



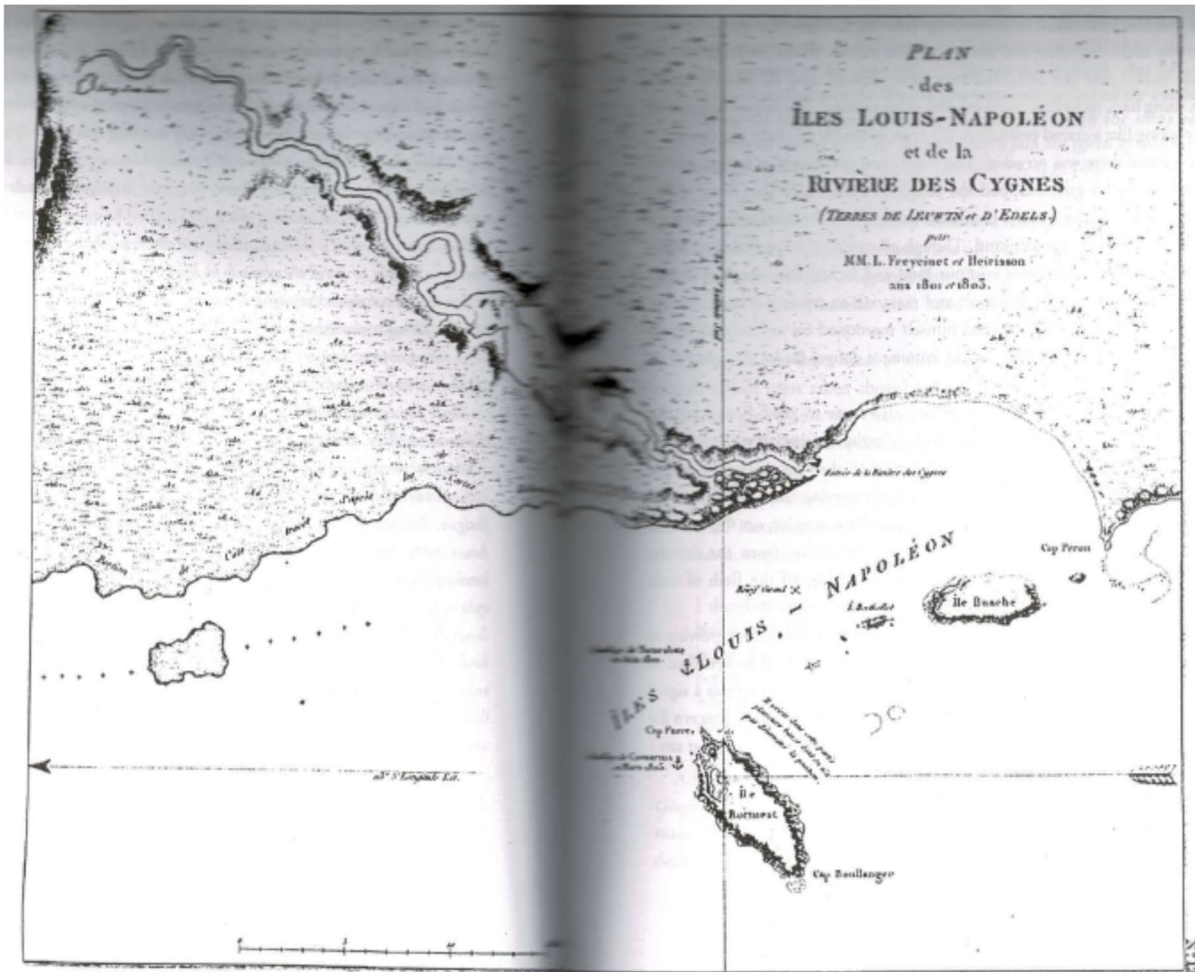
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The Heirisson History

It all starts with Heirisson's Chart:



The Swan River, 1801 and 1803 chart by Freycinet and Heirisson.
[Ramsay Collection, Scotch College, Melbourne]

Who was Heirisson?

We have to go back to the French exploration of the region in June 1801 by Capt Baudin in his ship *Geographe* and the accompanying ship *Naturaliste* under Capt Hamelin. After being seriously embayed by a northerly gale in what is now Geographe Bay, the vessels became separated so when the gale abated Capt Hamelin sailed for the agreed next rendezvous point of Rottnest Island and waited there for Baudin, who had actually arrived there first, decided not to wait as agreed, and shot off North for Shark Bay and points beyond - not the sort of sailing friend you need!

Meanwhile, Hamelin made use of the time anchored off Rottnest to send out several parties in small boats to explore and chart the area. One of these boats was commanded by Sub Lt Heirisson



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who was instructed to head up the "river of swans" as far as he could go in the longboat and report on its suitability as a port of call for European vessels. After negotiating his way over the rocky bar at the entrance (the one that C Y O'Connor later blasted away), Heirisson made his way upriver with some difficulties at the shallow, muddy areas at what is now the Narrows and again further upriver probably near what is now Heirisson Island. Interestingly, and probably relevantly, the name for the new footbridge, Matagarup, apparently means "knee deep"! Just how far up river Heirisson actually got I am not entirely sure, but his chart seems to me to indicate that he got just about as far upriver as Capt Stirling did a quarter of a century later. (Thanks to A J Brown's "Ill Starred Captains Flinders & Baudin", Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2004 for most of the above)

However, as neither the earlier Dutch, nor this French expedition, seemed to have had the incentive to start a colony here that Stirling did, we in WA are now all (well mostly) speaking English rather than Dutch or French!

JIM BLACK
Wee Birlinn
OGA C-Fleet Captain
+61 418 918 050
jimblack.marine@iinet.net.au