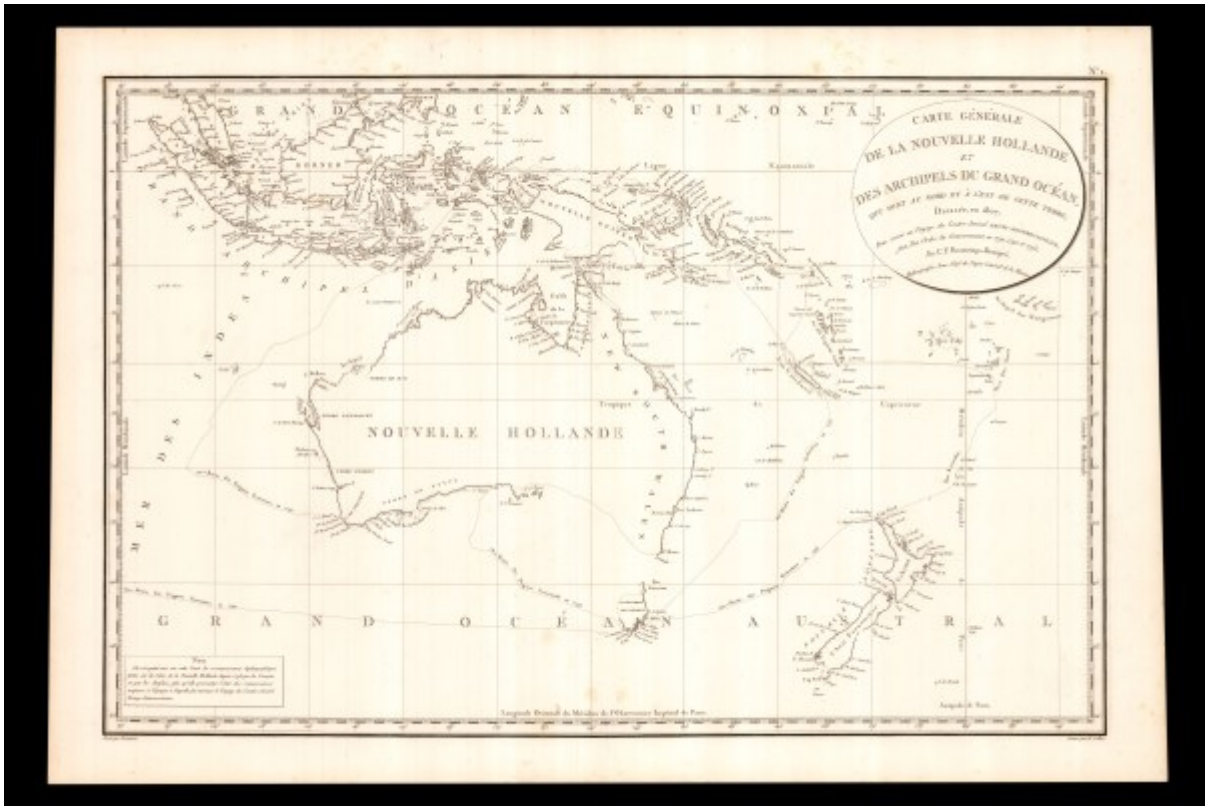


First issue. Double-page engraved chart.

“SIEUR D’ENTRECASTEAUX SHALL DRAW PRECISE MAPS OF EVERY COASTLINE AND ISLE HE ENCOUNTERS” (FLEURIEU)

Carte Generale de la Nouvelle Hollande et Des Archipels du Grand Ocean, qui Sont au Nord et a l’Est de Cette Terre

Author
d’ENTRECASTEAUX, Antoine Bruny; Charles-Francois BEAUTEMPS-BEAUPRE; and Denis DECRES

Publication date
1807.

Publisher
Depot general des cartes et plans de la marine et des colonies],

Publication place
[Paris,

Physical description

First issue. Double-page engraved chart.

Dimensions
650 by 864mm (25.5 by 34 inches).

Notes

Plate no. 1 from, the ‘Atlas du voyage de Bruny-Dentrecasteaux, contre-amiral de France, commandant les fregates ‘la Recherche’ et ‘l’Esperance’, fait par ordre du gouvernement en 1791, 1792 et 1793 : publie par ordre de sa majeste l’empereur et roi, sous le ministere de son excellence le vice-amiral Decres… par C.F. Beautemps-Beaupre’ (1807).

A beautiful map of Australia, the East Indies, New Guinea and the islands of the western Pacific showing tracks of D’Entrecasteaux’s ships, Recherche and Esperance in 1792-1793. Coastline of southeastern Australia and northern and western Tasmania is missing.

From 29 September 1791 to 27 October 27 1793, Charles-François Beautemps-Beaupré (1766-1854) sailed aboard the frigate ‘La Recherche’ under the command of Antoine Bruny d’Entrecasteaux. The expedition’s primary objective was to find trace of the missing Lapérouse expedition. By following the expedition’s route to New Holland.

“That will be the final destination of Sieur d’Entrecasteaux’s expedition in search of Lapérouse’s frigates. However, if these ships have indeed been swallowed by the sea, if the ocean has left no debris on any beaches, if after exhausting every possible avenue Sieur d’Entrecasteaux has no choice but to abandon this goal, as critical as it is, he shall at least have the satisfaction and glory of having made an immeasurable contribution to the perfecting of the field of cartography and the expansion of man’s knowledge. Sieur d’Entrecasteaux shall draw precise maps of every coastline and isle he encounters. If these places have already been explored, he shall verify the accuracy of his predecessors’ maps and descriptions” (Fleurieu, Mémoire du Roi pour servir d’instruction au sieur d’Entrecasteaux, September 16, 1791).

The ships eventually came within reach of Vanikoro (the Salomon Islands), where shipwrecked survivors from La Boussole and L’Astrolabe were still living. D’Entrecasteaux died of scurvy off the coast of Java on July 20, 1793.

After spending two years perfecting his art during every day of the voyage, Beautemps-Beaupré became the premier specialist of modern hydrography. In his work he skilfully combined the art of drawing with the precision of science. It was the first time that an expedition employed a full-time hydrographer. By and large, the task of surveying coastlines and sea bottoms had previously been entrusted to naval officers, for whom it was but one of many tasks. D’Entrecasteaux quickly realized the unique chance his expedition had of having such a talented specialist aboard. The more the search for Lapérouse seemed hopeless, the more Beautemps-Beaupré had time to fulfill his scientific and artistic mission. In 25 months, Beautemps-Beaupré drew 32 maps, at a monthly rate vastly greater than any other expedition of his time.

The mapmakers
Denis Decrès (1761-1820) was an officer in the French Navy who took part in numerous attacks against the English in the Antilles during the War of Independance, the Indies and Ireland. In 1793 he became Ship-of-the-Line Captain, then Chef de Division in March 1797 and Counter Admiral in April 1798, and was chosen by Napoleon Bonaparte to command Brueys’s frigates in his Egyptian expedition. He took part in the Battle of the Nile, from whence he sailed to Malta with Villeneuve. After conducting a siege against the English navy led by Horatio Nelson, he was taken prisoner. He was freed after a prisoner exchange in August 1800, and on 2 October 1801 the First Consul promoted him to Minister of the Navy, replacing the engineer Pierre Alexandre Forfait. He was made Vice Admiral on May 30, 1804, and Duke in April 1813, and remained Minister of the Navy until 1814. He returned to the rank of Minister of the Navy during Napoleon’s Hundred Days (from March 20 to June 22, 1815). Despite being granted a fleet that was too weak for the missions assigned to him, but he nevertheless succeeded in aiding Napoleon’s rebuilding of the French Navy, both before and after Trafalgar. Decrès died from injuries caused by a bomb planted under his bed

by his maître d'hôtel in 1820. The maître d'hôtel, and probable lover, was so shocked by either his own actions, or his master's survival, or perhaps both, that he defenestrated himself shortly after committing the act, and died some days before the Vice Admiral.

Immediately after engraving his maps, Charles-François Beautemps-Beaupré (1766-1854) sent the majority of them to Decrès. The maps were engraved in Paris, based on the drawings made at sea 15 years earlier, and then sent directly by Decrès to Napoléon. Decrès would then pass the Emperor's instructions on to Beautemps-Beaupré.

Bibliography

Literature: Clancy, 'The Mapping of Terra Australis', 9.2; Hill, 'The Hill Collection of Pacific Vpyages', 467; National Library of Australia, Gerritsen for 'Mapping our World: Terra Incognita to Australia', page 203; Tooley, 'The Mapping of Australia', 543.

Provenance

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