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**The Pacific Journal of Louis-
Antoine de Bougainville,
1767-1768**

Edited by **John Dunmore**



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THE PACIFIC JOURNAL OF
LOUIS-ANTOINE DE BOUGAINVILLE
1767-1768

THIRD SERIES
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1767-1768

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JOHN DUNMORE

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations and Maps	viii
Preface	ix
EDITORIAL NOTE	
The Problem of Equivalence	xi
Naval titles	xii
Measurements	xii
Currency	xiii
Navigational Practices	xiv
Textual Note	xv
Abbreviations Used	xvi
INTRODUCTION	
The Background	xix
The Participants	xxiv
The Ships	xlii
The Instructions	xliii
The Voyage	xliv
The Achievements	lxx
THE JOURNAL – 14 November 1767 to 12 December 1768	i
APPENDICES	
1. The Muster Roll	183
2. The Journal of Caro	199
3. The Journal of Vivez	223
4. The Journal of Fesche	249
5. The Journal of Nassau-Siegen	281
6. The Commerson Documents	296
BIBLIOGRAPHY	306
INDEXES	315

ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

Illustrations

1. Journal of Bougainville, first page. *Reprinted by permission of the Archives de la Marine (Colonies), Paris.* xvii
2. View of the French settlement, Malouines, in 1763-1764, by Dom Pernetty, *Histoire abrégée d'un voyage aux îles Malouines.* xxi
3. New Cythera, coloured drawing believed to be by Charles de Romainville. *Reprinted by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Service des Cartes et Plans* 56
4. Pastel drawing by an unknown artist, representing Bougainville and his officers with islanders in Tahiti. *Held in the Rex Nan Kivell collection, Canberra, reprinted with the permission of the National Library of Australia, Canberra.* 65
5. Document taking possession of the Louisiades Archipelago on behalf of the King of France. *Reprinted by permission of the Archives de la Marine (Colonies), Paris.* III

Maps

1. Voyage of Bougainville across the Pacific, 1767-68. Inside cover
2. Tuamotu Archipelago to Tahiti, 22 March – 18 April 1768. 49
3. Tahiti, 4 April – 15 April 1768. 58
4. Samoa, 3 May – 5 May 1768. 80
5. Vanuatu, 22 May – 28 May 1768. 90
6. Vanuatu to New Guinea, 28 May – 8 August 1768. 98

PREFACE

The journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's Pacific voyage of 1767-8 lay unpublished in the Archives Nationales in Paris until 1977 when Étienne Taillemite, then the Archives' Chief Conservator, brought out his impressive two-volume *Bougainville et ses compagnons autour du monde 1766-1769*, as the first in the series 'Voyages et Découvertes' published and printed by the Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, in association with the Publications de la Sorbonne. Taillemite had previously drawn attention to the little-known journal of Jean-Louis Caro, and the decision was taken to include the journals of those who had accompanied Bougainville on his circumnavigation. A more rounded picture of the first major French voyage of exploration could thus be presented to the French public.

The expedition had been known to the public not long after its return to France, as the result of Bougainville's own narrative, *Voyage autour du monde*, published in France in 1771, re-issued in two volumes in 1772 and available in that same year in an English translation by J.R. Forster. The *Voyage* remained available in one form or another and in several languages over the next two hundred years, but the original shipboard journal stayed buried in the vaults of the Archives Nationales. As Patrick O'Reilly, the secretary of the *Société des océanistes*, pointed out in a prefatory note to the Taillemite edition, there had been no scholarly and authentic account of the voyage available to French or other readers.

In providing an English translation and edition of Bougainville's original journal of his Pacific crossing, together with a selection from the journals of those who sailed with him, one must therefore pay a tribute to the painstaking labours of Mr Taillemite. Footnotes have been supplied in this present publication to take into account the interests and requirements of English readers, but where a note has been taken in its entirety from the French edition it is given between single quotes with the acknowledgement 'ET'.

Thanks must also be expressed to a number of people who have helped to elucidate some of the questions that remained unanswered or unclear: Professor G. G. Aymonin, of the Laboratoire de Phanérogamie at the Musée national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, Emeritus Professor Kenneth Quinn, Dr Edward Duyker, Melbourne, librarians at Massey University, Palmerston North and Albany campuses, Dr W. R. Sykes, Landcare Research, Sandy Bartle, Te Papa Museum, Wellington, Professor Glynnis M. Cropp, Dr Ly Tio-Fane, Mauritius, Mme Jeannine Monnier, Maurice Recq, Brest, Mrs Fay Clayton, and the late Dr Norman Austin, with particular thanks to Captain R. J. Campbell for guidance on the interpretation of technical nautical matters.

My thanks must also be expressed to the Council of the Hakluyt Society, its trustees and honorary series editors, Professor Robin Law and Professor W. F. Ryan,

for their assistance and their confidence over a period of years that have made it possible for the journals of the three leading French eighteenth-century Pacific explorers, Surville, La Pérouse and now Bougainville, to take their place in the Society's publications. Special thanks are due to Professor Law for his painstaking assistance during preparation of the present volume.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Problem of Equivalence

A number of problems arise when translating French journals and documents into English owing to differences in the naval hierarchies of the two countries in the eighteenth century, as well as in the varying uses of weights and measures. Currencies, of course, fluctuated then as they do now. A balance has to be found between translating the word by its dictionary equivalent, which can create a misleading impression, and leaving all such words in French, highlighting them by the use of italics, which can be tiresome and in the end unhelpful. A compromise has been sought by in general using the English word, even though a purist would object that a true equivalence does not exist, and leaving the words in French and in italics in cases where an English approximation would leave a false impression. Thus, a league or a mile will be found in the text as preferable to *lieue* or *mille*, and lieutenant or clerk instead of *lieutenant* or *écrivain*.

Similar problems arise with the use of place names in the manuscripts. In the translated text, the English equivalent of a place name has been used in accordance with general usage. There are occasions when a literal translation has been judged more informative in the particular context or in the case of a descriptive name, and consequently preferable. For instance, the French seldom if ever used the name Falkland Islands; in the translation this has been found to be an appropriate name when the island group is referred to in a general way, but the Malouine Islands or Malouines has been used when references to the French settlement or French activities have made this preferable. In the case of the Straits of Magellan, the French tended (and still tend) to use the singular, in the sense of a single suitable channel, and this preference has been reflected in the translation. In their references to the island or land of Espiritu Santo, the French did not use the Spanish term but the French equivalent, and this has been reflected in the translation as the 'Land of the Holy Spirit'. In the case of present-day Mauritius, the eighteenth-century name of the Isle de France has been used throughout.

The term 'Savage' in reference to islanders and other native people is retained throughout the translation. Lest it should give offence, it may be necessary to draw attention to the capital letter – used in the journals and reports – and to point out that in the context of the times it referred to a person living in a state close to nature, the word being derived from the late Latin *salvaticus*, or forest-dweller. During the eighteenth century the question of the 'Noble Savage', a man living in an ideal non-urbanized state, uncorrupted by property rights, political structures and inherited social hierarchies, was widely discussed, especially after the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's essay on the foundations of inequality in human societies.

Naval titles

Capitaine ('captain') was a term describing the person in charge of a ship. The lowest rank in this hierarchy was a *capitaine de flûte*, or storeship captain. The *flûte* being a transport vessel, normally accompanying a warship, its captain was often a man who had served in merchant ships, a professional sailor and one who had been accepted in the navy either on a permanent basis or with a temporary commission, i.e. an officer of the class known as 'blue' from the predominant colour of his uniform.

A *capitaine de brûlot* was an officer in charge of a fireship. This vessel was used in naval engagements, loaded with explosive materials, set on fire and directed at enemy ships. The command of such a vessel required experience, daring and skill. The appointment implied acceptance in the naval service, as a fighting officer, as against the storeship captain whose main function was the conveying of stores; however, many fireship captains were 'officers of the blue'.

The rank of *capitaine de frégate* was gradually falling into disuse in the eighteenth century, the rank of *capitaine de vaisseau*, usually senior to it, being in the process of replacing it. However, it was found useful during the Seven Years War in order to provide rank and status to experienced officers from the 'blue' class. Bougainville, although captain of a frigate, was given a commission as *capitaine de vaisseau*, the senior grade, applying to a captain in charge of a warship of 20 guns or more, roughly the equivalent of a post-captain. In the modern French navy, the rank of *capitaine de frégate* has been restored, being the intermediate rank between *capitaine de corvette* and *capitaine de vaisseau*.

A *chef d'escadre* was a senior officer in charge of several ships and accordingly of superior rank to a *capitaine de vaisseau*. The term 'commodore' is a fair approximation.

Entry into the naval service for sons of the nobility was normally through the *Gardes de la Marine*, which it would be misleading to translate as 'guard' unless the context made it clear that it was not intended to refer to a sentry or a person watching over people or property. Young men could also join a ship as *volontaires*. These volunteers were usually youths with links to the merchant service, such as the two sons of Duclos, and with some experience of the sea – Fesche had previously served as a junior pilot – who planned to pursue a career in the merchant service and, in some cases, in the royal navy. They were regarded as junior officers.

In the case of warrant officers and other lower ranks, the equivalent British grades are given, but with some reservations.

Measurements

In the eighteenth century, measurements had not been standardized and varied from country to country and often from one district to another. Attempts to standardize units of measure throughout France had been made at frequent intervals; indeed, one of the requests made in the list of complaints known as the *Cahiers de Doléances* in 1788 was for 'One king, one law, one weight, one measure'. There was one major reform in 1737 when the *lieue* or league was standardized, but even so there was one league applicable to the transport of grain, one for the postal service and one for general purposes, in addition to the *lieue marine* used by sailors. Major reforms began with the French Revolution, the metric system being gradually introduced from 1793-5.

It is possible to translate some French terms into English: a *brasse*, for instance, is normally translated as a fathom, a *lieue* as a league, and an *encablure* as a cablelength, but these are forms of usage and are not precise equivalents.

Measures of length in use at the time of Bougainville's voyage (with their approximate English equivalent in brackets) were:

Lieue (league): 2000 *toises* for the transport of grain, 2200 *toises* for postal services, 2400 *toises* for general road travel.

Lieue marine: one twentieth of a degree (3 nautical miles), or 5.557 km.

Mille marin (nautical mile): 1852 m.

Toise: 6 *pieds* (feet): 1.949 m.

Pied de roi: 12 *pouces* (inches): 32.5 cm.

Pouce: 12 *lignes*: 2.7 cm.

Ligne: 12 *points*: 2.26 mm.

Point: equivalent to 0.188 mm.

Brasse (fathom) or 5 *pieds*: 1.624 m. The English fathom is 6 feet or 1.82 m.

Encablure (cablelength): equivalent to 185.2 m (one-tenth of a nautical mile).

Weights and measures of capacity also require caution in estimating equivalents:

Barique (barrel, cask): 230 litres.

Livre (pound): 489 gm.

Pot de Paris: 1.90 litres.

Quintal (hundredweight): 100 *livres* or 48.95 kg.

Tonneau de mer (barrel, tun): 2,000 *livres* or 979 kg.

The term *quart* currently refers to a quarter of a litre, but it was also used to refer to a quarter of a *pot*.

Longitudes given by Bougainville were based on the Paris meridian, 2°20' 14" East of Greenwich.

Currency

Units of currency similarly present some difficulty. The terms *livre*, *sol*, *denier* may strike a chord with those who recall the pre-decimal *l. s. d.*, but it would be misleading to equate French and English currencies. The term *franc* goes back to the fourteenth century; the *livre* with which it was synonymous changed in value over the centuries as its gold content fluctuated, usually downwards, with the royal fortunes; while the *louis* made its appearance in the mid-seventeenth century. The following values were current at the *time* when Bougainville was writing:

Louis: gold coin worth 24 *livres*.

Écu: silver coin worth 6 *livres*.

Livre: silver coin worth 20 *sols*.

Sol: copper coin worth 12 *deniers*.

Liard: copper coin worth 3 *deniers*.

Denier: copper coin.

It is difficult to estimate the value of France's currency in British terms. Following

the disastrous Seven Years War, France's financial situation was unenviable. Even comparing average wages is hazardous, as conditions varied from one country or one region to another. One estimate, based on a comparison of the annual income of a Lyons silk weaver, recorded in Voltaire's 1754 *Dictionnaire philosophique* (in the article entitled 'Feasts') as being approximately 639 *livres*, gives when compared with similar incomes of English skilled workers a value for a French *livre* of just under one shilling or five modern pence. The *Boudeuse's* muster roll gives the monthly pay of sailors and others, applicable to the years 1765-8, and is useful for appreciating income relativities. A master gunner, master carpenter and master sailmaker earned between 480 and 600 *livres*. Sailors were paid between 144 and 216 *livres*. In addition, they were provided with some form of accommodation and food of varying quality; this was balanced by their lengthy absences from home.

Navigational Practices

The position of a ship, once out of the sight of land or away from a traditional trade route, was determined by calculating the point of intersection between two imaginary lines, the latitude, or the distance north or south from the Equator, and the longitude, or distance east or west from a known point, such as the port of departure or more generally the capital of the home country, London (Greenwich) for British sailors, Paris for French.

The latitude was reasonably easy to determine by observing the altitude of the noonday sun and using an almanac. The astrolabe and later the octant and the sextant were used for these observations, two mirrors bringing the image of the sun in coincidence with the horizon. Reasonably clear weather allowed quite accurate observations.

Longitudes, however, were more difficult to determine, requiring a comparison between shipboard time and the time at the point of departure or in Paris. Measuring the speed of a ship was difficult and unreliable: the log line (*ligne de loch*), a rope of some 150 fathoms in length, marked at intervals by means of knots and with a steady-ying board at the end, was thrown overboard. The number of knots passing the rail during a specified interval was then counted, usually aloud, and provided, at least in theory, the information required – in fact, it depended on the sailors operating it not shortening what was a boring task by upturning the sandglass before it had emptied. Allowance also needed to be made for the ship's progress being affected by currents. The naval regulations provided for a 30-second sandglass, and a spacing between knots of $\frac{1}{20}$ of a degree or just over 47 *pieds*; ship's pilots however often shortened this distance to 41 *pieds*, considering this to be both safer and more accurate, as it theoretically allowed for drag.

The French used as a reference book a national almanac, the *Connaissance des temps*, first published in 1679 and regularly updated, which contained tables for the determination of longitudes from observations of the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites or of the moon (lunar distances). Little accuracy could be attained, however, until the true time on board could be calculated. Pendulum clocks were of little use. A great improvement came aboard when the Englishman John Harrison invented the chronometer; this, however was not available until after 1766, by which time Bougainville had

already left. Bougainville had on board with him the latest model of the octant, perfected in England in the 1730s; several of the officers also had one and comparisons were frequently established, often with the help of the astronomer Véron, enabling an average to be determined. On fine days, the degree of accuracy was fairly satisfactory; on others, guesswork tended to dominate. Once on land, however, checks could be carried out with other instruments, mostly by Véron, and the ship's position recalculated.

Hence, on numerous occasions, the word 'Estimated' (or 'Estd') appears in the journal. It corresponds to the English expressions 'Dead Reckoning', 'By Reckoning' or 'By Account'. The term 'Estimated' (for *Estimé*) has been retained in the translation as being, if anything clearer to the reader. The method used to determine the position of the *Boudeuse* is recorded in the journals, so that the reader knows whether clouds or bad weather interfered and made accurate observations of the elevation of the sun or the angle of the moon impossible. Bougainville often gives the observed and the estimated latitude when a change in the cloud cover makes both possible, thus enabling a check to be made on the accuracy of the estimates. Additional information about the methods used is also often supplied, frequently in naval or scientific terminology. Thus the terms 'ortive' and 'occiduous' are found in the text: broadly, these signify eastern and western or, in reference to a planet, its rising or setting (e.g. 'the rising amplitude' of a planet). Compass variations were calculated by observing the magnetic bearing of the sun at its rising (ortive amplitude) or setting (occiduous amplitude) and comparing it with the sun's true bearing.

Bougainville's log also gives the distance covered by the ship – or '*courses*' (translated as 'run') – during the previous 24 hours (i.e. from midday to midday). This is stated in minutes of a degree, corresponding to a nautical mile (e.g. for the first entry in the journal, the route is given as 70' 40", equivalent to 70.65 miles or 131 km). In almost every case, however, these measurements need to be treated with caution, on account of the combined effects of drift, winds and currents. Bougainville often adds 'Estimated' to the distances he records.

The direction in which the vessel travelled can be calculated according to the new estimated or true position. The French (and indeed the Spanish) method of recording the direction differed from the one current in England. In this edition, the French style has been retained. The corresponding English compass directions are as follows:

N¼NE: NbyE	NE¼N: NEbyN	NE¼E: NEbyE	E¼NE: EbyN
E¼SE: EbyS	SE¼E: SEbyE	SE¼S: SEbyS	S¼SE: SbyE
S¼SW: SbyW	SW¼S: SWbyS	SW¼W: SWbyW	W¼SW: WbyS
W¼NW: WbyN	NW¼W: NWbyN	NW¼W: NWbyW	NW¼N: NWbyN
N¼NW: NbyW			

Greater precision can be achieved by the addition of degrees and minutes.

Textual Note

Bougainville's shipboard journal is held at the Archives Nationales, Paris, under the reference Marine 4 JJ 142, N° 17. A second copy is in existence, also held at the Archives Nationales, but it is the work of an unknown copyist some years later and contains a number of errors.

It contains a muster roll and details of the *Boudeuse*, dimensions, height of the masts, etc. The daily account of the voyage begins on page 20 with the entry of 15 to 16 November 1766 when the frigate sailed from Mindin, opposite Saint Nazaire, at the mouth of the River Loire. It ends with the entry of 15 February 1769, while the ship was on her way home from the Isle de France, having called at the Cape of Good Hope and Ascension Island. It does not therefore contain any information about the meeting between Bougainville and Carteret on 20 February. Bougainville gives no reason for his failure to keep a journal during the final stages of the voyage: there is a heading for 15-16 February but the pages are blank after that.

Abbreviations Used

AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
BN, BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
ET	Étienne Taillemite
NAF	Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (at BN)

Journal

De La Campagne commencée Le 12

15 9^{bre} 1756

Sur la frigate Du Roi La Boudeuse
qui se commande comme Capitaine de
Vaisseau avec Lettres De Service.

Cette frigate a été construite à Nantes
Par M. Roffeur, Lancé à l'eau au
printemps 1755, doublée en 76

comme elle forme un bon à l'entree au la
Frigate, après lancé à l'eau, elle est équipée de
70000. M. Ducloux chargé en arriéré compte à
M. Le Duc de Praslin.

J'observerai qu'il ny a point d'entree, moins propre
à la construction de l'armement de frigate de
Roi que la Bay de Nantes. pour l'assais de ma
conscience, je t'ai mandé au
en si. de suite les raisons.



Meridien de Tenerife	a	18° 52'	Ouen de Paris
Meridien de l'île de Fer	a	19° 54'	O. de Paris
Merid. du Cap Léopard	a	7° 28'	O. de Paris
Meridien de Londres			

1. Journal of Bougainville, first page.

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INTRODUCTION

The Background

The Seven Years War, lasting from 1756 to 1763, exhausted France economically and ended the dominant position she had held in European politics under the Old Regime. British naval superiority and the French government's policy of concentrating her war effort on the continent had brought about the end of French colonial developments in Canada and India. To some, the loss of distant settlements and outposts was of little consequence, but to many and especially to those who had been involved in France's overseas campaigns the new situation appeared both humiliating and dangerous. Their British rivals were no longer laying the foundations for an imposing overseas empire: they were consolidating it. The future loomed ominous, with Britain apparently set on building up a global colonial empire, controlling sea routes and dominating world trade.

This fear would come to the forefront during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. In the interim, the uppermost thought of French politicians and patriots was that the peace of 1763 was only a temporary truce, forced on the combatants by sheer exhaustion, and that the struggle would soon be resumed. Every effort should therefore be directed towards preparing for the next stage. One obvious move was the occupation of unsettled territories at key points on sea routes, in order to forestall some of Britain's likely colonizing moves, and to provide new bases to make up for those that had been lost. It was a policy rendered even more desirable by the closing of Canada to French immigration and the expulsion of considerable numbers of French settlers from Acadia, part of Nova Scotia, and the destruction of their farms at the beginning of the war. This *Grand Dérangement*, as it was called, an early form of ethnic cleansing, was deeply resented by men like Bougainville. Although most of the Acadians had been sent to Louisiana and to various British settlements, a number had found their way to France, and Bougainville saw in them a humanitarian cause, a useful lever by which to move opinion in favour of his plans, as well as a good source of potential recruits.

The fall of Quebec and the consequent collapse of French Canada had led to his return to France, at first as a paroled prisoner. Allowed to serve in Germany, he was wounded and had to return to Paris in 1761. He would play no further part in the war and he was therefore free to draw up his plans well before the Treaty of Paris in 1763 put a final end to the hostilities. His years in Parisian and London scientific circles in the mid-1750s had familiarized him with issues of exploration and in particular with Britain's interest in the Pacific Ocean. He knew Charles de Brosses, whose highly influential *Histoire des découvertes aux terres australes* had appeared in 1756. By the end of 1761 his thoughts about Pacific exploration and the need for French bases on sea routes had crystallized

sufficiently to enable him to approach the Minister of Marine, the Duc de Choiseul, with a firm proposal.¹

His plans were well received, but refined over the following year. The French government was in no position to promote or finance a voyage of exploration into the Pacific, so the first step would be the colonization of the uninhabited Falkland Islands, largely by Acadian settlers who 'would be quite willing to go there as the climate where it is proposed to establish their settlement is about the same as that of Acadia, their former homeland.'² Bougainville did not conceal the fact that strategic considerations drove him to propose this and made it relatively easy for the government to support the plan: 'seeing that the North was closed to us, I thought of giving to my country in the Southern Hemisphere what she no longer possesses in the northern one. I searched and found the Malouine Island.'³ If the deserted Falklands could be held by France, they would bar the way to British ambitions, just as the Isle de France could threaten British shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean.

The possibility of establishing a base on the islands went back almost half a century. Laurens Olivier, in the *Comte de Lamoignon*, having sighted three islands in their neighbourhood, had suggested a more thorough survey by a French expedition, as they appeared suitable for a settlement and as a port of call.⁴ Others, notably Doublet and Duquesnel, with the Spanish South American trade in mind, also pressed for a French settlement: 'It would be easy and not too costly to settle there, and in a short while to provide [the islands] with all kinds of plants and grain crops and vegetables, as well as to populate them with cattle and poultry. There is fish in abundance, and this discovery deserves attention.'⁵

Two ships were obtained, the *Aigle* and the *Sphinx*. Bougainville and his relatives provided the funds, and in September 1763 the small expedition – France's first colonial venture since the war – was under way. The first settlement, Port Saint-Louis, was established in February 1764 and a few months later Bougainville returned to France to report on his success. He was well received and the Duc de Choiseul had little difficulty in obtaining Louis XV's approval for the formal taking over of a Malouines colony. Bougainville drew up further proposals for the full recognition of what was now known as the Saint Malo Company, including some official financial support for the next stages of the project. There were, Bougainville pointed out, over 300 Acadian families living around St Malo, totalling 1,300 people, who could be transported to the islands; this would require, in addition to the *Aigle*, two storeships and two

¹ In his published narrative, Bougainville seems to disclaim that the establishment of a base at the Falkland Islands was his own idea: 'At the beginning of 1763, the French court decided to form a settlement on these islands. I offered to the Minister to establish it at my own expense.' *Voyage*, p. 48. However, there is strong evidence that informal discussions preceded this decision and that Bougainville played a major role at the earliest stages.

² Memoir in AN, Colonies, F²A 20.

³ Note dated 4 July 1764 in BN, NAF 9407-11. The name Malouine is derived from St Malo and commemorated the discoveries and sightings made by ships from this port earlier in the century. In the context of this expedition the term Falklands and Malouines are therefore interchangeable. The Spanish equivalent, Malvinas, is regularly used by Argentinians.

⁴ 'Copie du journal du Sieur Laurens Olivier', 1714, BN, NAF 9438.

⁵ 'Relation de la nouvelle découverte des isles Cébaldes', 1711, BN, NAF 9438.



*Site de la Baie de L'Est de la plus grande
des Iles Malouines, et de son habitation.*

2. View of the French settlement, Malouines, in 1763-1764, by Dom Pernetty, *Histoire abrégée d'un voyage aux îles Malouines*.

sloops, and adequate supplies for subsistence, seeds and agricultural implements. The Minister unequivocally endorsed the proposal: 'Approved in full', he wrote in the margin.

There were, however, some warning signs about. The Spanish ambassador had already made preliminary enquiries about French intentions. The newspapers at Amsterdam and The Hague published brief reports on disquiet being expressed in London, and discussed whether the Dutch, through Sebald de Weert in 1600, might not have a claim to the islands on the basis of prior discovery, preceding the English by some ninety years, so that 'the French were merely the third in line.'¹

By then Bougainville was on his way back to Port Saint-Louis in the *Aigle*. He arrived at the beginning of 1765 and found the small settlement in good heart; the winter had not been too harsh, the cattle had survived in the open air and in fact done quite well, the crops were promising, with the exception of wheat. The chaplain had performed one wedding and two christenings. But there was a shortage of timber, both for building and for firewood.² Bougainville therefore set out for the Straits of Magellan to get some. He was successful in this mission, surveyed the first narrows and the bays beyond and met some of the local inhabitants. More unexpected was the presence of three ships, which he identified as British: they were Byron's *Dolphin*, *Tamar* and *Florida* on their way to the Pacific Ocean. Byron had already been to the Falklands without seeing the French settlement; conversely the French had been unaware of the English presence. Bougainville and Byron did not meet in the Straits: they merely sighted each other and went on their way, but it was an ominous encounter.

Back at Port Saint-Louis at the end of March, Bougainville got ready to sail back to France. He sailed on 28 April 1765 and dropped anchor at St Malo on 13 August. He then hastened to Paris and discovered that his colony was doomed. The British had become fully aware of his plans and of the danger this presented to their shipping route. Byron had in fact taken formal possession of the Falkland Islands, laying out a sketchy vegetable garden at a commodious harbour he named Port Egmont, thus bringing Britain firmly into the equation.³ Byron's third ship, the *Florida*, had been sent back to London with news of the sighting of Bougainville in the Straits, removing any doubts about French activities. The Admiralty took immediate steps to ensure that Britain's claims were respected and within three months the *Jason*, captain Macbride, was on her way to the Falklands with clear instructions to inform 'any subjects of a foreign Power' found there that 'the Islands belonged to Great Britain, and

¹ There were a number of periodicals in French published in the Netherlands at this time; this enabled journalists to avoid the censorship procedures in France and to comment more freely on contemporary issues. They also enabled other governments, especially the British, to present their case on contentious matters. The main ones were the *Gazette de la Haye* and the *Gazette de Hollande*, also known as the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*: for the controversy over priority of claims to the Malouines as among the French, English and Dutch, see the *Gazette de la Haye*, 13 July & 14 August 1764, *Gazette de Hollande*, 13 August 1764. The complex arguments which arose out of Bougainville's actions are analysed in minute detail by Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 167-419. For early French language periodicals, see Levi, *Guide to French Literature: Beginnings to 1789*.

² See Pernetty, *Histoire d'un voyage aux isles Malouines fait en 1763 et 1764*, a useful and reasonably reliable source.

³ See Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire*, I, pp. 25-7.

that, since his Majesty had given orders for the settlement thereof ... any such persons were to be offered transport on his Majesty's ships to some port in the Dominions of the Power to which they belonged.¹

The Spanish for their part, after some tactful enquiries through diplomatic channels, had been expressing their increasing concern to Versailles. The islands were geographically part of South America, and thus within the Spanish sphere of colonial influence. They were allied to France through the Family Compact and did not at first oppose Bougainville's activities, but they were uneasy about claims of sovereignty. Once the French government began to transform Port Saint-Louis from a commercial enterprise into a colonial settlement, with a member of Bougainville's family as governor holding a royal warrant, mild protests turned into a firmly worded request for the French to desist from further encroachment into Spanish territory.

At first, the French were unwilling to sacrifice a settlement that held such appealing strategic possibilities. But to hold on to the Falklands would mean alienating Spain – and now possibly lead to a new war with England. The political disadvantages far outweighed any likely gains the settlement might bring. Louis XV consequently agreed to ask Bougainville to abandon the settlement and recognize the Spanish claim. The Bourbon ranks would then be closed, and the British would be forced to claim right of ownership by prior discovery – which was not a principle the British were anxious to establish in international law.

Bougainville went to Madrid in April 1766 and again in September to discuss terms with the Spanish Government and France's representative in Madrid. The King of Spain had no wish to impose any special hardship on the pleasant Frenchman, and he agreed to refund the Saint Malo Company's investments plus interest at five per cent, and to meet any costs to be incurred by Bougainville up to April 1767 in connection with the cession of the colony, its buildings and equipment. The total involved exceeded 600,000 *livres*.² Spain hoped in addition that France, in recognizing Spanish prior claims, would condemn the British for establishing Port Egmont, but Louis XV was not willing to venture into a confrontation with Britain at this point. He had agreed to give up what had become the French colony of the 'Malouines': the question of whether England had a legal right to its new settlement on the 'Falklands', or whether Spain had a better claim to its 'Malvinas', could be left to later – and indeed it was still a matter for bitter disputes in the late twentieth century.

Compelled to accept the inevitable, Bougainville revived his original plans. The settlement on the Malouines had been planned merely as the first stage of a voyage into the Pacific Ocean, where new discoveries might be made and further French outposts might be established. The Duc de Choiseul had endorsed the proposal back in 1762 and it had been officially approved the following year. There was even more

¹ *Ibid.* The instructions are reprinted in full in Corney, *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti*, II, pp. 441–5.

² The letter of agreement signed by Bougainville on 4 October 1766 is quoted in Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 377–8. Although it included an admission that his settlement was 'illegal', Bougainville continued to regard the Falklands as having been an unclaimed archipelago to which the first settlers were entitled. A case in point was Mauritius, discovered by the Portuguese, settled by the Dutch in 1698, left deserted in 1710, renamed Isle de France by the French in 1715, and turned into a prosperous French colony until 1814, when Britain took it over under the terms of the Treaty of Paris.

reason to proceed now on account of recent British activities in the Pacific. Information coming from London made it clear that further Pacific voyages were being envisaged. Byron had already sailed; soon there would be Wallis and Carteret; scientists on both sides of the Channel were pressing for more expeditions, drawing attention to the coming transits of Venus which would see James Cook take his *Endeavour* around the world and France send out its own savants to the Indian Ocean and elsewhere. Science may have been a respectable pretext, but other voices had also been raised across the Channel for settlements in the vast ocean, notably that of James Callander, who had translated De Brosses's influential book and adapted it so as to present a case for English, as against French, exploration of the South Seas.

The time was now ripe for Bougainville's great undertaking. Within twenty-four hours of his return from Spain with copies of all the agreements that had been signed in Madrid, Bougainville was hard at work making final arrangements for his voyage around the world. Practically everything had been prepared, with the full assistance of the Minister of Marine. There was no reason to delay. France was ready to send its first officially-sponsored expedition into the Pacific Ocean. A month after his return to Paris, Bougainville sailed in the *Boudeuse* from the Loire, impatient to set out on the great undertaking which had been his dream for so many years.

The Participants

1. The *Boudeuse*

Louis-Antoine de Bougainville was born in Paris on 12 November 1729 in a family of respected lawyers. His father Pierre-Yves was a notary at the nearby Châtelet, and in 1741 he was appointed *échevin* or councillor of the city of Paris. This led to his ennoblement, becoming a member of the *noblesse de robe*, 'nobility of the gown' as against the *noblesse d'épée*, or 'nobility of the sword', to which most, but by no means all the leading families of the kingdom belonged. This ennoblement opened many doors to Bougainville who soon proved himself to be a talented and highly personable young man about town. In addition, he made a rapid transition from the world of gowns and law books to the world of swordsmen by joining the army. After some time with the musketeers in 1750, he served in the Picardy Regiment – the Bougainville family had originated from that province – rising to aide-de-camp in 1754.

In October of the same year he went to the French Embassy in London as secretary to the Duc de Mirepoix. He met a number of leading figures in English society, including Lord George Anson who had completed a circumnavigation in 1744. He also met scientists with whom he could discuss the works and ideas of the French savants under whom he had studied or with whom he had talked at length for, although he had the traditional solid grounding in the classics which was the basis of all education and culture in his day, he also had a sound knowledge of science and mathematics. In 1755 he published his *Traité du calcul intégral* which helped him to establish a reputation in learned circles; in January 1756 he was elected a member of the Royal Society.

The international situation, however, had been rapidly worsening and Europe was sliding into what would become the Seven Years War. Bougainville returned to army service. Appointed aide-de-camp to Montcalm, he sailed for Canada in March 1756.

He was wounded in June 1758 and returned to France. He was back in Canada in the following year, in time to witness the fall of Quebec. He continued to defend what remained of French Canada against superior forces, but was taken prisoner near Montreal in September 1760. Freed on parole, he was sent back to France and soon after allowed to take part in military operations in Germany. He was wounded in July 1761 and sent back to Paris; for him, the war was now over.¹

He now turned his mind to his plans to explore the Pacific Ocean, ensuring that France would have a part to play there in years to come. He had acquired a considerable knowledge of the sciences of navigation and astronomy from each of his crossings of the Atlantic and had established firm friendships with men like Duclos-Guyot. Although he would depend on their help during his circumnavigation, he was by no means a dilettante, an idle army officer playing at sea captain. He had been an able student and had gained practical experience by closely observing and assisting the officers whenever he was at sea; and indeed his ability as a commander and as a navigator remained unquestioned during the voyage. He had in addition a very thorough knowledge, acquired through study and discussions with scientists and naval officers, of earlier voyages to the Pacific. The influence of his older brother, Jean-Pierre, should not be overlooked. Jean-Pierre was a lawyer, in poor health (he died in 1763), a man of considerable learning, well connected in Paris circles, who had planned for his brother a more colourful career than his own state of health would ever allow him.

Bougainville's first duties however concerned the establishment of a colony on the Falkland Islands. This was his own idea, carefully thought out and linked with his desire to set up a French base that would serve later French expeditions to the Pacific while assisting in the resettlement of French Canadian refugees. He sailed twice to the Falklands, in September 1763 and again in July 1764. On the second occasion, he went to the Straits of Magellan to obtain supplies of timber. Pressure from Spain and indirectly from Britain forced the abandonment of the settlement, which Bougainville handed over to the Spanish authorities in April 1767. He then continued on his way with the *Boudeuse* and the *Étoile*, passing through the Straits and into the Pacific Ocean, returning to France in March 1769.

His subsequent career was mostly associated with the navy, to which he was officially transferred on March 1770, and with administrative and political matters. He considered leading an expedition to the North Pole and drew up careful plans, which the Minister considered for a time, but the proposal was shelved and Bougainville busied himself with naval problems. His position in the navy was still ambiguous: not only had he transferred from the army, but strictly he could be counted among the

¹ On Bougainville's youth and the Canadian campaigns, see de Kerallain, *Les Français au Canada: la jeunesse de Bougainville et la Guerre de Sept ans*; and La Roncière, *Bougainville*. Kerallain is a descendant of Bougainville. La Roncière's book has a readable and extensive section on the Canadian campaigns, pp. 15-93, compared with pp. 119-71 for the voyage and pp. 172-80 for the aftermath - this may be due to this biography being published during the German Occupation when Britain was often depicted as an enemy of France and this biography appeared in a collection directed by Abel Herman, a prominent collaborator. La Roncière provides a valuable list of documents for the early period of Bougainville's life.

'officers of the blue', men who had often a long experience of the sea but gained in the merchant service, and who were accepted on naval ships only during wartime – after which, to use Bougainville's own words, these men 'born in the honest middle class' seldom found permanent employment in the navy. Traditionally, a career in the naval service was available only to those who came from the *noblesse d'épée*, the 'reds' as they were known.¹ He had however powerful protectors at court, and a well-established reputation as an able and enterprising man. War anyhow was approaching once more. The American colonies began their struggle to free themselves from English rule and gradually France was drawn into the fight.

Bougainville joined the *Terpsichore* as second in command in May 1775 and obtained his own command, that of the *Bien-Aimé*, in January 1777. He fought in several naval engagements for the next six years, commanding the *Guerrier* from April 1778 and the *Languedoc* from June to September 1780. A brief interlude ashore allowed him to marry, on 27 January 1781, Marie-Joséphine de Longchamps-Montendre, of an old naval family. They would have four sons, the eldest of whom, Hyacinthe, would one day head his own expedition to the Pacific.

Bougainville was back at sea at the beginning of March 1781, in the *Auguste* bound for the West Indies and North America. In September he took part in the Battle of the Chesapeake, and in the following January in the capture of St Kitts, but the French fleet was defeated at the Battle of the Saintes near the island of Guadeloupe in April, and Bougainville returned to France. In 1784 he was elected a member of the *Académie de Marine* and inducted in the Order of Cincinnatus by the grateful United States. He spent the next few years helping to plan major French expeditions to the Pacific, such as La Pérouse's and D'Entrecasteaux's. The French political climate was rapidly darkening. At first, he was able to play a part in attempting to reform the navy, became commander of the Brest Squadron in October 1790 and was promoted vice-admiral in January 1792. But the situation was becoming intolerable. Unable to establish order among the naval personnel, he resigned and retired to his property in Normandy. This did not save him from being arrested as a suspected royalist and imprisoned for two months in 1794.

Freed, he soon returned to his influential role in Paris. He was appointed to the committee planning Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, and helped with the preparations for Baudin's voyage to Australia, on which his son Hyacinthe would embark in 1800. He was appointed a Senator in 1799 and Rear-Admiral in 1802 when finally he retired from the navy. He became Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1804 and a Count of the Empire four years later. His final official function was to chair the court of enquiry that followed the naval defeat at Trafalgar. He died on 20 August 1811, aged eighty-one.

His second-in-command, *Nicolas-Pierre Duclos-Guyot*, undeniably an officer of the blue since he came from a family of artisans, was born at St Malo on 14 December

¹ The distinction and its ramifications, and the privileges enjoyed by young members of the nobility, increasingly contested as the eighteenth century progressed, have been analysed in Aman, *Les Officiers bleus dans la marine française au XVIIIe siècle*. Most of the officers who sailed with Bougainville on his voyage around the world were 'blues'.

1722 and first sailed at the age of twelve on one of the French India Company's vessels. Promoted *enseigne* in 1742 and lieutenant a year later, he transferred to privateers during the War of the Austrian Succession, resuming his service with the company in 1749 and making a six-year voyage to Peru. On his return he qualified for the rank of captain, but soon resumed service on privateers when the War of American Independence broke out. He was remarkably successful as captain of the privateer *Victoire*, taking no fewer than seven prizes in the 1757. His ship was transferred to the royal service and he sailed to Canada with the rank of *lieutenant de frégate*. In 1759, commanding the *Chézine*, he crossed to Canada with a passenger on board, Bougainville, with whom he established a close friendship. His time in Canada was marked by frequent actions and some notable successes, and in 1764 he was raised to the rank of fireship captain.

He sailed to the Malouines in 1763 in the *Aigle*, then stayed in France helping to prepare for the planned circumnavigation. However, when he returned from the circumnavigation, he found that as an officer of the blue there was no opening for him in the navy, and he returned to merchant ships, sailing to India and China between 1771 and 1775. He served briefly in the *Belle-Poule* in 1776-7 and was then appointed port captain at the Isle de France. He left in 1781 in the storeship *Osterley*, sailing to Buenos Aires. He retired on health grounds in 1784 with the rank of *lieutenant de vaisseau* and a government pension. However, the Revolution called him back. Given the rank of *capitaine de vaisseau*, he took charge of the *America* in May 1792 and sailed to Santo Domingo, but a mutiny on board in July 1793 forced him to return to France. He died near St Malo on 10 March 1794.

He was highly esteemed by Bougainville, who had been a talented pupil of his back in early Canadian days. 'This officer is assuredly one of the best in Europe and few could claim such extensive periods of service both in peace and in wartime,' wrote Bougainville, an opinion endorsed by the naval administrators who noted in his record: 'His success in everything he has undertaken makes him worthy of recommendation.'¹

Five young officers of the red, four of them almost contemporaries from the *Gardes de la Marine*, sailed in the *Boudeuse*. The oldest, *Alexandre de Lamotte-Baracé de Bourmand*, was born in Anjou on 17 September 1736, joining the *Gardes* at Brest in 1754 and sailing to Canada the following year. He was taken prisoner when his ship was captured off Newfoundland even before war had been formally declared, but was freed on parole in January 1757. He then served with the Knights of Malta, but did not return to sea until April 1763. Just prior to his appointment to the *Boudeuse* with the rank of *enseigne*, he had sailed to Guyana and Santo Domingo. He was promoted lieutenant during the circumnavigation, but found his health so affected by the hardships he had to endure that he eventually withdrew from the naval service with a modest pension. The Revolution had a serious effect on his financial situation and there is a record of a special invalid's pension being granted to him in 1802. He died

¹ Duclos-Guyot files in AN, C¹ 174, p. 1965, quoted in Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 64-5. There is another file on him at AN, Marine C7:92; and a personal file at the Service Historique de la Marine, CC7.

some time after 1816 when his name disappears from the records, by which time he would have been in his early eighties.¹

Henri de Fulques d'Oraison was born in Provence on 16 January 1739. He served from May 1757 to February 1758 when he too was taken prisoner. Repatriated, he sailed once more, to be captured for the second time in August 1759. Freed in April 1760, he returned to active service until the end of the war. He then accompanied the Chevalier de Ternay on a mission to various European countries, from England to Russia. On his return, he was promoted to *enseigne* and shortly after was appointed to the *Boudeuse*. Like Bournand, he found his health seriously affected by the voyage, possibly developing tuberculosis. He was given a modest pension and transferred to the army. Campaigning on land proved much more wholesome for him than on sea and he began a highly successful career that saw him rise to the rank of *maréchal de camp* in 1790. This progress was stalled for some time on account of his aristocratic origins, but by October 1795 the revolutionary extremists had been removed and D'Oraison was appointed commander of the Brest forces and later to a similar position at Besançon. He finally retired with the rank of general in December 1813 and died in Paris on 22 May 1819. He too therefore, in spite of suffering ill-health from the hardships of the circumnavigation, reached his eighties.²

The third *enseigne*, Jean-Jacques-Pierre de Gratet du Bouchage, however, did not survive the voyage. After joining the *Gardes* at Toulon at the same time as D'Oraison, he served in a succession of ships, mostly in Mediterranean waters, being promoted *enseigne* just before joining the *Boudeuse*. He apparently caught dysentery at Batavia and died at Port-Louis on 26 November 1768, aged twenty-nine.³

Two slightly younger officers were promoted *enseignes* during the voyage. *Jean-Baptiste-François de Suzannet* had joined the *Gardes* at Rochefort in August 1757 and was soon involved in the campaigns of the Seven Years War. He had already sailed to Guyana and to Canada. On his return from the circumnavigation, he commanded several small transport vessels, then with the coming of the War of American Independence began a career which saw him obtain several commands and rise to the rank of *lieutenant de vaisseau* in 1778. He took part in a number of naval combats, being finally captured off Puerto Rico in April 1782. Promoted *capitaine de vaisseau* in May 1786, he took over command of the *Capricieuse* and then of the *Andromaque*, but he refused to join the republican side when the Revolution broke out, was allowed to retire in 1792 and emigrated. He joined the force of émigrés attempting with British support to land in Brittany. He was killed during the landing of June 1795 at Quiberon.

His career was paralleled by the other young *garde*, the Breton *Jacques-Marie de Cramezel de Kerhué* (found in some of the journals as *Kerué* and *Kervé*). Born on 25 March 1741, he had joined the navy at the age of sixteen and almost immediately

¹ Bournand's personal file is held at AN, Marine C7:231.

² Reference to D'Oraison are found in AN, Marine C7:231 and B4:114, f° 201. His mission to northern Europe is mentioned in the biography of Ternay by Linyer de la Barbée, *Le Chevalier de Ternay*, I, p. 174. A biographical note also appears in Six, *Dictionnaire biographique des généraux et amiraux français de la Révolution et de l'Empire*, II, p. 267.

³ On Du Bouchage, see Taillemitte, *Bougainville*, I, p. 67.

went to sea, in the *Magnifique* bound for Louisbourg. He remained in Canada until the following year and returned to France to take part in a number of campaigns until the end of the war. He was given little respite after this, sailing in the *Sceptre* in 1764 and the *Étourdie* in 1765 bound for St Pierre and Miquelon, the remaining French possessions at the mouth of the St Lawrence. It was then that he met another young cadet, Suzannet, and both soon afterwards received instructions to report to Bougainville. Appointed *enseigne* during the voyage, but later than Suzannet, a delay he considered a hurtful slight, he completed the circumnavigation without any impairment to his health and soon after his return was appointed to the *Rossignol* for a voyage to Santo Domingo. A lieutenant by 1778, he took part in several campaigns during the War of American Independence, including the Battle of Ushant in July 1778. He was later taken prisoner. Freed after a time, he returned to active service, obtained his own command, that of the *Barbeau* in 1783, and pursued his successful career until the Revolution. He was promoted to *capitaine de vaisseau*, but increasingly rejected the republican philosophy, resigned and joined the émigrés abroad. Like Suzannet, he took part in the Quiberon landings of June 1795 and was killed at about the same time.¹

The last officer to join the *Boudeuse*, in October 1766, was *Josselin Le Corre*, born in Brittany on 29 August 1727, an officer of the blue who had served in merchant ships since 1742, working his way up from seaman and leading seaman to boatswain, eventually qualifying as a ship's master. He had seen service in the navy briefly in 1750, and returned to war service during the Seven Years War, sailing to Canada in 1753-4 and taking part in anti-corsair activities; taken prisoner in 1758, he disappears from naval records until 1763. In January 1766, he married Augustine, daughter of Alexandre Guyot, a relative of Duclos-Guyot who recommended him to Bougainville for the circumnavigation. He proved to be a most reliable and able officer during the entire voyage, and Bougainville sought his transfer to the navy on his return, recommending him for the rank of storeship captain, but his background made him a weak competitor against better connected officers. The Brest *Intendant* pointed out that, although Le Corre had to his credit four periods of service on royal ships, he had completed eleven on merchant vessels which had brought him their own benefits: 'the pecuniary advantages these kinds of navigation produce counterbalance the favours that should in preference be given to those who are only employed in the King's service.'² Le Corre consequently returned to the merchant service and made his way to the Isle de France some time in 1770. He is in all probability the Le Corre (or Le Cor) who sailed in the *Marquis-de-Castries* on the Marion Dufresne expedition planned to return Ahutoru, the Tahitian who had accompanied Bougainville to France, to Tahiti. He survived this voyage and returned to France. He returned to the Isle de France in January 1777 in command of the *Confiance* and made several trading voyages in the Indian Ocean until 1780, subsequently returning to France and retirement. He died at St Servan on 23 August 1785.³

¹ The personal files of Suzannet and Kerhué are held at AN, Marine C7:314 and C7:77.

² Quoted in Duyker, *An Officer of the Blue*, p. 118.

³ See on him Duyker, 'Josselin and Alexander Le Corre', pp. 9-13; Duyker, *An Officer of the Blue*, pp. 118-19, 197; *Dictionnaire de biographie mauricienne*, pp. 1490-91. On the family, see Duyker, *Of the Star and the Key*, p. 12.

There were three *volontaires* under Bougainville's direct command, young men who hoped to pursue a career in the navy. They were seldom youths who lacked experience at sea, often had connections that could be of use in furthering their plans, but usually lacked the aristocratic background that would have enabled them to join the navy through the normal channel of the *Gardes de la Marine*. Two were related to the *Boudeuse's* second-in-command; they were in fact the two sons of Duclos-Guyot, *Alexandre* and *Pierre*. Both had sailed with their father while in their early teens, joining him in the *Aigle* in 1763 for the first voyage to the Falkland Islands. The former, but not apparently Pierre, went on the second voyage of 1764-5. They then both sailed from France in the *Boudeuse*, but once the Malouines settlement had been handed over to the Spanish, Bougainville or their father felt it preferable to separate them. Accordingly, *Pierre* transferred to the *Étoile* while the ships were in port at Rio de Janeiro in July 1767. He was clearly a pleasant young man and able to get on well with the often irascible Philibert Commerson, helping the naturalist with the writing up of his shipboard journal. His later career is not known, and it can be presumed that he subsequently served in trading vessels.

Alexandre Duclos-Guyot, probably named after his uncle Alexandre, a source of occasional confusion, had a more prominent career in the royal service, gradually overcoming the disadvantages of being an officer of the blue. After his return to France, he served in merchant ships, but the War of American Independence opened new avenues for him. He was already highly regarded: a report dated 1774 by the naval commissioner at St Malo states that he was 'a steady individual, very diligent, very knowledgeable and in every respect the worthy son of an equally worthy father.'¹ He joined his father in the *Flamand* in January 1778, sailing to the Isle de France. He was captured a year later, but exchanged against other prisoners a year later. He then served under Bougainville as *lieutenant de frégate* in the *Languedoc*, obtaining his first command, the corvette *Mortemart* in October 1780. Other commands followed; he ended his war service with the temporary rank of fireship captain, made a voyage to China in command of a storeship, and became assistant port lieutenant at the Isle de France, remaining there from 1785 to 1788. The Revolution provided him with new opportunities and in 1791 he sailed to the Isle de France in command of the *Philippe d'Orléans*. Appointed *lieutenant de frégate* at the beginning of January 1792, he was about to return to France when he was asked to sail to Buenos Aires to obtain supplies for the island. He reached that port in February 1793, but the international situation had worsened, his ship was impounded and he was imprisoned until 1802. Back in France, he was pensioned off, and after a time decided to travel to Spain to seek some indemnity from the authorities for his ill-treatment. Negotiations were protracted and complicated by the continually changing political situation in that country. He is reported as having disappeared during the withdrawal of French troops from Spain in 1813 and he is believed to have been killed by guerilla fighters in Andalusia.

The third *volontaire* to sail in the *Boudeuse* was *Charles-Félix-Pierre Fesche*, the best known of the junior officers on account of the informative journal he wrote during

¹ Quoted in Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, p. 75. His file is in AN, Marine C7: 376. An article on him is included in the *Dictionnaire de biographie mauricienne*, no. 27, p. 801.

the voyage. He was apparently descended from a Sardinian family and claimed to be distantly related to the Bonaparte family through the emperor's mother Letizia, whose half-brother was Giuseppe Fesch, eventually Grand Almoner of France and Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyons. He was born in Paris on 10 October 1745, was introduced to Bougainville at an early stage and sailed with him in the *Aigle* as a ship's apprentice on the first and second voyages to the Falklands in 1763 and 1764. He returned to the islands a third time, joining the *Étoile* in October 1765, but was transferred to the *Boudeuse* a year later. He remained at the Isle de France when Bougainville sailed from Port-Louis in November 1768, seemingly at the request of the administrator Pierre Poivre, but this request must have been rather broadly formulated since Fesche found no opening available to him in the colony. Disappointed, he returned to France in December 1769, only to find there was no position vacant for him in the French navy. He then transferred to the army, serving for some years with a cavalry regiment. However, the sea called him back and he commanded several privateers during the American war, being twice taken prisoner, but succeeding in making his escape back to France. He returned to the army, serving for a time in the cavalry. The Revolutionary Wars offered the chance of further promotions and we find him serving in Germany and in France, in time as lieutenant and quartermaster. He was however getting on in years, his health was becoming affected by his continual campaigning, and some of his later postings were to various corps of veterans. He entered the veterans' home at the Invalides in 1802 and died, presumably in Paris, on 27 January 1810 in his sixty-fifth year.¹

The *Boudeuse's* clerk – the French term is *écrivain* or 'scribe' – seems to have been ill-suited for a long voyage around the world. *Louis-Antoine Starot de Saint-Germain* did not belong to the naval administrative corps. Born in the Dauphiné region on 27 September 1731, he had studied law, then obtained a position as administrator of stores in Guyana. He held this post from 1763 to 1766 when, back in France, he applied for a similar position in the French possessions in the Indian Ocean. He was instead appointed to the *Boudeuse*. Recently married and no seaman, certainly no intrepid explorer, he bitterly regretted having had to embark on a lengthy circumnavigation. His journal, a valuable record in many respects, is peppered with acid comments. 'What is the use of such a voyage?' he commented, criticizing with some pertinence but little understanding of the problems faced by Bougainville the lack of close surveys of the coasts the ship sailed along and the inadequate information obtained about the islands encountered on the way. He was left behind at the Isle de France in a poor state of health and made his way back to France later. After some time spent working in the naval offices at Rochefort he was sent to Santo Domingo. His career suffered in the 1770s from accusations of shady dealings from which an enquiry exonerated him in 1776. Nevertheless, a number of rumours about him were still circulating, and his father among others refused to speak to him and threatened to disinherit him. He sought the Minister's assistance and was granted a warrant as commissioner in the naval administrative service, which helped to rehabilitate him. However, he decided to retire in September 1779, on health grounds, with a substantial

¹ A file on him is held in AN, Marine C7:106. Notes on the early part of the voyage are contained in a file at BN, NAF 11651 and his *Journal de navigation* is kept at the Musée national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris.

pension. His later years were spent in his home district, writing poetry and a play. He died on 11 December 1823, having at the ripe age of ninety-two outlived practically all the members of the Bougainville expedition.¹

The surgeon *Louis-Claude Laporte* belonged to a family associated with the sea and with medicine. His father was a 'master barber' living in Brest at a time when a skilled barber provided paramedical or indeed medical services, since bleedings – to rid the body of what were believed to be harmful 'humours' – were a major part of medical science. Louis-Claude engaged in more advanced studies, qualifying through medical examinations for a masterate in surgery and medicine, and joining the navy as a surgeon. His evident ability and devotion on the circumnavigation earned him wide recognition. He served in several ships after his return, maintained his reputation by his treatment of the wounded and his energy in preventing infection and sickness during the War of American Independence, and in 1779 was appointed assistant medical officer for the port of Brest.²

The chaplain *Jean-Baptiste Lavaisse* (or *Lavaysse*, found also as *Lavoys*) was a Franciscan Minorite, born near Autun in central France but attached to the Paris house. Bougainville had originally been approached by Commerson on behalf of his brother-in-law who was a priest – a suggestion which might cause some surprise as relations between the latter two men were somewhat strained, possibly as the result of Commerson's rumoured liaison with Jeanne Baret. There was insufficient time to discuss the possibility of his joining the expedition, as he lived some distance from Paris, and Bougainville decided to waste no more time on the matter and to approach the Archbishop of Paris. Father Lavaisse had no ties, indeed few resources of any kind, and all he asked was that 'on his return to France, he could be sure of some adequate means of subsistence.'³ He would, following the death of the *Étoile's* chaplain, assume some additional functions during the voyage, but there are few references to him in the various journals. When he reached the Isle de France, he was asked to remain behind 'to carry out the tasks related to his ministry, of which the island is in the greatest need.' However, he did not stay long, as we find him sailing back to France in February 1769. His health had been impaired, as is evidenced by a medical certificate of January 1770 declaring him unfit for any further naval chaplaincy. He retired to the Autun district, 'carrying out such functions as his health still allows.' A request for financial assistance, dated July 1787, reminds the authorities that he had joined the Bougainville expedition on the understanding that his needs would be adequately met on his return, but that nothing had so far been done. The Minister of Marine then went only as far as to write to the bishop, recommending Lavaisse to his good offices, but nothing more is known of the ailing and possibly by now ageing priest. The coming storm of the Revolution would, if anything, worsen the position of such men.

The *Boudeuse* also included one passenger whose role on board soon became more

¹ A file on Saint-Germain is held at AN, Marine C7:293 and 296. His notebooks formed the basis for the publication by La Roncière of 'Routier inédit d'un compagnon de Bougainville: Louis-Antoine Starot de Saint-Germain, écrivain de la *Boudeuse*'.

² 'We know little about [him]', wrote Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, p. 72, giving as his only sources AN, Marine B³ 570 f. 267 and B³ 664 f. 99.

³ AN, Marine C7: 171, quoted in Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, p. 477.

than that of a mere observer. On a number of occasions, *Charles-Nicolas-Othon d'Orange et de Nassau-Siegen* (Prince of Nassau) helped Bougainville and defused some tense situations that had begun to develop with islanders. Born on 9 January 1745 and well connected in France as in Germany, he had joined the army in 1761 during the closing years of the Seven Years War. The end of this conflict in 1763 saw him back in Paris and subject to all the temptations the society of his time could offer to an outwardly wealthy and idle young man. He had some flaws of character, not unusual in a youth of his background; he was proud, impetuous and inclined to fight duels. His wealth was only relative and he began to accumulate debts; in addition, he was rumoured to be involved with several young ladies, one being the celebrated young actress Sophie Arnould, while another claimed he was the father of her child. His family were becoming concerned about his future. He was related to the former Secretary of State for the Navy, the Comte de Maurepas, who invited Bougainville to dinner and introduced him to the young Nassau-Siegen. The two had a long conversation, rapidly established a firm friendship, and Bougainville readily accepted the suggestion that the young man might join him on the expedition. He would sail at his own expense, but his family were delighted by the arrangement since it removed him from the frivolities of French society and the possibility of incurring further debts. Bougainville had few occasions to regret his presence on board: he was far more helpful and companionable than demanding. One is tempted to make a comparison between this passenger and Joseph Banks in Cook's *Endeavour* and the strain between the latter two brought about by Banks's demands, which led to his refusal, to Cook's considerable relief, to sail on the second voyage.¹ Back in France, his health unimpaired and his enthusiasm for adventure undimmed, Nassau-Siegen returned to the army, but sought an appointment in the navy with the senior rank of *capitaine de vaisseau*. This caused a storm of protests among other officers and the proposal was shelved. He then took part in operations connected with the War of American Independence, drew up a plan for the invasion of Jersey in the Channel Islands and even contemplated the possibility of setting up his own kingdom in West Africa. His debts were again mounting up, but a marriage to a Russian princess restored his finances. This led to his moving to Russia, where he became a protégé of Catherine II and eventually achieved his ambition to attain high rank in the navy by becoming a Russian admiral. He was buried in the Ukraine.²

2. The *Étoile*

A couple of years older than Bougainville, *François Chesnard de la Giraudais*, born at St Malo in 1727, had been at sea longer than any other officer on the voyage. He had first gone to sea at the age of five with his father on voyages connected with commerce and fisheries. During the War of the Austrian Succession, he served in the

¹ By then, in the words of Cook's biographer, 'Mr Banks, we must conclude, had come by an unusually swelled head.' Beaglehole, *Life of Captain James Cook*, p. 293.

² A biography, including chapters on his later life, was written by the Marquis d'Aragon under the title *Un Paladin au XVIIIe siècle*. Comments on his life in France appear in memoirs of the time, such as Bachaumont's *Mémoires secrets*; Métra's *Correspondance secrète politique et littéraire*, X, p. 175; and the Duc des Cars' *Mémoires*, I, pp. 174 and 268–70. A file on him is held in AN, Marine, C7:224.

Saint-Laurent, still under his father, and took part in his first sea fight at the age of seventeen. Transferred to the *Lys* later in that same year, 1744, still only seventeen, he held the rank of lieutenant; on this occasion he was wounded. The following year, in yet another sea fight, he was taken prisoner. Freed a year later, he served in the privateer *Gloire* which was to claim a total of thirty-six prizes before being herself captured in 1747. When peace was restored, La Giraudais returned to trading and fishing vessels, sailing regularly to Newfoundland. He was taken prisoner in 1755 during the British pre-emptive arrest of sailors and ships, prior to the formal outbreak of the Seven Years War. He was freed six months later, qualified for his master's certificate in September 1757 and took over command of a privateer, which earned him yet another period of captivity after a running battle that lasted ten hours. In 1759 he led a convoy of sixteen ships bound for Canada and was involved in yet another sea fight near Quebec. In the following year, he returned to Canada with a convoy of six merchantmen, captured seven vessels on the way, but was finally cornered by five enemy ships; after a cat-and-mouse battle lasting more than a fortnight, realizing he could not get away, he burned his ships and made his way to Montreal. Asking to take final despatches from the French commander to Paris, he slipped away on a schooner around the north of Newfoundland. Commissioned *lieutenant de frégate* for the remainder of the war, he was put in charge of five gunboats. But the navy had nothing for him in peacetime. He gladly accepted Bougainville's offer to command the *Sphinx* on the first voyage to the Falklands. He then took over the *Étoile* for the second expedition to the French settlement. He was given a commission as fireship captain for the duration of the circumnavigation; in August 1770 this warrant was turned into a permanent commission. However, there was little active service offering in the navy and financial difficulties forced him back to the merchant service and private trade. He sailed to the Isle de France and became involved in questionable transactions in Africa and South America. In March 1776 he was sentenced *in absentia* to three months imprisonment, but he had already died in Zanzibar in November 1775 at the age of forty-eight.¹

His second-in-command was an experienced officer from the French India Company. *Jean-Louis Caro* had served with the company since his early youth and proceeded through all its grades, from junior apprentice to captain. He had obtained his first command, with the rank of *lieutenant de frégate* on the snow *Fine* bound for the Isle de France. By 1765, as second lieutenant, he was sailing to China in the *Villevault*. He was back in July 1766 and had been promoted first lieutenant when Bougainville offered him the position of second-in-command of the *Étoile*, for which he received a temporary commission in the royal navy as *lieutenant de frégate*. On his return, on the recommendation of Bougainville who had valued his skill and his determination, he was sent to China as second officer of the *Duc-de-Duras*. He returned to China in 1773-4 and sailed to India in 1775-6. He died in 1787.

Jean-Louis Caro wrote a careful journal during the circumnavigation, which is typical of the man. It was down-to-earth, giving the image of a practical man who

¹ La Giraudais' personal file is held at AN, Marine under reference C7:163. He appears in the *Dictionnaire de biographie mauricienne*, no. 23, p. 689; see also Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 89-90.

had little time for shipboard squabbles – which allowed him to ignore Commerson's gibes – and little interest in the philosophical theories of his day, expressing his views, favourable or otherwise, on the people, and being more given to rely on a simple Breton faith.¹

Four other officers of the blue² sailed in the *Étoile*. Of these two, Landais and La Fontaine bear the addition 'deceased', inserted at a later date, but this should not be taken as an indication of longevity in the case of the other two, Donat and Lavarye-Leroy, because although we know very little about Donat, we do know that Lavarye-Leroy died of wounds in 1781, aged fifty-five.

Joseph Donat was a relative of Chesnard de la Giraudais and the brother of Henry Donat de Lagarde who had sailed in the *Sphinx* to the Falklands. Henry had been quite prominent in coastal reconnaissance in the islands, but he did not sail on the circumnavigation.³ There are a few mentions of Joseph in connection with boats sent to attempt to survey islands in the neighbourhood of New Ireland and the Moluccas, but few details. His service on board was apparently quite routine and satisfactory, and he completed the voyage back to France in the *Étoile*, thereafter presumably returning to the merchant service.

Details about *La Fontaine-Villaubrun* are equally sketchy. He was a fairly late appointment to the *Étoile*, replacing René Hercouet who had sailed on a previous voyage to the Falklands but was unavailable to take up the position of second lieutenant previously offered him. La Fontaine is reported as befriending Ahutoru on his early visits and looking for spices with Commerson on an island in the Moluccas. He was one of those left behind at the Isle de France at the request of the local authorities and some time later was commanding a merchant vessel in Indian seas.

Much more is known about *Pierre Landais*, from St Malo, born on 20 February 1734. He first went to sea at the age of eleven, sailing in a merchant vessel. He underwent his baptism of fire a year later, but was taken prisoner after that. The War of the Austrian Succession over, he returned to the merchant service, rising to lieutenant in 1752, but when the Seven Years War broke out he joined a privateer and was taken prisoner in 1756. Freed, he returned to privateering in 1760, but later joined the navy as an officer of the blue with the rank of lieutenant. While serving in the *Zéphyr* in September 1762 he was wounded and for a third time taken prisoner. Peace was signed a year later, and he served, still as officer of the blue, in the storeships *Garonne* and *Barbue* sailing to Newfoundland. This period of service ended in December 1764, and he was subsequently appointed to the *Étoile* with the rank of *lieutenant de frégate*. He was put in charge of boats surveying various islands later in the voyage, but criticized for firing on islanders without adequate justification. On a final occasion, he had failed to report to the *Boudense* for instructions and was reprimanded for it, leading to a violent argument with the Prince of Nassau who, if Commerson is to be believed, was tempted to draw his pistol and shoot him. After this, Donat was usually

¹ Personal file in AN, Marine C7:53, with his Journal under reference 4JJ 1. His later career is mentioned in AN, Colonies C² 289 f^o 23.

² They are listed as 'merchant officers' in Vivez's journal, Rochefort MS, title page.

³ Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, p. 108; Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, p. 80 stresses that little is known about him and Lafontaine.

put in charge. In spite of a difficult nature, he was highly regarded as an experienced sailor and a particularly brave one. His appointment in the navy was confirmed, and he rose to *lieutenant de frégate* in January 1773 and fireship captain three months later. However, an appointment as port lieutenant of Rochefort in December 1775 displeased him and he retired at the beginning of 1776. He then joined the naval forces of the young United States, took command of the *Flamand* bound for New Hampshire and in 1778 was given command of USS *Alliance*, sailing to northern waters under John Paul Jones – with whom he soon fell out. He had taken American nationality, but left the States in 1789, travelled to Turkey, Germany and England before returning to France in 1791, rejoining the French navy in July 1792 with the rank of *capitaine de vaisseau*. He was given command of the *Patriote* for various operations in the Mediterranean, but once again fell out with his superiors. He was nevertheless promoted to rear-admiral from 1 January 1793 and took over the *Côte d'Or* at Brest. The anarchy that plagued the navy during the more difficult time of the Revolution caused him to resign and he returned for a time to America. He attempted to obtain a French naval pension after the end of the revolutionary period but it was declined and he sailed in 1802, apparently for good, to the United States. He died some time after 1815 in his eighties. A crotchety individual right to the end, he had not surprisingly fallen out with the equally difficult Commerson during the circumnavigation.¹

Pierre-Marie Lavarye-Leroy,² like many on the expedition a native of St Malo, was born in the year 1726, joined the merchant service at the age of eleven and eventually rose to the rank of merchant captain. His record prior to his joining the *Aigle* in 1763 was most impressive: he had completed twelve trading voyages to the West Indies, Africa, North America and the Indian Ocean, eight on privateers and three on ships of the royal navy. Bougainville considered him an able and reliable officer, senior in experience and rank to most of the others and a suitable person to take over Port Saint-Louis in the Malouines. He was appointed port captain of Port Saint-Louis and later given a special bonus of 300 *livres* in recognition of this service. While in the islands, he had a small sloop constructed, *La Croisade*, which enabled him to survey some of the lesser known coasts and inlets of the archipelago. When the colony had been handed over to the Spanish authorities, he sailed to Montevideo with Bougainville who appointed him to the *Étoile*. He was back in the Indian Ocean in 1774, assisting the French consul at Surat, and on his return to France in 1778 applied to join the navy. Bougainville continued to support him, writing a testimonial that secured his entry into the service with the rank of *lieutenant de frégate* and a special bonus of 800 *livres*. In August 1780 he joined Bougainville in the *Languedoc*, subsequently transferred to the *Saint-Esprit* and finally to the *Héros*. He was badly wounded at the Battle of La Praya on 16 April 1781 and died four days later.³

Two *volontaires* were appointed to the *Étoile*. The first of these, *Jean-Robert-Suzanne*

¹ Landais' file is at AN, Marine CC7 and a biographical note appears under his name in the *Dictionnaire biographique des généraux et amiraux français...*, X, p. 51. See also Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 80-82.

² As is the case with a number of the other officers and members of the expedition, his name is spelt in a variety of ways. He is sometimes referred to as Leroy, Leroi, Le Roy, or Le-Roy, sometimes as Lavarie, Lavari or Lavary.

³ See AN, Marine C7:174, 182.

Lemoyne de Montchevry, born at Cayenne, Guyana, on 8 March 1750, was the son of the Lemoyne, commissary general at Rochefort, who had supervised the equipping of the *Étoile* and later travelled to Nantes to supervise work on the *Boudeuse*. The youth had already been at sea as a *volontaire* in 1765 and his father, whose efficiency and energy had impressed Bougainville as it had his own superiors, had little difficulty in getting Jean-Robert accepted for the *Étoile*. He would transfer to the *Boudeuse* while at Rio de Janeiro in July 1767 in exchange for Pierre Duclos-Guyot and be promoted *garde de la marine* in August. However, he had a weak chest and died at the Isle de France on 15 November 1768.¹ The second, *Alexandre-Joseph Riouffe* was born at Cannes in southern France, probably also in 1750. He too had sailed for the first time in 1765, in the *Garonne* bound for Cayenne. The ship returned to Rochefort in June 1766 and in early 1767 Riouffe was appointed to the *Étoile*. He completed the circumnavigation and was back in France on 24 April 1769. He held a minor administrative position from 1770 to 1772, then sailed in a transport vessel along the French coast. He served in the storeship *Bricole* in 1774, going to the West Indies, and from then on rose steadily through the ranks, taking part in a number of major engagements during the American War. He obtained his first command in 1784, that of the frigate *Flore*, and was appointed assistant administrator of the port of Rochefort in 1786. The Revolution, whose ideals he shared, gave new opportunities. He sailed to Santo Domingo in command of the frigate *Inconstante* in December 1791, and was promoted to *capitaine de vaisseau* in January 1792. On 29 November 1793, he was seriously wounded in an engagement against two English vessels while on escort duties and was taken to Jamaica. He died at Kingston ten days later.²

The clerk *Michau* (also *Michaud*, *Michaux*) was a land-based official whose only time at sea appears to have been his voyage in the *Étoile*. He had first worked in the artillery section of the Rochefort military college, and after serving there for ten years was transferred to the administrative side. He was probably in his mid to late twenties when he was appointed to the *Boudeuse*, but soon after transferred to the *Étoile*. He needed, according to a report, to save money, which may be why he sought this position in which he would be housed and fed, however modestly. He seems to have fulfilled his duties satisfactorily, writing reports to the Minister on damage suffered by the *Étoile* when a Spanish vessel ran foul of the storeship in Montevideo. His name appears as a co-signatory to the various Acts of Possession. Apart from these few mentions, his name does not appear in the journals, with one exception, a brief note in Pierre Duclos-Guyot's journal: 'Mr Michau, clerk, was placed under arrest on the 15th inst. in the afternoon.'³ This was possibly the outcome of an altercation between one of the officers and the clerk who was unused to shipboard discipline. He completed the circumnavigation in the *Étoile* and returned to his desk job at Rochefort, rising gradually to the position of chief clerk in the general stores department, a grade he

¹ On Lemoyne, see his file at AN, Marine C7:180 and a report on his death in C¹ 183, f. 883.

² Riouffe's personal file is held AN, Marine C¹ 206. There is an account of his final days in Troudé, *Batailles navales de la France*, II, p. 313.

³ Commerson/Duclos-Guyot Journal, entry of 15-16 May 1768. At the time the expedition was approaching the New Hebrides. His file is held at AN, Marine C7:207.

reached in 1786. His name appears in the staff lists until 1792, as the revolutionary storm gathered strength, after which it vanishes.

The surgeon *François Vivez* or *Vivès* is far better known, not merely on account of the journal he kept in the *Étoile* but because of his outstanding career in the naval service, a milieu in which he was born and which he never left. He was a man of severe principles, devoted to his duties and expecting the same standard from others. A careful observer of human nature, although with little sympathy towards some of the islanders he encountered, especially in Melanesia, he was also highly conscientious and eager to find ways to alleviate the sufferings of those who became his patients.¹ He was born in Rochefort on 14 September 1744, the son of a naval surgeon. He first went to sea at the age of seven in the *Formidable* with his father, enrolled as a pupil-surgeon just before his twelfth birthday and qualified as assistant surgeon in May 1760. He worked from 1759 to 1762 at the hospital for the wounded at Rochefort, still under his father, then moved to Aix in 1763. He served as second surgeon in the storeships *Coulisse* and *Garonne* in 1764 and 1765, and joined the *Étoile* as medical officer in 1766, qualified as medical officer and ship's surgeon after his return to France and served as such in various ships from 1772 to 1782. This period included no fewer than seven major naval battles and involved his remaining at sea for lengthy cruises. Vivez disembarked at Boston in December 1782, suffering from scurvy, his hearing badly affected as a consequence of attending to the wounded next to firing guns. He returned to France and in 1786 asked to be allowed to retire on a pension. This was declined, and instead he was appointed to the medical school at Rochefort. He gradually rose through the various grades to medical officer first class and in June 1801 was placed in charge of the convalescent wing of the convict hospital. He finally retired in December 1811. He had married the sister of a naval surgeon whose first husband had also been a surgeon in the services; she died in 1787 and he later married the daughter of an exchange dealer who had three brothers in the navy. He died at Rochefort on 3 September 1828.

The chaplain, Fr *François-Nicolas Buet*, was a native of Quimper. His involvement in the expedition was tragically brief. On 17 June 1767, while the *Étoile* was at anchor in Rio de Janeiro, he went ashore to say Mass in the cathedral and visit other churches in the town; at some time between 6 and 7 p.m. he was about to make his way back to the ship, together with the young apprentice Constantin, when an argument developed with some locals. A hostile crowd gathered that attacked both of them. Constantin was hit but survived by shamming death; Fr Buet was beaten with oars and held down in the water until drowned. His body was found the next morning washed up on the shore, and he was buried in the parish cemetery on the 19th.²

¹ Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 83-5, devotes several paragraphs to an analysis of his personality, and quotes comments on Vivez by the Inspector General of Health, J. R. Quoy, giving a fair but favourable picture of the surgeon, under whom he had studied at Rochefort: *Notice sur Mr Vivès*, MS in La Rochelle library, 1834, and 'Mémoires inédits de Jean-René Quoy (1790-1869).'

² A report on this incident is included in a letter by Michau to the Minister dated 12 September 1767, AN, Marine B4 110, and further details are provided by Commerson in his journal, entry of 17 June 1767. There is little doubt that the chaplain had visited local churches as he had already supplied a report on them for Commerson's journal. The latter, however, does add a note of criticism to his account of the killing: 'One should not conceal the fact that the unfortunate abbé brought this catastrophe on his own

The engineer-cartographer (*ingénieur-cartographe*) Charles Routier de Romainville was born in Paris in 1742 and joined the army in 1756. He was wounded in August 1762 at the Battle of Johannesburg. He was appointed to serve in the Malouines settlement as engineer-geographer. He had sailed in the *Aigle* on 6 October 1764 and was promoted lieutenant in November. On arrival in the Malouines, he drew up a plan for a new settlement, to be known as Ville Dubuc, and remained in the islands until the end of April 1767 when he embarked in the *Boudeuse* for Rio de Janeiro. The Spanish offered him a post with the rank of captain, but he refused, preferring to join the complement of the *Étoile* as cartographer and draughtsman. During the voyage, he drew a number of maps and some 'charming pen sketches', many of which have been lost.¹ He left the expedition at the Isle de France, where he remained until the end of 1769, subsequently being appointed to the Pondicherry regiment. Back in the Isle de France in 1772, he was sent to take possession of the Seychelles. He was promoted to the rank of captain in August 1779 and to chief engineer (*ingénieur en chef*) on the island of Bourbon in May 1781. He resigned at the end of that year, and there are few records of his subsequent career. He applied in 1792 for the Cross of St Louis, but it was not a propitious time – the Order was abolished by the republican government that very year. A relative enquired as to his whereabouts in 1818, but the Ministry had no knowledge of him at that time: if he was still alive, he would by then have been seventy-six.

The astronomer *Pierre-Antoine Véron* was born in a poor working class family in Normandy in 1736, but in spite of living in an age when birth and class greatly mattered, he earned the respect and admiration of all who met him. He began life as a gardener and had little chance to further his studies until he was twenty; then, thanks to an uncle in Rouen who recognized his special talents, he was able to enrol at the school of hydrography and from there was sent to Paris Royal College where the mathematician Lalande took him under his protection. Lalande used his influence to get him accepted as assistant pilot in the *Diadème* in 1762 and in the *Sceptre* in 1763. He met on the latter vessel a similarly gifted young man, Charles-François de Charnières, with whom he sailed in the *Malicieuse* in the following year and with whom he collaborated on astronomical observations and on perfecting an astronomic glass called a megameter. Lalande then recommended him to the Minister of Marine for the Bougainville expedition. 'From what you told me', replied the Minister, 'I had no hesitation in issuing the required orders for Mr Véron to sail in the storeship *Étoile*.'² Bougainville soon realized his ability and relied on him as a matter of course for verifying the ships' positions. When the expedition reached the Isle de France, the *Intendant*, Pierre Poivre, asked Bougainville to let him have Véron's services for scientific work on the island and in particular for calculations related to the 1769 Transit of Venus. Poivre sent him as astronomer on an expedition to the Moluccas and the

head. He was a Breton, was excited by the wine he had drunk and behaved in a way that would have caused him to be knocked out as much in our French ports as in Rio: 'Journal', 17 June 1767.

¹ Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville*, I, p. 633, mentions a 'charming view' of a Strait of Magellan bay, in BN, NAF 9407, f. 38, some maps of Tahiti in private ownership, *ibid.*, I, p. 691, one of the waterfalls in New Ireland, also in private ownership, *ibid.*, I, p. 765. The reference to his 'charming drawings ... so light and fluid', is from *ibid.*, II, p. 975.

² AN, Colonies B 125 f. 609, quoted in Taillemite, *Bougainville*, I, p. 90.

Philippines in the corvette *Vigilant* to fetch spice plants for the island. On the return journey, Véron fell ill during a call at Timor and he died soon after reaching Port-Louis on 1 June 1770. Bougainville remembered him as a 'gentle person', devoted to his work, mild and rather shy. Commerson, who fell out with a number of his fellow voyagers, had always remained on friendly terms with him, and on his death he named a flower after him, the *Veronia tristiflora*, 'a star-shaped flower that shows itself for only a few hours, and which against a dark background is spattered with tears.'¹ The French government, wishing to repay the devotion of 'so rare a man' who had died 'victim of his zeal', agreed to grant a pension to each of his five brothers and sisters.²

Probably the best known personality in the *Étoile* was the naturalist *Philibert Commerson*. He was the son of a small-town lawyer, born at Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne on 18 November 1727. His father grudgingly agreed to humour his early passion for botany and sent him to study medicine at Montpellier. He travelled throughout the district, collecting plants, and after graduating continued his travels, collecting in central France and the Alps, and turned for a while to the study of fishes, drawing up a list of rare types from the Mediterranean, earning thanks and praise for this from the Queen of Sweden. He wrote a *Martyrologe de la botanique*, a series of biographical notes in praise of those who had lost their life in the service of the natural sciences.³ He became a resident doctor at Toulon-sur-Arroux, in the Charolais district in 1760, having married the daughter of a nearby lawyer, 'a sensitive plant', as he wrote to a friend, 'whom I propose to place, not in my herbarium but in the nuptial bed.' She was seven years older than he, 'but intelligent, well read' and with some claims to a fortune of 40,000 *livres*. She died a couple of years later and Commerson moved to Paris in 1764, leaving their infant son in the care of his brother-in-law, the Abbé Beau. He met a number of leading botanists in Paris, and in time was advised to join the Bougainville expedition to the Falklands, which he discovered would eventually include a circumnavigation. Bougainville met him, found him a tense, but appealing and undeniably enthusiastic savant, and both agreed on his appointment as 'Royal Botanist and Naturalist' – medical duties were mentioned but were relegated to the background since the *Étoile* had her own surgeon – with the quite substantial annual salary of 2,000 *livres*. In addition, Bougainville agreed to his being accompanied on the voyage by a valet.

Commerson proved to be a keen collector of botanical specimens, but he was given few opportunities to go ashore. Like all landsmen in ships, he was annoyed by the indifference of the naval men, most of them ignorant of the natural sciences and unwilling or unable to remain at anchor for lengthy periods and provide a botanist with the time and leisure to gather plants or other items. Commerson was more than an enthusiast; he was often carried away by his own passion and impatient towards others. The *Étoile* he described as 'that hellish den where hatred, insubordination, bad faith, brigandage, cruelty and all kinds of disorders reign.'⁴ His notes contain a number

¹ Quoted in Cap, *Philibert Commerson*, p. 37.

² AN, Marine C7: 344, file on Véron; Taillemitte, *Bougainville*, I, pp. 90–92.

³ This title, somewhat pompous, as indeed was Commerson's style, was adapted by one of his biographers, Montessus, who wrote a *Martyrologe et biographie de Commerson* in 1859.

⁴ Lefranc, *Bougainville et ses compagnons*, p. 93.