baie des Chiens-Marins*, are especially notable.

**Terre Napoléon, Golfe Joséphine and Golfe Bonaparte**, the name given to the entire eastern south coast and the two large gulfs that dominate the shore, did not survive colonisation by the British or the examination of Flinders' charts, after his six years imprisonment at Ile de France from 1804. Being the first European to describe those shores, his names have prevailed over many of the French names, and it is also now generally accepted that it was he who, in earlier proving that the land mass was one, named the island continent Australia.3

Baudin reported quite unenthusiastically on the land and for over a decade after his voyage French interest in the Great Southland waned, partly because of Napoleon's focus on Europe, and the proximity of the British on those parts of the east coast that the French desired.

Mauritius (Ile de France) then became the French base in the Indian Ocean. After Trafalgar in 1805 and the British occupation of Mauritius five years later French naval power in the Indian Ocean had all but evaporated.

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3 Scott, (1914:304-10) deals with this at length, noting that at the term Australia had been used before, as early as 1638, the term 'was not therefore of Flinder's devising'. His proving that there was no strait between the two land masses, however required the application of a single name and he first uses the term in a private letter to his brother in a letter dated 25 August 1804 and in public in an essay on the fate of La Pérouse that was published in France in 1810. The botanist Labillardière is also noted as having used the term in the preface to his work *Novae Hollandiae Plantarum Specimen*, published in 1804 (Hamilton, 1999: 24, 236).
The Uranie Voyage

After the death of Baudin at Mauritius and the return of Le Géographe to France, responsibility for the production of the history of the voyage fell on Péron and then following his death, on Louis de Freycinet. The charts mentioned above were compiled in this period and when the full report was completed in 1816, the newly-married Freycinet proposed another voyage and was successful in obtaining the support of the Institute of France and King Louis XVIII for it.

Freycinet's plan was accepted 'very nearly in its entirety' (Dunmore, 1969:63) and he was ordered to sail in the 350 ton, 112 French feet (36m) long corvette L’Uranie with a complement of 120 men, 23 Officers and one 'stowaway' according to Freycinet and of 125 men according to Dunmore, (1962:65). They were to sail to Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town, and from there to south-west Australia where he was to examine King George Sound. He was then to sail back west to Cape Leeuwin and to proceed north to Shark Bay to establish an observatory on a parallel of latitude as close as possible to that at Rio de Janiero. In conducting his observations and comparing results, he was thereby to help determine the shape of the earth.

L’Uranie described

Plans and illustrations of L’Uranie (formerly La Ciotat) were obtained from France by M. Philippe Godard. They were in turn passed on to Mr Robert Sexton, of Adelaide, a maritime historian who is interested in French exploration vessels and who has made a detailed study of Freycinet's work in command of the schooner Le Casuarina.

Mr Sexton has advised that the 350-ton Uranie measured 112 French feet (36m) long by 28 feet in length and depth of hold of 14 feet.

His analysis of the plans with features expected to reflect the archaeological remains underlined by the expedition leader, also shows that:

L’Uranie had both a main or gundeck and a lower deck, (the latter referred to by the French as the 'orlop deck'). The forecastle and poop decks, their 'upper deck', were connected by broad gangways, and the opening left between them ... was gated over. A dunnage, cabin accommodation for the commander, was installed aft over the full breadth of the quarterdeck, while cabins for the various other officers were ranged around the after part of both gundeck and between-decks. In the hold, the magazine aft was separated from a series of three full-width bread rooms by a double-panel bulkhead, such as also separated the distilling plant room forward from both the hold and the boatswain’s and master gunner's stores at the bows...[Items] seen here in at least one view include the pumps, galley, distilling plant, and
the metal belaying pin racks and geared winches at the masts.

There are three "royal" pumps, the traditional wooden pump modified by a metal tube in the working area, and a pair of double-acting pumps.

There are several strange features concerning the cooking arrangements. Instead of being in their usual place in the forecastle, the galley and bread oven were placed in the between-decks between mainmast and main hatch, and far from being associated with the galley, the still was in the hold just aft of the fore mast.... The series of iron tanks in the hold are generally marked eau (water), but the two larger ones are marked légumes (vegetables).

An engraving of a quarter view of the Uranie [frontispiece]—the only source for the stern decoration at this stage—shows guns projecting from all the ports...it seems more likely that she would have mounted just three guns each side in the waist as did the other exploring ships. (R. Sexton, to McCarthy, 30/8/2001)²

² In support of this analysis, an illustration of Baudin’s ships at Timor shows that they carried three guns on each side.
Figure 9: Close up of one of the Baudin vessels at Timor in 1801 showing three guns as described by Sexton (WA Maritime Museum).

The scientific basis of the voyage

It was purely a scientific mission, as the following excerpt from the scientist's report shows that:

"The principal object of the expedition commanded by Captain Freycinet was the investigation of the figure [shape] of the earth, and of the elements of terrestrial magnetism; several questions of meteorology had also been suggested by the Academy as worthy of attention. Although geography certainly formed but a secondary object in the voyage, it was natural to anticipate...[there would be] some valuable additions to the existing tables of latitude and longitude. Though no proficient naturalist was attached to the expedition, our navigators undertook the task of collecting for the Museums if not of investigating, every interesting specimen of the three kingdoms; and we also had reason to expect from the draughtsman attached by Government to the expedition, a faithful representation of all such specimens...and that he should take accurate views of the different coasts...finally, it was to be expected that Captain Freycinet and his companions would add new particulars to the history of savage nations." (Humboldt, Cuvier, Gay-Lussac, F. Arago et al., 1823, Report made to the Academy of Sciences)

According to Marchant in his detailed assessment of the French impact on Australian shores, the Uranie report was to be presented under seven headings, geography, history, observations of the people, government, commerce, primary produce, industries and art, with 596 sub-classes listed under them that made it 'one of the most significant anthropological expeditions conducted by the French (Marchant, 1988:213)."
The *Uranie* Itinerary

A brief contemporary account of the voyage of *L’Uranie* was outlined in the scientist’s report under the heading *ITINERARY* and it suffices here as a concise and contemporary overview.

The expedition sailed from Toulon on the 17th of September 1817, arrived at Gibraltar on the 11th of October, and left it, on the 15th, for Teneriffe, where it remained from the 22d to the 28th of the same month. The *Uranie* cast anchor at Rio Janeiro on the 6th of December. This city being considered a proper station both for the pendulum and compass observations, Captain Freycinet remained there nearly two months.
At the Cape of Good Hope, the next place of rendezvous, he stopped from the 7th of March to the 5th of April 1818; and the time there was employed in similar observations, which are of the greater importance... The same consideration gives an interest to the observations at the Isle of France, where the Uranie arrived on the 5th of May, and which she left on the 14th of July. After a very short stay at the Isle of Bourbon [La Réunion], Captain Freycinet sailed on the 2nd of August for Shark's Bay, which he had visited in his first voyage with [Hamelin, under] Captain Baudin. He arrived there on the 12th, and quitted it on the 26th of September, for Coupang, the capital of the Dutch settlements in the Isle of Timor.

Farther on will be found an enumeration of the observations of different kinds made at this port, from the 9th to the 23rd of October 1818, when the expedition sailed for Diely, the residence of the governor of the Portuguese settlement, at the northern part of the Island. Leaving Diely [Dili] on the 22nd of November, the Uranie steered her course for the little island of Rawak, situated near Waigiu (New Guinea), almost exactly on the equator; she remained there from the 16th of December 1818, to the 5th of January 1819.

Figure 10: Jacques Arago's illustration entitled 'The corvette Uranie drawn by the current within the rocks of Boulabonda near New Guinea' (Arago, 1823: 222).
The next rendezvous was at the Marianne Islands, and was of nearly three months' duration; a delay rendered necessary by the important operations to be executed at those islands, by the necessity of laying in fresh provisions, and of allowing time for the sick, who were then pretty numerous, to recover.

On the 5th of April 1819, the Uranic sailed from Guam; she cast anchor at Owhyhee, the largest of the Sandwich Islands, on the 8th of August; on the 16th she touched at Mowhee; on the 26th at Woahoo; and on the 30th, finally quitted that archipelago for Port Jackson; where it became necessary to refit the vessel, and make the usual observations on the weight of the atmosphere and on magnetism. The expedition left New South Wales on the 25th of December 1819, for Terra-del-Fuego; but scarcely had they cast anchor in the Bay of Good Success, on the 7th of February 1820, when a furious hurricane obliged them suddenly to cut their cables, and to let the ship run under bare poles for two successive days. When the storm abated, it became a matter of consideration, whether, considering the importance of pendulum observations in the high southern latitudes, they should return to Terra-del-Fuego, from which they were now a considerable distance, or rendezvous at the Malouine Islands; Captain Freycinet determined on the latter. The Academy has received from this excellent officer complete verbal details of the shipwreck of the Uranic, which took place in French Bay, on the 13th of February 1820, and of the stay made by the ship's company at that desert station.

Figure 12: A portion of Alphonse Pelton's view of the Uranic camp showing the wreck offshore (Reproduced in Bassett, 1962: 196, from originals held by the de Freycinet family).
It will be therefore sufficient for us to mention that the expedition quitted the Malouine Islands on the 17th of April 1820, on board an American vessel, which had accidentally come there, and was purchased by Captain Freycinet; that they first put into Monte-Video, and, after a residence of a month in the River Plate, the Physicienne (the name given to the new vessel) sailed on the 7th of June for Rio Janeiro, where she arrived on the 19th. During a stay of three months, our navigators repeated the observations of different kinds which they had made there on their passage out. Finally, on the 13th of September 1820, the Physicienne quitted Brasil; stress of weather obliged her, on the 10th of November, to put in to Cherbourg; she left that on the 12th, and arrived at Havre on the 13th, where she was laid up.

The duration of the voyage was therefore three years and two months nearly; and the distance sailed amounts to about 23,600 leagues, of 25 to a degree. (Humboldt et al., 1823).

The rich social elements of the Uranie voyage

Rose de Freycinet

There was an illicit element to the Uranie voyage, for when Louis de Freycinet's expedition left France the 22-year-old Madame Rose de Saulces de Freycinet (née Piron) was aboard L'Uranie. This social element has added immeasurably to the importance of the voyage and, it is expected, to the significance of the archaeological remains.

It appears that Rose and Louis' preparations for smuggling her on board began almost as soon as he was appointed commander of the new voyage of exploration and circumnavigation in the Uranie. It also appears that he extended the accommodation on board the ship to suit. This appears in the extended upper-works aft visible in Figure 10 above. This further attests to the pre-meditated nature of the Freycinet's actions.

Figure 13: Images of Rose & Louis de Freycinet (Reproduced in Basset, 1962, from originalts in the possession of the de Freycinet family)
From a social perspective, Rose and Louis de Freycinet's actions were to be the beginnings of one of France's great and lasting love stories. It was one that so captured the imagination of contemporary society that she and her husband were to be feted in the salons of Paris on their safe return to France after many adventures—and he was never censured by the French Navy despite initial indignation once news of the tryst became known. The indignation was not universally shared, for it appears that when news of their arrival at Gibraltar, where Rose appeared disguised in 'a long blue frockcoat and trousers to match', the Minister in Paris could have ordered her ashore at the next suitable port, but decided to ignore the matter. (Dunmore, 1969:67).

Throughout the official accounts, including Louis' own reports, Rose de Freycinet's presence on board was not mentioned, though a lasting indirect reference appears in the naming of a new variety of dove Colombe pinon found on islands off New Guinea (Dunmore, 1969:82), and two ferns gathered by the botanists (Rivièrè, 1996:xxi). One official hint appears in section iv of the scientist's report entitled GEOGRAPHY thus:

Captain Freycinet discovered... a small island to which he gave the name of Rose Island... (Humboldt, et al., 1823).

This small island named by Freycinet 'from the name of someone who is extremely dear to me' (Voyage, vol ii:623-4) proved a delight to Rose and she wrote on 21 October 1819 in her letters home that, 'now it is done, my name has been linked with a small corner of the world' (Rivièrè, 1996:110). The island lies in the Pacific, near Samoa. No doubt concerned about the effect of their deception on his career, de Freycinet made few other references to his wife in the official accounts, though Cape Rose in Shark Bay on the west coast of Australia also refers.

In examining Freycinet's actions in taking Rose with him, it needs also be noted that Matthew Flinders also had harboured a plan to take his wife Ann on his exploration voyage, at least to Port Jackson where she was to stay while he completed his work—a scheme that was abandoned when she was found on board during an official inspection of the ship. Further, a woman was on board one of Louis de Bougainville's ships on his circumnavigation (Godard to McCarthy, February, 2002), and Marie Louise Victoire Giradin, disguised as a man, sailed as crew on board the Recherche, one of d'Entrecasteaux's ships. Unfortunately she, like many others, died towards the end of the voyage, leaving the detail of her story untold (Duyker & Duyker, 2001: xxv).

Thus in its execution and in the extant record, Rose De Freycinet's presence on board L'Uranie was remarkable to say the least and her husband had taken a grave risk in regard to his career and future prospects in the matter. Thus the trend, almost an agreed need, to make little mention of Rose's presence on board was continued where possible, even in presenting the official works of the various artists.

Nevertheless, the voyage of the 'remarkably intelligent, courageous and determined' 22-year-old Rose de Freycinet (Grille, 1853), was quietly
celebrated in France in her own, tragically short, lifetime and later with the publication of her journal in 1927 by M. Charles Duplomb. Two modern accounts, Marius Bassett’s *Realms and Islands: The world voyage of Rose de Freycinet 1817-1820* published in 1962 and Marc Serge Rivière’s *A Woman of Courage: The journal of Rose de Freycinet on her voyage around the world 1817-1820* that was published in 1996 have since served to whet the appetite of the English-speaking world, for she provides a number of new perspectives on exploration voyages, including, apart from detailed comment on clothing and other personal matters, ‘a keen observing eye for customs’ (Dunmore, 1969: 70).

Further, to the unique elements of it all the French author Gabriel Lafond, who a few years later travelled along a similar route to *L’Uranie*, recorded that the Freycinetts were ‘well remembered, even still discussed’ among Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese officials with whom they came in contact. He also recorded that ‘everywhere, as “one of France’s finest ornaments”, she had excited sympathy for her country, so lately wounded in its pride’ (Quoted in Bassett, 1962: 46).

There were positive and nationalistic elements in it all, as Lafond records below, and much of the latter appears dependent on the qualities of Rose de Freycinet herself.

> She was also an apple of discord, thrown... to a crowd of young men whose jealousies and passions could not fail to be aroused. Always of dignified, becoming and discreet behaviour, never herself giving cause for a single derogatory comment, by her mere existence young Mme de Freycinet furnished a topic of conversation likely to disturb the good harmony, even the discipline, essential to a naval ship’ (Quoted in Bassett, 1962: 148).

Another contemporary, the Antarctic explorer James Weddell met the couple in his travels and he also starkly places Rose de Freycinet in a number of other useful social and historical contexts.

> The extreme vivacity of Madame F. seemed well to accord with the character of the French fair; it was reported, that in the midst of the greatest danger and confusion, she retained a most surprising firmness and composure of mind; resembling in this, according to all accounts, the unexampled fortitude of many French ladies during that murderous period of the French Revolution, when their dearest friends and relations were torn from them by merciless assassins’ (Weddell, 1827: 101).

Readers interested in Rose de Saulces de Freycinet, her time, her observations and her travels are referred to the Bassett and Rivière accounts for details, though excerpts of relevance to Australia and the archaeological remains at both the wreck and campsite are reproduced here.
**L'Uranie at Shark Bay: The de Vlamingh plate**

Having elected not to land first at King George Sound as ordered, de Freycinet brought *L’Uranie* to anchor off Dirk Hartog Island adjacent Cape Inscription on 12 September 1818. The next day a boat was despatched to Inscription Point in order to recover the Vlamingh plate. After a few days and with some difficulty, the boat returned and the plate was brought on board to the expectant Freycinet. In recovering the relic, contrary to his former Captain Hamelin’s sentiments, de Freycinet utilised a time-honoured logic in doing so, referring to its exposed location, the possibility of damage or its recovery by less well intentioned others.

Believing that such a rare plate might again be swallowed up by the sands, or else run the risk of being taken away and destroyed by some careless sailor, I felt that its correct place was in one of these great scientific depositories which offer to the historian such rich and precious documents. I planned, therefore, to place it in the collections of the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres de L’Institut de France (de Freycinet, *Voyage Historique*, Vol.II:449).

While some will consider this act ‘sound and reasonable’ in the circumstances (Dunmore, 1969:73), many, including Jacques Arago, the expedition draughtsman, will not agree. At the time, he noted that ‘M. Fabre had been directed to go in search of a plate of lead, left on this land by its first discoverer. In fact, the plate has been carried away………I abstain from all reflections on the circumstances’. (Footnote to letter LVI). Perhaps Arago was aware that Hamelin had been quite forthright on the matter, stating in his journal that it would have been a ‘crime and a sacrilege’ to remove the plate (Horner, 1987:175). It is possible that Freycinet also removed Hamelin’s plate and certainly the absence of the two plates created some concern just a few years later when the Australian-born explorer Phillip Parker King (son of the Governor with whom Baudin was earlier in contact) landed at Cape Inscription and ‘with eager steps’ hurried up to Hamelin’s two posts that he could see were still standing.

*Figure 14: Modern representations of the explorer’s posts at Cape Inscription (Photo, M. McCarthy).*
Expecting to view the two plates either on the posts or, at worst, lying detached in the sand at the foot of the posts, his reaction is recorded thus:

On reaching the top, however, they found the plates gone. King 'mortified', and unwilling to accept that a civilized European could have committed such an outrage, concluded that the Aborigines had removed them (Hordern, 1997:341).

While awaiting the return of the crew carrying the plate, Freycinet moved *L'Urantie* across to Baie de Dampier (Broadhurst Bight at Cape Peron) and established camp there. The observatory was duly set up and with water supplies very low, Freycinet arranged for the ship's iron water tanks that replaced the wooden casks normally used for that purpose to be replenished with fresh water.

In his account of them Freycinet refers to them as an ingenious type of cask' (Freycinet, 1829:1239). This was effected using an 'alembic', or apparatus for distilling sea water. Although the plant on board set fire to the deck and had caused other problems, a second one set up ashore proved effective and soon began supplying fresh water.

**Contemporary accounts of the visit to Shark Bay**

Rose de Freycinet's and Jacques Arago's letters concerning these events appearing in Rivière read as follows:

**Freycinet**

12 September ... at 5 o'clock we anchored at the entrance of Shark Bay, near Dirk Hartog's Island ... we saw the low and arid coast of New Holland; there was nothing in the sight to ease our minds, for we knew we would find no water in this unseemly land...

**Arago**

The coast from the moment we first saw it, exhibited nothing but a picture of desolation; no rivulet consoled the eye, no tree attracted it; no mountain gave variety to the landscape, no dwelling enlivened it; everywhere reigned sterility and death. (Letter LIII).

**Freycinet**

13 September1818...Louis sent a boat to Dirk Hartog's Island to remove an inscription left behind by the Dutch to mark their landing around 1690. It is a precious object which we plan to take back to Paris.\(^4\)

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\(^4\) While the inference here is that Rose had some hand in the decision to recover the plates, some care needs be taking in accepting these translations verbatim for Basset's translation reads 'Louis sent a boat to Dirk Hartich's to take away an inscription left by the Dutch who landed here about 1690. It is something precious to take back to Paris' (Basset, 1962:85).
The artwork of the voyage

There is a great body of artwork extant. Of direct interest to those examining the works from an Australian and Freycinet perspective is a work based on Alphonse Pellion's *Baie des Chiens-Marins: Observatoire de l'Uranie*. It provides a record of the camp at Shark Bay with the distilling apparatus. The published version shows Louis de Freycinet at work on his observations at a table outside a very distinctive tent, whereas Rose and a Mauritian boy appear seated nearby in his original and unofficial version.

Rose de Freycinet's account of this scene reads;

18 September...I went ashore with Louis and we spend several days sleeping under a tent. That stay on land was not a pleasant one for me, the country being entirely devoid of trees and vegetation...When the heat died down a little, I would collect shells, of which I have an impressive collection. I spend the rest of the day in the tent reading or working.

*Figure 15a:* The official view of the Uranie camp in Shark Bay, Western Australia. Carrying the explanation 'Dessiné par Marchais d'après A. Pellion, Gravé par Forget' above the title, it is based on Alphonse Pellion's original in *Figure 15b.*
Figure 15b: Alphonse Pellion’s depiction of the Uranie camp in Shark Bay, Western Australia. (From Rivière, 1996: 52 & Bassetti, 1962: 85). The original is in the possession of the de Freycinet family.

Figure 15c: Close-up of Rose de Freycinet’s tent in Shark Bay, Western Australia.
Meeting with the indigenous people

Later our two observers, Rose de Freycinet and Jacques Arago, record a meeting with Aboriginal people in a manner that reveals both the concerns on both sides and the literary legacy that all mariners shared at the time.

FREYCI Net
21 September... the natives, no doubt frightened off by the number of people coming ashore, had retreated on the day we first saw them. The previous day, after much hesitation, they had come up to the men in the first camp and had exchanged their weapons for tin, glass necklaces and so on.

ARAGO
After I had taken a dozen steps, I distinguished on the sand some traces of a naked foot, that reminded me of the situation in which Robinson Crusoe once found himself in...

The exchange is also relevant in that the attitudes of those who landed at New Holland on the Uranie voyage was quite disparaging and, in contrast to the Baudin voyage, tended to reflect the negative opinions of Dampier and the Dutch. Arago records their meetings with the Aboriginal people which were made ‘with a certain mistrust’ and when concerned at a developing impasse, he produced a pair of castanets and played a ‘sort of tune’ which resulted in astonishment and then a dance in response from some of the Aborigines. (Letter LIV).

Figure 16: Jacques Arago’s sketch of the meeting with Aborigines at Cape Peron. (From Bassett, 1962: 84. The original is in the possession of the de Freycinet family).

For Rose de Freycinet, the land and its peoples were frightening and inhospitable and she wrote to her mother advising that it was ‘without a single regret’ that she departed from ‘that hell on earth’. Viewing her comments as the product of her daughter’s acknowledged fears, Rose’s mother was to advise her to ‘look at the drawings in Baudin’s voyage... and you will have a true idea of these people’ (Quoted in Bassett, 1962:92).
Some of the officers and Jacques Arago, continued to interact with the indigenous inhabitants—concluding by means of one strange experiment that the Aborigines drank salt water (Bassett, 1962: 94; Marchant, 1998:216). Apart from the recovery of the de Vlamingh plate, little of value was accomplished, though some useful survey work was conducted by L. I. Duperrey during what transpired to be quite a short stay at New Holland. On 26 September the ship left for Timor, where de Freycinet wrote back to France providing an explanation why he had failed to survey the coast from King George Sound, north to Shark Bay as ordered (Marchant, 1998:216).

**The landing at Timor**

On the occasion of their landing at Dili, Pellion provides another official and very dignified view of the officers disembarking to a salute of cannon without Rose, while Arago shows the same scene, with Rose dressed in the fashion of the time, supported on her husband’s arm.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that it was earlier in the voyage at Gibraltar when Rose appeared dressed as a man that the only hint of disapproval from foreign officials with whom they came in contact was received. While apparently not disturbed at all by her presence on board, the Governor was certainly not impressed with her appearance in trousers, and from then on Rose de Freycinet ‘abandoned her male disguise’ and dressed in the fashion recorded in some detail in her letters and, for instance, in Arago’s painting below (Dumore, 1969:67).

Arago was quite a humorist, for when his depiction of the official landing at Dili is examined very closely, he shows a less dignified view of it all and, to the delight of the realists amongst us all, he depicts an officer upended in the bows of the Uranie longboat. Herein lies the ever-present gulf between reality and the recorded event, and we are indebted to Arago and Rose de Freycinet for its presentation!

This attribute, the exuberant almost uninhibited nature of Arago’s art and writings, and Rose de Freycinet’s frank musings on people, places, events, on Louis’ understandable ill-health and her reflections on her own reactions, and on occasion, even the appropriateness of her own attire in respect to local custom, allows us to view both her and Arago’s accounts as important social commentary.

In that respect they represent far more of an anthropological resource than the more formal accounts of the officers and officials on board L’Uranie and on most other exploration ships that preceded it. In that same context it is also important to note that, unlike his predecessors, de Freycinet deliberately did not have a large body of civilian scientists with him, nor did he have such a politically divided ship. In having, with the notable exceptions of Rose, Arago and the Abbé (chaplain), a complement consisting of naval personnel, he was thereby able to maintain discipline and a unity of purpose that was lacking in the voyages of d’Entrecasteaux and Baudin where the complement were divided as much by social and political discord as from the competing aspirations of the scientists and the mariners (Dunmore, 1969:65).
Figure 17: Alphonse Pellion’s ‘official’ depiction of the landing at Dili. (Reproduced from original in de Freycinet, 1826 by Rivière, 1996:59)

Figure 18a: Arago’s depiction of the same scene, with Rose as part of the party. Reproduced from original in de Freycinet, 1826 by Rivière, 1996:59)

Figure 18b: A close up of the officer upended in the bows (National Library of Australia)
Of importance in reflecting on the earlier character assassination of de Freycinet’s former leader Nicolas Baudin by Péron and others, and on both Péron and de Freycinet’s failure to mention their former leader by name in the final account of the Baudin voyage—except on the occasion of his death (Brown, 2000)—is the fact that Freycinet did not suffer in like manner. Though there was plenty of opportunity for criticism, the unity preserved even after the voyage was completed is due in part to the decision not to include a large party of civilian scientists on the voyage.

From Timor L’Uranie proceeded as per the Itinerary above, and from an Australian and possibly an archaeological perspective, their next relevant port of call was Port Jackson in New South Wales.

*L’Uranie* at Port Jackson: concern at French expansionism

On 13 November, they arrived off the coast of New South Wales and a few days later dropped anchor in Neutral Bay. The changes evident since his visit in 1802 were a wonder to Freycinet, while the newcomer Arago was overwhelmed and as a result his comments are positively effusive.

Old friends came on board at Port Jackson and a house was rented ashore to house the Freycinets and for the scientific equipment. Dunmore recounts that while the botanists and others went off to become further acquainted with the hinterland, for the Freycinets ‘the stay was one long series of social events...local society succumbed to the charm and vivacity of the commandant’s lady—a very genteel, amiable woman’.

Dunmore also records that on the occasion of their visit to his residence at Parramatta, Governor Macquarie sent a regimental band to serenade the official party as they travelled up the harbour, such was the import of their visit. It was not all plain sailing, however, for on the first night in town they were burgled and lost a lot of linen, clothing and silverware. Rose’s account of this event is well worth reproducing at this juncture.

> We learnt that during the night our silver, table linen, our servants’ clothing and other effects had been stolen from the ground floor of the house we occupy. You know the purpose of this colony and what sort of people are to be found here in plenty; you will therefore not be astonished at this misdeed: might one not say it is roguery’s classic shore. It would be astonishing not to find thieves here as it would not to meet Parisians in Paris and Englishmen in London (Baslett, 1962:179).

While in Sydney, the Freycinets went to Parramatta and spent two days at Elizabeth Farm with the Macarthurs of merino sheep fame. Louis de Freycinet was assured by Mrs Hannibal Macarthur that her brother, Phillip Parker King, who was then surveying the north-west coast would have liked to have met him.

King was absent attempting to fill in the gaps in the charts left by his predecessors, for though peace had come with the defeat of Bonaparte, there were still many, including Governor Macquarie who harboured concerns
about French expansionist sentiment that was still directed towards the coast of New Holland. When ordered by London to provide King with a small ship with which to complete the surveys, Macquarie stated that:

I therefore cordially and entirely concur in opinion... as to the expediency and necessity of using every possible means and precaution to frustrate the present intentions of the French Government in this instance (Bassett, 1962:181)

King circumnavigated Australia three times between 1817-1822. In the course of one of these voyages he found his bosun’s lady had stowed away and on another occasion was disappointed at not finding the Vlamingh and Hamelin plates in Shark Bay. He also named the Buccaneer Archipelago in the north-west in honour of Dampier, such was his effect on those who followed.

On Sundays Mass was celebrated on board L’Uranie, the service attended not only by the French but also by a sizeable number of the Catholic population of Sydney—a predominantly Irish group that Péron expected to join as sympathisers in his earlier plot to seize the colony (Péron to Decaen, 20 December 1802. (Quoted in Scott, 1914:315-337).

On the eve of their departure, a large quantity of supplies and livestock was loaded. Included were two of Macarthur’s merino rams, with a view to introducing them to the flocks in France. They joined, as curiosities and valuable specimens, the eight black swans and a number of emus already on board. In reflecting France’s developing plans for the south-west of New Holland, Rose also expressed the hope that ‘would to God the French had as well-established a penal colony as this one’ (Quoted in Bassett, 1962:194).

On leaving port on Christmas morning 1819, a drunken convict was found in the bilge and handed over to the pilot and although a thorough search was carried out, ten more escapees were found when they were too far at sea to return.

French interest in New Holland extinguished

In his detailed analysis of the social, political and strategic context of the French interests in the Southland, Leslie Marchant states that:

In the period after Freycinet’s mission, the French government for the first time made specific plans to colonize western Australia, in order to realize the long held Bourbon dream of having a temperate base in the Indian Ocean to match British controlled south Africa’ (Marchant, 1998: 209).

Marchant also examines at length French interest in the establishment of a penal colony in south-western Australia in emulation of those on the east coast. The return to peace following Waterloo and restoration of the Bourbon monarchy resulted in the despatch of three French expeditions to south-west
Australia. The first led by Freycinet in *L’Uranie* and subsequently those of one of his officers, Louis Duperrey in 1822, and then Hyacinthe de Bougainville in 1824. Two of the three expeditions failed to arrive at their destination and the sole landing took place during an accidental visit by Dumont d’Urville, who had actually been sent to examine the suitability of establishing a French colony in New Zealand. He landed at King George Sound in 1826 just before French interest in a proposed south-west Australian colony was completely extinguished by the British establishing themselves at King George Sound (Albany) in 1826 and at the Swan River (Fremantle) in 1829. Thus, for a variety of reasons no 'Restoration Period’ French expedition, including de Freycinet’s, actually landed on the south-west coast of Australia, as intended and consequently no French penal colony eventuated.

On can only speculate on the result, had de Freycinet conducted the explorations required of him in 1818 and had France acted upon Saint Alouarn’s annexation of the Shark Bay region for France in 1772.

**The loss of *L’Uranie***

This is not the place to provide further detail of the voyage or its ramifications, for as indicated this work is designed purely to provide the basis for an informed assessment of the importance of the *Uranie* story to both Australia and the Falkland Islands and to provide the basis for an informed assessment of the archaeological remains at the wreck and the camp.

Suffice it to direct the reader’s attention to the works mentioned in the bibliography and to again note that two of the ship’s anchors were lost in a storm on the coast of Tierra del Fuego at the Baie du Bon Succès, where they hoped to take observations and to regain their strength for the final run home. Unable to return, they then attempted to reach Bougainville’s abandoned settlement at Port Louis where they hoped to finish the work and to rest after their battering in rounding the Horn. Louis de Freycinet wrote of ensuing events as did numerous others. Excerpts from the accounts he, the artist Jacques Arago and Rose de Freycinet gave are quoted here, and where they provide insights into the expected archaeological record the relevant section is underlined.

**Louis de Freycinet’s account:**

(Items of importance to the archaeological record are underlined. Excerpts from a translation by Mr R. Sexton).

*At 4 p.m. on 14 February we discerned the entrance of French Bay [Berkeley Sound]...[a] reduction in depth made me give the order to fall way two points to larboard to deviate away from the coast; but this excessive care became disastrous for us, and shortly the corvette was brought up with a pretty strong shock on an underwater rock...by backing all sails quickly we got ourselves refloated*
promptly...water soon entered the hold strongly...We hastened... to try to at least fother the leak; but after much work this measure was found inadequate; from this time I saw no other hope of escape than to go and cast the corvette ashore in a suitable place to at least save the crew and the results of the voyage...At 11 p.m., when in the proximity of Penguin [Hog] Island, we were overtaken by calm [and decided] to anchor... Despite the efforts of the crew and the working of all our pumps, the water had already reached the height of the orlop deck... and I sent a pinnace under the command of Monsieur Duperrey to sound in the vicinity and look for a suitable spot to beach the corvette... fear of seeing the corvette sink persuaded me to slip the cable [i.e. to abandon the anchor]...to stand in for the sandy cove... to the south of Penguin Island. We fell in with the track of the pinnace of Monsieur Duperrey, who having just reconnoitred the beach in question was in a position to more surely direct our course. It is therefore at 3 a.m. that the Uranie reached the inevitable termination of her voyage, at the place we have so properly named the Anse de la Providence!

Figure 19: Anse de la Providence, now Uranie Bay, Falkland Islands 1:50,000. D.O.S. Sheet 14.
... As soon as the ship was beached we carried some kedge anchors abreast her for fear that the surf should shift her away from shore...she heeled little by little to starboard to the point where the masts made an angle of twenty degrees with the vertical. ... We were fortunately then at the time of high water, spring tides; the water entered to half the breadth of the gun-deck; afterwards only descending to about five peds [5.3 feet] below this level at the ebb tide.

At first we worked to lighten the vessel; sent ashore were all the objects that could be of some use to us, whether immediately or later: the anchors and the guns, fitted with buoys were dropped close alongside. We came to regret acutely that our tier was composed of iron tanks, for we could never recover a single one of them from the hold...Not only did these iron tanks give rise to a disastrous encumbrance, they later deprived us of the resources to place a string of water casks around the sides of the ship, which might have been a powerful agent for us.

[in trying to turn the vessel onto its other side and thereby expose the leak] ...two bower anchors were dropped on the landward side opposite the foremast and the mainmast; their backing was set up on the shore with kedge anchors strongly secured with stakes and planks buried in the sand.

... the frightful shocks the hull suffered on the ground as a result of the ocean swell... we expected to see the corvette smashed to pieces...soon indeed we came to the sad conclusion that complete planks had been detached from the ship's bottom through these repeated jolts... As soon as the impossibility of repairing the Uranie had been proven, I set to work decking the longboat with the intention of sending it to Montevideo...to fetch the help we needed...(Freyceinet, 1826, Book One, Itinerary: 37-43).

In his *Voyage autour du Monde: Historique II* (1829) Freycinet provides details that also assist in making predictions about the archaeological remains, in explaining what is found, or in planning future work at the site. For example he refers to utilising the ship's 'royal pumps' and 'chain pumps' together...and attempting to put the ship 'square to the shore' but coming to rest 'a little crosswise'. In contradiction of his earlier statements, when he said he says that the tide was 'rising' as they stood in to the beach, he stated in this account that the ship struck at 'low water'.

In respect of predictions about what might have been abandoned in the wrecking, he states that the 'valuable merino sheep from New Holland' and other stock that had survived the voyage were landed though they lost 'several cases of specimens that were in the hold'.
...it was essential to place in safety immediately the journals and other expedition papers... we generally saved all our work in physical science, astronomy, hydrography, anthropology, and linguistics as well as all our journals and notes on natural history.

Freycinet also records that:

...special tents were pitched for our small number of sick, then for the crew, the petty officers, the midshipmen, and the officers; a particular one was also reserved for me, and it was there that all our papers were brought together as well as the astronomical and physical science instruments etc. The one destined to contain our gunpowder was placed in a separate quarter; two likewise were raised to receive the spirits and sea provisions that we had saved from the wreck.

James Weddell's account

The Antarctic explorer James Weddell records that he was in the Falkland islands in the brig Jane at the time and that Captain Orne of the American ship 'cunningly prevented' news of the disaster getting to him in order to avoid there being competition in securing recompense for taking the French home. Weddell met the Freycinets and dined with them, providing numerous additional insights, some of which have been mentioned earlier. He also produced a chart of Berkeley Sound which shows L'Uranie, providing an indication of its appearance when it was abandoned by the French.

Figure 20: Extract from Weddell's chart of Berkeley Sound showing the 'French wreck' ashore (Weddell, 1827: opp. p. 96).
Rose de Freycinet’s and Jacques Arago’s accounts

Rose de Freycinet’s journal as translated by Marc Serge Rivière and Marnie Bassett is important in respect to the clues it provides both in respect to the break-up of L’Uranie and to the remains at the camp.

Jacques Arago also provides two items of useful information in his letters and these are interspersed with the Freycinet account. Clues gleaned from his book appear below.

Jacques Arago...Letter CLIV:
At first the ship was lying on the sand; by degrees she was forced upon the rocks, and, notwithstanding the assurances which had been given to me to the contrary, she fell over on the starboard side, and my cabin was immersed in water....

... The collection of shells which I had gathered at every place where we stopped; the different arms of almost every nation on earth; rare birds and curious reptiles; my linen; my books; ten portfolios of sketches and finished drawings; all—all were engulfed...
It became necessary to take proper measures for landing the few provisions which had been saved. Muskets and ammunition were the principal objects of our solicitude.

Rose de Freycinet
18 February 1820...we are still on board, as Louis does not wish to abandon the ship before the most essential items have been removed from it. We see enormous waves lifting the ship and dropping it with great force. Each time this happens, we feel that the Uranie is going to split into two.

20 February 1820....waves are still lifting the corvette

29 February.... the longboat has been taken ashore; a tent has been pitched for the carpenters and another for the blacksmiths. Our camp looks like a small village; there is a tent for Louis, one for the equipment and the records where we will also take our meals, one for the staff, one for the midshipmen and one for the volunteers. Three other tents have been pitched, for the hospital, the sailors’ barracks and the masters respectively. There are also small tents for the cooks and the supplies. At some distance from the camp is the powder magazine where arms and ammunition are kept under lock and key. The crew are still busy salvaging anything they can from the ship.

Arago...Letter CLVIII
Three horses have been killed to-day, at a short distance from the camp, and the pieces are already placed in store; and as no one can go on...
board the corvette, which is gradually filling with sand, rolled in with great violence by the high seas...

Freylinet

4 March...Louis goes aboard each day to supervise the salvage operations. The swell is very heavy and the sea continues to lash the coast with such a fury that boats moored in a small bay have been driven onto the shore (See the Duperrey chart below).

8 March...High tides have prevented any salvage operations in the Uranie, as the top of the battery is permanently underwater.

10 March...we have resolved to send the hunters to set up camp three leagues from here. Four hunters and 11 men left at 1 p.m. to carry the necessary equipment to the new camp. [This camp is expected to have been substantial given the large number of horses and foals together with some oxen and pigs that Rose de Freycinet records were butchered there].

11 March...The new moon has brought back the high tide, and the men have seized the opportunity to go on board today.

13 March...The low tide made it possible for a large number of times to be salvaged from our poor Uranie. The search party managed to reach a hold containing biscuits and removed a large number...

14 March......sack of flour was salvaged and... fell into the hands of the cook during the construction of his oven. ...The only sound that disturbs me, and will torment me for a long time to come, is the noise of the waves crashing against the rocks on the shore, close to our tent.

Today many other items have been salvaged... the Lieutenant noticing a large piece of wood at the bottom of the sea, almost directly under the corvette, dredged it and recognised it as a plank from the Uranie. It contained a gash at least 7 feet long. The plank comes from the section of the ship which struck the rock, and the rolling of the sea has loosened it.

18 March...my husband decided to take a walk to the shipyard; we found the chaloupe very advanced [it was being decked] and ready to be launched in two or three days... the crew salvaged... a barrel of pitch. They also removed a box containing 66 cheeses in good condition...

22 March... The crew are busy tidying up the rigging and various items salvaged from the Uranie. Louis...presses on with the building of his observatory and intends to set up the equipment tomorrow...
29 March... The fine weather of the last two days, which made it possible for the crew to board the Uranie, has not kept up and nothing could be salvaged, even though high tides arrived with the full moon. The recent bad weather has heeled the Uranie over much more, and the battery is now permanently submerged. We have no choice but to abandon the rest of the goods left on board.

The Mercury... dropped anchor. The American informed us that he was flying the flag of rebels in whose service he was and that the purpose of his voyage was to transport cannons to Valparaiso.

30 March... The limited shelter which our tents provide in such a cold and wet climate is very trying...

2 April... we have received some medicine, which we had not been able to salvage from the Uranie.

4 April... The Sloop [a schooner belonging to the whaler [General Knox] showed M. Dubaut six spots where ships had been wrecked recently... and the captain told Louis that there were perhaps 50 wrecks in this area.

7 April... I continue to oversee the packing of my crates... all the books, maps etc. of the expedition need to be packed, in addition to our personal effects... Today I have numbered the twenty-second box and I still have about another ten to do...

8 April 1820... The captain of the General Knox [Orme]... has rendered assistance to the captain of the Mercury [Galvin] by taking on board some of his guns, with the intention of throwing them overboard at sea. This work is already well advanced and will allow us at last to send our baggage on board. Today Louis received a letter from the captain of the whaler who has heard that we planned to burn the remains of the Uranie. He asked for permission to remove everything that might be useful to him beforehand. But Louis does not wish to burn anything nor allow anything to be taken, not knowing whether the Government will send a rescue party to salvage all these objects, many of which, such as anchors, cannons, masts, etc., are very valuable. He is going to reply that unless he wishes to pay for it, the captain has no right to take away this material. I believe that he has no intention of purchasing anything whatsoever and his conscience will be too strong for him to return after our departure and brazenly take what has been refused him.

24 April 1820... The weather is foul; the tempestuous gales make us fear for the safety of several boats out at sea... M. Lamarche went on board our poor wrecked vessel to remove various small items and found
that everything was smashed or damaged and that several things had been stolen, including a beautiful mirror which used to stand in the poop-deck. He had no doubt that the culprit was Captain Orme who, believing that no one would go back to the Uranie, had taken what he wanted. M. Lamarche headed straight for our old camp, where he knew he would find the captain, to accuse him of the theft, hoping at least to recover the mirror. Orme [of the General Knox] was lost for words but assured us that his sailors had gone on board the Uranie without his consent, and that he believed the mirror was in the sloop and he would send it to the Mercury the following morning.

25 April 1820... Our captain has raised more difficulties concerning some topmasts which M. Lamarche had brought on board and placed on the deck. He arrived in a huff to tell Louis that the weight was excessive and that this endangered his ship. After some discussion regarding the fact that the ship was overloaded, it was agreed to jettison half of the goods at sea.

Tonight the Scottish captain [Weddell] came to visit Louis who offered him his rigged rowboat; as we cannot take it with us... He appeared to be very grateful and told us that, out of greed, Captain Orme had concealed the tragedy which had befallen the Uranie... I have heard that he asked what my name was and has called this small sloop The Rose.

'Primary salvage' at the shipwreck

After the events here described, the performing of what is described as 'primary salvage' or the authorised removal of materials from a wreck by the crew, the owners or their agents (McCarthy, 2000: 59) was completed. The ship was then abandoned and the French departed.

Given that there had already been unauthorised visits to the wreck and that materials had already been recovered in an unauthorised fashion, sufficient to have Freycinet consider burning the ship to prevent the looting (See entry for 8 April above), it is reasonable to conclude that these activities would have proceeded apace once the Uranie people left.

The sheer number of vessels that were in the islands, the prominence of the wreck (as shown by Weddell and in the Spanish illustration above), the nature of the place, and the trades conducted—whaling, assisting rebels and scaling—which of their very nature were secretive, all lead one to conclude that it is inconceivable that the wreck and the survivor's camp ashore would have been stripped of every useful item in the ensuing years.

Weddell, who had befriended the Freycinet to the extent he named their longboat which was presented to him The Rose, and who remained in the area until late in the year would have been powerless to stop the removal of materials from the wreck. He soon moved away to conduct further explorations and many others would have visited and examined the remains, treating them as abandoned materials. Those on official business would have considered the materials salvaged the property of their respective
governments. While anchored away at Port St Salvador, for example, Weddell also records that he received a letter from the commander of a ‘patriot national frigate’ which was then at anchor at Port Louis, not far from the Uranie wreck. In that missive Weddell was informed that the Captain was ‘commissioned by the supreme government of the united Provinces of South America’ at ‘Buenos Ayres’ to take possession of the islands and that he also intended to take possession of the wreck. This may be the source of the Spanish view of the wreck shown below.

Figure 21: A Spanish view of the wreck of L’Uranie (Naïfrage de l’Uranie en 1820, PH 71906, courtesy P. Godard). Entitled Reliquias d-la corveta Francesca la Urania.

An understanding of the commonalities of wreck disintegration and of shipwreck survivors camps when examined against these various descriptions allows a predictive model of the expected remains to be established.

The expected remains at the Uranie sites
Shipwreck sites of this nature can consist of
#1 a ‘striking point’ at which materials can be lost overboard when the ship first hits, or can fall from a pierced hull, leading to...
#2 a grounding point at which the main wreck comes to a final stop after proceeding on from #1, and the
#3 a wreckage plume emanating from one or both points depending on prevailing sea conditions and/or a violent event such as a hurricane or cyclone. The latter can lead to a plume that is often contrary to the prevailing seas and swell.
#4) a survivor’s camp, if the crew get ashore and occupy an area for a length of time
These four elements appear present at the Uranie site, and the quantity of wreckage in the plume, especially those elements of it on the beach, is notably large.

Indications are that the initial grounding at what is now known as Uranie Rock at the northern head of Berkeley Sound did not result in the loss of materials from the hull. Nor do the crew appear to have abandoned materials or to have thrown heavy objects such as cannon overboard in their flight to safety to eventually ground near the beach at Anse de la Providence, as the survivors called it.

Wooden vessels lying on a sand bottom bury into the seabed where they then disintegrate in a recognisable fashion dependent on a number of variables including sediment type, angle of heel and the like. A case similar to that described at L’Uranie, where it has heeled over to one side and then disintegrated is represented in the following set of stages.

Though L’Uranie did not have the iron knees of the vessel used in the illustration below as a predictive model, in this instance the effect will be the same. With the upper sections being torn off the wreck over the years and floating ashore in the storms, it will become evident where the vast quantities of plank, frame and structural timbers on the beach adjacent have emanated from.

**Figure 22:** Stages in the disintegration of a wooden wreck using hypothetical iron knees to illustrate the process. Wooden knees exposed above the sand will disintegrate along with other organic materials (M. McCarthy).
Conversely, the section remaining buried will stay protected by the sediments and heavy objects that remain on the wreck mound above it, e.g., cannon, anchors, winches, windlasses, stoves and the like. Eventually all exposed organic materials projecting above the seabed will disintegrate, leaving only those that have been colonised by plant and animal growth visible. Soon even those become difficult to identify, given the accumulative nature of these phenomena.

Unless there is a vast perturbation in the seabed caused by incidents such as violent storms that results in the uncovering of the remaining timbers and their being torn from the seabed, the extent of timber remaining will depend a great deal on the angle of heel of the wreck. For example if a vessel comes to rest upright on a sand bottom, all below the turn of the bilge can be expected to remain, and if lying on its side (as was the case with Uranie) often an entire half from the keelson through to the deck beams can remain. In either case these are substantial remains and both serve to act as a ‘cup’ in retaining materials once carried on board.

In the Uranie case it is expected most if not all the cannons and anchors were removed to assist in salvage, indeed one cannon is shown in the foreground in the Maurin illustration above and it is known from the accounts above that anchors were sent ashore in order to steady and then right the ship.

It is also evident in the Uranie case that there was ample opportunity to recover material, even that submerged in the hold, due to the tide range of around two metres over the period of the occupation of the land opposite. Further, the ability of salvors to ‘fish’ items out of a submerged hold is well recognised. That Uranie carried a large complement of artificers and crew, and given that there were numerous occasions when they could get access to the wreck in order to complete their work, it is expected that a vast amount of the material carried by the ship, including the scientific specimens could have been recovered by the crew while they were ashore. This is termed ‘primary salvage’ (McCarthy, 2000).

Given the interest shown in the remains by others, such as Captain Orme of the whaler General Knox, it is again logical to assume that further salvage would have occurred well after the French left and that as the ship began to break up and the holds thereby became more accessible, then those items left would also have been the subject of considerable attention. The iron tanks would have been especially useful to whalers and sealers for example. This has been termed ‘secondary salvage’, and while de Freycinet did all he could to avoid it, there is little doubt that it occurred. It is also reasonable to conclude that the survivor’s camp has also been denuded of useful materials and attractive items over the years.

**Preliminary investigations at the Uranie Site**

The July 1931 edition of *Sea Breezes*, carries a list entitled ‘Wrecks, Founderings, etc. on and near the Falkland Islands’ (Lehman, 1931:295-8). The list, which incidently does not contain reference to L’Uranie, was utilised by later scholars in compiling their own works on the same subject. One, a
plan of the islands with details of maritime and historical interest was produced by Mr John Smith, Curator of the Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust in 1977. It show details of four wrecks in the Berkeley Sound area, L’Uranie (1820), Fortunato (1876), Blanche (1856) and Magellen a French whaler of ‘about’ 1830. Given the amount of traffic that was around for the short period of the L’Uranie incident, it is possible that there are more, especially given Rose de Freycinet’s comment on 4 April 1820 that:

The Sloop [a schooner belonging to the whaler General Knox] showed M. Dubaut six spots where ships had been wrecked recently... and the captain told Louis that there were perhaps 20 wrecks in this area.

Mr David Eynn’s Uranie wreck report
In his earlier role as a ‘travelling teacher’ in the Islands, Mr David Eynn had become interested in the many wrecks there and he compiled a database of wrecks and numerous dives, often in home-made wetsuits. These dives included one that resulted in the location of the wreck in what was then known as French or Uranie Bay. Now proprietor of South Atlantic Maritime Services at Stanley, Mr Eynn was described by Mr Robert King, the Receiver of Wreck, in the Falkland Islands as the ‘leader of the local wreck survey group that works closely with the Museum and National Trust’ (Pers. Comm., King to McCarthy, 3 May 2000). In a letter to the author Mr Eynn indicated that L’Uranie was ‘one of the first shipwrecks’ he had located and that the discovery occurred in 1971 while he was diving with another local diver, Ken Halliday. Further Mr Eynn indicated that he had ‘relocated the wreck a couple of times since’ (D. Eynn to M. McCarthy, 25 April 2000).

Other expeditions
Mr Eynn was also part of a committee formed in the Falkland Islands to facilitate a youth training expedition under the ‘Operation Raleigh’ banner to the Uranie in the summer of 1991/2. It is understood that Associate Professor Leslie Marchant, a Western Australian and author of the seminal work France Australie, referred to in the historical analyses above, and retired Lt Colonel Blashford-Snell, of ‘Operation Raleigh’ were also involved in the project. Unfortunately Assoc. Prof. Marchant was not able to assist the Museum’s team in this instance, or in its general ‘French Connection’ studies (For details on this project see the Appendix 1.).

Other avenues of assistance were sought and contact was established with the London Office of Operation Raleigh. A search of their archives indicated that the wreck had not been visited and this was confirmed when on the occasion of the WA Museum’s visit to his establishment in March 2001 Mr

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5 Robert Sexton advises that in a work by J. Thierry du Pasquier entitled Les Bateleurs français du XIXe siècle, 1814-1868, published in 1882, it appears that four French whalers were lost in the Falkland islands around this time. One, Magellen was lost on 11 January 1833 in ‘Soledad Bay’.
Eynon advised that the Operation Raleigh search and survey did not 
eventuate and that the committee was subsequently disbanded (Eynon to 
McCarthy, March 2001).

Uranie Bay was also visited by the author M. Philippe Godard, a French 
citizen and adventurer residing in Perth, Western Australia. As part of his 
research into the activities of the French explorers on the Western Australian 
coast, he had chartered Mr Eynon to take him to the wreck by boat from 
Stanley in 1998. Though the land camp was visited and a brief photographic 
record was made, Mr Eynon was unable to put M. Godard on the wreck site 
(Godard to McCarthy, February 2002).

When Philippe Godard and the author met in connection with his location 
of relics from the 1772 French annexation of Western Australia mentioned 
éarlier (McCarthy, 1998), it was agreed to join forces and he provided the 
Museum with both a record of his visit and his preliminary research notes.

Figure 23: Philippe Godard at home after his visit to the Uranie Camp. He is holding a 
copy of de Freycinet’s Voyage Autour de Monde.

The Western Australian Maritime Museum’s fieldwork

When contacted by the Museum team on the advice of both the Receiver 
of Wreck, Mr Robert King and by Mr John Smith, the Museum Curator in the 
Falklands, Mr Eynon agreed to act as guide to the Museum team, to take them 
to the site, and to assist it with the hire of boats and equipment.
Expressions of support had also been received from the Falklands Island Sub Aqua Club (FISAC), a service-based dive club then being led by Flt Lt Paul Carrier, an RAF officer keen to have the club become involved in bona fide shipwreck survey in the islands. He offered to assist with the provision of divers and with a large Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) for use as a platform from which to operate.

After extensive planning and preparation, and after receiving all the necessary letters of permission and support (e.g. from the Falklands Islands Museum and National Trust) including approval to camp at Long Island, and approval from the Receiver of Wreck in the Falklands ‘to conduct a strictly non-disturbance search and inspection’ of the site (King to McCarthy, 3 May 2000), the Western Australian Maritime Museum’s team arrived at Port Stanley on Tuesday 6 March 2001 and spent the rest of the day settling in.

Figure 24 a-c: David Eynon, Robert King and John Smith at Port Stanley.
Arrival at Uranie Bay

The team then proceeded with Mr Eynon and his family—as drivers of two other 4WDs—to Uranie Beach on Long Island Farm, home of his sister and brother-in-law Glenda and Neil Watson.

After being made welcome and viewing the Watson's substantial research collection, the team examined a large collection of wreck material that was preserved in their home paddock and near the farmhouse. This included timbers, two large hawse-pipes, coal and cannonballs. Mr Watson also advised that while most of the material was from L’Uranie, there was also possibly material from Port Louis and from a wreck believed to be the Fortunato in the southern corner of the bay.

The team were then taken to the beach and after traversing along it to a flat elevated place opposite the 13th telegraph pole—which Mr Eynon indicated was his marker for the wreck offshore—camp was set up and the rest of the afternoon was spent settling in.

As part of the charter arrangements, Mr Eynon had agreed to bring his boat across from Stanley when the weather permitted, but with the wind blowing hard offshore, diving was impossible and the morning of the next day, Wednesday March 7, was spent examining the land camp and the wreckage on the beach.

The location of submerged wreckage

On the arrival of Flt Lt Bob Arber and Mr Craig Robertson, an advance guard of the FISAC team who were keen to dive even without their boat, preparations were made for a search of the area indicated by Mr Eynon about 200 metres offshore opposite the 13th telegraph pole between two lines of kelp (since designated the 'northern' and 'southern' beds).

For the search the two service divers elected to utilise scuba and dry suit systems while Museum diver Geoff Kimpton chose a wet suit and snorkel. After traversing the sand between the set of parallel kelp beds opposite the 13th pole, as directed by Mr Eynon, a 10 m length of timber—possibly a keel or keelson section—was found in 4-5 m of water, with a smaller piece, apparently a frame, projecting 50 cm from the seabed 20 metres away on sand. This was buoyed.

Figure 25: Divers Kimpton and Lashmar coming ashore after photographing the timber. The buoy and the kelp bed are visible in the background (Photo M. McCarthy)
Museum diver John Lashmar, also utilising a wet suit and snorkel, checked the kelp beds inshore and a line of parallel reefs just inshore of the northern kelp bed. This has since been called the ‘Dog Reef’ due to the presence of a prominent rock on one line of reef that appears much like the head of a Labrador dog shown in the right hand corner of an illustration by the contemporary artist Nicolas Maurin, below. The finding of a pulley sheave with an inner coak in the reef confirmed the impression given by Maurin’s illustration showing wreckage that was predominantly rigging amongst these rocks.

*Figure 26: Nicolas Maurin’s view entitled Naufrage de L’Uranie, looking across ‘Dog Rock’ towards the Camp. What is believed to be Rose de Freycinet’s distinctive tent is shown in the background. The near tent is improvised from a sail, as indicated by the lines of roof-points visible.* (National Library of Australia)

After breakfast the following day, Friday 9, concerned that we had inadvertently intruded on the *Uranie* survivor’s camp, the team rectified the matter and moved to the last piece of shelter north. Despite the very cold and bleak 25-30 knot westerly (offshore) winds that prevented the departure of Dave Eynon’s boat from Stanley, a considerable distance downwind in unprotected waters, inshore there were flat calm seas. As a result Geoff Kimpton and John Lashmar entered the water for video and photography of the buoyed timbers, around 11 a.m.
RAF divers appeared in their rigid inflatable boat (RIB), having towed in across 'camp' (from the Spanish campo meaning fields) to a launching facility near the Port Louis area. Thus they were able to utilise the otherwise unsuitable conditions to make a sheltered approach to the site from the west.

Figure 27: The RAF Divers and the RIB (Photo Hugh Edwards)

FISAC divers Arber, Robertson and newcomer Duncan Young then proceeded in the RIB with the author to search the deeper waters at the head of the northern kelp bed and across the bay opposite the 13th telegraph pole, towards the southern kelp bed.

During a break for lunch Mr Eynon and family, Museum Curators John Smith and Anne Johnston, and Robert King the Receiver of Wreck arrived by 4WD. While Mr Eynon and family examined wreckage at the southern extremity of the bay, the official party were shown the land camp and the divers continued searching.

Later in the afternoon, after the Eynon family and the official contingent had departed—and with no further clues as to the location of the wreck forthcoming—the combined Museum and RAF dive team searched the full extent of the northern kelp bed. The RAF group worked to seaward and on its southern side and Kimpton searched the entire northern side from deep water inshore, finding no further evidence of a wreck. Museum diver Hugh Edwards also checked the buoyed timber and Dog Reef area.

By this means the entire area to seaward of this marker out to the 7 metre depth contour was searched, and with the exception of the timbers and rigging found by Kimpton and Lashmar on the previous day, no further evidence of a wreck was found.
Attempts to locate the site using contemporary illustrations

Perplexed at the failure to find more timbers opposite the 13th telegraph pole, Geoff Kimpson and the author proceeded after the dive to the place that the artist Aphonse Pellion had occupied while drawing the wreck with the camp in the foreground (Figure 12 and upper view Figure 28). After two hours of fighting blustering winds and with some difficulty, his vantage point was fixed and comparisons between the view today and that in 1820 were made. Dr Williams, using his skills and experience as an artist, checked the position and agreed with the conclusions made.

This was the third view of the wreck to be fixed from the three contemporary drawings available. In total they were:

1. View from across Dog Reef to the camp By Nicolas Maurin. (Middle view Figure 28);
2. View from across the bay: Unknown Spanish artist (bottom)
3. View from behind the camp with the wreck in the background: By Pellion (Top).

From a comparison of these views with the topography, it became evident that:

1. The hillocks shown by the artists near the camp didn’t exist as depicted or have since eroded, possibly as a result of sand movement after the French occupation.
2. There are no trees as shown in the Pellion drawing, nor are there sand hills of the size and form indicated in it or in Maurin’s illustration.
3. Pellion’s depiction of the range of hills behind the site to the south east, while having many similarities, is not ‘photographic. Dr Williams was of the opinion that he was foreshortening all he could see for effect and was putting into one frame a much larger picture.
4. The Spanish view (Figure 21 and Figure 28 bottom), provides little assistance at all, showing the ship on the beach behind a line of rocks (possibly Dog Reef) projecting into the sea. The hills in the background and the land to the left of the wreck do not reflect the present situation at all.

While it was clear that the buoy placed on the timbers located by Geoff Kimpson lay near the Uranie wreck as depicted by Pellion in the upper view of Figure 29 following, expectations—in the absence of the bulk of a wreck at Mr Eynon’s position—that the contemporary artists would lead the team to the main site were clearly unrealistic, though there were some clues. These realisations combined to present quite a disappointment, as they were then all the team had to go on.

It was hoped that Dave Eynon could solve the puzzle, but on Saturday 10 March, hail and 30-knot winds again prevented both his departure in his RIB from Stanley and the RAF RIB via the Port Louis area—negating the plan to check the bearings given and to deploy a magnetometer.
Again this proved a real disappointment given that the Kimpton buoy and the Pellion artwork corresponded and it was evident that the wreck lay nearby, possibly in the adjacent kelp bed or just beyond it.

Figure 28: The three contemporary views of the Uranie site
The examination of the remains on land

In the afternoon with winds rising to 45-60 knots from the west, dropping temperatures, and very rough seas even very close inshore, work at sea was not possible and the GPS survey and examination of onshore timbers was continued under some difficulty. In the interim the team artist Dr John Williams produced sections through the camp site and a series of colour and black and white representations and photographs were taken at the same location as the artists some 200 years previous.

Figure 29: Team members examining the timbers on shore and the staunchion mentioned below (M. McCarty)

All large timbers on the shore including fastenings were closely examined over these first few days and plotted. These included a section of what appeared to be a staunchion supporting light cabin timber, with nut bolts, spikes etc and an iron knee. Shown on the right of Figure 29 above, it is believed to be a part of the ‘dunette’ or temporary additional quarters added to L’Uranie in preparation for the voyage.
Location of the rank-and-file soldier's and sailor's camp: a clue to the location of the wreck.

On the next day, Sunday 11 March, the wind had abated and smooth seas were prevalent offshore though in the water visibility was poor. The recording of the timbers continued while Dr Williams continued his work on drawing a site plan of the camp.
Initially the *Uranie* camp was believed to be confined to the area shown above the Museum’s Campsite II in the plan above, but finding more indications of the extent of the camp, including an artificial pond dug along a small stream, it became evident to Dr Williams that more remains existed to the north of what was first thought to be the main camp. With the benefit of hindsight this was to be expected, for with 142 people ranging from officers, crew, supernumeraries and the 11 Port Jackson convicts, it the camp must have been compartmentalised as were accommodation arrangements at sea.

Added as a result of Dr Williams insights was a distinct camp area that it once consisted of low stone walls and bastions that were possibly covered with spars and sails facing the sea. These walls, apparently more a military phenomenon than the ‘civilian’ camp to the south opposite the 13th telegraph pole. These remains were also opposite Alphonse Pellion’s position where he was stationed when producing a view of the camp across Dog Reef from the sea.

*Figure 30b: Excerpt from John William’s sketches showing the extent of the Uranie camp, focusing on the military and salvors’ camp*
In considering the military camp, Pellion's reasons for being offshore opposite it then became obvious: he was in a boat transiting in towards the camp on shore that was evidently out of his painting—as was L'Uranie—from which he was probably returning to the shore. On discussing the matter further amongst the dive team it became evident that, all other things being equal, it was logical for de Freycinet to have established the sailor's and soldier's camp closest to the wreck where they could assist in the salvage and to help build a rescue boat from the ship's timbers as recorded by the various diarists. As a result it was elected to examine the area to seaward and slightly north of Dog Rock adjacent the 'military camp' as a very likely possibility for the wreck-site.

**The wreck is found and inspected**

Divers Kimpton and Lashmar then kitted up and swam from the shore adjacent Dog Reef, Kimpton on snorkel and Lashmar on scuba. A hundred metres offshore from the Dog Reef in around 4-5 m of water, Kimpton indicated that he had found more wreckage protruding from the seabed and festooned with kelp. Almost simultaneously Lashmar surfaced, having found another piece, similarly colonised. Both finds were buoyed.

*Figure 31: Kelp growing on ship's timbers (Photo: M. McCarthy).*
In the meantime the FISAC team comprising, Paul Carrier as OIC, Pete Gruncell, Dave Gwineth, Debbie Carrier and Duncan Young arrived in their RIB. While the Museum divers were occupied around the buoys a magnetometer survey was commenced over the area and through the kelp nearby with the assistance of Carrier and Gwineth as boat operators. Unfortunately the electronics on the RIB were unable to provide a steady current flow and after 30 minutes the attempt was abandoned. Kimpton in the meantime had located more wreckage near the buoys and it became evident that the main wreck had been found. A halt was called for lunch with the wind westerly and increasing, but underwater the visibility was good.

The FISAC team, being still fresh and keen to get into the water, were then asked to closely search the area of the Kimpton/Lashmar find utilising scuba gear. In order to do so they were authorised to perform a light hand-fanning and the removal of the kelp from any timbers found for the purposes of photography and inspection. After well over an hour they returned to indicate they had removed some kelp and in doing so had found more timbers in the area of the buoys. From their description of the extent of the wreckage found it was apparent that the main wreck had been found, albeit festooned in kelp. Eager to continue, the FISAC team were taken through a 'dry run' on the beach of the standard recording techniques required for a preliminary site inspection. These included the laying of a graduated baseline along the axis of the site and the taking of right angle offsets from it using a set of metric tapes and a collapsible right-angled scale.

*Figure 32: A FISAC diver taking right angle offsets (Photo: Geoff Kimpton, from a video record)*
While the FISAC divers were thus engaged the Museum group also prepared for still and video photography and an inspection, also on scuba. After the FISAC divers had cut more of the kelp from the timbers and after the sand around each projecting timber was lightly hand-fanned to reveal its form and orientation, the axis of the site became apparent and a tape was strung through the middle of the site with zero at the shoreward end. Right angle offsets and depth measurements were then taken as planned.

About an hour later, with light falling to levels below that required for the photographic record, a halt was called. After celebrations on the shore, notes were compared and Paul Carrier produced a 'fine copy' of his FISAC team's underwater sketch. See below.

*Figure 33: The FISAC sketch of the site (Paul Carrier)*

The site which disappeared into the sand at the shoreward and seaward ends lay on an angle in towards the shore in 3-4 metres of water. It measured about 24 metres long by 7.5 metres wide with a keel/frame/keelson assemblage visible along an exposed 15 m section its southern side.

It was certainly the main piece of wreckage and, with the benefit of hindsight was close to the Pelliion position, opposite what is now believed to be the crew/salvor's section of the camp and it was not far offshore from the Maurin location on the northern side of Dog Reef.
Figure 34: Views of the remains on the seabed (Photos: M. McCarthy).
Figure 34 cont.: Views of the remains on the seabed. (Photo: Geoff Kimpton & M. McCarthy, from a video record)
After a brief celebration the FISAC team departed, passing back over the wreck to return a fire brick inadvertently recovered from what appeared to be a hearth or similar at the seaward end of the site.

Figure 35: The FISAC Team toast the 'find' with Geoff Kimpton (Photo: John Williams).

The Museum team then retired to a celebratory meal of Sicilian chips, pasta of some quality prepared by team journalist Carmelo Amalfi of the West Australian Newspaper and a welcome cognac of a lesser standard. As per an established tradition the pages of Rose’s journal for the same day in 1820 were read to the group and to the strains of Ave Maria, a hymn that would have been known to the French, the successes of the day and the state of the moon and tides often described by her those 200 years previously were contemplated. That the museum team were camped adjacent to L’Uranie in the same month and in the same place that her complement were marooned in 1820 provided an ethereal element to it all.

On Monday 12 March, with the weather poor, the RAF not returning, with Dave Eynon still unable to leave Port Stanley, and with our aims of a non-disturbance search and survey achieved, it was decided not to continue the in-water work, but to finalise the land survey, to commence packing, and to assist the Watsons herding cattle as but a small recognition of their assistance throughout.
The large stone structure

While walking to the Long Island Farm homestead the team also noticed and then examined a large, yet collapsed, stone structure opposite the farm near the beach. From an examination of the bottles still lying around it, the structure dated from 1870/80 at least. Horse bones and fire bricks similar to those on L’Uranie were also noted. Being too late for it to be effected, a plan and thorough inspection was not made, though the remains were very substantial indeed and were full of sand.

Figure 36: The large stone structure (Photo John Williams)

A re-joining of L’Uranie with the de Vlamingh plate and the linking of Shark Bay with the Falkland Islands

After an early tea with the Watsons and in finding they could not cast any light on the structure, or on the apparently artificial pond near the Uranie campsite, the Museum team paused for a photograph of them with a copy of the Vlamingh plate.

Cr Moss, President of the Shire of Shark Bay, had brought it to the Islands to show the local community and for a ceremonial reuniting with L’Uranie and the survivor’s camp where it had been housed for the time the castaways were marooned on these shores. This was considered to be an appropriate gesture, given that the de Freycinet’s had commented on the similarity between the Falkland Islands and Shark Bay (See Figures 37a & b).
David Eynon’s wreck report

While in Port Stanley, on following day, Tuesday 13 March, Mr Eynon was briefed on the location of the main site. While regretting his inability to provide assistance to the team due to the weather, he advised he had searched for his archive in the interim. He then provided more information on the history of the find, including his report of locating the wreck that is reproduced below.

Survey — Shipwrecks — Falkland Islands

Wreck Name: Uranie
Type/Country: Corvette/French
History (Brief):
Vessel departed Toulon in 1817, Captain Louis de Freycinet had been appointed by the French Government to lead a scientific expedition around the World. She visited South America, South Africa, Mauritius, Timor, The Moluccas, The Carolines, Australia. After a rough passage around the Horn, the Captain decided to put into the Falkland Islands. She struck an underwater rock near French Bay and was badly holed. Pumping proved inadequate and the vessel was headed towards a beach and at 3 on the morning of 15th February 1820 she ran aground on a sandy shore (now known as Long Island). She was already half full of water and the damage to the Corvette was beyond repair. The survivors were to remain on the area until April 21st when they were rescued by the three-masted ship Mercury eventually arriving in France on 15th November 1820.

Survey Report:
A great deal of wood from the wreck can still be found on the beach. The wreck lies in 4 m of water approximately 200 yards from the shoreline. The wreck itself is badly broken up and the shifting sands sometime partially covers what remains of the keel, planks and ribs. Many artefacts relating to the ship could be seen (see photograph) and no doubt some are of historical interest. This particular wreck could be of interest to the French Marine Historians.

Position:
Wreck is positioned at the 13th telegraph pole along Long Island Beach from the house, and approximately 200 yards from the shoreline.

Bibliography:
Reefs and Islands. Publisher Oxford University Press.

Despite having to rely on the contemporary artwork and on an analysis of the camp to locate the wreck, David Eynon’s role in its re-location was acknowledged in Carmelo Amalfi’s article that was sent electronically to Australia overnight. Appearing in the March 12, 2001 edition of the West Australian Newspaper, it read:

The find in Berkeley sound comes after Neil Watson and diver Dave Eynon showed the team timbers salvaged by Mr Watson as garden borders and fence posts. Mr Eynon and fellow Falklands diver Ken Halliday first dived on the wreck site 30 years ago. Mr Eynon last saw the submerged wreckage at Uranie Bay 18 months ago.
Divers find wreck in sand

A WA Museum team believes it may have found the Uranie, which was wrecked in the Falklands in 1820.

WRECK OF THE URANIE

Underwater cross-section

Dr. McCarthy and some of the team are examining the remains of the Uranie. The ship was salvaged in 1824, but the remains were discovered in 1974.

On Saturday, the Western march of the divers was cut short when a strong easterly wind made it difficult to search for the remains. The divers were forced to return to陆.

The Uranie is a small, single-masted ship that was built in 1818. It was lost in the Falklands in 1820.

Dutch plate links islands to WA

A Dutch plate from the 17th century has been found on King George Island in Antarctica.

The plate was discovered by a team of Australian and Dutch researchers during a recent expedition to the area.

It is a privilege to join the party and hold a replica of a maritime relic at the place where it was saved.
Wreck after Falklands. Farmer Neil Watson and wife Glenda with Urinea Bay in the background. The pool Mr Watson is leaning on is believed to be from the Urinea. Picture: CAMERON ALLEN

Timbers believed to be from the French ship the Urinea—one of the ships used in the early exploration of WA—were found by a local drifter who found them about 18 months ago.

The ship's crew arrived at Urinea Bay, on East Falkland Island, about 12km north-west of the Falkland Islands' capital of Port Stanley, during the mid-18th century and carried out surveying and trade ventures in the area. The timbers were discovered on the beach by Mr Watson, who said he was surprised by the discovery.

Mr Watson said the timbers were found on a remote beach near the Urinea Bay, which is about 10km south of Stanley.

Dr McCrory said although the timbers were found, they were not significant enough to warrant further investigation.

Three plates and other items including a chest, pottery, and a log were found on the beach where the ship's timber was found.

The location of the wreck will be disclosed because of the risk of injury.

Several pieces of timber provide the builders for the Uruguayans. Others decorate the front yard of his farm house.

"They have been washed up here for weeks," Mr Watson said. "I think they are not as much of a threat as they are now in a more weathered state.

The timbers are from a 19th-century ship, the Urinea, which was wrecked near the Falkland Islands in the mid-18th century. The timbers were discovered on the beach by Mr Watson, who said he was surprised by the discovery.

Atlantic clues to WA

SCIENCE writer for The West Australian, Catherine Amato, is travelling with a team of WA maritime experts to the South Atlantic that is working to recover the Urinea's treasure.

The team, led by the WA Maritime Museum, is on a round-the-world voyage to find two lost ships—discovered by archaeological expeditions William Dampier and Louis de Freycinet.

The trip is to the Falkland Islands and the Urinea Bay, where it is believed to be from the Urinea's ship Urinea. Next week, the expedition will be in the Urinea Bay, where Dampier and the Urinea were stranded.

Catherine de Freycinet reached the Urinea in September 1818 after an expedition with William Dampier to search for the Urinea.

He arrived at the Falkland Islands on February 1819 and offered the Urinea to the French. The Urinea was purchased by the French, and the Urinea was used as a base for further exploration. The Urinea was later lost in a storm on the way back to France.

Mr Watson said the wreck was one of the most significant finds in the Urinea's history. The Urinea was lost in a storm on the way back to France.

Mr Watson said the wreck was one of the most significant finds in the Urinea's history. The Urinea was lost in a storm on the way back to France.

"I hope to find some more artifacts in the next few weeks," Mr Watson said. "They are not as much of a threat as they are now in a more weathered state."
A slide presentation outlining the importance of the wreck and the landing camp to France, to the Islands, and to Australia was presented at Port Stanley and a highlight was Cr Moss, President of the Shire of Shark Bay's unveiling the replica of the Flamingh plate shown in the illustration above.

The explanation of the importance of the plate—which had been removed by Freycinet at Shark Bay and then recovered from the wreck to eventually find its way to France, and then after WWII back to Australia—added greatly to the night. Author Hugh Edwards and correspondent Carmelo Amalfi were also there to add further detail.

On Wednesday 14 March the team departed for Ascension Island and the search for HM Ship Roebuck.

David Eynon's 1972 diary entry

In a covering note to the West Australian Newspaper that was penned after the Museum team had returned home, Mr Eynon indicated that after a further protracted search of his archive, he had found his diary of events from the first dive on the site. There he reaffirmed that he, Ken Halliday and another person Jack (?) located a keel, copper fastenings and iron-work and other materials at a position where the 'rock' and the 10th telephone pole line up. His diary entries read thus:

Saturday 20 December, 1972:

Jack, Ken myself leave for Long Island... on—all gear out and wet suits on—In the water at 1830, takes 10 mins to locate wreckage of Uranie—remains of keel remaining, copper fastened also some iron work. Position line up rock with 10th telephone pole from Long Island house. Water cold—suit out taking photos—out of water at 1945—.... rub ourselves quickly to gain circulation. Pitch tent—wet suits out drying—lovely. Cold but calm evening hoping for a good day tomorrow.

Sunday 31st Dec

... in the water again at 0930—clearer than the day before—especially with the sun up. This time find the wreck straight away—we think a considerable amount is under the sea. Use Ectochrom (high speed)—find out other sections of the Uranie near the keel section various artefacts as shown in the diagram, the rod shaped object made of copper found to the west of the keel. The circular section attached to a piece of wood and because of this we were unable to detach it. Photograph. Our square slab—not sure what its made off. Barnacle growth photographed. Also find what is probably a sheave—found in blocks—copper or brass. 3 rungs on it—too embedded to prise off. Lovely now, sun overhead—snorkelling fine. Finish film.

Out of the water at 1030...take down gear-tent... make our way along beach to dig out piece of wreckage which could have something to do with capstan—fine—3 hawse pipes one with lead wrapped around it. Leave at 1330.

Here were further important clues. This account, the historical data and the accounts reproduced above, set the scene for the museum's inspection report that follows.
Technical Data: The *Uranie* sites

**Aims:**
As agreed with the Receiver of Wreck at the Falkland Islands and the Curator of the Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust, the purpose of this site inspection was to make a preliminary non-disturbance assessment of the extent of the submerged remains of the wreck of *la corvette du Roi L'Uranie* and its associated land camp, and to produce a photographic record of the site and any associated material on land.

**Constraints:**
The survey was proposed, accepted, and conducted as a non-disturbance search and survey, precluding the systematic removal of overburden on land or the sand layer under which the wreck lies. Only materials lying exposed or capable of being hand-fanned in a non-damaging manner were recorded, obviating any assessment of deeply-buried wreckage or remains at sea or on land.

**Site details:**

**Site Name:**
The wreck and survivor's camp of the French exploration corvette *L'Uranie*

**Date the ship was lost or abandoned:** 14 February 1820

**Date the campsite was occupied:** 14 February to 26 April 1820

**Date of Museum Inspection:** 7 March –15 March 2001

**File Name:** Dampier/de Freycinet

**File Number:** Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum: 365/00.

**Modern Chart & Map Numbers:**
3) *South Atlantic Ocean, Falkland Islands, Port Salvador to Port William, 1:75,000, BA 2547, 1988 Edition.*
4) *An International Travel Map of Falkland Islands Islas Malvinas, Scale 1:300,000, International Travel Maps, Vancouver, Canada.*

**Contemporary Charts and maps**
1) *Plan de la Baie Francaise (à la partie Orientale des Iles Malouines.) Levé et dressé par M. L'I. Duprey, Officier de marine, Établi sur la corvette Du Roi L'Uranie, 1820.*

**GPS Fix**

# Main body of wreckage: 51°35.063'S., 58°03.630'E
Finders:
Mr D. Eynon & Mr K. Halliday
The WA Maritime Museum Team

Inspection personnel:
WA Maritime Museum team
Mr C. Amalfi
Mr H. Edwards
Mr G. Kimpton
Mr J. Lashmar
Mr L. Moss
Mr J. Williams
Dr M. McCarthy OIC

Falkland Island Residents assisting
Mr David Eynon: South Atlantic Maritime Services
Mr Robert King: Receiver of Wreck
Dr Anne Johnson: Falkland Island Museum and National Trust
Mr John Smith: Falkland Island Museum and National Trust
Mr Neil and Mrs Glenda Watson: Long Island Farm.

Members Falkland Islands Sub Aqua Club assisting
Ft Lt Bob Arber RAF
Ft Lt Paul Carrier RAF (OIC)
Ms Debbie Carrier
Sgt Pete Gruncell (Royal Signals Corps)
Mr Dave Gwinneth
Mr Craig Robertson
Lt Duncan Young (Royal Logistics Corps)

Sailing Directions:
# By Sea: In appropriate weather conditions and in a suitable boat sail from Stanley to Uranie Bay in Berkeley Sound, a distance of c. 20 NM. Proceed through the lines of kelp beds to a point c. 500 metres east of the farm adjacent a line of parallel reefs visible at low water, and anchor c. 100 m offshore from the reef in 4-5 m of water maximum.
# By Land: Alternatively drive in a 4WD to Long Island Farm on Uranie Bay after obtaining permission to traverse the area and proceed to the beach adjacent. The terrain and the tracks over ‘campo’ (From the Spanish campo...field) as the farmland and unoccupied areas are called, can prove difficult. From there proceed to the sites as described below.

Site Conditions on inspection
Sea and Swell: Smooth seas generally with very low swell.
Current: Light
Winds: Predominantly offshore
Surge: Slight surge on the seabed in shallow water.
Visibility: Variable at 3-5 m plus.
Site Photographs:
Colour: Dampier/de Freycinet project.
Transparencies: Dampier/de Freycinet project.
Prints: Dampier/de Freycinet project
Transit Photos: Nil
Video: Dampier/de Freycinet

Figure 38: Chart Excerpt: BA 7550 Berkeley Sound

Sea-bed coverage: Sand
Tidal range: Approximately 2 m
Weather ashore: Variable, sometimes warm with light winds and full sun, other times ranging down to hail, c.5°C, rain and 50 kt winds.

Biological Data:
Thick kelp beds in discrete formations generally in a line offshore. These appear tied to rock and to exposed features such as the wreck itself.
Site identification issues:

Though there was a distinct possibility that it had been utilised in the 19th century by other visitors and by subsequent land-holders, the historical evidence indicated that there was little room for doubt that the terrestrial remains are those L’Uranie survivor’s camp.

Given that it corresponded in position and form to the depictions of it by the three artists above, there was also little doubt that the wreck of L’Uranie had been found. Mr Eynon’s report of wreckage opposite the 13th telegraph post was not as substantial as expected however and there was a possibility that a large part of the main wreck had broken clear and was buried in that vicinity. This has occurred elsewhere in the author’s experience and quite large sections of a hull can be found detached from the main site, often giving rise to conflicting claims by finders.

The matter was resolved as this report was being prepared back at Fremantle in Western Australia, where a copy of Duperrey’s chart of 1820, produced while he was marooned with the rest of the Uranie complement was obtained and brought to our attention by South Australian maritime researcher Mr Bcb Sexton (a late addition to the Uranie research team). A very close inspection shows that directly above the ‘L’ in the words La corvette L’Uranie naufragée lies a small mark indicating the wreck. The reef formation (Dog Reef) is also clearly visible just north of the smaller of two streams, the larger of which is termed Aiguade de l’Uranie.

As the wreck found by the Museum’s team and recorded by the FISAC divers is in that exact place, and as it lies as described in the various journals and illustrations opposite the camp with its keel to the south, there is no doubt that the wreck found is that of L’Uranie and not any other vessel such as La Fortunato (1876) that is also known to lie in the vicinity, apparently at the southern end of the Bay (Smith, 1977; Watson pers. comm.).

Approximate location of sites:
The sites consist of:

i) a main body of wreckage offshore at Uranie Bay
ii) a wreckage ‘plume’ on the seabed from there to the shore
iii) wreckage cast ashore: this lies from the south western head of the bay through to the beach opposite the farmhouse.
iv) A survivor’s camp that lies mainly between two streams in the middle of the bay. It comprises two known elements that are presently named the ‘military’ camp and the ‘civilian’ camp. Other elements are expected to become evident after further analysis.

The camp once occupied by the majority of the Uranie survivors lies between high water and a low ridge running along the shore south of the Farmhouse. The wreck itself lies on a sand bottom adjacent a large kelp bed c. 200 m directly offshore and immediately out from the distinctive reef formation depicted in the site plan and since named the ‘Dog Reef’.
Figure 39b: Detail from the plan de la Baie Francaise à la partie Orientale des îles Malouines). L.I. Duperrey, 1820.
The land camps & beachside wreckage

The main elements of the Uranie camp appear to lie at the foot of and above a prominent ridge of vegetation growing along a series of low dunes that stretch along the mid to south end of Uranie Bay. The camp appears to lie on the dune and at its foot between a large creek to the south, stretching intermittently from there north to a place where the dune flattens into a narrow grassy plain across a smaller creek with an apparently artificial lake at its upper end, and then across a flat grassed area past a distinctive parallel line of reefs at the northern end. Inland of this section lies a low dune system that appears not to have been inhabited, though it would have lent itself ideally to a wind break providing shelter from the strong westerly (offshore) winds that blow across the bay and out to sea.

On the beach adjacent down to the high water mark lie many scattered timbers comprising knees, fragments of frame, planking, cabin timbers, deadwood and the like all consistent with a vessel of the size and description of L'Uranie. Iron and copper fastenings appear throughout. Small fragments of copper sheathing are occasionally visible with the occasional pulley sheave and at one place two firebricks that appear to have recently been lifted from either the sea or the beach onto an area of vegetation.

While the spread of timbers centres in the region between the reef structure and the stream south, it is also found lightly scattered to the north and in larger quantities at the head of the bay to the south. Here and at other places in this lower part of the bay timbers were located well above the highest high water spring tide mark and were apparently deposited there in a violent storm that was associated with a considerable tidal surge. Some are overgrown with pasture, other project through the ground below the grass at the storm surge level.

Two focuses of attention along this area appear to be what have been called (as a result of surface indications only) the 'civilian campsite' to the south and a 'military campsite' that are situated either side of the small stream further to the north. This stream also appears to have an artificial pond on a grassed plateau along its course. At the southern end the much larger and stronger flowing stream labelled Aiguade de l'Uranie (watering place of the Uranie) meanders down to the intertidal zone and submerged within it lie ship's timbers. In this watering place there also appears also to be another pool, though it is less obviously artificial.

The 'civilian camp':

The tentative identification of an area on a remarkably flat plateau interspersed with conglomerations of water worn rocks that had been carried there for use in a camp or similar is based on the location of fine sherds and bottle fragments on the surface of a small rise at the southern extremity of that same plateau. These appear to have been exposed by wind activity.
The elevated nature of the plateau, the number of collapsed rock structures, its sheltered position away from the sea, with another ridge of vegetation acting as a windbreak for the westerly winds, makes it a logical place to house the upper echelon of shipboard society, though this theory was not tested, given the non-disturbance nature of the search and survey undertaken. It needs be accepted that there may be a number of alternatives, for example, the elevated and clear position, the collapsed stone structures and the fine ceramics could be an indication of an officer’s quarters or respite adjacent an observatory of the sort Freycinet would have needed to set up to continue his scientific work determining terrestrial magnetism and the shape of the earth.

Figure 40: Plan of the ‘civilian camp’ (John Williams).

In a number of ‘blowouts’ (wind excavated depressions) behind this plateau and to the north and south of it along the ridge there appeared further evidence of an occupation. Some contained ceramics and other sherds, other fastenings, a shoe fragment and these ‘blowouts’ appear to have commenced with the soil and vegetation disturbances that were a corollary of the French occupation and they appear to have been kept ‘open’ by the combined effect of stock and wind ever since.
The 'military camp'

In blending in far more with the surrounds, notably the thousands of water-worn rocks strewn along the beach at high water and in being a totally grassed field bar for a few stock 'pads' and light 'blowouts', the existence of this feature escaped the team for a few days.

As indicated it was first recognised by team artist John Williams as he was traversing the camp drawing plans and sections through it from the dunes to the beach.

This site appears as a number of lines of water-worn rock lying on an expanse of grass, some interspersed with ship's timbers that could not have reached their present position even in the greatest storm. These are believed to have been utilised within or on the structures to support sails or to provide additional shelter or support.

Between these structures and the beach, and lying along the grass/sand interface, was a low (and long-since completely collapsed) linear rock structure with regularly spaced concentrations of rock that in total resembled military 'bastions', hence the term 'military camp' that was assigned to it.

Nearby on the grass, again at its meeting with the beach sands was a deposit consisting of riveted iron straps and iron spaul of what was apparently the remains of an iron tank, possibly the one appearing in the Pellion view above to the side of the small boat Freycinet had his men altering and decking over to provide a means of escape or obtaining assistance.

The large stone structure opposite the homestead

Very close to the shore opposite the Long Island Farm homestead lies a large mound containing a collapsed stone structure, full of sand and vegetation which from the form and style of the bottles lying on the surface at the southern end dates to around 1870/80 at the latest. Horse bones and fire bricks similar to those on L'Uranie were also noted amidst the rocks at this end. A plan and thorough inspection was not made.

Being very large, it is possible that, unless it was erected by the first settlers at the Bay (rendering it of considerable interest on that score alone), it was produced by the crew of the Uranie, who, in being over one hundred strong, would have taken little time to build this and the other structures noted above. The Watsons were unable to provide any explanation for it and theories among the Museum's team ranged from a large beacon to alert rescuers or to mark the way into Port Louis, to an armoury to house powder and guns from Uranie, to an oven/cookhouse where animals were butchered and the meat/bones stored for future consumption, and through to a holding facility for the troublesome Port Jackson convicts.

Possible other sites

It is apparent that more sites will exist. Reference is made in the journal entries above to a 'hunter's camp' quite far away from the main camps, for example, and in the map produced by Duperrey above there is a small bay marked Anse aux Canoits (Boat Cove) at the north end of Anse de la
Providence (now Uranie Bay). Both sites are expected to contain evidence of an occupation of some sort.

Figure 41: Uranie Bay, showing some of the features mentioned above (John Williams)

10.3.1901. PLAN OF URANIE BAY. (NOT TO SCALE. BUT 10cm = approx. 1 km)
by John Williams.
The *Uranie* wreck

The *Uranie* wreck lies on a seabed of sand on an axis from shore of c. 100° magnetic, in c. 4 metres of water, shallowing slightly towards the shoreward end.

The visible wreckage measured c. 24 metres long with a keel/frame/keelson assemblage along part of its southern side between the 3-17 metre marks. What appeared to be iron ballast ‘pigs’ were visible alongside the keelson on the inner side of the wreck, as were copper bolts, one of which projected laterally from the side of one timber under the ballast. The stubs of a series of double frames project at right angles from the keel/keelson structure, and at the 15 metre mark, timbers of a corresponding double frame are visible 7.5 metres across the sand from the line of the keel/keelson, with others barely visible at lesser distances from the centreline, one being c. 4 m away. Hand-fanning to reveal their form and alignment indicates that they are connected under the sand to the keel, providing evidence that a large section of the wreck lies below the sand at this point. An agglomeration of what appear to be firebricks similar to one seen onshore was seen adjacent the double frame at the 15 metre mark. The depth inside the wreck varied from 3.5 m at the seaward end (24 m mark) to 3.4 m at the shore (0 m mark), At the northern extremity of the site at the 15 m mark the seabed was 3 metres from the surface and from there it slopes downward to c. 3.5 m measured at the 20 m mark and 3.4 m at the 0 m mark along the mid line of the wreck. Adjacent the keel/keelson there is a drop of 10-20 centimetres to the sea floor where a depth of 4 metres to the seabed was recorded. Experience indicates that a structure of this nature acts as a ‘cup’ containing materials that were carried in the hold and heavy objects and that other materials from on the deck above will have fallen into it as the ship disintegrated. Materials also lie underneath and alongside the structure, being washed under or buried by wave action.

Material raised from the wreck or recovered from the land site:

Nil, though one FISAC diver did recover a brick exposed in the hand-fanning process in the mistaken belief that its recovery was warranted. This was returned to the site by the Club at the end of the inspection.

Site security issues

The site(s) lie in a very remote location virtually under the gaze of the occupants of Long Island Farm, Neil and Glenda Watson, relative of Mr David Eynon as mentioned above, all committed preservationists keen not to have the site(s) subject to any unauthorised or unwarranted interference.

Further, the Falkland Islands Government has very stringent historic shipwreck legislation in place, indeed one could argue that it is the equal of all others throughout the world at present. The site has also received the attention of the Museum and National Trust of the Falkland Islands and its outgoing and incoming curators (Mr John Smith & Dr Anne Johnston
respectively) have both been extremely supportive of the need to keep these sites as pristine as possible for as long as possible.

Given that it would be almost impossible for there to be unauthorised interference in the sites in the present climate, it could be argued that they are well protected by such interests.

Ownership issues:

As a former serving ‘ship of State’ and given that it was not surrendered in the course of battle to another party, L’Uranie and its official contents remains the property of France, despite its lying in the waters of a British Protectorate (See appendices). By that same convention, foreign ships of State are protected by the country in whose waters the remains lie.

As a matter of course and as agreed by the team before departure, the remains of L’Uranie at Long Island Farm in Uranie Bay and in the seas opposite were formally claimed by the team through the Receiver of Wreck at the Falklands for the French Navy and for the Falkland Islands, paving the way for their declaration as a suite of significant maritime archaeological sites and precluding any claims that might be made by others with non-archaeological or heritage considerations in mind. Further, the team also indicated that it would only exercise those rights due to it as the finders should the wreck and the relics be the subject of a competing claim that serves to cast any doubt on the rights of the French Navy, Britain and the Falkland Islands.

Assessment of site significance

(i) Archaeological: Of France’s lost exploration ships and the associated remains, those at the wreck and camps of La corvette du Roi L’Uranie are an easily accessible and comparatively well preserved representative of those from the post-Napoleonic period—a time when France still sought colonies on the Great South Land for its own purposes and partly as a foil to British intentions.

The vessel and the camps provide tangible links to Louis de Freycinet, one of France’s distinguished explorers, and the ship carried materials collected from around the world as France and other European countries searched for knowledge about the Great Southland and for new dominions. The vessel is also linked to one of the great female voyagers, commentators and diarists of her time, Rose de Freycinet, and again there are expected to be materials related to her presence on board.

The sites are of great significance to Australia in respect of its links to the de Freycinetts, and to their role in removing and preserving the de Vlamingh plate, and most likely the Hamelin Plate. They are also significant in regards to the collections de Freycinet and his people made.

(ii) Technological: The wreck, its fittings and fixtures will complement documentary sources in providing useful information and insights into the French exploration ship of the time and the manner in which it was re-fitted and prepared for its exploration voyage.
(iii) Scientific: Apart from the usual comparative studies, e.g. corrosion measurement, organics analyses, site formation studies, &c that are now part of most major shipwreck studies, the materials gathered on the de Freycinet's voyage and subsequently lost in the sands of Uranie Bay and on its shores will prove of interest to many specialists. Examples are the fastenings that remain in abundance on the shore.

(iv) Educational: The wreck provides a focus on Rose and Louis de Freycinet, their travels, their journals, their story and on France’s plans in respect to Terre Napoléon and other stretches of Australian shores that in other circumstances might well have seen the region colonised by France.

(v) Recreational: The area in which the wreck lies is remote and in being buried and on a relatively barren sand bottom, the site does not lend itself easily to recreational diving.

(vi) Cultural: The de Freycinet's social legacy is multi-faceted, residing mainly in the journals and in the comparison of theirs with the other commentaries. Scholars with interests centring on the topic of 'women at sea' will also find a rich resource in Rose de Freycinet's story.

Management considerations:

Natural Forces:
The wreck lies on a hard sand bottom adjacent to large bed of kelp. It is protected from all but those seas that on occasion run down Berkeley Sound. With the kelp also growing on all exposed timber or fittings, thereby also helping alleviate the force of any seas and swell that might run down the sound, it appears that the wreck is presently well-protected from natural forces. The survivor's camp is also well protected, though 'blowouts' amongst the dunes and animal pads do serve to expose materials.

Present and Future Human Forces
The wreck lies adjacent the Long Island Farm homestead and cannot be accessed without alerting residents at the farm. In that respect is well protected from unwarranted human interference. The same applies for the land camps.

Projected General Site Stability
It is anticipated that the sites will remain stable unless there is enhanced human access or there is an event that results in a drop in the sand levels on the seabed or in the removal of the protective sands and kelp over the site. Again it is expected that the land sites will remain stable unless there is an increase in human or animal access.
Legal Considerations

Though they are acknowledged as significant, the sites are, as yet, not listed on the inventories of the heritage sites in the Falkland Islands. The shipwreck Acts in force throughout the islands are of considerable strength and from discussions made with divers have become well respected.

Recommendations

#1 In respect of the historic links *L’Uranie* and its people have with Australia it is hoped that the Falkland Islands Government and its people should consider the wreck and its survivor’s camp as part of a shared maritime heritage of France, the Islands, Australia and the State of Western Australia in particular.

#2) If they are not already protected, the *Uranie* sites should be declared historic under the terms of the Heritage legislation in place at the Falkland Islands. This legal protection could be enhanced by the declaration of a ‘holistic’ heritage zone encompassing the area of the camps, the beach and the wreck itself. Appropriate signage could be erected and visitation could be encouraged (subject to landholder approval) on a ‘take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints’ basis in accordance with present ‘eco-tourism’ philosophies.

#3) The archaeological deposit at the wreck and at elements of the land site(s) be tested by appropriate specialists in order to gauge the full extent of the remains at sea and on the land. Before doing so a prior commitment to the conservation of any materials disturbed and to the return of the site(s) to a stable condition needs be made.

The Western Australian Maritime Museum is prepared to facilitate and lead this work in association with Falkland Island and French interests.

#3) Copies of the illustrative and research materials gleaned and developed by the Western Australian Maritime Museum’s team for the purposes of this report should be forwarded in CD form to the Falkland Islands through the Office of the Receiver of Wreck and the Falkland Island Museum and National Trust for use in the interpretation and presentation of the site and its story at the Islands and in France. (In progress)

#4) A website on the subject of the *Uranie* voyage should be developed and educational institutions should be provided easy access to the WA Maritime Museum’s research materials for non-commercial uses. (In progress).
#5) The Australian authors Hugh Edwards and Philippe Godard should be encouraged to commence work on a book, either separately or in tandem, and that others in France and the Falkland Islands be encouraged to write about the Uranie story. (In progress)

#6) Consideration could be given to travelling an exhibition on the Uranie story together with elements of the team’s successful search for the site of William Dampier’s ship Roebuck (1690-1701) soon after leaving the Falkland Islands. Consideration also needs be given to the exhibition travelling to France, Fremantle, Shark Bay, and elsewhere in Australia, including the National Maritime Museum in Sydney if that is considered appropriate. (In progress)

#2 The British and Falkland Islands Government recognise the efforts of the Receiver of Wreck, Mr Robert King and Flt Lt Paul Carrier and his FISAC team in facilitating the search and inspection, and for bringing matters to such a satisfactory closure for the Islands and their people.

#3 Mr David Eynon and Mr Ken Halliday will continue to be recognised as the first to locate the wreck site. (Done)
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Appendix 1: The French Connection Studies

The WA Maritime Museum and the French on these shores

While there have been a number of previous historical studies and searches external to this institution, such as the research and fieldwork conducted by author Associate Professor Leslie Marchant (*France Australe*), staff of the Department of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum have been involved in research and fieldwork pertinent to the material remains of a number of French explorers over recent years. Museum staff have also assisted numerous scholars and authors in conducting research and in presenting their work. Presently a number of staff are working with external scholars and affiliates in a range of French explorer related studies.

Recently the opportunity arose within the Department to unify this suite of studies into a recognisable thread that could well be entitled ‘The French Connection’.

In chronological order it involves

a) The voyages of St Aloiarn in 1772 (*Gros Ventre*)
b) The loss of La Pérouse in 1788 (*Astrolabe & Boussole*)
c) The voyages of d’Entrecasteaux in 1792 (*Espérance & Recherche*)
d) Baudin and Hamelin’s explorations in 1801-3 (*Géographe & Naturaliste*)
e) Louis and Rose de Freycinet’s visit to Shark Bay (1818), and the loss of the ship in the Falkland Islands two years later (*L’Uranie*)
f) The visit of Dumont d’Urville in 1826 (*Astrolabe II*)
g) The loss of the whaler *Parséverant* at Shark Bay in 1841
h) The former French slave-ship *James Matthews* (1841)
i) The rescue of the explorer John Eyre by the whale-ship *Mississippi* near Esperance
j) The loss of the French cargo ship *Ville de Rouen* in 1901

This unified study is reminiscent of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) and Colonial Shipwreck themes that have characterised the Department’s efforts in other areas.

The archaeological elements of the ‘French Connection’ involve:

1) Research and fieldwork on the annexation of the Shark Bay region by St Aloiarn in 1772 involving the deposition of coins and a bottle containing an annexation parchment (Sturbsry et al.).

2) The search for two anchors lost by St Aloiarn in Shark Bay (Green & Souter). With numerous external researchers, notably M. Philippe Godard, the Shire of Shark Bay and others.

3) Assisting in the publication of the report of a former staff member (S. Sledge) on the examination of the remains of one of La Pérouse’s vessels lost in the Pacific in 1788 (Green and Sturbsry).

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6 It's commander Captain Rossiter was a British citizen in command of a French crew and ship (Godard to McCarthy, February 2002).
4) Research and fieldwork re the deposition of bottles and plates in Shark Bay and possibly other regions by subsequent explorers Hamelin and Baudin 1801-1803 (McCarthy et al.).

5) The search for the ‘chaloupe’ a longboat lost near Busselton during the Hamelin and Baudin voyages (Green, Souter et al.). With numerous external researchers, notably Mr Tom O’Brien of Bunbury.

6) The discovery of the de Vlamingh plate by Hamelin and the erection of a plate of his own. Research and fieldwork at the plate site (McCarthy, Playford and National Trust)

7) The visit by Rose and Louis de Freycinet to Shark Bay and the possible removal of both the de Vlamingh plate and the Hamelin plate in 1817. Research into the whereabouts of the Hamelin plate (McCarthy, Philippe Godard)

8) Research and fieldwork related to the loss of the whaler Persévérant (1837-1841) and the marooning of the crew in Shark Bay (McCarthy & Souter) With numerous external researchers, notably Mr Hugh Edwards and M. Philippe Godard.

9) Proposed studies at the wreck of the de Freycinet’s ship L’Uranie in the Falkland Islands. This involves their campsites (McCarthy et al). With numerous external researchers, notably M. Philippe Godard and Mr Hugh Edwards.

10) The recording and management of the remains of the barque Ville de Rouen lost at Moore River in 1901 (Department generally). With Mr J. Clarke of Two Rocks.

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Department of Maritime Archaeology
March 2000
Appendix 2: Ownership of sunken warships, ships of State, and downed military aircraft

(Reproduced from Roach, 1996: 84-5)

Warships, naval auxiliaries, and other vessels owned or operated by a State and used at the time they sank only on government non-commercial service, are State vessels. Aircraft used in military, customs and police services are State aircraft. International law recognises that State vessels and aircraft, and their associated artefacts, whether or not sunken, are entitled to sovereign immunity.

In addition, such shipwrecks and sunken aircraft are historical artefacts of special importance and entitled to special protection. Many such ships and aircraft have unique histories making them important parts of their country’s traditions. In addition, these ships and aircraft may be the last resting places of many sailors and airmen who died in the service of their nations.

The practice of States confirms the well-established rule of international law that title to such vessels and aircraft is lost only by capture or surrender during battle (before sinking), by international agreement, or by an express act of abandonment of government property. Once hostilities have ended, belligerents do not acquire any title to such vessels or aircraft through the act of sinking them. Likewise, title to such vessels and aircraft is not lost by the mere passage of time.

A coastal State does not acquire any right of ownership to a sunken state vessel or aircraft by reason of its being located on or embedded in land or the sea-bed over which it exercises sovereignty or jurisdiction. Access to such vessels and aircraft and their associated artefacts located on or embedded in the sea-bed of foreign archipelagic waters, territorial seas or contiguous zones, is subject to coastal State control in accordance with international law. It is the policy of most Governments to honour requests from sovereign States to respect, or to authorise visits to, such sunken vessels and aircraft.

Access to sunken state vessels and aircraft and their associated artefacts located on or embedded in the continental shelf seaward of 24 miles from the baseline is subject to flag State control and is not subject to coastal State control. Access to sunken state vessels and aircraft and their associated artefacts located on or embedded in the sea-bed seaward of 24 miles from the baseline is subject only to flag State control.

Except for opposing belligerents while hostilities continue, no person or State may salvage or attempt to salvage sunken state vessels or aircraft, of their associated artefacts, wherever located, without the express permission of the sovereign flag State, whether or not a war grave.

Once hostilities have ended, sunken state vessels and aircraft containing crew remains are also entitled to special respect as war graves and must not be disturbed without the explicit permission of the sovereign.

The flag State is entitled to use all lawful means to prevent unauthorised disturbance of the wreck or crash site (including the debris field) or salvage of the wreck.
Disturbance of any shipwreck or crash site is necessarily a destructive process. In virtually every instance, once recovery activities are undertaken, the site cannot be restored or replicated. Any recovery effort which disturbs the site denies other properly authorised persons the opportunity for scientific discovery and study.

Accepted principles of marine archaeology, naval history and environmental protection require thoughtful research design, careful site surveys, minimal site disturbance consistent with research requirements, adequate financial resources, preparation of professional reports, and a comprehensive conservation plan before artefacts should be permitted to be recovered and treated. These principles apply particularly to sunken state vessels and aircraft.

These rules do not affect the rights of a territorial sovereign to engage in legitimate operations, such as removal of navigational obstructions, prevention of damage to the marine environment, or other actions not prohibited by international law, ordinarily following notice to and in cooperation with the State owning the vessel or aircraft or otherwise entitled to assert the sovereign immunity of the wreck.

A "duty fare" on the "Tristar" service to the Islands was obtained for the team through Mr. Robert King, Receiver of Wreck, Falkland Island Government. Mr. Neil and Mrs. Glenda Watson welcomed the team on the farm on Uranie Bay. Flt Lt Paul Carrier (RAF) organised a support dive team and a boat.

Sponsors, supporters & fundraisers