

THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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JEAN-FRANCOIS DE GALAUP COMPTE DE LA PEROUSE

The spelling of names from a couple of centuries ago is, at best, very difficult and there is some confusion regarding the spelling of La Perouse.

A single word spelling Laperouse was used on the original membership record for brethren accepted into Lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre for the year 1765.

It is not a signature and it is probably in the handwriting of the Lodge Secretary.

It is worth noting that two of his Masonic contemporaries used the single word spelling. They were the world famous Astronomer Bro Joseph-Jerome Lalande (1732 – 1807) and the equally famous mathematician Bro Pierre-Simon Laplace.

Another spelling that was used was La Pyrouse.

An account of La Perouse's voyage up until September 1787 was published by the French Government entitled *Voyage de La Perouse autour du Monde*. The title used the two word spelling.

The French public had already been fascinated by the explorations of La Perouse and his crew, but their complete disappearance added to the romance and intrigue of the story. The sensational tale was popularised both in France and in Britain, by several fictionalised books and plays, which explored the possible fate of the expedition.

Two such plays produced in England in 1802 and 1827 used La Perouse in the title but, to add to the confusion, the 1827 play entitled *De La Perouse or the Desolate Island* advertised the actor Mr Howel playing the part of Perouse.

In Australia, the two word spelling is used.

The French navigator was born on 22 August 1741 at the castle La Guo on the banks of the River Tarn near Albi in Southern France.

THEATRE, HUNTINGDON.

THE THIRD NIGHT OF

**Messrs. Parsloe & Howel's
PERFORMANCE.**

THIS PRESENT FRIDAY EVENING the 16th, of AUGUST 1827.

Will be performed Colman's favorite Comedy, called the

HEIR AT LAW,

Hubb Bowley, - - - - - Mr W. ROBERTSON
Henry Merchant, - - - - - Mr BUTLER Stedfast, - - - - - Mr SHIELD
Zebiel Hounspon, - - - - - Mr GURNER Renrick, - - - - - Mr CHESTERTON
Daniel Douglas, alias Bacon Duberly, - - - - - Mr REED
Dr Pangloss, L. L. D. and A. S. S., - - - - - Mr CHIPPENDALE
Deborah Douglas, alias Lady Duberly, - - - - - Mrs DANBY
Caroline Dormer, - - - - - Miss MARINUS Cicely Hounspon, - - - - - Miss ROUTH

The celebrated **EPILOGUE**, by all the Characters.

END OF ACT SECOND,

MR. E. J. PARSLOE, WILL PERSONATE

**MOTHER SHIPTON'S
CAT,**

In which he will introduce his celebrated SCENE from the Pantomime of

MOTHER SHIPTON.

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

A Hornpipe by Mr. Howel.

To conclude with the grand Pantomime of action, (in 2 acts,) called

DE LA PEROUSE

OR, THE DESOLATE ISLAND.

EUROPEANS.

Perouse, the Navigator, - - - - - Mr. HOWEL,

Lieutenant, - - - - - Mr BUTLER Congo a black Servant, - - - - - Mr REED
Madame Perouse, - - - - - Miss ROUTH

INDIANS.

Kanko, Sister to Umha, - - - - - Mr SHIELD
Tupotopaw, - - - - - Mr HEDGKIN, Quishequaw, &c. by others

Champanzee, (a Monkey of the Island) Mr. E. J. PARSLOE

Umha, betrothed to Kanko, - - - - - Miss MARINUS.

. The public are respectfully informed there will be NO HALF PRICE to the GALLERY on the nights of Messrs E. J. Parsloe's and Howel's performance.

Doors open at 6 to begin at 7 - Lower Boxes 3s 6d. Half-price 2s - Upper Boxes 2s 6d. Half-price 1s 6d - Pit 2s. - Gallery 1s.

Tickets and places for the Boxes to be taken of Mr Wood, Printer, near the George Hotel: Tickets may also be had of Mr Robertson, at Mr Wilson's, Silversmiths, Market Place.

**Messrs. Howel and Parsloe's
LAST NIGHT, AND BENEFIT,
ON SATURDAY, THE 11th OF AUGUST, 1827.**

LOVELL, PRINTER, HUNTINGDON.

THEATRE, HUNTINGDON.

The third night of Messrs. Parsloe & Howel's performance. . . .
Friday evening the 10th of August 1827.

Albi, 60 km north-east of Toulouse, is the capital of the Department of Tarn in the historic province of Languedoc some 270 km west of Marseille and 160 km north of the Spanish border.

Jean-Francois was the oldest son of an aristocratic family and, after elementary schooling, he attended at age 9, a Jesuit college in Albi.

At age 15, he reported to the navy at the training establishment at the port of Brest.

During his training, the seven year war with Britain began. In November 1759, whilst serving on the *Formidable* in the battle against Admiral Hawke, RN, off Belle Isle, Newfoundland, La Perouse was wounded and taken prisoner. After two years he was repatriated from England and was posted again to sea duties, at the Ile de France (now Mauritius), where for 5 years, he perfected his techniques as a seaman and navigator and pursued his interest in oceanography. He travelled to India where he met his future wife Elenore Brouden whom he married 17 June 1783.

Promoted lieutenant in April 1775 and captain in 1780 after France joined the American war, with Britain, he had opportunities to distinguish himself as a naval commander. His campaign against the British in Hudson Bay in August 1782 was a signal success. He conquered 2 British forts and he demonstrated his humanity by leaving with the remnants of the settlements enough arms and provisions to enable them to preserve themselves during the oncoming winter.

In 1783, the French government resolved to send an expedition to the Pacific to complete Captain Cook's unfinished work, and in particular to explore a possible north-west passage and other passages in the Bering Sea, which had been a mystery to Europeans since the sixteenth century. King Louis XVI himself took a hand in drafting the plan and itinerary, and when La Perouse was selected to lead the fleet gave him an audience before he sailed.

In command of two ships, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe* (Commandant Paul Antoine Fleuriot de Langle), he left Brest on 1 August 1785 making for Brazil. Doubling Cape Horn he refitted in Chile, then sailed to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and thence to Alaska, where he turned south exploring and surveying the coast as far as California.

After a short refit at Monterey, he sailed across the Pacific, discovered uncharted islands, and visited Macao and Manila.

After six weeks reprovisioning and refreshing he left on 10 April 1787 to survey the coasts and territories north of Korea, which had been described and commented on by Christian missionaries. He sailed up the Gulf of Tartary, naming several points on both its shores and discovered that the Russian territory of Sakhalin was an island. The strait between Sakhalin and the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido is named in his honour.

In September he put in to Kamchatka Peninsular to replenish his supplies. From there he dispatched an officer, Barthelemy de Lesseps, overland to Paris with accounts of his discoveries, while he turned south making for New Holland.

In December, at the Samoan island of Tutuila, which Bro Louis Antoine de Bougainville had called the Navigator Islands when he explored them in 1767, some of the inhabitants suddenly attacked a party from *L'Astrolabe* seeking water and killed Commandant de Langle, La Perouse's second in Command and eleven others. The humane La Perouse left without taking reprisals and sailed through the Pacific Islands to Norfolk Island and thence to Botany Bay. He was sighted off the coast of New South Wales on 24 January 1788 but bad weather prevented the French ships from entering Botany Bay.

There was some alarm among the First Fleeters. Captain Arthur Phillip had already left for Port Jackson but his second-in-command, Captain John Hunter had remained in the bay on HMS *Sirius* together with the other transports.

Conjecture was rife. Were the ships Dutch men-of-war sent to dispute the landing of the British? Were they French or Spanish or Portuguese or, as some hoped, were they British vessels with more convicts and supplies? Phillip decided they were French on a voyage of discovery.

Captain Hunter sent Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, RN, to assist the French to an anchorage. The French were surprised to see that the British expedition which they knew had left England, had actually arrived.

Captain Robert Sutton de Clonard, in command of *L'Astrolabe* following the death of de Langle at Samoa, paid a courtesy call on Captain Hunter. He explained that the French ships had put into Botany Bay to replenish wood and water and to build two new longboats the frames for which had been brought from France.

The French immediately erected a small timber stockade with mounted naval guns on the northern shore of Botany Bay just inside the head of the bay and at the eastern point of what is now Yarra Bay where Cook had recorded a small stream of fresh water.

Captain Phillip sent Lieutenant Philip Gidley King, RN, by water, to pay a call on La Perouse and offer any assistance. King's men rowed from Port Jackson to Botany Bay and back.

La Perouse returned the offer stating that he expected to be back in France within 15 months and that he had 3 years supply of provisions.

Lieutenant King also learned that some convicts had tramped overland from the settlement at Port Jackson with the idea of joining the French ships.

La Perouse, humane as ever, sent them back with more than adequate provisions for the 15 km walk through the bush.

King stayed the night on *La Boussole*, no doubt to the relief of his rowers, and learned that the astronomer, Joseph Lepaute Dagelet had found James Cook's observations to be correct.

On 8 February, Captain de Clonard visited Governor Phillip at Port Jackson and handed to him dispatches for transmission to the French Ambassador in London.

It seems strange that Phillip and La Perouse never met.

Some of Phillip's officers, Surgeon Arthur Bowes among others, were suspicious of French motives and their courtesy visits.

On 17 February 1788, the Professor of Natural History, Father Laurent Receveur died. Lieutenant King described him as 'a man of letters and a genius'. La Perouse erected a board over his grave.

Hic Jacet
L. RECEVEUR
Ex. F. F. Minoribus
Galliae Sacerdos;
Physicus in Circumnavigatione Mund
Duce D. de la Perouse
Obiit Die 17 Febr., Anno
1788

On 10 March, La Perouse used gunfire to frighten the Aborigines who were believed to be threatening the fort.

La Perouse said that 'the country and people (Aborigines) are very inferior to any I had met'.

On the same day, 10 March 1788, La Perouse sailed from Botany Bay and was not heard from again.

Two convict women, had been smuggled aboard by the French sailors.

His disappearance led the French government in 1791 to equip another expedition under Rear Admiral Joseph Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux to look for him, but the search was fruitless.

As Franco-British relations deteriorated during the revolution unfounded rumours spread in France blaming the British for the tragedy which had occurred in the vicinity of the new colony.

In 1826, an Irish captain, Peter Dillon, was in the Santa Cruz Islands (now part of the Solomon Islands). Here he bought several swords which he

believed had belonged to La Perouse. According to locals, the swords had come from a nearby island called Vanikoro where two large ships had broken up.

Among the reefs of Vanikoro, Dillon, and later Dumont d'Urville, discovered anchors and other wreckage. These remains were identified as belonging to *L'Astrolabe*.

No crew members were ever found, although locals on Vanikoro told Dillon that some of the survivors had built a boat and sailed away, and at least two men allegedly remained for many years on Vanikoro but had died or left some time earlier. Dumont d'Urville oversaw the erection of a monument to the La Perouse expedition on Vanikoro.

It was not until 1964 that the wreck of *La Boussole* was finally discovered on Vanikoro's reefs. At last the fate of La Perouse and his crew was known.

Meanwhile, the French government had published the records of the voyage as far as Kamchatka: *Voyage de La Perouse autour du Monde*, 1-4 (Paris, 1797). These volumes are mines of cartographic and scientific information about the Pacific. Three English translations were published during 1798-99.

As soon as the French had sailed, the Aborigines removed the fortifications and the memorial to Father Receveur.

There is a fine statue of La Perouse in his home town of Albi and he is remembered by the Sydney suburb, known to generations of schoolboys as 'La Po', located on the northern shore of Botany Bay where the French had camped and erected their stockade. There is a Monument commemorating the visit and a museum located in what is now the Botany Bay National Park.

The grave of Father Receveur is now properly marked and there is a monument to the expedition.

Bro Jean-Francois La Perouse was made a Mason at Brest on 26 July 1765 in Lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre (Happy meeting). He was passed to the second degree on 26 August 1765 and raised a Master Mason on 12 April 1766.

He rarely attended due to his long absences at sea but he is recorded as a visitor to Lodge Marine on 27 October 1778.

Lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre was consecrated on 6 November 1745 by Lodge L'Anglaise (the English Lodge) No. 204, Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) at Bordeaux.

In 1764, Lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre was affiliated with the Grand Lodge of France. It later became part of The Grand Orient of France.

Bro La Perouse was also admitted to the rank of Perfect Master Scottish Elect.

At that time, the early stages of what is now the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite was being developed and for a Master Mason to be perfected was the beginning of his ecossais (or Scottish) Masonry.

The number and names of the degrees have been changed since that time and Perfect Master is now the 5th degree of the rite of 33 degrees. The 9th, 10th, 11th and 14th degrees became the elect series.

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TRANSLATIONS:

I am indebted to Right Wor Bro Ian R McCulloch, PDGM and Wor Bro Raymond Beltrami for their translations of the very difficult to read copies of the original French Masonic records.

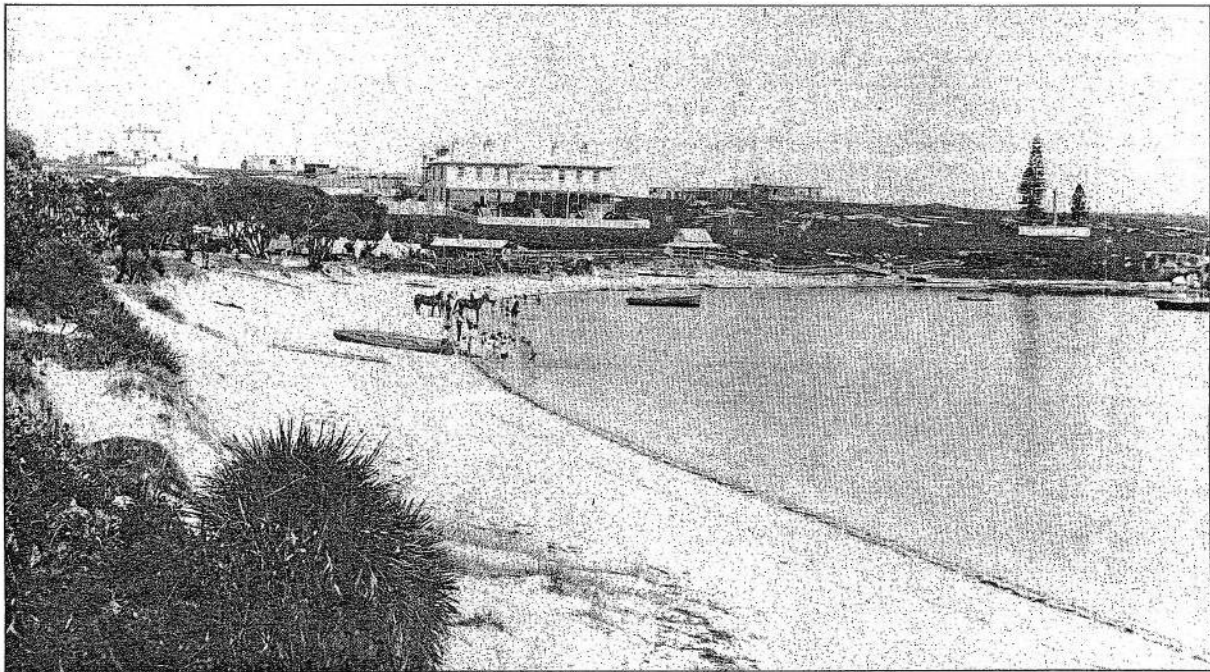
GRAHAME H CUMMING.

[P.T.O.]



Jean Francois de Galaup, Comte de La Perouse.

View of Frenchman's Bay, La Perouse, c. 1885.



Frenchmen visiting Australia sometimes make a pilgrimage to La Perouse, considering it a small part of France in Australia.

Today there are two French memorials in the suburb of La Perouse: the grave of Father Receveur and the large La Perouse monument erected in 1825 by the French, commemorating the great French navigator.

In 1825 Governor Brisbane proposed that the land on which these two memorials stand should be made over to France, but this was never done, and the land remains the property of Australia.