Freycinet map of 1811 - was it really the first full map of Australia to be published?

Peter Reynders and *Rupert Gerritsen*

This is about Australian history, but also about French history. The Freycinet map of Nouvelle Hollande is generally recognised as the first full map of Australia to be published. But was it the first and was it published in 1811?
Whether it was or not, this year is the bicentenary of its publication.

My introduction will be followed by Rupert Gerritsen specifically addressing these questions.

I will provide a historical context - in three layers - the map as:

- The culmination of a long chain of events in Australian maritime contact history both fictitious and real;
- A product of protracted hostilities between France and Britain; and
- A vicarious link between Australia and the towering historical figure of Napoléon Bonaparte.

His name actually features on the map as *Terre Napoléon*, perhaps less peculiar than the Latin word "Australia" as a geographical name on our continent.

Because of time constraints I will only touch on some key developments. Classical Greek philosophers had developed the idea of a spherical earth, confirmed by the first circumnavigation of the globe by Magellan and Elcano from 1519 to 1522. In the first century Claudius Ptolemy suggested there ought to be a large continent surrounding and including the South Pole: a southland. Renaissance cartographers resurrected his theory on their world maps and presented various Latin names for it, including *Terra Australis Incognita* and *Australia.*

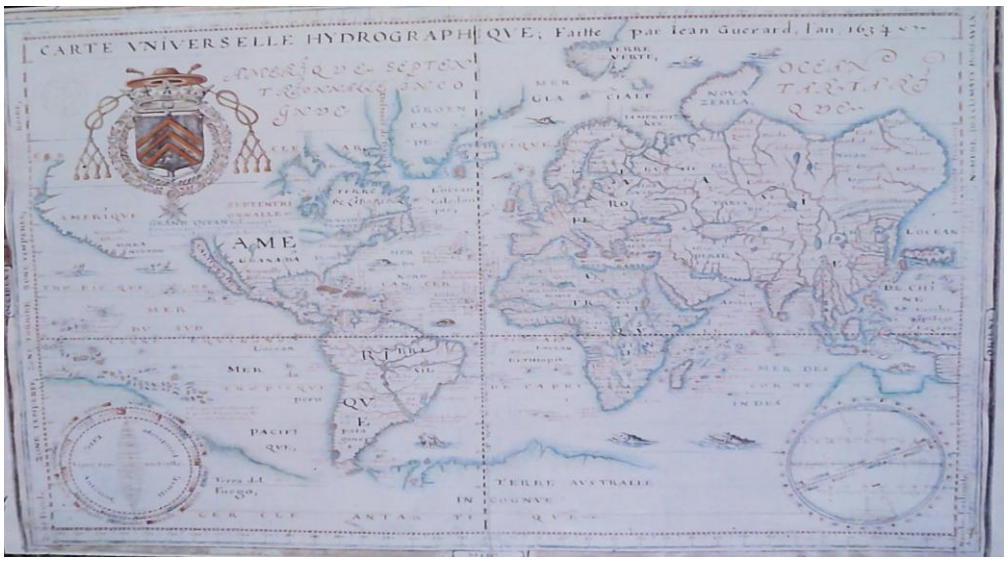

Figure 1. The Guerard Map: *Carte Universelle Hydrographique* (1634)
State Library of New South Wales, Map M M2 100/1634/

For example, the world map of 1634, by Frenchman Jean Guerard, shows this theoretical southland. It was invariably done that way throughout the 16th century, to include the South Pole and it was placed south of all other continents. This example illustrates that the 17th century French map makers, like the better known Thévenot, were not particularly up to date or accurate in their cartography as it was then often done as a sideline. That would change in the 18th century.

With Tasman sailing south of our whole continent in 1642, which he widely circumnavigated, the world's cartographers rejected the notion that the continent had anything to do with the theoretical Southland. If it existed at all, so they began to conclude, it would be around the South Pole:

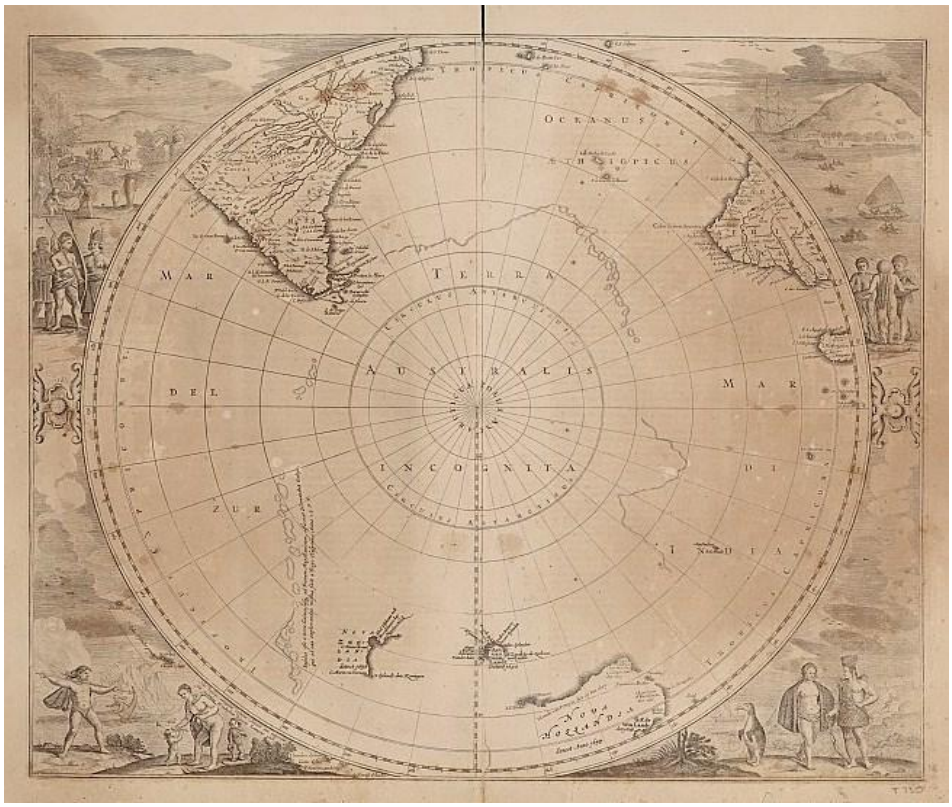

Figure 2. Hondius' *Polus Antarcticus* (1657)
National Library of Australia, Map T 730

This map from the middle of the 17th century shows the southern parts of the continents as known by Tasman's time with Australia third furthest south. The emerging island continent had been excluded from the theoretical land mass of *Terra Australis Incognita*.

After Cook's voyages a consensus seemed to have developed that there was no Southland, or if there was, it sat under the ice of the South Pole Region. So at a time that using Latin still confirmed one's intellectual status, Matthew Flinders placed the Latin notions of *Terra Australis* and *Australia* on his 1804 manuscript map of the continent. Suddenly it seemed the name was back in favour because it was now unused and therefore available.

This Latin translation for Southland, was therefore no longer available when a continent around the South Pole was indeed discovered deeper in the 19th century and it was given the somewhat clumsy name of Antarctica.

Information giving rise to the Freycinet map includes charts and reports by many earlier mariners, including:

1. Willem Janszoon, who had charted some of the westcoast of Cape York in 1606,
2. Dirk Hartog, who had encountered and charted parts of the west coast in 1616,
3. Nuyts and Thijssen who had sailed along much of the south coast in the *Gulden Zeepaert* in 1627,
4. Tasman in 1642 and 1644 and
5. de Vlamingh's voyage of 1696-97.
6. Cook's information of the east coast of 1770
7. Followed by that of d'Entrecasteaux, Bass and Flinders, in refining the knowledge of the south coast and of Van Diemens Land, establishing it as an island,
8. Finally the data collected during the voyage of Baudin.

French representation in the timeline of European maritime exploration of Australia is considerable.

It begins with the fictitious encounter of Binot Paulmier de Gonneville, a French navigator who claimed to have paid a visit to the great Austral land on his return voyage to South America between 1503 and 1505. The first Frenchmen to actually visit Australia did so most likely onboard the VOC East Indiaman *Batavia.*

Figure 3. Imaginary scene from the Batavia Mutiny
Pelsaert 1647 Inside Frontpiece

There were eight French soldiers aboard the *Batavia* at the time it was wrecked on Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group of the Abrolhos Islands off the coast of WA on 4 June 1629 and we know their names. Two of these soldiers were murdered by the Mutineers, but the others joined the group who held out against them, the Defenders.

The first recorded contact of a French vessel with Australia took place on 4 August 1687, when Captain, later Admiral, Duquesne-Guitton in *l'Oiseau*, sighted and sailed up the West Australian coast in the vicinity of the Swan River en route to Siam with Claude Céberet du Boullay the new French Ambassador there and his staff. Then two close encounters followed: In 1768 Louis Antoine de Bougainville, on the first French voyage around the world (and that of a woman: Jeane Barré) in *La Boudeuse* and *l'Étoile*, came within a few hundred kilometres of the east coast of Australia, as did Jean de Surville in 1769.

But it was not until 1772 that another French ship actually visited Australia. Louis-François de St. Allouarn left Mauritius in January 1772 and coming upon the coast of Western Australia sailed north from Cape Leeuwin to Shark Bay. Here he landed on Dirk Hartog Island and claimed the western part of Nouvelle Hollande for France.

At the same time as St. Allouarn was claiming the west coast, Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne, *en route* to Tahiti, arrived in Van Diemen's Land before sailing on to New Zealand where he and some of his crew experienced a culinary catastrophe, being eaten by the Maoris.

Then follows the better known voyage of Rear Admiral Jean François Galaup, Count of LaPérouse, who sailed into Botany Bay in January 1788. Following a long and arduous voyage through the Pacific he had received orders at Kamchatka to sail for Nouvelle Hollande and he arrived in the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe* at Botany Bay the day the First Fleet was leaving it for Port Jackson. After his visit he sailed into the Pacific, and was not heard of again. He is thought to have perished at Vanikoro, part of the Santa Cruz group.

During 1792 and 1793 Rear Admiral Antoine Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, circumnavigated Nouvelle Hollande in the *Recherche* and the *Espérance* in search of LaPérouse. He visited Tasmania twice, the charting of part of it being undertaken by his young, and now famous hydrographer and cartographer Charles-François Beautemps-Beaupré.

The Freycinet map can also be considered an outcome of the century's old French/British rivalry. The expansionist policies of the rulers of France resulted in repeated war with England over a period of about eight centuries.

Early French rulers, such as the first Christian Franconian King Chlodovech (Clovis) taking his cue from the Romans, then Charlemagne and even William de Conqueror (also known as Guillaume le Bâtard**)** established an aggressive tradition of territorial expansion, reciprocated by the English. This escalated under Louis XIV into a string of wars against Britain and its allies. Louis XIV failed largely because of the better quality of the British Navy. The terms of the Treaty of Utrecht and of Ranstatt at the end of the war of Spanish Succession in 1713, saw him humiliated and he died in 1715, 100 years before the Battle of Waterloo, where a similar fate would await France.

Figure 4. King Chlodovech [Clovis]

The Anglo-French hostilities of the Seven Years War, where incidentally Bougainville and Cook both fought, on opposite sides, in North America, ended again in a humiliating defeat in 1763. France lost its North American and Indian colonies. The urge to compensate for this was an important French sentiment for the rest of the 18th century. Towards the end of that century came the French Revolution.

Britain had already had its civil war. It had beheaded the king and the formation of a Republic in the 1640's, achieving a constitutional monarchy after its "Glorious Revolution" in 1688. There was no need any more for conquering feudalism through a violent revolution. France, however, was still suffering a badly managed feudal system in the 18th century. Influential writers like Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau presented feudalism as a complete anachronism. This stimulated the arrival of a violent and chaotic revolution, where the power initially landed with mob leaders, such as Robespierre, Danton and the bloodthirsty Marat, some of whom ended up on the guillotine themselves.

Out of this melee emerged army officer Napoléon Bonaparte, rising quickly through the ranks, thanks to his military successes in continental Europe. He became First Consul, heading an all powerful troika, as a result of his Coup d'État de Brumaire in 1799.

The concerted French effort at this time to try and match the British Navy and its navigational standards, and hopefully its successes, included the establishment of the Bureau de Longitudes in 1795.

From this milieu emerged the idea of the Baudin Expedition to Nouvelle Hollande. It was approved by First Consul Napoléon, partly in response to the British settlement at Sydney Cove.

Figure 5. Napoléon Bonaparte

Napoléon became Emperor in 1804 riding a wave of popularity. Earlier, the French fleet had been defeated in the Mediterranean in the battle of Aboukir Bay, following Napoléon's campaign to Egypt. A year after Baudin's ships came back from Nouvelle Hollande in 1804, without him, the French fleet was defeated at Trafalgar. The Emperor agreed in 1806 that scientist Péron and hydrographer de Freycinet would have access to the records of Baudin's voyage and prepare a glorious narrative of the latest French voyage to Nouvelle Hollande, and publish it along with the first full map of this island continent.

Figure 6. Matthew Flinders

The Englishman Matthew Flinders meanwhile, was under house arrest in Mauritius, compliments of its Governor and confidant of Napoléon, General Charles Decaen, who would have been Governor of the French colonies in India had the British not reneged on the terms of the Treaty of Amiens. Consequently, Flinders was not in a position to publish his narrative and map of *Terra Australis* until he returned to England after six years in Mauritius,

as it happened in 1814. And so it would seem the first full map of the continent was published in Paris in 1811. To discuss this I now hand over to my colleague Rupert Gerritsen.

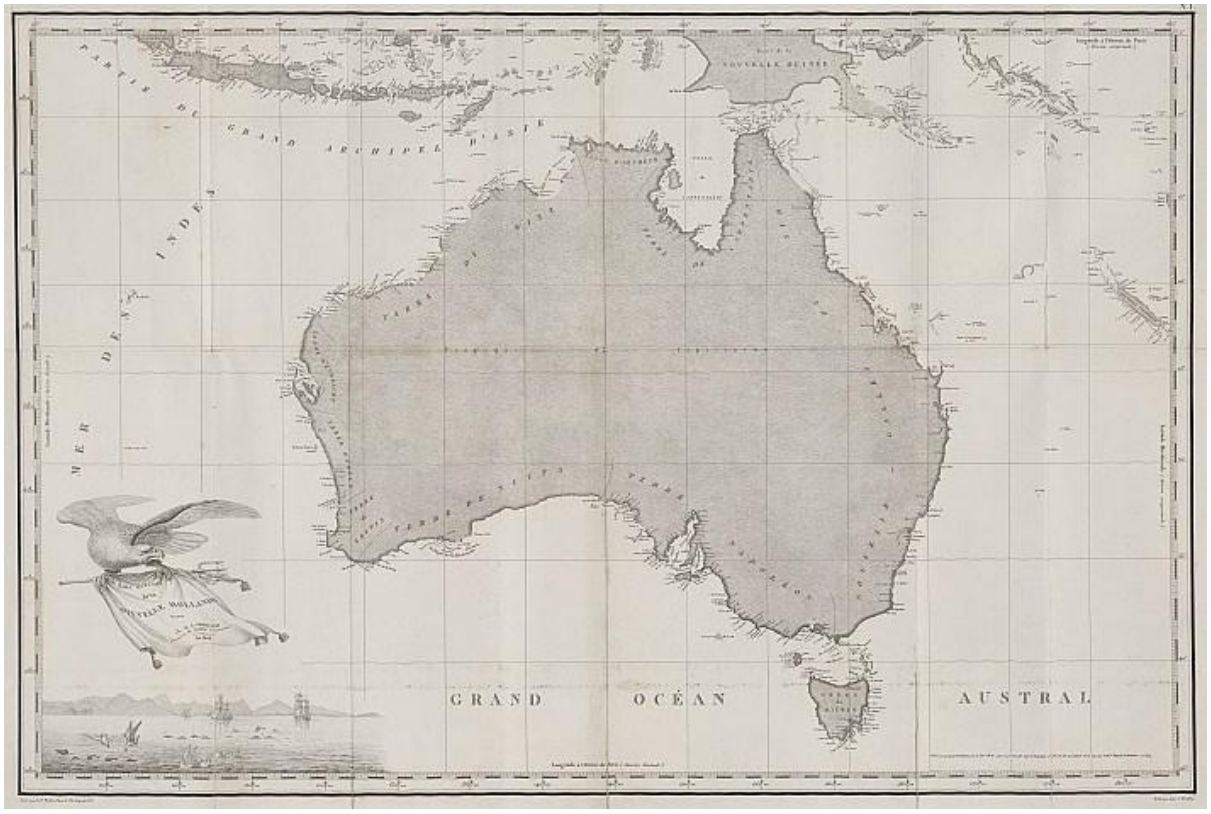

Figure 7. The Freycinet map
de Freycinet 1811a, National Library of Australia, Map RaA 1 Plate 1

The Baudin expedition was intended to be a voyage of discovery that would further scientific knowledge and perhaps eclipse the achievements of James Cook. First Consul Napoléon Bonaparte approved the expedition 'to the coasts of New Holland',[1] after receiving a delegation of Baudin and eminent members of the Institut National de France on 25 March 1800. The explicit purpose of the voyage was to be 'observation and research relating to Geography and Natural History.'[2]

So, with '600 leagues' of unexplored south coast in New Holland, and the prospect of new discoveries beckoning, the expedition departed Le Havre on 19 October 1800. In this context much has been made of the claim that Baudin and his rival Matthew Flinders were also engaged in a race to find a fabled north-south strait, 'Williamson's Strait', running from the south coast through the middle of Australia to the Gulf of Carpentaria.[3] However, to what extent Baudin and Flinders were aware of, or seriously entertained the possibility that such a strait existed, is an open question. Although some researchers have claimed in more recent times that 'it was rumoured,' there was 'speculation,' it was 'a long-held mystery,' or that it was 'general opinion' at the time that such a strait existed,[4] this not a single reference for such claims prior to September 1800.[5] Flinders, while acknowledged that 'geographers were disposed to give the appellation of Continent' to Australia, nevertheless claimed 'doubts still existed' that Australia was a continent and not a number of large islands.[6] But we believe the real intent was to eliminate all possible doubt that continental Australia was a single

landmass, principally because of its implications for British territorial claims in New Holland, as well as to find a route into inland Australia. Flinders alludes to this, noting that the establishment of the colony in New South Wales 'has added a degree of interest to the question of continuity.'[7] Consequently, his instructions for the exploration of the south coast directed that:

> in case you should discover any creek or opening likely to lead to *an inland sea or strait* [original emphasis], you are at liberty, either to examine it or not, as you shall judge it most expedient, until a more favourable opportunity shall enable you so to do.[8]

Baudin's instructions however, prepared for him by the likes of Jussieu, Bougainville, Comte de Fleurieu and the mathematician Laplace, make no mention of this hypothetical strait, nor give any specific direction to search for it. Moreover, neither Baudin nor Flinders, following their famous meeting at Encounter Bay on 8-9 April 1802, mention it all in their journal entries, and it would seem that it was not even discussed.[9]

Figure 8. Louis de Freycinet

It is not possible in the time available to give a full account of Baudin expedition so I will just mention some salient details. Among those joining the Baudin expedition's ships, the *Géographe* and *Naturaliste*, were Sub-Lieutenants Louis-Claude de Saulses de Freycinet and his older brother Henri-Louis. Ironically, Louis did not initially sail as a 'geographer'. Both were promoted to Lieutenant, and Louis was later given command of the schooner *Casuarina*, purchased in Sydney to enable better inshore surveying. Another member of the expedition, someone who was ultimately to have a highly significant influence on its outcomes, was of course the 25 year old Assistant Zoologist François Péron.

From a scientific viewpoint the Baudin expedition had been an outstanding success. In geographic terms much of Australia's coastline had been explored, though they had been gazumped by Flinders in the *Investigator* and Lt. Grant in HMS *Lady Nelson* in charting the previously unknown part of the south coast. Just about all the expedition could lay claim to discovering was a small stretch of the coast of South Australia, from Mt. Schanck to Encounter Bay.

Publication of the volumes giving the official account of the expedition, *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes*, and the associated atlases, was authorised by Napoléon on 4 August 1806. Péron, along with naturalist Lesueur, was given responsibility, with Louis de Freycinet, who had already been working on the charts, to undertake the cartography.

But a range of difficulties arose and so it would be ten years before the project was completed. The first volume, *Historique*, was published in 1807, but the second volume, also *Historique*, was not published until 1816, although volume 3, *Navigation et Geographie*, had already been published in 1815. This was partly due to the death of Péron in 1810, from tuberculosis, when de Freycinet took over responsibility for the final volumes, and partly strained government finances.

A number of controversies arose with the publication of the volumes and maps, one being the almost complete elimination of any reference to Baudin and, it seems at Péron's behest, the application of French names to many geographic features and coasts already explored and named by other navigators, particularly Flinders.

Figure 9. Part of Freycinet map of 1811 showing French names

In discussing the Freycinet map as the first map of Australia care needs to be taken in qualifying what one means. Flinders prepared a map of Australia in 1804, while detained in Mauritius, courtesy of one of Napoléon's confidants, General Decaen. But this was a 'fair

drawing', a manuscript map, which was not published until 1814, and then in modified form. Use of the term 'complete' map of Australia is not strictly correct either, in relation to both the Freycinet and the Flinders maps. Both have numerous small gaps where inlets were missed or it was too dangerous to undertake close surveying. Hence the term 'full' is used, as the full outline of Australia is finally discernable. Thus, the Freycinet map is generally regarded as the first full map of Australia to be published. But is this really the case? Are there are other maps which could be considered as possible candidates as full maps of Australia published prior to 1811.

Addressing this question, the first reference to the publication of a full map of Australia is in part 1 of the *Atlas Historique* of 1807, accompanying the first volume of *Voyage de Découvertes*. In the table of contents is listed 'Carte Générale de la Nouvelle Hollande' [General Map of New Holland].

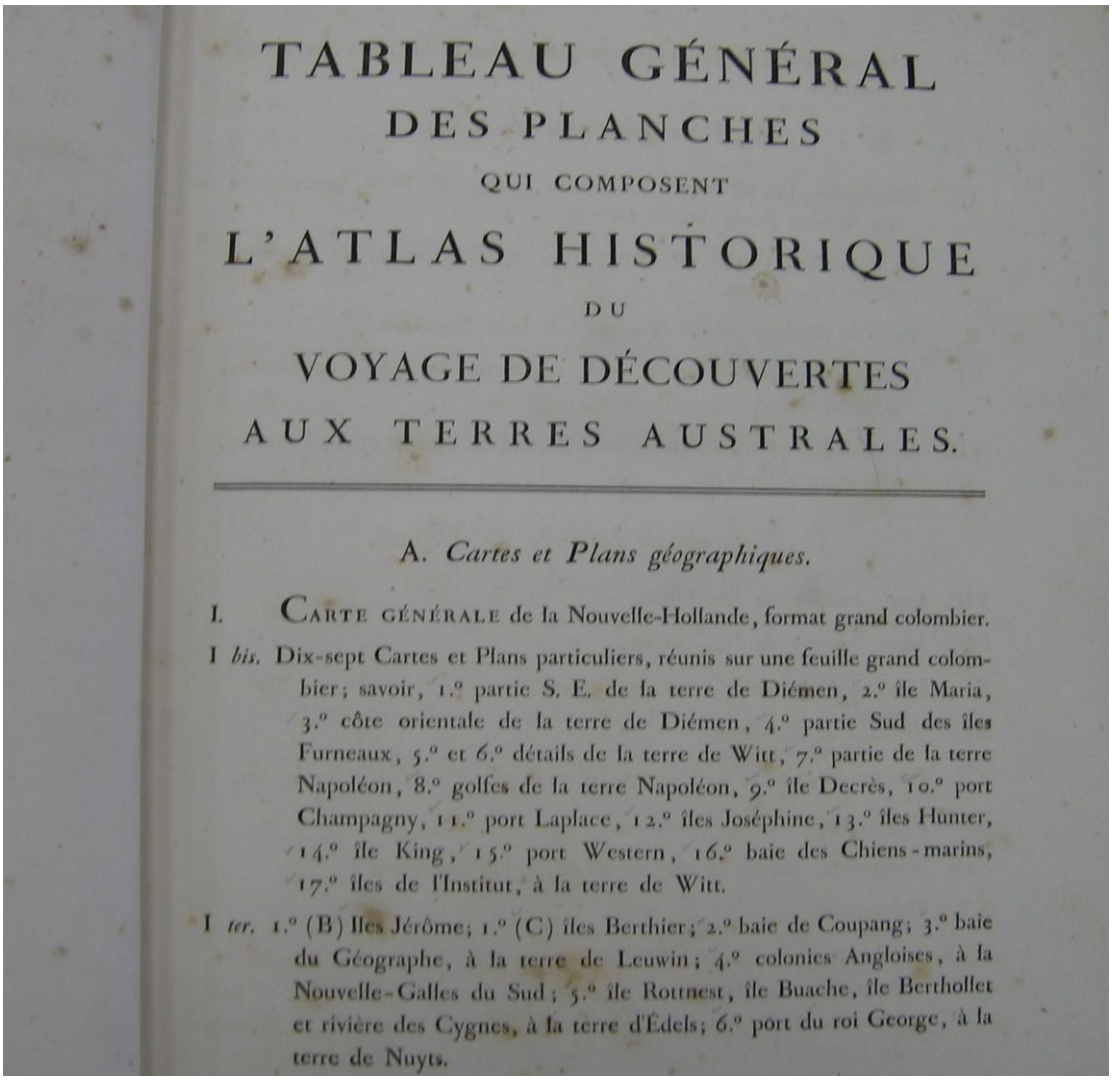

TABLEAU GÉNÉRAL
DES PLANCHES
QUI COMPOSENT
L'ATLAS HISTORIQUE
DU
VOYAGE DE DÉCOUVERTES
AUX TERRES AUSTRALES.

A. *Cartes et Plans géographiques.*

I. Carte générale de la Nouvelle-Hollande, format grand colombier.

I *bis.* Dix-sept Cartes et Plans particuliers, réunis sur une feuille grand colombier; savoir, 1.° partie S. E. de la terre de Diémen, 2.° île Maria, 3.° côte orientale de la terre de Diémen, 4.° partie Sud des îles Furneaux, 5.° et 6.° détails de la terre de Witt, 7.° partie de la terre Napoléon, 8.° golfes de la terre Napoléon, 9.° île Decrès, 10.° port Champagny, 11.° port Laplace, 12.° îles Joséphine, 13.° îles Hunter, 14.° île King, 15.° port Western, 16.° baie des Chiens-marins, 17.° îles de l'Institut, à la terre de Witt.

I *ter.* 1.° (B) Iles Jérôme; 1.° (C) îles Berthier; 2.° baie de Coupang; 3.° baie du Géographe, à la terre de Leuwin; 4.° colonies Angloises, à la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud; 5.° île Rottnest, île Buache, île Berthollet et rivière des Cygnes, à la terre d'Édels; 6.° port du roi George, à la terre de Nuyts.

Figure 10. Table of Contents of *Atlas Historique*
Peron 1807

But when one looks, it does not appear to be there. For his 1910 book on the Baudin expedition, *Terre Napoléon*, Professor Scott examined four original editions but was unable

to locate any such map in that publication. I examined a further nine original editions, with the same result. However, the explanation was actually already evident in 1816, with a note indicating the map intended for part 1 of *Atlas Historique* had been:

> '*presents avec plus de details et dans un autre ordre dans l'atlas historique, 2e partie.*'
> ['presented with more detail and in another order in *Atlas Historique*, part 2.'].[10]

In other words the map was included in the second part of *Atlas Historique*, not published until 1811, largely because the engraver had not been paid.

Despite the authoritative credentials of the 1811 map, another map exists in the National Library's map collection which seems to have been published earlier, in 1808.

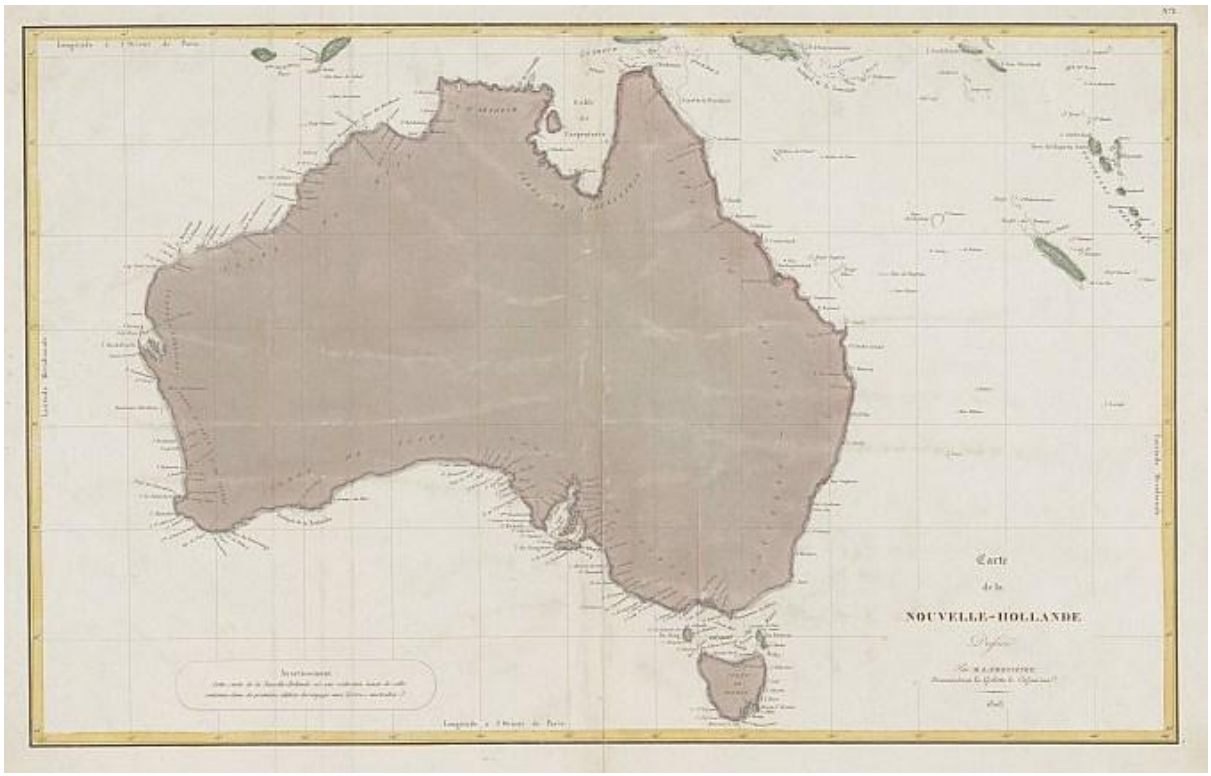

Figure 11. *Carte de la Nouvelle Hollande ... 1808*
National Library of Australia, Map RM 2189

Its appearance is different to the accepted 1811 map, it places Australia further to the west, it has a slightly different title, 'Carte de la Nouvelle Hollande', [Map of New Holland] and the catalogue indicates it was published in 1808.

Authorship of this map is ascribed to Louis de Freycinet and the catalogue indicates that it may have been published in Paris, but the publisher is unknown. Physical examination of the map reveals nothing further other than a note in pencil on the rear indicating it was acquired by the National Library in 1983, and the purchase price. However, closer scrutiny quickly demolishes the claim that its publication actually preceded the 1811 map. There is a cartouche on the bottom left corner:

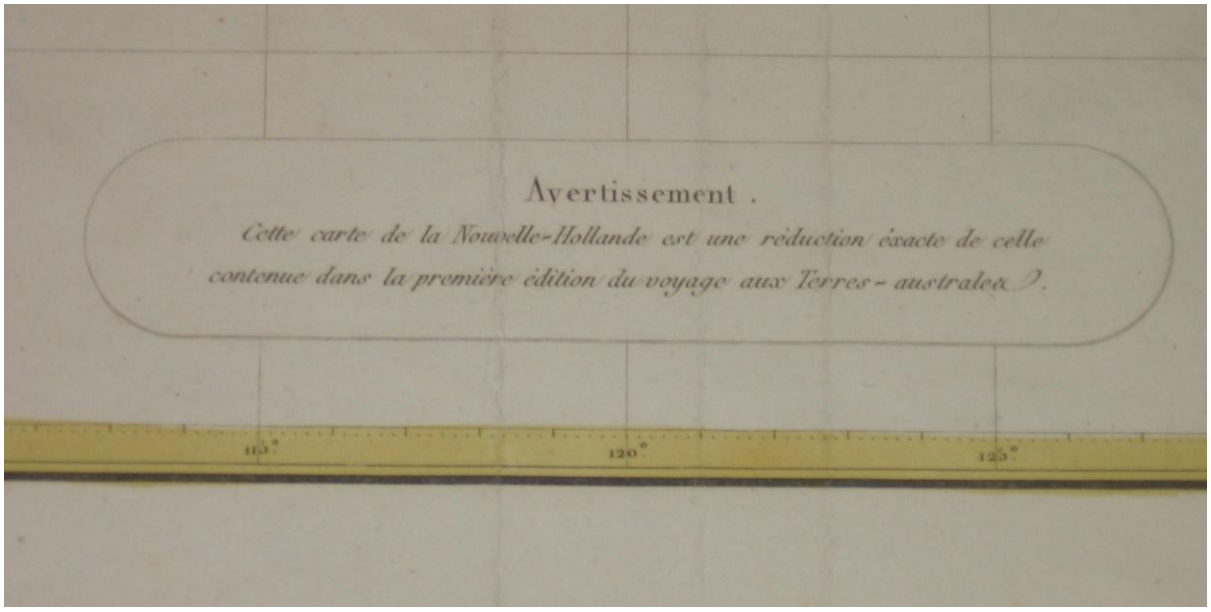

Figure 12. Cartouche of *Carte de la Nouvelle Hollande ... 1808*

which when translated states:

'This map is an exact reproduction of that contained in the first edition of *Voyage aux Terres Australes*',

indicating that it is simply a copy of the map contained in the first edition of *Voyage de Découvertes*, so it was published after 1811. Further examination shows that much of the nomenclature has been changed to reflect the precedence ascribed to Flinders, following publication of his map in 1814.

Professor Scott refers to a map of this form, claiming it was published in a revised *Atlas* in 1817. But no trace of any such atlas can be found. An antiquarian bookseller, offering a copy of this map, claims it comes from a revised atlas published in 1815. Again, no trace of any revised atlas from this period can be found. However, if one examines the second edition of *Voyage de Découvertes*, published in 1824, the explanation of this conundrum becomes clearer. There, in the *Atlas* of this publication, is a map identical to the '1808' map. The '1808' on the map simply reflects the state of cartographic knowledge at the time of the map's preparation, not the date of publication. '1808' in fact also appears on the cartouche of the 1811 map. Thus we can conclude the '1808' map was published after 1814 and is probably a single sheet reproduction of the 'Carte de Nouvelle Hollande' contained in the 1824 *Atlas*.

The penultimate example of a map that could lay claim to being an earlier map than the 1811 Freycinet map is one showing Australia as 'Nouvelle Hollande', with 'Océanique Centrale' inscribed on a cartouche formed by an illustration of a Tasmanian bark-bundle canoe.

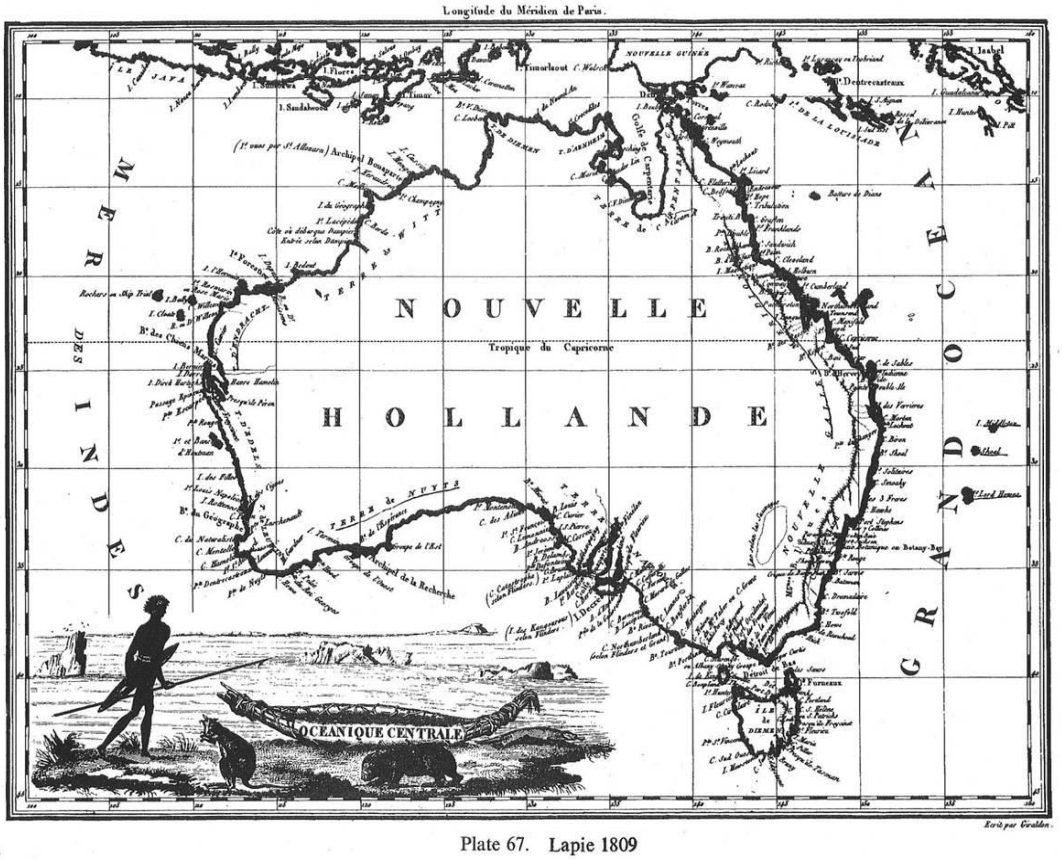

Figure 13. *Océanique Centrale,* 1809
Tooley, Plate 67

According to one of the most respected authorities on Australian cartographic history, Ronald Tooley, this map was prepared by Pierre Lapie and published in 1809. As Lapie was at the time Chief of the Topographic Section of the War Office in France, and possibly privy to the cartographic work of the Baudin expedition, such a claim must be taken seriously. However, internal evidence in terms of the nomenclature on the map suggests this date may be wrong. In 1810 a review of the English translation of the first volume of Péron's *Voyage de Découvertes* was published. The anonymous reviewer, thought to be John Barrow, Secretary to the Admiralty, indicated he had seen copies of some of Flinders charts and papers, and took issue with the application of French names to Flinders' and others' prior discoveries, citing some examples, including Kangaroo Island and North West Cape.

And there on 'Océanique Centrale' one finds a number of instances where dual names were applied, so that Kangaroo Island for example, the French 'Île Decrès', has adjacent to it in brackets 'I. des Kangourous selon Flinders.' This dual naming would seem to place the publication of 'Océanique Centrale' after 1810.

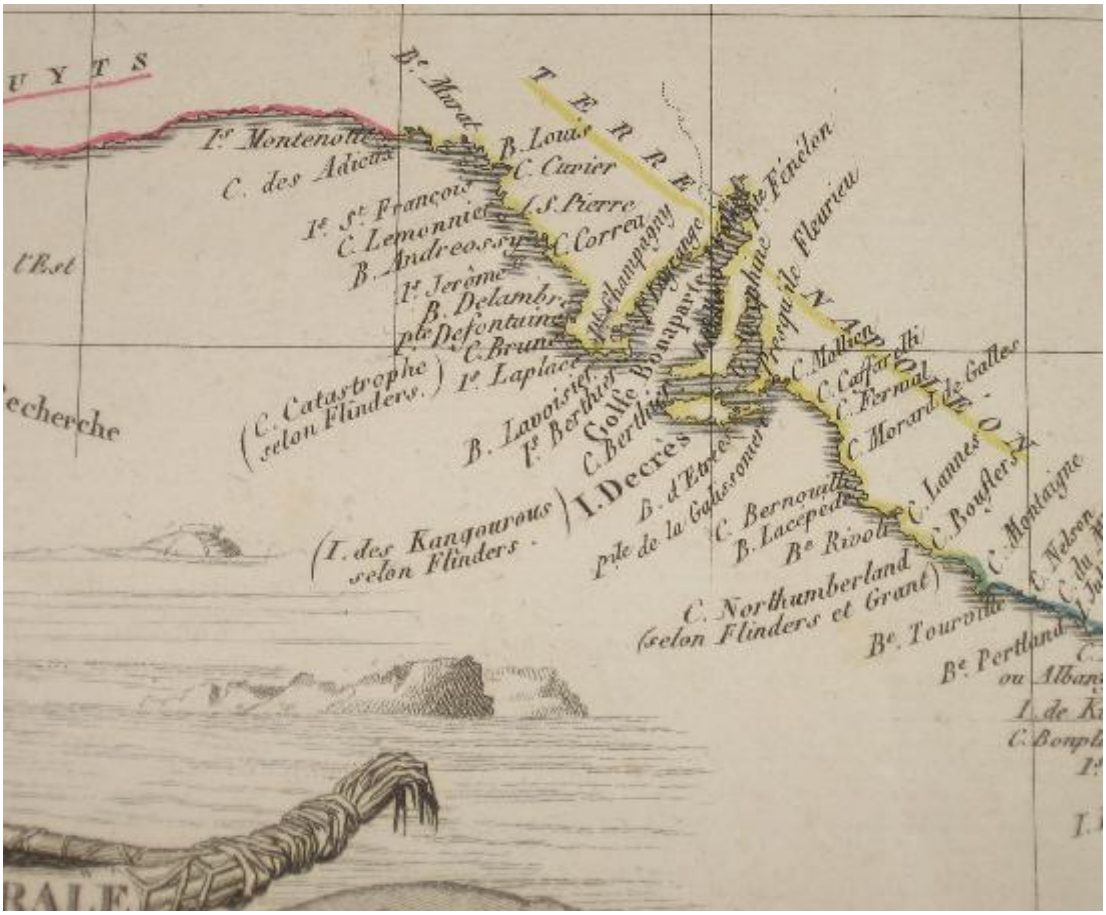

Figure 14. Portion of *Océanique Centrale*, 1809

In fact, it appears in an atlas of Lapie's maps, *Atlas Complet du Précis de la Géographie Universelle,* published in 1812.

> Pour donner à plusiers parties de cette Carte un plus grand degree d'exactitude, nous aurions desire pouvoir consult la grande and Carte de la Nouvelle-Hollande, que M. Freycinet, captaine de marine, addressée pour l'Atlas du *Voyage aux Terres Australes*; mais un devoir rigoureux defendoit à M. Freycinet de nous la communiquer: nous n'en avons pas pu profiter.[11]
>
> [To provide all the parts of this map with a greater degree accuracy we would have preferred to consult the map of New Holland, by M. Freycinet, sea captain, author of the Atlas of *Voyage to the Southern Lands*. But strict adherence to duty prevented M. Freycinet from communicating with us: we have not benefitted.]

In this publication we find a statement that Lapie had in fact been denied access to Louis de Freycinet's cartographic information. It seems he did indeed rely upon other sources, such as the 1810 review written by Barrow, and a memoire and a small manuscript map sent by Flinders to *Annales des Voyages*, edited by geographer Conrad Malte-Brun. From this conjunction of evidence it is believed Tooley was in error, and 'Océanique Centrale' is now ascribed a publication date of 1812.

Lastly, I present a map from an atlas recently brought to our attention by Dr Bronwen Douglas of ANU.

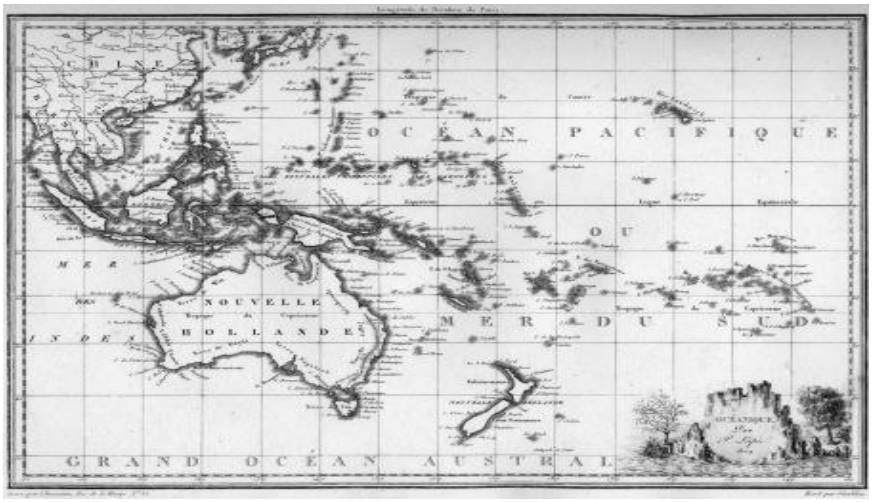

Figure 15. *Océanique* 1810
Précis de la géographie universelle, Map 22

This map is Map 22 from *Précis de la Géographie Universelle*, published by Malte-Brun, with the publication date given as 1810. It is held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

As can be seen it is a regional map of Oceania, not specifically of Australia, but one that does show a full outline of Australia. The author of the map is Pierre Lapie, who, according to the cartouche, prepared it in 1809. I am unable to show you a magnified view from this version of the south coast, but it does shows an accurate and detailed coastline, and some names appear such as 'Gulphe Bonaparte', 'Île Decrès' and 'Terre Napoléon'. However, these can be seen in a version held by the National Library. This has been given a possible publication date of 1812, but it would appear that this in fact is a single sheet reproduction of the 1810 'Océanique Centrale' map.

Figure 16. Portion of *Océanique*, 1810

It is worth noting that in the 1810 *Précis de la Géographie Universelle* there is also a mappe-monde showing, probably for the first time, a map of the world with a full outline of Australia.

Figure 17. *Précis de la géographie universelle*, Mappe-monde, 1810
Malte-Brun 1810

In view of Lapie's statement in the 1812 atlas that he did not have direct access to de Freycinet's charting, it is a mystery how Lapie was able to map the blank part of the south coast by 1809. He stated that he had drawn from the first volume of *Voyage de Découvertes* from 1807, but there is insufficient detail in that, and none of the other sources he used for the 1812 atlas were available in 1809. This mystery may well be a matter for future research.

Having thus considered and eliminated known contenders to the Freycinet map of 1811, we are therefore able to conclude with some confidence that it was indeed the first full map of Australia to be published, and qualify that by saying it is the first full map **explicitly** of Australia **as such** to be published.

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NOTES

[1] Horner, 1986, p.40.

[2] 'Plan of Itinerary for Citizen Baudin' in Baudin, 2004, p.1.

[3] See for example Toft, 2002.

'Williamson's Strait' was named after a reputed voyage by American Captain Williamson through central Australia (Toft 2002, pp.11,75,91).

[4] See Toft, pp.11,75,91; Tiley, p.108; Horner, p.219; Scott, p.25-26n1.

[5] Flinders first claimed there was a conjecture that a strait that 'dismembers New Holland' could exist in a note appended to his report on the voyage of the *Norfolk* in 1799 (*Historical Records of New South Wales*, volume 3, p.817). The earliest specific reference to a strait from the south coast to the Gulf of Carpentaria is 'Letter: Matthew Flinders to Joseph Banks, 6 September 1800', (Banks Papers, Section 13:Series 65.01CY 3009/181).

[6] Flinders, vol. 1, p.i.

[7] Flinders, vol. 1p.,i.

Fuller discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, but we hope to address it in a forthcoming paper.

[8] Flinders, vol. 1, p.8.

[9] Péron 1807, pp.324-5; Brown, 2001, pp.177-79

[10] Péron and de Freycinet 1816, p.467.

[11] Lapie in *Atlas complet* 1812, p.9.