

without long experience in salvage work in tropical waters would have missed them.”

Mr. Discombe did not resume his underwater explorations until five months later.

“Naturally the lead ingot was the first thing I got out—and as I hoped, it bore the same arsenal markings as similar ingots from the Astrolabe.

“Among the objects I uncovered in three weekends of blasting were five lead ingots, six anchors ranging from 8 to 15 ft., four brass wheels about 12 in. in diameter and weighing 60 to 70 lb. each, several cannon, a bundle of iron rods and some small pieces of glass.



**La Perouse (left) receives final instructions for his voyage to the Pacific from King Louis XVI of France. From a painting in the Versailles Palace**

“On another section of the reef I found several relics that had some real ‘human interest’ about them. They were the remains and some of the contents of, an officer’s sea chest. . . a silver shoe buckle, some small copper nails, an eyeglass, part of a bone knife handle, a pair of calipers, part of a sword hilt and a gold coin almost covered with coral.

“After finding these things I could not resist the temptation to pay another visit to the spot where the Astrolabe went down.

“When I had last been to this spot in 1959, there was a lot of rubble on the bottom left by previous blasting. This, I found, has now been washed away and many objects, not previously seen, have been uncovered.

“Among the things that I saw were hundreds of pieces of broken glass, iron ballast blocks, wooden planks, iron rods, and drums of some sort. The planks, which are well-preserved, are under the ballast blocks, so they obviously formed part of the bottom of the ship.

“The most important find I made was a millstone used for grinding corn and weighing about a hundred-weight. This could prove conclusively that the wreck at this spot is that of the Astrolabe, as it is known that the Astrolabe had a windmill on deck for making flour while the Boussole did not.”

Mr. Discombe said his millstone might be the “mate” of one found by the Irishman, Peter Dillon, in 1827. When Dillon took this and other relics to Paris, Barthelmy de Lesseps, the only survivor of the La Perouse expedition, told him that the millstone was “the best thing you’ve got”.

De Lesseps had been put ashore at Petropavlovsk, Siberia, before the ships sailed for the Philippines and Botany Bay, so that he could take La Perouse’s Journals to Paris.

De Lesseps said the millstone positively confirmed that Dillon had solved the mystery of La Perouse’s fate, because the Astrolabe, in which he had served, had possessed such a stone driven by a windmill.

The windmill, which was on the poop deck, was the only thing that differentiated sketches of the two ships, de Lesseps said.

Mr. Discombe said: “Now the mystery I would like to solve is: What happened to the ship that La Perouse’s men are said to have built on Vanikoro and sailed away in?”

“No trace of that vessel has ever been found. I have some ideas about where it is but I’m not telling anyone. If anyone is going to find it, it’s going to be me.”

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### **CHARITY DANCE AT BARYULGIL FORERUNNER OF MANY MORE**

People travelled from as far afield as Brisbane, Kempsey, Grafton, Lismore, Tenterfield and Armidale to attend a charity dance at the public hall, Baryulgil, at the end of February.

The attendance was more than 150 and door takings which were donated to Grafton Ambulance totalled £37.

Socially the function was an outstanding success and a credit to the organisers, Aborigines from the Square at Baryulgil. A decision was made to stage further dances this autumn, the first in aid of the Country Women’s Association.

The senior “rock and roll” competition was won by Mr. Charlie Avery and Miss Lana Mundine. The junior “rock and roll” prize went to Steve and Jenny Mundine.

The prize for the best-dressed couple was awarded to Miss Winnie Harrington and Mr. Aubrey Roberts.

Mr. Roberts is supervisor of the Aborigines Reserve at Cubawee.

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### **LITTLE “MISS AUSTRALIA DAY”**

The State Governor, Lieut.-General Sir Eric Woodward, has sent a letter of congratulations on behalf of the Australia Day Committee to Mr. and Mrs. Eric Craigie of Moree.

Mrs. Craigie, on Australia Day, January 28, presented her husband with a bonny daughter—Jennifer Grace.

To mark the occasion the Australia Day Committee gave baby Jennifer a special commemorative Silver Spoon.

*Dawn* joins in congratulations to the happy parents.