

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REGION

The original inhabitants of this area were the Aboriginal people known as the Lyluequonny. Their first encounter with Europeans was with the French, an amicable meeting which could be considered a 'cultural exchange'. The French expeditions were focused on the scientific study of native flora, fauna, geology and the waterways of Van Diemen's Land.

Later, for the Aboriginals, contact with British settlers was not as friendly. The Aboriginal people were removed from their country to Bruny Island.

Recherche Bay itself, sheltered from the wildest weather, provided some safe harbour for the influx of early settlers, sealers and convicts. Early industries based initially on coal-mining and whaling became established. Coal was sent to Hobart and the oil produced from whales helped the emerging colony with lighting, cooking and the manufacture of soaps and corsets. The bronze whale sculpture that presently sits at Adams Point pays homage to this history.

With such an intense boating industry, and with early access to this area only possible by sea, there was demand for ship-building and local timber-milling was established. One of the features of this somewhat sheltered coastline was that tall forest eucalypts grew close to the shore, making for convenient, though still dangerous, harvesting. Timber was not only required for the local collieries and boat building, but for housing and domestic needs. A number of mills were established around the bay over time, with one mill at Cockle Creek run by women during World War II. Tram tracks spread out into the bush to retrieve logs from the hinterland.

Fishing for food was a necessity in such an isolated

area and also became a source of income, with Recherche Bay supplying Hobart and even London with oysters in the late 19th Century. Sharks too were harvested for their liver oil and then became fertilizer for domestic and market gardens which provided fresh vegetables for Hobart.

With the overlap of these various livelihoods and industries, towns with schools, shops and post offices were gazetted and established.

Generations of families have left a legacy of their endeavours, not only in the place names around the bay, but in their store of memories.

We can now drive with some ease to this region, set as it is near some of the most beautiful mountains and country in Tasmania. Much of the forest has regrown along the coastline - reclaiming houses, villages and structures lost to fire, decay or economic change.

We may glimpse some exotic plant that speaks of a different time, or we may see some remnant wooden pier post or a stone footing that stirs our imagination to wonder.

The bay is mostly a quiet place now, with its holiday shacks, its beaches and the lap of wave.... and the lap of wave upon a midden.... the earliest record of human history here.



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A TRAVELLER'S GLIMPSE INTO THE HISTORY OF

Recherche Bay

IN THE FAR SOUTH OF TASMANIA



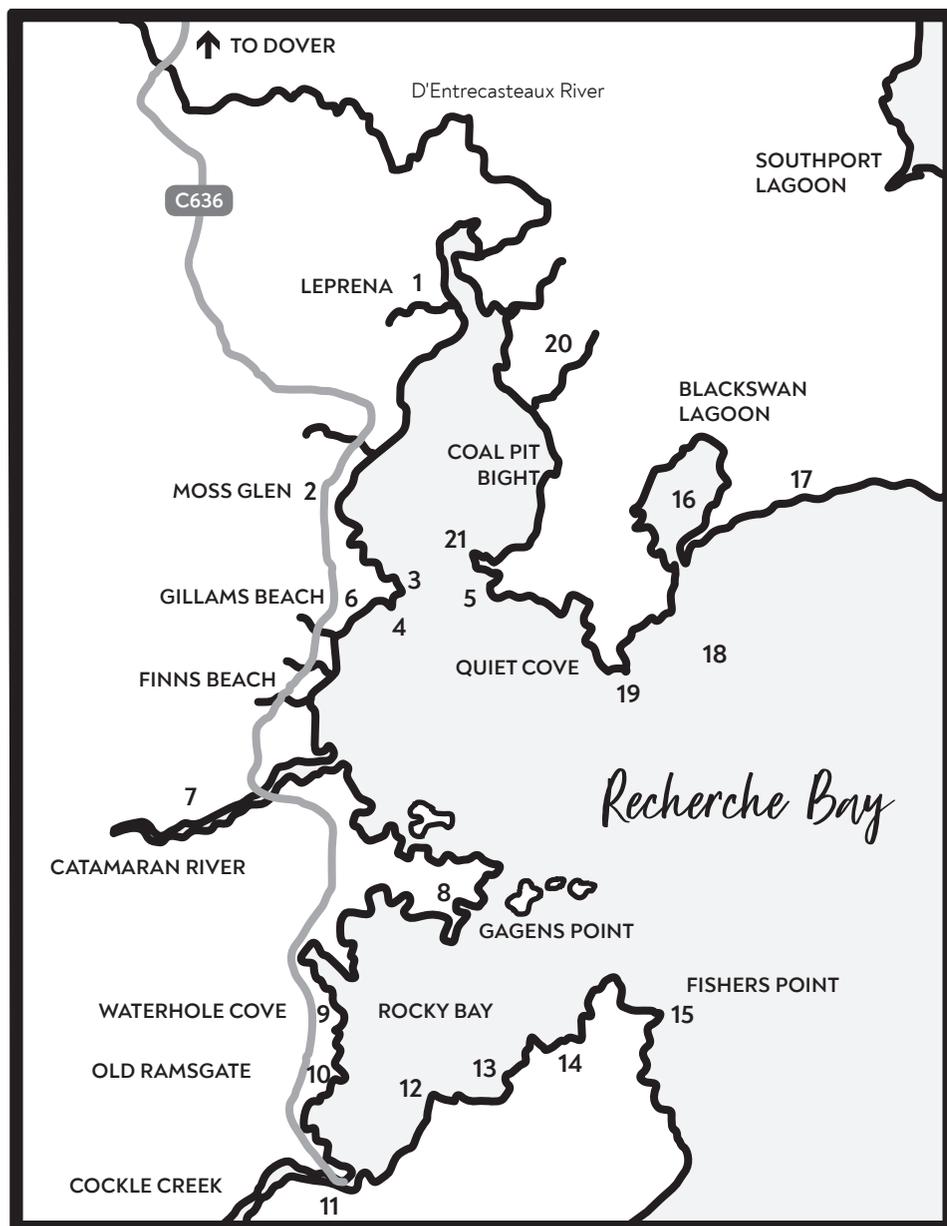
A community project produced by Far South Tasmania Inc.
to assist people in knowing more
about the land they're travelling through.

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MAP OF RECHERCHE BAY



For more information we recommend Bruce Poulson's book *'Recherche Bay a short history'*. We are indebted to him for providing notes and the map for this brochure. We would also like to acknowledge his dedication to preserving local history.

LEGEND

1. **Leprena Township** – Timber mill 1884 to 1938
2. **Moss Glen** – Former timber hamlet (Smith & Heather Mills)/coal mine/wharf/first watering place of French 1792
3. **Ryans Point** – Police Station/foundations of police cells remain
4. **Mazeys Rocks** – Crayfish/abalone area
5. **Shag Rock** – Navigational hazard
6. **Gillams / Finns Beaches** – Agricultural area with late colonial peach orchards and gardens
7. **Catamaran River** – Settlement/coalfields/shops/school/last whaling station in Tasmania/ several mills/pop. up to 300/one of the largest coal mines in Tasmania/ *Annie McDougall* (lumber ship) built here/“a poor man's Venice”
8. **Gagens Point** – Whaling Stations/Ramsgate Inn/home of retired whalers/multicultural population/Chinese abalone exporter/timber mill
9. **Waterhole Cove** – Coal loading/mine infrastructure/watering place of French 1793 (9-15 Old Ramsgate area which was the first surveyed town south of Hobart)
10. **Motts Beach**–Ship *Recherche* forge and shore facilities-1793
11. **Cockle Creek** – Wharf/early mill
12. **Adams Point (Whale Sculpture)** – 1793 French Observatory and shore facilities of the ship *Esperance*/site of first European burial (Gunner Boucher)
13. **Snake Point** – 1793 Observatory of ship *Recherche*/whaling stations
14. **Planter Beach** – Early boat building/early graveyard and extant graves
15. **Fishers Point** (named after Capt. W. Fisher) – Pilot station remnants/market garden/commercial cabbage garden
16. **Blackswan Lagoon** – This area, as well as the immediate region, provided a rich source of botanical specimens for the French, incl. *Eucalyptus globulus* – Tasmania's floral emblem.
17. **Little Lagoon Beach** – Friendly meetings between Aborigines and the French 1793/ anthropological study and cultural exchange
18. **The Images** – Accessible site for food gathering for Aboriginal Tasmanians – abalone, crayfish
19. **Sullivan Point** – Location of the first police station and post office
20. **French Garden** - While a formal garden was established in this area, various seeds such as potatoes, chicory, celery, peas and sorrel were planted in many other places
21. **Bennetts Point** – French first Observatories – 1792 /science of geomagnetism developed