

## BOOK REVIEWS

Serge Duigou, *L'Australie oubliée de Saint-Allouarn*. Quimper, Editions Ressac, 1989, 32 pp., 11 illustrations, 4 maps. ISBN 2 904966 22 6.

Louis François Marie Alleno de Saint-Allouarn (1738–1772) is little known in Australia even though he commanded the first French ship to reach the Australian mainland. Last year I had the pleasure of visiting what remains of the manor house in which the explorer was born near Quimper. Unfortunately, at the time, I had neither the benefit nor the pleasure of reading Serge Duigou's charming summary of the explorer's family history and exploits.

Briefly, as commander of the 16 gun *Gros Ventre*, Saint-Allouarn took part in Kerguelen's expedition in search of the Southland. Kerguelen commanded the 24 gun *Fortune* (on which one of my Breton ancestors, Charles Kervern [1756–1822] arrived at Isle de France, now Mauritius, in 1770). Not long after discovering the islands which still bear Kerguelen's name, the *Fortune* became separated from the *Gros Ventre*. Kerguelen decided to return to the Isle de France on 16 February, expecting Saint-Allouarn, on the *Gros Ventre*, would do the same. He did not. From an Australian perspective, the separation is particularly important, because Saint-Allouarn continued to sail eastward until he reached what we now call Flinders Bay, near Cape Leeuwin, on the south of the Western Australian coast. The expedition then travelled north without sighting land for another seven hundred (sea) miles. On the afternoon of 28 March 1772, Shark Bay was sighted. The following day the *Gros Ventre* anchored at Turtle Bay and on the morning of 30 March Ensign Mingault was despatched in a longboat to survey the north of Dirk Hartog Island. This same officer took possession of Western Australia in the name of the King of France!

Saint-Allouarn then sailed back to the Isle de France via Melville Island and Timor. The expedition arrived in Port Louis on 5 September 1772 in an appalling state. Most of the men were suffering from scurvy. Saint-Allouarn died on 27 September 1772, just over three weeks later. He was only thirty-five years old and left no account of his life or expedition. Fortunately extracts from the journals of two of his officers have survived. Though his voyage had little scientific merit, it was an important precursor of several other great

French expeditions. Saint-Allouarn also serves to remind us that France was not idle at the time of Cook's great voyages. Serge Duigou concludes, quite aptly, that "after a profound purgatory of two centuries, the rehabilitation of Louis Alleno de Saint-Allouarn and his brave companions is timely".

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Lurline Stuart, *A Very Busy Smith. An Annotated Checklist of the Works of James Smith Nineteenth-Century Melbourne Journalist and Critic*. Clayton, Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies and National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1992, xxii-122 pp.

Publishers should not write reviews of books for which they bear some responsibility. Readers are warned, therefore, that the following note is a doubly interested one. However, the Editor feels it his duty to draw attention to a substantial bibliographical contribution on one of the main promoters of French culture in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century.

*Explorations* carried a brief article on Smith's French connection by Lurline Stuart in its first number (May 1985, pp. 6-7). Her book *James Smith. The Making of a Colonial Culture* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989) presents the career of this influential opinion-former and cultural gatekeeper in some detail. The present volume is in some ways a companion piece, analogous to the *thèse complémentaire* of the old-style *doctorat d'Etat*. It certainly has the documentary rigour and thoroughness of the best examples of that genre.

Like Redmond Barry and other colonial notables of his time, Smith found himself at the source of many of our institutions and traditions, not least those strengthening links between Australia and France. Needless to say, this is reflected in his copious writings and in the personal libraries he put together and dispersed at various times in his career (see addenda A4, A5 and A6 on page 122 of *A Very Busy Smith*). It is true that there is nothing major on a French theme, but articles, lectures, reviews and reminiscences return quite frequently to facets of Smith's experience of the perpetually fascinating culture on

the other side of the Channel. Although the bibliography is not indexed, cross-references help the user to follow various trails in an output that runs to 584 items without the addenda.

The "Introduction" (pp. vii-xi) and the account of the "Bibliographical conventions" observed (pp. xii-xxii) mean that the volume can be self-contained for the casual browser or for the reader intent on explaining particular parts of nineteenth-century Victorian culture, including the spiritualism that occupied a good deal of Smith's time. Beyond desultory consultation of a reference work full of delightful surprises—and the Editor admits his penchant for this sort of *vagabondage littéraire*—*A Very Busy Smith* offers the solid virtue of a systematic account of Smith's known and avowed productions. As such it must have its place in any serious collection devoted to Australian studies. That that discipline involves an extra-Australian context, including a French one, is a truth we shall have to keep on repeating.

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