

BOOK REVIEWS

Mark A Clements, Susan Walker, and Paul Ziesing, *New Caledonia Field Expeditions 1992*, Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra 1992, pp 61 (English text and illustrations), pp 25 (French text trans by C. B. Thornton-Smith, ISBN 0 646 216457).

In July 1791 the botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière wrote to Sir Joseph Banks to inform him of his imminent departure on Bruny d'Entrecasteaux's expedition to search for La Pérouse. In his letter Labillardière asked Banks' advice on how best to prepare and how best to advance the natural sciences during the course of the voyage. Banks, who twenty years before had circled the globe as a naturalist on James Cook's *Endeavour*, responded warmly with a great deal of practical advice and also reminded Labillardière that no botanist had visited New Caledonia beside Forster 'who did little while he was there' and urged further study of the island's flora. Labillardière took the advice to heart and would eventually publish the first floras of New Holland and New Caledonia. Twenty years separated these two publications, but aside from describing kindred members of the same genera in both works, he also grouped a number of the plants he described in his *Sertum Austro-Caledonicum* (1824) in families such as Proteaceae and Myrtaceae, and thus recognized that the flora of New Caledonia had strong affinities with that of New Holland.

Labillardière's pioneering work contained only one description of an orchid which he named *Limodorum unguiculatum* (= *Spathaglotis unguiculatum*, Reichenbach fil.), collected during his stay in Balade in the north of New Caledonia. Other botanists have followed in his footsteps including the authors of the work at hand which records the findings of field expeditions from the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The aim of these expeditions was to further studies in the origins, relationships and systematics of orchids of the south-west Pacific and Australia and to gather particular information on species of *Acianthus*, *Caladenia*, *Calochilus*, *Corybas*, *Orthoceras* and *Pterostylis* in New Caledonia. These genera are also found in Australia; indeed there are *Caledonia* and *Pterostylis* (and also *Dendrobium*) growing in the immediate surrounds of my own home in Sydney. Studies such as this help to define the limits of Australian species. The project also aims to establish a program of *in vitro* propagation of orchid species to further scientific research, to compile a vouchered photographic record of New Caledonian orchids and to publish a bilingual popular reference work based on these colour photographs. This current publication not only includes a number of beautiful colour photographs,

but some fine botanical drawings by Lucy Turner, Sonia van de Haar, Melissa Ogden, Elisa Crossing and Andrew Kaminski.

Ed Duyker
Sylvania

Tim Fischer, *Seven Days in East Timor: Ballot and Bullets*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp 149, map, photographs, index, foreword by Bishop Carlos Belo, ISBN 1 86508 277 5\$19-95.*

It may seem a strange place to review a book on the UN supervised ballot in East Timor in a journal devoted to French-Australian links. This, however, is an important book written by a former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Trade. Fischer offers the reader his personal chronicle of his leadership of the All Party Australian delegation which monitored the 'Popular Consultation' in East Timor - a referendum which delivered an overwhelming vote for independence from Indonesia and heralded the violent holocaust of militia revenge:massacre, rape, arson and forced deportation. It is a chronicle of the bravery of the United Nations Mission in East Timor, of the unarmed civilian police (including numerous Australians) who assisted them, and, of course, the long suffering people of East Timor. It is also a chronicle of events which eventually led to Australia's (and France's) peacekeeping commitment to INTERFET in East Timor.

Clearly Indonesia could have acted otherwise. The militias could have been restrained and generosity could have replaced intimidation and revenge. Scholars of French-Australian relations will read with interest that on 19 December 1998, Prime Minister John Howard wrote to Present Habibie and proposed an alternative French model for the problems of East Timor:

It might be worth considering ... a means of addressing the East Timorese desire for an act of self-determination in a manner that avoids an early and final decision on the future status of the province. One way of doing this would be to build into the autonomy package a review mechanism along the lines of the Matignon Accords in New Caledonia. The Matignon Accords have enabled a compromise political solution to be implemented while deferring a referendum on the final status of New Caledonia for many years.

Fischer also makes numerous references to Francophone Mauritius. He tells us, for example, how the breakdown of the photocopier during the meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation in Mauritius in 1997

gave him an important opportunity to discuss East Timor with the then Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas (p. 64) He also offers the economic success of Mauritius as a model for East Timor. He tells us: 'East Timor is nine times larger than Mauritius ...' (p. 135) And 'Mauritius', he reminds us, 'is showing the way with development of small island tourism. This has been linked to a push to establish itself as a stopover place on an alternative route between Australia and Europe' (p. 137). Although Fischer believes that 'East Timor will not become a new Singapore or Mauritius or Bhutan overnight', he tells us: 'The leaders of those countries have worked to achieve social cohesion, and economic security. However, with unity of purpose, a good deal of sensible help and a measure of luck, East Timor will be able to gradually rebuild and find a deserved place in the sun after the horrible bloodbath of September 1999' (p. 141).

I was moved by this book and by the author's personal warmth, humanity and insight. Like most Australians I have followed events in East Timor with a mixture of sadness, anger and powerlessness. In the wake of so much brutality and repression, this book offers a message of hope.

**Tim Fischer has donated his royalties from this book to Caritas and other charities working to rebuild East Timor.*

Ed Duyker Honorary Consul, Republic of Mauritius, Sydney.

Gillian Kelly, *Well Suited to the Colony*, Queanbeyan NSW, The Australian Society of the Lacemakers of Calais, n.d. [1998], 287 pp.

This book tells the fascinating story of almost seven hundred men, women and children who emigrated to Australia from France toward the end of 1848. As the title-page succinctly puts it, it is 'the story of the lace-workers from Calais, born in the Midlands, trapped between the poorhouses of England and the French Revolution, who appealed to emigrate to the colonies of Australia.' Published in 1998 to mark the sesquicentenary of their arrival on these shores, it is a thoroughly researched, well-illustrated and competently told work which puts together the whole story of these refugees. Building on Nellie Muland's 1963 work *Calais au temps de la dentelle*, it follows the lace workers to their new home in the Antipodes.

Since the late sixteenth century, European techniques for the technique of fabrics by machine had become increasingly sophisticated, and it was the English spinners who led the way in developing machines for producing various types of stocking and other mesh materials. By 1800 the warp machine was being used in Nottingham to produce net, and as even more sophisticated machines were invented, Nottingham and its nearby villages were to become the main centre for making point net for hosiery and embroidery.

A parallel development, especially since about 1802, had been the smuggling of the new English technology into continental Europe, notably to France and Belgium. By 1815, between five and six hundred boats were crossing the Channel day and night, carrying contraband in both directions, and late in that year the Commissioner of Police in Paris seized forty-nine pieces of lace and mounted a raid on the home of one Robert Webster in Calais, uncovering two lace-making machines.

Why Calais? Obviously it was close to England, but also to Paris. Moreover there was already a systematic smuggling scheme in place there, and although the French authorities for some time seemed to turn a blind eye to it was considered that, should the political situation change, it would be easier to escape from Calais than from an inland centre.

Economic conditions in Nottingham being increasingly unfavourable to the lace workers, Calais became a popular centre in which they could conduct their trade, and from 1817 onwards more and more of the English workers moved there. Little accommodation was available in the town itself, but in the neighbouring village of Saint-Pierre there were farm houses and other dwellings suitable for housing. By the end of 1820 there were already fourteen

English manufacturers in Calais who owned 32 machines employing 52 lace makers. Though those who actually worked the machinery were English, the 'spin-off' effect was such that it was possible to employ another 483 women of whom 460 were French. By 1824 the number of machines had risen to 89. Three years later still, the machines numbered 170 and the lace workers between 700 and 800. An estimated 4000 people (English and French) were in some way involved in the trade in the area of Saint-Pierre, providing a source of local employment which no doubt was instrumental for a time in keeping the English lace workers from the over-zealous attention from the French authorities.

Gillian Kelly's account traces not only traces the rise of the lace-making industry, but also the political background against which the lacemakers (as foreigners) had to operate. Upon the accession of Charles X following the death of Louis XVIII, the lace workers thought it prudent to take up a collection among their community (800 francs being raised) and present it along with a French flag to the mayor of Calais – at the same time expressing in fulsome tones their consciousness of their position:

Driven by the oppressive weight of our grinding taxation to seek an asylum on your shores and coming hither at the termination of a long and bloody war, which, we now recollect with shame, was commenced with the wicked purpose of stifling your first attempts to be free – we, in common with the rest of our countrymen, felt some portion of that national jealousy and ill will, which were the natural consequences of our mistaken views of that sanguinary struggle! We have lived with you, but it has been as strangers in a foreign land – there has been mixture without fraternity, there has been intercourse without cordiality – but the glorious events of July came, and laid prostrate the moral barrier. The heroic devotion of the population of Paris had operated as a charm upon the civilised world. There is not one just man – there is not a real friend of freedom in the universe but would now be proud to extend the hand of cordiality to France and Frenchmen!

And so on at great length. But it did indeed seem that after the July Revolution the attitudes of the two peoples towards each other had improved considerably. The English lace makers were becoming less and less 'strangers in a foreign' land and more and more a part of their adopted country. As Gillian Kelly puts it:

Their children had grown up in this town in France, attended school, spoke French and with few exceptions, entered the trade. They married and bore children, some of them the second generation to be born in France. They were probably more French than English.

Then came – as Gillian Kelly describes in her excellent historical analysis – the February Revolution of 1848 and the bloody events that followed in the famous

'June Days' (23-26 June). The provisional government under Louis Blanc and his poet-deputy Alphonse de Lamartine (*O lac!*) were unable or unwilling to stop the popular uprising whose xenophobic overtones were reminiscent of the right-wing populism of more recent times. Foreign workers were no longer welcome, and despite the protests of some of the more liberal-minded of French people (such as the members of the Calais–Saint-Pierre Odd Fellows Lodge who denounced the 'cries and conduct of a few ruffians') the English workers were hounded out of France.

A petition addressed to the British Government led to the establishment of a 'Committee of Noblemen and Gentlemen for the Relief of British Workmen, Refugees from France'. It was clear that any return to Nottingham would be impractical, as there were no jobs to be had and the only other option was a return to the Nottingham poorhouses, at immediate and large cost to the parish. At this stage the solution was proposed of enabling the displaced workers to emigrate to the colonies in Australia, notably to South Australia where there was a shortage of workers.

On 19 April the *Fairlie* left Deptford for Plymouth, from where on 1 May she sailed for Australia with the first contingent of emigrants. On 12 May she was followed by the *Harpley* and on 9 June bearing the largest contingent – by the *Agincourt*. Later that year eight other ships bound for Australia brought further refugees from the events in France. Gillian Kelly's account describes the shipboard life, the births and deaths in the course of the journey, and finally the arrivals in Australia.

The *Harpley* had been bound for Port Adelaide, where she arrived with great difficulty on 2 September. The *Fairlie* and (later) the *Agincourt*, on the other hand, had set out for Sydney, where few jobs were available, making it necessary for those who landed there to pursue opportunities further afield, notably in Bathurst and Maitland. Gillian Kelly's account describes in vivid detail the sort of conditions the emigrants would have found in these outposts of rural Australia, 'so different to the industrialised communities they had known.'

The new settlers were unable to ply in Australia the trade they had known in France, and for the most part became ordinary workers or servants to the more prosperous members of the colonies to which they travelled. Some attempted to turn to good account their French Background, such as 'Madame Shore', a milliner and dressmaker of Bathurst, who advertised in December 1848 that 'she has had fifteen years experience in the Business in France, and has brought over with her all the latest and most elegant Paris Fashions that had appeared prior to her leaving that country.' For a few years, the emigrants tended to remain in close communities whether in South Australia or in New South Wales, but the discovery of gold was to change this way of living completely. From South Australia they streamed to the Victorian goldfields, while others spread to different directions until they were entirely dispersed. As Gillian Kelly comments, 'the close knit community of the lacemakers of Calais had disappeared into the fabric of the developing Australian society.'

Not until recent times, and as a result of a chance meeting of people who discovered that they had in common the fact that their ancestors had worked as lacemakers in France, did the descendants of the emigrants form themselves into an association aimed at finding out more about their forbears and their remarkable story. Relations, too, were opened up with a number of local historians in Calais, and particularly Saint-Pierre where the local patois still contains a number of English words. A number of members of the Australian society (ASLC) are regular visitors to Calais.

Reporting the arrival of the *Agincourt* on 14 October 1848, the *Bathurst Advocate* commented that the 264 refugees on board were in good health and appeared to be 'a class of immigrants well suited to the colony.' Taking these words as her title, Gillian Kelly has written an eminently written account of this little-known chapter in the history of Franco-Australian relations.

Well Suited to the Colony is available by writing to Gillian Kelly at PO Box 1277, Queanbeyan, NSW 2620. The price is \$34.00, plus \$6.00 for packaging and handling (\$7.50 for two and \$8.20 for three) Cheques should be made out to ASLC.

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