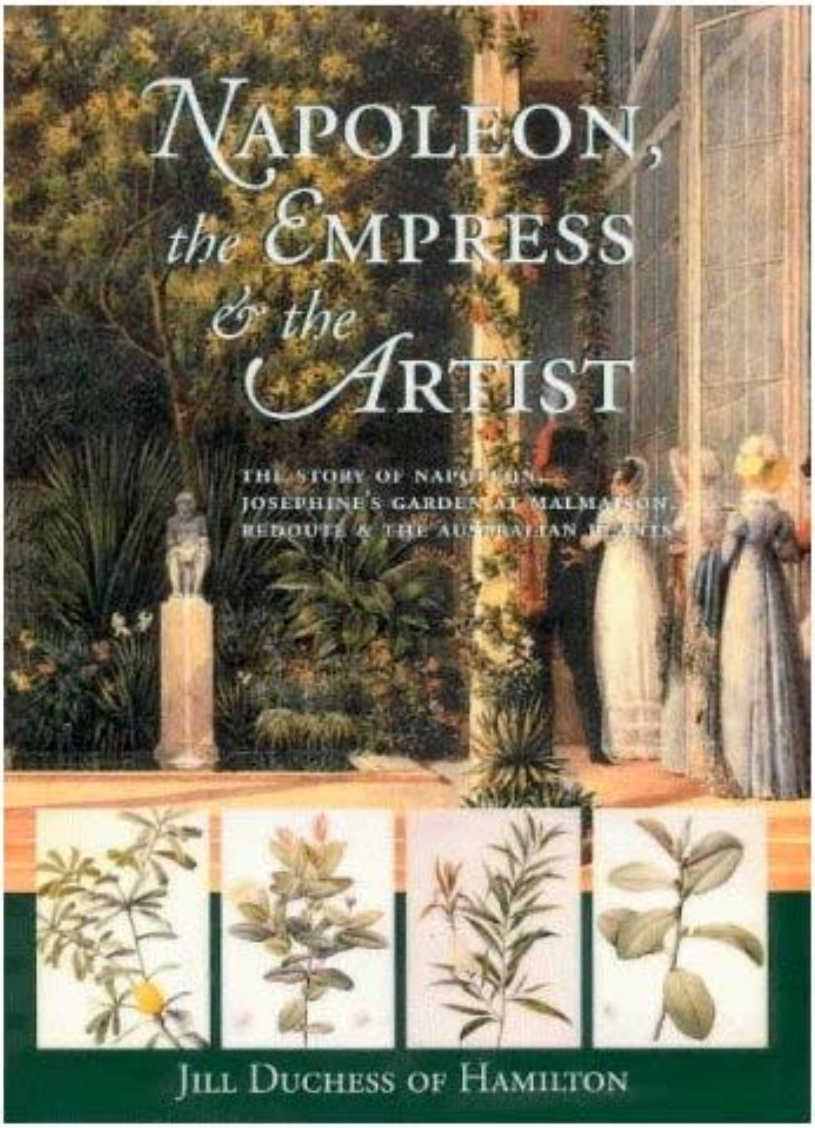
NAPOLEON,
the EMPRESS
& the
ARTIST
JILL DUCHESS OF HAMILTON

Napoleon and Australia? Napoleon and science? Napoleon the intellectual? Napoleon with his boot pushing a spade? Napoleon in his own vegetable patch? Napoleon the art patron? Napoleon arranging the biggest public exhibition of art ever held in the world? Josephine and Australia? Josephine a grande dame of botany? These names, words and concepts are seldom associated. At the age of forty-five, though, Napoleon returned to digging in his garden, something that he had not done since he had been at military school. And in the period between leaving school and being exiled to Elba, so great was Napoleon's interest in science that when twenty-six he was elected a member of mathematical section of the newly formed Institut National, the name given to the revamped Académie des Sciences after the French Revolution. It was at meetings of the Institut that he learnt about the Australian platypus. This direction in his life, combined with his curiosity about Australia, led to a brief but profitable period when the Australian flora was documented and illustrated in France.

The eucalypt tree, the wombat, the platypus and the emu are just some of the Australian icons classified by the French. Also, more illustrations of the Australian flora were published in France during the sixteen years of the Napoleonic era than in the ninety years in Britain after Captain Cook's discovery of the east coast of Australia in 1770. The following pages tell why and how this happened, and also throw an unexpected light on Napoleon and, of course, Josephine and Redouté.

Napoleon's interest in Australia—like his gardening—started when he was still at school. His youthful essays and letters, and the special portable library which accompanied him everywhere, reveal that he was very aware of the voyages of Captain Cook and La Pérouse to Botany Bay. Just months after he came to power as First Consul he personally gave the Baudin expedition to Australia both his blessing and his stamp of approval.

Josephine is mostly remembered for her style; her charm; for the burning love letters written to her by Napoleon; for being a leader of fashion; for being the most celebrated hostess of her age, enlivening Paris with elegant dinners, galas and balls; and, last but not least, for the music hall quip, 'Not tonight Josephine!' But her interest in natural history and Australian plants is seen in the magnificent book, Jardin de la Malmaison, illustrated for her by Pierre Joseph Redouté. This was published in Paris at the same time as the first comprehensive book in the world on the Australian flora. Weighing a hefty seven kilograms, written by Jacques Julien Houtou de La Billardière, this milestone in the scientific history of Australia came out as a partwork—again in Paris, again containing illustrations by Redouté.

Although, in the early years after settlement, over two hundred Australian plants had survived the hazardous voyage to England and France either as seeds or rooted in sawn-off rum casks, no single English book or journal carried as many colour plates of Australian plants as Jardin de la Malmaison. In this book, which Josephine commissioned, many of the illustrations have such a strong decorative element, and are so bold in their presentation, that they are beyond mere documentation; they are paintings in their own right.

Sir Joseph Banks named Botany Bay in 1770 and was the first—after William Dampier—to bring attention in Europe to the Australian flora. It was the French, though,

whose beautifully illustrated volumes did the most to promote Australian plants abroad after settlement. Apart from the 265 black and white engravings in Labillardière's volumes—the majority by Pierre Antoine Poiteau (1766–1854)—no other single artist published more drawings and colour plates of the Australian flora than Pierre Joseph Redouté, the 'Raphael of the flowers'. Most people are aware of the beautiful roses painted by Redouté but few have seen his images of the Australian flora—well over one hundred. Here for the first time they have been taken from the colour plates in books, and from watercolour originals at the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge University and the Bibliothèque Centrale of the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, to display part of Australia's scientific, artistic and gardening heritage. They form a magnificent collection. Redouté drew everything from the stiff, upright kangaroo paw and bouquets of yellow wattle to the vigorous evergreen climber Pandorea pandorana, the banksia, the flame pea, the paper daisy, paperbark trees, boronia, the slender bottlebrushes and five species of eucalypt which, coincidentally, are the types which support koalas.

The majority of early Australian botanical paintings undertaken by British artists remained in archives, or were left hidden in folios in Britain. It is only in recent years that many of these early depictions of Australian flora have come out of dusty strongrooms and repositories. The best known, 738 of Sydney Parkinson's paintings from the Endeavour voyage, were printed and brilliantly produced as The Banks Florilegium in the 1980s. The superb Ferdinand Bauer paintings, from Matthew Flinders' Investigator voyage, provide another example of works hidden from public view for a long period of time.

Contrary to popular belief Joseph Banks published nothing from the Endeavour voyage. In fact, it took the British an incredible forty years from the naming of Botany Bay to publish anything comparable to what appeared in Paris during Napoleon's rule—and then it was without illustrations.

The British failed to send a botanist or gardener to Australia with the First Fleet, so why was Australian flora promoted by Napoleon Bonaparte's wife, the Empress Josephine? Why did many Australian plants flower in Europe for the first time in France? Why has Pierre Joseph Redouté's massive contribution to the documentation of Australian flora not been acknowledged until now? Why did France, in the first twenty years after the Revolution, take such an interest in the flowers of Australia, then a newly settled British colony? Did the Australian flora appeal to Josephine because of Napoleon's overwhelming interest in science and art? Or because Napoleon had some strange, unexpected connection with Australia? The answer to this is contained in the chapters of this book—the story of the Australian plants is woven into one of the most intriguing love stories in the world, the romance of Napoleon and Josephine.

Napoleon had such a huge influence on everything he came in contact with—whether it was a substitute for lead in pencils, a battle to be won or his wife's garden—that last year when I began to write the story of the Empress Josephine and the Australian plants the book quickly changed course. As I looked for clues I discovered Napoleon's connections—and so the title became Napoleon, the Empress and the Artist.

But even without Napoleon's unexpected link with Australia he may have been interested as, unlike most military conquerors, he was an intellectual with a passion for science, mathematics and modern ideas—as well as the classics and art: 'The real

conquests, the only unregretted ones, are those against ignorance. The worthiest and most significant occupation for nations is to enlarge the frontiers of human knowledge.'

Because Napoleon is famous as a general on the battlefields of Europe, his other side is often ignored, as are remarks like this: 'Do you know … what amazes me most in the world? The inability of force to maintain anything at all. There are only two powers in the world; the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword is always defeated by the mind.'

Jill Duchess of Hamilton 1999

Note: Following modern English usage I have omitted the accents from Napoleon, Josephine and other proper first names, unless in a title, as well as omitting the hyphen from double Christian names such as Marie Antoinette. I have also omitted accents from words in common English usage, such as chateau.

Plants painted by Redouté are listed under the name he used originally in France, with the Latin name by which it is now generally known following in brackets—this does not necessarily reflect the latest revision in botanical nomenclature.

While Europe echoed with the sounds of the tramping boots, gunshot and cannon-fire of the vast armies of Napoleon Bonaparte, his wife Josephine was peacefully overseeing the creation of a unique and extraordinary garden at Malmaison. Here, in her tranquil acres in the Ile de France, at least 184 newly-discovered plants from all corners of the world were grown for the first time in Europe.

During those dramatic years of post-Revolutionary France Australian trees, shrubs and flowers joined hundreds of other plants, both exotic and European, in her garden—some well known, some extremely rare. All had been brought to the Empress by ship and horse-drawn carriage to build what became for a brief period the greatest private horticultural collection in early nineteenth century France.

For twenty years Napoleon was a phenomenon unequalled in history, soaring from nothing to become the mightiest ruler the modern world had then known. He was just thirty when he became master of France, and forty-six when he fell from power. In that short span of time he breathed fire and energy into France and infused it with gloire. But it is his battles which are today remembered, not his interest in science, mathematics, gardens or natural history—and facts such as that in 1814, when he was exiled to Elba, amongst the books in his luggage were twenty-four volumes of the Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle and five volumes of Système des Plantes, as well as books on chemistry and voyages.

The leading position of French science in the eighteenth century had become even more firmly established after the Revolution. Napoleon was a member of the Mathematical and Physical Class of the Institut National which was divided into ten sections, one of which was botany and plant physiology. At the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle the number of professorships was increased to twelve, including three in botany. The post-Revolutionary government's state support for all branches of the sciences was further augmented by Napoleon when he came to power. Etienne Pierre Ventenat, one of the first members of the botany section and a fellow member of the Institut with Napoleon, became

closely associated with the garden at Malmaison—a garden created during a period of expansion and acceleration of scientific activity on a scale hitherto unknown.

Josephine's garden

The site of Josephine's garden, on the edge of the River Seine, an hour by carriage from central Paris, was idyllic. Such was the beauty of the garden that artists continued to make pilgrimages there decades after her death in 1814. The poplar- and willow-fringed Ile de Chatou, which formed the southern border of her estate, later became a favourite weekend haunt of the Impressionist painters. Renoir, Manet, Monet and so many others gathered there that it is now called the Impressionist Island.

The river edges of the formerly extensive grounds of Malmaison can be seen in the famous canvases painted by Renoir at the Café Fournaise.

The genesis of Josephine's great achievement at Malmaison lay in a short-lived explosion of interest in the newly discovered plants and animals from the strange and 'topsy-turvy' land full of 'antipodean oddities' known then as New Holland, Nouvelle Hollande, New South Wales or just Botany Bay. These plants and animals were so rare and so difficult to procure that they were looked upon much as visitors from the moon would have been.

black swans and
other animals

That Malmaison was home to Australian fauna, such as the black swans, as well as flora, was celebrated on the title page of the Atlas of Baudin's voyage to Australia. Instead of a scene from the continent itself, there is a vignette of the park at Malmaison with three kangaroos, two emus and five black swans, as well as trees including melaleuca, acacia and casuarina. Despite the novelty of the Australian quadrupeds, the black swans were regarded as the most fascinating creatures in the park. They became its most spectacular feature, beating their huge black wings as they rose from the water. Josephine's enormous empathy with all animals, domesticated and wild, meant that Napoleon had to sleep with a pug dog in or on the conjugal bed—sometimes a small stuffed antelope beside it!

Her affection for animals meant that Josephine was one of the first in Europe to encourage all sorts of wild creatures—with the exception of lions, tigers and other dangerous animals—to wander in semi-liberty in the grounds instead of being locked up in pens, as was then the custom. Her black swans from the Baudin voyage were the first outside Australia to build nests of sticks and reeds and lay fertile eggs. Josephine was so closely associated with the black swans that swans became her unofficial emblem. A swan was carved on the side of her elaborate gilded bed and metal brackets in the shape of a swan were part of the decoration at Malmaison.

Although recognised as being fond of horses Napoleon is not known, as was Josephine, for being sympathetic to animals. According to Sir Charles Blagden, however, ho became Secretary to the Royal Society, he was. Napoleon was especially curious about that strange and beautiful animal the platypus, one of the three known members of the mammalian sub-class Monotremata which lay eggs and suckle their young.

In a letter from Paris to Sir Joseph Banks in 1802, Blagden wrote: 'I have observed likewise that the First Consul is fond of animals, both from what he said respecting the

Ornithorhynchus, and from the manner in which he spoke at the meeting of the Institute last month, respecting an antelope he brought from Egypt, and of which he appeared to be really fond.'

And not only platypuses. Napoleon's interest in the continent is seen in the following request sent to Sir Joseph Banks by Blagden, after a dinner with Napoleon, along with a description of their conversation.

The most acceptable present which could be made to the First Consul, would be a pair of live kangaroos … the gentlemen of the Jardin des Plantes have been endeavouring to negotiate an exchange with the dealers in animals in London, proposing to give one of their lions for one or two kangaroos … The park at St Cloud where he is going to reside, would be an excellent place for a little paddock of kangaroos like that of the King at Richmond …

Today though, there is a reminder in Corsica that Napoleon's interests extended to the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Up the main road from his birthplace in Ajaccio, an imposing memorial—a replica of the bronze figure once destined for the top of the column of the Place Vendome in Paris, complete with his bizarre tricorne hat, his redingote and his left hand in his waistcoat—is reached through an avenue of forty-two eucalypt trees with spongy reddish bark, Eucalyptus robusta, the stately Swamp Mahogany, from around Sydney. The memorial was erected in 1938 beside the granite rocks known as La Grotte Napoléon where Napoleon is said to have played as a child.

Just four months after coming to power as First Consul, in March 1800 Napoleon authorised the Baudin expedition to Australia, with special instructions to bring back plants and animals. It is appropriate that these forty-two trees are one of the species which returned on the ships of this expedition. In the appendix to the Atlas of the voyage the botanist Louis Claude Leschenault described some of the special plants, including 'the Eucalyptus robusta … noted as a beautiful tree of considerable height, which could be introduced with advantage to our forests'. Today tourists trudge up the hill to the memorial, unaware of Napoleon's connection with the trees around the statue. No municipal record details why that species was planted there. It could, of course, be merely coincidence that a tree which returned to France on the Baudin expedition was chosen, but as there are over five hundred species of eucalypt, that seems unlikely.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the quick-growing eucalypt trees which Josephine pioneered at Malmaison—she grew most of the then known twenty-four varieties—were grown in their thousands on the Mediterranean coast. The strong scent of eucalyptus oil was thought to repel malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

war as a background

Josephine's garden, which profited so much from two of the first three French voyages to Australia, developed against the dramatic backdrop of the Napoleonic wars. It seems extraordinary that plants from a new British colony should have had their European debut in an Imperial French garden at a time when a fierce and bloody war was being waged. Britain and France were officially fighting during the whole of the fifteen years that Josephine was at Malmaison, apart from an interval of thirteen months after the signing of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. The Anglo-French conflict, which started in 1793 and finished in 1815, involved to a greater or lesser degree all the principal nations in Europe.

Yet, sporadically, despite the war, plants came to Josephine from all over the world. Amazingly, the British—and Napoleon—cooperated.

A letter from Napoleon to an astronomer in Milan showed that where science was concerned, frontiers disappeared for Napoleon: ‘Science, which ennobles the human intelligence … All men of genius, all those that have attained a distinguished place in the Republic of Letters are Frenchmen, whatever may have been the country of their birth.’ In 1802 he even ordered a report on the progress of all sciences since 1789—in foreign countries, as well as France. The most frequently invited guests at his dinners were scientists such as the astronomer-mathematician Pierre Simon Laplace and the chemist Claude Louis Berthollet. Gaspard Monge, the founder of descriptive geometry, although twenty-three years older than Napoleon, appears to have been a close friend.

love of malmaison

Josephine and Napoleon lived in the legendary royal palaces of France: St Cloud, the Tuileries and Fontainebleau. But no house is more strongly associated with either of them than Malmaison. In the years in which Josephine reigned there as châtelaine she made it indelibly her own. Malmaison was her security, her dower house. It was where she longed to be, her enchanted ground, her intensely personal property. She had a need for a home which would always be hers, as she never felt her situation was secure. There was the ever-present possibility that Napoleon might divorce her so he could remarry to have an heir; that the Bonaparte clan would achieve their aim of pushing her out; that Napoleon might be killed in battle, leaving her a widow who would no longer have the right to live in a royal residence.

The span of the garden at Malmaison, from the time of Josephine’s purchase of it in 1799 to her death in 1814, parallels the rise and fall of Napoleon: his seizure of power, his abdication, his triumphant return to Paris and his nostalgic visit to Malmaison when he paced the garden following his defeat at Waterloo. Finally he was banished to the island of St Helena in the Atlantic, coincidentally on the then main shipping route to Australia.

Napoleon always acknowledged Josephine’s interest in natural history. When, for example, he met Baron von Humboldt, the German naturalist and traveller, on the latter’s return from his celebrated scientific journey in South America, Napoleon remarked: ‘M. Humboldt, I understand you are interested in botany. My wife also studies it.’

Many of the Australian plants that were so exquisitely painted in France before 1815 were grown in the Empress’ garden. Recently, in 1997, the Australian plants in this garden were chosen for emphasis in the exhibition ‘L’Impératrice Joséphine et les sciences naturelles’ at Malmaison. ‘The great luck of the garden,’ wrote the curator of the exhibition, ‘was the Baudin expedition to Australia. The voyage permitted it to acquire its indisputable originality and its universal renown.’ It was the living cargo from this expedition, which had left France in 1800, which topped up the collection at Malmaison. No other country’s plants and animals were more strongly associated with Josephine than those of Australia.

Most references to the small but charming château of Malmaison also refer to the park and gardens, stressing their integration with everyday life there. Pierre Fontaine, the first of over nine architects, landscape gardeners, chief gardeners and controllers at Malmaison, said that Josephine favoured Malmaison greatly, preferring ‘it to all other places in the world’.

the gardener
from australia

Many flowers from New South Wales and Tasmania had links with Josephine's chief gardener, Felix Delahaye, who for decades was the only gardener in Europe who had actually seen plants growing in Australia and grew what he had collected. He had travelled as gardener on the D'Entrecasteaux voyage to south-western Australia and Tasmania in 1791–93 on which the botanist Labillardière collected over two hundred new plants.

On his return from Australia in 1797 Delahaye worked first at Le Trianon, on the restoration of Marie Antoinette's old garden at Versailles, then at Versailles itself, and finally in 1803 at Malmaison. Armed with this experience he was able to cultivate what he had collected—and more. A self-taught man from a simple background, a trainee gardener at the Jardin des Plantes at Rouen, he had come to Paris at the age of twenty in 1787 as an apprentice at the Jardin du Roi, rising to become director of cultivation at the city's new school of horticulture.

Delahaye was one of the five main ways by which Australian plants found their way to Malmaison. The others came from the decks of the Baudin expedition; from consignments across the channel from the commercial nursery in London of Lee & Kennedy; by carriage from the nursery of Jacques Martin Cels outside Paris; and from dozens of botanists and admirers throughout the world, including Sir Joseph Banks. There are now so few extant records of what was grown at Malmaison that were it not for Redouté no-one would know the full story of Josephine and the Australian plants.

Josephine's love of plants was demonstrated in the extraordinary way she decorated a table for a grand dinner in Paris. On the long cloth to cover the table for 150 guests at the Tuileries there was a meadow 'covered with fresh green turf, bordered with natural flowers interspersed with pots and baskets of flowers'. Such a daring display of wild plants in a country which used flowers in stiff formal arrangements showed the influence of Rousseau's thought on Josephine. This was at a time when hostesses vied with each other to create original table decorations, including architectural masterpieces in sugar. But Josephine never missed an opportunity to bring plants to the fore. She regarded flowers as a necessity of life: garlands of anemones or hyacinths woven into her coiffures were particular favourites.

Josephine's determination to acquire really special plants gave her the drive to overcome the hurdles of war embargoes, debt and the difficulties of keeping alive plants which had survived hazardous ocean voyages from newly discovered countries. In Paris she kept huge tubs of shrubs on her balconies, but only after purchasing Malmaison did she have the opportunity for serious gardening.

redouté's influence

A middle-aged Belgian with large fleshy hands, just four years older than the Empress, did more than anyone to bring fame to the garden—not with a spade but with an easel and a paintbrush. The books illustrated by Pierre Joseph Redouté are amongst the most valued botanical books ever produced. Les Liliacées, Jardin de la Malmaison, Description des Plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre and Les Roses all helped bring applause to the Empress Josephine and spread knowledge about flora old and new.

Over a period of fifty years, with the help of the Empress, no other artist drew, painted and published as many examples of Australian flora as Redouté. Hidden amongst his legacy, which includes at least 2600 colour plates of 1800 different species, are over one hundred of the finest depictions of Australian flora published in the early nineteenth century.

Pierre Joseph Redouté is most frequently thought of as the greatest rose painter in history, but he also deserves a place of honour in the history of Australian botany. His most famous paintings might be of roses, but they comprise only a small part of his immense output.

Redouté's work at Malmaison with the Australian flora is not widely recognised, alas, as the early links between Australia and France have never been fully investigated. The greatest documentation of the Australian flora in France coincided with the time when Napoleon was in power.

redouté's millions

Redouté was important in the story of Malmaison, not only because of the superb colour plates he made of Josephine's flowers, but also because of his influence on her garden and her taste in art. He was the only person with a major role, either advising or working on the garden, who stayed with Josephine from its conception until her death.

Redouté's paintings are today amongst the most costly botanical art in the world. When Van Gogh's Irises went under the hammer at auction it beat all records as the highest price for an oil painting, but the top price ever paid for botanical art was for a series of plant portraits by Redouté. The original watercolours for his two-volume book Les Liliacées were sold for US$5.5 million at auction in New York in 1985—486 plates of lilies, irises and other plants with one seed-leaf, including the Australian kangaroo paw and dianella, all in sumptuous colour with delicately shaded petals and leaves.

Redouté's long and successful career prospered under the enthusiastic patronage of Louis XVI, drawing to a close with the triumph of seeing one of his best pupils, Louise Marie, the eldest daughter of France's citizen-king Louis Philippe, marry King Leopold I of Belgium. It showed that a love of plants and an ability to draw them well could bring a man through almost any upheaval. He survived revolution and wars as the official royal draughtsman to Marie Antoinette, as painter to Empress Josephine, as drawing master to Napoleon's second wife Marie Louise, and finally as a flower painter to Louis Philippe's daughters. But it was his association with Josephine and her garden at Malmaison which gave brilliance to his career.

Pierre Joseph Redouté was one of three brothers, all artists, who all at some stage in their distinguished careers worked for either Napoleon or Josephine. Redouté's older brother Ferdinand Antoine, sought after in Paris for his theatrical scenery and for his murals, started decorating the drawing rooms of Malmaison in 1800.

Redouté's younger brother Henri Joseph also drew and painted plants, but is best known for his animal and shell paintings. In 1792, he drew 489 plants and shells for the new Encyclopédie and three years later exhibited two watercolours of fish at the Louvre.

Chosen to accompany Napoleon to Egypt as a member of the Commission des Sciences et des Arts d'Egypte he painted antiquities, including temple bas reliefs, inscriptions and details of monuments. Sixty-eight of these appeared in the superb French encyclopaedia on Egypt, Description de l'Egypte, published in Paris between 1809 and 1828.

Redouté first met Josephine at the Louvre in the year before she purchased Malmaison, and he first visited her there a few months after the purchase in 1799. From then on, until just hours before she died, he was part of the matrix of her life. So great was the bond between them as artist and patron that when Josephine lay dying Redouté came to her bedside to show her a canvas with a flower he was painting, which he knew would lift her spirits. Always thoughtful of other people, Josephine held a handkerchief to her mouth and with a limp hand cautioned him not to come close in case her illness was contagious. Little did Josephine realise that her name would be connected forever to this adored painter through the books they had created together on the plants in her garden, especially roses.

Although for fifteen years Redouté had painted the exotic plants in Josephine's garden, they also shared a fondness for the simple native plants of Europe. Josephine's love of nature, which would stay with her for the rest of her life, started during her early life in tropical Martinique. Greatly influenced by a monk who was a master-cum-apothecary at the Abbey school which he attended, Redouté also developed a passion for plants during his childhood.

Late eighteenth-century Europe was home to a growing desire to categorise and explain the phenomena of the natural world. Botanists and zoologists were systematically cataloguing all the known plants and animals on earth. Such was the thirst and eagerness for new specimens that demands went out from museums and botanic gardens all over Europe and England for new plant specimens, living or dried. Allied to this was a belief that scientific discoveries—and new plants like the breadfruit—could be turned to great material benefit.

redouté and the australian flowers

Although the most exquisite of Redouté's Australian plants were painted at Malmaison for Josephine in the first years of the nineteenth century, his association with the flora of Australia had started much earlier. His first pen and wash picture of a eucalypt was drawn in 1787, during his nine-month visit to London at the age of twenty-eight. This was also a first for Australia. It is the earliest botanical image of the most dominant genus on the continent. Redouté would have been familiar with eucalypts for the rest of his life as species from Tasmania survived Paris temperatures and were grown at Malmaison and other places in France. Labillardière personally planted Eucalyptus globulus at Malmaison in 1805.

Redouté's painting of the eucalypt was soon augmented by images of many other Australian plants, coinciding as it did with the massive preparations for the departure from England of the First Fleet—the largest forced consignment of people ever dispatched across the oceans in European history. This horrific excursion would soon open up a whole new world of plants for Redouté to paint—flowers which would play such a large part in the books of Josephine's garden and the much visited garden itself.

the pictures which remained a mystery

Art historians have never grouped Redouté's colour plates and watercolours into the plants' countries of origin, so those of Australian species have not been catalogued as such. The prominence given to the Australian plants in the first of the two folio books of colour plates of plants from Empress Josephine's garden, Jardin de la Malmaison, published in 1803, was extraordinary. She asked the eminent botanist Etienne Pierre Ventenat—whose brother, a naturalist, had been chaplain to Labillardière and Delahaye on the 1791 voyage to Australia but had died on the journey back to France—to prepare a book in which her 'best plants were to be described'. Obviously they thought the Australian plants were her 'best plants', as of the 120 plates, over one-third are of Australian species. It shows Josephine's fascination with Australia's flora. There were plenty of other plants to choose from. Ventenat, appointed 'Botanist to Her Majesty', said in the dedication of the book that Empress Josephine had collected the 'rarest plants growing on French soil'.

Why did Josephine favour so many Australian plants, and why these in particular? Why did Redouté select them? The Australian plants in Jardin de la Malmaison are not the most impressive examples of the country's flora. There are others, such as the waratah with its crowns of crimson blossoms, and Sturt's desert pea, which are far more spectacular. Why did Josephine not give first priority to the fabulously showy flowers, especially the orchids from the New World, which were also part of her collection? Was it to please Napoleon, who was obviously still interested in Australia? (He had ordered Captain Cook's Voyages as part of his travelling library to take on his Egyptian campaign.) Or was it because these were the newest species which they found the easiest to grow? Or did the arrival in France of these plants coincide with a new interest in the beauty of the small and simple flower, as promoted by Rousseau?

The difficulty and cost of producing books with colour plates in the early nineteenth century can be seen by the fact that the English, the colonisers of the newly settled country, published nothing with Australian plants comparable to the books to which Josephine gave her patronage.

Other artists, in both Australia and Britain, were painting the Australian flora both before and at the same time as Redouté, but their work had little impact as it never underwent the expensive process of being copied onto copper plates, nor the even costlier and more complicated procedures of printing and distribution. Nor were their paintings exhibited. As these colour plates were not seen, they could not advance understanding of the Australian flora. They make pretty books or interesting exhibits in modern times, and add to the study of early attitudes, but they did not in their own day contribute anything to European knowledge of Australian flora. Wonderful though these illustrations often are, and deserving of display and reprinting, it must be remembered that although they are now acknowledged as part of Australian history, they were not in their time.

Today it is often assumed, when botanical paintings are exhibited or reproduced, that they were well known in their own time. But few modern books, let alone exhibitions, clearly distinguish between those pictures that were published contemporaneously, and those that remained unknown until this century. But it cannot be denied that it was the paintings of the flowers printed shortly after their discovery which became the stepping stones to a knowledge of Australian flora.

Ferdinand Bauer, who travelled with Matthew Flinders on the voyage of the Investigator to Australia in 1801, is often said to have painted by far the best early paintings of Australian plants. This may be so, but only fifteen of them were ever printed in the nineteenth century. The only other artist whose output of paintings of Australian flowers came close to Redouté's, and which were actually published soon after they were painted, was James Sowerby in London. He painted Australian flowers for Curtis's Botanical Magazine and James Edward Smith's A Specimen of the Botany of New Holland (1793). Smith's work, alas, contained but sixteen illustrations of Australian plants. Sowerby's colour plates were often not drawn from living plants, but from drawings and dried plants which had been sent to England from Australia on convict ships. Between 1804 and 1810 Smith's Exotic Botany, which contained thirty-nine Australian plants, was published. But yet again many of the colour plates by Sowerby were based on sketches and herbarium specimens, not living plants—so the illustrations are often just mere documentation. They are not to be compared with the work by Redouté.

josephine and roses

Although the garden at Malmaison was crowded with everything from scented tropical gardenias and orchids from the Americas to the newly arrived plants from temperate Australia, Malmaison and Josephine are today associated with roses. She located 197 varieties—all that were then known in Europe—and in the last years of her life created the largest rose garden in France. Yet roses, though important, were but part of her garden and her interest. Since there are now more people who grow roses than people who grow Australian plants, it is for roses that Josephine is best remembered.

It is a similar story with Redouté. His other paintings are less famous than his roses but they are, in a different way, even more beautiful. His best known book, Les Roses, was published in three volumes between 1817 and 1824. Again Josephine was the inspiration. Although these much copied pages were not produced until after her death, the first paintings were made in her garden while he was still carrying out commissions for her.

After Jospehine died and Napoleon was exiled to St Helena, Redouté's interest in Australian flora waned.

josephine and
natural history

Josephine's passion for botany and zoology was acknowledged by the professors at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, who claimed her as a colleague and sent her a letter: 'Permit me madame to congratulate you on the taste you have for natural science. You contribute to its progress and we thank you in the name of all naturalists.'

Ventenat's foreword in Jardin de la Malmaison summarised Josephine's overall achievement.

You have gathered around you the rarest plants growing on French soil. Some, indeed, which have never before left the deserts of Arabia or the burning sands of Egypt have been domesticated through your care. Now, regularly classified, they offer to us as we inspect them in the beautiful gardens of Malmaison, an impressive reminder of the conquests of your illustrious husband and a most pleasant evidence of the studies you have pursued in your leisure hours.

Josephine's Arcadian paradise both supported science and fulfilled her wish for an English garden: streams flowed where rivulets had trickled; classical stone and wooden bridges crossed little rivers; miles of garden paths wound their way past pools and fountains; winding paths led visitors to glades and woods; shady groves of trees were grouped to give vistas beyond; a grotto was adorned with marble gods and goddesses; wide lawns spread as far as flowering meadows; guests rowed beside the swans on the Lake of St Cucufa or lingered in the Temple of Love; and huge hauls of wood and coal kept the massive hothouses at the correct temperature to nurture unusual and exotic blooms sent from the four corners of the Earth. But this taste for the exotic did not detract from Josephine's appreciation of the local flora.

war no hindrance

Josephine always strove to get the very newest and the very best in everything. Just as she found war with England no hindrance to plant exchange, she found it no reason to discontinue landscaping at Malmaison in the romantic English style which the previous owners had already begun and which she liked. Nor did Josephine find war any reason to prevent her employing a Mr Howatson from England as her head gardener for four years—nor did war discourage her from making the flora and fauna of a British colony a special attraction in her garden.

Despite the war many plants for Malmaison were shipped across the English Channel by Lee & Kennedy, the biggest dealers in Australian and South African plants in England. They built up a profitable trade in plants through plant hunters and sea captains. As convict ships from Australia often returned home via the Cape of Good Hope and St Helena, newly discovered plants from South Africa and Australia arrived together and competed for attention. Many plants died en route; even if they arrived in a good state, so little was known about their natural environment that very often they were given incorrect care, many withering away from over-watering, insufficient light or from being placed in a too-humid hothouse.

early struggle
for australia

The use of a scene from Malmaison to illustrate the Atlas may also have been an acknowledgment of Napoleon's support for Baudin's Australian expedition. While preparing for his Egyptian campaign, Napoleon had personally endorsed what was officially a scientific voyage but was also a voyage of discovery. Once Napoleon was made First Consul he gave the expedition his stamp of approval and it departed with his express good wishes.

Unlike the British ships conveying convicts to Botany Bay, which carried neither botanists nor gardeners, this expedition to Australia included four astronomers and hydrographers, three botanists, five zoologists, two mineralogists, four artists and five gardeners. They were all presented by l'Institut for the approval of Napoleon before joining the ships. The Baudin expedition was comparable in talent to the assembly of scientists which accompanied Napoleon to Egypt. The results too would have been similar, but for ten of the scientific staff leaving the ships at Ile de France (Mauritius), leaving just thirteen. Of this remaining thirteen, ten either met a tragic death or because of illness had to disembark at various ports. Only three of the original twenty-three returned to France on the ships.

he original twenty-three returned to France on the ships.

France's colonial ambitions were well known. But the five French expeditions between Cook's voyages in 1770 and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 never seriously challenged Britain's supremacy in Australia, although it was feasible that part of the continent—especially Tasmania—could have become a French colony. No European power to this point had hoped to be the sole occupier of a new continent.

When Baudin sailed from France in 1800, the gaol-without-bars that was New South Wales was still limited to a small area around Port Jackson, even though the population had expanded to over 6000 souls in its twelve years of settlement. Despite a thriving but bloody whaling and sealing trade, the colony was still unable to exploit the natural flora and be self-sustaining, relying on imported food. When the First Fleet sailed to Botany Bay no botanist, no gardener, no farmer accompanied it. In fact, no British botanist was seen in New South Wales until Robert Brown came with Matthew Flinders in 1801, on a voyage prompted by the departure of the Baudin expedition.

In England Sir Joseph Banks, who worked ceaselessly to promote science in Europe, failed to bring out the grandest of all flower books which would have publicised his great haul of plants from Australia. There was a gap of eighteen years between the return of the Endeavour to England and the arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay, years in which Banks' promised book on Australian flora should have been completed. Banks spent huge sums employing artists in the preparation of copper plates from Parkinson's drawings of his collection. His book, had it come to fruition, would have been the most impressive botanical publication of the eighteenth century. His failure to publish was a tragedy for science, and for the future environmental management of Australia. It was this void which allowed the botanical work of the French to become an important part of Australia's early botanical history.

Returning convict ships brought seeds, plants and dried specimens back to England—for Kew, for private nurseries and other botanists—but little was officially catalogued or exploited. It was largely the enthusiasm of the principals of the plant dealers Lee & Kennedy, and that of Sir James Edward Smith, Founder-President of the Linnean Society of London, that led to an early understanding of Australian flora in England.

first book on
australian plants

So great was French interest in Australia that the first French book on Australian flora, Jacques Julien Houtou de Labillardière's Novae Hollandiae Plantarum Specimen, was published in Paris in 1804. This scholarly work, on plants collected on his voyage to Australia's south-west coast and Tasmania with D'Entrecasteaux, had amongst its 265 black and white plant illustrations four images of eucalypts by Redouté.

The book provides an example of how Britain continues to get credit for something which should go to the French. It is the first book published after settlement in which the continent was referred to as Australia, a derivation of the Latin terra australis meaning

‘south land’. In his preface Labillardière writes of sailing from the Cape of Good Hope to Australia. Matthew Flinders, who is usually acknowledged as the first person to coin the name Australia, used the word in correspondence but did not actually publish it until ten years later, in 1814. Professor Denis Carr of Canberra wrote a paper in 1976 drawing attention to the initial use in print of the name Australia by the Frenchman, but Flinders continues to be acknowledged as the originator of the name. The word Australasia—‘Asia of the South’—was also coined by a Frenchman, the philosopher Charles de Brosses. The word was published in 1754 in his monumental Histoire de la Navigation aux Terres Australes which contained the first detailed study of the history of European exploration of the southern lands.

Matthew Flinders also continues to get the credit for the first maps of the coastline of Australia. It is forgotten that he had on board with him copies of the confiscated maps made of the western Australian and Tasmanian coasts eight years earlier by the skilled draughtsman C. F. Beautemps-Beaupré, the cartographer who accompanied Labillardière on the D’Entrecasteaux voyage. The maps were spoils of war.

A British voyage, also to the south-west coast of Australia, the year before Labillardière visited, resulted in a shameful contrast to French effort. Archibald Menzies, surgeon and naturalist on George Vancouver’s expedition, collected many new plants from King George’s Sound, but nothing happened to them. None were used for new descriptive work and none were concisely listed.

The only work published in England by a botanist who had explored the coasts during that period appeared six years after Labillardière’s book. The small Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae was published in 1810 by the great botanist Robert Brown, following his journey to Australia with Matthew Flinders. The book had no illustrations and the commencing and concluding sections never appeared. Brown himself had to pay the publishing costs of £100. After only twenty-five copies were sold, at eighteen shillings each, the rest were withdrawn from sale. He gave them away to prominent botanists in Europe. The poor sales alone highlights the lack of interest in the Australian flora in England. It is also extraordinary that a stack of this excellent book was not purchased and sent to the colony of New South Wales to help the colonists understand the flora of the new land.

The early French interest in Australian plants thus contrasts markedly with the indifferent attitude of the British, whose officials failed to publish any systematic study of the flora, or to print anything of significance on the subject, let alone anything that would help the new settlers in New South Wales understand the strange new plants around them.

It was different in France. Both Napoleon and Josephine helped finance the publication of Redouté’s work by subscribing to the grand folio editions of his books. They bought copies for themselves, and sent others to scientific institutions and governments in Europe—even to London when England when was still the enemy. Redouté’s books were a choice gift for anyone Josephine wished to honour, such as Sir James Edward Smith or Sir Joseph Banks in London. Napoleon ordered his foreign minister, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, to subscribe to eighty volumes of Les Liliacées as part of the promotion abroad of French culture and art. These magnificent books were to be given, in Napoleon’s name,

to the most distinguished kings, artists and scientists in Europe. Napoleon, who dictated his own press releases and sent them directly to newspapers, was one of the first monarchs to realise the value of public relations and favourable publicity. For the same reason Napoleon and Josephine were the first modern royal couple to travel widely throughout their dominions—and, it seems, the first to present botanical books abroad in such a lavish way.

acknowledgment of josephine's role today

Awareness of Josephine's contribution to gardening has faded. After her death and the defeat of Napoleon, the contents of Malmaison were either put up for sale or dispersed and much of the grounds sold off as lots for new houses. Malmaison itself passed through many hands. The gardens fell into neglect and finally met with nearly complete destruction during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, which completely destroyed St Cloud and the Tuileries, the two other homes she had shared with Napoleon.

In 1904 a philanthropic Frenchman named Daniel Osiris bought the house, together with the much-reduced grounds, and gave it to the government as a museum. But the only traces of the enormous variety of plants which flourished under Josephine's care—apart from the wild violets which still grow in the lawn and the Marengo cedar which towers over Josephine's gallery—are Redouté's paintings.

When his career was established Pierre Joseph Redouté painted flowers and nothing but flowers. John Audubon, the American bird artist, was so touched by Redouté's love of nature after meeting him in Paris that he wrote that he 'dislikes all that is not nature alone; he cannot bear either the drawings of stuffed birds or of quadrupeds, and evinced a strong desire to see a work wherein nature was delineated in an animated manner'.

Redouté's talent as a draughtsman and artist was so great that he could have easily have executed large canvases that would have been hung on the walls of the Louvre and brought him greater fame. Napoleon obviously thought so. Charles Leger, in his biography of Redouté, said that once when the artist was painting, Napoleon, who was familiar with his work, came and stood beside him. He asked why he only painted flowers and nothing else. Why, he could paint grand, historical scenes. Redouté replied that he would rather stick to what he knew he could do well.

Little did either Audubon or Napoleon realise that in his early career Redouté had been forced—in order to support himself—to paint religious and historical scenes using a multitude of techniques, from frescoes on the walls of palaces and churches to easel-pictures, portraits and massive canvases of scenes for the theatre. He had, from the fact that he continued to get commissions although very young, been a master of oil painting. But on examining the struggle of his early life—a young boy of thirteen setting out into unknown countries with his paints and little else—one wonders if it was not the strain of those years, working long hours in freezing churches and castles on scaffolding with the terrible smell of oil paint, that made him put that part of his career behind him. Those huge works took years to complete and were often the work of many artists. A flower painting, in contrast, could be done in less than a week, sometimes in less than a day. So Redouté had the satisfaction of starting a job and seeing it finished.

Redouté came from a dynasty of painters. His great-grandfather was a court painter of portraits, religious and historic subjects to the princes of Liège in the last decades of the seventeenth century. One of his sons, Jean Jacques, went to Belgium between 1729 and 1732 to work on the walls of the abbey of Saint-Hubert, bringing with him his wife and his son, Charles Joseph, who was then fifteen years old. Charles Joseph, after learning the trade from his father, had the luck to be sent to study at an academy in Paris for six years. On his return, he too, worked on the superb decorations of the church of Saint-Hubert. But Charles Joseph, the father of Pierre Joseph, never earned enough to support his wife, two daughters and three sons. The children had a hard life and were forced to earn their living from an early age, before completing their education. All three of Charles Joseph's sons—Ferdinand Antoine (1756), Pierre Joseph (1759) and Henri Joseph (1766)—became painters in the family tradition, and all three ended up living and working in Paris, although only Pierre Joseph and Henri became well known.

Records in the village of Saint-Hubert in the Ardennes, which then belonged to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg but is now part of Belgium, show that Redouté was baptised on 10 July 1759. His family were poor and it was often a struggle for them to pay the taxes on their home at number 8 Rue du Four—now Rue Redouté. It was a 'third class house' next to a bakery, with a garden and three goats. Redouté spent much time in the wild woods and countryside around the small town. The first plant he is known to have painted was neither cultivated nor exotic nor sensational, but the humble wintergreen chickweed, Trientalis europea.

'Pierre-Joseph, wandering in the woods of the Ardennes, came to love their wild flowers; the delicate beauty in particular of Trientalis europea, which he was the first to notice in Belgium, remained fixed in his memory,' said Professor William Stearn, who has written extensively on Redouté.

fulfils youthful ambition

Redouté learnt the family trade of religious painting and portraiture from the cradle, but lack of work in the area around his home meant he did not go to Paris to study as his father had done. Circumstances forced him to lead an itinerant life for ten years before finding continuous work in Paris.

Having absorbed the skills of paint and paintbrush from his father, Pierre Joseph put school behind him at the age of thirteen and in July 1772 set out from Saint-Hubert to seek fame and fortune. His brother Antoine Ferdinand, although three years older, stayed at home as, of course, did Henri who was then only eight. So obvious were Redouté's talents, even at that age, that some thought that this youth might one day be as great as that other painter from the area, the master Pieter Bruegel the Elder. But for now Redouté's talents seemed to be taking him towards a future as a portrait painter of the not so rich and not so famous.

Travelling often on foot, the young Redouté followed a precarious existence. Trying to earn his living and develop his talent, he undertook church and interior decoration. Professor André Lawalrée, a botanist who lives not far from Redouté's birthplace and has become the world expert on Redouté, wrote.

He worked in the Brabant, then near Vilvorde … and decorated salons, panels above doorways and executed religious paintings, exercising different techniques and was initially influenced by the Brussels and Antwerp school. He also went to Flanders where he found work

as he received recommendations because of the high standard of his work. But as well, the qualities of his character also attracted people.

Holland was also a destination for Redouté. He was following in the footsteps of Linnaeus, who had studied there some thirty years earlier. Redouté managed, as well as studying living plants, to have a year's training in fine oil painting in an atelier at Liège. Most importantly, though, he carefully studied the methods of the old masters, including the eighteenth century flower painter Jan van Huysum, who did much work in the medium of watercolour.

In 1775 a painter named André invited Redouté to go to the Château de Carlsbourg to work on giant frescoes, but after about a year he was called home to Saint-Hubert as his father was dying. He came to be near his family and to finish the work of his father. Because Antoine Ferdinand had gone to Paris and Henri was still only ten, it was up to Redouté to make arrangements for his mother. He did not stay in Saint-Hubert for long. In 1777 he was fulfilling commissions for the Bishop of Liège when an Austrian general asked him to go to Luxembourg to paint his portrait. Other prestigious commissions followed, including one by a kind woman, a Madame Tornaco, who was so impressed by his talents that she was sure he would make his way in the court of Versailles; she gave him letters of introduction to various dukes and courtiers.

Redouté's older brother, Antoine Ferdinand, had been in Paris for six years working as a scenery designer for the Théâtre Italien, before the twenty-three-year-old Pierre Joseph arrived there. Distressingly, Redouté had somehow lost the flattering letters of introduction given to him in Luxembourg so he had to rely on his brother for help to get work. Again he was up on the scaffolds painting scenery as a props artist, painting backdrops for the Commedia dell'Arte. But this was more varied than the religious and historical scenes he had worked on for the past ten years. The demand for realistic elaborate stage effects of photographic verisimilitude meant that artists worked long hours painting massive sets and backcloths ready for the scene-shifters backstage every time the curtain fell, in the thriving Parisian theatre scene.

While he was employed on the massive stage sets he continued with his first love, painting flowers which he sold to the Parisian print dealer Chereau. Recognising Redouté's talent, Chereau had some of the paintings engraved, which brought Redouté to the notice of two important people involved at the Jardin du Roi: Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle, a wealthy disciple of Linnaeus, magistrate and bibliophile, and Gérard van Spaëndonck, a Dutch watercolourist who was the Paris museum's professor of flower painting.

L'Héritier became Redouté's greatest teacher, giving the young man access to his private botanical library and lessons in botany—dissecting flowers, understanding the particularities of plants, especially the reproductive organs, and drawing them. L'Héritier stood over his pupil, his voice guiding his brush, so Redouté learnt to draw not just for art, but for science.

Coming from an aristocratic family, and well educated in the classics and law, L'Héritier had had no formal training in science and was completely self-taught in botany. At the age of twenty-six, during the reign of Louis XV, through his family connections he had been given the impressive job of Superintendent of Woods and Water in the Paris region. His need to learn about trees and other plants led him to read Linnaeus' newly published work, Species plantarum. Like Rousseau, L'Héritier was fired with enthusiasm for nature and a yearning to bring others to share his love for plants. Even when, three years later in 1775, L'Héritier was given an appointment dealing with people rather than trees, as magistrate in the Cours des Aides, he continued with his botanical studies. Plant classification followed and in 1785 he began to publish in instalments Stirpes novae, an illustrated book of little-known plants. The second instalment, containing three drawings by Redouté, marks the beginning of Redouté's career as a botanical artist.

It was at this time that Redouté's younger brother, Henri Joseph, aged nineteen, came to Paris. The two brothers now formed an intimate relationship—based on friendship and work—which lasted all their lives. Although they shared a passionate love of plants, which they both painted exquisitely, Henri Joseph also adored animals—in fact, it is said by some experts that his scientific images of fish have never been excelled. After seeing a painting of Henri Joseph's of some summer mushrooms in the Bois de Boulogne, on the outskirts of Paris, L'Héritier gave him work also. From then on the association of the two brothers was truly close and their work appeared often in the same books and exhibitions.

Working with L'Héritier put Redouté in touch with influential people in Paris. Despite his lack of education and poor background he had a charm which let him cross social barriers. As well as painting he began experimenting with different methods of printing.

On 27 February 1786, at the age of twenty-seven, Redouté married the Parisienne Marie Marthe Gobert, six years younger, who worshipped her husband all his life. Their first child, born nine months later and christened Marie Joseph, was known by the more musical name of Josephine Redouté, prophetically presaging Redouté's association with the Empress Josephine, then the wife of Alexandre de Beauharnais. At the time of Marie Joseph's birth Redouté, of course, had never heard of Josephine, the patron who would follow L'Héritier. Just as Redouté worked for L'Héritier for fifteen years, until his tragic death, he would also work for Josephine for fifteen years, until her untimely death.

redouté goes to london

In April 1787, after receiving a letter from L'Héritier asking him to come immediately to London to paint plants for his new book, Sertum anglicum, Redouté crossed the English Channel for the first time. Here he met five people, all closely connected with both Linnaeus and Australia, with whom he would retain links for the rest of his life. The first was James Lee, the remarkable Scottish nurseryman who had translated Linnaeus' work into English, thus helping to promote the new system of sexual classification. The second contact was John Kennedy, Lee's partner. The third was that ubiquitous force in the world of science, Sir Joseph Banks, then overseeing the preparations for the departure of the First Fleet to Botany Bay, so named in his honour. The fourth, Francesco Bartolozzi, was a printer, while the fifth, Sir James Edward Smith, was the successor to Linnaeus. He had, at Banks' suggestion, four years earlier while still a medical student, purchased Linnaeus' extensive herbarium collections and library from his widow in Sweden.

Redouté, though, did not meet him until the end of his stay, as Smith was in Europe on his seventeen-month Grand Tour—an absolute must for rich young men—until November 1787. He returned with moss from the top of Rousseau's tomb at Ermenonville, bay leaves from Virgil's tomb at Pozzuoli near Naples and a sprig of myrtle from the Temple of Venus—the Roman goddess representing beauty and growth in nature, especially in gardens. Smith also returned with a young Milanese manservant, Francesco Borone, after whom he would later name the highly perfumed Australian genus Boronia. Back in London, fired to continue the work of the great father of nomenclature, Smith commenced setting up the Linnean Society of London, which today is known as the most august and oldest natural history society in the world.

departure of the first fleet

Redouté spent nine months in London. Some of the time he stayed with L'Héritier in a rented flat at 13 Broad Street, on the corner of Poland Street, Carnaby Market, a short stroll away from Sir Joseph Banks' house. The rest of the time he stayed with James Lee in his house at his Vineyard nursery in Hammersmith—a large establishment which was a convenient stopping place on the road to the King's garden at Kew where Redouté did most of his painting of flowers. The nursery had been established in 1745 by James Lee and Lewis Kennedy, the latter being succeeded by his son John in the year Redouté stayed there. Redouté gave James Lee's daughter Anne painting lessons, and presented the family with an exquisite painting of campanula, a Scottish native plant which also grows in France.

James Lee had been interested in the Australian flora right from the start. He had recommended the painter Sydney Parkinson, and a gardener, for Cook's voyage to Australia in 1770, and had exchanged plants with Kew. While Redouté was in London Lee was writing plant-care sheets for the captains and officers of the eleven sailing ships about to depart for Botany Bay, knowing that the First Fleet carried not one gardener, let alone a botanist. To help fill the gap James Lee printed a set of instructions at his own expense, in the hope that some seeds and plants would survive the return trip to England.

It was later said that only one living plant in every hundred withstood the trip. Even keeping seeds dry, viable and away from vermin was a problem. It was a matter of knowing the requirements of the plants, as well as protecting them from rats, mice, mildew, the tropical heat of the equator, desiccating salt spray and the urine of shipboard dogs and cats. Washing salt-spray off the leaves, sheltering the plants from sun and wind, and keeping the soil damp in the face of water-shortages was of utmost importance. Neglect, salt-spray, overheating, and lack of water when thirsty sailors naturally gave themselves priority, were the main reasons for plants not reaching their destination—not to mention those which must have been washed overboard in heavy weather.

redouté's dots

forerunners to pointillism

Today all images on television screens are in thousands of tiny dots (pixels), as are photographs in newspapers. But at the end of the eighteenth century the idea of using dots instead of lines to reproduce pictures was revolutionary. The notion of the eye joining up dots, rather than following lines, was completely new. From the master engraver Francesco Bartolozzi, who settled in London and became a founder member of the Royal Academy, Redouté learnt the technique of stipple engraving—the use of tiny dots rather

than lines—which made possible subtle variations in colouring. This technique, using broken colour in tiny specks, produces extraordinary luminosity in the printed image, in both light and shadow. Redouté perfected this method, which was much copied, combining it with roulette work. The painter Georges Pierre Seurat, born exactly one hundred years after Redouté, caused a sensation when he used dots of colour instead of brushstrokes in oil painting. The term ‘pointillism’ was first used in 1886 to name this style of painting.

Redouté’s methods were forward-thinking in many ways. He was so precise that he insisted his engravers use a complicated system of mirrors so the print appeared the same way round as the original painting. In many botanical plates the engraver just copied an original painting onto a copper plate, so that the resultant print was a mirror image of the original, but this was not good enough for Redouté. Sometimes, though, despite his preference, the image was reversed, as with Ficus rubiginosa in Jardin de la Malmaison.

This work with printing coincided with the development of new techniques of reproduction such as aquatint, lithography and steel engraving—side products of the new technologies of the Industrial Revolution. Such strides were being taken that it is surprising that more colour plates of Australian plants were not printed in England in those early days.

redouté paints the first eucalypt grown at kew

While in London Redouté painted Eucalyptus obliqua, the first eucalypt known to be grown outside Australia. A tree-fern which, although native to Australia, was mistakenly described in the book as having come from the small island of St Helena. The eucalypt, the most dominant genus in Australia, was neither named nor classified for eighteen years after it was discovered by Joseph Banks—and then by a Frenchman visiting London.

Banks might have brought the leaves of the eucalypt back to England, but he is not linked with it scientifically. To have one’s name attached to a new species, a botanist has to do more than find a plant, give it a name and bring it home in the luggage. Although the International Code of Nomenclature did not come into effect until 1905, at the end of the eighteenth century some of its rules were already in force, such as the one that decrees that a description in Latin of everything from reproductive organs to petals and roots, and the plant’s likeness to other similar plants, its family and genus, has to appear in a scientific journal. Most importantly, the plant’s dried specimen has to be deposited in an herbarium, when it becomes known as the ‘type specimen’. Then, as now, although it is preferable that descriptions are accompanied by a drawing, it is not necessary. Each classification can take weeks or months to prepare and then fail because it is inadequate, because the plant does not exhibit the characteristics which dominate its classification, or because another botanist has won the race and had a name and description published first.

Another of the plants which Redouté painted in London is an example of a plant which fitted in with an existing family in Europe, the Amaryllis from China, classified by L’Héritier as belonging to the same family and genus as the simple jonquils which grew in the woods around Redouté’s home in Saint-Hubert. The family Liliaceae, which includes the homely garlic, began to fascinate Redouté, and would result in the start of the publication of his magnificent series Les Liliacées in 1802.

Sir Joseph Banks commented on the London visit of L'Héritier and Redouté: 'Monsieur L'Héritier is still here to the amazement of everyone and has given no sign of returning. He has left off working at Dombey's herbarium and now runs most diligently from garden to garden, buying plants in profusion and books without end.'

L'Héritier made a point of classifying plants from the living specimens which he found growing at Kew, but he also examined dried specimens, particularly those kept in Banks' extensive herbarium at his house in Soho. His classification of Eucalyptus obliqua, with its creamy white flowers and dark green glossy leaves, together with Redouté's drawing, was published in England in Sertum Anglicum (An English Garland of Rare Plants which are cultivated in the Gardens around London especially in the Royal Gardens of Kew observed From the year 1786 to the year 1787). The book was dedicated and 'offered' to the English nation in gratitude for the generous assistance afforded him by England's learned men of botany. It contains twenty-two plates by Redouté and thirteen by Sowerby.

Redouté was already back in France when the Prince of Wales, the first of the convict ships to return to England from Botany Bay, arrived with seeds and plants of banksia, leptospermum, lambertia and melaleuca. These went to both the Royal Gardens at Kew and James Lee's nursery. All these new plant families a decade later were represented in Redouté's masterpiece, Jardin de la Malmaison. In Paris Redouté continued with the illustrations for further instalments of Stirpes Novae for L'Héritier, which had been started before his departure for England. At this time L'Héritier wrote: 'Dear Redouté, the truth of your brush, even more than its magic, will make me share, perhaps, the celebrity that our work together will one day earn for both of us.'

redouté's eventful
year after london

In the year after Redouté's return to Paris, he was appointed to the staff of the Jardin du Roi as painter for the Library of the King. The position was available as Gérard van Spaëndonck, the professor at the museum, was not interested in doing this painstaking work any more, so Redouté really was taking a load off his shoulders. Again he brought a fresh approach to his subject. With his brush he placed very thin layers of watercolour onto the vellum, allowing a reflection of the creamy-white background through the colour washes, which produced a brightness of tone, freshness of colour and luminosity. Before the technique had been to use gouache, a thicker paint with more body which was therefore less transparent than what Redouté called l'aquarelle.

Redouté's name was also put forward to the Académie des Sciences. For both institutions he made paintings on fine sheep- or calf-skin (vellum), both of which were more delicate, smoother and thinner than ordinary parchment.

Redouté accompanied each drawing with profiles of dissections—made under a magnifying glass—of exquisitely detailed stamens, stigmas and corollas, to aid the progress of science. Beautiful, and worthy of hanging in any gallery, Redouté's paintings, commissioned as scientific drawings, also helped place plants in the new binomial system of classification created by Linnaeus, and assisted in the search for an understanding of the relationships and differences in the natural world. The affinities and distinctions between plants in different countries were two of the building blocks upon which the theory of natural selection and evolution would eventually rest.

Also in that eventful year in Paris after his return from London, Redouté became one of the founding members of the Société Linnéenne de Paris which, of course, had a close affinity with the Linnean Society of London, also established in 1788. These societies of natural historians provided an international network for their members and were a force in establishing a standard system of classification.

Redouté's happy marriage, his close bond with his brother and his work for L'Héritier remained the core of his life, but he could also boast some truly prestigious assignments. From then onwards, for over half a century, he was drawing master to the rich and famous and said to have 'counted all the prettiest women in Paris among his pupils'.

Part of his popularity is attributed to the enthusiasm for flowers which he imparted to those around him. His friend Jules Janin said that 'he composed a bouquet with the intelligence and the happiness of a young girl at her first ball; and yet he brought about those delicate masterpieces with the thick hands which resembled the feet of some prehistoric animal'.

Redouté's first famous pupil, however, came at a controversial time, on the eve of the French Revolution. It was dangerous to be close to the woman whom the public held responsible for the bankrupt state of the country. But after L'Héritier and the botanist Desfontaines arranged for Redouté to be able to paint flowers in the English garden of Le Petit Trianon, Marie Antoinette authorised him to bear the honorary title 'Dessinateur du Cabinet de la Reine'. As she was no artist and did not want lessons, she asked Redouté to paint the flowers in her garden to hang in the fairytale thatched cottages in her hameau. It had taken Redouté just seventeen years since he left home at thirteen to become part of the fringe of the ill-fated Court of Versailles, a court from which all members within a couple of years quickly fled.

Marie Antoinette's frivolous and extravagant conduct, as well as her famous parties, held at Le Petit Trianon, made her unpopular. Equally unpopular was her huge expenditure on clothes, jewellery and amusements. Her presence at horse races and masked balls in Paris without the King gave rise to scandal, as did her meddling with politics and her close friendship with the King's younger brother, the Comte d'Artois. The huge costs of creating the gardens and theatricals at the Trianon were also a target for much criticism.

Capricious, and with a much-criticised disregard for conventions, Marie Antoinette was charmed by Redouté and sought him out, despite the fact that he was not a 'gentleman painter'. Redouté's work for the Queen did nothing to advance his career; it may even have held it back. Although Redouté was a Republican he managed to walk the tightrope between extremists, but his role with the Queen could easily have jeopardised other appointments. For most people on the eve of the Revolution she was not good news.

Nor did working for Marie Antoinette provide Redouté with any income. Even if the position had not been honorary it is unlikely that he would have been paid, as the vast army of royal servants had not received a penny for months. Soaring inflation and desperate food shortages combined with years of inefficient rule meant that the royal coffers were empty. Although the miseries of France were identified with the Queen's extravagances, France's involvement in the American War of Independence (1775–1783)

had all but bankrupted the country. Economic decline followed by a recession, combined with a couple of years of bad harvests, depression and rising prices, meant a massive rise in the price of bread. Unemployment hit everyone—from peasants, poor tenants, wheat-growers, textile workers, craftsmen and manufacturers to speculators—but the aristocracy remained intransigent.

Suddenly on 14 July 1789 there was the storming of the Bastille prison and fortress—a symbol of royal oppression. Fuelled by the American Revolution and Thomas Paine's pamphlet The Rights of Man, the Revolution took hold of France. Paris rang with Rousseau's slogan: 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. The King was forced to withdraw his opposition to the Declaration of the Rights of Man issued by the first French Revolutionary Assembly in 1789. This drew heavily on Rousseau's Social Contract and enshrined the principles of 'liberty, property, security, and the right to resist oppression'. As peasants in the country started to rise against the seigneurs, the aristocrats fled by the thousand to other countries. Still the cry went up for 'Bread!'

In the early summer of 1791 Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, heavily disguised, under cover of darkness, with her devoted knight-errant, the Swedish Hans Axel Comte de Fersen disguised as a coachman, tried to escape to her native Austria, but they were arrested at Varennes, brought back to Paris under heavy guard and imprisoned.

french republic proclaimed

On 21 September the French Republic was proclaimed. Towards the end of that dreadful year, the royal gaolers granted either Louis XVI or Marie Antoinette a very odd wish: could Pierre Joseph Redouté come to her prison in the Temple with his easel and paintbox to capture the brief beauty of a night-flowering cactus? It is uncertain if the invitation came from the King or the Queen and there is no explanation of how or why the cactus was in the crowded room which imprisoned all the royal family—or how anyone there knew that the cactus flowered only once a year at midnight. Like the other paintings of plants done by Redouté for Marie Antoinette it has been lost. Redouté, deeply moved by this poignant occasion, never spoke about it.

Redouté's association with Marie Antoinette did not, after all, hinder his career. In 1792 he received the title 'Dessinateur de l'Académie des Sciences' and the following year exhibited paintings of flowers and fruits for the first time, in the Salon des Aquarelles de Fleurs Lauréat en Botanique au Muséum, as well as serving on the powerful jury of well-known painters which included Jacques Louis David, Francois Gérard and Jean Honoré Fragonard.

The King was guillotined in January 1793. The Terror—in which the Convention attacked opponents and anyone else considered a threat to the regime—followed; something like 40 000 people were killed in Paris and the provinces.

So awful was her life in prison that before Marie Antoinette was placed in solitary confinement in the Conciergerie, she confided to her former lady-in-waiting, Madame Campan, 'If the insurgents murder me it will be a blessing, a rescue from a most wretched existence.' Soon afterwards she was moved, and in October 1793 she was charged with treason and indecent relationships with her son Louis Charles—an accusation which horrified all the women of France, Republican as well as Royalist. A few hours later she was guillotined. Even her enemies remarked on her courage and dignity as she went to

her death. Her last words were her apology to the executioner when she stumbled on his foot: ‘Sir, I beg your pardon. I did not do it on purpose.’

The shocks of the Revolution in Paris were far-reaching. Even the names—as well as the hierarchy—of the two scientific and artistic institutions which were part of Redouté’s life underwent dramatic changes. The Jardin du Roi—the Jardin des Plantes—became the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, and the collection of vellums, which like other royal property were now national property, became the property of the new museum—where they are held to this day. The Palace of the Louvre, which houses some of the most priceless paintings in the world, many of which date back to the time of Francis I and Louis XIV, also changed. First, the building and the collection became the Muséum des Arts au Louvre, and was opened to the public for the first time, thus making art accessible to everyone, on the anniversary of the fall of the monarchy. The Salon des Artistes vivants was also opened to public view. But in 1794 the Muséum des Arts became the Muséum National des Arts; two years later it became the Muséum Central des Arts, and was soon to be changed once more.

redouté’s appearance

It has often been remarked that Redouté’s appearance was not in keeping with his beautiful pictures. Famous for his exquisite paintings of flowers, he himself has been described as ‘rugged and unkempt’. According to one of the few contemporary descriptions—in the memoirs of a minor bystander in Paris, Joseph Francois Grille—Redouté had.

… a dumpy body, limbs like an elephant’s, a head as heavy and flat as Dutch cheese, thick lips, a hollow voice, crooked fingers, a repulsive look, and beneath the skin an extremely delicate sense of tact, exquisite taste, a deep feeling for art, a fine sensibility, nobility of character, and the perseverance needed for the development of genius: such was Redouté, who had all the pretty women in Paris as his pupils.

It was around this time that Louis Leopold Boilly painted The Reunion of Artists in the Studio of d’Isabey, now at the Louvre. Redouté’s face is among the twenty-seven men in this famous painting. This portrait shows him—contrary to Grille’s description—as dignified, well-dressed and distinguished, a pleasant-looking man with a neatly tied cravat and good posture. The best known image of him, however, is the portrait by Francois Gerard, drawn in 1809 when Redouté was a youthful-looking fifty, which is in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. An engraving taken from this portrait, made by Charles Simon Pradier to appear on the frontispiece of Redouté’s Les Roses, is commonly reproduced. The most charming portrait of him, now in Lille, was made when he was in his late thirties, a few years before he started painting for Josephine. It shows the artist, intelligent, hair cut short in the new Consular style, leaning on his right hand, gazing at an unseen person.

flower painting
an art form

Although representations of flowers and animals have been made from the time of the most primitive cave paintings, it was only in sixteenth century Europe that flower painting became an art form in its own right. Until then, apart from such exceptions as the flower paintings of Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer, flowers in art were mostly confined to the borders of mediaeval manuscripts. It was the quest to find, describe, name and find

connections between every living creature in the world which pushed flower painting into an art form. Botanical drawing, in the form of beautiful watercolours usually executed for wealthy or aristocratic patrons, began to flourish at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Apart from Holland, one of the main centres of flower painting was Paris. It is often said that the Sun King, Louis XIV, who made the great garden at Versailles, was so impressed by the flowers of Nicolas Robert (1614–85) that he commissioned a series of botanical paintings known as Les Vélins du Roi (The Vellums of the King), but it was actually Gaston d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIII, who started the collection. On his death both the paintings and the tradition were passed to Louis XIV. The King paid for twenty pictures of flowers to be made each year on fine calf-hide, a tradition which continued beyond the Bourbons and the French Revolution. Redouté added to this extraordinary and valuable collection of botanical art when it still belonged to the Bourbons.

redouté becomes famous

In the last years of the eighteenth century and the very first years of the nineteenth century, Redouté worked simultaneously on colour plates for four books: René Louiche Desfontaine's Flora atlantica (1798–99); Plantarum succulentarum historia/Histoire des plantes grasses (1799–1805), with text by Augustin Pyramus de Candolle; Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France by Henry Louis Duhamel du Monceau; and finally the work which would lead to Josephine and Malmaison: Description des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues cultivées dans le jardin de J.M. Cels (1800), written by the botanist Etienne Pierre Ventenat who, like his friend Jacques Martin Cels, was also a friend of L'Héritier. It was this trio who did so much to promote knowledge about Australian plants in France at the turn of the century.

Ventenat was another late starter in botany. Born in Limoges in 1757, he was trained, like his uncle, for a career in the church. Although he was thirty when he first started to study botany he later taught it at the Lycée de Paris, was one of the librarians at the Bibliothèque de Panthéon and a member of what became l'Institut de France. He was considered to be very lucky—at the age of thirty-one he was returning from a trip to England when the ship he was on capsized and he was the sole survivor. He died twenty years later.

redouté moves
into the louvre

Redouté's greatest period of work was done when he lived at the Louvre in Paris and worked at the Jardin des Plantes across the river and at Malmaison. The Louvre and the gardens meant that he combined both the artistic and the scientific worlds. From 1798 until 1805 Redouté lived with his wife and three children at the Louvre where he also had a studio. This ancient palace on the Right Bank of the Seine, beside the elegant gardens of the Palace of the Tuileries, was for many years the home of dozens of artists. Since the reign of Henri IV—known as the first of the Bourbons—artists and craftsmen had lived in a special section as guests of the King. Henri gave a real push to the revival in learning and the arts from the time he came to power in 1589. In 1608 he installed nineteen people in the Louvre—six sculptors and painters and thirteen clock-makers, cabinetmakers, tapestry-makers and goldsmiths. This royal tradition expanded and a virtual community of leading artists was lodged there. The small rooms first allocated soon crept into better

parts of the palace and some of the artists had elegant studio-apartments. The artist Jean Baptiste Isabey even employed architects and designers to remodel his rooms.

Although the Louvre had once been a palace for kings its character and role changed when Louis XIV, the Sun King, started adding new wings and enlarging the galleries. He converted old passages and rooms into small apartments, studios, workshops and living quarters for artists, sculptors and other craftsmen. But when Louis XIV moved to Versailles the Louvre began to fall into disrepair. Shops were even set up in its entrances, despite the fact that for thirty years it had housed the Academies of Art, Architecture, Science and Sculpture—as well as much of the fabulous art collection which Louis had purchased from Charles I of England.

When Redouté lived at the Louvre it was a splendid and fascinating community, the like of which has never been seen since. Not only did many artists work together and sometimes eat together, they quarrelled and copied and learnt much from each other. Their children ran along the corridors, bumping into rich clients coming to have their portraits painted. The Louvre certainly enriched the artistic life of France. It was a place where wealthy patrons could look at the old and commission the new. It suited Redouté to live there. He had few living expenses, the most prestigious address in Paris and, most importantly, contact with other artists.

Napoleon reduced the numbers dramatically. He first made his presence felt at the Louvre after he returned from his Italian campaign, when an enormous banquet was given for 700 people on one long trestle table. The artists who lived there were sat at le bout de table—the foot of the table. The dinner was a huge success but it took years to repair the damage it caused and it was not until a year later in 1799 that a new floor was opened to public view.

In 1802 Napoleon announced that he needed more space to exhibit pictures and requested the artists to move. A few of them moved to the artists' colony at nearby Montmartre, but most stayed put until 1805 and 1806 when they were forcibly sent away. Many were rehoused in old convents and others went to Montmartre. Some refused to go without state pensions. After every artist of renown had left Napoleon employed six obscure artists to work on the building itself and, much to the fury of those who had been expelled, they stayed until the Revolution in 1848.

redouté's heritage

Redouté ranks with Christoph Jakob Trew, Georg Dionysius Ehret, Nicholas Robert and Nikolaus Joseph Jacquin as a Titan of botanical literature. Early editions of books containing Redouté's paintings, held mostly in museums and libraries in Europe and the United States, are amongst the most precious early nineteenth century illustrated books in the world. The Mitchell Library and the State Library of New South Wales, both in Sydney, hold first editions of most of the books with Redouté's Australian drawings and paintings, apart from Jardin de la Malmaison. There is only one copy of this in Australia. But, alas, no originals of the Australian plants are held in Australia. They are scattered in private collections, museums and libraries in Europe and the US. Twenty-five colour plates are held in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and fifteen are to be found in the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

Not only are Redouté's colour plates the most valuable in the world, he is today the best known of all the botanical painters. There is even a museum devoted to his memory: the Centre Pierre-Joseph Redouté in Rue Redouté, Saint-Hubert, Belgium. Unhappily Redouté has not gained the recognition in France that he appears to have elsewhere and there is no plaque on what is left of his old house in Meudon.

Redouté's enthusiasm for the simple flowers of the woodlands led him, while still 'peintre de fleurs de l'Impératrice', to illustrate and publish at his own expense La Botanique (Letters on the Elements of Botany Addressed to Ladies) in 1805. It was originally published in French by Rousseau himself in 1771, and in English in 1785 by the eminent Thomas Martyn, who held the Chair of Botany at Cambridge, as Letters on the Elements of Botany, addressed to a Lady, by the celebrated J.J. Rousseau; translated into English, with Notes, and twenty-four additional Letters, fully explaining the System of Linnaeus: by Thomas Martyn. This version went into eight editions.

Taking on the financial risk of illustrating and publishing this unpretentious little book reveals Redouté's admiration for Rousseau—as well as his love of native plants. Without him, Rousseau's lessons in botany, showing the flower as the sexual organ of the plant, would never have become well known. Neither would his strong words about the manipulation of plants by breeders.

Rousseau's book also gave Redouté an opportunity to publish illustrations of the plants of France, including the foxglove, cow parsley, fennel, asphodel, shepherd's purse, white horehound, common scurvy-grass, hound's tongue, campanula, St John's wort, toadflax, cornflower, scabious, buckthorn, arum lily, chicory, daisy, dandelion, wild carrot, chervil, field eryngo, red clover, broom, honeysuckle, garlic, narcissus, lady's mantle, elder and hemlock.

The tempestuous Rousseau is usually associated with philosophy and politics but in his later years he had raised himself above controversy by taking up botany. Botanist, musician and philosopher, he was either hated as a thinker who would unsettle established society or esteemed as the great liberator of the human spirit. His happiest days were spent in the countryside, accompanied by his much-loved dog Sultan, where he found peace in the meadows, the waters and the woods, examining plants and taking flowers to dry for his portable herbarium. During his sixteen-month stay in England in 1766–67 Rousseau became so absorbed in looking at new plants—even when walking along the roads—that he did not notice when Sultan ran off. Twice the loss of the dog was advertised. After the first disappearance, when David Hume brought Sultan back to his grateful owner in Chiswick, Rousseau shed tears of joy.

Sultan ran off again as Rousseau was returning to Chiswick after a visit to Harley Street for a sitting for his portrait by Allan Ramsay. An advertisement appeared in The Public Advertiser on 4 March 1766: 'Lost, last Saturday evening, between Kensington and Chiswick, a small brown Dog, with short Ears, and a short curled Tail. Whoever brings him to Mr Pulleyn's Grocer, by the River's side, Chiswick, shall have Five shillings reward. No greater Reward will be offered.'

Rousseau and the dog really needed to get out of London. Rousseau wanted isolation, nature and solitude. Arthur Young, the agriculturalist who had earlier written Travels in

France, commented that the fashion in France for passing time in the country had been inspired by both English country house life and ‘the magic of Rousseau’s writings’.

It was in England that Rousseau wrote much of his book on botany which a century later influenced John Ruskin and William Morris and two hundred years in advance anticipated today’s anxieties concerning genetic engineering.

La Botanique summarised Rousseau’s contempt for making bigger blooms—double flowers were ‘nature disfigured by man’. The insatiable appetite for more spectacular blooms had already caused plant breeders to cross flowers to increase the size or number of the petals, converting them into what are called doubles. The process of selecting and breeding plants with large and/or profuse petals is often at the expense of the floral parts, such as stamens or anthers, which revert to petals. By doubling petals at the expense of the sexual organs, the flowers are so changed that either the nectar is not there or if it is, pollinating insects such as bees often cannot reach it in the hidden nectary at the base of the petals.

Should you find double flowers, waste no time in examining them; they are deformed, or, if you prefer, we have embellished them according to our whim: nature is no longer there; she refuses to be reproduced by such deformed monsters; for while the most arresting part, the corolla, is reduplicated, it is at the expense of our more essential organs, which disappear beneath this splendour.

At the end of the book Rousseau added: ‘Those double flowers admired in the flowerbeds are monsters deprived of the faculty of reproducing their kind, a faculty with which nature has endowed all living things.’

When Redouté illustrated the book over twenty years had passed since Rousseau’s death and his attitude to nature and plants—that man is an integral part of nature, not above it—had gained ground. He had urged readers to ‘appreciate nature, look in forests, not kitchen gardens’. Sir Gavin de Beer, in his book on the history of science, said that Rousseau ‘was of great importance … his book played some part in disseminating knowledge of this gentle science’. Rousseau was not alone, of course, in his efforts to raise awareness about the need to preserve wild scenery and help people appreciate unexploited nature.

He had preached the virtues of going back to nature, and of a life as close to the natural environment as possible. Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire (Reveries of the Solitary Walker), with its descriptions of nature and of man’s feelings for nature, had had an influence throughout Europe, especially in England and France. People started to look more deeply at the beauty of the countryside in its wild state, even at the simple native plants of woods, fields and lanes. Thatched cottages, wild gardens, orchards, enjoyment of the open air, walking in the woods, going on picnics, and a ‘cowshed for the sake of the milk which I love’, all took on new meaning.

Rousseau carried a copy of Linnaeus’ Systema naturae with him everywhere. Linnaeus had not long published this golden key to the plant kingdom, in which he expounded his system of classification based on sexual characteristics. The book transformed the study of botany, simplifying it for the amateur. In a letter to Linnaeus Rousseau wrote: ‘I read you, I study you, I meditate on you, I honour you.’ Rousseau was grateful to his hero for pulling botany from the apothecaries and giving it back to natural history.

Linnaeus-worship spread, and ‘herborising’ became increasingly popular. Useful local floras multiplied. Wonderful flower books with fabulous colour plates and scientific botanical descriptions were published in greater numbers than before, not just because the process of printing became easier and cheaper, but because there was more demand. The crowning masterpieces were the huge folio editions illustrated by Redouté in France, including the two which brought the Australian flora to the attention of the world. Redouté’s production and publication of Rousseau’s book coincided with the publication of the two volumes of Jardin de la Malmaison, dominated by Australian plants.

sexy stamens and provocative pistils
make botany risqué

Botany had long been considered a suitable diversion for young ladies, but a new delicacy had arisen about the subject since Linnaeus introduced his classification system based on sexual characteristics. Polite society was shocked at the focus given to the fact that plants possessed sexual organs, let alone the capacity to use them. Information about fertilisation and describing the size and actions of the pistils, stamens, ovaries and stigma raised the question: Was botany still a suitable subject for young women? One writer described petals which ‘chastely fold over and cover the organs of impregnation’. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, published in 1768, condemned the ‘disgusting strokes of obscenity’ with which Linnaeus had disfigured the picture of nature’s innocent beauties.

Martin Kemp, the current professor of History of Art at Oxford, has said.

Parents were cautious at what age a daughter should learn too much about nature, and Rousseau’s book,
based on his letters to his cousin, suggested they should
be shown to her young daughter only at her mother’s discretion. When Rousseau plunged into an exposition
on the naked sexual organs of a lily, he added a warning that when instructing her daughter in such ‘secrets’ they should be unveiled ‘by degrees, no more than is suitable to her age and sex’.

Despite these warnings, Rousseau had no hesitation in recommending botany to the female sex. He was ‘convinced that at all times of life the study of nature abates the taste for frivolous amusements, prevents the tumult of the passions and provides the mind with a nourishment which is salutary by filling it with an object most worthy of its contemplation’.

Like Rousseau, Josephine came late to the discipline of botany. When she started her garden at Malmaison—like many others in England and France at the time—she had leaned on Rousseau’s principles, letting much of her park imitate the abundance and wildness of nature. The main area of her garden was in the English style, the style Rousseau had so approved of during his stay in England in the late 1760s. However, Rousseau began to see that great English gardens like Lord Cobham’s Stowe were grand and stylised rather than really natural—‘rassemblés avec une magnificence plus qu’humaine’.

English gardens were then—as they are still—one of the artistic triumphs of the British Isles. They were admired and copied throughout the world, although in France people

were sharply divided for and against. Voltaire claimed to have introduced the English-style garden to France—along with the plays of William Shakespeare and the scientific ideas of Sir Isaac Newton—after his visit to England in 1728. Voltaire said his so-called English garden had ‘no French gewgaws—all is Nature’, although English visitors did not see it that way. Another school of thought believes that it was Rousseau who did most to introduce the English garden to France.

For the last twenty years before their deaths neither Voltaire nor Rousseau spoke to the other, and the support of one usually meant the opposition of the other. Even though they both died in 1778, eleven years before the French Revolution, it was the works and ideas of both Voltaire and Rousseau which helped to foster it. The all-pervasive influence of Rousseau’s thought affected many fields. His book Le Contrat social, with its slogan ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’, became the bible of the French Revolution. Ironically, Marie Antoinette not only followed many of Rousseau’s precepts for gardens, she also made a pilgrimage to Ermenonville after his death and sat on a bench—known ever since as Le Banc de la Reine—to contemplate his tomb.

royal cowherds

Like Marie Antoinette’s garden at Le Petit Trianon, Josephine’s garden, as well as being more natural, boasted several features suggested by Rousseau, including a dairy. But Josephine’s cowherd was Swiss and from Berne. Her attendants, too, wore Swiss costume (something which Voltaire never envisioned).

According to a memoir written by one of Josephine’s ladies-in-waiting, Georgette Ducrest, a finely carved bust of Rousseau had pride of place in Josephine’s large and elegant glasshouse. She said that the bust was placed in the entertainment area and that Josephine had instructed her superintendent to ensure ‘that the vines and foliage may play around his head. This will be a natural crown, worthy of the author of Emile’.

Josephine’s interest in Rousseau extended to bestowing a pension on the Marquis de Girardin, a distinguished and intellectual aristocrat who was famous in France for two things: looking after Rousseau in the last two months of his life in an isolated cottage in the grounds of his château at Ermenonville, north-west of Paris, and popularising the English style of garden.

the english garden
comes to france

Girardin published his gardening principles in De la Composition des paysages in 1777. He advocated that a landowner should ‘prendre ce que la nature vous offre’, following Alexander Pope’s landscaping precepts—‘Consult the Genius of the Place’ and ‘Let Nature never be forgot’. The garden that had most impressed him during a Grand Tour of Italy, Germany and England, when he was twenty-eight, was the Leasowes, near Birmingham, laid out by the poet-gardener William Shenstone as a ferme ornée combining picturesque scenes with rural management. Using the principles in his book he laid out his Ermenonville estate, utilising not only ideas taken from the Leasowes, but literary inspiration from Virgil’s Georgics and from ‘Julie’s garden’, which Rousseau had created in La Nouvelle Héloïse—going so far as to build a memorial to Shenstone. When Rousseau later came to spend his last days at Ermenonville he exclaimed: ‘I find here the gardens of my Julie.’ Girardin erected Rousseau’s tomb on an island in the middle of the lake which

he had unwittingly inspired. (Consciously or unconsciously the present Earl Spencer recently took a leaf out of Rousseau's book when he buried his sister, the Princess of Wales, on a small island in a lake in another English garden.)

Although Rousseau had a huge influence on the popularisation of the English garden, there was already a growing enthusiasm for wild and evocative scenery throughout Europe, combined with an inclination towards more natural landscaping. Despite this trend, though, the majority of gardens in France remained formal, their creators ignoring Rousseau's dictum that there should be no straight lines in a natural garden and that paths should saunter 'like the steps of an indolent man'.

In the same way that George III was soon to grant the Corsican freedom fighter Pasquale Paoli a pension and a sanctuary in England, a pension was arranged for Rousseau on 2 May 1766. Even before his arrival in England, Rousseau had said to David Hume that he would accept this royal generosity. But so great was Rousseau's pride that when he received the official letter he found an excuse to refuse it and promptly disappeared to stay in a cottage at Nuneham Courtenay near Oxford with young Lord Nuneham, where he planted wildflowers in the garden.

Rousseau's writings were endlessly debated. Man and society were at their best in their natural state, he said. His pre-Revolutionary admirers thought that the philosopher's vision of the ideal republic had already been created in the United States of America and should be copied. Others associated him solely with the concept of the 'noble savage'—who existed before the advent of property, law, arts and sciences.

Rousseau became one of the most famous names in Europe—he was often known simply as Jean Jacques. Two of his books were widely read, even by those not interested in philosophy or change. The first was Emile, with its revolutionary ideas on education, the simple life, the familial bond, domestic happiness and pleasures—'we will be our own servants in order to be our own masters'. The French authorities, though, ordered the book to be burned by the public hangman. The magistrates suggested that the author should be burned as well as his book. He was saved, as he was many other times, by crossing the border.

Rousseau was the first to write that adult man is the result of his childhood, that man can be made or corrupted by his education—or his mother. (And this was over a century before Freud.) His novel La Nouvelle Héloïse showed how a decent life might be led: gambling and drunkenness replaced by outdoor sports; mothers nursing their own children instead of sending them to wet nurses; men wearing their own hair instead of elaborate wigs; and work and modest sociability in place of finery, affectation, intrigue and competition over symbols of status. He strove towards a way of living in which honesty, sincerity, hard work and the absence of personal display would establish true equality.

napoleon's adoration
turns sour

Napoleon and Josephine's attitudes towards Rousseau were diametrically opposed. Napoleon in early childhood and youth worshipped the great man, only to reject him later, while Josephine, totally ignorant of him in her youth, grew in later life to honour him. Napoleon had an early connection with the philosopher through his father's friendship with the Corsican politician Pasquale Paoli, who corresponded with Rousseau. Brought up in a

liberal-thinking household and educated at excellent schools, Napoleon enthusiastically filled notebooks with thoughts on his hero and saw himself as Rousseau's Virtuous Man. But by the time he was thirty he announced he had forsaken the philosopher, turning his back on him when he returned from Egypt, writing in a letter that Rousseau was wrong: 'Primitive man is a dog!'

On another occasion when he visited Ermenonville, which the old Marquis de Girardin had turned into a Rousseau memorial park, complete with a Temple of Philosophy, a Swiss chalet and a picturesque dairy, Napoleon thundered: 'Until I was sixteen years old I would have fought for Rousseau against all the friends of Voltaire. Today, though, it is the opposite. La Nouvelle Héloïse! I read it when I was nine years old! That work turned my head … He is a madman, your Rousseau. It would have been better for the peace of France if that man had never existed.'

Asked why, Napoleon explained: 'It is he who prepared the French Revolution.' With Rousseau-like directness, the Marquis replied: 'I would have thought, Citoyen Consul, that it is not for you to complain about the Revolution.' Napoleon added: 'Well, the future will let us know if it would have been better that neither Rousseau nor I should have ever existed.'

Josephine, on the other hand, had been unaware of Rousseau in her childhood on Martinique. Her family's income was dependent on the labour and oppression of plantation slaves, and slavery was a practice which Rousseau denounced. Her interest in the philosopher arose much later, probably in the fashionable salons of Paris. Rousseau's thinking intensified the love of nature which Josephine had absorbed at first hand in Martinique.

After her divorce from Napoleon in 1809, when she 'had much need of distraction', Josephine, an intrepid traveller, visited Switzerland. Rousseau in his Rêveries said that Switzerland was.

... the one country in the world where you can find this mixture of wild nature and human industry. The whole of Switzerland is like one great city, whose long wide streets, longer than the Rue Saint-Antoine, are planted with forests and broken up by mountains, and whose scattered and isolated houses are only connected with one another by English landscape gardens.

Despite the difficult journey, Josephine made a pilgrimage to the tiny Ile de St-Pierre in the Lake of Bienne, with its hillocks covered with wild thyme and flowers, of which Rousseau had written: 'Of all the places where I have lived … none has made me so truly happy or left me such tender regrets …' Here he had spent six weeks with his dog Sultan seeking solace amongst the local flora. He again saw the virtues of returning to nature in its primal form even though it was here that he formed his ideas for the Project for the Constitution of Corsica.

During her visit Josephine even sat for a couple of hours in Rousseau's old lodging. After being served lunch in his room she watched a performance of local girls dancing in their traditional costume, which she had requested after reading Rousseau's description of their performances. She went on to Berne, where she stayed for two weeks at the invitation of the city council. During this visit she purchased a small estate at Prégny-la-Tour, on the shores of Lake Geneva, near Rousseau's birthplace. She also commissioned some rural scenes by the Swiss painter Delavine to take back to France.

One hundred and fifty years after Josephine's pilgrimage, that champion of the arts and philosophy, the late Kenneth Clark, who visited the island in the 1960s, included it in his television series Civilisation. It was here on that little island that Rousseau, according to Clark, had an experience so intense.

… that one can almost say it caused a revolution in human feeling. In listening to the flux and reflux of the waves, he tells us, he became completely at one with nature, lost all consciousness of an independent self, all painful memories of the past or anxieties about the future, everything except the sense of being. 'I realised', he said, 'that our existence is nothing but a succession of moments perceived through the senses.' I feel therefore I am.

… Whatever his defects as a human being, and they were clearly apparent to all those who tried to befriend him, Rousseau was a genius: one of the most original minds of any age and a writer of incomparable prose. His solitary and suspicious character had this advantage: it made him an outsider—he didn't care what he said.

U nlike Josephine, few members of the families of heads of state in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century had spent their early years on a tropical island or were accustomed to exotic flora. Josephine's childhood and adolescence were marked by a closeness to nature and a deep love for her environment. Her mother so loved Martinique that when Josephine became Empress of France she refused to leave the island where she also had been born. Josephine's attachment to this island in the then French West Indies endowed her with a deep respect and curiosity for plants and animals—as well as a passion for the place—which never left her.

In later, rootless years, Josephine would wistfully recall this home in the tropics as a place of security. Eventually she became famed for a series of glasshouses in France where she surrounded herself with exotic evergreen plants like those of her sunny past.

The lush tropical vegetation of Martinique was the only plant life that Josephine knew for the first sixteen years of her life. Dominating the landscape were the volcanic mountains covered in thick rainforest and jungle—and the active volcano itself. The name Martinique is thought to be a corruption of the local Indian madiana, 'island of flowers'. From childhood days spent exploring the fringes of this romantic landscape rich in waterfalls, screeching parrots, tree orchids and deadly snakes came Josephine's fascination with wild places and untamed nature. Her interest in plants—together with their names and properties—began with the Negro and half-caste women (known as mulattos) on her mother's estate—a plantation of cotton, tobacco, coffee and sugar—at Trois-Ilets, spread along the flat coastal strip between the hills and the sea. At 5.30 each morning a bell rang to summon the twenty to thirty slaves to a long hard day's labour. The ratio of slaves to white people on the island was about ten to one.

Josephine's youth might have been rich in plants but it was not a very grand life. The eldest daughter of an impoverished family, Marie Joseph Rose Tascher de la Pagerie was born in a three-year lull between war with Britain and a devastating cyclone. Five months before her birth in 1763 France had regained the island from the British. In 1766 the cyclone flattened the estate, including the large family home with its cool wide verandahs,

high ceilings and lovely courtyard. The catastrophe, which laid waste the whole island, was said to be the most disastrous that ever befell the Antilles, and Josephine's family never recovered from the loss.

The family found shelter in the old stone sugar refinery, the only structure that remained standing on the family property. Instead of rebuilding the family home, her father converted part of the refinery into a habitable dwelling. Built as part of the plantation headquarters, it was close to the slave quarters, the noisy sheds, the mill, the infirmary, the lock-up and the lean-to shacks where the slaves made their rum and cooked their cassava. This closer than usual proximity to day to day slave life meant that Josephine had more contact with Negro songs, stories and knowledge about plants than she would have had if the grand house surrounded by its gracious lawns had still been standing. One old mulatto woman predicted that one day Josephine would be 'more than a queen'. Marion, the Negro slave who bought her up, told her she was beautiful and made her look at her reflection in a stream which ran behind a shrubbery. They called her Yeyette.

Josephine's education at a convent in Fort Royal finished when she was fourteen. She was taught only the basics of reading, writing, singing, dancing and embroidery. A certain poise made up for her lack of schooling—she was noted for her grace and her elegant bearing, emphasised by the clothes in vogue in the islands. The great heat and humid climate of the tropics had produced a fashion for loose dresses made of muslins and cottons, of flowing gowns and simple hairstyles. (After the Revolution, this style was adapted to supplant the ornate costumes with hooped petticoats and corseted waists made fashionable by the court of Versailles.)

An officer in a French regiment on duty in Martinique, Count Montgaillard, later described the impact of Josephine in his memoirs.

She possessed in great measure the power to charm and the visual advantages that draw compliments …Without being beautiful, without even being what one might describe as pretty, Mlle de la Pagerie was remarkable for a certain fascination and a disarming expression … Her figure was that of a nymph; her entire person bore the mark of the vivacity, the freedom, the abandon that only Creole women know how to combine in their movements, their manners, their tone of voice, even their silences.

The term 'Creole' then identified a European born on the islands of the French West Indies.

Josephine accompanied her father to Paris at the age of sixteen to live with a childless aunt. The aunt, in order to cement the bonds between her family and that of her long-standing lover, the ageing and rich Marquis de Beauharnais, arranged a marriage between his son Alexandre, and her pretty and beguiling niece.

Although newly ennobled, the Beauharnais family, described as 'a good bourgeois one from Orleans', only moved on the outer fringes of aristocratic circles, so Josephine was never presented at court to Marie Antoinette after her wedding; nor did she ever meet her. The closest she got to the royal family was as a follower one day of the King's hunt. In her memoirs the Marquise de La Tour du Pin said that even if Josephine had been presented at court, 'she would have belonged to that class of lady who, after their first presentation, returned to Court only on New Year's Day'.

The title of Marquis which Alexandre's father used was of very recent origin, having been bestowed on him during his term as governor of Martinique. Josephine's own family had more claim to nobility than the Beauharnais. Her father had served at court for five years from 1752 as a page in the household of the Dauphine, mother of Louis XVI.

The wedding took place on 13 December 1779 at Noisy-le-Grand. It was a difficult time in France with the national debt escalating with the country's involvement in the American War of Independence. Louis XVI had little sympathy with the revolt against the lawful king of the American colonies, but he had entered the war to avenge French defeat in the Seven Years' War. Although France did better than in any recent war against England, later many of the officers—including Alexandre de Beauharnais and Gilbert de la Fayette—came home from America wishing to spread revolutionary ideas on French soil, and overthrow yet another king.

The couple settled in Paris in a house borrowed from a Beauharnais relative. Alexandre has been described by the Marquise de la Tour du Pin as a 'handsomely built man and in those days, when dancing was considered an art, he was thought—and with some reason—to be the finest dancer in Paris'. But this good-looking nineteen-year-old, an accomplished and gifted captain in the infantry, complained that Josephine's schooling in Martinique had been so inadequate that she was too ignorant to attend fashionable salons with him. He left her at home with stacks of books on history and philosophy while he enjoyed the social scene, and wrote to his former tutor.

At the sight of Mlle de la Pagerie I felt I could live happily with her; I at once devised a plan to reform her education and zealously to make good the omissions of those first fifteen years of her life that had been so neglected…Instead of spending a large part of my time at home with someone who has nothing to say to me, I frequently go out, more than I had planned to do, and have taken up some of my former life as a bachelor.

Then Alexandre made a complaint that was echoed by Napoleon twenty years later: '… she wants me to devote myself to her exclusively; she wants to know what I do, what I write …'

Josephine began an education from a random selection of books which would stand her in good stead for the rest of her life. Two children were born, her son Eugene in September 1781 and her daughter Hortense in April 1783. The couple parted before the birth of Hortense. The aunt married her lover, but the marriage between Josephine and Alexandre ended in what was then an unusual step, a legal separation. Wounded by her husband's neglect and his romantic affairs—or perhaps by a romantic affair of her own—Josephine suddenly went home to Martinique with Hortense in the summer of 1788, leaving Eugene in the care of his father.

The sparks of gunfire from the Revolution inexorably spread to the island, and a revolt of the slaves erupted in the summer of 1790. Josephine managed to find passage to France on a frigate through her friendship with a ship's officer. Hortense later described how a cannonball fell quite close to them on a meadow on their way to the port in Martinique.

The following day the rebels, who had by now conquered the city ordered the French vessels to turn back … We promptly set sail, leaving the coast behind. Cannon shots were fired; fortunately, fate spared us and none of them hit us. So there we were, suddenly on board ship, having bid no one farewell, and on our way to France, without ever having intended to do so.

They arrived at Toulon in 1790, in the second year of the French Revolution. Eugene was then nine, Hortense seven. Josephine's erstwhile husband, Alexandre, at the time of the King's flight to Varennes, was President of the Assembly and had standing among the Republicans. Although separated, Josephine enjoyed a new social status through her husband and started attending a few salons in Paris.

Alexandre also served as Colonel with the Army of the North and commanded the Army of the Rhine. During a long stay on his estate he was arrested and then imprisoned under The Terror in 1794. The warrant for his arrest was signed by, amongst others, the painter Jacques Louis David. Alexandre's brother's wife was also arrested.

Josephine and her children found refuge in a small house at Croissy on the Seine with her friend Désirée Hosten. Everyday she and Hortense could see across the Seine through breaks in the trees to the slate rooftops of her future home, the chateau Malmaison, surrounded by the gentle lines of its English garden. During their two years at Croissy Eugene, to satisfy the Revolution's emphasis on crafts and trades following the teachings of Rousseau, was apprenticed to a carpenter.

Josephine risked her life by writing letters pleading for the release of both Alexandre and her sister-in-law, realising that such correspondence might draw attention to herself — which indeed it did. One of her letters was written to the Committee of General Security, which had an office in Marie Antoinette's former bedroom at the Tuileries, which in just six years would become Josephine's own bedroom: 'I am an American and he is the only member of that family I know; had I been permitted to see you, I would have dispelled your doubts. My house is a Republican one; before the Revolution my children were no different from the sans-culottes.'

This act of bravery led to Josephine's arrest in April by three red-bonneted functionaries. She found herself under the same roof as her former husband in one of the most sinister prisons of the French Revolution—the old convent of the Carmelites on the Rue Vaugirard with its damp and blood-stained walls. Amongst the women either in her cell or nearby were two duchesses and the future Madame Tussaud, who had been a member of the household of the King's sister in Versailles.

It was crowded and horrible—seven hundred men and women holed up with open latrines in corridors crawling with rats, mice and other vermin. When Josephine arrived Alexandre was deep into a passionate affair with Delphine de Custine 'with flaxen hair and beryl-blue eyes'. He had never been kind to Josephine and now carried on this affair under her nose. She received some comfort, though, from secret messages sent by her children. They hid notes in the collar of Fortuné, her little pug dog, who would dash between the legs of the guards to find his mistress, and return with her messages to the children hiding outside. In the six weeks between the middle of June and the end of July 1367 severed heads fell in Paris.

After Alexandre became a victim of the guillotine in July 1794, the Marquise de La Tour du Pin wrote: 'I had often danced with him myself, so that when I heard of his death on the scaffold, I was much affected. I could not imagine him elsewhere than in a quadrille … a bitter contrast.' Josephine narrowly escaped the scaffold herself. Three days after her husband's death Robespierre was overthrown, ending The Terror. Eventually the prison gates swung open to give Josephine her freedom on 6 August. The executive power of the new Republic was then vested in the Convention—a Council of Five Hundred and a Council of Anciens (or Senate)—and an Executive of five Directors which stayed in power for exactly five years. The most influential member of the Directoire was Paul Barras.

Josephine had a brief affair in prison with General Lazarre Louis Hoche which lurched along after their release. Hoping for a protector for both herself and her children, she continued seeing this brilliant soldier who enlisted Eugene on his staff as a simple orderly, when he was only thirteen. His wife's pregnancy put a sudden end to the relationship.

The Revolution abolished both royalty and official religion so France had neither an established Church nor public financial support for any sect. The Roman Catholic monopoly had ceased as had the link between Church and State. When the buildings of religious establishments had been seized and become the property of the State or dispersed, the tradition of education by priests and nuns had ended in France. The Revolution had swept away the convents where young ladies had been taught how to read, write, draw, embroider and recite the Catechism.

Somehow Josephine managed to find the fees to send both Eugene and Hortense to private schools. Eugene was enrolled at a strict establishment run by the Irish Jesuits, and Hortense boarded at the National Institution for the Education of Young Women in a splendid country house at Saint Germain-en-Laye, run by Madame Campan, a former lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette. Although the tone of the school was that of the old nobility rather than the new democracy, it was was one of the earliest schools in France to adopt some of the educational methods promoted by Rousseau. It was also one of the first for girls that taught English and Italian. Hortense was so happy there that she always returned with enthusiasm to her classes in history, painting, mathematics and etiquette—as well as Rousseau-inspired nature study.

The splendid Madame Campan would not only educate Hortense and two of Napoleon's sisters, she would become a strong link in the chain between the old court of Marie Antoinette and Josephine, becoming the main Bonaparte adviser on etiquette.

While her children were away at school, within less than a year Josephine rose from being a pathetic ex-prisoner to becoming the toast of the capital. She was the best-dressed woman in Paris and the most in demand. Being a Creole from the West Indies of old but minor nobility, and the discarded wife of a titled aristocrat, who during the Revolution had been acquainted with many of the highest in the land, Jospehine could transcend all class distinctions. As Napoleon later noted, she was a bridge linking the left and the right, between the past, present and future. She helped integrate into a new society the haughty aristocrats and monarchists of the ancien régime after they returned to France and the upstarts, writers, profiteers, intellectuals and post-Revolutionary officials of the Republic. A feeling for all people, regardless of age, colour or social status, combined with a certain magnetism, was the basis of her popularity.

Physically Josephine was of medium height; the passports established in her name give her height as 1 metre 63 centimetres; her eyes, a dark blue, were made more intense by thick, long, black eyelashes. She had light brown hair, long and silky, which went with her pale olive skin. She looked years younger than she was because of her clever use of make-up, which always included rouge.

Incredibly, Josephine found the money for her stylish clothes and managed to get invitations to the most fashionable places while food shortages, raging inflation and the whole violent legacy of the Revolution forced beggars on to the streets. In December 1794, along with the people of power and fashion of Thermidor France, Josephine went to the opening of the home of her close friend Theresa Tallien. La Chaumière was a rustic farmhouse-style retreat with a thatched roof set in the midst of a romantic mixture of poplar and lilac trees—an adaptation of an English garden in Paris. Eighteenth-century England, where Rousseau's ideas were all the rage, had seen a trend back to the origins of landscape architecture, to bring controlled wilderness into parks and gardens. This coincided with an acceptance of him as the father of romanticism and champion of the heart against the head. His followers, in France as in England, revered nature as the only moral guide. Just two months before Madame Tallien's party, and eighteen years after his death, the Convention of Paris had decreed that Rousseau's remains be removed from the little island in the lake at Ermenonville to the Pantheon, in a place of honour. The reburial had revived French interest in Rousseau and his love of nature and, most of all, in the question of the influence of nature on the soul.

The beautiful daughter of a rich Spanish banker, Madame Tallien, as well as bringing the countryside to Paris, had the most sparkling salon to which she invited people from both the old and the new regimes. Josephine followed her example, proving a sensation in post-revolutionary Paris. Her salon attracted the most brilliant society in France—including a transient lover, the all-powerful Paul Barras, one of the five new Directors of France. Rejected by Hoche, Josephine pinned her hopes for a stable future on Paul Barras. He came from aristocratic stock, was a former royal officer—and had a wife tucked away in the country, seldom seen in public. Like the other five Directors he had a suite of rooms at the Luxembourg Palace, which was then the centre of government of the new Republic. All titles had been abolished and instead of being addressed as Monsieur or Madame, everyone was now addressed as Citoyen or Citoyenne.

Josephine sometimes acted as hostess for Barras at his home in Paris, sending out invitations in her own name. Her struggle to maintain the appearance of a wealthy woman leading a glamorous life was tremendous. She liked display and being the centre of attention but she also wanted to achieve a high social status so her two children could make good marriages.

A member of a group known as Les Merveilleuses, 'the marvellous ones', Josephine popularised the latest styles of dress, which at first was daringly sheer semi-clad representations of the goddess Diana. This developed into the Empire Line with its high waists in white muslin, short puffed sleeves and high bodices which pushed up the breasts, showing bold cleavages in low necklines. The dresses and tunics were cut straight to outline physical form. Hair, too, was natural—often cut short with ribbons, jewels and flowers threaded through curls. These fashions were amongst the many reactions

against puritanical revolutionary ideas. Madame Tallien once wore a Grecian tunic of semi-transparent muslin with little underneath. A satirical cartoon by the English caricaturist, James Gillray, shows Josephine and Madame Tallien dancing naked before Barras, while a startled General Bonaparte peers at the scene through a gauze curtain. Josephine and Madame Tallien together with Madame Récamier were the queens of society in the salons of the Directoire.

Although Josephine did manage to get compensation for some of her dead ex-husband's sequestered estates, she was desperately short of money. With the island of Martinique captured again by the British, at thirty-two she needed help. Communication with her mother in the West Indies—let alone receiving income from the family sugar plantation—was difficult. From 1792 onward, Josephine had in practice survived on loans from 'our good friend Emmery', a banker. By 1795 she owed 'considerable sums' but this did not inhibit her taking a lease on number 6 Rue de Chantereine, with its small walled garden behind and a courtyard in the front. The house had been built for Julie Talma, the rich wife of the great tragic actor François Joseph Talma. Barras, Josephine's lover, had lately been supplying her with money, but she was still in debt. Moreover, he was beginning to lose interest in her.

A seldom-quoted observer of Josephine during those heady Directory days was Barras' cousin, the notorious French writer Marquis de Sade, from whose surname the word 'sadism' is derived. An aristocratic army officer of the Seven Years' War, he had been imprisoned under a lettre de cachet (a royal order of indefinite detention without trial) at Vincennes and then in the Bastille. Removed from the world for twelve and a half years, he took to writing erotic books on sexual fantasy and perversion. When the Revolution abolished lettres de cachet he was freed, and as Citoyen Sade became a living legend in Paris, where he wrote pamphlets and became a powerful orator. He often visited the Luxembourg Palace and soon had the Director's debauchery under his pen. Most interestingly, he commented on Josephine and her friend Madame Tallien: 'Madame de Beauharnais was a hundred times more avid for pleasure than Mme Tallien.'

Frances Mossiker, in his book Napoleon and Josephine, goes so far as to say: 'Sade's roman à clef entitled Zoloé et ses deux acolytes depicts the saturnalia of the Luxembourg Palace, with Madame Beauharnais represented as Zoloé and Thérèse Tallien and Madame Châteaurenaud as the two acolytes. It is by way of a curiosity that no trace of rivalry ever marred this trio's friendship.' De Sade also wrote about Josephine's spending: 'Not all the revenues of all the provinces of France could have satisfied her extravagances.' In 1801 the rigorous censors of Napoleon brought prosecution against him for his novel Justine, but it is said the real reason was official displeasure at a pamphlet which lampooned Napoleon and Josephine.

France had conquered the island of Corsica—the most mountainous in the Mediterranean—a year before his birth in 1769, so Napoleon was born a Frenchman. But the family was Italian by race and culture and Corsican by tradition. Napoleon's father, Charles Buona Parte, was a member of an old and noble family, but without the backing of much land or money generation after generation of Bonapartes had worked in Corsica as lawyers and officials.

Although they were, undoubtedy, one of the leading families of Corsica, during Napoleon's childhood the family home was shared with an uncle and cousins who occupied the top floor. Letizia, Charles and their four children—later this figure grew to eight—had just four rooms.

Over the years there were many conflicts and disputes with the cousins and aunts on the other floors. Dorothy Carrington, the historian who has lived on the island for fifty years, relates the problems Napoleon's family had in particular with one of the cousins who resided on the top floor, Maria Giustina, grand-daughter of Charles' great-great-grand-father, quarrelsome by nature.

She went to law with Carlo [Charles] when he claimed, obviously unjustly, exclusive use of the main entrance and stairs; but in January 1783 Carlo struck back … He had hung one of his best costumes out of a window to air it … Maria Giustina poured over it a pot of urine (orina) … Maria Giustina, on 17 January 1783, was condemned to pay the cost of the garment.

Napoleon's ancestors, he claimed, were: 'of Tuscan origin. In the middle ages they figure as senators of the republics of Florence, San Miniato, Bologna, Sarzana and Treviso, and as prelates attached to the court of Rome … In the fifteenth century, a younger branch of the Bonaparte family settled in Corsica'.

The spelling of the family name was irregular, but Italian: 'Those acquainted with the Italian language know that it is optional to write Buona or Bona,' explained Napoleon later. 'The members of the Bonaparte family have used both these modes of orthography indiscriminately.' Not only was the name joined together, but in 1796 Napoleon dropped the 'u' to make it easier for the French to pronounce.

In fact all the Bonapartes gallicised their names after the family was established in France—Giuseppe became Joseph, Lucciano became Lucien, Luigi became Louis and so on. Napoleon spoke Italian, only learning to speak French when he went to school at Autun and Brienne at the age of nine.

The traditional way of life on the rocky and mountainous island, with its wild sea-coasts and unscalable peaks, was that of the shepherds who moved flocks of goats and sheep around the wild scrubland of the steep hills and valleys. 'The isle is woody; the plains and hills are or may be covered with olives, mulberry, orange, lemon and other fruit trees. The sides of the mountains are clothed with chestnut trees, amidst which there are villages naturally fortified in their position,' recalled Napoleon at the end of his life. 'On the tops of the mountains are forests of pines, firs and evergreen oaks; the olive trees are as large as those of the Levant; the chestnut trees are enormous, and of the largest species; the pines and firs are not inferior to those of Russia in height and bulk; but as topmasts they will not last above three or four years, becoming dry and brittle after time.'

This description reveals Napoleon's interest in trees. Whenever he was describing Corsica it was always the mighty trees which he mentioned, not the spectacular wildflowers for which Corsica is now famous. The stately tassel hyacinth and the superb Illyrian sea lily with its lantern-like flowers are found only on the grassy slopes of Sardinia and Corsica. From late winter a tangle of aromatic wild shrubs and herbaceous plants,

including myrtle and showy rock-roses, shower the ground with pink and white petals and break into flower.

The Scottish writer and biographer of Dr Johnson, the famous James Boswell, compared the Corsicans—especially their clans, their poverty and the martial traditions in their highlands—with the Scottish Highlanders before the Jacobite uprisings. As in Scotland, the highest peaks of Corsica are perpetually covered with mist and cloud. Boswell's book Account of Corsica (1768) was written after he had visited Corsica at the suggestion of the philosopher Rousseau, whom he had met after writing to him with the words: 'Open the door to a man who dares to assure you that he deserves to enter.'

In 1762 Rousseau had stated in The Social Contract: 'There is still in Europe one country capable of legislation, and that is the island of Corsica. The valour and constancy with which this brave people have known how to recover and defend its liberty well merits that some wise man teaches them how to preserve it. I have some presentiment that one day this little island will astonish Europe.' Three years after writing these words Rousseau had received a letter from a young officer in Corsica asking him to write a constitution. He formed the ideas for this not on the island of Corsica itself but on on a smaller, colder island, the island of St-Pierre in Lake Bienne in Switzerland. Islands, he said, were well situated for the happiness of those who like to lie within narrow bounds: 'Noble people, I do not want to give you artificial and systematic laws invented by men, but to bring you back under the only laws of nature and order which command the heart and do not tyrannise the will.' But as the ideas began to take shape in Rousseau's mind Voltaire's attack on him was published. He gave up all ideas of writing a constitution and thought instead of taking refuge on the island. But he changed his mind and fled to England in 1767, accompanied by the Scottish philosopher David Hume.

Pasquale Paoli, the celebrated revolutionary leader of independent Corsica, led the Corsicans in an attempt to gain freedom from Genoa, the Italian city-state which had controlled the island on and off since the fifteenth century, forming a rebel state in the mountainous town of Corte in 1755. It was so successful that he formed a university there in 1765, where Charles Buona Parte finished his law degree. He was secretary to Paoli. The tenacious islanders put up so much resistance that the Genoese called on the French for aid against the rebels. The French prevailed. Many Corsicans, hating the new master more than the old, took arms and fled into the mountains. Communication and appalling roads—combined with 650 kilometres of tortuous coastline full of hidden strongholds—meant that a lengthy battle followed. The women too joined in, taking refuge in mountain hideouts. Napoleon later told how his mother Letizia, with young Joseph under one arm and pregnant 'with me, followed Paoli's headquarters and the army of the Corsican patriots, in the campaign of 1769, across the mountains, and resided a long time on the summit of Monte Rotondo … But her pregnancy advancing, she returned to her house at Ajaccio. I was born on 15 August, being the Feast of [the] Assumption.'

Napoleon's father, Charles Buona Parte, fervently assisted his friend Paoli in the fight against the French, but once the French were obviously there to stay and Paoli had fled to England, he compromised. Registering as a member of the minor nobility, he caught the attention of the Comte de Marbeuf, who became the French military governor in 1770.

To be seen with Marbeuf was a social triumph—and Letizia was seen often. When Marbeuf came to Ajaccio from his home in Bastia—then the capital of Corsica—he walked through the streets with Letizia on his arm. Although Marbeuf was more than twice

Letizia's age he was outwardly seductive and their friendship was so affectionate that many people assumed the pair had a long-lasting affair. His first wife never came to join him in Corsica, and they had no children. After her death, when he was seventy-one years old he married a young French aristocrat in the hope of having an heir.

In her prize-winning book Granite Island, describing the Bonapartes' little apartment, Dorothy Carrington says how she came to feel 'a very poignant quality in this stuffy family home with its rather pathetic pretensions, where an impecunious couple struggled to lead a polite life in a rough country and give their eight children a privileged start in the world.' She also said that Napoleon brawled in the neighbouring streets and was nicknamed Ribulione, 'the troublemaker'.

This friendship with Marbeuf helped the family. Charles managed to obtain various prestigious administrative positions and scholarships for his children from Louis XVI. In 1773 he was appointed Royal Counsellor and Assessor in the province and town of Ajaccio, a job which involved pleasant trips to Paris. The family lived through the fantastic contrast of seeing Charles, as the Corsican representative of nobles to Louis XVI, in full court dress, grandly going to Versailles, while at home there was a constant shortage of money.

Napoleon, with nostalgia and pride, later told General Bertrand, during his confinement on the third island of his life, St Helena, how the family managed.

It was a matter of principle with us not to spend money. We never bought anything that wasn't strictly necessary, such as clothes, furniture, etc. But we spent practically nothing on food, except, of course, such groceries as coffee, sugar and rice, which did not come from Corsica. We grew everything else. The family owned a communal mill to which all the villagers brought their flour to be milled, and they paid for this with a certain percentage of flour. We also had a communal bakehouse, the use of which was paid for in fish. The wine was from local vineyards. The milk was brought to us, and the goat's-milk cheese; even meat from the butcher was never paid for in cash. Instead we had an account with the butcher, and in exchange for our meat, we gave him the equivalent in sheep, lambs, goats, or even oxen. The main thing was not to have to part with a penny. Money was very scarce. It was a tremendous undertaking to pay cash down.

There were two olive groves in Ajaccio. One belonged to the Bonaparte family and the other to the Jesuits. Since then there are many more. It was the custom in those days for near relatives, such as uncles, aunts, first cousins or grandfathers, to come and collect their supply of olive oil at the time of the harvest. On Sundays, which was the day on which the peasants brought their goats, cheese, milk and other produce into town, there were great junketings which, in winter, lasted all the next day and the next.

Even though the family lived in the town of Ajaccio, Napoleon, the fourth child and second son of the family, led a rural childhood, much of it unsupervised, running wild exploring the countryside with his many cousins, brothers and sisters. Married at the age of fourteen, Letizia produced thirteen children, eight of whom survived infancy—apart from Napoleon and Joseph there were Lucien, Elisa, Louis, Pauline, Caroline and Jerome. Napoleon roamed the mountains with Joseph and Lucien, swam in the sea and often climbed the fort of Ajaccio where the Genoese had left behind a bronze cannon which he

liked to sit astride. When Napoleon was five years old his father purchased an adjoining rooftop which became a sixteen-metre-long terrace leading off their four-room apartment. According to the guidebook now sold at the house, now a museum: ‘A small cabin in wood was installed on the terrace to permit the young Napoleon to work.’ Often he played in the waste land around the port. Fifteen minutes away from the house, in an isolated and rugged granite rock, a fissure which resembles a cave became Napoleon’s other retreat. It still bears the name La Grotte Napoléon.

All through his early life Napoleon’s need for intense privacy—to the point of seclusion—manifested itself. Sometimes he found solitude in closed-in places like the cave, sometimes he found it by cutting himself off from those around him and reading intently. Books accompanied him wherever he travelled all his life.

After a few years at a small kindergarten-type school run by nuns, Napoleon went on to a strict Jesuit school where he learned to read and write. He boasted later that he read Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Héloïse when only nine. His pastime of rambling among the Corsican mountains—as well as family life—came to an end at the age of ten when he was sent to mainland France to be educated as a young nobleman. The Bonapartes certainly profited by the fact that the island had become French, as it enabled the children to be better educated than if they had stayed on Corsica. Thirty sons of Corsican nobles received some of the 300-odd educational scholarships and endowments at certain French schools.

Just before Christmas 1778, Charles Bonaparte sailed from Corsica, taking with him Joseph and Napoleon to enrol them at the ancient school in Autun in Burgundy, before going on business to Versailles. But in May a scholarship place was found for Napoleon at the Royal Military College at Brienne, run by the religious order of Franciscans, near Aube in the cold, windswept Champagne country of north-eastern France, 200 kilometres east of Paris. The regime was harsh and it was almost as if he were an orphan in an institution; in the five-and-a-half years he was there he had only one visit from his parents. The boys slept in cubicles and the prayers which dominated their days led to Napoleon despising the Church for the rest of his life. But he received as good an education in general science, mathematics and engineering as could then be found anywhere in Europe. During his time at Brienne, from 13 May 1779 until 30 October 1784, not once did he return to Corsica. But living in France made him more Corsican, firing in his mind a romantic picture of an island in which the ideal society visualised by Rousseau became a reality. He was training to be a French soldier, but his first loyalty was to Corsica. So deep-rooted and staunch was his attachment that he later fleetingly fought against the French in the cause of Corsican independence.

At Brienne there were never sufficient funds to let Napoleon compete with the other boys in clothing or pocket money. Grandeur and social status had to wait. Fed up with his fellow students making fun of his rough Italian accent and shabby clothes, he is said to have written to
his parents.

If you or my patrons cannot give me the means to maintain a more reputable appearance in this school, send for me to come home, and that as soon
as possible; I’m tired of looking like a beggar and

seeing my insolent fellow pupils, who have only their wealth to recommend them, mocking at my poverty.

But it seems that his years at the school were not constantly unhappy—later he was a generous patron and benefactor to his former schoolfriends and teachers.

napoleon's first garden

Within two years at school he had created his first garden—'a retreat worthy of a hermit'—inspired by Rousseau, the man who was still his hero. Like his solitary grotto in Corsica it was a place where Napoleon could read, meditate and commune with nature. The hard physical work of creating the garden began when students were encouraged to take up outdoor activities. Although the project started off as a team effort with two of his classmates, Napoleon soon, as he would again later in life, seized sole control, persuading his two partners to give their shares over entirely. Once established on his own, Napoleon allowed nobody else to enter, enclosing the garden with what has been called in different reports a hedge, a wall or a palissade which, together with a thick planting of trees, made a secluded hideaway. Napoleon spent what little money he had on this garden not because it was a garden, but because it was a retreat, a secret place. He once defended it with a pickaxe when some of the boys broke through the wall to extinguish a fire in the adjoining area. The trees he planted were important to him. In one of his school essays, inspired by a poem called 'Les Jardins', he wrote of a man from the island of Tahiti—a place long romanticised in France—who went into transports of joy when he saw a tree of his native land. Years later in Elba, the ever-practical Napoleon ordered trees to be planted along the roads: 'We should only plant mulberries … which could be a good product for the nutrition of silkworms.'

In his garden bower, Napoleon eagerly devoured any books he could find, especially works by Rousseau—from his political theories and The Social Contract to thoughts on nature and the 'noble savage'. His intellectual and forward-thinking childhood and youth were in stark contrast to the sheltered and protected non-intellectual upbringing of his future wife.

Although Napoleon's name is synonymous with some of the most famous land battles in history, he had, when younger, aspired to a future in the navy. His yearning to go to sea was explored by Vincent Cronin in his best-selling biography: 'When he was twelve, Napoleon, who had grown up beside the sea, decided he wanted to be a sailor. A taste for mathematics often goes with a liking for sea and ships … Along with other cadets bent on joining the navy, he even slept in a hammock.'

He went on to say that in 1785 Napoleon had thought of entering the English naval college at Portsmouth, and pointed out that in La Nouvelle Héloïse Saint-Preux sails with Anson's squadron to the Pacific. 'With help from a master, Napoleon managed to write a letter to the Admiralty, asking for a place in the English naval college. He showed it to an English boy in the school, a baronet's son named Lawley, who was later to become Lord Wenlock.'

'I remained six years at that school [Brienne],' said Napoleon. 'In 1783, Field-Marshal the Chevalier Kergariou, inspector of the military schools, selected me to pass the following year to the military school at Paris, to which three of the best scholars, chosen by the inspector, were annually sent from each of the twelve provincial schools. I remained only eight months at Paris.'

When Napoleon changed his small austere cell-like room at Brienne for elegant quarters in the magnificent École Militaire he at last had a taste of living in grandeur. Designed to outshine Les Invalides, the school, a mixture of Corinthian columns with a squared, flattened dome, had been Madame de Pompadour's gift to Paris. It opened onto the vast parade ground of the Champ de Mars where, the year before Napoleon arrived, one of the first hot air balloons had been released into the sky.

Paris—with its newly invented street lamps which were lowered on ropes at dusk to be lit and then raised to illuminate the mediaeval streets—was a place of diversion for most of the gentlemen cadets, but Napoleon spent most of his free time studying. Apart from fencing and reading his diversions were few. From a teacher's point of view Napoleon was not an ideal student. He concentrated on mathematics, geography and history, in which he excelled, but furtively sneaking books to read into the German class which irked him. His spelling was often phonetic and his writing sometimes difficult to read.

On St Helena Napoleon later told Las Cases: 'We were magnificently fed and served, treated in every way like officers possessed of great wealth, certainly greater than that of most of our families, and far above what many of us would enjoy later on.'

One cadet, the young nobleman Le Picard de Phélippeaux, with whom Napoleon was supposed to have exchanged kicks of irritation under the table, twelve years later would cause Napoleon a humiliating defeat on a foreign battlefield. Phélippeaux, like many of their fellow cadets, emigrated in the face of the Revolution. He quickly joined the English army, and was sent to the Mediterranean, where he commanded Sidney Smith's guns and halted Napoleon's march from Egypt to Constantinople.

the voyage of la perouse
to australia

Napoleon's longing for independence, to go to sea and to see the world, meant that at the age of fifteen he was one of two students at the exclusive Ecole Militaire in Paris who applied to accompany Jean François Galaup de la Pérouse on his expedition to the South Seas. No other expedition had so excited the general imagination of the country. France had already established her presence in the South Seas, especially with the voyages of Louis Antoine de Bougainville between 1766 and 1769. Now La Pérouse was to explore the northern coasts of America and Russia, the romantic isle of Tahiti, and then sail on to the Cape York Peninsula of Australia and begin an anticlockwise circumnavigation of the continent, ending at Tasmania, before finally sailing to New Zealand. The expedition would take twenty months and rival the voyages of Captain Cook, whose shadow still loomed large in the Pacific. Books of Cook's three voyages had been widely read in France. Since Cook's death in Hawaii six years earlier there had been no voyages of discovery to equal his, but now much faith was invested in La Pérouse to do so. His renown came from a brilliant raid on the British posts in Hudson Bay in 1782.

La Pérouse's ships formed just one of three European expeditions which would head into the Pacific in the next few years. The other two were Captain Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet of six transports, three storeships and two small warships which were to carry 586 male and 192 female convicts plus their keepers to Botany Bay, and Captain Bligh on the Bounty, en route to Tahiti to collect breadfruit to be delivered to the plantations of the

British West Indies, and to be grown as food for slaves. Of the three expeditions by far the best equipped, the most scientifically fitted out, was that of La Pérouse.

Louis XVI, a keen geographer himself, took an intelligent interest in all preparations for the voyage, even in those for bringing back plants, shells, minerals and animals. Reports were to be made on all European commerce and possessions, 'which may be interesting … in a military point of view'; likely places for French settlement were to be noted. Few expeditions in the eighteenth century had left Europe with better ships, stores, instruments, seamen or scientists. The total cost was a million livres, an immense sum for then-shaky French finances.

Scientists were consulted about every detail of the expedition and a scientific staff of thirteen, including three naturalists, joined the ships. Scientific equipment included a million pins for mounting specimens as well as tubs in which to bring back living ones. Science was the rage in France and Georges Buffon, the famed director of the Jardin du Roi, hoped for an unrivalled collection of new plant species from the voyage. In the century since the Académie des Sciences had held its inaugural meeting in Paris, scientific enthusiasm had promoted everything from technology to natural history.

The two ships of the expedition, refitted and renamed the Boussole and the Astrolabe, carried vast supplies which included a hundred bushels of seeds selected by the King's gardener and fifty-nine trees and shrubs to be planted in countries visited. Gifts included bars of iron, glass buttons, mirrors and medals with the King's likeness.

napoleon applies to
join the expedition

The crew of 220 was hand-picked. Napoleon was among the many who unsuccessfully applied. One volunteer who was chosen, Roux d'Arbaud, a fellow student of Napoleon's at the École Militaire, was said to be 'a prodigy when it comes to astronomy'. Other recruits from the school were two of the tutors, Gaspard Monge's brother Louis, who left the expedition in Tenerife, and Joseph Dagelet.

Alexandre Jean des Mazis, one of Napoleon's friends at the school, wrote about Napoleon's application. Des Mazis and Napoleon prepared for their examination in 1784 together, and after passing they chose to be stationed together in the same regiment, that of La Fère at Valence. So des Mazis certainly knew what he was writing about when he said.

Buonaparte was in the mathematics class … Messrs Dagelet and Monge, two men of distinction, were our teachers … the question arose of the voyage of M. de la Pérouse. Messrs Dagelet and Monge sought and were granted the favour of joining as astronomers … Buonaparte would have liked this opportunity of displaying his energy in such a fine enterprise, but Darbaud was the only one selected; they could not accept a greater number of pupils, and so Darbaud sailed with Messrs Dagelet and Monge …

More information is likely to become available when the relevant B4 files in the French National Archives which relate to the La Pérouse expedition have been closely studied. Frank McLynn in his book Napoleon mentions Napoleon's ambition of sailing with La Pérouse, and adds: 'His name is included in the list of unsuccessful candidates in the national archives in Paris.'

Whether Napoleon applied because he was particularly interested in Australia or Tahiti, or whether it was too good an opportunity for a cadet wanting to make a career in the navy to miss, is not known. While the Pacific had captured the imagination of France, Napoleon would not have lost sight of the scientific ideas behind the expedition. But the Pacific held a fascination for many Europeans. Bougainville's romantic vision of Tahiti, Nouvelle Cythère, had been enhanced by his book and by the Tahitian called Ahu-toru who returned to Paris with him in 1769. Although Rousseau popularised the idea of 'natural man', uncorrupted by civilisation, it was John Dryden, the English poet, who had first used the phrase 'noble savage' in his poem 'The Conquest of Granada' over a century earlier.

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were at Brest to see La Pérouse and his ships depart on 1 August 1785. Soon they rounded Cape Horn to criss-cross the Pacific on their voyage of discovery, little realising that their main event would be the encounter with the English in Botany Bay.

napoleon's career
in the army

After his rejection for the expedition, Napoleon's career took a decided turn away from the sea and his career in the army was confirmed. In August 1785 'Cadet de Buonaparte' was passed in a final examination by Pierre Simon Laplace, the mathematician, astronomer and physicist who formulated a fundamental differential equation in physics which bears his name. Later he headed the Académe des Sciences. Laplace had a long-lasting influence on Napoleon, who always surrounded himself with men of science and art. Over the years Napoleon supported hundreds of scientists to make fresh observations and new discoveries, just as he supported hundreds of painters, sculptors and architects. It was this passion for science, art and literature which would soon be an influence in France on the group who documented the Australian flora.

At the end of October, after graduation, Napoleon took stage and water coaches to Valence via Lyons and arrived on 3 November 1788. After just two months of basic training—drilling first as a private, then as a corporal and finally as a sergeant—he was promoted and became fourth in importance in one of the four bombardier companies. The duties of looking after his men were not arduous and he willingly attended classes in mathematics, fortification, chemistry and physics.

Napoleon modestly attributed his early promotion to the shortage of officers, but it was also due to his great skill in applying the principles of mathematics, especially to the use of projectiles and ballistics. Although it is often said that Napoleon's rapid rise to power in the French Army illustrates the claim of the revolutionaries that they had swept away the stiff formality of the Royal Army, after the Revolution the Republican Army had a terrible shortage of good officers. Until the Revolution most officers had been recruited from the aristocracy or landed gentry. Not only had hundreds fled, there was no longer a pool from which to recruit them. The artillery suffered less than the cavalry, but by 1793 more than half its captains had been promoted from the ranks. The Revolution facilitated the meteoric rise of obscure army corporals in the new Republican Army—as well as men like Napoleon who had qualified on a king's scholarship.

books and pens

Most of Napoleon's wages went home to Corsica to help his mother or to pay the landlady for his small room above the Café Cercle, but he seems to have had enough left over to indulge in a passion which stayed with him all his life: buying books. As well as reading he took copious notes. Paper, ink, quills and books were his luxuries.

Napoleon was greatly stimulated by Rousseau's Confessions, then considered the most exciting book of its day. It had been published five years earlier and was remarkable for a frankness then unsurpassed. Wanting to find out about Rousseau's personal life, Napoleon wrote to a bookseller in Geneva to obtain the memoirs written by Madame de Warens, Rousseau's former benefactress and mistress. Napoleon's aspirations as a writer meant that he left numerous essays, compositions and carefully filled notebooks. His Lament of a Young Patriot Absent from his Country, a short story written in May 1785, is much influenced by Rousseau. In it a romantic young rebel professes to envy the natural life of the mountaineer who spends his days in public affairs and his nights in the tender arms of his dear wife. In Valence Napoleon wrote his *Defence of Rousseau* and started what he hoped would be a complete work on Corsica.

J.M. Thompson, who edited Napoleon's letters and examined his extensive essays, praised his inquisitive and acquisitive mind.

History, both for its administrative and financial side, and for its romantic possibilities, was Bonaparte's favourite reading … What chiefly interested him here seems to have been the British possessions in various parts of the world: he makes notes on our colonial defences, and on the revenues of Bengal. The principal manuscript breaks off, prophetically enough, with the words Sainte-Hélène, petite île…

As well as being as an aspiring writer, Napoleon was bloodying his sword. In Lyons he suppressed a mob of strikers who were rebelling for better wages in the weaving factories. Three ringleaders were hanged. Napoleon, deciding to take his first leave—to which he could add a month's travelling time—started his much-awaited journey by land and sea to Corsica, visiting en route his brother Lucien who was then in Aix-en-Provence training to be a priest. At last, on 15 September 1786, Napoleon was 'on his native soil seven years and nine months after departure, at the age of seventeen years and one month'. Despite his French education Napoleon felt very Corsican, very nationalistic.

He carried two suitcases, the smaller full of clothes, the larger full of books, including French translations of the classics—Plutarch, Plato, Cicero, Cornelius Nepos, Livy, Tacitus—plus Montaigne, Montesquieu, Raynal and the Scottish poem Ossian. All his money had been spent on books and he had to borrow his fare home to Corsica.

the family mulberry trees

One of the first tasks Napoleon set himself on his return was to get his family compensation for their mulberry tree nursery. The mulberry from Asia, used as the larval foodplant in silkworm culture around the Mediterranean, had been introduced centuries ago by the Greeks and Romans. For unknown—but as it turns out well-founded—reasons it was not grown in Corsica. Napoleon's father, Charles, had managed to get the authorities to put up money to drain an area of swampy marsh known as the Salines. Charles had turned the swamp into a massive nursery for mulberries after the government had launched a scheme promoting the silk industry in Corsica. With subsidies for nursery plantations for mulberries, draining procedures—aided by government grants—had been

set in place years ago while Napoleon was at Brienne. The project dominated the Bonapartes' lives in many ways. A contract with the government in 1782 had assured Charles of sales for 100 000 sapling mulberries over fifteen years. But the first planting was a disaster—not enough of the seeds from Italy and France had germinated. Although two years later around 10 000 tiny mulberry trees were sprouting through the earth, the whole enterprise failed miserably.

Napoleon also managed to procure scholarships for Lucien and for Louis. He became the virtual head of the family. During his stay in Corsica, which lasted almost exactly a year (15 September 1786 to 12 September 1787), he showed himself as Francophobe as the rest of his family. Although in French uniform with its blue and red coat, and charged with enlisting recruits for the French Army, he involved himself in local politics. Napoleon yearned to liberate Corsica from the very French Army which employed him. So when he returned to duty in France it was not for long—his heart lay in Corsica. His attachment to that island was so strong that until he was twenty-four he frequently jeopardised his position with the French Army—in seven-and-a-half-years of service he spent just thirty months with his corps.

During five lengthy sojourns on Corsica between 1786 and 1793, Napoleon became increasingly involved in political agitation. Under the influence of his father's old friend Paoli, on his second visit he showed himself quite vehemently anti-French. Paoli still stood for the independence of Corsica, regarding the acquisition of the island by France as treachery, and the very idea of a Republic as a disaster. In later years the situation would change and Napoleon would stand for France against Paoli. There must have been many Corsicans then who regretted that Napoleon had not realised his ambition to join La Pérouse's Pacific expedition.

G o to Botany Bay to see what the English are doing with their new colony, were the instructions sent by courier from Paris to La Pérouse at Kamchatka, an outpost of the Russian Empire. His itinerary was changed—he must rush to Botany Bay and await the arrival of the large convict fleet.

So on 24 January 1788 the Boussole and the Astrolabe, flying the royal fleur-de-lis of France, came within sight of the eleven vessels anchored in Botany Bay, much to the surprise of the English. La Pérouse saw the English depart almost immediately for the superior harbour of Port Jackson, twenty-four kilometres to the north, to make a permanent settlement. British officers paid friendly visits to the French. Relations were cordial if distant, but not so satisfactory with the Aborigines. The French told an English officer that they had to put up a stockade around their tents and, alas, were forced 'to fire on the Natives at Botany Bay to keep them quiet'.

After six weeks in Botany Bay, having completed making a longboat to replace the two wrecked against reefs in the Sandwich Islands, on 10 March La Pérouse sailed away. From that moment on they were never seen again by a European. Fifteen months later, a box containing La Pérouse's journals and dispatches, which he had entrusted to departing convict ships at Botany Bay to send to France, arrived in Paris, just a few weeks before the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. Letters said that he would 'go to the Friendly Islands', and then to the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, and finally to that oasis for

the French in the Indian Ocean, Ile de France (Mauritius). He also dispatched journals, drawings, paintings and maps about his voyage around the Pacific, including the gruesome story of how twelve of his men were killed in Samoa—but there was no report on the flora of Botany Bay from the botanist La Martinière or the gardener-botanist Collignon. La Pérouse had planned to write up the stay in Botany Bay while at sea.

Months expanded into a year, and then two years. Not a word was heard of the two French ships after they departed from Botany Bay. Most of the eighteenth-century French and English voyages of exploration to the Pacific so far had been successful, especially those of Bougainville, Byron, Wallis and Cook. But it now seemed that the Pacific had swallowed up the best equipped, the greatest scientific ships and crew that had ever left France. Everyone, especially the King, wanted to know their fate.

But for an administrative decision in Paris, Napoleon could easily have disappeared with La Pérouse and his crew. Or would he have saved the expedition? It is difficult to believe that this energetic and outspoken young man who, wherever he was, sent out ripples of action, would not have changed the outcome. Napoleon surely would have kept a beacon fire burning to attract the attention of any passing ship on the island on which they were abandoned—as William Dampier had done on Ascension Island after being shipwrecked there in 1701 on the way back from Australia.

departure of d’entrecasteaux to
search for la perouse

The Société d’Histoire Naturelle petitioned the Assemblée National to send a search party which would, as well as finding the missing hero, continue his scientific research in the Pacific. The National Assembly voted a million francs to send two ships, the Recherche and the Espérance, under the overall command of Admiral Antoine Raymond Joseph Bruni D’Entrecasteaux. On board were two men who would later work for Napoleon and Josephine, the chief gardener Felix Delahaye, and botanist Jacques Julien Houtou de la Billardière.

The career of Delahaye—born in 1767 the son of a labourer in Normandy—shows how the Revolution opened up careers to talent. When he was chosen as gardener on this expedition his assignment was to effect plant exchange on a spectacular scale—to introduce European plants to the islands they visited, and to bring back seeds, shoots and young plants for introduction into France or her colonies. Many of these would end up in the garden of his future employer.

Labillardière, although a committed Republican who had shortened his grand name, came from a noble Normandy family. One member of another branch of the family, Madame de Flahaut Comtesse de la Billardèrie, was the mistress of the French politician Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, by whom she had a son. This son later became aide-de-camp to Napoleon and the morganatic husband of Josephine’s daughter, Hortense. Labillardière’s parents had a large estate in Normandy where he was born in 1755. He studied Latin, Greek and philosophy at the Jesuit college at Alençon and then studied medicine at Montpellier, a city with a fine university tradition where the first Faculty of Medicine in Europe had been founded in 1141 and where the Jardin du Roi had been established in 1640. Here Labillardière came under the influence of Antoine Gouan, the professor of botany who earlier had met the great Linnaeus.

Deciding to devote his life to botany and to discover and classify plants all over the world, Labillardière set off on intrepid collecting journeys in the Swiss and French Alps and in 1782 went to England for two years. Here, like most visiting botanists in London, he visited Kew, and Joseph Banks' herbarium at Soho Square, and even met Banks himself, an association that would later prove invaluable. When he was studying the dried plants in Banks' herbarium he had no idea that he would soon be sailing across the world and seeing living examples of those plants.

In London he also met Banks' protegé James Edward Smith, who had just founded the Linnean Society. Both Banks and Labillardière were elected Fellows. When Labillardière's first book, Icones plantarum Syriae rariores, was published as a result of his collecting trip to Syria and Lebanon, he immediately sent a copy to the Linnean Society in London.

Labillardière 'seized with avidity' the opportunity to join the Pacific expedition. Two letters held in the National Library of Australia archives show his excitement about the voyage. On 26 June 1791 he wrote: 'You know that the Assemblée National will send two vessels in search of M. de la Pérouse. There will be two naturalists. I have already been designated for Botany. I will soon receive my commission. We will depart in August. We will go to the South Seas, and since we will call in at many islands, I intend to gather an immense collection.'

Six weeks later another letter shows that he was still gathering his kit of 30 000 small pins for mounting specimens, 15 litres of sulphuric acid, 11 000 sheets of drying paper and a vast library: 'I am almost to depart for Brest. I should really have gone already, but the sort of voyage that we are going to undertake demands such a lot of preparations that it is difficult to be ready on time.'

When the ships sailed from Brest on 29 September 1791, D'Entrecasteaux at the helm of the Recherche and Jean Michel Huon de Kermadec at the helm of the Espérance, the confusion and anxiety in France spread to the ships. Although all titles had been abolished, as they had on land, there were distinct divisions between the two captains and the officers, who were Royalists, and the crew and most of the scientific staff, including Labillardière, Ventenat the naturalist-chaplain, and Claude Gaspard Riche, who were Republicans. As ships carrying news could take over six months to arrive even at Mauritius, let alone Botany Bay, those on board lived in two time periods—that of the voyage, and that of the historical past of Europe. A microcosm of the aftermath of the Revolution was acted out on the ships. When the ships left France, it was just two months after the King's flight from Varennes. On board, the tensions over the next two years fused into a crisis which ended in imprisonments and deaths in Batavia.

The voyage from France to the Cape of Good Hope took a lengthy three months. In Table Bay, a rumour was heard that Captain John Hunter (later Governor of New South Wales) had seen canoes in the Admiralty Islands—a group of forty islands north-east of New Guinea—manned by natives wearing French uniforms. So a route was charted there via the Moluccas (Maluka). Slow progress, and rotting and maggot-ridden stored food, made D'Entrecasteaux change his route to one similar to that of Bligh on the Bounty, crossing the Indian Ocean on the Roaring Forties to Tasmania, then entering the Pacific via the Tasman Sea. There were plagues of rats, mice, cockroaches and maggots on board, and Labillardière wrote about the problems of keeping both plants and food free from attack: 'Maggots from the biscuits spread through our food, jumping and wriggling like

those ordinarily found in cheese.' Most ships had problems with vermin, which prospered in the damp, filthy atmosphere of the hold. The old-style ballast of sand and shingle, not banished until 1820, was impossible to keep clean. It was not only a breeding ground for rats but a constant source of smells and poisonous gases and of many of the bowel and stomach disorders affecting the crews. (Sometimes on ships the rats were a source of fresh meat—on his return from Acre after defeating Napoleon, Captain Sidney Smith enjoyed meals of stewed rats from choice.) It was down here in these frightful damp and insanitary conditions that the ship's provisions and water supplies were kept. The odours were made worse by pigs and fowls on board the ships. Labillardière wrote: 'The Commodore had allowed the people to bring pigs and fowls on board, for their private use; and all parts of the ship were lumbered with them, but especially between decks; and they were the more troublesome, as the disagreeable odour which they diffused, was considerably increased by the heat of the climate …' It is interesting that the crew managed to tend the plants in spite of all their troubles.

It must have been a relief to reach land, especially the dramatically beautiful bay where Hobart now stands. One bay was named after the ship Recherche, and a channel and an island after the captain himself. They then sailed around to Adventure Bay. Little could Labillardière and Delahaye have realised that many of the plants they were collecting would soon be growing in the gardens of the future Empress Josephine—it would have been impossible to believe in those heady Republican days that in just over a decade France would have an Empress! Nor would they have realised that a few of the same plants would later be grown in England in the garden of the great scientist Charles Darwin, who would follow in their footsteps on the voyage of the Beagle in 1836.

While plant exploring Labillardière added an entry in his journal about making a 'hut of branches, which we had lopped from the trees with a pole-axe that one of our company carried with him for his defence. The hardness of the ground was meliorated with a bed of fern …' Labillardière described his awe at the sight of the magnificent vegetation.

We were filled with admiration at the sight of these ancient forests in which the sound of an axe had never been heard. The eye was astonished in contemplating the prodigious size of these trees, amongst which were some myrtles more than 25 fathoms in height, whose tufted summits were crowned with an ever verdant foliage …

I gathered several species of the Eucalyptus during this excursion, amongst others, Eucalyptus refinifera …

We likewise collected several species of Philadelphus, the Banksia integrifolia, a new species of Epacris.

Amongst the hundreds of plants he collected was the Tasmanian blue gum, Eucalyptus globulus. Others included that old favourite of seamen, sea parsley, which had never been scientifically classified before. He called it Apium prostratum, 'because of the position of the stem which creeps along the ground … We carried a large quantity on board with us'. He also collected a large number of seeds.

The French expedition left Tasmania on 28 May 1792. Soon afterwards, Captain Bligh anchored again at Adventure Bay, on his second breadfruit voyage. He planted two pomegranates, a quince tree, three fig trees, an apple tree and a few acorns, near a tree inscribed by Captain Cook in 1777 to commemorate his only visit there.

The real search for La Pérouse commenced when the southern reefs of New Caledonia were reached on 16 June —La Pérouse's letter had specified that island. Passing and stopping at island after island in the quest they, alas, found not a trace of their predecessors. At the Admiralty Islands they spoke with the natives, but found no evidence to support Hunter's tale of natives wearing French uniforms.

They stopped for provisioning at Ambon, a Dutch island trading post famous for its nutmegs, rice, coconuts and cloves, in what is now Indonesia, and were received cordially by the Dutch, despite the deterioration in French relations with the rest of Europe. In December 1792 they reached the south-west of Australia, anchoring at the entrance to King George III Sound. Rough seas prevented them entering, so they sailed on, finally anchoring at Esperance Bay, named after their ship. Although they only stayed a week, Labillardière gathered a bounty of plants including a bush bearing edible fruit, later named by Robert Brown Billardiera in his honour. Amongst those which were collected, later grown in the Empress Josephine's garden and illustrated by Redouté, was the delicate pea-flower Chorizema ilicifolia. A banksia which they collected was later renamed Dryandra nivea, and painted by Redouté. But meanwhile, on board ship they were carefully drawn by the two botanical artists of the expedition, Piron and Ely.

Banksia repens was found when Riche, the naturalist who concentrated on collecting birds, fish and minerals, disappeared. Labillardière insisted that the ships waited at least a few days while search parties were sent to look for him.

A boat was immediately dispatched, from each ship, for the mainland; and I had the pleasure to be of the party … The commodore ordered guns to be fired every half hour, to enable Riche, if still alive, to direct his steps with the more certainty towards the anchoring place … In those arid wastes, grows a fine plant which nearly resembles the iris and which naturally classes itself with the genera Dilatris and Argolafia. It forms, however, a new and very distinct genus, principally by its irregular corolla. I have delineated it under the name of Anigozanthos … The top of the stalk is covered with reddish pili, like the flowers. I had denominated this species Anigozanthos rufa.

Labillardière was describing what is commonly known as the kangaroo paw, one species of which, Anigozanthos manglesii, is now the floral emblem of Western Australia. Yet another member of the genus, Anigozanthos flavidus, would become an elegant example of Redouté's Australian flora in the world's most expensive collection of botanical paintings ever sold at auction.

Labillardière continued his story of the search for Riche.

We returned towards the landing place, lamenting the fate of our unfortunate mess-mate, and had very nearly reached the shore, in a hopeless state of mind, when we saw one of those who had been left to take care of the boat, running to meet us with the pleasing intelligence, that Riche was still alive, and that he had just arrived at the landing place, extenuated with hunger and fatigue. He had been fifty-four hours on shore, with no other provision than some bits of biscuit …

The ships headed again to Tasmania, arriving at Recherche Bay on 21 January 1793, where Labillardière found Bligh's trees doing well, despite the death of the apple tree.

Coinciding with their arrival, thousands of kilometres away in Paris Louis XVI went to his death. He is said to have asked on the steps of the guillotine, ‘At least, is there any news of Monsieur La Pérouse?’ News of events in Paris, of course, had to wait until the ship arrived at a Dutch port.

Labillardière wrote that the family affection of the local Aboriginal people suggested that here was ‘an image of the first state of society’. The French left on 27 February and headed straight for New Zealand, but did not make landfall there, hurrying on to Tongatapu. They took fruit and other fresh provisions on board, as well as 300 breadfruit saplings—which would compete with those of Bligh in the West Indies. In New Caledonia, Huon de Kermadec died of the illness with which he had been stricken on their departure from Tasmania.

As the search ships sailed north-east towards New Guinea, near Santa Cruz they sighted an island sixty-five kilometres distant which they named after the Recherche (now Vanikoro). The coincidence was tragic. Why, oh, why didn’t they go ashore—as La Pérouse had five years earlier? There could easily have been survivors living a Robinson Crusoe-type existence. For it was here that La Pérouse’s ships had met their end, smashed against the rocks during a monsoonal storm. It seems that some of the men had been killed or drowned immediately, while others built a small boat only to perish at sea. The less adventurous remained on the island, to become the first beachcombers of the Pacific, and die, according to islanders, of disease or old age. By a cruel turn of fate, the ships of the search party sailed within sixty-five kilometres of where copper plates, timber decorated with the fleur-de-lys, guns, bells and a silver sword sheath were found almost forty years later. Captain Peter Dillon’s discovery of a silver sword-hilt on a nearby island in 1826 led to the site of the shipwreck on Vanikoro.

D’Entrecasteaux ceaselessly went on searching the Solomons and the Louisiades in vain, not giving up until the crew were exhausted and scorbutic. D’Entrecasteaux died of scurvy and dysentery on the slow voyage to Surabaya, the capital of eastern Java, where the expedition ended in chaos.

Ironically, the two captains met the same fate as the man for whom they were searching. Like La Pérouse, they died in the South Seas. The ships, too, never returned to France. Nor did nearly half the crew—the death rate was horrific, with eighty-nine out of a total of 219 men dying.

After hearing that the Revolution had developed into The Terror; that the King and Queen had been guillotined and that Britain and Holland were at war against France, tensions on the ship escalated into skirmishes as the crew split into two factions—the Republicans led by Labillardière, who were keen to go directly to the already revolutionised Ile de France, and the Royalists. Labillardière’s sworn enemy, D’Auribeau, the new captain, hoisted the white banner of the Bourbons with its golden fleur-de-lys and confiscated Labillardière’s collections. The Dutch refused to let any of the French depart and, at the instigation of D’Auribeau, arrested the Republicans. Seven prisoners, including Labillardière, were forced on a horrific march for fifteen days over 320 kilometres, through jungles and over steep terrain, to Semarang, the capital of central Java, between Surabaya and Batavia, where they were kept under house arrest. The death-rate from

tropical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria was high in those days, so it was a miracle that Labillardière survived.

Five of the prisoners, including Riche and Ventenat, managed to depart from Java on ships to Mauritius, and only Labillardière and the artist Piron were there when D'Auribeau arrived and confiscated Labillardière's precious journal of observations. However, he got them back again. In August 1794 D'Auribeau became the fifth French captain in six years to go to Australia and die before reaching home.

Labillardière wrote to Sir Joseph Banks in London, in April 1794, thanking him for his advice in the preparation of the voyage but complaining of the loss of his natural history collections from the last three years. A letter was also sent to L'Héritier. But, as it turned out, the war slowed the mail down so much that it took two years for the letters to reach London and Paris.

The ships had now been sold to cover costs and bills while the outcome of all the work of the voyage, the natural history collections and the maps made by Beautemps-Beaupré, were put under the care of Chevalier de Rossel. Labillardière remained under arrest, confined in uncomfortable tropical quarters. In January 1795, after fourteen months in Batavia, Rossel and other French officers finally left on the Hooghly in a Dutch convoy, carrying the precious collections of dried flowers from Australia and the valuable maps. Six months later, after many near mishaps, the Hooghly was captured by the British as it was leaving St Helena on the homeward leg of its voyage. Britain was then still at war with both Holland and France. Knowing both the expense and the effort which had gone into the scientific side of the failed expedition, the captain of the British ship Sceptre seized Labillardière's collections, papers and documents from the Hooghly, much to the anger of the two French officers guarding them. Two weeks later, when west of the Azores, a cutter came from the Sceptre to transfer the two French officers and their baggage to yet another ship. They were given no explanation for their transfer. The Hooghly, which had started leaking badly, was abandoned and set on fire.

Finally, after this bizarre journey from the other side of the world, the collections were unloaded in England in November 1795. Rossel was taken prisoner and not released until the Treaty of Amiens seven years later. Labillardière's letter to Banks from Java still had not arrived. The French claimant Louis XVIII, in exile in England, expressed a desire that the collections should be given to Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, who like her former mother-in-law Princess Augusta had a genuine enthusiasm for botany. Unlike her husband George III, known as Farmer George, who had little interest in gardens and plants, Queen Charlotte loved flowers. With her daughters she had botanical lessons from James Edward Smith and even lessons in flower painting from Franz Bauer, the brother of Ferdinand who later travelled to Australia. In March the thirty-six trunks were taken from the Customs House to the London residence of the royal French ambassador, the Duc d'Harcourt, for safekeeping. The war with France was not going well for England. The French Revolution had plunged Europe into the most far-reaching crisis ever known, and England was both stretched by the war and brimming with homeless émigrés, mostly aristocratic or from the church. For years there were around 25 000 French émigrés in England, mostly around London but also scattered over a wide area from the Channel Islands to the Scottish borders. As well as the huge cost of the war large sums were voted annually by the British Government for the 'relief of the suffering French clergy and laity'.

There were fears of an epidemic of bloody violence sweeping like a tornado across Europe into England, changing the centuries-old aristocratic structure of society. The aspiring middle classes—as well as the upper classes—saw their way of life threatened by the Revolution. It was not just invasion by the French that concerned them; they feared also the rising tide of working class agitation, given confidence by what was happening in France. Confiscating the only trophy from the failed French expedition was just one of innumerable non-military incidents designed to irritate and undermine the French Republicans, who themselves had confiscated and nationalised all the property of the French émigrés and the religious orders. In fact much of it was being sold to finance the French government.

The Queen requested Joseph Banks to advise her if she should accept this bouquet from the émigrés. Banks examined the boxes, but he hesitated. He had finally received Labillardière's letter from Java, written two years earlier. Labillardière had, by a miracle, just reached Paris. Banks wrote to the Queen's Vice-Chamberlain: 'The collection of plants bears testimony of an industry all but indefatigable in the Botanists who were employed, the chief of whom [Labillardière] I am sorry to say was the principal fomenter of the Mutiny, which took place in the ships, built on the strongest Jacobin Principles.'

The Queen, he said, should accept the collection. He would select one specimen of each species for her, a task that, given the estimated 10 000 specimens, would take at least a year. The fate of the duplicates was not specified. Then another plea came from the Directoire in Paris. Finally Banks received a letter from Labillardière in Paris, again begging for his help. Labillardière also wrote to James Edward Smith at the Linnean Society: 'Please make, my friend, all possible efforts. You know how much could be lost for science if collections of this nature were not returned to those who made them.' The French authorities and scientists at the Jardin des Plantes also pleaded for them to be sent across the Channel to France.

Most in England, however, believed that the collections belonged to the French Crown and should be given to England's Queen Charlotte as Louis XVIII had requested.

A second approach was made by the Directoire in May. They, too, appealed directly to Banks. Banks completely changed his stance and worked behind the scenes to have the collections sent to France. On 9 June he wrote to Labillardière that members of the Cabinet were sympathetic to his arguments, and later that month got a verbal agreement from the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville, that they might be restored. When nothing had happened a month later Banks wrote to the authorities again, requesting a 'speedy answer to this interesting subject, and to deprecate a refusal'. In early August an agreement was finally reached—the collections would be returned. Banks wrote to his friend Antoine Laurent de Jussieu, professor at the Jardin des Plantes.

I confess I wish much to learn from his specimens some of those discoveries in the natural order of plants which he must have made, but it seemed to my feelings dishonourable to avail myself even of the opportunity I had of examining them … all will be returned to him. I shall not retain a leaf, a flower, or a Botanical idea of his collection, for I have not possessed myself of anything at all of his, that fortune committed to my custody.

The change by the British may have been a peace offering to the Directoire, as it was thought they might be weakening and reinstating the monarchy. This story of how the British returned the plants is often told, but for some reason the saga of the valuable maps from the expedition is overlooked. The British Admiralty had the maps copied and studied the cartographical advances closely. They were not handed over to France until the Peace of Amiens.

The expedition in search of La Pérouse, like that of La Pérouse himself, had ended in chaos. Yet out of this extraordinary attempt at reconnaissance, in which so many lives were lost, came a remarkable haul of plants, the first large collection of flora from Australia since that of Banks and Solander to return to Europe—and the first major book. Riche, alas, died soon after his return to France and none of his works on birds, fish and minerals was published.

D uring Napoleon's third visit to Corsica, which lasted for fifteen months and ended in January 1791, the country was in turmoil. Three groups were forming—Royalist, National (Paoli) and Popular (Republican).

The Commandant of Ajaccio complained to the Minister of War in Paris: 'The lieutenant Buonaparte would be better with his corps as he foments incessantly.' Napoleon's anti-French behaviour now stood out, as the French Revolution had been welcomed at first in Corsica when the island was given the status of a département of France. An amnesty even allowed the Corsican patriot Pasquale de Paoli to return to the island. Paoli the revolutionary, who had put up such a heroic struggle for Corsican independence before Napoleon's birth, was now nearly sixty-five, and had mellowed during his long exile in England, where he had been introduced to such intellectuals as Dr Johnson by his friend Boswell, and lived off a generous pension paid to him by the English parliament. Napoleon described him as being fat, white and resembling an Englishman.

Suddenly a fresh insurrection arose against France and Napoleon became the proud Adjutant-Major of a battalion of Corsican volunteers. This made his situation precarious in France for two reasons—he was absent without leave in the first place, and the National Assembly now required all officers in the regular army to return to their regiments for a nationwide census between 25 December and 10 January 1792. The only officers who could avoid the census were those of the rank of lieutenant-colonel and above, who were not bound by the ruling. As there were only two such positions available at the time in his region, and elections for the two places were soon to take place, Napoleon pushed himself forward.

Voting would be by 500 National Guardsmen. Napoleon faced stiff opposition so he spent a good part of his uncle's legacy on winning votes—even using bribery. Over 200 voting volunteers were lodged close by Casa Bonaparte and given lavish board for a fortnight before the election. Napoleon even helped arrange the abduction of one of the commissioners in charge of the election. His efforts were successful and on 28 March 1792 he was elected lieutenant-colonel.

The island was in an uproar because of the Revolution and internal politics. In the struggle Napoleon was found fighting with his volunteer corps against the French troops who held the citadel, but the affair was so muddled that he escaped court martial. Lejard,

the new Minister of War, sent a report of the incident to the Ministry of Justice in Paris where, because of the confusion following the fall of the King, it gathered dust.

By that time, Army authorities in Valence realised that Bonaparte was absent without leave. He faced charges of desertion. Rather than try to explain himself in Valence, he went straight to Paris, arriving on 28 May. Within three weeks, with his old school friend Bourrienne, Napoleon was by chance witness to the famous morning of 20 June 1792 when a great mob of men, women and children overran the Tuileries. Five to six thousand people broke into the elaborate formal garden created by Le Nôtre, wrecking it as they surged to the palace and insulted and humiliated the king, even forcing him to put on a red Cap of Liberty and drink with them to the health of the nation. This scene of mob violence, which turned out to be the dress rehearsal for the violent insurrection on 10 August that captured the Tuileries, horrified Napoleon. Again Napoleon was eyewitness to the final storming of the Tuileries, when about 30 000 people broke into the garden, butchering the Swiss Guards.

He is supposed to have announced: ‘Had I been king, things would have happened differently,’ adding, ‘Jacobins are madmen who have no common sense.’ After that day, for the rest of his life Napoleon was fearful of crowds. Twenty years after the massacre in the Tuileries garden, Napoleon ordered that it be redesigned, perhaps to erase the memory of that day.

death of louis xvi

The French Republic was proclaimed in August 1792, and a new assembly (the National Convention) came into effect a month later. Louis XVI was guillotined on 21 January 1793. Soon after the King’s death, his beloved Académie des Sciences was temporarily suppressed, along with all other French academies, although they soon revived under different names. Throughout 1793 Paris was in turmoil. In the disturbance and commotion, instead of being punished for being absent without leave, Napoleon, incredibly, was promoted on 10 July, backdated to 6 February.

confrontation with
the english

Within a few months, in October Napoleon was yet again on a boat, returning to Corsica. He had managed to get special permission to take leave of absence to escort his sister Elisa back to Corsica. The Revolution had caused her boarding school at St Cyr to shut down and she was too young to travel alone. Back in Corsica he was starting to realise that only a handful of Corsicans really cared about autonomy. The French had now ruled Corsica since 1769 and it looked as if they would continue to do so. In March 1793 Napoleon had a showdown with Paoli who wanted to play the ‘English card’, whereas Napoleon now supported the Revolution and France, having come to terms with the fact that Corsica could not stand on its own, that it would always be dominated by a stronger power. Now, given a choice between England and France, Napoleon chose France.

Lucien Bonaparte, like his elder brother an ardent follower of Rousseau and a great orator, made a thundering speech at the Jacobin Club in Toulon. Paoli, he said, was a traitor, about to hand over the island to the English. Hearing of this the Convention summoned Paoli to Paris to answer the accusation, as well as other serious complaints about his loyalty to the French Republic. Paoli used ‘old age and broken health’ as an

excuse not to travel. Interpretations of what followed are all muddled and contradictory; some even say that Napoleon sent a letter to his father's old friend offering his support. This offer, if it existed, was rejected. A vendetta against the Bonapartes was declared. Paoli's supporters destroyed, burnt and stole Bonaparte family possessions. Napoleon tried to gather support but failed, and the whole island rose up against the Bonapartes. The family went into hiding. Napoleon, outlawed in turn by Paoli, escaped by hiding in the grotto of a friend's garden.

Again a terrified Letizia took to the hills to the north of Ajaccio, this time with four of her children, eventually getting as far as the family property of Milelli. It was too dangerous to rest there so in the dark of night they made their way to the Tower of Capitello, on the edge of the Campo de Oro, the site of the modern airport of Ajaccio. On the night of 3 June 1793 some boats approached, Napoleon swam ashore and got his family on board, sailing to Calvi in the north-west of the island, where Letizia and her children were transferred to a merchant ship from Toulon which had managed to get through the English patrols. It was a triumph for Paoli. The French now held only a few positions in Corsica.

The family, left literally with only the clothes they stood up in, headed for Toulon, an uncertain life and penury. Josephine, three years earlier had also left her island, with borrowed clothing and a hazardous future to confront.

'Cette fois—et pour toujours—Napoleon a choisi la France' ('This time—and for ever—Napoleon has chosen France') wrote the French historian André Castelot. The homeless Napoleon was now, at last, a true Frenchman. He turned his back on Corsica forever and put his enormous energy into his career in France. From June 1793, France and the army became his life. The only islands in his life from now on would be those of his exile.

a possible post with
the english army

Napoleon's later told how through Paoli he was offered a post with the English Army. This is not as bizarre as it sounds, as France and Britain at that time were not at war—the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 had brought peace. Before their falling out, when Napoleon was still in doubt as to whether to give his allegiance to France or Corsica, Paoli had made him an offer. Decades later on St Helena, Lady Malcolm, the wife of Rear Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, commander of the South Atlantic Squadron, who used to play chess with Napoleon, recalled his reminiscences. In her published diary she wrote.

The Admiral requested to know if it was true that he [Bonaparte] was offered a commission in the English army. He replied: 'I will tell you how it was. Paoli urged me to enter into the English service, he then had the power of procuring me a commission as high a rank as I could expect; but I preferred the French, because I spoke the language, was of their religion, understood and liked their manners, and I thought the beginning of a revolution a fine time for an enterprising young man. Paoli was angry—we did not speak afterwards, but I always respected him, and so did he me.'

Soon after this, in February 1794, while the Bonapartes were in France, British ships with 12 000 men invaded Corsica. Napoleon lost his ancestral home, Admiral Nelson right eye was badly wounded in an 'explosion of stones', and Corsica fell to the British, who ruled the island for two years. If Napoleon had stayed on the island as a supporter of Paoli—even if he had not taken up his offer—he would have ended up fighting for the

British. It is impossible to speculate on the outcome and how it would have affected the balance of power of Europe. Napoleon as a foreign colonial soldier would never have risen as quickly or to such heights had he gone over to England.

In his Memoirs (translated by Somerset de Chair) Napoleon explained how unpopular English rule on Corsica was: 'Our property was devastated; our house, after being pillaged, was long used as barracks by an English battalion.' One of the English occupying Casa Bonaparte was a young captain by the name of Hudson Lowe who would, a couple of decades later, become governor of St Helena, in charge of Napoleon's imprisonment. Napoleon wrote.

The Corsicans were extremely dissatisfied with the English governors; they neither understood their language, their habitual gloom, nor their manner of living. Men who were continually at table, almost always intoxicated, and of uncommunicative dispositions, exhibited a remarkable contrast to their manners.…

An extraordinary event now took place. The King
of England placed the crown of Corsica upon his [own] head. In June, 1794, the Council of Corsica, of which Paoli was president, proclaimed that its political connection with France was for ever broken off; and
that the crown of Corsica should be offered to the King
of England. A deputation proceeded to London, and
the king accepted the crown.

Sir Gilbert Elliott, later elevated to being Lord Minto, was rushed to the island as Viceroy as Britain was anxious to secure any naval base in the Mediterranean. Elliott wrote to his wife, who soon followed him from England: 'I was crowned last Thursday, June 19th [1794] and I send you my Majesty's speech … it produced on my subjects a kingly effect …' By chance the liberal education of Sir Gilbert had been supervised by one of Napoleon's heroes, David Hume, in Paris, and Elliott would have seen much on the island through the eyes of Rousseau. (For years the sole reminder of England's two years sovereignty of this island was a pub in London's Soho, The King of Corsica.)

While the Bonapartes were struggling in Marseilles, the Elliotts started bringing gaiety back to Corsica. Dorothy Carrington describes the 'really splendid ball' given by Lady Elliot to celebrate her arrival before Christmas: 'The rooms were decorated with myrtle, orange and arbutus trees, and there was a long passage "enclosed with a myrtle hedge" making a perfect garden. Regimental bands played at her assemblies in the real garden outside; her guests danced on a terrace overlooking it; the moon, rising from the sea, shed its beams through the French window leading from terrace to ballroom.'

the bonaparte family's
new life in france

Chaotic conditions in Toulon forced Letizia to move her family to Marseilles. Though not in a state of war the city was feeling the effects of The Terror, with arrests and executions frighteningly commonplace. Practically penniless, Letizia rented a cheap apartment at the top of a house near the old port and set her daughters to work as laundresses. No laundries ever had such high-spirited and attractive girls toiling in them. According to a former British ambassador to Paris, Sir Pierson Dixon, who wrote a biography of Pauline, laundry work led to good social contacts although in later year the enemies of the family would mock the menial occupation of the Bonaparte girls at this period: 'The three girls, high-spirited and attractive, were thus brought in contact with some of the well-to-do

families of Marseilles. One in particular, the Clary family, took pity on the exiles. The following year [1794] Joseph married Julie Clary', the heiress of a rich industrialist in Marseilles.

At first the fugitive Bonapartes had no other source of income apart from Napoleon's pay and money from their laundry work. But Joseph, through Napoleon, got a job as an assistant commissary of the Republic with the army. Napoleon fell in love with Julie Clary's sister Désirée and proposed to her, but when he was transferred to Paris, Josephine quickly displaced her in his affections. Désirée wrote a sad and poignant letter after her rejection, but soon married another rising star in the French Army, Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadotte, a lawyer's son from Pau in France, who was later given the crown of Sweden. By a strange turn of fate Desirée's son, King Oscar, married Josephine's grand-daughter, another Josephine.

With the penniless Letizia and his three sisters hardly ever out of his mind, Napoleon rejoined the 4th Artillery Regiment at Nice, managed to get some back pay and was soon heading a convoy transporting powder wagons to the coast from Avignon, and a few months later from Marseilles to Nice. But it was his pen, not his sword, that gave him his first lucky break. He wrote a dramatic essay attacking Paoli: Le Souper de Beaucaire. 'Paoli, too, hoisted the Tricolor in Corsica, in order to give himself time to deceive the people, to crush the true friends of liberty … he ravaged and confiscated the property of the richer families because they were allied to the unity of the Republic …'

'The beginning of my rise was at Toulon,' said Napoleon. 'The artillery in which I was serving was badly officered, a number had been privates without education. It was known to the general that I had been well educated at l'Ecole Militaire; I was the sort of person he wanted; he gave me the command; I was successful, and gained reputation.'

Into the gaudy scene of post-Revolutionary Paris stepped
Napoleon Bonaparte, his skin pale and taut from years of
poor food and poverty, barely a franc in the pocket of his threadbare military coat. Most of his wages still went south to his mother to support her and his younger brothers and sisters. He was inured to lack of money, however—there had never been a period in his life when he did not have to face financial challenges.

Napoleon was intoxicated with Paris, its elegance, its women. In a letter to his brother Joseph, he wrote.

The ladies are everywhere. In the theatre, out driving, in the libraries. You see lovely creatures in the scholar's study. Here, in this one place in all the world, they are worthy to hold the reins; and the men are mad about them, think of nothing else and live only for and through them. A woman needs six months in Paris which is her due and her empire.

One of the many descriptions of Napoleon at the time shows that, impressed though he was with the sophistication of the city, he was still countrified in appearance. General Baron Thiebault described him after he arrived in Paris: 'I can still see his hat, on which perched a casual feather that had not been very well affixed. His tricoloured sash was knotted carelessly, his clothes were badly cut and the sword he carried scarcely seemed the weapon that was to make his fortune.' Even seven years later the English writer Fanny

Burney, on a visit to Paris, said that despite the smart clothes he was then wearing, he had ‘far more the air of a student than a warrior’.

In late spring 1795 he was sharing simple lodgings with Andoche Junot, the friend who would later be one of his best generals. The two young men would stroll arm in arm through the streets of Paris with the lilac and laburnum hanging over garden walls. Junot said they often went past the chestnuts and hawthorns of the Champs Elysées to the Jardin des Plantes, the former Jardin du Roi. There, says Junot, ‘We breathed not only a purer air but in passing over the threshold of the grille we seemed to throw off a heavy burden, so peaceful and pleasant was the whole atmosphere.’

In Paris Napoleon caught Barras’ eye again. Barras had first come across Napoleon when he had visited Marseilles, accompanied by Stanislas Fréron, to suppress a revolt there in December 1794. These two men had promoted Napoleon to brigadier-general, in the name of the people, after his part in the relief of Toulon. Fréron had become infatuated with Napoleon’s beautiful sister Pauline and even proposed to her, and Barras had got to know the Bonaparte family. So Barras and Napoleon knew each other well before Barras started his affair with Josephine.

By August the Committee of Public Safety had had enough of Napoleon’s continued sick notes—produced whenever he did not want to be moved away from the centre of power or to fight in a place where he did not want to go—and relieved him of his command in the army. But Barras came to Napoleon’s rescue. He arranged a job for him in the military operations department of the Topographical Bureau of the Committee of Public Safety. The Convention had charged Barras with the task of protecting the Republic against the insurrection of royalist sympathisers which was threatening to break out. And when 20 000 well-armed Royalists were marching towards the city centre Napoleon quelled the embryonic uprising. Napoleon placed 4000 men in a protective circle around the Tuileries and then he ordered, in the words of the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle, in his History of the French Revolution, a ‘whiff of grapeshot’. From a row of cannon Napoleon unleashed a deadly barrage of fire, mowing down the rebels in droves, killing around 1400. The date 5 October 1795, famous as 13 Vendémiaire, was—according to Carlyle—the end of the Revolution. In his romantic history he wrote that the French Revolution ‘is blown into space and became a thing that was’. It was the beginning of Napoleon’s rapid rise to power.

Although only twenty-six years old, Napoleon was rewarded with promotion to the rank of Artillery Divisional General, appointed General-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior, and invited to attend the newly formed Institut National, the new name for the revamped Académie des Sciences. He moved from his depressing lodging in the Marais district and was seen driving in a grand carriage. It was Barras who insisted that Napoleon was raised to the rank of a major-general, and when he resigned his position of Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior he made sure that his protégé took his place.

Barras also possibly gave Napoleon an introduction to the woman who would become his wife. Contemporary memoirs contradict Napoleon’s own account of their first meeting, dictated over two decades later. Napoleon’s memoirs say that the government had started disarming all citizens, calling in all unauthorised weapons. Amongst the weapons confiscated was the sword of the late Alexandre de Beauharnais. The next day Eugene de Beauharnais, then fourteen, applied to the commanding officer, who happened to be

Napoleon, for the return of the weapon once wielded by his father. Napoleon handed the sword back to the boy, who kissed it. The next day Josephine called at Napoleon's headquarters to thank him in person for his kindness. Barras said that this account of the meeting was not true—that it was he, Barras, who had invited Napoleon one night to a gathering at his house where he had met Josephine.

Her coquettish ways, flamboyant style of dressing in silk, gauze and pearls, her noble upper-class air and pleasant manner captivated Napoleon. Although Josephine was six years older he may not have been aware of it, as she was vague about her age. At the church where she is buried in the village of Malmaison, now part of the Paris suburb of Ruiel-Malmaison, a notice giving architectural and historical details states that at her funeral 'it was found that the date of her birth was not 1768 but 1763'.

On St Helena Napoleon, dictating his memoirs, stressed how he had been shy in the presence of women until he met Josephine, who was 'the first who gave me a sense of security. One day I was sitting near her, and she said flattering things about my military achievements. This praise intoxicated me, I devoted myself to her uninterruptedly, I followed her everywhere—I was passionately in love with her. And our acquaintances already knew what I did not dare tell her …' Another time he said that she was the first person to boost his confidence, to give him reassurance.

Socially awkward, but with a lucid intellect, Napoleon was first amused and then flattered by Josephine's attention. But it was not until she wrote him a note inviting him to lunch with her that he fell obsessively in love. Her feelings were then not as intense as his, but she enjoyed his company and he filled the gap for her after Barras' affections had waned.

'His conversation was always worth listening to,' Hortense later wrote, when recalling how Napoleon was the life and soul of the little group composed of her mother, Madame Tallien and several men. 'He made even the ghost stories he occasionally told interesting by the way in which he related them. Indeed, he was so openly admired in our circle …'

One thing Napoleon and Josephine had in common—apart from charisma, ambition, noble but impoverished island backgrounds and a passion for the arts—was a prodigious memory. Napoleon could remember the face of a soldier in the street from a battle years earlier. Josephine's memory helped her make friends as she recalled names and the least important circumstances from the past. She also knew how to store stories and confidences—and then repeat them in an entertaining way, especially to Napoleon, who was enthralled. She could relate stories word perfect and recite quotes with accuracy. Napoleon called her his 'little agenda'; to test her he sometimes made mistakes in dates in order to have the pleasure of being corrected by her.

Josephine had the social gift of speaking well on everything and anything—despite appalling teeth which meant that she never really opened her mouth very wide. She taught herself the skill of looking fascinating with a tight-lipped smile. Universally described as graceful, she listened to answers with a kind attention that gave confidence. The fact that she always gave the appearance of genuinely listening to the speaker, combined with her interest in people and her brilliant memory, meant that Josephine presented herself in a better light than most princesses of the old regime. One of the things that showed her up

as not being a true royal, according to the members of the old aristocracy, was sometimes an over-eagerness to please.

Popular though Josephine was, the thirty-two-year-old widow's main concern was to keep herself afloat. Napoleon, she saw, was a man who would soon have more assets than his sword, his horse, his suitcase of books—and his mother. Encouraged by Barras, who was keen to release himself from the responsibility of maintaining his ex-mistress, Josephine set her sights on Napoleon. Little did she realise that this alliance would also meet her strong desire to promote her progeny. Exactly ten years later Napoleon arranged what turned out to be a happy marriage for her son Eugene, which would make Josephine the great-great-grandmother of most late nineteenth-century European royalty. Today her descendants are sovereigns of Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and the Duchy of Luxembourg. Prince Rainier, too, traces his links with Napoleon back to a candlelit civil wedding service in 1796—his great-grandmother was the grand-daughter of Napoleon's adopted daughter, Stephanie de Beauharnais.

Napoleon later admitted that although he was immeasurably in love with Josephine, he was also aware that his position would be enhanced by marriage to a woman with influential friends occupying high positions among the new elite. Years later in his memoirs he said: 'My marriage put me in contact with a whole party which was necessary for the purpose of my system of fusion, one of the major principles of my administration ... Without my wife, I would never have had any rapport with this party.'

Napoleon knew that no matter how grateful the old nobility might be when he allowed them to return to France, he would never be one of them. Josephine managed to play a brilliant role in the new class system formed after the social ranks had changed during the Revolution—she managed to belong to the old as well as to the new society. She had been both a Revolutionary and a Jacobin, but her first husband had been guillotined as an aristocrat.

The wedding banns were published in mid-February 1796. Two-and-a-half weeks later Napoleon was made commander of the army in Italy. Josephine was still so close to Barras that it was said that the promotion was 'Josephine's dowry'. The civil ceremony took place in Paris on the evening of 9 March and was conducted by the mayor of the Second Arrondissement. One of the four witnesses was Barras. The six-year age difference between the couple was concealed. Due to the difficulty in those post-Revolutionary days of procuring birth certificates, Josephine managed to make it appear that Napoleon was older than she was, instead of six years younger. Josephine could not produce her certificate and just gave her year of birth as 1763; Napoleon used the certificate of his brother Joseph who was born in 1768. Using a false birth certificate was not the only legal aberration—one of the witnesses was under age. On a more personal level Napoleon failed to inform any of his family—not even his beloved brother Joseph who remained close to him all his life—that he was soon to marry.

violets

The violets that Josephine was wearing were wilting by the time the bridegroom arrived for the ceremony, preparations for the Italian campaign having made him two hours late. It is difficult to know whether Josephine wore violets to please Napoleon, knowing that they were his preferred flowers, or whether they were actually her favourite flowers. Or both. According to the plant historian Alice Coates, Josephine asked her new husband to give

her violets—and only violets—on each wedding anniversary. It is quite likely that they were Napoleon's favourite flowers, as in her memoirs Madame Junot recalled how, on a visit to her mother well before Napoleon met Josephine, he had come with a bunch of these lovely simple blooms.

The choice of a native wildflower of France rather than some of the more spectacular florist's flowers such as the auriculas, tulips, carnations or even roses with which her name is now so strongly associated, suggests that Josephine was favouring the trend, led by Rousseau, to ignore showy flowers, especially those made larger by plant breeding. The violet has always been a symbol of modesty and shyness, as in the old expression 'shrinking violet', meaning someone who shrinks from being noticed.

Whether Josephine was wearing violets to please her new husband or not, she had already revealed her assertiveness over certain domestic issues. It is always said that when the newly married couple returned to 9 Rue de Chantereine they found her pug dog Fortuné on the bed. Napoleon asked her to remove him. She refused. So on the night of their marriage Napoleon the brave soldier, already scarred on his inner left thigh from the pike of an English sergeant at the Battle of Toulon, was wounded once again. The dog, sensing competition for his mistress' affections, bit Napoleon's leg. However, as Napoleon had already spent many nights in her house and in her bed, it is likely that when he retold the story he transposed the bite to the wedding night.

Two days later the honeymoon was over. Napoleon departed for Italy as Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, leading his forces to victory in battle after battle as he pushed the Austrians out of Italy. His manner of manipulating troops was so original, so adroit, that the skills employed in modern warfare date from this campaign. In the words of Sir Arthur Bryant, Napoleon had genius and.

… immense will power, inexhaustible energy, lightning perception, unbounded ambition. He arrived in Nice on 26 March to find the army starving, despondent and in rags. Within a few days he had inspired it with something of his own dazzling faith and vitality … the young eagle struck … But though he broke all the rules, in six battles against divided forces of twice his strength he drove a wedge between the Austrians and the Piedmontese … Bonaparte's men were marching at unprecedented speed eastwards along the south bank of the Po … the conqueror entered the Lombard capital, the inhabitants, feminine in their worship of success, strewing flowers in his path … 'People of Italy,' he thundered, 'the Army of France has broken your chains.'

The euphoria of the Italians lessened when Napoleon presented them with a bill for the price of their liberation and protection: millions of francs, vast stores of provisions, thousands of horses—and paintings which were to be ceded to France under peace treaties in lieu of war taxes. No warrior had ever obtained victory so quickly and rewarded his country so lavishly with the best of art and science. Revolutionary France had set a precedent in their Belgian campaign in 1794 when artists and experts accompanied the army to remove works of art and science to be sent back to the Louvre, the Jardin des Plantes and the Bibliothèque Nationale. In a similar way Napoleon immediately planned another transportation to France of an enormous booty of Italian works of art, including paintings by Bellini, Correggio, Perugino, Raphael and Titian from Parma, Modena, Milan, Cremona, Bologna, Perugia, Rome, Venice, Florence and Turin.

Again experts were needed to evaluate the paintings, so he wrote letters to Paris such as the following: ‘I repeat my request for a few known artists to take charge of the choice and transport of the fine things we shall think fit to send to Paris.’ The result was the Government Commission for the Research of Artistic and Scientific Objects in Conquered Countries which was led by Jacques Pierre Tinet who had been attached to the French Legation in Florence, and as well as the sculptor Moitee, the painters Wicar, Gros and Berthelemy, the scientists Monge and Berthollet who had previously been part of the commission to Belgium, as well as the botanists Thouin and Labillardière. Even though most of the material chosen by the Commission which went to the Louvre was returned to Italy after 1815, around one hundred items remain. Today a visitor has only to tour the Louvre to see how expert Labillardière and the other commissioners were in choosing the spoils of war—despite dimly lit churches and unlabelled paintings.

return of labillardière

As Napoleon, as a student, had so wanted to be part of La Pérouse’s expedition, he would have had a keen interest in Labillardière’s search through the Pacific, and especially Australia, the last place where La Pérouse’s presence had been recorded.

The mathematician Gaspard Monge, became Napoleon’s lifelong friend. Napoleon’s choice of scientists as friends as well as his methodical appraisal of the works of art, shows his strong belief in the importance of both science and the scienctists themselves. This strong scientific bent is usually disregarded in biographies of Napoleon but, like his mathematical ability, it was one of his strengths, and would later work to elevate Josephine’s love of flowers and plants into scientific botany.

While in Italy Napoleon made a plea to the Directoire: ‘The sciences, which have revealed so many secrets and destroyed so many prejudices, are called upon to render yet greater services. New truth and new discoveries will contribute even more to the happiness of mankind; but it is essential that we should respect the scientists and protect science.’

W hen Napoleon marched on Vienna, the

Austrians asked for peace. His success shook Europe to its foundations. A twenty-seven-year-old general who had started a campaign at Nice and closed it just south of Vienna had become France’s most popular soldier, the new hero of the French Republic—but not yet, alas, the hero of his wife. Daily he wrote from Italy begging Josephine to join him. Every week she made excuses why she could not. His letters, touching though they were, did not redress the inadequacies of the two-day honeymoon when Napoleon had been preoccupied with preparations for the battlefront. She needed more attention and she found it.

Napoleon’s much-quoted amorous yearnings for Josephine, endearing epistles worthy of inclusion in any anthology of love letters, are considered by some scholars, such as Comte Saint-Imbert, to be in the style of Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Héloïse. Just one short note was sold at a Paris auction in 1997 for over US$100 000: ‘I have not spent a night without holding you in my arms … In the middle of business, at the head of the troops, inspecting the camps, only my adorable Josephine is in my heart, occupies my mind, absorbs my thoughts.’

Eventually, four months later, Josephine left Paris and crossed the Alps to join her triumphant husband. Included in the group in her carriage, along with her maid, Junot and Napoleon's brother Joseph, was her new friend, Hippolyte Charles. Twenty-five years old and handsome, he was known as a great raconteur and renowned for his witty aphorisms and his popularity with women. Josephine had managed to obtain an official military appointment for him.

So excited was Napoleon about being reunited with Josephine that he had the magnificent Serbelloni Palace in Milan readied for her arrival. He organised fetes and dinners and showered her with presents. Knowing her predilection for flowers he went to the extent of having large pots of flowering shrubs placed on the terraces. Later he even arranged to have the Palace's greenhouses and hothouses put at her disposal.

Whispers that Josephine might be having an affair eventually reached Napoleon. He threatened to have Charles shot. Instead, her lover resigned from the army, using this new freedom and connections—especially Josephine and Barras—to make handsome profits from shady dealings on commissions on behalf of the house of Bodin in Lyons, which supplied provisions to the army.

rags to riches

For the summer Napoleon, who two years earlier had been living in cheap rented rooms in Paris with Junot, took over Castle Mombello with its spreading gardens overlooking the Lombardy plain. Like most famous Italian gardens it was on a hillside, with much terracing and many water features, and was Josephine's introduction to the classic elegance of an Italian garden with statues, balustrading, fountains and yew hedges. Although formal, it did not have the stiffness of French parterres nor the scale of Le Nôtre's gardens at Versailles, which were flat and extended for miles into the open countryside. A classic eighteenth-century Italian garden was halfway in style between a French and an English garden. Posted on guard around the perimeter were 300 Polish soldiers.

It was perhaps not a wise move, but Napoleon invited all his family. Letizia had been affronted when Napoleon had consulted neither Joseph nor her before his marriage. This formidable matriarch, who had had to struggle with widowhood in Corsica by bringing up her family on a shoestring, was appalled by Josephine, who had faced widowhood by running up debts so she could mix in society and find a new man. It must be remembered, however, that Letizia too, although on a much smaller scale, had also run up debts, was supposed by some to have had a lover in Corsica and done everything possible to climb the social ladder. Letizia was also alarmed at Josephine's extravagances and the prospect of a great deal more of her son's money disappearing in Josephine's direction.

Napoleon's three sisters, Caroline, Marianne (Elisa) and the beautiful Pauline, who was then sixteen, were equally united in their dislike of their sister-in-law. They were adamant that she was not good enough for their wonderful brother. Pauline, a lifelong worshipper of her brilliant sibling, instinctively saw a rival—perhaps because she knew that, like herself, Josephine had a strange magnetic power that attracted and fascinated men. No man had ever a more glamorous or devoted sister than Napoleon had in Pauline, whose loyalty lasted till his death.

Josephine's elegance and social ease were in sharp contrast to the comportment of the women in Napoleon's family. A few more years of their brother's success and money were needed to soften their provincial appearance. Napoleon, though, was fast acquiring the aplomb of a man confident of his own worth and place. The charm for which Josephine is still famed, however, did not work on this tightly knit group of Bonapartes, especially Joseph. The family was united against her, and for the next twelve years worked to push her out of Napoleon's life. One of the tools they used was Josephine's seeming inability to conceive again. Napoleon's desperate need for an heir, which vied with his deep affection for Josephine, was later revealed in this letter which he wrote in Italy: 'Dear Josephine … whom nature has given such intelligence, gentleness and beauty—you who alone can rule over my heart, you who know only too well I am sure, the utter mastery you have over me.'

At Mombello semi-royal etiquette was imposed and Josephine, as was her habit, created a grand and harmonious atmosphere within the rooms. Her ability to organise and animate a house, attending to every detail from guest lists, food, décor and etiquette to conversation, was her greatest social asset. She set the scene for Napoleon's brilliance. 'I win wars, Josephine wins hearts,' said Napoleon. Two decades later on St Helena, Napoleon described her as 'the model of the graces with all their fascinations'. One disaster occurred at Mombello: the cook's mastiff made a definite social faux pas when he killed Josephine's dog, the ill-named Fortuné. Hippolyte Charles, ever-present in the shadows, came to the rescue and gave her another.

While the paintings of the old masters were being taken from Italy, new paintings were commissioned of the new hero. Always restless, however, Napoleon found it difficult to stay still long enough for any painter to capture his likeness. Josephine persuaded him to have his portrait executed by Antoine Gros, the result being the popular Napoleon at the Bridge of Arcola. Gros complained that Napoleon hardly gave him time to mix his colours, even though night after night Josephine held her husband on her knee for painting sessions, the only way to keep him still. On one of the other occasions when the restless Napoleon sat for a painter, he posed for David in 1797 for the large painting which was to depict him on the Plateau de Rivoli with the treaty of Campo Formio.

In a vast tent that Napoleon had ordered erected in the gardens of Mombello, he received requests for audiences from important people: ministers, officials, scientists, envoys, agents, writers, artists, landowners and bureaucrats. Much to Josephine's delight, many Italians, hopeful of easing their way with the conqueror, presented her with gifts. So many mosaics, cameos, pictures, statues by the hundreds, and so many jewels came her way, that it is amazing that the carriage was strong enough to carry them all. Within three years all these valuable gifts would be taken to Malmaison. Meanwhile they were jammed into Josephine's house at Rue de Chantereine, which even before Napoleon's return was rechristened Rue de la Victoire.

From Italy Josephine sent instructions for the redecoration of this house in Paris—which Napoleon had now purchased—to make it fit for the most popular general in the French republic. This brought her into contact with the great architect and furniture designer Charles Percier who, with Pierre Fontaine, three years later would come into conflict with her over the planning of the gardens at Malmaison.

There are no words in any language capable of giving
a true picture of the effect produced in France by

Bonaparte's arrival,' were the words of Madame Junot describing Napoleon's return to Paris after the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797. This occasion was very different from his arrival three years earlier as an unknown officer who had been evicted by the English from his family home. Now he was the feted general coming home to a newly renovated house. Not only was there a change in people's attitude to Napoleon, there was certainly a change in his circumstances. The days of living in a garret were well and truly over.

Describing the atmosphere in the house after Napoleon's return, Hortense wrote: '… it was filled with generals and officers. Sentinels had difficulty in keeping back the crowd and the society folk, who were all equally impatient and eager to catch sight of the conqueror of Italy … the successes of the French armies in Italy had made my mother more than a queen …'

The visitors must have been amazed. In the main reception room was a frieze painted by pupils of David; bas-reliefs by Moitte could be seen through a row of bronzed plaster pillars; furniture à la grecque, from original designs by Percier, graced the rooms. Upstairs, Napoleon's bedroom was draped and canopied with striped material to resemble a campaign tent; the upturned drums which served as stools and chairs had backs shaped like crossbows supported by sheaves of arrows.

From the moment Napoleon returned from Italy, Josephine became a symbol of her husband's triumphs, and was hailed as 'Our Lady of Victory'. She earned the affectionate admiration of France largely due to her grace, elegance and generosity. She set the fashion of the day and was widely imitated. For instance, when the textile weavers in Lyons were suffering a slump in demand for their materials, Napoleon asked her to wear dresses made of Lyons velvets. Trade picked up. Paris fashions were still illustrated and described in London magazines.

Josephine's favourite fashion statement, though, was made with flowers. Artificial or natural, they adorned her hair, her dresses and her house. Hortense remembered how Napoleon would tease Josephine when she was arranging her hair: 'He would take out the flowers she was wearing and put them back differently, insist that this new way was much more becoming than the way the hairdresser had arranged them, and call on me to testify what good taste he had. All this with a most laughable gravity.'

Although Napoleon and Josephine continued to live in Rue de la Victoire they planned to buy a house in the country. While in Italy Napoleon had asked his brother Joseph to tell Josephine that should she want to buy a country house, half each, he could give her 30 000 francs, taken from the 40 000 francs which was left from their assets in Corsica.

There remained a sizeable gap between the price of the sort of house Josephine wanted and what Napoleon could—or would—then pay. After her return from Italy, Josephine played the dutiful wife and hostess, as well as being a direct route for Napoleon to her old friend Barras. Three months later the subject of a country house again arose. Malmaison was suggested by the artist Jean Baptiste Isabey, who gave painting lessons at Madame Campan's school where Hortense was his best pupil, and later became a friend of Hortense. Isabey recalled: 'Madame Le Couteulx, with whom I was on friendly terms, asked me to approach Madame Bonaparte on the subject of the property she owned near Rueil.'

Napoleon had inspected Malmaison before he went to Egypt but had thought the price far too high for a house that was not really grand. The matter of a country house was dropped while Napoleon was absorbed in preparations for his Egyptian expedition, but not forgotten.

The French government, in anticipation of invading England, had made Napoleon commander of the army of England. After visiting the coast of northern France and Flanders, however, he decided that British naval supremacy made the plan of direct assault out of the question. Alternatives needed to be found, to ‘shake England to her marrow-bones’, in the phrase of the time. Napoleon pushed the idea that ‘an Eastern expedition would menace Britain’s trade with the Indies’ and with India. Even Britain’s new colony in Australia would become closer to France through the canal that Napoleon planned to dig through Egypt to link the Red Sea with the Mediterranean. By their mere presence in Egypt the French would be able to disrupt regular shipping routes. Many goods went by sea from India and other places to the Red Sea, then were consigned by overland transport and to ships in the Mediterranean.

Napoleon first presented his project for the occupation of Egypt while still in Italy. The plan was agreed to by the all-powerful Barras and the other members of the Directoire. Every major port of the French and Italian Rivieras started secret preparations. The plans to seize Malta and Egypt and to build a canal at the Isthmus of Suez were, of course concealed. Speed and secrecy were vital as they had to get control of Egypt before the return of the British fleet to the Mediterranean.

At a meeting of l’Institut de France, attended by leading scientists of the Republic, Napoleon sought their support to make this expedition one of scholarship and science as well as of military consequence. (He himself had just been elected a member of the mathematical section of l’Institut.) His belief in the importance of science is again revealed in the employment of the scientists and artists who went with him to Egypt as members of a special Scientific and Artistic Commission, carefully selected by Napoleon himself to provide a cultural and technological background to his colonisation.

Napoleon was greatly appreciative of the interrelationship between science and the arts. Among the 197-strong group of botanists, zoologists, archaeologists, physicists, artists and draughtsmen were Redouté’s brother Henri Joseph, who travelled as a zoological draughtsman, Dominique Vivant Denon, the future Director of the Louvre, and Napoleon’s new friend the mathematician and chemist Monge. Militarily the Egyptian campaign was a failure, but scientifically it would be Napoleon’s voyage of discovery.

And it was this success which a couple of years later would mean he would put his force behind Nicholas Baudin’s scientific expedition to Australia, which departed from Le Havre in 1800. Napoleon’s continued interest in the Pacific and Australia was reflected in the books he ordered for the first of the portable libraries which henceforward were to accompany him on every campaign.

In May, after ten weeks of frenzied preparations for Egypt, 38 000 troops with hard rations for one hundred days and water for forty, were embarked in 400 ships, which included 13 battleships, 42 frigates and 130 transports. Only 1200 horses went up the gangplanks as once in Egypt Napoleon planned to use camels for transport. Josephine

went as far as Toulon to see her husband and son embark in the men-of-war which would cross the Mediterranean, eluding, if possible, the English ships. Napoleon sailed east to the Pyramids.

This was the first major sea voyage of the man who had wanted, when at school, to be a sailor rather than a soldier. His huge armada arrived at Malta on 9 June, where the Knights of St John surrendered with little resistance. In Malta Napoleon immediately put reform into effect. He abolished slavery; gave equal rights to Jews; freed 2000 Turks and Moors; established fifteen primary schools and arranged scholarships for sixty boys to be educated in France. Having selected prizes from the accumulation of seven centuries of treasures and packed them in the hold of the Admiral's ship l'Orient, Napoleon left a garrison at Valletta—the halfway house to France—and sailed across to Egypt.

Alexandria was captured. The French then marched up the Nile, destroyed a Mameluke army at the Battle of the Pyramids and entered Cairo, setting up a military government. The scholars supervised the installation of Arabic and French printing presses. Napoleon had gone to an immense amount of trouble to bring with him from France a set of Arabic type, requisitioned from the Papal press. Soon the first printed books were produced in Egypt—medical books on the bubonic plague, smallpox and eye disease. Eye disease was such a problem in Egypt that one in every three returning French soldiers suffered from painful and inflamed eyes. Henri Joseph Redouté suffered for the rest of his life.

Napoleon founded l'Institut d'Egypte which was divided into sections: industry, health, science and mathematics, art and literature. One of his initial questions to the newly formed Institut Scientifique was about plants: Did anything grow in Egypt which could replace the European hops in brewing beer? The scholars brought from France studied the antiquities, languages, agriculture and medicine of Egypt and traced the proposed route of the future Suez Canal from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. The results of this careful scientific work appeared in the twenty-four volume Description de l'Egypte published in Paris between 1809 and 1828, a monumental undertaking which marked the emergence of Egyptology as a science. Napoleon had come to the Nile in search of an empire and left with the first record of Ancient Egypt—including the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, which furnished the key for the deciphering of hieroglyphs, and continued the work which would lay the foundations for Egyptology. The advancement of science in the wake of the Egyptian campaign was the most lasting result of any of Napoleon's campaigns. Napoleon hoped for the same approach for the continent of Australia through the Baudin expedition.

The secrecy surrounding the French preparations for the invasion of Egypt had been so effective that when the English Fleet under Admiral Nelson arrived in the Mediterranean, it was only pure guesswork that brought them to the Egyptian port of Aboukir Bay, near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile. On 1 August, the very day he sighted the French Fleet anchored in a sandy bay, Nelson attacked. One of the bloodiest naval battles of all time, the Battle of the Nile off Aboukir Bay, followed. The agony of this was immortalised in the poem 'Casabianca' by F.D. Hemans: 'The boy stood on the burning deck/Whence all but he had fled …'

Although they both affected each other's fate and fame, Napoleon and Nelson were destined never to get any closer than on that fateful night. By a strange coincidence, a ship loaded with Maltese treasure was captured by an English ship which would play a fateful part at the end of Napoleon's career, the 74-gun, twelve-year old Bellerophon.

Napoleon was nearly one hundred and fifty kilometres away in Cairo, unaware of the disaster taking place. Only two French ships of the line and two frigates were left unsunk, ungrounded or untaken. The French army was cut off in Egypt, immobilised in the land it had conquered. It was Napoleon's first major reverse. His idea of an advance towards the east to break Britain's hold on India was shattered forever. Penned into Egypt by the Royal Navy blockade, Napoleon decided to march north around the Mediterranean towards Syria and Jerusalem. He pushed over the Turks at Mount Tabour but was defeated at the old crusader port of St Jean d'Acre by Sir Sidney Smith's guns commanded by his old school colleague Le Picard de Phélippeux, and was forced return to Cairo.

affair of the
captured letters

After the Battle of the Nile, the victorious Admiral Horatio Nelson captured a mail packet which contained confidential documents of military affairs, letters written by Napoleon and a cautionary letter from seventeen-year-old Eugene de Beauharnais to his mother Josephine. From his cabin, Nelson wrote to Lord Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty: 'I send a pacquet of intercepted Letters, some of them of great importance; in particular, one from Buonaparte to his brother. He writes such a scrawl, no one not used to it can read; but luckily, we have got a man who has wrote in his Office, to decipher it …'

Soon afterwards a letter from Napoleon to his brother, about Josephine's adulterous affair with the dashing young Parisian Hippolyte Charles, was leaked from the London office of Earl Spencer. James Perry, the editor of the Morning Chronicle, who later became a friend of Nelson's when he was his neighbour at Merton, was critical of the affair. The Morning Chronicle asked, 'What has Madame Bonaparte's chastity to do with her husband's expedition through Egypt!' The scandal provoked Napoleon to remark to his brother Lucien: 'The warriors of Egypt are like those at the siege of Troy, and their wives have reserved for them the same kind of fidelity.'

At the time of the letter's publication, Nelson was in Naples in the arms of Lady Hamilton, the notorious Emma, in the first days of his daring liaison. Any moralising about Josephine's adultery would have made Nelson look ridiculous. By coincidence the wives of both Napoleon and Nelson were from the Caribbean. Before he had married the widow Frances Nisbett (Fanny) who came from Nevis, four islands from Josephine's Martinique, he had had a series of sweethearts in different ports. But apart from one affair, which nobody knew about, he had been a faithful husband, so his public friendship with Emma came as a shock. In his memoirs Napoleon commented: 'A variety of caricatures on this subject were seen in the streets of London. In one of these, Nelson was represented amusing himself with dressing Lady Hamilton, while the frigate La Muiron was passing between his legs.'

Little did Earl Spencer realise the repercussions that this precedent of leaking personal correspondence would create. It was to rebound cruelly on his descendants. (He was the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Diana, Princess of Wales.) Even the French newspapers had a heyday with the leaks. While condemning the lack of moral scruples of the English papers, they indignantly copied extracts from the letters to stress their point. There was so much interest that a publisher in Paris, Sieur Simon, published the whole text with more letters.

'It derogates from the character of a nation to descend to such gossiping,' bellowed an English paper another day. 'One of these letters is from BUONAPARTE to his Brother,

complaining of the profligacy of his wife; another from young BEAUHARNDIS [sic], expressing his hopes that his dear Mamma is not so wicked as she is represented! Such are the precious secrets which, to breed mischief in private families, is to be published in French and English!'

The most quoted letter was from Napoleon to his brother Joseph and contained complaints about the coquetry of Josephine and his resolve to leave her now he knew of her infidelity.

… I am undergoing acute domestic distress, for the veil is now entirely rent. It is a sad state when one and the same heart is torn by such conflicting sentiments regarding one and the same person. You know what I mean … Make arrangements for a country place to be ready for my arrival, either near Paris or in Burgundy.

I expect to shut myself away there for the winter. I am disgusted with human nature. I have need of solitude and isolation. Grandeur palls on me. My emotions are spent, withered. Glory stales. At the age of twenty-nine,

I have exhausted everything; life has nothing more to offer. Nothing remains for me but to become a complete egoist. I intend to keep my house. No one else shall have it, no matter who …

Also in the mail packet was a letter from Eugene to his mother, warning her that Napoleon knew about her affair. The letter was fated to have the opposite effect to his intention—becoming, once published, more fodder for gossiping tongues.

My dearest mother, I have so many things to tell you,

I don't know where to begin. For the last five days Bonaparte has appeared exceedingly sad, and this came about as the result of a talk he had with Junot and Julien … He was more seriously affected by this conversation than I had realised. From the few words

I could catch, it all goes back to Charles, to the fact that he returned with you [from Italy] in your carriage to within three posting stations from Paris; that you have seen him since in Paris; that you have been going with him to the Italien Theatre, to the fourth-balcony loges; that it was he who gave you your little dog; that he is with you even at this moment …

There, from the snatches of conversation I have overheard, is all I can make out of it. As you can well imagine, Maman, I do not believe a word of this, but what is certain is that the general is deeply affected by it. Still, he redoubles his kindnesses to me: he seems to be saying, by his actions, that children cannot be held responsible for their mothers' frailties. But your son tells himself that all this gossip has been fabricated by your enemies, and he loves you no less, no less yearns to embrace you. I only hope that by the time you arrive

here all this will be forgotten.

In London people asked: 'Charles who?' But in Paris everyone knew—for there had been earlier gossip about Josephine's affair with Hippolyte Charles. 'Il est cocu' ('He is cuckolded'), they said referring to Napoleon.

The letters caused tremendous scandal and intrigue in both London and Paris, but were omitted from the final text of the book which was published as Copies of Original Letters from the Army of General Bonaparte in Egypt Intercepted by the Fleet under the Command of Admiral Lord Nelson. The introduction insisted that.

For this purpose, everything that was not illustrative of one or other of those objects [the situation of the Army] was suppressed: all private Letters, unless intimately connected with the end in view, were passed over; and even those of Bonaparte which have been so shamefully misrepresented, and commented upon by those fervid champions of decency, the Opposition Writers … though not strictly and absolutely private, yet containing nothing that could materially interest or inform the public, were laid aside with the rest. We trust that we have not admitted any thing that can raise a blush on the cheek of our readers, either for themselves or for us.

Discussion about the ethics of leaking these letters has been going on for centuries. Bernard Chevallier, the curator of Malmaison, and expert on the lives of Josephine and Napoleon, said.

Josephine only read the letter five months later in the press. The decision of the British government to publish this correspondence offended certain people … It was said at the time that the respect of people's private life—even if they are the enemy—should be regarded as a sacred principle. The publication did not honour the generosity of the ministry—it was degrading and unworthy of a civilised nation.

The last person to hear of his humiliation was Napoleon himself. Napoleon was still stranded in Egypt with over 30 000 troops bivouacked around the Pyramids and there was no safe way of communicating with France, due to the high risk of more mail being intercepted (although some letters got through via Tripoli and Tunis). Napoleon had not allowed such setbacks to interfere with his plans for colonising, studying and modernising Egypt. He attempted to merge European ideas with the traditions of Islam and prepared economic and political projects.

A week after the vicious publication of the letters, Napoleon was celebrating the opening of a garden—a public pleasure park in Cairo. At the hour of four in the afternoon a hot air balloon machine which flew, as advertised in posters printed in Arabic, rose above Esbekieh Square to the immense jubilation of the Egyptians. After the balloon took off into the air, the crowd rushed through the gates, where the new garden's director was waiting for his guest of honour in front of a giant shrub of jasmine. In a few minutes the visitors invaded the park, discovering at each corner a new attraction—jugglers, oriental singers and dancers, swings, wooden horses, icecream sellers, a small orchestra, a billiard saloon and a café.

Napoleon wanted the garden to be the equivalent of the famous Tivoli Gardens in Paris, where everybody went to enjoy their Sundays. If Paris has so many lovely gardens, he said, it is essential for Cairo to have similar places where people can divert themselves. With its ponds, streams and cascades, and orange, lemon and other sweet-smelling trees, the garden was soon the most beautiful in Cairo. Ingenious wheels within wells made it possible to have running water in every part of the garden.

Napoleon's interest in gardens meant that he even sent seeds of the small annual flower mignonette (Reseda odorata), which he had gathered himself, home to Josephine. They arrived in France without being intercepted. Although mignonette had been grown in Europe since 1725, it was Josephine who made it fashionable as a fragrant pot plant for rooms and balconies.

The seeds of the mignonette were the first of many sent to Josephine which either slipped through the war net or which the British Navy allowed through the front to France. Although it is often said that officers of the Fleet were instructed by the Admiralty to see to the safe and speedy delivery of seeds or plants addressed to Josephine on any enemy prize captured on the high seas, there is no proof of this—some got through, some did not.

Napoleon's awareness of the value of gardeners to the well-being of the community is seen by a letter he sent to headquarters with a list of necessary reinforcements and military supplies of all kinds, plus: 'A company of actors. A company of dancers. At least three or four marionnettes for the people. 100 French women. The wives of all those employed in the country. Twenty surgeons … 50 gardeners with their families, and seeds of all kinds of vegetables …'

The victory in Egypt raised Nelson to the House of Lords as Baron Nelson of the Nile. His wife Fanny gained a title but lost her husband. Much to the tittering scandal of London society, Nelson returned to England with Lady Hamilton and purchased a small mansion at Merton, then a quiet village close to Wimbledon, and an hour's carriage drive from London.

The captured letters had fuelled so much gossip in Paris that Josephine was keen to distance herself quickly from the hostility of the Bonaparte family, who were now vociferously in league against her. Gloom and a question mark hung over the future of her marriage—and she had debts in plenty and no cash. Communication with Egypt was so bad that some days she believed that Napoleon was dead or assassinated, other days that he wanted to divorce her. The leaked letters were one of the lowest points of Josephine's life, but they accelerated her determination, despite lack of funds, to remove herself from the centre of Paris. Malmaison, like Nelson's new abode at Merton, was an hour's drive from the capital, and near a quiet village west of the city centre. Guests could come for dinner and take a carriage home.

Buying the house was an act of defiance. Napoleon's brother Joseph was slow in paying Josephine her allowance; there was no possibility of his advancing money to her for anything substantial. And she did not know if she was buying the house as a family home for Napoleon's return, as a widow's retreat, or as the refuge of a divorced woman. But lack of money was ever a challenge for Josephine. With hope and borrowings she purchased Malmaison—and the story of her garden and the Australian plants began. She even borrowed 15 000 francs from the guardian at Malmaison, who continued to act as a steward.

Josephine's ex-lover Barras, in the third volume of his bitter memoirs, relates how he lent her the money as a down-payment on the house.

'Is Bonaparte truly dead? Is the news official?' 'No, madame, the news is not official, and it lacks confirmation. Amid the hazards of war, in a hostile country, amid barbarians, who can tell? The life of Bonaparte is more astonishing than would be his death …' … 'Well then, Barras, is it quite sure that Bonaparte has been assassinated?' 'The news comes from a correspondent who has no interest in lying.' … 'Would you believe that I have an income of barely 100,000 francs. When I say income I should say annuity, for it is Joseph who has control of the whole of the capital, and who pays me my allowance every

month. If I venture to ask him—a thing most painful to me—to make me a quarter's advance, he refuses. He tells me I have no rent to pay, because I have my little house in the Rue de Chantereine … I am desirous of having a country-house… a little place on the Route Saint-Germain. The environs are charming. The owner, M. Lecouleux, would sell it to me at a low price; all that he asks is 80,000 francs down. Would you believe that Joseph has dared to refuse me this amount? I begged him to advance it to me out of my annuity. He replied to me that an annuity was not paid until such times as it fell due; moreover, that mine was but a life annuity. What infamy! It would have been impossible for me to pay the first instalment if those good folks of the Compagnie Bodin—to whom, it is true, I rendered great service in Italy—had not given, lent me 50,000 francs. I require a like sum to meet my engagements, and I do not know where to find it … Come now is he really dead?' 'I believe so.' … 'I have not more than three millions in precious stones and diamonds; besides, now he [Joseph] tells me that he gives them to me, anon that he lends them to me. It would not surprise me were the whole pack of them to dispute my right to them were I a widow today … if I no longer have Bonaparte, I shall at least have wherewith to live with my diamonds and my personal property. Meanwhile, my dear friend, you must oblige me by lending me 50,000 francs, in order that I may pay an instalment on my country-house of Malmaison. This will be in accordance with the decorum suited to widowhood.'

Barras went on, saying that he would lend her the money but he did not want her jewellery as a deposit, and that if she feared the rapacity of the Bonaparte brothers, she could put her jewellery in safekeeping with her notary. She signed the Act of Purchase on 21 April 1799 for 225 000 francs plus 37 000 francs for the furniture, plus transfer taxes. This was a high price for a property that Napoleon had found too small, too expensive and lacking the grandeur that he had always yearned for.

Josephine moved immediately to Malmaison—even though she had only paid the deposit—and held a house-warming party. She spent the spring of 1799 there exploring the meadows, the forests, the vineyards, the flower-beds, and started planning her new garden. Madame de Rémusat wrote.

It was at Malmaison that Mme Bonaparte showed us an immense quantity of pearls, diamonds, and cameos, which constituted the contents of her jewel-case. Even at that time it might have figured in a tale from the Arabian Nights, and it was destined to receive further rich acquisitions. Invaded and grateful Italy had contributed … The reception rooms at Malmaison were sumptuously decorated with the spoils of Italy.

Then came the news that spread from one French village to another: Napoleon had eluded the English ships and disembarked at Fréjus on 9 October. Although the destruction of the French Fleet had forced him to leave the army behind, he found that the prestige he had acquired as hero of the Italian campaign was undimmed by his disastrous failure in Egypt. As he made a triumphal progress to Paris, he saw that growing poverty and disorder meant that the new Republic was ripe for change. At home, the government was at its lowest ebb since the inception of the Republic due to inefficiency and corruption. Abroad, Austria again threatened the frontiers.

On his arrival in Paris, Napoleon found the house on the Rue de la Victoire empty. Josephine, hearing of his landing, had hurried in her carriage south to Lyons to meet him, but unfortunately had taken a different road. She had wanted to see Napoleon before his brothers further inflamed him against her. Despite appalling communications with Egypt

they had managed to keep him informed of her assumed affair with Hippolyte Charles and the ensuing publicity.

When, a few days later, she arrived back at Rue de la Victoire, Napoleon locked her out of his room for a day. She pleaded with him and wept, banging on the door. When that failed Hortense and Eugene joined their pleas to hers. He was unable to resist them for long. When Lucien Bonaparte arrived at seven the next morning, he was ushered into the bedroom to find Napoleon in bed with Josephine at his side. Napoleon had forgiven Josephine, and Josephine had forgiven Napoleon his public affair in Egypt with a soldier's wife.

The marriage underwent a transformation. In the same way that Napoleon had made a commitment to France when he left Corsica, Josephine now made a commitment to Napoleon. Ironically, their roles were now reversed. Josephine remained faithful to her husband, but Napoleon, who had just tasted the thrill of adultery in Egypt, started a string of conquests and affairs. During the next decade, over and over again Josephine would become distraught with jealousy, although only one of Napoleon's liaisons—with the Polish aristocrat Marie Walewska in 1808—developed into an affair of consequence. Most of his mistresses were temporary. This may have been because, until the divorce in 1809, he always wanted Josephine to be part of his life. Even so, like her first husband, Napoleon complained of Josephine's possessive nature.

'The storms of the early years once weathered and blown over, the Bonapartes' marriage proved a very happy one,' wrote Antoine Thibeaudeau, who saw them often after the reconciliation. Napoleon depended on Josephine for much more than reassurance in bed. Infidelity forgotten, Josephine became the lasting love of his life, and was loyal to him to the very end. The change in Napoleon's behaviour towards Josephine is seen in Madame de Rémusat's description.

When I questioned her as to what Bonaparte was like in his youth, she told me that he was then dreamy, silent, and awkward in the society of women, but passionate and fascinating, although rather an odd person in every way. She blamed the campaign in Egypt for having changed his temper, and developed that petty despotism from which she afterwards suffered so much.

When Josephine married Napoleon, what she had wanted overwhelmingly was security for herself and her children. Although the marriage had been the desperate measure of a woman past her first bloom, her attachment to him deepened as he grew in stature, which he did at a rate almost unrivalled in history. The Battle of the Nile might have given Nelson a seat in the Upper Houses of Parliament, but it gave Napoleon the determination to seize power. Italy was lost, the enemy was advancing on the Rhine, the Revolution must be saved. The glamour of the Napoleonic legend spread across Europe. The hero-worship expanded to such a degree that even men like Hegel, Goethe and Beethoven hailed Napoleon as the Messiah of a new order in Europe. 'Meanwhile all Europe rang with my arrival,' recalled Napoleon in his memoirs. 'England and Austria were alarmed.'

Just over a month after his return, on 9 November, he staged a bloodless coup d'état. The lower Chamber, in a last spasm of republicanism, refused to vote, and its deputies were dispersed by Napoleon's troops. Finally, the upper Chamber and a small minority of the lower Chamber agreed to transfer power to three consuls: Napoleon, Sieyès and

Ducos. Barras signed the resignation which had been prepared for him in advance. When he left Paris for his country seat a troop of cavalry accompanied him to ensure he did not return.

Three years after Napoleon replaced Barras as Josephine's lover, Napoleon had reduced Barras from the most powerful man in France to a lonely, bitter has-been on a country estate. Now that Napoleon was one of the three new rulers of France, he and Josephine moved from Rue de la Victoire into the Luxembourg Palace, which above the main entrance displays the coat of arms of Marie de Medicis who had ordered the palace to be built in 1612. Although it had until recently been surrounded by the only remaining Renaissance garden in Paris, with a French embroidery of flower-beds around Italian-style grottoes and fountains, when Josephine arrived the grounds already reflected the horticultural Anglomania which had come to France at the end of the ancien régime. As this now English-style garden had become a favourite place for Parisians to stroll, it meant that Josephine had no privacy.

In the event this mattered little—she was hardly there, as within three months Napoleon moved his headquarters to the Tuileries. The move on 19 February 1800, complete with a procession in which Napoleon rode in a carriage drawn by six white horses, is the first example of Napoleon staging a display of pomp for the public. He said to his old school friend Louis Antoine Bourrienne, who worked as his secretary for a few years, 'We must make a show and impress people. The Directoire was too simple and so not respected. Simplicity is all very well in the army, but in a large city, in a palace, the head of the government must attract all eyes in every possible way.'

Three thousand soldiers lined the route while the crowds cheered. Napoleon moved into Louis XVI's old suite of eight rooms on the first floor, and Josephine occupied Marie Antoinette's rooms on the ground floor where she felt she could sense the ghost of her predecessor. Josephine never liked these rooms, and always longed to get back to Malmaison. The gardens of the Tuileries, like those of the Luxembourg Palace, were also open so the public could stroll past, and were even busier with cafés.

The first part of Napoleon's rise to power as First Consul is closely associated with his delight in Malmaison. At last he had a place where he could expend some of his tremendous nervous energy—no house could contain him and his incredible and aggressive drive. He needed a garden where he could pace up and down. The day after the coup he and Josephine had journeyed there for a few days' respite. From that day onwards until the end of 1802, Malmaison was to be Napoleon's country residence, a backdrop to the first heady years of the Consulate. This period was also one of stabilisation after the Revolution, as well as being the most successful period in Napoleon's career. There was a carefree, youthful atmosphere—before he brought in protocol, etiquette and titles.

It was in Napoleon's study at Malmaison that some of the most beneficial laws and reforms which affected everyday life in France were discussed and written. The most famous of these were the Civil Code and the Concordat, the treaty between the Papacy and France concerning the restoration of the Church. While discussing the Concordat Lucien Bonaparte is reputed to have said with youthful enthusiasm: 'Let us only consult the proper oracles of the century, let us interrogate Rousseau.' This was a provocative remark,

as Napoleon had dramatically showed the world that he had forsaken Rousseau, by having the faces of his favourite writers and philosophers painted on the vaulted ceiling of his study at Malmaison, omitting Rousseau whom he had repudiated but including Voltaire, Hume and Racine.

In the ten years until his divorce in 1809, Napoleon spent a total of ten months and twelve days at Malmaison, a much longer period than he spent at any one of the legendary royal palaces of Fontainebleau, Compiègne, Le Trianon at Versailles or Rambouillet. After 1802 his principal residences were the Tuileries and the palace of St Cloud. For Josephine, however, Malmaison remained a haven and home for the rest of her life. It was here that the couple experienced their greatest domestic bliss.

'Nowhere, except on the battlefield, have I seen Bonaparte more happy than in the gardens at Malmaison,' wrote Bourrienne. Confined to rooms along the great corridors in the Tuileries during the week, Napoleon longed for the country. Bourrienne said Napoleon looked on life at Malmaison as an escape from the burden of affairs and the constraint of state occasions, 'looking forward as eagerly to his weekends there as a schoolboy to his holidays'.

Malmaison could not be compared with the splendid estate of Mortefontaine which Napoleon's brother Joseph had purchased. Rather than being a grand princely establishment, Malmaison was really a large country manor which had mellowed as it was added to over the centuries. It was ordinary but very pretty. Farm buildings and stables were attached to the main building. The grounds included a small park, gardens, woods and vineyards, running down to the poplar-fringed Seine and across to the small island of Chatou. Madame Junot wrote: 'Malmaison was a pretty country house with agreeable environs … The park was small, sloping on all sides, and resembled a pretty English garden.'

In front of the principal façade of the house was a vast lawn which led the eye towards the hills on the other side of the Seine. The river flowed discreetly across the bottom of the park. In the distance could be seen a series of arches built in the Roman style—the Aqueduct of Marly, from which Versailles drew its water. The English fashion for embellishing the landscape with suggestions of eye-catching ruins led Josephine, pointing to the aqueduct, to say to guests: 'This is a kindness which Louis XIV did for me.'

Josephine suffered no reproaches from Napoleon for paying an excessively high price for the estate. Instead a delighted Napoleon paid the balance of the money owing on 20 December 1799, 'for him and in his name', by which he became the actual owner. Although Josephine ran the house and garden as her own, Malmaison was not legally held in her name until it was transferred to her in 1809 as part of her divorce settlement.

Malmaison today is a far cry from the simple, rather rundown estate, encompassing only 60 hectares, which Josephine and Napoleon first acquired. They immediately started architectural improvements, and the land was extended by purchase and exchange to take in the surrounding 130 hectares of woods. When Josephine died, fifteen years after its purchase, the Malmaison estate was twelve times its original size, covering a total of 726 hectares. Napoleon complained bitterly about the cost of modernising the house and altering the park, and about the extra grounds which Josephine insisted on buying, yet it was he who started dramatic alterations to the house itself and he who kept on financing the improvements. Work at Malmaison, however, was small compared to the scale of

Napoleon's grandiose vision for functional public works in Paris—which included a water system for the city, numerous sewers, footpaths, new streets, bridges, quays. He was always building.

malmaison before josephine

The origin of the unfortunate name Malmaison, meaning 'evil house', is a mystery. One legend tells that it was here that Viking plunderers gathered in 826. Another suggests that the name refers to evil deeds perpetrated by a Viking leader on local women. Whatever evil existed in the house disappeared as soon as the next family moved in, as it remained in the same family for 376 years, from 1390 until 1766. The next owners, the du Moley family, were not so fortunate. The Revolution brought an end to their possession of their beloved house and the English garden they had created. After just over thirty years, they had to put it up for sale.

The du Moley family were part of a group of philosophers who prided themselves, before the Revolution, on running Malmaison like an English country house. One of their literary visitors described the estate as: '… beside the brook of Malmaison which flows down a steep slope from the top of the hill and winds along, under bowers of greenery to groove the flowery lawns …' Violets and daisies to this day are found in this lawn.

The former curator at Malmaison, Gerard Hubert, said that after his purchase of the house in 1771, the new proprietor, Jacques-Jean Le Couteulx du Moley, a member of a family of Normandy financiers, gave 'brilliant receptions to which came an elite of nobles, artists, poets and philosophers … Choderlos de Laclos, who had just published Les Liaisons Dangereuses … the American Governor Morriss …' Madame du Moley liked to walk alone. It was understood that if one held a branch of greenery in one's hand, one did not want to meet people or to talk. One of the frequent visitors was the poet Abbé Delille, author of Les Jardins, in which he described Malmaison as 'so pleasant with its beautiful woods, water-pieces, views and position'.

In spite of being a supporter of the Revolution, Le Couteulx tried unsuccessfully to save Louis XVI. Imprisoned himself and deep in debt, he was forced to sell his little chateau on the Seine.

holding office under the trees

When Napoleon was in residence at Malmaison, from six in the morning the house bustled with government and military officials. He held meetings with counsellors, preparing edicts and laws. Bourrienne wrote.

At Malmaison Bonaparte sometimes neglected his work in order to take walks and supervise personally the improvements which he had ordered … After dinner, he amused himself by calculating the income from the grounds. He forgot neither the upkeep of the park nor the vegetables in the kitchen garden. His accounts showed an income of 8,000 francs. 'That's not bad,' he said to me, 'but one needs a yearly income of 30,000 francs to live here.'

A wooden bridge was suspended from the side of the library into the garden, over the waterless moat. It was covered by a long canvas tent, which gave Napoleon an airy room

where he worked on a narrow table. If the weather was good the garden itself became his office. Servants carried his table outside so he could work, using the bridge to move between the library and the lawn. A small octagonal pavilion—still standing in the garden today—which was built by the previous owners in 1790 and named the Pavilion of Liberty, became a private retreat. Like Napoleon's cave in Corsica and his arbour at school, it was a closed-in place where he could withdraw to think alone.

Napoleon had an almost British public school belief in fresh air and exercise, often asking for windows to be opened. Open air was, he said, conducive to 'the expansion of ideas'. Working out of doors made his thoughts 'loftier and larger'. Madame Junot quotes Napoleon as saying: 'When I am outside in the fresh air my ideas take a higher direction … I cannot understand how some men can work successfully if they are always inside, beside the fireplace, without communication with the sky.' This might have been the inspiration for the ceiling in Josephine's bedroom, which features a fresco of a few cirrus clouds blowing across a bright blue sky.

Sometimes, to the horror of the older government men, Napoleon worked on the ground without chairs or table. The statesman Charles Maurice de Talleyrand who was foreign minister both under Barras and Napoleon, complained.

I arrived at Malmaison … where I found the First Consul had established his office on one of the bowling greens. Everyone was sitting on the grass which Napoleon did not mind in the least as he was wearing leather boots and kid breeches—and he is used to camping. But as for me in silk breeches and silk stockings—can you imagine me sitting on the lawn! I am full of rheumatism! What a man! It was as if he was in a camp!

entertainments and amusements

On fine days, especially on balmy spring and summer evenings, meals were taken on the lawn. There was a vogue at the time for eating alfresco. Even the atmosphere of Rousseau's Emile was sometimes recreated after a fashion at Malmaison—he had written.

…we will make our dining room anywhere, in the garden, on a boat, beneath a tree; sometimes at a distance from the house on the banks of a running stream, on the fresh green grass, among the clumps of willow and hazel; a long procession of guests will carry the material for the feast with laughter and singing; the turf will be our chairs and table, the banks of the stream our sideboard, and our dessert is hanging on the trees.

Rousseau might have been surprised at the way Josephine interpreted this scene. Her footmen carried decorative dwarf fruit trees to the dining room, so guests could pluck their own cherries, plums and apricots in mid-December.

The family and their guests played either simple charades in the salon or card games or theatricals, with the painter Isabey setting up the props. Hortense, an excellent actress, was a great success in The Barber of Seville. Madame Campan, the proprietor and headmistress of Hortense's school, was a regular visitor and a huge influence on both her favourite pupil Hortense and on the etiquette and tone of Consular life. She made sure that the old-world courtesies of the ancien régime were not forgotten. Later she would even advise on the procedures and rituals for the coronation.

Sometimes at these family-dominated evenings Napoleon —despite lessons in Valence which had not resulted in any great competence on the floor—danced his favourite Monaco, which was more exercise than dance. Napoleon was well aware that he did not have the accomplishments of a gentleman. He could neither dance nor ride well—he racked in the saddle and wore holes in his trousers—and although he spoke excellent French as well as his native Italian, he never learnt to speak any other languages. But this lack of polish did not worry him.

The accounts of Madame Junot, who became the Duchess d'Abrantès, and Josephine's daughter Hortense, best convey the happiness and excitement of those early days at Malmaison. Madame Junot's mother was a Corsican friend of Napoleon's mother. At the age of sixteen she married Napoleon's friend and general, Androche Junot, and later made a small fortune with her racy Mémoires Historiques which she wrote when having an affair with Balzac. In this book she recalled.

Bonaparte loved Malmaison, and liked the company to feel at ease there, although he worked continually, rising at six each morning, and not appearing until the evening. On Wednesdays there was usually a more formal dinner, the guests driving out from Paris, and afterwards there were theatricals.

On warm summer evenings Bonaparte would order dinner to be served outside on the lawns beneath the trees. On some days hunts were arranged, and the youthful company would at times, when Bonaparte felt in the mood, play games like barre which he vastly enjoyed, taking off his coat and running like a hare, or rather, like the gazelle he fed with all the tobacco from his pouch, encouraging it to run at us, and the horrid animal tore our dresses and often our legs.

Most of the inhabitants at Malmaison were young and gay, and there was much laughter … For Napoleon, one of the greatest delights of those recreational periods was to see us running beneath the leafy arches of the trees, all dressed in white. Nothing else touched him

like the sight of a graceful woman in a white gown. Josephine, well aware of this preference, almost always wore India muslin, filmy as a cloud. Indeed, in general, the white dress was a uniform for the women at Malmaison… Napoleon loved that spot with a passion!

Hortense's extensive memoirs reflect her fondness for Napoleon—right to the end of his career she retained something of her girlish enthusiasm for him; Napoleon was also genuinely attached to her. Hortense described how the trade wars meant that neither she nor her mother could wear the flimsy white dresses they so liked, and how it affected fashions on all levels.

France prospered, the government became organised and work abounded. Luxury, an indispensable feature of a great state, began to rear its head. In order to revive the cloth industry at Lyons and to set us free from the constant levy we were paying to the British, the First Consul had forbidden us to wear muslin and threw anything he suspected to have been made in England into the fire.

Whenever my mother and I appeared before him, all dressed up, his first question was always: 'Is that muslin you're wearing?' Often we replied that it was St Quentin linen,

but a smile invariably betrayed us and instantly his hand would tear the foreign garment asunder. These sartorial disasters recurred frequently, and we had to turn to satin and velvet instead. Fashion intervened, however, and cashmere shawls—in spite of frequent threats to burn them—survived banishment.

balls and dinners

Sunday night balls were the highlight of the summer season during the first years of the Consulate. A stream of carriages from Paris poured into the Malmaison courtyard, and guests wandered from the music-filled rooms through the French windows to the wide green lawn onto which the château's garden façade opened.

Even when guests were present, meals with Napoleon were brisk and served quickly—they rarely lasted more than twenty minutes or half an hour. He was bored with drawn-out lunches or dinner parties. 'If one wants to eat fast,' declared Napoleon, 'One must eat chez moi!' At Malmaison the large table in the dining room decorated with Roman dancers on the walls gave the feeling of a family reunion. Napoleon sat down first at the head of the table, choosing whoever he wanted to sit on the chair beside him. Facing him was Josephine—always a patient and gifted hostess. There were never any place cards and other guests followed without any order.

'And after dinner,' Hortense reminisced, 'the First Consul always took my mother's arm, to lead her away from the others for a long stroll through the gardens.'

Visitors to the house were usually taken by Josephine to inspect the latest plant acquisitions. 'At Malmaison the park, the grounds and woods above the Seine were enchanting,' wrote Madame Junot. 'Mme Bonaparte was already laying out her colourful flower beds and building her immense hothouses that were to make her gardens unrivalled in France.'

Napoleon often walked in the gardens with Josephine so Hortense and her friends could flirt in the drawing-room with the aides-de-camp. Hortense fell in love with Gérard Duroc, although he was only three years younger than her stepfather. Glamorous and amusing, this scion of an impoverished aristocratic family was a personal friend of Napoleon's and had been his aide-de-camp in Italy. Unfortunately for Hortense, both Josephine and Napoleon wanted her to marry another of Napoleon's aides-de-camp, his brother Louis Bonaparte—and in the end their wishes prevailed. At Malmaison love affairs were started, engagements arranged, hearts broken. It was a radiantly youthful group that gathered there from Saturday to Monday during the early days of the Consulate.

Hortense wrote.

The Consul's habits were much the same at Malmaison as in Paris. He invariably worked all the morning, either alone or with his ministers, who came out from Paris. Learned men were invited to dinner; they stayed afterwards, spending the rest of the evening, and the Consul enjoyed the conversation. Those I saw the most frequently were Monge, Berthollet, Fourcroy, Volney, Laplace, Lagrange and Prony. Those who were married came with their wives … Of them all it was Monge whom the Emperor seemed to like best as a man … Savants seemed at their ease with the Consul, for between them and him there was always complete freedom of expression … One day he drove out with my mother and myself, and we went to the Jardin des Plantes to call on Daubenton, the naturalist, who lived in a little pavilion giving on to the garden. He seemed extremely old as

he sat in a large armchair, but in spite of his great age he had all his wits about him when he spoke. The General asked him many questions about Buffon.

No monarch was ever so attentive to scientists as Napoleon. Not only did he invite them socially to Malmaison, he encouraged them in other ways. The naturalist Bernard Lacépède, who was Professor of Natural History at the Jardin des Plantes, was made a senator in 1799, and a minister of state in 1809. Claude Berthollet the chemist, Napoleon's friend who did so much research into gunpowder, was made a senator, as were Lagrange, Laplace and Monge. Fourcroy was made a councillor of state, Jean Antoine Chaptal was made Minister of the Interior.

napoleon widens his
social circle

'Under the Republic, when social life had been completely destroyed, the Republicans tried to make the cultured class adopt the manners and habits of the populace,' wrote Hortense, recalling her youth at Malmaison.

Under the Consulate, on the other hand, the Consul, when he brought people together again, strove to raise everyone of talent and value to the level of good society (which used to be so exclusive), no matter what had been their origin. Aristocratic traditions are so deeply rooted among all classes in France that this was no easy matter. Nevertheless he tried. He went so far as to invite some famous actors to dine at Malmaison … all distinguished artists and possessing excellent manners. But people took offence, and prejudice is so strong that the nouveaux riches objected quite as much as the old nobility.

renovations and decorations

In between the entertaining and summer days on the lawns colossal alterations took place at Malmaison. Napoleon wanted a brilliant architect to transform the ground floor, creating a suite of modern salons worthy of his new status as Consul. The painters David and Isabey both extolled the virtues of the two young architects Percier and Fontaine, who had done some work near Rue de la Victoire. Josephine had already ordered some furniture from Fontaine when in Italy. On 30 January 1800 they received the title of 'Architects of Malmaison' and within months Malmaison became a stepping stone to fame, this commission leading to major alterations on many of the royal palaces of Paris, including the Tuileries and the Louvre. They would work for Napoleon, but not Josephine, until 1815.

Their first idea was to push Malmaison itself aside and build a pretty little Italian-style villa on the hill. The old house, they said, could be turned into servant and staff quarters. But considerations of finance—and Napoleon—prevailed, and instead they modernised the old mansion in a grandiose manner.

As well as being structurally altered, every corner of the house was filled with the latest style of furniture. Malmaison became one of the first houses to display the new Empire style, of which Percier and Fontaine were the true inspirers. Some of the prototypes of this distinctive style can still be seen at Malmaison.

Empire-style furniture carried carvings, gilt motifs of crowns, caryatids and griffins. The classical embellishments of Greece and Rome were combined with sphinxes and other

symbols of Egyptian antiquity, such as scarabs, lotuses and the characteristic human-headed animal figures. The goddesses and swans of classical mythology mingled with symbols of the Roman warrior—swords, arrows and helmets. Life-like claw feet supported tables, chests and carved stands. Ironically, it was Marie Antoinette who first introduced Egyptian themes into furniture—she even had stone sphinxes in her English garden at Versailles. But the style did not catch on until Napoleon returned from his Egyptian campaign, when it spread rapidly beyond the confines of France. Percier and Fontaine dictated their ideas to master cabinetmakers such as Jacob, who made pieces in mahogany, inlaid with thin strips of light-coloured wood.

The year 1800 was devoted to renovations which had to be undertaken at great speed, as Napoleon went to Malmaison every ‘decade-end’ and did not want his rooms filled with tradesmen. Seven years earlier, in November 1793, the seven-day week had been abolished and replaced by the ‘decade’—a period of ten days. Weekends became ‘decade-ends’ until Napoleon abolished the decade in September 1805 in favour of the old Gregorian calendar.

As well as the superficial alterations and decorations to the house, the plumbing and kitchens were modernised. The kitchen in the basement beside the waterless moat was provided with huge spits, and many bathrooms with running water were installed. Napoleon, who said that a hot bath was equal to four hours sleep, liked to top up his daily bath with lots of boiling water. Excellent bathrooms were built in every house he used—at Elba he built a Pompeii-style bath. In just eighteen months at Malmaison, more than double the purchase price was spent on renovations. All around annexes mushroomed—dwellings for servants, stables, shelters for the many guards and their dogs, even a charming little theatre. A pavilion in the shape of a tent was built at the entrance of the house, opening onto a vestibule with stucco columns, giving it the aspect of the atrium of a Roman villa.

This hallway led on the right to a billiard room, a drawing room and a gallery which doubled as a music salon. To the left there was the dining room, its plaster walls elaborately painted. The room most admired today is Napoleon’s library cum study, with its vaulted ceilings. The ground floor was magnificent, while the council chambers, situated above the drawing room and the gallery, were much simpler, in the shape of a tent. The remainder of the first floor accommodated seven bedroom suites, while ten smaller ones were on the second floor.

The tensions which later arose between the architects and Josephine were not manifest at first. Fontaine wrote in his diary.

The decorators have finished the ceilings of the library and the frieze in the room of the first Consul, on the first floor, above the drawing-room … Madame Bonaparte takes a lively interest in everything we do. She is ordering some new decorations and wants us to give our attention to the gardens, the waters, the hothouses, in short: to everything that can make this place more agreeable, for she regards it as her own private property.

Redouté’s brother Antoine was bought in to paint frescoes on the walls of Josephine’s drawing room. But the main Redouté influence at Malmaison was that of Pierre Joseph

who, from the moment he came with his easel to paint flower portraits for Josephine's bedroom, worked there regularly until Josephine's death. Dozens of staff came and went, or died in those sixteen years, but Redouté was around from the beginning of the garden until its end.

Napoleon was so impressed by the work of Percier and Fontaine at Malmaison that he wrote to them asking them to renovate the gardens of the Tuileries with suitable temples, kiosks for the cafés, and fountains. He ordered more trees to be planted in straight lines, more grass to be laid, more pavilions to be built and the grand central avenue, which on special occasions he had lit with lanterns, to be made wider.

The two architects were later ordered to transform the Louvre to accommodate the treasures which had arrived from Italy. The work on the Great Gallery, with its massive double archways and overhead lighting, was a contrast to work in the modestly sized rooms at Malmaison. Although Napoleon was reluctant to have his name glorified, he made an exception with art and science. He agreed to have the name of the Louvre changed to Le Musée Napoleon.

the people's art

With the Revolution came a demand for the democratisation of art. Most people could only see paintings in cathedrals and churches—and much of that was confiscated during the Revolution anyway. There were no public galleries open on a regular basis. Books and prints were expensive and mostly out of the reach of the working man. A handwritten petition presented to the Directoire in March 1799, signed by nearly forty prominent French artists, including Redouté, David, Le Brun, Carle Vernet, Gérard, Fragonard and the two architects Percier and Fontaine, pleaded with the French government to recognise engraving as a major art form. Nothing happened. But eight months later, when Napoleon came to power as First Consul, he took immediate notice of the petition. The huge production of relatively cheap engravings followed: black and white as well as colour plates of everything from life-like images of battles and portraits, rural scenes and flowers to scientific colour plates of newly classified plants and animals. In addition engravings were used to illustrate expensive large folio editions. Napoleon, by helping the print industry and opening the Louvre, widened the audience of art and science. His patronage later extended to aiding the social ascent of artists as not only did he invite his favourite painters to formal events at the Tuileries, he ennobled them. The director of the museums of the Louvre and French monuments, Dominique Vivant Denon, became a baron, as did Antoine Jean Gros and François Pascal Gérard, making them socially equal or superior to the people who purchased their work. Napoleon's patronage of the arts was a major reason for the documentation of the Australian flora in France which coincided with his era.

The contrast between the garden styles favoured by Josephine and Napoleon could not have been greater. It is said in many books and articles that he called the winding paths, kiosks, rustic bridges, temples and cottages that his wife so liked les niaiseries ('foolish things'), that he was furious at her wish to have an English garden, that he preferred the grounds to be formal, French and grand. But neither letters nor his extensive memoirs substantiate this alleged disapproval—and he actually commissioned an English garden himself at Fontainebleau in 1810. The only written complaints about Josephine and her horticultural Anglomania come from the architects Percier and Fontaine.

There may be a lack of records about Napoleon's taste in gardens, but there is one piece of evidence greater than words, his own garden at St Helena. He demonstrated his personal preference in garden styles in 1819 when he created a formal garden on the island during his banishment there. Despite its tropical location he planned a stiff, formal French garden complete with parterres, instead of a lush, abundant display of nature. Anyone who attempts such a garden with its patterns of little pathways, clipped dwarf hedges, roses and rows of annuals in well-forked soil, in the semi-arid tropics on top of a mountain 500 metres above sea level, where the winds are constant and there is a shortage of water, must have a strong and stubborn predilection for that style.

Napoleon's St Helena garden showed a soldier's orderly mind and an impulse towards straight lines, symmetry and geometry. Wearing a straw hat with a wide brim he neatly divided the ground, manured it and sowed it, and expected everyone—from his valet to his secretary—to join in this backbreaking labour. There were even a grotto and a cascade. Ever-practical, though, Napoleon included plenty of beans, peas, and every other vegetable that could be grown on the island—all safely guarded from the world by thick walls to make a private sanctum, a retreat. When one day a bullock charged into the garden a horrified Napoleon, seeing deep hoof-prints destroying his neat beds, shot the animal dead. By contrast, when Josephine hired an elephant to visit Malmaison to amuse her grandchildren she ignored the troughs made by his giant pads. The lawn, she sighed, is being ruined—but as long as the children were enjoying themselves she resigned herself to the damage.

Josephine would have despaired at what Napoleon laid out at St Helena. For her it would have had too many straight paths and little squares of lawn—in total contrast to the sinuous English style which she favoured. In gardening, as in many other things, they were worlds apart.

At Malmaison Josephine started gardening with passion a few months after she moved in. For twenty years she had led a rootless, shifting life. Settled now, at last she could plant trees that she would see grow to maturity, and initiate books which would record the splendours of her garden for centuries. Josephine's patronage of botanists and artists meant that she made a true contribution to natural science and to the knowledge of the flora of many countries, including Australia. France still led the world in the field of natural history. The scientific interest in plants and animals aroused by George Leclerc de Buffon's monumental forty-four volume Histoire Naturelle, published between 1749–67, had continued during the turmoil of the Revolution and since.

Perhaps no other house in France could have revitalised Josephine's interest in gardening and natural history as did Malmaison. When she moved in there was already an English garden, which showed the influence of Rousseau, and a Clock Building, a four-storeyed tower with a natural history cabinet of pressed flowers and botanical books. Malmaison boasted mature grounds in a style in stark contrast to the formalism of French and Italian gardens. Josephine vastly improved on what was there and, while normally easy-going, opposed all attempts to introduce classical formal French garden designs, obstinately refusing to change the character of the grounds.

what is an english garden?

Apart from its neatness, balance and symmetry, supporters of the formal classical French garden liked its constancy throughout the seasons. An English garden's appearance is subject to the seasons, changing throughout the year. The garden in March has a different appearance from the garden in August, and so on—it is never static.

While neo-classicism dominated Europe a new romantic movement developed in England. The English garden, so connected with the great houses of England, is the main garden style indigenous to the British Isles. Romantic English landscapes, first pioneered by the Palladian architects and that greatest of English landscape gardeners, William Kent, then pushed ahead by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, were a reaction against the classical formality of the seventeenth century. Kent's view was that 'nature abhors a straight line'.

Ironically, two of the main influences on the new English school came from abroad. One was the Arcadian landscapes, with their winding streams, classical bridges and shady groves, of the French painters such as Claude Lorraine and Nicolas Poussin. The other was the Chinese structures popularised by Sir William Chambers, architect of the Pagoda at Kew and author of Dissertation on Oriental Gardening. The main influence on the English garden, however, was the English literary movement, which lauded the loosened-up garden style which looked more natural and boasted an asymmetrical beauty. Horace Walpole said that William Kent 'leapt the fence and saw that all nature was a garden'. Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope and the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, as well as other writers and intellectuals, put force behind this move towards nature even though they strenuously maintained rigid ideas on architecture. Pope tore the formal style of garden to shreds. This change in gardening philosophy coincided with England's rapid rise to world power. With the expansion of trade came plant explorers and naturalists, and new species of trees, shrubs and flowers poured into England.

The jardin anglais in France was fashionable, almost daring, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century not widespread. The term was used to describe gardens which were natural and informal but contained fantastic man-made objects in the shape of temples, follies, grottoes, waterfalls, ruins, bridges, leafy glades with pieces of mellow sculpture and always a winding river or stream. Some English gardens even had thatched rural retreats. In France, although the influence of Versailles was still paramount, there were some famous examples which were given the label jardin anglais. Madame Tallien's La Chaumière was one, as were Ermenonville and Marie Antoinette's attempt to create an English garden hameau set in Anglo-Chinese scenery. She moved the rare and unusual plants of Le Petit Trianon's botanic garden to make way for a rustic garden with Swiss chalets, sheepfolds and winding walks, as well as a lawn with violets and daisies. But the result was overdone and florid, not subtle enough to be a true English garden.

what is a formal
french garden?

Formal French gardens, with their grand sense of scale and massive effects, combined the classical elements of garden design with long straight avenues of the French hunting forests, axial walks, intersecting avenues or allées. Some of the magnificent formal gardens, like the giant living Persian carpet at Versailles, were designed merely to be looked at from above, not as places for relaxation. They are cold and silent; there is no place for birds and butterflies or other wildlife. Critics say they are over-pruned, too regular and too monotonous. Versailles, the masterpiece of André Le Nôtre, not only influenced

gardens throughout France, but the layout also of towns and cities. Even that part of early nineteenth century Paris from the Tuileries to the Arc de Triomphe, with its straight thoroughfares, symmetry and classical embellishments, is based on one of Le Nôtre's original designs.

A formal garden relies on subjecting nature to human will; it relies on secateurs and constant cutting back and pruning, concentrating more on pattern than on plants. In contrast, English gardens, even before the eighteenth century, with their sweet-smelling walled gardens, open bowling greens, clipped yew hedges, arbours, kitchen gardens, orchards and meadows, have always leaned more towards natural than classical lines.

josephine's english design

To stress the Englishness of her garden, Jospehine grouped native French trees in threes or fives, never an even number. Too much topiary—shrubs and trees trimmed and clipped into ornamental shapes—and manicured hedges in intricate scrolled patterns, would have been a peculiarly unsuitable setting for the exciting new flora which the plant hunters were bringing back to Europe. The English garden also fitted in with the new refusal to be constrained by the traditions which still existed in France, despite the Revolution. With her garden Josephine wanted everything to be freer, more natural in approach—like the flimsy muslin dresses she liked to wear. If Josephine had not persisted in keeping Malmaison in the English style, the garden would not have adapted itself so well to the newly discovered plants from Australia.

At Malmaison the eye penetrated through and beyond trees to glimpses of the countryside beyond. Vistas changed with the shadows cast by the sun. The silhouette and the skyline were special features. The main garden was irregular in plan with serpentine walks winding through shrubberies intermixed with roses and honeysuckle for naturalistic effects. One of Josephine's radical steps was to adapt Humphrey Repton's new concept of bringing flower-gardens close to the house. This was revolutionary—a forerunner of modern gardening practices. Plants were chosen so there was a succession of flowers according to season.

Fontaine the architect complained in 1801: 'Madame Bonaparte wants nothing but à l'anglais, nothing but what is tortuous, animated, uneven, with precipices, rivers, temple, as at Méréville, as at Mortefontaine, as at the Desert de Retz.' Curiosity about the English garden style, originally fuelled by Rousseau, had also been stimulated by the translation of Thomas Whateley's Observations on Modern Gardening in 1771. Josephine would almost certainly have visited the gardens mentioned so disparagingly by Fontaine, especially Mortefontaine, which was owned by Napoleon's brother Joseph.

napoleon's love of
the neo-classical

The fact that his brother Joseph also had un jardin anglais may have softened Napoleon's attitude towards the English style, although from the moment he came to power until his dying day he promoted the neo-classical style in buildings and art, especially in Paris. This majestic, grand style which Napoleon favoured evoked the strength and the power of the regime and can be seen today in his Arc de Triomphe, the column in the Place Vendôme, the paintings by David and Gerard and the sculptures of Antonio Canova. Although, ever-practical, he had the first footpaths and gutters built in

Paris, improved water distribution, added ten kilometres of sewerage, his intention was ‘to make Paris the most beautiful capital of the world’. One of his first jobs was to clean up the Louvre—he removed all the shops and set the mould for it to become the richest public museum in the world, full of European masterpieces and antiquities from Egypt, Rome and Greece.

Napoleon liked strong, grand architecture which recalled imperial Rome, and became a force behind the revival of classical principles. He could never have enough arches, especially triumphal arches such as the Carrousel and the Etoile, columns, friezes, statues, pedestals and capitals. After Napoleon moved into the Tuileries, Percier and Fontaine built the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli and he named the nearby streets after his military victories.

Although Napoleon enjoyed the garden at Malmaison, he never appreciated the enormous effort and cost that went into it. In the memoirs he dictated to General Bertrand he grumbled: ‘What is the craziest form of expenditure? To indulge in a passion for building. It is even worse than laying out gardens. The house and garden at Malmaison were no better, possibly less so, for having had millions spent on them.’

Napoleon brought an appreciation of science into Josephine’s life, but he had absolutely no influence on the appearance and design of her garden. He was too restless, too busy and seldom long enough in one place to involve himself seriously with plants, although he had a genuine interest in them, especially majestic trees. During the only two periods in his life when Napoleon spent an uninterrupted length of time in one place—at military school in Brienne and on St Helena—he made gardens, the main similarity between them being that they were both enclosed within a wall, fenced off from the world.

Josephine, on the other hand, delighted in showing guests around, explaining botanical details to the point of boredom. ‘It was Josephine, and Josephine alone, who was interested in natural history,’ says Bernard Chevallier, the learned curator of Malmaison. ‘Gardening for Napoleon on St Helena was, for him, a way of finding something to do, to fill his last days, to have exercise.’

Josephine’s romantic garden of vistas with dozens of beds and borders into which she acclimatised new flowering shrubs, flowers and trees, was as different as a garden could be from the formality of Napoleon’s hectare at St Helena. Although the cluttered look and the stiff little alleys of a formal French garden were no part of Josephine’s vision for Malmaison, she was forced to compromise in some respects: ‘At the expense of the good opinion that she has of our talents,’ wrote Fontaine, ‘we managed to obtain from her that the entrance drive and the one which leads to the stables, should not be submitted to the rules which expect tortuous little pathways.’ So the carriage entry to the house became a large straight French avenue, the garden in front of the main entrance was also kept up in a more traditional French style, and two sections near the house, called ‘the Emperor’s garden’, were geometrical.

While Josephine brought the easy English garden style to the surroundings of the house, Napoleon brought the neo-classical style into the house. He commissioned Girodet to paint dramatic frescoes depicting modern French generals who, after their heroic deeds, were received into heaven by the Scottish Ossian. The legend of Ossian, related in a lengthy poem, was popular in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The

poem was either by an ancient Scottish bard whose works had been rediscovered, or forged by the Scotsman Macpherson.

Another dramatic example of the contrast between the natural style of Josephine and the formal style of Napoleon is revealed in their choice of paintings. While he favoured the grandeur of David and Girodet, she preferred the bucolic settings of seventeenth-century Paul Potter, painter of placid cows, sheep and quiet landscapes. Sixteen of his pictures were hung in her gallery at Malmaison, including La Vache qui Pisse.

David emerged as the leading neo-classical painter, using modern subjects in colourful, classical settings from the past. Architecture, too, was dominated by neo-classicism, as was sculpture. Sometimes Napoleon took the style too far. Canova's statues of Pauline as Venus and Napoleon's mother as Agrippina caused a sensation, but his gigantic nude statue of Napoleon as Mars did not. Nobody saw it. It had taken nine years to complete and by the time it arrived in February 1811, its subject had thickened considerably around the waist. An embarrassed Napoleon had it packed away in a corner of the Louvre, saying it was athletic and that the sculptor had failed to express his calm dignity. In 1816 it was sold by Louis XVIII to the British for for 66 000 francs. After it was carefully shipped to London, the Prince Regent gave it to Wellington. Complete with the figure of Victory in the right hand, it still stands in Apsley House, Wellington's home in Hyde Park, London, exactly where Wellington placed it at the bottom of the staircase, dominating the entrance hall, and is viewed by tens of thousands of tourists every year.

Many of the pictures at Apsley House are of the Bonapartes or from the Bonaparte collection and reflect the love of neo-classical art shared by Napoleon and his brother Joseph. One painting by Robert Lefévre shows Napoleon in full neo-classical accoutrement—blue uniform with red facings, gold epaulettes, white waistcoat and white breeches of a French general, with black Napoleon boots, plus the Italian Iron Crown, which dangles from his buttonhole—hung to look across Hyde Park. Another by Lefevre is mounted in a frame decorated with Imperial bees.

Eighty-three of the magnificent paintings on show were found in the baggage in Joseph Bonaparte's carriage, which was captured by Wellington in June 1813 at Vitoria, on the road between Spain and France. Wellington sent the canvases, which had been taken out of their frames and rolled up, to England for safe-keeping. When he found that Joseph had taken the paintings from the walls of the royal palaces in Spain, Wellington wrote offering to return them, but the Spanish, grateful for British involvement in the war, insisted that he kept them. Thus England benefitted from Joseph's art theft. Napoleon, on the other hand, acquired paintings and works of arts as part of war reparations or treaties.

The Empire style—which is based on neo-classical principles—is so closely associated with Napoleon that it could be called the Napoleon style. The discovery of the ancient city of Pompeii in the early eighteenth century had revitalised French interest in classical antiquity, an interest which came to a peak at the end of the reign of Louis XVI, and influenced the fashions of the Revolution and the new Republic, the grandest phase of French neo-classicism. Even the terms 'consul' and 'emperor' were taken from the Romans.

Napoleon was particularly keen on classical urns. Josephine could never dissuade him from placing both urns and statuary around the lawns and walks. Despite his alleged resistance to the style of the garden, and his definite complaints about its cost, most of Napoleon's letters and comments show that he cooperated with Josephine to create it. War helped rather than hindered her collections, as Napoleon allowed her to make good use of his military success. Ambassadors, sea captains, governors and travellers abroad were urged to search out and to send her rare specimens of plants and seedlings. These gifts of plants or animals became an easy way to appeal indirectly to Napoleon. Ventenat, the botanist working for Josephine, wrote in a general edict: 'The general supervisor of the house of the Empress has invited me to send to all the chiefs of the conquered provinces lists of plants that could enrich the large collection of Malmaison.' Josephine also encouraged the custom whereby ships' captains returning from distant lands brought gifts for the wife of the new master of France.

Like many other Australian plants discovered in the early years of British settlement, the acacia, known as 'wattle' in Australia and by the more romantic name of 'mimosa' in France, has strong French connections. It was grown as an exotic in France long before it was cultivated in gardens in its own country, being first cultivated in the Empress Josephine's garden and in the South of France. Wattle shrubs and trees were sent to the South of France where they thrived and are now so widespread that it is often mistakenly thought they are native to the area. Dazzling clusters of its yellow flowers on drooping branches were admired in late winter and sold throughout the country as harbingers of spring—even becoming part of the traditional costume of Nice.

Not only did the acacia have its main European debut on the edges of Paris, but one of the earliest species to be classified, Acacia verticillata (prickly moses), was first described and named by the French botanist L'Héritier on a visit to London in 1787, when he also classified that emblematic plant of Australia, the mighty eucalypt, which dominates the continent. In the same year in Paris the French botanist Jean Lamarck classified a tree which grows on the edges of Australian beaches: Casuarina verticillata (now reclassified as Allocasuarina verticillata).

australian plants

Although Australian plants were grown at the Royal garden at Kew, they were never cherished by George III's family in the way that they were by the Imperial family in France. It is a tribute to Josephine that she grew so many newly discovered plants, and took pride in doing so, making sure they were documented. The sixteen Banksia species, four Lasiopetalum species and eleven Acacia species growing at Kew in 1806 never made their way into publication. We know they were there because Robert Brown mentioned them in a letter. According to the botanist Aimé Bonpland, when he went to London in 1815 after Jospehine's death, he recorded finding, in two hours spent at Kew and at Lee & Kennedy, just thirty varieties of exotics that were not to be found in her garden. But it must be remembered that this was not a methodical comparison—and he may have been biased in his own favour as he had been her chief botanist. Ireland seems to have done better. At the garden which later became the Glasnevin Botanic Garden, on the edge of Dublin, around seventy Australian plants were being grown in 1802, but again they did not appear in wonderful colour plates, and so had little impact. To be fair, though, it must be

remembered that the climate is more suitable in France than in the British Isles for growing Australian plants.

As the world's only island continent, Australia's flora developed in isolation for millions of years, making it very different from that of any other country. Nearly 90 per cent of Australian plants are not found naturally anywhere else in the world—in other words they are endemic to Australia. Although breathtaking newly discovered plants from the Americas, China and South Africa were still arriving in Europe, the first flowers from those countries had been known centuries earlier. So the flora from Australia, the last of the seven continents to be explored, was, for just over three decades in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a curiosity—and it was all new.

France, especially through the Empress Josephine, played an important part in the early awareness and documentation of the flora of many countries. Prickly moses and the boronia were but two of the Australian plants in Josephine's garden which she selected, along with the Australian fuchsia Correa alba, bottlebrushes and other newly discovered plants, to be immortalised by the paintbrush of Pierre Joseph Redouté in two of the most valuable botanical art books printed in the early nineteenth century. His brilliant portrayal of parts and structures, as well as his delicate shading and tone, gave his images of plants a three-dimensional appearance. Although seventy-one Australian plants in Josephine's garden made it into the books of the plants at Malmaison, many others, including her casuarinas and other eucalypts, did not.

For eight years following her purchase of Malmaison, Josephine employed a succession of landscape architects, superintendents, consultants, botanists and gardeners. They all worked with determination, disagreed with one another and were jealous of each other. It took a lot of searching to find the experts who could fulfil her goal of making a magnificent English garden which was also a scholarly botanical establishment.

Just as she carried on in the spirit of the previous owners of Malmaison with the style of the garden, Josephine also built upon the herbarium they had started, obtaining the services of the illustrious scientist Pierre Ventenat. No botanist could hold a higher position in France. He was a Lycée professor, he was also in charge of the Pantheon library, and a member of l'Institut. The book he had just published, Description des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues cultivées dans le jardin de J.M. Cels, written after his extensive work of introducing exotic plants into Jacques Martin Cels' garden at Montrouge outside Paris, had been acclaimed as a great success.

The book had eighty-one black and white drawings by Redouté and eight by his brother Henri Joseph, eleven of them plants brought back from Australia by Labillardière. The plants included wattles, bottlebrush, drooping paperbark trees and a robust hakea.

This book gave Ventenat the idea of making a grander publication in colour of the unusual plants to be found in the park and the hothouses of Malmaison. But it was not just the book which was inspired by Cels; his actual garden was 'the nursery which supplied the foundation for the garden at Malmaison … Without the work of the garden of Cels the idea for that of Malmaison would not have been conceived'.

Vententat's mission at Malmaison, as it had been chez Cels, was to introduce more and more new species and to systematically describe them. A carriage was put at his disposal so that as soon as a new flower bloomed he and Redouté could rush from Paris to Malmaison to describe and paint it. Year after year, month after month, Redouté and Ventenat made regular trips to Malmaison to record Josephine's plants, resulting in six deliveries a year, each of six colour plates.

Seeds came to Josephine from each region in France; from Josephine's mother in the West Indies; from Bonpland a collection from his expedition to South and Central America with Humboldt; from Sir Joseph Banks a personal gift of the seeds of Nicotiana undulata; from Sir James Edward Smith of the Linnean Society new seeds from Botany Bay; from Lee & Kennedy more Botany Bay seeds.

Trading with the enemy was compounded as the best and rarest plants from all corners of the world were coming into English ports. It was the English plantsmen and nurseries who were growing and selling them. So not only was the style of the garden at Malmaison English, but many of its contents had to be imported from across the Channel.

War or no war, Napoleon sometimes took part in the plant quest: 'It has been such awful weather that I have stayed in Paris. Malmaison without you is too sad …', wrote Napoleon in a letter to Josephine in 1801 when she was taking the waters at Plombières. 'I have received for you, from London, some plants which I sent on to your gardener.' In the same year Josephine wrote to the French plenipotentiary in London to ask if King George III could be persuaded to send her some plants from 'son beau jardin de Kew'. But it must be remembered that 1801 was the year before the Peace of Amiens and there was optimism in the relationship between the two countries. Sir Joseph Banks also received appeals from Josephine, as did the French commissioner in England: 'You made me hope that the Kew gardener would agree to give me some interesting seeds; I beg you to remind him of his promise.' The archives at Malmaison include many letters in Josephine's own handwriting with detailed instructions about the collection and packing of seeds. She kept up a large correspondence on the plants and animals at Malmaison.

She also chose as her head gardener the Englishman Alexander Howatson. Howatson was knowledgeable about plants—and that was what Josephine wanted. He had nothing to do with the design of the garden although he had trained under the irascible Scottish gardener Thomas Blaikie, an expert who was often consulted in designing English gardens in France. Howatson had worked with Blaikie at Bagatelle and the Parc Monceau in Paris, where there were English gardens, but on the horticultural side, not the design side.

Plants sent to Malmaison from the Lee & Kennedy nursery in London—one of the great merchant houses for newly discovered plants—included the Bignonia pandorana (now Pandorea pandorana) vine from Queensland and Kennedya rubicunda, named by Ventenat after Lewis Kennedy. It is sometimes claimed—but it is unlikely—that John Kennedy came across the Channel to help Josephine with the layout of the garden, but he could have been introduced by Redouté, who had stayed at the nursery during his visit to England in 1787.

William Paul, a famous nurseryman, in his book The Rose Garden, published in 1848, says: ‘The late Mr Kennedy was provided with a passport to go and come as he pleased during the war, in order that he might superintend the formation of that garden.’ Although this story has often been repeated in print there is no evidence to confirm that he did cross the English Channel with such a passport. Malmaison has no records referring to a visit, nor does the Public Records Office in England have records of a passport. But if Josephine had arranged for him to come secretly there would be nothing in writing. The mystery remains unsolved.

Hermia Oliver, writing in Hortus in 1988, says: ‘The evidence of two contemporary writers seems to show that Kennedy never left England and that the “passport” is, alas, a legend.’ The story becomes more muddled because John Kennedy’s son, Lewis Kennedy, a garden designer of renown, did work for both Josephine and Napoleon in 1812. Josephine presented him with a snuffbox, now in the keeping of his descendants.

Another story, about Josephine and dahlias, has also become exaggerated. She was one of the first to grow them in France. Tubers had been sent from Mexico first, to the Jardin des Plantes, where they were over-cosseted and rotted away. When seeds arrived at Malmaison Josephine managed to raise them successfully.

So far the story is true, but from then on it becomes fanciful to the point of being ridiculous. It is said that only she planted, weeded and generally cared for them. The Polish lover of a lady-in-waiting bribed a gardener to steal a hundred roots. Appalled, Josephine not only sacked the gardener and dismissed the lady-in-waiting, but also had all her dahlias chopped up and dug into the soil, and would never hear the plant’s name mentioned again. This is unlikely as Josephine—despite her passion for both her garden and her gallery—was always remembered as being ‘infinitely kind’ and generous to her ladies-in-waiting, spending a fortune on their dowries, trousseaux and wedding parties. Even when they upset her she was not vindictive.

the continental blockade

The imposition of the Continental Blockade from 1803 onwards made it more difficult to get plants from abroad, but did not completely stem the flow from Lee & Kennedy. The Gentleman’s Magazine of 1811 reported that in 1803 Josephine had received plants from Lee & Kennedy ‘to the amount of £2600’—but that was probably before the end of the Peace of Amiens. Business was not always easy with Lee & Kennedy, however. Josephine’s critics paint her as a mindless spendthrift, but this is far from the truth. Her correspondence reveals concern and caution about being overcharged. A letter complaining about the cost of a delivery of Australian seeds is not from someone who threw money away.

I would beg you to write to Mr Lee & Kennedy that the sum that they are demanding is exorbitant. They had promised to take back all that I would not be able to use and part of their dispatch had so suffered during the trip that we have not been able to make any use of them. I have proposed to reduce their demand to 12,000 francs and with this sum they should feel themselves well paid. If they refuse I will pay the totality of their demand but they will cease to be my providers.

Josephine delighted in sharing the plants as well as growing them. She had a vision of creating botanical gardens in each département (county) of France. ‘I wish,’ she wrote, ‘that Malmaison may soon become the source of riches for all the départements … For this reason I have planted a large number of trees and shrubs from Australia and North America. In ten years time I would like each département to own a collection of rare plants from my nurseries.’

Her efforts were applauded by J.P. Deleuze, the botanist who wrote the History and Description of the Royal Museum in 1823 (in 1815 the museum had yet again changed its name!). The English edition stated.

It is impossible to conceive the elegance and beauty of the mimosas of New Holland, some of which are covered with long spikes and others with tufts of flowers variously coloured … There are in the green-house [at the museum] sixteen species of arborescent mimosa from New Holland … it is hoped that they will one day be cultivated in our southern departments … With these are mingled banksias, melaleucas, hakeas … In the beginning of May, the most curious trees, such as the meterosideros [callistemon], the melaleuca, the eucalyptus, the leptospermum, the banksia and the mimosas are placed in the oval enclosure before the amphitheatre …

Towards the end of his life, with satisfaction he could add: ‘Metrosideros, acacias, eucalypts, melaleuca and leptos-permum, which at first excited so much admiration by the beauty of their flowers, have been admitted into our gardens. The magnificent eucalypt which attains 150 feet in height … is also beginning to be propagated in the southern départements.’

josephine consults an english expert

While Josephine let Napoleon have his way with Fontaine’s neo-classical embellishments inside the house, she continued to stand firm on the garden. When Fontaine’s propositions for the design of the gardens did not agree with Josephine’s, it was suggested that she get advice from the patriarch of the English garden style in France, Jean Marie Morel. Although retired in Lyons, Morel came to Paris. His book The Art of Gardens Following the Uses of the Chinese, published in 1757, had been followed twenty years later by The Theory of Gardens.

Fontaine complained vocally about the ‘expert’.

He was a little old man of seventy, robust in body and fairly clear in mind; everything we had done seemed to him insupportable … We had planned a botanical garden, with hot-houses, a menagerie, aviaries, fish-pools and in the centre a small pavilion, containing a museum. This plan had been warmly received. One of the hot-houses was already built; but the patriarch of à l’anglais gardens found fault with everything. The hothouse was demolished.

Morel never agreed to anything put forward by Fontaine. ‘This stupid old man,’ complained Fontaine, ‘has only until now a few projects in the garden. We are continuing under his eyes and against his wish planting some trees directly in the earth and planning some of the principal pathways to the new park.’

In 1802 Fontaine again complained that he and Percier were going to be replaced at Malmaison and that ‘Morel, who had often complained about but not stopped our plantings, has in the last six weeks started to change what we had already planted.’ Morel

was autocratic and he, like so many others, disappointed Josephine. In the end he too was dispensed with.

Untangling the history of the garden becomes complex. So many people, wanting to gain prestige through having their names linked with Josephine's, exaggerated their association with her. Or if they did not, their descendants did. Was advice given by Blaikie? With his own garden at St Germain full of rarities, Blaikie was one of the foremost experts of the English style. He, too, had been employed by Marie Antoinette. But there is no record of any payment being made to Blaikie in the meticulously kept accounts at Malmaison. Nor is there any reference to Josephine or Malmaison in Blaikie's own journals. But in another journal about a tour through France in 1823, a Mr D. Neill wrote: 'The grounds at Malmaison were originally laid out by Morel, but they were brought into their present character by Blaikie and Hudson [Howatson?].' This account may have been slightly biased, as Blaikie was his guide!

trade embargoes

Even before the total trade embargo imposed in 1803, Napoleon was determined to throttle 'that nation of shopkeepers', the little Englanders with their swelling industrial wealth, by reserving the continent for French trade. He would stop the trade on which British power depended by introducing substitutes for goods imported from Britain or her colonies. Many of Napoleon's ingenious alternatives—such as the mixture of clay and graphite to replace lead in pencils—far from being just wartime measures, are still used today. Others included chicory instead of coffee; herbal teas, such as orange-flower tea, which he drank every morning, instead of Chinese or Indian teas; sugarbeet as a European grown alternative to sugarcane from the West Indies.

Napoleon wrote to General Junot: 'Take special care that the ladies of your establishment use Swiss tea. It is as good as that of China. Coffee made from chicory is not at all inferior to that of Arabia … Let them take care, also, that no part of their dress is composed of English merchandise … It is a contest of life or death between France and England.'

The spirit of the French drive against English goods is demonstrated by the hundreds of cards sent out by that chameleon of politics, Talleyrand, to guests before a reception for Josephine held in January 1798 at his luxurious residence, l'Hotel Gallifet, in Paris. The printed cards requested his guests to favour for the evening clothes of French manufacture rather than English fabric, so that their attire would show their infallible attachment to France and create jobs.

anglomania

But no official actions could diminish the Anglomania of the time. People wore fabrics spun in English factories, wanted English-type clubs, drank English tea, ate the Roast Beef of Olde England (and even nursery-type puddings), admired English manners, wore frock coats and riding coats (which became les redingotes), went horse-racing, recited the Scottish poet Ossian, adapted Scottish-inspired bowling greens, wore the new English fabric, a very fine transparent muslin called cambric, and played whist—and many wanted romantic English gardens. There was confusion between what was English or Scottish or just British—but it was all popular.

It was impossible to stop Josephine's desire for exotic plants from the British colonies, which were shipped mainly through England. At Malmaison, in the large heated

glasshouse, plants from every corner of the world, including Australian plants such as eucalypts, tree ferns, lilly-pillies and banksias, jostled for pride of place with flowering banana plants, palms and magnolias. Josephine had already introduced several unknown plants into France, including the camellia, phlox and the Martinique jasmine. Huge sums were spent on her favourite carnations and tulip bulbs. Three of her plants recalled her husband's conquests: the lily of the Nile, Parma violets and Damietta roses. Her glasshouse was an amazing construction—stately fluted columns, fine inlaid furniture, candelabra and oil paintings were placed in this jungle-like salon extraordinaire, a magical and romantic setting for banquets and balls.

josephine's love of botany

One visitor noted that Josephine kept botanical textbooks beside the gilded swans at the head of her bed and spent several hours a day with her gardeners. Visitors were astounded at her memory for the complicated names of her new plants, although the endless recital of the Latin names of her beloved plants wearied her ladies-in-waiting. Georgette Ducrest, in her Memoirs of the Empress Josephine, published anonymously in 1828, gives a lady-in-waiting's account.

When the weather was fine, the green-houses were inspected; the same walk was taken every day, on the way to that spot the same subjects were talked over; the conversation generally turned upon botany, upon her Majesty's taste for that interesting science, her wonderful memory which enabled her to name every plant; in short, the same phrases were generally repeated over and over again, and at the same time, circumstances well calculated to render those promenades exceedingly tedious and fatiguing. I no sooner stepped onto that delightful walk, which I had so much admired when I first saw it, than I was seized with an immoderate fit of yawning.

As well as scarce plants, the garden had exotic fruits to tempt palates. Dinner guests at Malmaison were given compotes of fresh pineapple, mango and banana grown in Josephine's hothouses. Madame Junot recalled that even before the great hot-house had been built, 'there was an orangerie in which Madame Bonaparte had built smaller individual hot-houses in which she grew 300 pineapples, which gave her a hundred per year'. One of the first buildings constructed after Josephine acquired Malmaison was the orangerie, built in 1800, where she could grow tropical fruits as a nostalgic reminder of her childhood in the lush, steamy rainforest of the West Indies, with its exotic birds, flowers and greenery.

Pierre Joseph Redouté was disorganised. He neither

kept a list of his works nor catalogued what he had painted. Nor did he keep a record of his income and expenses. In Paris his studio and home were under the same roof, but the domestic side of his life was more orderly than his business affairs. Despite her unstinting devotion, his wife Marie Marthe, alas, did not help organise the paperwork of his professional or business life. His expenditure was frequently ahead of his income, even when he had money coming in from commissions, but although money problems were a recurring pattern in his life, he never was forced to move home or studio because of debts or paint portraits which would have brought in more money. Redouté's talent as a draughtsman and artist was so great that he could easily execute large canvases that would have been hung on the walls of the Louvre and brought him greater fame and

income. But he was obstinate. A great survivor, from the age of twenty-five to fifty-five, for thirty years, he had the safety net of two devoted patrons, L'Héritier and the Empress Josephine, who followed each other in quick succession.

Within months of L'Héritier's sudden death on 16 August 1800, Josephine stepped into his place. Although most references to Redouté mention his work for Marie Antoinette, it is never explained that her support had been trivial, and that being connected to the most hated woman in France may have been a hindrance, thus she cannot be counted as a patron. Even if she had not been so unpopular she did not have the knowledge of plants which propelled L'Héritier and Josephine. His association with her was more about painting pretty pictures.

Although the Revolution did not inhibit Redouté's rapid rise to fame, events around that time, as well as the Revolution itself, augured poorly for the aristocratic L'Héritier. Thrown into prison on a trumped-up charge, he was later released, and although he obtained a small post in the new Ministry of Justice, like most aristocrats he lost enormous sums of money during the upheavals. Plants remained his passion but publishing new expensive botanical books was now out of the question. He managed, though, to continue his masterpiece Stirpes novae. L'Héritier, like Rousseau, found botany a solace, something to withdraw into. After the sudden death of Madame L'Héritier he had more harmonious relationships with his plants and with Redouté than with his four children. He had brought them up as best he could but the terrible tensions between L'Héritier and his children meant that his son Jacques left home. One night in August 1800, L'Héritier was found hacked to death with a sabre near his front door. His mysterious murder has never been solved. When his son Jacques could not be found, though, rumours arose that he was the murderer. After the funeral L'Héritier was buried in his own garden and his family sold his superb collection of botanical books—second only to the library of Sir Joseph Banks—in lots by public auction. This angered the many people who thought the collection should have been kept as a whole. L'Héritier's last work, which was a study of the flora of tiny wild plants, lichens and mosses which grew in the cracks of the pavements of the Place Vendôme disappeared, as did any drawings done by Redouté to accompany the manuscript.

Added to Redouté's grief at the loss of a friend and father figure was the worry of how he would make up the income he had been receiving from L'Héritier for fifteen years. Fortunately it was only a matter of months before Josephine filled the gap—and his purse. Apart from painting the flowers of Malmaison with the botanist Ventenat, Redouté received other commissions from Josephine. At least six paintings of flowers on vellum for her bedroom at Malmaison—not botanical illustrations but floral arrangements in the manner of the Dutch painters—were her first direct assignments. In the accounts at Malmaison can be seen: 'To Monsieur Redouté flower painter, F125 for final account for F7,200 value of six paintings which he has delivered …' Two of his rare decorative pictures, painted to be framed and hung, are on display today in the Salle des Fleurs of the Château de Compiègne. The paintings on display at Malmaison are different—they are original colour plates and prints of the botanical illustrations of the fifty-one books he illustrated.

redouté's change in technique

The thirty-five engravings in grey tonal washes which Redouté made for L'Héritier's Sertum Anglicum, including the eucalypt, are humble in appearance compared to the sumptuous productions in the books for Josephine. This reflects not a lesser ability, but the fact that L'Héritier favoured the unique character of monochrome engraving for botanical publications. There is a tremendous difference in appearance between Redouté's early drawings, which were line-engraved in black and white, and those produced later and printed with stipple engraving with fabulous colour tones.

The early illustrations should not be dismissed, however. Their overall parallel-line shading in a tonal manner gives each plant enormous depth and perspective. Wilfrid Blunt, the late art critic, summed up the differences, noting that Redouté's early illustrations were 'painted with the greatest care and attention to botanical detail, but they inevitably lack the subtlety and refinement of his more mature work and the brilliance that full colour always provides'. In 1798 Redouté had also broken another tradition in botanical art. He stopped putting squared frames and wash lines around his pictures.

The subtle tones of his plant paintings could be faithfully captured by his engravers, even though the colours in the prints could never be made as brilliant as in the originals. The flamboyance, spontaneity and depth of colour which come from a generously loaded paintbrush can be seen in his original of Metrosideros anomala at the Fitzwilliam Museum; by contrast its print, which is Plate V in Jardin de la Malmaison, is not quite as vibrant.

the cult of plant collecting

The colonisation of Australia coincided with a growing cult of plant collecting in Europe. Like horticulture, plant collecting was becoming more scientific—and fashionable. Museums, nurseries, botanists and aristocrats vied to get the very first of any new species when it arrived in Europe, and to keep it alive until it flowered so it could be propagated and, in Josephine's case, painted. Josephine turned from gardener to learned patron of botany and natural history, while Napoleon continued to remain mostly interested in the exact sciences, in mathematics and geometry.

Although there was an undercurrent of competition between the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and Malmaison, there was also, as is seen in the following letter written in 1802 by the head of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, a steady exchange of plants between them.

Madame, we have received a letter that you have honoured us by writing and to which was attached a list of plants that you desired. We offer them to you with speed and pleasure. If you would like to send the gardener of Malmaison with a carriage the day that you will find acceptable they will be given instantly. Amongst those that you ask there is a small number of which we have but one single example. We are going to multiply them by the method by which an aerial stem is put in contact with the soil before being cut off the mother plant. And we hope to send them to you as soon as possible. … You have the kindness, madame, to offer us in return several rare plants from your collection. We accept with much gratitude …

Josephine possessed a good working knowledge of botany, equally at ease with the local flora of France and the most exotic plants. She physically tended some herself. In a letter to her daughter Hortense in 1811 Josephine described a plant of the Morus family—the family which contains the mulberry—that she might expect to find in the woods around

Fontainebleau, and instructed her how to transplant and grow it. The commonplace and the exotic found equal favour in her eyes.

There were various influences which made Josephine promote plants from Australia, still thought of as a country beyond the reach of imagination. She, like Napoleon, enjoyed being up to date in everything. It was just over a decade since Australia had been settled and there was a certain competitive edge in having something from that continent. Perhaps she was reminding him of his yearning for the missed opportunities of his longed-for voyage to Australia with La Pérouse? The precise reason remains an enigma; what is not a mystery, however, is Napoleon's well-known eagerness for learning, for new things, for science. For anything connected with knowledge his thirst was unquenchable: 'The real conquests, the only unregretted ones, are those against ignorance. The worthiest and most significant occupation for nations is to enlarge the frontiers of human knowledge.'

The majority of Australian flowers are modest in appearance when compared to many other exotics. In England Sir James Edward Smith worked hard to dispel the prevailing view that Australian plants were 'deficient in beauty'. The Australian plants chosen for Josephine's prestigious book reveal her interest in a flower's botanical features and intrinsic beauty or curious form rather than its ability to astonish. Her choices also suggest the modest side of her personality, which is seldom acknowledged. This unpretentious side was also revealed when she gave her blessing to her name and title being bestowed on the almost weedy Australian plant Josephinia imperatricis, a member of the Bignonia family.

Josephine had decided to create a garden which would surpass the two main botanic gardens in France, the ancient garden attached to the university in Montpellier and the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. Her ambitions were unmatched by other mere plant enthusiasts. She encouraged the propagation of many plants which came from a variety of sources, but many, like the eucalypt and the bottlebrush, had returned to France with either Delahaye or Labillardière from the D'Entrecasteaux voyage.

battle of marengo

As the garden at Malmaison developed, in 1800 two major events occurred, one vital to the fame of Napoleon, the other decisive in the appearance of the garden. The first was the Battle of Marengo, the second was the departure of the Baudin voyage to explore Australia.

The Battle of Marengo was not only the first victory won by Napoleon as First Consul, it was also one of the swiftest and most dramatic. Seeking to re-establish control of northern Italy, he departed from Malmaison on 4 May, and made a crossing of the Alps which, although he did not have elephants, was as daring as that of Hannibal two thousand years earlier. At Lausanne, orders were given for the troops to move forward over the gigantic crest of the Alps to St Pierre, a hamlet at the foot of Mount St Bernard. The cavalcade went up the rugged heights, over precipices nearly perpendicular, dragging behind them heavy artillery on the trunks of trees. The mountains are so high that even though it was nearly summer they were covered in snow. Napoleon and his soldiers descended in sledges to the battle, which took place in the midst of extensive forests, close to the citadel of Alessandria in northern Italy. He wound up his whirlwind thirty-day campaign with the resounding victory of Marengo. Again he defeated the Habsburgs. Twenty thousand French troops in two divisions defeated and routed 32 000 Austrians.

Josephine anxiously awaited news of the battle at Malmaison. She always stayed there, not at the official palaces, when Napoleon was campaigning. ‘We had news of the victory of Marengo,’ wrote Fontaine in his diary. ‘Madame Bonaparte gave a supper under the trees in the small garden … We put up tents, lent by Leconte [then architect of the Tuileries], to roof the tables.’ Josephine planted the cedar, known to this day at Malmaison as the ‘Marengo cedar’, which was one of the many plants brought back from Egypt by the French expedition. Napoleon had given the name Marengo to the little stallion of just 14.1 hands which he had ridden to victory. A small horse was considered to be safer in battle as it was not such an easy target as a big animal. This stallion, which had come back from Egypt with him, would be with him to the end.

Napoleon returned to Paris in June for a second summer at Malmaison. The months he spent there, though, were not free of work. Progress was being made to restore religion and the Church in France, as Napoleon had spoken to the Pope’s chief cardinal just before his departure for Marengo. It was a visit to Malmaison which had first prompted Napoleon’s move towards the Concordat: ‘I was taking a solitary walk, surrounded by the silence of nature when suddenly the sound of the church bells of Rueil struck my ear. I felt very moved, so great is the influence of early habits and our education. I thought, “What an impression bells must make on simple, credulous people! The people must have a religion.”’ Of course, when Napoleon heard the bells they had been ringing to strike the hour, not to summon people to church.

Here at Malmaison Napoleon decided that the separation between Church and State should continue, although Church salaries would be paid by the State. He was adamant that no property would be returned and that schools would remain run by the State, not the Church. Later he said: ‘I felt bound to organise the education of the future generation and in such a way that their political and moral opinions could be supervised.’ The issues were so complicated that religion was not officially restored until Easter 1802, just after the Treaty of Amiens. Soon afterwards the week went back to its old seven days, including Sunday.

It would be Napoleon versus Nelson. Napoleon, with his eagle eye on everything, knew that without a strong fleet of ships equal to that of Britain, France could never gain world supremacy. Britain, despite ships with mouldy biscuit, tough salt beef, floggings and press-ganged crews, was still the strongest maritime power in history. While Napoleon’s new Paris dazzled Europe, and he surprised his enemies with an unexpected sequence of victories on land, a huge effort was diverted into shipyards. Loans from French banks boosted the project for more boats; existing harbours were improved; soldiers became sailors.

The contrast between the priorities which the French and the British accorded their navies is seen in the two exploratory expeditions which departed from France and Britain for Australia in 1800 and 1801. With England everything best was kept for battle, while France gave at least one of her best ships to science. The gap in the qualities of the ships used for these voyages was enormous. Matthew Flinders, the twenty-six-year-old British lieutenant, was created a commander to be given just one leaky old ship, renamed the Investigator. Nicholas Baudin, in contrast, was in charge of Le Géographe, an elegant three-masted corvette with thirty cannon, accompanied by a sturdy storeship—a showcase

for the glory of France and one of the most expensive, and best-equipped, voyages in exploration.

Having convinced members of l'Institut National of the merits of a voyage to les Terres Australes, on 25 March 1800 Baudin met Napoleon, himself a reader of Cook: 'The reception was as I had foreseen, the Voyage settled,' wrote Baudin, 'and I received the order to tell the Minister of Marine to make known as soon as possible the means of carrying it out …'

Although La Pérouse's expedition to the Pacific and Australia is often mentioned in biographies of Louis XVI, it is a different story with Baudin and Napoleon. Napoleon ratified this expedition, which was a major event in the Consulate years, but none of his major biographers mentions it. Yet Napoleon, because of his knowledge of science, could contribute more than Louis XVI's general interest in the La Pérouse voyage.

Recently Time magazine (15 March 1999) summed up the situation in their article on the Baudin exhibition, 'Terre Napoléon', at the Museum of Sydney: 'They set off with high hopes and the blessing of Napoleon, and eventually their discoveries would eclipse all rivals. But first, this French expedition to Australia turned into the voyage from hell … and then history forgot all about it.'

On 19 October 1800, thirty-four years after France's first voyage to the Pacific, Captain Baudin made his entry, at the helm of Le Géographe, into Australian history. This tight-lipped, forty-six-year-old little bullet of a man, the self-taught son of a chandler, an officer bleu (not of noble birth) who had risen from the ranks, was determined to live up to the confidence of the First Consul. Baudin had already led botanical and ornithological voyages to the Orient and the South Seas, but now he would combine cartography with science—a source of conflict throughout the voyage. His two main instructions were to blend existing maps with new exploration so as to make a map of the whole continent, and make scientific investigations and discoveries. One vital thing, though, was missing—the confiscated maps of the coast of Australia made by his predecessor, the brilliant Beautemps-Beaupré. When these were eventually returned to France in 1802 they had already been copied and given to Flinders.

At the time the ships followed each other from Europe, the British convict outpost—still known as Botany Bay—on the east coast of Australia had still not been visited by a British botanist or scientist. Also most of the coastline was uncharted and the interior unexplored. The colony had expanded to about 5000 inhabitants since it had been started in 1788, and Sir Joseph Banks, instrumental in setting up the colony, was president of Britain's august scientific body, the Royal Society, had promoted many botanists to undertake journeys abroad. The Flinders expedition was arranged after the British government was asked by the French for a passport, setting out the peaceful mission of Baudin's scientific ships and so drawing attention to the shaming lack of British effort. When the scientist Robert Brown left England with Flinders it was fourteen years since the departure of the First Fleet from Portsmouth.

Even after settlement European knowledge of the general area grew slowly. Exploration suffered from a lack of continuity and coordination despite the interest in the place, as demonstrated by the sales of Labillardière's book Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse. Published in Paris in 1800, it contained thirteen plates of Australian plants by Redouté, including some magnificent depictions of banksias, kangaroo paws and correas.

Curiosity about Australia meant that by the end of the year the book had gone into two French editions, three English editions, one German and one Russian edition.

Out of the scientific staff of twenty-four on board the French ship, including astronomers, geographers, mineralogists, zoologists and draftsmen, there were three botanists and five gardeners. Only six returned. Baudin's bad management meant that in Mauritius a large number of the crew used sickness as a reason not to continue on the voyage. Accounts of the exact number vary, but somewhere around forty-six crew members, including ten of the scientific team, left the ships. Two of the three lieutenants from Le Géographe, the two lieutenants from Le Naturaliste, the astronomer, two botanists, two zoologists and the two official artists also left. The resourceful Baudin replaced the artists with two assistant gunners, Nicolas Martin Petit and Charles Alexandre Lesueur, and wrote in his log: 'It will be seen from the work of these two young men whether my choice was good or bad.' It was good. Time magazine, after the exhibition of their paintings in Sydney, acclaimed their work as 'stunning—both as historical documents and as art. Lesueur, who had providently packed "ma boite de couleurs, crayons, etc." was among the earliest colonial artists to record an Aboriginal corroboree … Petit's portraits of Tasmanians were the first to bring them [the Aborigines] to life and to humanize them rather than caricature them.'

At last, on 1 June 1801, nearly a year after their departure from France, the ships cast anchor in Australian waters. For two months they skirted the coast, following some of the old route of the Englishman William Dampier to the port he had named Shark Bay. Here they took on twenty-four kangaroos, but all except one soon died. One difficulty which marred Baudin's voyage—as those of other early navigators—was that the continent's coast has singularly few inlets, resulting in long periods between landfalls. The harbours and ports are spacious but surprisingly few and far between. Vessels often had to stay at sea longer than they would on voyages to other countries and thus their supplies of fresh food and water fell very low. The deficiency disease scurvy—which results from a lack of vitamin C found in fresh vegetables and fruit—was a severe problem on early voyages of discovery to Australia. Even when ships found anchorage, often the sailors could not identify the edible plants—they needed Aboriginal guides for that.

But the really indispensable item for visiting sailors was water. Australia is the least watered continent on Earth, and the least mountainous. The rivers are few and far between and often dry up. The scarcity of fresh water meant that one Australian plant already growing at Malmaison when Baudin departed bore a name given by Labillardière when he had been desperate with thirst. So great had been his joy when he stumbled across a spring that he celebrated the occasion by naming a plant he found growing there Chorizema ilicifolia—in Greek, choros means 'dance', and zema, 'drink'.

Lack of fresh food and water forced Baudin to detour to the Dutch island of Timor, where the worst scurvy cases were hospitalised but some, alas, died. A month later a new disease hit them—dysentery. Having found a ship in Timor to take a large collection of seeds and living plants to France, they then sailed towards Tasmania, leaving the worst of the sick in Timor. On this leg of the voyage the shortage of water was so great that some men drank their own urine. Arrival at Tasmania was a relief, but after a few weeks rest on they went. At Maria Island there were more deaths. Although they only had rotting meat, biscuits gnawed at by worms and weevils, a small ration of stagnant and putrid water, Baudin continued mapping the continent.

The French had had a nine-month start over the English when Flinders departed from England on 18 July 1801, but Banks smugly predicted that he would reach his destination and chart much of the southern coast before the French. Flinders charted uninterrupted until the two expeditions met at Encounter Bay on 8–9 April 1802. Baudin described the tension when he saw the strange ship which.

… made a signal which we did not understand and so did not answer.

She ran up the English flag and shortened sail. We, for our part, hoisted the national flag, and I braced sharp up to draw alongside her. As they spoke [to] us first, they asked what the ship was. I replied that she was French. Then they asked if Captain Baudin was her commander. I was very surprised, not only at the question, but at hearing myself named as well. When I said yes, the English ship brought to. Seeing her make ready to send a boat across, I likewise brought to to wait for it. The English captain, Mr Flinders … was extremely reserved on all matters …[the next morning] Mr Flinders was making ready to come aboard again … He arrived at half past six … as he was much less reserved on this second visit than before, he told me that his ship was the Investigator and that he had left Europe about eight months after I had. He also told me that he had begun his exploration of the coast of New Holland at Cape Leeuwin …

With the help of the botanist Robert Brown as interpreter, Flinders gave them details of Kangaroo Island and then quietly acknowledged the help given to him by the previous French cartographer. He made a magnificent and generous gesture, which Baudin recorded in his journal just with the words: ‘Before we separated, Mr Flinders gave me several charts published by Arrowsmith since our departure …’

It is unlikely that Baudin told Flinders that he had not only renamed the south coast Terre Napoléon but given his new discoveries French names such as Golfe Bonaparte, Golfe Josephine, Hortense Bay, Cape Marengo, Cape Berthier and Lacepede Strait. Flinders named the coastline opposite where they met Encounter Bay.

More weeks followed, with Baudin charting the southern coast, and more collecting. Amongst the many plants gathered, on which Leschenault pinned so many hopes for acclimatisation, either as seeds or living specimens kept alive on decks, were plants which were to enhance Josephine’s garden and be painted by Redouté. They included the stately kangaroo paw Anigozanthus flavidus; the bright red crimson bottlebrush Callistemon glaucus (formerly Metrosideros glauca); the impressive Eucalyptus diversifolia; the dainty dwarf wedge-pea Gompholobium furcellatum; the bright yellow Hibiscus heterophyllus; the plant of the sand-dunes Apium prostratum; another bottlebrush, Callistemon pallidus (formerly Metrosideros pallida); the delicate mimosa or wattle Acacia subulata, and the Josephinia imperatricis, named after the Empress.

Baudin continued west until more scurvy, more deaths and a lack of water forced him first to Adventure Bay in Tasmania and then to head for Port Jackson. The threat of scurvy never eased. By the middle of the year the crew were so weakened by scurvy that only twelve, of the 170 on board, could man the ship. Luckily, just before Baudin arrived at the convict settlement of Port Jackson on 20 June, a British ship had preceded them with the news that both countries had signed the preliminaries of the Treaty of Amiens. At last there would be peace between France and Britain.

The discourtesies usual in time of hostility were no more, so when Governor King heard that Baudin's ship Le Géographe was outside the heads of Sydney Harbour, in obvious trouble, he immediately sent out help to bring it into the harbour. Baudin had been at sea far too long for the health of his crew—some 110 days. Four men had died since they had anchored at a small island off Tasmania, thirty-one were near death and the rest were suffering from various degrees of debilitation: 'their joints were stiff, their flexors shrunk, bowing their limbs. But their faces were the worst: leaden complexions, guns so swollen as to protrude from their mouths, ulcerated or without feeling, fetid breath …' Two dropped dead on arrival.

In Sydney Baudin again met up with Matthew Flinders. The hospitality of the British was generous. Although this British outpost—populated by soldiers and pickpockets, vagrants, thieves, prostitutes, murderers, forgers and highway robbers—was putting effort into farming, and grapevines, vegetables and fruit trees flourished, it still relied on imported food. There were always shortages, but enough was found for all the unexpected extra mouths. When the elegant Le Naturaliste made a grand entrance into Sydney Harbour, there was a feeling of relief, as the crew under the command of Emmanuel Hamelin had fared better, Hamelin having followed the latest theories on the prevention of scurvy.

The French stayed for five months in this colony which had made substantial progress in its first thirteen years, living in tents on Bennelong Point where the Opera House now stands. The scientists regained their health and explored the settlement which was now expanding beyond being just a place for convicts. Already the ruthless sealing industry, which would be followed by whaling, had started.

Reports of French conversations had made Governor King highly suspicious of French motives and he immediately dispatched an expedition to form a settlement in Tasmania. (French exploration later also prompted the settlement of Western Australia. Freycinet's voyage in 1817 was followed by that of Hyacinthe Bougainville eight years later, in 1824; he mapped the Swan River for about eighty kilometres from its mouth. The garrison at Albany was established to forestall French intentions.)
When Baudin finally left Port Jackson on 18 November 1802, he ordered *Le Naturaliste* to go ahead to France with the documents, the crew members he considered too sick to continue and the collections made so far, including the two black swans which would go on to live so happily on the lake at Malmaison.

On this last part of the voyage the ships collected more live animal specimens, including kangaroos, wallabies and emus, along with parrots, parakeets and a sulphur-crested cockatoo, many of which later joined the swans in Josephine's garden at Malmaison. (When the black emu from King Island died in 1822 its race died with it, joining the growing list of animal extinctions.) That the animals survived these long sea voyages, cooped up in cages, with inappropriate food, and subject to attack from the numerous shipboard dogs and cats, let alone mice and rats, is amazing. Baudin described the problems of keeping the wild animals alive on his ship.

During the morning I was told that several of our quadrupeds and emus were very sick. We could only attribute this to the violent and incessant movement of the heavy sea,

which left them not a moment's peace. This news was particularly unpleasant, as I saw myself on the brink of losing them after giving them such attention as they should have secured a happier fate. Since the emus refused to eat, we fed them by force, opening their beaks and introducing pellets of rice mash into their stomachs. We gave them, and the sick kangaroo likewise, wine and sugar, and although I was very short of these same things for myself, I shall be very happy to have gone without them for their sake if they can help in restoring them to health. On this day I had a worse bout of spitting blood than I had had before.

But, as a later entry reveals, Baudin's care was to no avail for some.

We lost a kangaroo and an emu in the course of the day. It was the second time that this accident had occurred and we attributed it to the heavy movements of the ship … [which] was thrown about in every way by the rough, uncomfortable sea. We stuffed the animals in order to preserve their skins.'

On another occasion Baudin wrote about the death of yet another member of the sad menagerie.

On this day we lost one of the kangaroos … Its death resulted from the wounds the dogs had given it, quite apart from its having been hit by small shot '

Baudin returned to Timor to refresh before attempting a survey of the north coast. As before, Koupang proved a fatal port, and several more men died there. Baudin himself was also unwell. He completed more of the survey then decided to head for Mauritius which they reached in August. Just a few weeks later Baudin died, probably of tuberculosis. Under a new captain the ship headed for France, arriving on 24 March 1804.

Baudin left Brest three years after France had led the fabulous scientific expedition to Egypt. The hope that the results of the Baudin voyage would bring further strides in scientific knowledge was fulfilled, but although the results were praised initially, until recently they were largely buried in obscurity. Now, on the eve of the two hundredth anniversary of the departure of the voyage, a new enthusiasm and interest in the expedition is developing.

The observations and studies of native peoples made by François Péron during the voyage turned him into the father of modern anthropology. A report in 1806 by Baron Cuvier, the permanent secretary of l'Institut, who examined the Baudin collections, heaped praise on the work of the naturalists, especially the drawings and the zoological finds—the fishes, reptiles and zoophytes preserved in alcohol. They had collected more than ten times the new species that were collected on Captain Cook's Endeavour voyage.

Apart from the dried plant specimens there were 200 different species of living plants and 600 types of seed collected by the botanist Leschenault de la Tour—more than had come back on the decks of any other single expedition.

The great bonus for Josephine from Baudin's voyage was that it was to give Malmaison the animals and plants which made it so different from other gardens. Yet did she ever realise the death and misery which lay behind each plant which flowered in her garden, or behind each animal which frolicked or flew in her grounds? The sea-sick swans and kangaroos jammed into pens on deck for nearly two years? The deaths and illnesses suffered by the crew while collecting them? The hatreds and conflicts between the civilian scientists and the authoritarian captain and officers? The appallingly bad management of on-board provisions which meant long periods of hunger, thirst and scurvy?

The documentation of the flora from the Baudin voyage was poor. Apart from what appeared in Redouté's books, it was not described in any books or illustrated. It is thought, though, that some of the new plants collected might have been taken by Labillardière and included in his comprehensive two-volume work on the Australian flora. Some floral specimens were sent to Robert Brown in London, who used them in his own work.

peron's report of the voyage

The task of writing up the voyage fell to the brilliant François Péron. The first volume of Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes, with the vignette of Malmaison with the black swans, kangaroos and casuarina trees on the frontispiece, was published in 1807. His anthropological and zoological discoveries have been referred to ever since. Touchingly, his work was illustrated by Charles Alexandre Lesueur, the young gunner who became an artist on board, with whom he had formed an intimate friendship. They stayed together until Péron's untimely death at the age of thirty-five in 1810. Péron had developed such a hatred for Baudin, whom he saw as a monster, that in his account of the voyage he never referred to him by name. Although dead, Baudin was in great disfavour with the French authorities, who were horrified at the great loss of life on the expedition.

Louis de Freycinet, the expedition's cartographer, finished writing up the voyage in the second volume, published in 1812. These magnificent publications were the first to delineate the complete Australian coastline and might have become popular with the British if they had not contained French names for four hundred ports and bays—especially the threatening Terre Napoléon.

Ironically these maps would not have been the first of the Australian coastline if Napoleon had had his way. He had sent an order to Mauritius in 1806 to release Flinders, under house arrest there since 1804, but the governor of the island had ignored the order, believing that Flinders had too much knowledge about the island while war continued. After Flinders was released in 1810 he returned to England where, in straitened circumstances, he wrote up his voyage and completed his maps. His book was not published until the day before he died, in July 1814. Both voyages were landmarks in the cartography of the continent.

The next French expedition to Australia did not take place until 1817, when Napoleon was incarcerated on St Helena, on the main British shipping route to Australia—but when it did, de Freycinet was the captain.

napoleon, the revolution and the navy

While it took the collective military efforts of Great Britain, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Austria, Sweden and a group of the German states to push Napoleon from power, he never achieved the naval superiority he planned. The debacle of the Baudin voyage

provided a foretaste of what would happen with many of Napoleon's naval expeditions. Despite vast sums being lavished on the ships and excellent planning, something often went awry. Napoleon's extraordinary ability to motivate men was one of the reasons for the success of his army, but his efforts at sea never matched his successes on land.

The French fleet had become a force to be reckoned with in the 1780s under Louis XVI. So keen was the King on the navy that visitors to his apartments at Versailles were shown models of anchors, cranes, the tools used to build a ship—as well as maps. By the time the Revolution began, France could boast that she had the second strongest navy in the world. All the officers were recruited amongst the sons of noble families—but family genealogy had to be matched by personal ability. (Neither Captain Cook, a farm labourer's son, nor Matthew Flinders, the son of a doctor, would have got a post in the old French navy.) The French system, despite being unfair to the middle and working classes, produced well trained commanders and other officers. These skilled men, however, like other members of the aristocracy, emigrated en masse.

The decade after the Revolution was not one of prosperity for the French navy, despite its being opened up to new men of talent. When Napoleon came to power in 1799 the number of French ships of the line had nearly halved from the time of the fleet's former glory. He pumped energy and money into the fleet to remedy this state of affairs, and started two new schools for naval cadets, at Toulon and Brest. Years later on St Helena he said: 'I especially liked sailors, I admired their courage and their patriotism—but I never found between them and myself the man who would have made them worthy … I would have made him our Nelson, and things would have taken a different course.'

the return of baudin's ships

Hamelin and Le Naturaliste arrived at Le Havre on 7 June 1803. André Thouin, the professor in charge of cultivation at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, was in charge of the unloading of the collections and their transport to Paris. The great rivalry between Josephine and the museum about who would receive the plants meant that the sharing of the collections, even though there was a great number, had to be handled with delicacy.

Obtaining the Australian plants and animals for was an exercise in guile and persuasion. When charm did not work, Josephine influenced Napoleon to ask the Minister of the Interior to intervene and divert them to her garden instead of to the Jardin des Plantes. The professors of the museum were 'invited' by the Minister to defer to the desires of Madame Bonaparte, in a letter dated 13 June 1803.

You are about to receive a collection of seeds and of plants that the Captain Baudin has gathered during the course of his voyage to enrich your establishment. I desire that in this collection you reserve all the species that are requested by Madame Bonaparte. The citizen Mirbel [the superintendent of Josephine's garden] will present himself on her behalf and will let you know her intentions to which I invite and authorize you to defer …

A polite way of saying 'Give her what she wants or else!'

Despite this letter, the professors and administrators of the Museum were not forthcoming. A few weeks later, on 6 August, the Minister reiterated his 'invitation'.

I have authorized you, citizens, to deliver to Citizen Mirbel for the gardens of Madame Bonaparte all that is not essentially necessary to the establishment … You know as I do the success with which Madame Bonaparte looks after the culture of plants and the

acclimatization of rare animals. It is to the interest of science as to the glory of France to encourage her distinguished taste and I invite you to back her vision and mine by all the means that you have in your power …

Josephine got her plants.

Le Géographe arrived nearly seven months after Le Naturaliste. This time, though, Josephine's envoy was there early, before the professors from the museum arrived to take charge 'of all the productions of the nature and the arts belonging to the expedition of discovery'. So keen was Josephine to obtain more plants from this rich Antipodean source that similar instructions were again sent from government officers. A letter from the Minister of the Navy and of the Colonies to the Director of the museum stated.

Under the terms of the particular instructions that the deceased Baudin had received a part of the collections … and those of living animals … are allocated for the gardens of Malmaison. A person in charge of the care of this part of the collections is going to the port and the citizen should be aware … but only the part which is promised to the museum … As for the sharing … they should be able to compromise with the person in charge of the collection at Malmaison.

Despite these letters, yet another had to be written. Although the letter is amiable it contains a stern postscript: 'The animals for the menagerie of Malmaison must be left to the care of the agent of that menagerie who should by now have arrived. As for the plants and seeds, the intention of the government is for an equal sharing between the Jardin des Plantes and that of Malmaison. I beg you take appropriate actions.'

The rivalry over these plants and animals, amazingly enough, did not sour the relationship between Josephine and the museum for long. Museum officials knew how to profit from Josephine's interest in natural science, and there were some projects for which they used her political influence and her spontaneous tendency to help. For instance, a letter from the professors of the Museum to Madame Bonaparte on 25 November 1803 requested help for a member of l'Institut d'Egypte.

He has found that because of the excessive price of all goods, his allowance of 5,000 francs was barely enough to live on, and that as he could not even have a horse there [it] was impossible for him to travel and to continue his work in botany. He has written to the Ministry of the Interior to explain his situation and to ask for an allowance supplement for botany. We are calling on you, Madame, to pray for you to obtain for him the favour he begs. The Ministry of the Interior having no money …

bonpland's adventures before malmaison

The botanist who would soon raise many of the Australian seeds at Malmaison from Le Géographe returned to France in 1804. He was the inimitable Aimé Bonpland, one of the great travellers of the nineteenth century, who accompanied Alexander von Humboldt on his extraordinary expedition through the jungles and over the mountains of South America.

Bonpland came back from South America with a staggering 6000 specimens—even though many may well have been duplicates, this was an immense amount to have collected and to have transported back to France. Having got his eye accustomed to the luxuriant tropical flora of South America it is interesting that Bonpland became so involved with the Empress Josephine's Australian plants, which are usually less dramatic. Bonpland grew, described and published many of the plants from Baudin's voyage in Descriptions de

plantes rares et cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre but, alas, never published his descriptions of his 6000 South American specimens.

Funded by von Humboldt's inheritance from his father, in 1798 von Humboldt and Bonpland had arrived in Marseilles, hoping to catch up with Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and the other naturalists with Napoleon in Egypt. They were thwarted in this desire by Nelson's victory in the Battle of the Nile, which had isolated the French. The journey across the Mediterranean was unsafe, due to the British blockade which was in place to ensure that the French remained cut off beside the Nile.

Instead they proceeded to Madrid, where unexpected support from a Government minister determined them to go to Spanish America for their explorations. They were presented to the King who gave them a royal passport to visit all his dominions. At Corunna, having boarded the corvette Pizarro for South America, they were again blockaded by British gunboats patrolling the harbour mouth. The Spanish captain managed to elude the British ships when a storm blew up and they headed for Venezuela. In the next three years, avoiding epidemics of yellow fever and malaria, they covered thousands of miles of the continent, making a speciality of climbing volcanoes, even Chimborazo and Cotopaxi near Quito. At Cumana, where they observed a meteor shower, they went on to explore the course of the Orinoco, through wild and uninhabited country, discovering that it was connected to the Amazon. These adventures were described in Voyage de Humboldt et Bonpland aux Regions Equinoxales, which was published in twenty-three volumes between 1805 and 1834.

They started their adventure in a nine-metre boat which slowly made its way down the crocodile-infested rivers, then later journeyed up to the coast to Lima, where von Humboldt spent so much time studying the effect of the cold current that he gave his name to it. Eventually they went to Mexico, where they climbed Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl, then on to Cuba and New York, and at last back to France.

Von Humboldt was hailed as a second Columbus. His findings laid the foundation of physical geography and meteorology. Three days after Napoleon's coronation he presented a paper at l'Institut on the discovery of the decrease in intensity of the earth's magnetic force from the poles to the equator. It was said that for a while von Humboldt was the most famous man in Europe next to Napoleon.

Back in France he was inseparable from his friend Bonpland. They settled in Paris which was the best place in Europe to pursue scientific interests. In 1808 Bonpland, who of course was known to Napoleon, was employed at Malmaison.

T he brief Peace of Amiens was the only period during Josephine's fifteen years at Malmaison when there was an easy passage to Paris for plants from Lee & Kennedy in London. The signing of the Treaty in March 1802—which was to last just one year and sixteen days after it was ratified in May—brought foreigners, particularly English and Russians, flocking to Paris. The road from Calais to Paris was filled with mail-coaches, post-chaises and private carriages. Such was the interest of the English in the changes in France that they came in droves across the Channel. Napoleon had made the highways safe again. His efforts to encourage French exiles and emigrés to return to France meant that they too joined the foreign visitors.

The rejoicing in the peace was tremendous but two of the clauses of the Treaty stipulated that England was to relinquish Malta and that France was to quit southern Italy. Each country waited for the other to act first. Spies were still in both countries. The head of the London police had been sent over to report on French methods. Travellers from England to France were aware that both Napoleon and George III had an excuse to end the peace at any time. The hundreds of smugglers, who had done such a roaring trade when the coasts of France were blockaded by the British navy, were not out of a job for long.

Visitors to Paris were met by the lanterns lit in the arcades of the gardens at the Tuileries to celebrate the peace. While Versailles had been the glory of the Bourbons, Paris was to be the glory of Napoleon. He was delighted to show off the Paris which he was making into ‘the capital of the civilised world’.

To achieve Napoleon’s ambition to improve Paris, Fontaine and Percier, the architects who had fallen out with Josephine over the garden at Malmaison, were commissioned to start colossal building schemes, such as the arcades in the Rue de Rivoli and the grand staircase at the Louvre. Their elegant Arc du Carrousel is all that remains of the Tuileries, which was partially burnt down in 1871 and totally destroyed in 1882. Rather than seeing his building and decorating projects as extravagance, Napoleon often looked at such spending as an act of social welfare, a way of providing jobs.

the peace brings the
british to paris

That stirring piece of music the Marseillaise, which had become so famous, was never heard though. Considered subversive, it was banned. But Paris again rang with church bells and, as in the old days, the Angelus summoned people to prayer. After a decade of silence, on Easter Day 1802 Notre Dame de Paris had held religious ceremonies conducted by Napoleonic bishops. The Church was allowed to function again, but it had lost its independence.

Visitors were delighted to see that the gaiety, splendour, urbanity and sense of style so characteristic of Paris had survived the Revolution. Had Paris picked up as the fashion capital of Europe since its dip before the French Revolution? James Edward Smith, during his Grand Tour, had described women at Versailles as ‘old hags ugly beyond what you can conceive … are dressed like girls … and have on each check a broad dab of the highest pink crayon.’ The influence of Rousseau, during the Revolution, with his beliefs in naturalness and simplicity had meant that clothes had become more functional—and there were less of them. But most importantly, women had abandoned tight corsets and even petticoats. High-bodiced, clinging, semi-transparent low-cut loose dresses revealing much cleavage, which had come into vogue at the time of the Revolution, were still in fashion, as was simply styled hair—in contrast to the elaborate bouffant hairstyles and wigs which were still worn in England.

Fanny Burney, who was in Paris at the time with her French husband, later described the superiority of French fashion to the dreary old fashions of the English in her novel Evelina. The maid, aghast at the clothes being worn by Madame Duval, exclaimed: ‘This won’t do!—That you can never wear! This you can never be seen in! That would make you

stared at as a curiosity!—Three petticoats! No one wears more than one!—Stays? Everybody has left off even corsets!—Shift sleeves? Not a soul now wears even a chemise!'

Gourmet food was no longer the province solely of the rich. New places for meals—restaurants—had sprung up in Paris. Salt fish with garlic was served at Les Frères Provençaux, while Henneveux offered private boudoirs. This elegant new form of public dining, first established after the Revolution when there were no longer the grands seigneurs to employ the brilliant and skilled chefs of France, was the rage. Some cooks such as Carême had joined the exodus to England while others stayed in France and opened restaurants.

The first restaurant in the world had been opened in Paris after a man called Boulanger, a soup-seller, had called his soups by the special name of restaurant, meaning 'restorative', in 1765. So successful was their sale that he tried to enlarge his menu, but not being a member of the traiteurs corporation (eating-house keepers) he was not permitted to serve such dishes as these ragouts. When Boulanger offered his customers sheep's feet in white sauce, the traiteurs brought a law suit. But Boulanger won. An Act of Parliament decreed that sheep's feet in white sauce was not a ragout. Boulanger's sheep's feet became famous and from 1786 the great cuisiniers opened restaurants, nearly all of which were famed for a particular speciality. Their success was almost instantaneous. The restaurant habit was born in Paris and first witnessed by the English during the Peace of Amiens.

napoleon adopts a
quasi-royal tone

Eighty-one British Members of Parliament, sixty-one peers and thirty-three peeresses, many accompanied by their children, not to mention the hundreds of less exalted citizens, came to Paris during the Peace to view the heady new Napoleonic society. Napoleon held a dinner at the Tuileries once a month, inviting many of those who had been presented to him and Josephine in the previous weeks. Guests were fascinated to see the changes now there was a Bonaparte instead of a Bourbon in residence in the Tuileries. The British Embassy was overwhelmed with the mysteries of etiquette for visitors to the new Republic. It was quite, quite different to etiquette in the other new republic, the United States of America. Should men invited to Napoleon's receptions whiten their hair? He wore his short and never powdered it. Republican equality had abolished titles and required the use of the familiar tu instead of the polite vous. Had vous now been reinstated with the First Consul? Was it true that he winced when he heard the word citoyen? Visitors noted a quasi-royal tone and on 19 May the first step towards recreating titles and rank was seen when Napoleon created the Legion of Honour.

Madame de la Tour du Pin described the atmosphere of a fresh beginning on an earlier visit to the Tuileries.

In Paris I found that many of my acquaintances had already returned from abroad. All the young men were beginning to turn to the rising sun—Mme Bonaparte—who was living at the Tuileries in apartments that had been entirely redecorated, as if by the wave of a wand. She already bore herself like a Queen, but a very gracious, amiable and kindly one … she well understood her husband's plan: he was counting on her to win the allegiance of the upper ranks of society. Josephine had, in fact, given him to understand that she

herself had belonged to those circles; this was not quite true. I do not know if she had been presented at Court or had had the entrée at Versailles.

The apartments of the artists David, Gérard, Gros, Isabey and Redouté at the Louvre were across the garden from those of Napoleon and Josephine at the Tuileries. However, unlike Isabey, Gérard and Gros, who were later made barons by Napoleon, the name of Redouté does not appear on the couple's grand guest lists. Popular and loved though Redouté was, and even though he mixed socially with the other artists at the Louvre and Josephine relied on him in many ways, he had not really risen above the limitations of his background. He was never a regular guest at the Tuileries until decades later when Louis Philippe, known as the Citizen King, came to power in 1830. His two daughters were such keen students of botanical painting that Redouté dined with the family every Friday night.

Although Redouté appears well dressed in his portraits, it is unlikely that he had the elaborate clothes which court etiquette—even in the days of the First Empire—then demanded at official functions. Nor were he or his wife part of the set who frequently visited the theatre or the Opera. Redouté's greatest pleasures and entertainment—apart from painting flowers—were the meetings of the Linnean Society of Paris and taking his wife and children on the public ferry down the Seine to spend a day at Meudon, where they could gather wildflowers and picnic in the woods. Easy access by river meant that this area was long associated with French artists, in the same way that the Ile de Chatou was later to become a haven for the Impressionists.

le musee napoleon

The peace coincided with the Industrial Exhibition which as well as featuring machines displayed the latest styles in luxury items such as wonderful silks and velvets and Empire-style chairs. One exhibitor was Joseph Jacquard with his apparatus for fancy weaving which was to revolutionise the fabric industry.

But the place to really visit, the most popular destination, was the Louvre—Le Musée Napoleon. Napoleon was its greatest contributor. The year before the peace the palace had opened to show all its new treasures—a display unequalled before or since. Here was the staggering sight of twenty-five Raphaels together, including St Cecilia (now back in Bologna), Transfiguration (now back in the Vatican) and Madonna della Sedia (now back in the Pitti Palace at Florence); twenty-three Titians glowed in a burning row, including his Assumption (now back in Venice); fifty-three Rubens; thirty-three Van Dycks; thirty-one Rembrandts, as well as Correggio's St Jerome and Madonna della Scodella (now back in Parma). People came from all over Europe, particularly England, to admire this treasure trove including the president of the Royal Academy and the young painter William Turner. The rooms were thronged with copyists.

Under the Treaty of Bologna in 1796 and that of Tolentino a year later, Napoleon had allocated himself twenty pictures from Modena, twenty from Parma, forty from Bologna, ten from Ferrara and so on. At the Louvre—until they were returned after the Battle of Waterloo—were gathered together many of the world's most famous pictures. Well before Napoleon had come to power, in May 1791, it had been decreed that the Louvre should be dedicated to the conservation of objects of science and art so treasures were gathered from royal palaces and the churches. The first opening, though, had been brief. When the public were admitted in August 1793, only three days out of every ten were allotted for

public viewing, while copyists could come with their easels for another five days. But extensive repairs meant that the gallery had to be closed again after a year. The public was not admitted again until April 1799, and then only to part of the palace.

But there was one painting which only Napoleon and those close to him saw: the Mona Lisa. That was in his room at the Tuileries. Acquired by Francis I from Leonardo himself, it had been in France for over two centuries. It was not until 1804 that Napoleon relinquished his possession and moved it across to the Louvre where it was put on public display.

Napoleon's patronage of the arts as well as the sciences was outstanding. Visitors to Paris were astounded that scientists were even given portfolios in the government—a thing unheard of in London—and everything was done to give prestige to artists. 'He was enlightened in his concern for artisans,' says Timothy Wilson-Smith, in his book Napoleon and his Artists.

At the top of the artistic meritocracy ranked the painters, the sculptors, the architects, who hoped to become famous and prosperous … Once David had decided that Napoleon was a hero like the heroes of antiquity, a whole school of painters followed him in his enthusiasm … Even those who knew how he [Napoleon] could be discourteous to women, moody, cruel or garrulous were captivated by his imagination, his charm, his boundless ambition and boundless self-confidence … Architects vied with one another to provide the setting for him, sculptors to make his presence felt all over France and painters to recall every incident in his career. The Napoleonic industry embraced all crafts from the making of furniture, silverware and carpets to the manufacture of fashionable clothes and military uniform.

the effect of the french revolution on the people

One question often asked was whether the Revolution had made the masses better off. Apart from conscription, which drained many families of their best blood, they were in a better situation once they were no longer hampered by the conditions of the ancien régime. The French critic Hippolyte Taine, author of Les Origines de la France contemporaine, written at the end of the nineteenth century, said they certainly were. In 1789, out of every 100 francs of net income, a peasant paid 14 francs to the seigneur, 14 to the Church in tithes, 53 to the King in taxes, keeping only 19 francs for himself. In 1800 he paid nothing to the seigneur or to the Church and just 21 francs in state, departmental and communal taxes, leaving 79 francs for himself. Although they were soon to rise, the taxes were not as onerous as before.

The new tax system was coupled with the foundation of the Bank of France in 1800, and the tremendous energy exerted by Napoleon so that French industry would catch up with British industry. To ensure that his rule coincided with the rebirth and reorganisation of national industries, when not on military campaigns he often made tours in parts of the country, visiting factories, and throwing at them his patronage and generous subsidies. The first of these tours was in 1801, when he visited the Gobelins manufacturers, and the cloth factories of St Quentin, Bolbec, Elbeuf and Beauvais. Later the fabric manufacturers in Aix-en-Provence, the factories of printed linen at Jouy, the porcelain factory at Sèvres and, closer to home, the glass and mirror factories in the suburb of St Antoine in Paris, all received visits.

Voluminous correspondence shows Napoleon's determination to ensure that every man in France had a job. Employment of the masses, both as self-employed craft workers, such as cobblers and tailors, and in jobs in the new large factories, became a priority. In 1802 the workers of Lyons saw the soldier who had first bloodied his sword there, suppressing striking silk weavers at the age of seventeen, return as the champion of science and technology. He addressed the reluctant workmen on the necessity of using mechanical looms, confronting them with the reality of the times: 'it is only with the adoption of mechanical procedures and a reduction in manual labour that French industry can cease to be inferior to the English.'

In an effort to create work for unemployed hat-makers, bonnet-makers, cobblers, tailors and saddlers in Paris, he arranged '… for the manufacture of shoes at the rate of 500 a day, on the understanding that jobs are given to 1000 cobblers … 15 000 pairs a month … As there are still other workmen out of employment, see whether it would be feasible to manufacture 100 or so baggage-carts …' The poverty of his childhood made Napoleon particularly concerned with unemployment: 'My aim is not to prevent this or that manufacturer from going bankrupt, since not even the coffers of the State would provide enough to help everyone; my concern is to prevent the factories from closing their doors and leaving the working class unemployed.'

napoleon intrigues

the british

As well as seeing his museum—one of the glories of the Empire—all the visitors wanted to see Napoleon and Josephine. Josephine and Napoleon's beautiful sister Pauline were the most talked-about women in Paris.

Some visitors, though, thought that Napoleon would do no good for France as he represented the Revolution. Others feared that he would become a despot over a country which had declared political liberty. They saw him reigning over the ruins of the Republic, the very Republic to which he owed his rapid rise to power. Even his brother Lucien, his junior by six years, a patriotic and ardent Republican, felt that his brother was betraying him and the Republic through his lust for power.

A few old friends of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI refused to be presented to the man they called 'the tyrant', but even they were delighted to be able to add to the growing litany of descriptions of Bonaparte, for the English never called him Napoleon.

The English vied with each other to receive invitations, especially from Madame Junot or General Bernadotte, and others who gave brilliant parties. The most splendid, though, were those given by Talleyrand, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. If you went to the right parties you were bound to meet, according to Lady Bessborough, the leading men, 'from the generals to the savants'. Equally fashionable were the parties of the fearless Madame de Staël or the beautiful Madame Récamier, who was the reigning beauty of Paris. The Napoleonic social world was certainly brash. Lady Bessborough was electrified when she heard that Madame Récamier had retired to her bed at a ball given in her own house and 'let anybody come to look at her!'

Bonaparte's habits, said the English, were fascinating. Diaries from dozens of visitors list curious details. Every ten days he received summaries of all books, pamphlets and plays produced during that period. He could endure long hours without sleep, often working eighteen hours a day. He lacked aristocratic repose. He could not keep his small white hands still when talking to a lady or gentleman. He not only occupied the King's old

rooms, he rode a white charger which had once belonged to the King. So great was his fear of assassination that he always left the Opera or the theatre before the curtain fell, escorted by Mamelukes with torches, and a strong cavalry guard. There was even discussion about the colour of his eyes. They were hazel—no, grey—black as night when his Corsican temper was roused. Eventually it was decided that both Napoleon and Madame Bonaparte had blue eyes. He was said to be impenetrable, even to his intimates. Busts of both Admiral Nelson and the English Liberal statesman, Charles James Fox, were on his dressing-room mantelpiece.

Napoleon made a polished speech of welcome when, at last, he met Charles James Fox. But the meeting was a slight disappointment. Napoleon was thirty-three, Fox exactly twenty years older. For years Fox had acted as a modifying influence on English attitudes to France and had been the strength within the peace party. Afterwards Fox summed up his host as ‘a young man considerably intoxicated with success’. Fox, addicted to a fast life, gambling and drinking, the third son of the first Lord Holland, born in London and educated at Eton and Oxford, had become a member of parliament at nineteen where his liberal views astonished his family. He had actually greeted the early stages of the French Revolution with enthusiasm. Fox died, alas, four years after this Paris meeting, when he was trying again to set in train peace negotiations with France.

Fox also visited Malmaison. Josephine took him around her glasshouses, showing him the hortensia (hydrangea) which, she said, had ‘recently been given the name of my daughter’. When Fox’s nephew Lord Holland and his wife visited Malmaison, Josephine told them ‘these are my conquests’. Plucking a branch of jasmine introduced from her native Martinique, she added: ‘The seeds were sown and tended by my own hands—they remind me of my country, my childhood and the ornaments of my adolescence.’

napoleon’s love of science

As the following letter from Sir Charles Blagden, who became secretary to the Royal Society, to Sir Joseph Banks shows, Napoleon’s interest in science remained all-consuming. It was written after the dinner where Josephine had decorated the long table for one hundred and fifty guests as a spring meadow.

Probably you know, that the 15th of the French month is the day set apart by the First Consul for the reception of foreigners, and on that day he usually invites to dinner some of those who were presented to him the month before. Last Wednesday he invited me. Most of the company were assembled before he came in. I was standing near Laplace and Lagrange. After paying a few compliments to ladies and distinguished persons, he came up to us … asked me very graciously whether I found myself well in Paris, and then inquired how you were. I replied that you were much better than when I had left England. ‘But,’ said he, ‘has he no thought of coming to France?’ I answered, that, undoubtedly, it would be your wish to do so, but I feared that your precarious state of health, and your laments from the gout would prevent it. ‘Why, he is not old,’ said the Consul, ‘what is his age?’ I answered that you were in your sixtieth year. ‘That is not old,’ said the Consul, with a tone of voice which implied that he hoped you would overcome all difficulties, and make him a visit. Laplace, then very judiciously said, ‘Sir Joseph Banks is sending us a most curious animal … the quadruped bird and lizard …’ He asked its name and, as he boggled at it a little, I explained its meaning in Greek, and added a few words about the … animal, with which he seemed satisfied. He then said, ‘I have a project, in which I wish England

would concur with us. I mean to propose a prize for discoveries in Galvanism. I am fond of Galvanism, and consider it as promising great things.' I replied that undoubtedly it afforded hopes of getting a further insight into the animal anatomy and mentioned the torpedo and electrical eel. 'Yes,' said he, 'I look upon Volta's discovery as one of the most remarkable made of late years. Is much attention paid to that science in England?' I answered, that several of our scientific Gentlemen were engaged with it, and particularly that Mr Davy had made some curious experiments. 'But none,' he replied quickly, 'which form a revolution in the science, like that of Volta.' To this I assented, and he then went to speak with the persons in that part of the room. Laplace and Lagrange both took a share in this conversation and much more was said … it was evident to me that the First Consul's chief object was to express how much he wished that you would make a visit to France. Laplace told me, that he had often touched on the subject to him, and I have no doubt but that, if you were to come, you would be treated with the most marked attention both by the Consul himself, and by the nation at large. I asked Laplace what the Consul meant by saying that he wished we would concur in his project about Galvanism, whether he desired that we should join in offering the prize. Laplace answered that he did not understand it so, and that nothing but a general concurrence in promoting the science of Galvanism was intended …

… after dinner I was presented to Madame Bonaparte, who after a few general expressions, began to talk to me about Mrs Damer and Miss Berry. She spoke of the former's talent for statuary [sculpting], and mentioned with approbation the busts of Lord Nelson and Mr Charles Fox, and said, that, though she had not seen those gentlemen herself, yet that friends of hers who knew them had assured her the busts were extremely like. I then said, that you had informed me Mrs Damer was making up a parcel of seeds to send her. She replied, that she had spoke to Mrs Damer of her taste for plants and that the seeds would be acceptable. Be so good as to communicate this conversation to Mrs Damer, as a proof that the people here are not ignorant of her talents in the manner Miss Berry supposed …

napoleon raises his sights

It was during the year of the English visitors that a Bourbon-like formality started to assert itself. The happy, carefree informality of the early days at Malmaison, with dinner alfresco under the trees, was no more. Malmaison was no longer Napoleon's summer residence—instead of spending summer months in the house that Josephine so loved he opted for the grandeur of St Cloud. It was a magnificent palace, but it never found a place in Josephine's heart. Unlike Malmaison, which has two rather ordinary wooden staircases, St Cloud had a grand central staircase adorned with tall marble columns. Again Josephine was allotted the old rooms of Marie Antoinette. Again Madame Campan was consulted on etiquette.

But the move was not as drastic as it sounded, as St Cloud was but a short distance, about three kilometres, from Malmaison, further along the Seine. Today the suburb of Saint-Cloud borders that of Rueil-Malmaison. Napoleon built an excellent road between the two residences—now the busy Avenue Napoleon—so Josephine could ply backwards and forwards. When he was away she slept at Malmaison and the house was always run in readiness for her frequent visits.

Napoleon's valet, Constant, related that at St Cloud: 'There was a salon that the Emperor had particular affection for. It opened onto a lovely avenue of chestnut trees, in a closed park where he could walk at any hour, without being seen.'

When the Council of State formally proposed that Napoleon's tenure of office as First Consul be extended to life, eyes turned to Josephine to produce an heir. Six years of marriage had produced no pregnancy. Although few knew it she was, in fact, nearly forty. Her childlessness became a matter of state. The matter of succession blurred her future. The higher Napoleon rose in office, the more the matter was discussed. Her fertility, as she had had two children, could not be in doubt, but not so his. However, Josephine was worried that a mistress would produce a child by Napoleon, which would prove his ability to reproduce and emphasise that she was now barren. Hortense, who had married Napoleon's brother Louis in January, just before the peace, was pregnant. Could Napoleon adopt this child, if it were male, who would be his nephew as well as being his wife's grandchild?

Plagued by one of her well-known premonitions, Josephine pleaded with Napoleon 'not to become king'. Louis Antoine Bourrienne wrote: 'She knew that every step the First Consul took towards the throne was a step away from her.'

On 2 August 1802 a plebiscite—not a secret ballot—was held on the plans for the Constitution. Voters had to write a 'yes' or a 'no' beside their name in a public register. Many, of course, hesitated to go forward. But Napoleon was elected Consul for life—the plebiscite produced 3 568 885 votes in favour, out of 3 577 259 cast. The English visitors to Paris were amazed at the subsequent celebrations, with 'Napoleon's star, thirty feet in height, gleaming above the towers of Notre Dame throughout the night'.

the end of the peace

During the prelude to spring 1803 very large yellow straw hats, clearly an inspiration from Josephine, came into fashion. They were trimmed with poppies, marguerites and cornflowers, the red, white and blue colours of both England and France. But there was no time for the English to wear them. On 16 May, The Times of London announced that George III had recalled his Ambassador from Paris, and the British government had authorised the seizure of French shipping. It cannot be stressed too much that it was Britain that started the war—although Napoleon is often blamed for provoking it.

Napoleon, infuriated, made immediate plans to invade England and become 'master of London, Parliament and the Bank of England'. For the next two years the English lived in almost daily expectation of invasion from the French army, with its already legendary reputation, camped along the coasts of the Channel and the North Sea. To gratify his spleen Napoleon summoned Junot, the Governor of Paris and gave him the instruction: 'All Englishmen from the ages of eighteen to sixty, or holding any commission from His Britannic Majesty, who are at present in France, shall immediately be constituted Prisoners of War.' No Englishman was to be visible anywhere—not even in the most obscure theatre or restaurant in Paris. Madame de Staël in her book Ten Years' Exile wrote.

The rumour immediately spread that the English travellers would all be made prisoners … persons

entirely unconnected with political affairs, among

whom was Lord Beverly, the father of eleven children, returning from Italy with his wife and daughters … were arrested … languishing for ten years in country towns, leading the most miserable life that the imagination can conceive …

About seven hundred men were arrested and kept in France for ten years. Napoleon announced that no produce coming from English colonies would be admitted to French ports, nor would any merchandise coming directly or indirectly from England. That 'little

island', he thought, could receive no wound more fatal than the closure of every continental market to its goods. There was now no way that Australian plants could cross the Channel to Malmaison. Smugglers flourished as it took eleven years with a fight to the finish before there was peace again.

Madame de Staël continued: 'During the summer of 1803 began the great farce of the invasion of England; flat-bottomed boats were ordered to be built from one end of France to the other; they were even constructed in the forests on the borders of the great roads.' She listed some of the propaganda slogans inscribed on triumphal arches: 'The Road to London' and 'A Good Wind and Thirty Hours'. Napoleon became completely absorbed in his English expedition. Today the Colonne de la Grande Armée overlooks the site where, over two nights in 1804, an elegant pavilion rose on the salty, sparsely grassed hills behind the cliffs of Boulogne. From here Napoleon could survey his four main army camps, the town, the harbour and, through his giant telescope, the walls of Dover Castle across the Channel. Always innovative, Napoleon had had each piece of the pavilion precut and numbered—a forerunner of the do-it-yourself prefabricated home.

The camp for the Grande Armeé spread around Napoleon's baraque. Streets and roads with names such as Avenue de Marengo, Rue de St Bernard, Avenue de Campo Formio, ran through the thousands of thatched, mud-walled huts covering an area of about ten square kilometres. Through the summer, the gardens around the huts which housed an estimated 175 000 men sprouted flowers and vegetables. But no garden was lovelier than that around what had become the Baraque Impériale—although he was not yet crowned, Napoleon had already been elected Emperor, in May 1804. Carola Oman described his headquarters in Britain Against Napoleon, published in 1945.

A plain wooden fence, lighted after dark by reflector lamps, placed four feet apart, railed it off from the remainder of the cliff top … But beyond the jealously guarded fence, engineers had relieved the monotony of the prospect by an ornamental sheet of water, on which floated two black swans, and a garden with sandy yellow paths, flower beds, and clumps of ornamental shrubs.

So the swans from Australia also waited to repel the anticipated British attack.

And, never to be forgotten, are Napoleon's bees and violets. Just as the majestic lily, the fleur-de-lys, was the flower of the Bourbons, the humble bee became the symbolic emblem of the Emperor, and the violet became his flower. The violet, though, came later, after his first downfall; the bee came with his rise to power.

When he heard of the Emperor's coronation Beethoven tore up the dedication page from his Sinfonia Grande Napoleon Bonaparte and renamed it the Eroica—to celebrate the memory of a man he had once so admired. There was much controversy in France about Napoleon elevating himself to the title of Emperor. But little gold insects gave a light touch to the preparations of the gloomy ceremonial—all a prelude to the Imperial Court which was being formed. Royal bees were being embroidered onto everything from the coronation cushion to the royal robes and curtains. Like the decorations in the freezing December streets with double rows of orange trees linked by loops of stars, the embroidered bees brought the garden into the ceremony.

The grand coronation ceremony at Notre Dame on 2 December 1804 was, according to many critics, against the spirit of the Revolution, and against the words of the Constituent Assembly, which forbade 'all outward signs which imply distinctions of birth'. Heraldry too, along with titles and the hereditary nobility, was considered to be part of the old feudalism, and had also been outlawed in the Revolution. But all these things started to creep back within a few years of Napoleon's gaining power. The appellation Citoyen slowly became history and a new nobility, complete with heraldry and titles, came into being.

Napoleon's move to become an instant monarch was unprecedented. By placing a crown of golden laurel and oak leaves on his head he had put himself on the same footing as the Emperors of Russia and Austria. The crowning of Josephine, too, was unique. No queen consort, apart from Marie de Medicis, had been so honoured for centuries. On the other side of the Channel the English found the coronation something of a circus and the English caricaturists had special fun with Josephine's new title. L'Impératrice became l'impure actrice. Much was made of Napoleon's sisters—who had objected to carrying her long ermine-trimmed train—nearly making her trip. This was interpreted as a public way of showing their dislike of her. It was also thought amazing that on the eve of the great day, at Josephine's insistence—to help cement their civil marriage—the Pope carried out a religious wedding ceremony for Napoleon and Josephine. The presence of the Pope was a victory for Napoleon as the Bourbons had counted on the Pope's support to help overthrow him.

Pope Pius VII came to Paris to officiate but, as the world knows from David's glorious canvas of the coronation, Napoleon himself placed the crowns on both his head and Josephine's. Hortense's old friend Isabey, who had masterminded so many theatrical stage sets and props, designed Napoleon's coronation dress and was both artistic and stage director of the whole show. He had even made a model of the cathedral, complete with small dolls which would be used instead of the main participants, during early rehearsals. 'Ceremony is born,' wrote Isabey, observing the grand almoner, a grand master of ceremonies, a grand equerry, a grand chamberlain … ladies-in-waiting … footmen … It was almost as if the coronation was the funeral of the old Napoleon, the christening of the new.

Only thirteen years earlier Napoleon had been retiring at ten at night to save candles, rising at four in the morning, taking but one meal a day, sleeping in a room with bare walls and just two chairs and a table covered with books and papers as his only furniture with, in the adjoining room, his brother Louis sleeping on a coarse mattress. He had trained himself to endure longer periods of hard work and physical exertion than most people. What a long way Napoleon had come since 1791 when, after setting out on foot at four o'clock every morning from Auxonne, to look over the proofs for his first political pamphlet, he would, after a frugal breakfast, walk to his garrison, where he would arrive before noon.

After the Coronation Napoleon surrounded himself with strict court etiquette and protocol, but his own manner remained simple and direct and he was thrifty in his habits. Nothing is more characteristic of the dichotomy between his love of outward show and opulence, and his simple habits, than his bed. In his sumptuous palaces, surrounded by some of the finest furniture in the world, he liked to sleep on a campaign bed. From

Malmaison to St Helena his campaign bed never left him. His field furniture was designed so it could follow him everywhere and be operational in minutes.

bees as emblems

Like Charlemagne and most of the ruling houses of Europe, Napoleon chose the spread eagle as the heraldic emblem of France. In this he overruled his Council, who had chosen the rooster—France's emblem today. The potent symbol of the bee became his personal emblem. The bee was always considered to be the badge of industry and power. (It was not then well known that only females are of any consequence in the bee State.)

Napoleon did not say whether the Bonaparte bee was a bumble bee or a honey bee, but just as the eagle is the king of birds, the oak the king of trees, the bee is the king of insects. The bee was the royal emblem of some of the Pharaohs of Lower Egypt, and an emblem of royalty in the Minoan civilisation, where honey had significance as a sweetener and a preservative in funerary rites, of utmost importance to ancient civilisations. In Greece ambrosia and nectar consisted of fruit candied in honey and wine.

Embroiderers were commanded to continue decking hundreds of yards of silks and velvets with golden bees. Bees by the tens of thousands replaced the fleurs-de-lis in the royal palaces of France—on curtains, stamped in gold on leather suitcases, even on the upholstery of Napoleon's carriage, as a motif on silver-gilt furniture, in picture frames—on nearly everything. The bees were sometimes juxtaposed with eagles.

Later when Napoleon was deciding on a suitable uniform for the Imperial Guard he chose a white tunic with gold embroidery and a coat of red velvet decorated with golden bees in flight. The crimson cushion he knelt on at his coronation was decorated with a single bee. Although his monogram of 'N' encircled by laurel or oak leaves was also used as a symbol, it was the Bonaparte bee which was his actual emblem.

The bee was not an unusual choice. It often occurs as a charge or as a crest. The Complete Guide to Heraldry, published in 1909, states.

The fact that the bee was adopted as a badge by the Emperor Napoleon gave it considerable importance

in French armory, inasmuch as he assumed it for his

own badge, and the mantle and pavilion around the armorial bearings of the Empire were semé of these insects. They also appeared upon his own coronation mantle. He adopted them under the impression, which may or may not be correct, that they had at one time been the badge of Childéric, father of Clovis [King

of the Franks]. The whole story connected with their assumption by Napoleon has been a matter of much controversy … but it may be added that Napoleon changed the fleur-de-lys upon the chief in the arms

of Paris to golden bees upon a chief of gules, and a

chief azure, semé of bees or, was added as indicative

of their rank to the arms of 'Princes-Grand-Dignitaries of the Empire'.

Whether bees were the emblem of Childéric or not, the discovery of jewels in the form of insects thought to be bees, unearthed from the ancient grave in Tournai in 1653, was thought to have reinforced Napoleon's choice. Bees were occasionally used by the Bourbons and also by the Barberinis of Rome—with whom Napoleon claimed distant

kinship. Entomologists have now decided, however, that the emblem of Childéric was neither a bumble bee nor a honey bee, but a cricket or a cicada.

victories

On 2 December 1805, exactly one year to the day after his coronation, Napoleon crushed the Russians and Austrians at the Battle of Austerlitz. This was followed by dazzling victories at Jena and Friedland. But Nelson's annihilating defeat of the combined French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar in October 1805 had established British maritime supremacy. Napoleon was forced to abandon all ideas of invading Britain, but he maintained his power on the continent with his Grande Armée—now a formidable force. A surprising number of victories followed, as Napoleon's campaigns, strategy and style of combat were so brilliant that they are to this day studied by soldiers. Napoleon could boast 'Surely there is no finer army in Europe than mine today.' He was also proud of the way he had reorganised the country's finances, putting them on a firm footing with the new commitment to industry.

Inspiring his troops with fierce loyalty and devotion, Napoleon's strategy was based on rapid movement. Unhampered by heavy baggage, his efficient, mobile army could march fifty kilometres a day. Napoléon reinstated the rank of marshal, creating twenty-six of them. He also continued the Revolutionary practice of promotion from the ranks.

Conscription, though, was unpopular. Of the 1 500 000 men conscripted between 1800 and 1812 alone, three-quarters were from old France, the others from recently annexed areas. Equally unpopular were new taxes to pay for the wars, including the reintroduction of the much hated Salt Tax of the ancien régime, and between 1804 and 1810 a tax on drinks was reintroduced.

T he fact that Napoleon had made St Cloud his official country residence gave Josephine the feeling that Malmaison was entirely her own house and her own garden. Although she loved gardens and plants she did not exert her influence over the gardens of the other royal palaces of France although she became, more or less, the mistress of the palaces of the Tuileries, Saint Cloud and Fontainebleau, which kept their classical gardens. Nor did she become involved in the entirely newly created garden around the house built by Napoleon's friend, the champagne producer Jean Rémy Moët, at Epernay near his old school at Brienne, especially for the couple to use on their travels.

It was her beloved Malmaison which received all Josephine's enthusiastic attention when Napoleon was absent. And he was often away. His visits to Boulogne and plans to invade Britain were accompanied by battle after battle as his Empire expanded with a great series of brilliant victories.

While territories on the borders of France were annexed, briefly Spain, north-east Italy, Holland, Naples and Westphalia became satellite kingdoms under members of the Bonaparte family. Poland received a Napoleonic nominee as Grand Duke.

Napoleon's administrative genius and military victories meant that his reforms and institutions for France were also established in his conquered territories. These included his lycées and the Code Napoléon, which embodied the legal equality and property rights

that had emerged from the Revolution. His legacy is seen all over Europe, in the countries such as Italy, Switzerland and Germany which still use this civil code.

Napoleon's dazzling court, with its elaborate etiquette, imperial titles and honours, new uniforms and old ceremonials, also expanded over the continent. He arranged marriages between Josephine's son Eugene and the daughter of the King of Bavaria, his youngest brother Jerome and the daughter of the King of Wurtemberg, and his adopted daughter Stephanie de Beauharnais and the heir to the grand duchy of Baden Baden.

Josephine, too, conferred rank. One of the first things she did after she became Empress was to appoint Redouté 'Painter to Josephine, Empress of the French' with a salary of 18 000 francs a year. Redouté himself was not immune to receiving privileges. His determination to be recognised is demonstrated in the way he insisted that his name alone should appear on the cover of Les Liliacées. De Candolle, who wrote the descriptions, was not to appear, even in a subordinate position. De Candolle begged Redouté to allow his name on the title page; after all, he argued, he had collaborated on the text. To no avail. Redouté had suffered a serious blow to his pride when his name had not appeared on earlier works. Jardin de la Malmaison, for instance, bears just the name of Ventenat. Now Redouté was getting his own back on the botanists.

But despite his continual money worries—he often needed to be paid in advance—on 23 July 1804 Redouté acquired for 18 000 francs a grand property at Fleury-sous-Meudon (now known as Meudon) which would be a financial drain on him for the rest of his long life. It was part of the former estate of the Marquis de Mirabeau—the old orangerie and a house, a sort of annexe, which had housed the gardeners. With his apartment in the Hotel Mirabeau as his Paris headquarters, Fleury-sous-Meudon would remain Redouté's home until his death. Josephine gave Redouté a sapling from her Marengo cedar to plant in his new garden.

Napoleon's dazzling plans for the Louvre meant that Redouté and the other artists had had to leave their rent-free accommodation. Just as the artists were moved from the Louvre so art would have a bigger showcase, the offices for the scientists were also transferred.

napoleon moves l'institut

Since Napoleon had been elected to the scientific section of the Institut, he had proudly worn the academic uniform on many ceremonial occasions. It was an organisation interwoven into his life.

In 1805 Napoleon moved this beloved institution to give it larger, more prestigious headquarters in Mazarin's magnificent, imposing seventeenth-century Palais des Quatre Nations (where it remains today). This building had originated as a college, founded under the terms of Mazarin's will, for the four new provinces, including Alsace, which he had united with France. Mazarin's coat of arms is carved at the base of the mighty dome.

Although l'Institut was divided into classes to aid specialisation, members of all the different streams of knowledge attended meetings—which is how Napoleon had intimate knowledge of the platypus given by Joseph Banks to the Jardin des Plantes and investigated by Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, one of the foremost scientists of his time.

Napoleon mixed with the scientific elite and, according to some, excluded some of his critics. Attending the meetings was also how Napoleon came to know many of the corps des savants who had accompanied him to Egypt. He kept abreast with papers and reports from such luminaries as Monge, Berthollet, Chaptal, Lagrange and Laplace. One topic which was much discussed was plant classification. The Linnean sexual system had been adopted in Sweden, Germany, England and many other parts of Europe, but it did not take a really firm hold in France. Antoine Jussieu (1748–1836), professor of botany at the Jardin des Plantes, expanded on the system of classification of his uncle, Bernard Jussieu, and his Genera plantarum secundum ordines naturales disposita, juxta methodum in horto regio Parisiensi exaratam, together with the Linnean system, forms the basis of modern classification.

Many of the scientific members who were given government portfolios were involved in carrying out Napoleon's reforms. The Society for the Encouragement of National Industry was founded with the help of Monge, who had earlier been the driving force behind the founding of the Ecole Polytechnique during the Revolution. The lycées were founded with Fourcroy, the distinguished chemist and member of Napoleon's council of state.

One example of the way Napoleon applied mathematics to everyday life was his system of street numbering. He ordered that all the houses in new streets be numbered even on the right side, odd on the left, starting from the Seine—before that street numbering had been random. This is another simple innovation, like the graphite in pencils, which spread all over the world.

redoute leaves the louvre

Turning the artists out of the Louvre seemed harsh, but it was necessary for Napoleon's vision of Paris as the cultural and scientific centre of Europe. He needed space in which to house the largest collection of art in the world—paintings, statues, decorative arts, jewellery. Just how forward-thinking this was in making art accessible to the general population is seen by looking at how far France was ahead of London. Although the British Museum was founded in the mid eighteenth century, the National Gallery was not opened until 1824. (By coincidence its collection was based on pictures purchased from J.J. Angerstein, the father of the English army officer who purchased Napoleon's horse, Marengo.)

Napoleon had a list made of the ten best artists in the fields of painting, sculpture, architecture and music and swamped them all with commissions. As well as creating his own orchestra at the Tuileries, when he first became First Consul he ordered four enormous tableaux to be painted every two years, and he bought three works at each annual Salon. After 1806 his commissions intensified: eighteen tableaux d'histoire were ordered for the Tuileries alone. In 1811 he sent Girodet thirty-six orders for paintings. One bust alone of Napoleon by Chaudet was followed by a request for fifteen copies. But even though he was a patron unsurpassed the artists were not pleased to leave their luxurious quarters at the Louvre.

Redouté's first move was quickly followed by another to a rented nine-room apartment in the Hotel Mirabeau at 6 Rue de Seine, behind l'Institut. This studio, which remained his workshop and home for thirty-five years until his death, was filled with treasures—dried flowers, butterflies, shells, briefcases filled with sketches, works by his many friends, botanical books. He created within these rooms a large studio where a whole team of

engravers could work under his direction, so his prints and colour plates were of a superb quality. As it was also his home it was visited by his children's friends as well as his own. Both here and at Meudon Madame Redouté and her daughters were known in the artistic world as great hostesses. Adelaide was also a skilled amateur botanist.

Redouté lived and worked with the printers unless he took the packet down the Seine to the house at Meudon, where it was almost as if the ghost of Rousseau became his delightful companion in botany. Thirty years before, in 1767, when Rousseau returned from England he stayed with the Marquis de Mirabeau, the father of the great statesman, in the grand house opposite. Although Rousseau had been dead for nearly twenty years, Redouté felt the link keenly and, as explained in the first chapter, revived Rousseau's book on botany with his illustrations of wild plants gathered in the tangled woods of Meudon.

books of australian flora

In the early nineteenth century, colour reproduction and black and white printing reached a standard which has only now been surpassed with computer technology. More illustrated flower books were published in the first half of the nineteenth century than in the whole of the eighteenth century, but the early English books contained few colour plates of Australian plants—even though it was the early days of their discovery. Redouté, considered the master, the king of the flower painters, was not only a superb illustrator, he also personally supervised the printing of his works. An engraving was only as good as the copyist, as is seen in the portrait of Josephine by Lefevre compared with the engraving taken from it. Without the jewellery and clothes she would be unrecognisable. It was the same with plants—much was lost.

The tradition of great folio botanical books coming out as part works, often over a period of years, with their buyers having them bound in red or blue morocco leather, meant that Redouté was preparing colour plates for at least four books simultaneously in 1803. Les Liliacées, issued in eighty parts between July 1802 and September 1816, contained 503 plates. Jardin de la Malmaison came out in twenty parts with 120 plates between 1803 and 1805. Traité des arbres et arbustes que l'on cultive [en Pleine Terre] en France, which contained over 300 plates by Redouté, was published between 1801 and 1819 in fifty-eight parts. His most lucrative publication, strangely enough, was La Botanique by Rousseau with its French plants.

This was a popular book for amateurs. Redouté's enthusiasm for briefly turning away from the exotics to the plants around him was probably fuelled by his colleague de Candolle—the inventor of the word 'taxonomy'—who had two projects focusing on the native flora. One was aiding that doyen of naturalists, Lamarck, to update his Flore Française, while the government had commissioned him to make the other, a six-year botanical and agricultural survey of France.

The Australian flowers chosen for Jardin de la Malmaison reflect the difficulties which the French encountered in their cultivation. The seeds of many Australian plants need special treatment, such as being burnt by fire or soaked by seasonal rain, before they will germinate. Over half the plants grown at Malmaison before 1804 were those which are easily propagated. One group featured the low-growing peaflowers, members of the Leguminosae family, including the dwarf wedge-pea and species of the genus Kennedia, which give such a colourful show of flowers in the spring. Another group comprised plants

with woody fruits, like the eucalypts. Seeds which are protected within hard capsules were easier to collect and transport safely. The difficult to propagate Banksia marginata is pictured in Description des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre, the second book which Redouté illustrated for Josephine, indicating that it was a later introduction to the garden. There is also a superb unpublished illustration of Banksia serrata in the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. Redouté's two banksias for Labillardière's earlier Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse may have been from dried specimens.

Although Malmaison was known as a showcase for new plants from abroad, in its heyday the garden was a blend of local native flora and exotics—the stately French oak growing beside the flamboyant magnolia from China; France's graceful tall silver birch beside the bright red camellia from Japan; Napoleon's favourite French violets beside the lobelia; the splendid eucalypt from Australia beside ancient yews and ivies; the elaborate modern double roses with long-lasting blooms beside the simple but lovely wild dog-roses of Europe. Somewhere also was the Viola hederacea, brought back from Tasmania by Felix Delahaye.

Redouté was particularly interested in comparing the related species—the cousins, if you like—of different French plants coming in from other countries. But amongst the abundant greenery and tumbling flowers in Josephine's extraordinary garden were dozens of Australian species which seemed not to be related to other plant families. Another unusual characteristic of Australian plants is that they have adapted to poor soil, aridity and frequent burning.

landscape architects
come and go

The gardener Alexander Howatson's extravagance finally provided Napoleon with the excuse he needed to dismiss him, dispensing with his services when he received an excessive bill for transportation of shrubs to Malmaison. Napoleon obviously did not like having an English gardener in his employ, and had earlier stopped Hortense having English classes. Charles François Brisseau de Mirbel stepped into the vacancy as supervisor—and into the story of Australian plants in Europe—and soon, through de Mirbel, came Delahaye, fresh from his successes restoring the gardens at Le Trianon and Versailles. Despite tensions which arose between Delahaye and Josephine's chief botanist Aimé Bonpland, Delahaye worked for Josephine until her death—and unofficially dispersed Australian plants throughout France from his profitable nursery in Versailles, run by his wife and sons.

In 1806 Josephine finally found, in Louis Martin Berthault, the architect and landscape gardener who would most satisfactorily interpret her vision of an English garden. This was also the year that Napoleon made his brother Louis King of Holland. As soon as she became Queen of Holland, Hortense, following her mother's love of English gardens, transformed the great baroque garden at the Het Loo palace into an English garden.

Fontaine, who no longer had any connection with the garden at Malmaison, wrote disparagingly: 'The park of Malmaison has changed a lot. It has been replanted totally, adorned by little temples, little bridges, tombstones and rocks.' In a scornful conclusion he repeated the words of the Emperor: 'All the silliness of an English garden.' But after Josephine's death a British visitor to Malmaison noted: 'The English model has not been

merely imitated but has rather served as a base to imagine with satisfaction discernment and success—something new.'

But it was the content as much as the appearance that made the garden famous. In 1808, in his work Descriptions des nouveaux jardins de France, Alexandre de Laborde described the garden at Malmaison as the only 'genuine botanical garden in France'.

Josephine and Berthault's triumph was the new hothouse, one of the grandest and best stocked in Europe. This building was the most original of its type in its time—and one of the best known in the Paris region. Approximately 50 metres in length, it combined a glass building (the hothouse itself, orientated towards the south) with entertainment quarters facing north which were luxuriously decorated as a salon de réception et repos where people could enjoy the beauty of the plants. Josephine liked to receive her guests in these tropical surroundings, inspired by the palatial glass domes which Redouté had seen at Kew Gardens. Josephine's hothouse, though, was more magnificent than those in England, as she had combined plants with colonnades, furniture and china to stunning effect. Chateaubriand said that it was 'a cool and pleasant room, exquisitely furnished, from which one could admire the abundant tropical flora without the discomfort of a stifling atmosphere'.

Josephine's garden and her hothouse—she had other smaller structures in which other plants were kept and propagated—were her constant preoccupation. A letter to one of her ladies-in-waiting expresses her concern with water distribution: 'It was very kind of you to have gone to Malmaison. Would you be kind enough to let me know what has been done about the waters? Are my roses being watered? And how far advanced is the gallery? As for my lawns I miss them. I wish the rain which is very abundant here during the last fifteen days could be shared …'

In the years before the divorce Josephine became interested in growing roses, deciding to collect every kind known in the world. Josephine never lived to know that Redouté would publish a book on roses in 1817, including in it many that she had grown at Malmaison. Sadly, although it was this book which made them both famous in the gardening world, by the time it was published she had been dead for three years.

A fter a particularly cold winter in 1808,
having sent servants out on a fruitless search
for violets to celebrate his wedding anniversary, Napoleon, it is said, himself went into the woods to hunt for a few. He was at the summit of his career. Europe lay at his feet. The Emperors of Austria and Russia were his allies, his brothers sat on the thrones of Holland, Spain and Naples. France was strong and Paris was the cultural capital of Europe.

The one black spot was the continued resistance of England and the fact that he could not risk crossing the Channel because the French Fleet was no match in strength for the English Fleet. From his triumphant peak he took two steps which would lead to his fall—one political, the other personal.

Napoleon repeatedly said that it was only his need for an heir which made him divorce Josephine; that he would never have left her if she could have given him a child. She was his choice of a life companion, but he decided on divorce. But he found the idea of marrying into the old royal families of Europe irresistible.

'The divorce was decreed in the mind of the Emperor. His only hesitation was [as] to the means he should employ. No more kindness, no more consideration for my mother! He had given her up. 'He became unjust and plaguing', wrote Hortense in her memoirs.

Our family seemed a burden on him and he sought the society of his own people. He devoted himself to them entirely, as though he were seeking to make us desire what he did not as yet venture to exact. He did things he had never done before, such as driving out without the Empress, accompanied only by the Princess Borghese [his sister Pauline] with whom he spent almost every evening. It was said that a certain Piedmontese lady in the Princess's service was the reason for the strange assiduity. But I believe his conduct was rather an attempt to divert his mind from what lay before him and to steel himself against the pain of the separation he had resolved on. His mind was made up, but his heart still resisted, so he sought to occupy it elsewhere. It may be, too, that he was trying to prepare my mother … This love intrigue carried on in the very midst of our domestic life added new fuel to the rumours of an approaching divorce. As for me, witness of my mother's constant tears and of the conduct that provoked them, my heart and my wounded pride were alike revolted …

He protested … my mother would always be his dearest friend, that the one way of assuring the future peace of France was to leave his throne to his own child, that he had realized this for a long time and that only his affection for his wife had prevented him from taking action sooner.

Just at this time Paris was very gay and many fêtes were given to celebrate the peace with Austria. Everyone knew that the Emperor's divorce would shortly take place, but the Empress, faithful to her usual plan, attended all the receptions with the crown on her head although she knew that it would soon be worn by another…

On 15 December 1809, the day of the divorce, all the family gathered in the study. The Emperor began to read in a clear and steady voice: 'She adorned fifteen years of life; the memory of that will always remain inscribed in my heart…' Josephine then read out her paper, but tears prevented her from completing it.

Part of the divorce settlement was the transfer of ownership of Malmaison to Josephine. Napoleon—apart from allowances and an enormous staff—was to give her a special one-off payment of four thousand livres to spend on Malmaison, saying it would allow her 'to do as much planting as you like'. She was to retain the title of Empress, and was given the castle of Navarre in Normandy—known irreverently to the locals as la marmite because it looked like an inverted cooking pot—along with the title Duchess of Navarre.

did napoleon's health affect his decision?

Ironically, Napoleon had told Josephine of his decision to divorce her two days before the fifth anniversary of the coronation. When they married, Napoleon had been hollow-cheeked and painfully thin, with a persistent cough. Years later, his post-mortem examination revealed that the left lung had adhesions to the chest wall and scars on the upper lobe, suggestive of healed tuberculosis. This was revealed, amongst other ailments, in a recent paper presented to the Royal Society of Medicine by Dr Milo Keynes, the great-grandson of Charles Darwin and one of the most respected research surgeons in Britain. He says that Napoleon may have suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis when younger. What is amazing is that if he did, it did not affect his performance as a young soldier or his ability to go long periods without sleep.

As Napoleon set forth at the age of forty to recruit a nubile young princess from the royal families of Europe, he was at the zenith of his power, surrounded by a retinue of subservient monarchs, princes and dukes. He was skilful in keeping his followers—and enemies—in awe of him. But it was difficult to recognise in this middle-aged man, with a plump face and noticeable paunch, the slim, taut figure of the First Consul, whose classic aquiline profile adorned the coins of France. No clothes could now conceal his weight gain. And no words could hide his ambition.

Josephine had managed to help Napoleon keep a balance. Even Talleyrand told Madame de Rémusat, '… she knows the art of calming the Emperor. She understands everyone's problems here and has been a refuge to us all on a thousand occasions. When you see some foreign princess arrive to take her place, you will see discord between the Emperor and the courtiers. We will all be the losers by it.'

There is a theory that around the time of the divorce Napoleon was showing very early signs of deficient hormone production, due to an accident. 'He had had a fall from his carriage and been knocked unconscious when he was 34 years old, in 1803,' explains Dr Keynes in his paper.

At St Cloud Napoleon had taken over the reins of a four-horse carriage while he and Josephine were going for a drive. When the horses were startled, before Napoleon had time to recover control, they bolted and set off at full speed, and the carriage crashed against a railing, hurling Napoleon to the ground from the height of the coachman's seat. 'The accident in 1803 allows the right period for the development and recognition of his changed appearance, noted … in 1805 in a letter to his brother Joseph,' said Dr Keynes. It was not until around 1812 that the symptoms of dysfunction became more evident, however.

Although hypopituitarism more usually results from a pituitary tumour pressing on surrounding structures, Dr Keynes believes that in Napoleon's case it was 'due to damage to the blood supply of the pituitary, even though this is rare'. Amongst the signs of this disease are increasing obesity, with associated somnolence, along with a lowering of the output of the male hormone testosterone, causing loss of body hair and libido.

seventeen possible
royal brides

One of the events which finally prompted the divorce was the birth of Napoleon's illegitimate son by Marie Walewska, whom he met in Warsaw in 1807. This proved once and for all that he could father a child. Though Napoleon had had many passing affairs they had exercised little influence on him, and had had little impact on his life up to this point. He hardly possessed a mistress before he discarded her. But now the marriage which had weathered so many storms had been pushed aside.

Napoleon drew up a list of seventeen eligible princesses, which included the nineteen-year-old Catharina Pavlovna, the sister of Alexander I of Russia, and the eighteen-year-old Marie Louise, daughter of Francis I of Austria. It became a matter of which bride would bring the best alliance for France.

Josephine left the Tuileries at 2 p.m. on 16 December in the pouring rain. She drove away in the court carriage l'Opale, now preserved in the museum at Malmaison. Two hours later the Emperor left for Le Trianon where he spent a week 'in utter and most unusual listlessness'.

Hortense wrote later.

Our drive to Malmaison was sad and silent. When my mother entered that house where she had been so happy her heart was heavy with grief. But the next day Napoleon arrived to visit her. He took her hand affectionately and walked with her for a long time near the château. Every day he sent her a messenger with a letter complaining of his loneliness, and said how much he missed her.

He went to the Trianon and asked us to visit him there [on Christmas Day 1809]. I accompanied my mother and this interview, too, was a touching one.

The Emperor insisted that my mother must stay to dinner. As usual he sat opposite her. Nothing seemed changed. The Queen of Naples [Napoleon's sister] and
I were the only guests … There was a deep silence.

My mother could take nothing and I thought she was going to faint. The Emperor wiped his eyes several
times without saying a word, and we left immediately after dinner.

… But time went on. Letters became more rare and she still waited for them. There was a little room from which she could get a view of the high road. Every time she heard that there would be a hunt in the forest of Saint-Germain she would stand at the window till she had seen the Emperor's carriage pass and repass. I began to fear that her sacrifice was costing dearer than I had at first thought it would. My brother and I united our efforts to find something to amuse her … Malmaison was constantly crowded with people who, whether they were petty tradesman or Cabinet ministers or Marshals of France, brought her the homage of their respectful devotion …

My mother was burning to know who was to take her place. She made careful enquiries about all the eligible princesses …

After the battle of Wagram, Napoleon asked the defeated Emperor of Austria for his daughter in marriage; the Archduchess Marie Louise would become Empress of France. 'As for the Emperor, his mind was entirely taken up by the thought of his young wife. It seemed as though he could never hear enough details about her. Whenever a page or an aide-de-camp returned after taking a letter or a present, he would be overwhelmed with questions …'

Napoleon declared that 'as long as she is kind and bears me healthy sons I will love her as though she were the most beautiful woman on earth'. The forty-year-old Emperor even took waltzing lessons so he would be able to dance with his eighteen-year-old wife from Vienna.

navarre

Before Napoleon's marriage took place, the grieving Josephine was forced to go to the gloomy chateau of Navarre, in the midst of the grand forest of Evreux, fifty kilometres south of Rouen in Normandy. Navarre, on the site of an old dwelling of Rollo, the Sea-

King, was built by Jeanne of France, Queen of Navarre, Countess of Evreux, queen consort of Henry IV of England. The old square building was depressing—the windows did not shut, the wainscoting was rotten, there were draughts and damp everywhere and no heating apparatus. One visitor remarked: ‘This gloomy and forsaken chateau, whose only attraction was the half-forgotten memory of its vanished splendours, was a fit image of the woman who came to seek sanctuary there.’ At the time of the Revolution it had been confiscated from the Dukes of Bouillon.

Malmaison, the Emperor said, was too close to Paris. He insisted that Josephine stay well away from Paris, the court and the bridal couple during the wedding festivities.

Like St Cloud, Navarre never found a special place in Josephine’s heart, even though the once-beautiful if derelict grounds with winding streams, lakes and lawns stirred her to persevere with her passion. As is seen in her last book with flower paintings by Redouté, Description des Plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre, Australian plants were also brought to Navarre to make their home on French soil. While this magnificent book again boasts a wide variety of Australian flora, it contains a larger number of South African plants, so is not the same landmark advertisement for Australia as Jardin de la Malmaison. Bonpland, though, did not miss the chance to say that many of the Australian plants now bloomed at Navarre, that both the gardens at Navarre and at Malmaison were ‘very rich in melaleuca and metrosideros; there are many species not yet described, and those that have not yet flowered …’

In 1809, the year of their divorce, Napoleon allotted Josephine 800 plants and an unknown number of seeds from the royal hothouses of his new father-in-law in Austria. Bonpland went to Vienna to examine them. The cartloads of seeds and plants, taken to Navarre as well as to Malmaison, were poor compensation for the upheaval.

napoleon’s second wedding

Napoleon went to the border and met his new bride on 28 March 1810. ‘Never before had such luxury been seen as that which prepared the Emperor’s marriage. Nothing seemed good enough for the new Empress, and the Emperor inquired into the smallest details of everything that concerned her, ‘as though he had nothing else to think about’, said Hortense.

At last the day came. The Emperor was at Compiègne, the newly decorated but ancient royal palace seventy kilometres north-east of Paris, where Joan of Arc was captured by the English in 1430. Madame de la Tour du Pin described how Napoleon pushed all etiquette and decorum aside on his wedding night to his eighteen-year-old royal bride.

When the first courier arrived, Napoleon leaped into the calèche and set off to meet the berline bringing this wife whom he so ardently desired. The carriages drew up. The door of the berline was opened and Marie-Louise prepared to get out. But her husband did not give her time. He climbed into the carriage, embraced her and, having unceremoniously bundled out his sister, the Queen of Naples, telling her to ride in front, he seated himself beside Marie Louise. When they arrived at the chateau, he left the carriage first, offered his arm to his bride and led her into the Household Salon where all the people who had been invited were assembled. It was already dark. The Emperor presented all the Ladies of the Household in turn, and then the Gentlemen. When the presentations were over, he took the Empress by her hand and led her to her apartment. Everyone expected her to make a

change of toilette and then re-appear. They waited for an hour and were beginning to think longingly of supper when the Grand Chamberlain came to announce that Their Majesties had retired. Bertrand whispered in his wife's ear: 'They've gone to bed.' Everyone was greatly surprised, but no one allowed it to appear and they all went in to supper.

The following day, my sister learned from her husband that Marie-Louise had given the Emperor a statement signed by the Archbishop of Vienna declaring that 'the marriage could be consummated without any further ceremony, the proxy marriage being sufficient'.

For the grand wedding ceremony in Paris the new Queen wore the mantle worn by Josephine for the coronation. Josephine felt completely displaced and humiliated. She was afraid that Napoleon might oblige her to live out of France: 'For he never wrote to her, and though the house she had bought on the shores of the lake at Geneva was very attractive, nothing could compensate her for the loss of her own country and her beloved Malmaison.'

When Hortense visited Napoleon shortly after the wedding she found him in a state of great excitement as Marie Louise was already pregnant. But, he said.

'I am obliged to think of my wife's happiness. Things have not developed as I hoped they would. She is alarmed by your mother's attractiveness and the hold

that people know she has on me. I know this for a fact. Recently I wished to go out driving with my wife to Malmaison. I do not know whether she thought your mother was there, but she began to cry and I was

obliged to turn round and go somewhere else. However, no matter what happens, I will never oblige the Empress Josephine to do anything she does not want to do. I shall always remember the sacrifice she has made for me … If she prefers to return to Malmaison I shall do nothing to prevent her.'

I told the Emperor that this was assuredly her only wish.

Marie Louise found a place neither in the hearts of the people of France, nor in the Imperial court. Even Napoleon's brothers and sisters, who had so wanted Josephine replaced, were spiteful towards her, feeling inferior beside a hereditary royal princess, knowing also that her child would supersede their children. Madame de la Tour du Pin found her utterly boring and stupid. She related how when Marie Louise was offered a portrait of her grandmother during an official visit to Belgium, she had responded that the frame was too old-fashioned; when asked to visit the Forest of Soignes she had replied that she did not like forests. 'In short, this insignificant woman, so utterly unworthy of the man whose destiny she shared, seemed to make a point of being discourteous in every possible way … I did not see her again until after she had lost her throne; she was still just as stupid.'

After the birth of Napoleon's son, the little

King of Rome, early in 1811, Josephine was

allowed back to her beloved Malmaison, where she threw herself into her gardening and natural history with a new passion. In a pathetic tribute, Napoleon's bedroom and study were kept untouched from the time he left, except for dusting by her own hands. She kept the key and guarded the rooms as if their contents were sacred. A volume of history lay where he closed it, with a leaf turned down as a bookmark. A pen lay and a map of the world, which he used to spread before him and mark out his course of conquest, lay beside it.

She still watched with anxiety over Napoleon's fate, and was distressed and saddened by his disastrous Russian campaign. She would have sacrificed everything to return to him—even for a short time.

josephine's extravagance

Josephine is remembered for her fantastic extravagance. Her accounts show that she never saved, and that her tastes were always grander and her gifts more generous than her means. Her spending on clothes, jewellery and knick-knacks sometimes rivalled that of Marie Antoinette—although a vestige of a childhood sense of thrift meant that her monogrammed handkerchiefs were darned and her silk stockings were bleached every month.

As Empress, Josephine spent nearly a million francs on charity and donations during the five-and-a-half years of her reign, but in the same period over five times that amount went on dresses, hats, shoes, shawls, fans, jewellery, make-up and other items of her toilette. She always went way over her budget for dresses but never exceeded her allowance for charity. This could have been because she managed to get Napoleon's charitable fund, La Grande Cassette de l'Empereur, to bear the cost of many of her good works, which included supporting L'Institution Sainte-Perine de Chaillot, an old people's home, for which she also chose the beneficiaries.

Other massive bills were run up on her garden, on art, on science, and on helping people. She commissioned watercolours from well-known artists such as the Flemish Van Dael, Van Os and Van Spaëndonck, but she also gave lavish patronage to minor painters. Although she did not go as far as Louis XV, who began the famed Sèvres porcelain factory under the influence of Madame de Pompadour, or Napoleon himself, who personally supervised the rebirth of the silk industry in Lyons, Josephine's expenditure kept virtual armies of craftsmen, artisans, minor manufacturers —and even academics—going. To produce Jardin de la Malmaison she paid 130 000 francs to cover the cost of botanists, artists and printers.

Even Josephine's detractors, apart from her former lover Paul Barras, remarked on her kindness and generosity. She often intervened to obtain pensions for various people—impoverished gentlemen of the nobility; the poor widow of a revolutionary who was dying from breast cancer; the well-known Madame Poitrine, who was one of the wet nurses of Louis XVI's children; Marion, the slave who had cared for her as a child in Martinique. Josephine did not discriminate and spent a fair amount of her time in charitable pursuits, writing letters and choosing recipients. Sometimes jobs were found as favours for old contacts—the porter from Napoleon's school at Brienne was given a job at Malmaison, and one of the masters became her librarian there.

A woman of style, all her life Josephine followed the very latest whims of fashion, but with botany and horticulture she retained a total focus which never shifted. Something that started as a natural affinity developed at Malmaison almost into an obsession. Her interest in plants grew first into a love, and finally into a deep passion. The curiosity that Josephine showed for the natural sciences, especially botany, reveal an open mind and not, as her detractors like to portray, a frivolous one. Turning her back on politics and war—but not parties, balls and the theatre—she became a grande dame of botany. The botanical splendour of the gardens of Malmaison displayed her predilection, and stunned—and

sometimes bored—her guests. Her personal library also surprised her visitors. A great reader, when she died the library contained thousands of books.

josephine's death

Russia opened its ports to England, in defiance of Napoleon's stringent Continental System of blocking trade against 'that nation of shopkeepers' in 1812. With an army of 600 000 men Napoleon invaded Russia. A narrow victory at Borodino left an open road to Moscow. But the Muscovites had torched the city before fleeing. Chaotic scenes followed as Napoleon was forced to turn back on his former devastated track.

To this day Tchaikovsky's dramatic 1812 Overture commemorates Napoleon's harrowing retreat from Moscow—it includes La Marseillaise, the Tsarist national anthem, cathedral bells and cannonfire. The victors were the losers. Famine, disease, frost and snow decimated the men—stragglers were finished off by the Cossacks. Napoleon had also underestimated the effect of the weather. Only 90 000 men returned home.

In late 1813, while Napoleon was fighting on French soil for the first time, Josephine remained at Malmaison. The armies of Russia, Austria and Prussia were marching on Paris from the north and the east, while Wellington was coming from the south. It would have been much safer for her to go to Navarre, but she stayed on. The rooms at Malmaison filled with women preparing lint and bandages for the wounded.

Napoleon was fighting with his back to the wall against seven powers—Bavaria, Britain, Prussia, Russia, Saxony, Sweden and Austria (he was even fighting against his father-in-law, Francis I).

On 9 November, when the Allies offered peace if the borders of France were reduced to their natural frontiers of the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees, Napoleon made his greatest mistake—he refused. With just 50 000 men he went on with his whirlwind tactics to win victory after victory, one of them in the fields around his old school at Brienne. He refused again in February 1814, when the Allies offered peace subject to the French borders being contracted to the frontiers of 1791—those that existed before he crossed the Alps the week after his marriage to Josephine. He decided to hang on to Belgium. The fighting went on.

the arrival of the tsar
in paris

At the end of March 1814 Josephine sewed her diamonds into her skirts and her corsets and packed her most valuable paintings—yet still she waited. It was only at the last minute, with artillery fire within earshot of Paris, when the invaders, followed by the Comte D'Artois with his advance detachment of Royalists, were within sight of the capital, that she left for Navarre. She did not know if she would ever see her beloved Malmaison—or Napoleon—again. While she travelled the Imperial archives were being burnt at the Tuileries. On 29 March Josephine arrived at Navarre. Two days later the Allied troops occupied Paris.

On 1 April, for the first time since the fifteenth century, a foreign army marched through the streets of Paris. The Allies entered Paris led by Tsar Alexander of Russia, the King of Prussia, and Prince Schwarzenberg representing Austria. Napoleon was forced to

abdicate and to leave forever the country which he had turned into a great nation. Exiled to the little Mediterranean island of Elba, near Corsica, he would still be an emperor, albeit of a tiny kingdom, with the presence of English troops ensuring he would not escape.

The Allies, after many hesitations, especially by the Tsar, came down on the side of a Bourbon restoration. But the new King, Louis XVIII, the brother of Louis XVI, did not rush to the empty throne. He was late in leaving England for Paris to meet the Allies due to yet another severe attack of gout. Fifty-eight, enormously fat, with painful feet which he kept in cushion-like containers, Louis could only walk with the help of someone on either side to support him. Bid farewell by the Prince Regent, at last he set off to reclaim the throne lost by his brother twenty-one years earlier. Amongst his large party was the Duchess of Angoulême, the sole surviving child of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette—the 'orphan of the Temple' who with her mother had watched Redouté paint the cactus. By chance this grandson of Louis XV and brother of Louis XVI set foot in Paris on 4 May, the same day that Napoleon landed on Elba. The 'joyous entry' of the man known in England as 'Bungy Louis', wearing buttoned Prussian trousers and a British naval coat, was made in a barouche drawn by eight white horses from the Imperial stables, attended by grooms wearing the Emperor's livery and accompanied by the Imperial guard. At the gate of Saint-Denis he received the keys of Paris, and then proceeded to the home of his ancestors, the Tuileries. Here the nervous party saw the chestnut tree—the Royalist tree, the 'tree of the Swiss'—which was taller than any other tree in the old garden. Under this tree were buried the Swiss Guards, the last defenders of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in August 1792. Nourished by the blood and bones of the martyrs, the tree had become a place of pilgrimage for Royalists.

A violent opponent of the Revolution, Louis' reign was to be plagued both by reactionaries amongst the returned émigrés and by his own ill-health. He had but one asset—he was the legitimate heir to the throne of France. It is difficult to find words to describe the revulsion he elicited in those who met him: 'his pottle belly Majesty', 'the Sir John Falstaff of France', 'Louis Dix Huitres' (a pun on his passion for oysters); men playing cards would shout 'pig of clubs' or 'pig of diamonds'. Later, even the Duke of Wellington was not shy of expressing his opinion of the obese monarch: 'I had a very bad opinion of Louis XVIII—he was selfish and false to the highest degree …'; he also said that '[Louis] was a walking sore—not a part of him was sound …'

Louis' thirty-nine-year marriage to Louise Marie Josephine of Savoy, who had died four years earlier, had been childless, and now at fifty-nine it seemed unlikely that he would remarry. France would have no queen. Apart from his cold and haughty niece, the Duchess of Angoulême, known as 'Madame', there was nobody to take the place of the Empress Josephine. Marie Louise, like her aunt Marie Antoinette, had never won a place in the hearts of the French, and now there was no contender. The King received the ladies of the court once or twice a week at the Tuileries; they waited in the salon of Diana for the King to be wheeled into the Throne Room, for he could not walk.

The arrival of the Allies in Paris and the return of the hungry French troops affected everyone. Redouté had a Prussian officer billeted into his apartment in Paris, but far worse, his house in Meudon was broken into and the plants in the garden trampled by troops who came to stay uninvited.

An armistice had to be concluded and then a peace, but one of the first tasks of the restored Bourbons was to get rid of the thousands of Bonaparte bees which filled the royal palaces of France. Quickly embroidered patches of fleur-de-lys were stitched over the bees as the new king, his painful feet encased in huge slippers, shambled from palace to palace. An army of ladies of the court worked rapidly to unpick the bees from thousands of yards of sumptuous silk and velvet hangings in the palaces. Shops signs with violets were reversed out of view.

Josephine only returned to Malmaison a few weeks later when she was asked by Prince Leopold, son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and future King of Belgium, to receive the Tsar—who had now replaced Napoleon as the most powerful man in Europe. Leopold, who had been sent as an emissary, reassured her that Malmaison would not be confiscated from her, that it was safe to return. Her place and the respect of the people was assured. Napoleon's second wife, Marie Louise, had already disappeared into Austria with her son, seeking the protection of her father.

Although it is said that Josephine was concerned about her title of Empress now that the Bourbons had reclaimed the throne, this seems unlikely. She had found much of Napoleon's court etiquette stifling. One thing that is certain, though, is that she was ready—should Marie Louise decline—to go to Elba to be with Napoleon. The Paris newspapers reported that they had been instructed to refer to Josephine as 'the former wife of General Bonaparte'.

Her loyalty to Napoleon, though, did not stop her receiving almost daily visits from the Russian Emperor, nor from ordering from Leroy white muslin dresses worth over 6000 francs to wear for these semi-state occasions. Despite her advancing years Josephine still wore flimsy low-cut gowns. Even in the slightly chilly spring weather she wore them when wandering with the Tsar along the forested paths of the 70-hectare park, past the cedar she had planted to celebrate the battle of Marengo, down the alley of tulip trees, past the eucalypts. The Tsar intervened in the negotiations with the Allies and managed to arrange financial protection for her, Hortense and Eugene—as well as for Hortense's children, who were then staying with her.

Despite sycophantic portraits to the contrary, the Tsar was a weak, unattractive man with a pudgy face. Emotionally unstable, the victim of an arranged marriage at the age of fifteen in Moscow, he was always seeking a 'soul-mate'. Lady Shelley, wife of Sir John Shelley, M.P., who met him on his visit to England during the same year, wrote that he had been much over-praised and that he was a 'foolish, good-natured, dancing Dandy … He has a bad figure, tightened in at the waist, and has a chest like a woman …' Another description said that he was not the least handsome; rather, 'horribly pink and pudding like'.

Although Alexander was enchanted by Josephine—who gave him her portrait painted on a Sèvres teacup—he was enamoured with Hortense and insisted on staying on her estate, the Château de St-Leu, for two days. Hortense, however, was still, as she always would be, in love with the father of her secret child, the dashing Charles Flahaut—despite all his liaisons. It was after a drive through the Montmorency Forest in an open carriage on the way home from visiting the Tsar and Hortense at St-Leu that Josephine showed the first signs of a chill and cough.

Josephine's palace of glass, as well as providing botany with new specimens to be described, was the setting for her last—and most melancholy—triumph. Here, on 24 May 1814, nearly three weeks after Napoleon arrived on Elba and a year and three weeks before his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, surrounded by flowering shrubs, towering palms and vines, she gave a brilliant dinner. The table was laden with gleaming silver and crystal, Sèvres china and masses of flowers.

Ignoring her doctor's advice to stay in bed, Josephine presided at the dinner. The guests were the men who had exiled Napoleon to Elba, the victors of France, the conquering Allied sovereigns. Amongst the heads of state were the Grand Duke of Prussia and Tsar Alexander of Russia. Far from demonising her for being the former wife of the vanquished hero, the grand rulers had compassion for the older woman who had been cast aside. The Tsar confided his repugnance at the idea of putting the Bourbons back on the throne. Josephine was nearly fifty-one; her decayed teeth meant that she smiled with her mouth closed and often fluttered a lace handkerchief to her mouth; her indulgence in sweets meant whalebones in her corsets. But she fascinated these powerful men, who went out of their way to reassure her.

Josephine opened the dancing with Alexander. Overheated, she went outside on his arm into her beloved garden. The paths, as always at night, were illuminated with flares which threw shadows on the early roses, already in bloom. Gliding over her lawns in yet another flimsy muslin dress in the cool night air no doubt aggravated her cold. Two days later, determined and brave, Josephine made light of her illness even though her arms and chest were covered with a rash. On the third day, finding her tongue swollen and her fever overwhelming, her doctor applied blisters to her shoulders. 'Her terrible throat' meant that she could hardly speak. When Redouté and her grandsons came to the room she waved them aside, forbidding them to get close in case she had a disease which was contagious. Despite the fact she was dying she was, as always, dressed for the occasion—in a night-dress of rose-coloured satin with ribbons in her hair.

On 29 May 1814, fifteen years after she purchased Malmaison with hope and a loan, and less than a month before her birthday, with her faithful botanist Bonpland in the room, Josephine died. Her last words were supposed to have been: 'Bonaparte … Elba … King of Rome …' For three days the road between Malmaison and Paris was thick with carriages bringing people to pay their last respects, filing silently past the coffin in her bedroom. On 2 June Russian guards in full dress uniform and the militia of the canton lined the road from Malmaison to the church in the village of Rueil, close to her beloved estate. To please the Bourbons the archbishop who read the sermon avoided the use of Napoleon's name. He paid tribute to her efforts to help the émigrés. The little Martiniquaise who never wanted to be queen, but became 'more than a queen', was finally at peace. Amongst the mourners was Redouté who, like Bonpland, continued his work at Malmaison, which now belonged to Eugene. Redouté was given permission to return whenever he wanted to paint. But what would happen to the house? There was no cash, although Josephine's assets exceeded her debts. The first sale was of her pictures to the Tsar.

Already Le Moniteur was the mouthpiece for the new King, and the report of her death used neither her title nor the name Bonaparte: 'The death of Madame de Beauharnais

excites widespread sympathy. This woman was unfailingly gentle, and possessed much charm and attractiveness in manner and in mind. Extremely unhappy during her husband's reign, she sought refuge from his roughness and neglect in the study of Botany ...'

Josephine's death aroused tremendous interest in her life. Paris was flooded with pamphlet literature about la bonne Joséphine—Frenchwoman, wife and companion to the great Emperor. 'In this way,' wrote Josephine's respected biographer, Ernest Knapton, 'the first nostalgic surge of admiration for the exile at Elba arose, and the first step was taken in the creation of that great romantic fiction of the nineteenth century, the Napoleon legend. Far better for Josephine's fame that she should have died in this hour …' On Elba, Napoleon read of her death a few weeks later in an old newspaper. He was said to have been deeply affected and to have shut himself up for a day, refusing to see anyone—although it is said that his sadness at her death was mingled with anger and disappointment that she and Hortense had become so friendly with Tsar Alexander, the man who had caused his downfall. His spies, perhaps, had told him that the Tsar had burst into tears at the news of her death and had been inconsolable at the sight of her body laid out in her gilded swan bed. It was fitting that she died at Malmaison, their only real home, the place they had created together in the heady days of the Consulate. Forever the house would bear their indelible imprint, and the echo of one of the world's great love stories.

In the memoirs of Napoleon's valet, Louis Joseph Marchand, there is a footnote quoting part of a letter Josephine wrote to Napoleon after his abdication: 'Should I learn that, against all appearances, I am the only one willing to fulfil her duty, nothing shall hold me back, and I shall go to the only place where happiness can exist for me, as I will be able to console you when you are isolated and unhappy there. Say but one word, and I shall leave.'

Marchand went on to say that memories of Josephine were connected with the finest moments in Napoleon's political career: 'With Josephine his star rose, she had during her second marriage an extraordinary brilliance. She was then the evening star.'

But although Josephine had cause to complain about Napoleon, the husband who had discarded her, she was ever willing to return to him. Madame Junot joined the chorus echoing Josephine's devotion to Napoleon: 'The thought that Napoleon was alone on the rocks of the island of Elba, alone with his regrets and his memories, was a torment to Josephine.'

The final word on this subject was provoked by Madame de Staël, who visited Malmaison after her return from exile. 'Would you believe it,' Josephine exclaimed to another visitor, 'Madame de Staël had the effrontery to ask me whether I still love the Emperor! As if I could feel less ardently for him today, in his misfortune—I who never ceased loving the Emperor in the days of his good fortune!'

violets

While Napoleon and Josephine might have been at odds about garden design, they both had an affection for violets. So strongly associated with Napoleon were violets that after he was banished they came to be regarded as a flower of subversion, a sign of rebellion, something to be outlawed. The violet would become a rallying sign for his supporters during the Restoration: 'Vive le Père la Violette!' his followers shouted, and women waved bunches at him.

When Napoleon was exiled to the little island of Elba off the western Italian coast many loyal soldiers said that he would return when the violets next bloomed. In Elba Napoleon,

far from brooding over his predicament, took up a spade and started gardening. He had unfettered possession of the island as its ruler and sovereign and the promise of a large income so he could continue to live in style and maintain the thousand of his Guard who accompanied him.

When his sister Pauline arrived at the end of October she was enchanted by the garden that he had made above the harbour—the newly sown grass and freshly planted flowers. The ground around his modest palace on the hills above the capital of Portoferraio was rocky, so it was hard work—but the Emperor of Elba had to spend his energy somehow. He often started at five in the morning, working through the heat of the day. It was not as if he had no help at hand; in fact one of his letters reveals his concern that there were too many gardeners doing too little.

Reprimand the gardener for employing three men all the month on a garden the size of my hand, and eleven grenadiers for loading up a few cartfuls of earth. I disapprove of the proposed expenditure on turf during October. I would rather have grass seed. The gardener must bargain with the grenadiers to load earth at so much a cubic metre…Similarly…must bargain with the grenadiers for the excavation of the garden…

His court included chefs, two equerries, two valets, eight footmen and thirty-five men who worked in the stables which housed his favourite horses and his carriages.

Napoleon started a scheme to introduce a new crop. When he read that the Romans had grown wheat on the nearby island of Pianosa, twenty-five kilometres south of Elba, he immediately started a plan to introduce the crop again. Within three weeks of his arrival he sailed over to the island, examined the soil and took possession.

His horticultural pursuits even extended to importing olive trees from Corsica to replace the figs which cast too much shade among the vines. He encouraged the peasants to grow potatoes, lettuces, cauliflowers, onions and radishes, as well as mulberries and chestnut trees.

Josephine was dead, and now Marie Louise's repeated flimsy excuses made it abundantly clear that she would never set foot on Elba. Still he hoped, even though he knew that General Count Neipperg had already become her lover. (She had two children by him during Napoleon's lifetime and married him as soon as she became a widow). Napoleon's longing for company, particularly that of his son, was intense, his loneliness acute. So Napoleon was pleased when Pauline, and then his mother, came to Elba. Pauline stayed for four months, the only one of his siblings to join him in exile.

One of the British visitors to Elba was the tall, good-looking Marquis of Douglas, the future Duke of Hamilton, a great admirer of Napoleon who became Pauline's lover. Another visitor was Lord Castlereagh, who warned that unless money was paid to Napoleon it was likely that he would cause trouble.

Under the Treaty of Fontainebleau Napoleon should have received two million francs a year from Louis XVIII. This was never paid. The four million francs that Napoleon had brought with him was gone, paying for his Guard and large court. Pauline was pleased to be able to help her brother financially with the proceeds of the sale of her mansion in Paris.

The buyer, ironically, was the Duke of Wellington, who had been posted to Paris as British ambassador.

Napoleon's dire financial position, coupled with reports that the Bourbon government was planning to remove him to the Azores, the West Indies or St Helena, and that Louis XVIII had approved a report recommending the confiscation of all Bonaparte property in France, provoked him to escape.

Lady Holland, the wife of Charles James Fox's nephew, was one of Napoleon's greatest supporters, and while he was in Elba she sent him newspapers from Florence where she was then living. It was in one of these papers, The Courier, that he read the report that the allied sovereigns' plan was now to exile him to St Helena or St Lucia.

the hundred days

Leaving Elba—with a diamond necklace given to him by Pauline in his luggage—Napoleon sailed to Golfe Juan near Antibes, knowing he could count on the loyalty of many of his old troops. During his triumphal march north Louis XVIII fled. Hundreds of signs with violets painted on them swung over the doors of shops. Hailed as Emperor by thousands of his soldiers, on 20 March 1815 Napoleon re-entered Paris, and was carried on the shoulders of the cheering populace to the Tuileries. Without firing a shot he re-established his régime. During his first conversation with Hortense he said that he wanted to have Josephine's body moved to Saint-Denis, 'but not now. Later, and without any fuss'.

Stepfather and stepdaughter were back on their old affectionate terms and Hortense was a daily visitor to the Tuileries. Hortense had been unable to face going back to Malmaison since her mother's death, but to please Napoleon, when he expressed a strong wish to return she went too, sharing the house, its garden and its memories with him. Napoleon was overwhelmed with emotion.

'How every spot recalls her to me!' he confided to Hortense. 'I cannot believe that she isn't here.' When he wanted to see Josephine's room he said he would go alone: 'It might be too painful for you.' When he returned Hortense saw tears in his eyes.

That night when they returned to the Tuileries Hortense's lover Charles de Flahaut was waiting for them, having returned from Stuttgart. A letter from the Tsar announced that he would not negotiate with Napoleon, that there would be 'No peace, no truce, no reconciliation with that man … Once he is out of the way, there will be no war!'

Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia declared they would fight until Napoleon was defeated. The troops of the Allies, numbering well over half a million, were scattered far and wide but the vanguard of the Allied army, under Wellington and Blücher, had already arrived in Belgium. Napoleon decided to attack immediately, even though he would be outnumbered two to one, so he could break the line before they got to France.

napoleon and wellington face to face

The Battle of Waterloo on the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, sixteen kilometres south of Brussels on 18 June, was nearly not a defeat for Napoleon—as Wellington put it: 'The nearest run thing you ever saw in your life.' Only some of the old guard remained fighting, just long enough for Napoleon to escape. The nineteen years of battles abroad, that had started exactly a month after his marriage to Josephine, were now over. Among the

treasures taken from the battlefield was Napoleon's grand carriage with bullet-proof panels, complete with Pauline's diamonds and a bar of Windsor soap. Napoleon's faithful horse Marengo was captured and taken to London, where he was put on public display as a curiosity.

Wellington had already taken over Pauline's house—and one of Napoleon's former mistresses, the forty-year-old Guiseppina Grassini, known as 'la chanteuse de l'Empereur'. Wellington even displayed a portrait of her in his private sitting room, along with a print of Pauline. Now he usurped the Bonapartes in every way—every single one of them would be banished from France.

Napoleon abdicated a second time. Pursued by both the victors of the battle and the new French government, Hortense advised him to go to America immediately—without losing a day—or to surrender to one of the Allies. Disregarding her advice, the next day Napoleon said he would take refuge temporarily at Malmaison.

Napoleon slept in his old bedroom and worked in his old study where everything had been left just as it was when he had last stayed there before the divorce in 1809. In her memoirs Hortense recorded those last few days with Josephine's spirit still haunting the rooms, the house, the garden. She walked arm in arm with Napoleon through the beautiful English garden, under the avenues of ancient oaks and beeches, past the lake with the Australian black swans, into the glasshouse to see the exotic plants, past the thirty uniformed dragoons of the Imperial Guard who were picketed around the grounds. Napoleon was speechless and moved to tears, often breathing with difficulty.

It was then six days after his defeat at Waterloo and outside, dozens of gendarmes patrolled the walls of the estate. In total, three hundred Imperial Guards, grenadiers and chasseurs were barracked in the town, waiting to escort him to his last destination. Orders from Paris insisted he left France immediately. The dilapidated carriage sent for his last journey remained in the stables as the great soldier, the man who had completely revolutionised the tactics and strategy of battle, plotted his next move. He would, after all, go to the United States, where he would become a farmer. Plans were made for his journey to Rochefort on the Atlantic coast where a fast sailing boat would be waiting to take him to America.

'Who would have ever thought that I would see the Emperor of the French held prisoner at Malmaison,' exclaimed Hortense.

Napoleon's sentimental regard for Josephine was moving: 'That poor Josephine, I cannot get used to living here without her. I always expect to see her emerging from a path gathering one of those flowers, which she so loved … She was the most graceful woman I have ever known … Make another portrait of her for me, this time for a locket … How beautiful Malmaison is, isn't it, Hortense? It would be wonderful to be able to stay here.' Woe that he had not realised this before forging ahead, against Josephine's wishes, to become Emperor.

Just as Redouté had been at the Temple to paint the cactus just before the end of Marie Antoinette's life, he was at Malmaison at the end of Napoleon's time in France, painting roses. The heyday of Redouté's magnificent paintings of the Australian flora

began when Napoleon became First Consul and finished with his divorce from Napoleon and Josephine. It was fitting that Redouté be at Malmaison during Napoleon's last visit.

The evening of 29 June, at five o'clock, Napoleon put on a costume de ville—un habit marron, embraced Hortense, took a last lingering look at the gardens—and left them forever. Hortense had sewn her diamond necklace into the belt he was wearing around his waist. At Rochefort Napoleon found it was too late to avoid the ships of the Allies—he would be captured if he tried to escape. Defeated in more ways than one he flung himself on the mercy of the English, surrendering to the captain of the Bellerophon, that same ship which figured in the disastrous Battle of the Nile at the beginning of his rise to power.

After seven days at sea Napoleon had charmed the crew and the ship arrived on the English coast where he saw the Martello towers built ten years earlier along the shores against his threatened invasion. While anchored at Torbay he wrote to the Prince Regent asking for refuge in England, saying he was 'Themistocles, come to claim a seat by the hearth of the British people'. But Napoleon was not allowed to set foot on English soil. When he finally heard that his fate was banishment to that island which had been rumoured as his destination before he escaped from Elba, he is supposed to have said: 'My only wish was to purchase a small property in England and end my life there in peace and tranquillity. The idea of St Helena is perfect horror to me.' It was two months' sail away at the other end of the world.

st helena

In early August 1815 the Northumberland, accompanied by two troopships carrying the 53rd Regiment, and several men-of-war, was heading for St Helena in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Lying in the path of the south-east trade winds the island had been used as a port of call since the mid seventeenth century. Like Australia, St Helena was first made famous by William Dampier, the sailor, buccaneer and writer, who described his visits to both places in his bestseller New Voyage Round the World, published in 1697.

There is a small English town within the great bay, standing in a little valley, between two high steep mountains … But the houses in the town … stand empty, save only when ships arrive here; for the owners have all plantations farther in the island, where they constantly employ themselves. But when the ships arrive, they all flock to the town, where they live all the time that the ships lie here; for then is their fair or market … and to sell the product of their plantations …

Their plantations afford potatoes, yams, and some plantains and bonanoes[sic]. Their stock consists chiefly of Hogs, Bullocks, cocks and hens, ducks, geese and Turkeys, of which they have a great plenty …

When the advance news reached St Helena that the most famous man in the world—accompanied by a staff of twelve Frenchmen plus their various wives, children and domestics, making a party of thirty—was to arrive in a few days' time, there was immense excitement. Napoleon, then just forty-six years old, could be expected to live amongst them for at least another twenty or thirty years.

Although he would be free to roam around the grounds of his house, and to ride and walk in limited parts of the steep terrain, no risks were being taken. Arrangements were being made to put 500 guns, 2280 soldiers and two brigs on constant patrol around the

island, although it was just forty-five kilometres in circumference. A naval base was also being set up at Ascension Island. Even local fishing boats were not above suspicion.

napoleon lives in a wild garden

After just one night in the hot and stuffy town, fed up with being the object of curiosity, Napoleon asked if he could stay inland while alterations were being made at Longwood, the former summer residence of the British governor of the island, chosen to be his future home. His stay with Mr and Mrs Balcombe—whose firm was appointed purveyors to Napoleon—and their four children at The Briars is recorded vividly in the memoirs of Betsy Balcombe. The house was small, hardly large enough for the family, let alone a visitor, so Napoleon stayed for two months in the grand summer pavilion in the garden. This room, 5 metres long and 4.25 metres wide, was just large enough for his collapsible campaign bed and a table, his two manservants, and crates of possessions, including some of his two thousand books and a bust and a portrait of his son. Amongst the books was Gardens by Abbé Delille, which had a reference to the English garden at Malmaison.

Upstairs the two small garret rooms were used by the nervous and fidgety Comte de Las Cases, historian and author, and his fifteen-year-old son (who were after a year expelled by the English for smuggling personal uncensored letters to Napoleon). Napoleon's maître d'hôtel and cook, Cipriani, as well as his pastrycook, camped in a hut in the garden. Despite limited facilities the pastrycook produced elaborate Paris-inspired pieces of spun sugar in the shapes of triumphal arches and amber palaces.

Napoleon whiled away day after day dictating his memoirs to the generals Gourgaud, Bertrand and Montholon, the Comte de Las Cases and O'Meara, an English doctor—well aware of the legend he had already created. Las Cases' memoirs caused a sensation when they were published in Brussels in 1818 and in London in 1834 as Memoirs of the Life, Exile and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon. Napoleon also spent much time playing with thirteen-year-old Betsy Balcombe in the garden, a wilderness of orange trees, myrtles, pomegranates, geraniums and tropical vines. He even helped her with her French homework. A guitar arrived from Pauline in a rosewood case from Rome and Betsy sang. Brief though it was, his two months with the Balcombes was a happy time, the only such period before he died. In December Napoleon was ordered to move to Longwood, even though the rooms still smelt of new paint. His request to postpone the move was refused.

Longwood, situated on a high, rocky plateau above the eternal breakers, and often shrouded in mist, was far too small for Napoleon and his suite. It was uncomfortable, it leaked and its floors were rotten. Napoleon had five rooms and his staff, apart from the Comte and Comtesse de Montholon, crowded into the rest of the bungalow. From the windows Napoleon could gaze down at the ocean and the port where he saw the convict ships carrying other English prisoners to Australia.

But Napoleon maintained Imperial etiquette in the bungalow. Everyone dressed for dinner, which was served by his servants dressed as they had been in Paris at the Tuileries, in green coats with silver lace. The table was set with Imperial silver. Cipriani made his appearance, saying: 'Le dîner de votre Majesté est servi.' He then retreated backwards.

At Longwood everyone suffered from a problem which even arsenic could not eliminate—rats. Fearless, the rats ran between people's legs in the dining room. One even jumped out of Napoleon's hat as he was putting it on.

The other problem on the island was the shortage of food. Even before Napoleon and the two thousand plus people sent to guard him arrived on the island, there was such a shortage of fresh meat, especially beef, that there were restrictions on its sale. A huge fuss was made when Napoleon's maître d'hôtel ordered four bullocks so he could prepare a dish of brains for the Emperor.

The novelist William Thackeray, author of Vanity Fair, in his Roundabout Papers described his visit to St Helena in 1817 when travelling home to England from Calcutta. Although he was only six years old at the time, Thackaray recalled the myths which already circulated about Napoleon.

My black servant took me on a long walk over rocks and hills until we reached a garden, where we saw a man walking. 'That is he,' said the black man, 'that is Bonaparte! He eats three sheep every day, and all the little children he can lay hands on.'

Giving up trying to speak English, Napoleon's main hobbies became reading, dictating his memoirs and reading old newspapers. From out-of-date copies of The Times which eventually reached Longwood, Napoleon learnt that many prominent Englishmen were loud in their criticisms of the government, and especially of Lord Bathurst, for what they called his 'inhumane treatment'. He would have also learnt that another French scientific expedition had set off for Australia—the Uranie expedition of 1817–19, commanded by Louis de Freycinet, who had sailed with Baudin and written up the second volume of the voyage.

Napoleon had mixed with people when he first arrived on St Helena, but stopped because of the tensions which arose from the attitude of the island's governor, Sir Hudson Lowe—who had spent two years in Corsica during the English occupation. Lowe arrived seven months after Napoleon and from then on made his life on the island unbearable. There was even alarm in England when Lowe's persecution of the exile became known—his vindictive attitude extended to a refusal to allow Napoleon or any of his party to receive letters which he had not personally censored. Lowe's hatred of the Emperor embraced all of the French and even extended to the Balcombes, who left the island in 1818 and soon afterwards migrated to Australia.

Napoleon said that Lowe 'envies me every minute that he does not embitter. He wishes my death. He calls for that moment. It comes too slowly to satisfy his impatience. But let him be comforted. This horrible climate is charged with the execution of the crime, and it will fulfil its trust sooner than he expects'.

Pauline, like the other Bonapartes and Hortense, had had to leave France—but in Rome she lived in great style in the Borghese palace and in her own house, the Villa Paolina. Her affair with the Duke of Hamilton kept her in contact with other people from Britain. Through them she began to hear accounts—some from government sources—of the conditions of her brother's exile. Her fears were compounded by a depressing report from General Bertrand, the closest of Napoleon's followers, who had accompanied him on his great campaigns and finally to St Helena—he wrote saying that three of the original

party had already died, including Cipriani, and that the unhealthy climate of St Helena was truly bad for Europeans.

Bertrand's request for a new doctor, a young Catholic priest and a good cook resulted in the devoted Pauline sending her own cook, a doctor recommended by her mother, and a priest—who was actually elderly and arthritic—to St Helena. Napoleon was surprised when this doctor, another Corsican, named Francesco Antommarchi, arrived in September 1819, as he was an anatomy specialist with little knowledge of general medicine. But he had graduated from Florence, then thought to be one of the best medical schools in Europe. Antommarchi's first advise to Napoleon was sound. He urged him to take more exercise, perhaps in the form of gardening. Napoleon protested that he would not want to be watched by the red-coated guards.

'No, sire,' replied the doctor. 'You must dig the ground, turn up the earth, and so escape from inactivity and insult at the same time.'

Why Napoleon had not already taken up gardening—he was no stranger to it, having used it already as therapy on Elba—is not known. His waist now measured over 100 centimetres. But the idea was eventually seized upon with his usual enthusiasm for new things or activities, and he was up early the next morning pushing a spade despite the heat, saying, 'You pity my fair hands. Never mind. I have always accustomed my body to bend to my will, and I shall do so now.'

What started as a medical treatment became a consuming interest. He laid out paths and flower-beds, designed plantings of shrubs and trees to give himself some privacy. He even planted orpine which is supposed to be good against cancer, the disease that killed his father. Napoleon's grotto and cascade were not as grand as those at Malmaison, but the St Helena versions were dug by the actual designer. Wearing a straw hat with a wide brim, Napoleon expected everyone to join in this backbreaking labour.

The doctor wrote.

He soon grew fond of it [gardening] … He conveyed the earth from one spot to another, and pressed all Longwood into his service. The ladies alone escaped, though not without difficulty. He laughed at them, pressed them, entreated them, and used every art of persuasion. Things around soon assumed a different aspect … We made alleys, grottoes, cascades; the appearance of the ground had now some life and diversity. Here was an excavation, there a basin or a road … We planted willows, oaks, peach trees, to give a little shade around the house. Turning from the ornamental to the useful, we sowed beans and peas.

Awake at 5.30 a.m. or even earlier, Napoleon would wait with impatience for the rising of the sun, which would be the signal for the British guards to leave the garden. He would never venture out while they were there. Looking like a Chinese man with a straw hat, he would send his valet to see that the way was free, then ring the bell to call everyone to work, even throwing clods of earth against bedroom windows with remarks such as, 'Go on, lazy one, don't you see that the sun is up', and 'Come, come, it is daytime.'

The governor heard of the gardening, and looked upon it suspiciously, the doctor later recounting his dismissive remark: 'Is it by your advice, that General Bonaparte takes this violent exercise? It is labour lost—these trees will die. Not one will grow up.'

‘I broke the furrows,’ continued the doctor, ‘the Emperor threw the seed and covered it over. One day, as he was arranging a bed of French beans, he perceived some small roots, and began a dissertation upon the phenomena of vegetation. He analysed them with his usual sagacity, and drew from them evidences of a Supreme Being, who presides over the wonders of Nature.’ Acacia longifolia, the Australian wattle that grew so well at Malmaison, was also grown in the garden.

Some Chinese labourers helped with the exhausting task of digging of the large fish-pond, which took several weeks. At last, on 31 July the basin was completed and filled with water. Napoleon was anxious to place the fish in the pond with his own hands. He wanted all the children of Longwood to be with him. With great excitement the group watched the fish swim into the muddy depths.

Lady Holland sent Napoleon seeds of everlasting daisies, known as Immortelles in France, to remind him of Josephine’s garden. They were the second plant illustrated by Redouté for Jardin de la Malmaison. Just as the violet was Napoleon’s flower in France, this little Australian flower symbolises his exile. Like the violets in the lawn at Malmaison, the everlasting daisies still flower every year at Longwood. Many become wreaths for his old grave. The gum trees which dominated the area around Longwood when Napoleon arrived and which Las Cases wrote about in his memoirs, though, have mostly gone.

Meanwhile in Rome, Pauline decided she must get permission to be with her brother on St Helena and wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, finishing with the words: ‘If this request were refused, it would be a sentence of death, and I beg you to allow me to go to St Helena so as to be with the Emperor on his death-bed. I know that Napoleon’s days are numbered, and I would never forgive myself had I not used all means in my power to ease his last hours and prove my devotion to him.’

The letter was too late. By the time Lord Liverpool received Pauline’s petition Napoleon was already dead. On 5 May 1821 his last words had been: ‘France, armée, tête d’armée,’ and some insist his final utterance was ‘Joséphine’. The official post-mortem report, signed by five British surgeons, states the cause of death as a ‘cancerous ulcer’. Antommarchi refused to sign it. The rats remained a terrible problem. During the night after the autopsy, a rat took a mouthful of ear, and another dragged the heart half out of the silver dish on which it lay. Napoleon had asked for his heart to be taken out of his body, placed in alcohol and presented to Marie Louise in a silver casket. Despite the postmortem, though, which gave stomach cancer as the cause of death—his father had died of the same complaint—there has been controversy ever since, due to the high level of arsenic in hair samples. A hair sample from a locket, used for arsenic testing in the 1960s, belonged to Dame Mabel Brookes of Melbourne, a descendant of the Balcombes.

Napoleon was buried, as he had requested, under the willows in the Vale of Geranium. The coffin was covered by the Marengo cloak. Le Vizir joined the procession of mourners down the steep path to the grave.

willow trees

In an ironic twist, Napoleon’s death in exile countered in a small degree the flow of Australian plants to Europe which Josephine had done so much to promote, unwittingly causing the widespread introduction to Australia of a tree which has become part of the landscape of the southern half of the continent. Early in his stay on St Helena Napoleon

had ordered weeping willows (Salix babylonica), similar to those of beloved memory which drooped gracefully over the lake at Malmaison, to be planted overhanging a spring in the island's Geranium Valley. This spring was the destination of his walks and the place from which drinking water was carried to his house. After the burial service mourners broke twigs off the willow tree for remembrance. Fearful that such gestures might give rise to undue sentiment, Lowe ordered a temporary barricade to be erected around the area of the grave.

But the willows were soon stripped nearly bare of foliage, so anxious were people to have a relic of Napoleon. Year after year, passengers on passing sailing ships made excursions to his grave, taking cuttings from the branches. Thousands of broken-off twigs took root in improvised pots during the remainder of those voyages to Australia, America and, later, New Zealand. In America there was even a move to change the botanical name to Salix napoleon. Planted out when the travellers reached their destinations, the cuttings rapidly grew into handsome trees.

Literary giants like Lord Byron, Goethe and Victor Hugo became the champions of Napoleon, singing the praises of the man who had recently—and still—aroused the most violent hatred around the world. His name began to shine over Europe. The demands for souvenirs and relics went far beyond the weeping willow cuttings. The skeleton of Napoleon's stallion, Marengo, was articulated when the horse died in 1831. It is now on display at the National Army Museum in London, with only two hooves. One other hoof was kept as a souvenir by the owner, the fourth made into a snuff mull with a silver lid inscribed with the words 'Hoof of Marengo, Barb Charger of Napoleon, ridden by him at Marengo, Austerlitz, Jen, Wagram, in the campaign of Russia and lastly at Waterloo'. It was presented to the Brigade of Guards, and has been kept in the Officers' Mess at St James' Palace ever since. Every officer who guards the Queen at Buckingham Palace sits down to eat with the shining hoof of Napoleon's old horse on the mahogany table. Wellington, too, collected Napoleoniana in the form of portraits, china and other works of art. Most of these are still in Apsley House in London.

So great was Napoleon's celebrity and notoriety that the willows from his grave and the snuff container from his horse's hoof were but two of the many mementos. Many weeping willows in Australia are now cuttings of cuttings of those original cuttings—clones of the lonely trees on the St Helena gravesite. A crop of willows grown at Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia was turned into baskets, tables, chairs—and more snuffboxes.

So in the end the Emperor did invade Australia, in a subtle way. Unfortunately his beautiful water-hungry trees tend to alter the levels of rivers and lakes, displacing reeds and rushes for nesting birds, casting shade too dense for surrounding plants to flourish, in many places taking over from the native Australian plants which were once the pride of Malmaison, and disturbing the homes of the duck-billed platypus which had once so fascinated him.

Napoleon did return to France, and the Imperial bees and eagles once again decorated the royal palaces of France despite the ban on the Bonapartes coming to France. It took twenty-five years. In 1840 Louis-Philippe, the citizen-king, arranged for the remains of

Napoleon, with great pomp, to be dug up from his rat-proof tomb under the willows and taken away from the island which had caused him such misery—although he would have been amused to know that at last a silkworm industry had followed his mulberry trees—Longwood for a short time in 1829 housed a silkworm hatchery.

Napoleon's remains sailed to France on the Belle Poule. A few weeks before Christmas thye coffin, drawn by sixteen horses, went slowly through Paris, under the Arc de Triomphe, down the Champs Elysée to the magnificent Hôtel des Invalides, only a few streets away from Napoleon's old school, the Ecole Militaire. Wearing a green uniform, the body was placed in a red porphyry catafalque. The heart in the silver urn which Marie Louise had refused to accept was placed at his feet.

A century later Napoleon was joined by his son, Napoleon, whom he had styled the King of Rome. The younger Napoleon died of pulmonary tuberculosis at the age of twenty-one and had been buried in Vienna. But in Christmas 1940 Adolf Hitler, in a gesture to France, had ordered for his remains to be sent to Paris and be buried beside Napoleon's tomb. Le Vizier, who had competed with Marengo for his master's affections, is also nearby. Usually referred to as 'Napoleon's stuffed horse', he is on show in the Musée de l'Armée behind the dome, beside the courtyard, along with the imperial tented bed and exhibits recalling Napoleon's victories and defeats.

There is nothing there, though, to connect Napoleon with Josephine. Not even Josephine's grandson, Hortense's son, Napoleon III, who seized power in 1851, and had brought the Imperial eagle and bees back to the palaces. But he never made the same impact as his uncle. After his crushing defeat in the Franco–Prussian war in 1870 Queen Victoria granted him refuge in the countryside in Kent, the sanctuary for which his uncle had so yearned.

my personal connection

After Princess Pauline died in 1825 the exquisitely carved four-poster bed that she and the Duke of Hamilton had shared in Rome was sent to Scotland. She bequeathed it to him in the long will dictated the day before she died. The Dukes of Hamilton are the Hereditary Keepers of Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, so the bed was sent to the Hamilton apartment there, which is next to that of the royal family. Over one hundred and fifty years later I moved it, with the help of four foresters, in a horse-box to Lennoxlove, seat of the Dukes of Hamilton, where for a while it became my bed.

Another connection between the Hamiltons and the Bonapartes began with the marriage between the son and heir of the 10th Duke of Hamilton and the daughter of Princess Stephanie of Baden—Josephine's niece by marriage and adopted daughter of Napoleon. The daughter of this marriage married Prince Albert of Monaco in 1869 and their son, Louis, and grandson, Rainier, have ruled Monaco for over a century. Josephine's grandson, Napoleon III, re-conferred the hereditary title of Duc de Châtellerault on his cousin the 12th Duke of Hamilton.

I married the son and heir of the 14th Duke and this network of connections increased my fascination with the history of the Bonapartes which had begun when I lived in the South of France, a stone's throw from the palace at Monaco. Although I am now divorced from the Duke my interest in the history of the Bonapartes, together with a strong

sympathy for French culture, remains, and has led to this book, much of which has been researched in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. One of the oldest documents there is the Bonaparte Map—of Abel Tasman's voyages of 1642–43 and 1644. In 1931, 110 years after Napoleon's death, his great-great niece, Marie Bonaparte, wife of Prince George of Greece, and descendent of Lucien, presented the library with this priceless map. Marie's father Prince Roland had purchased it with the intention of giving it to Australia—a fitting tribute to his great-uncle's thrwarted desire to follow the route on the map of the La Pérouse voayge.

J.H.

1736
Carolus Linnaeus publishes Genera plantarum, which revolutionises plant classification.

1743
Joseph Banks born in London, England.

1756
Birth of Ferdinand Antoine Redouté in Saint Hubert, Belgium.

1759
10 July: Birth of Pierre Joseph Redouté in Saint Hubert, Belgium.

1760
George III comes to the throne in England.

1763
23 June: Birth in Martinique of Marie Joseph Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, the future Empress Josephine.

1766
Birth of Henri Joseph Redouté in Saint Hubert, Belgium.

1768
The Endeavour departs from England, bound for Tahiti to observe the Transit of Venus, commanded by James Cook with a superb scientific team. Joseph Banks pays his own expenses plus those of two pupils of Linnaeus—Daniel Solander and Hermann Spöring—two artists and various assistants.

1769
Birth of Napoleon Bonaparte in Corsica.

1770
May: The Endeavour makes landfall on the east coast of Australia; Cook names the place of their landing Botany Bay due to the extensive plant collections made there; annexes the east coast under the name of New South Wales.

1771

The Endeavour returns to Britain.

May: Publication in France of Bougainville's journal Voyage autour du Monde.

1772
Redouté leaves home to work in Flanders and the Low Countries.

Voyage autour du Monde translated into English and published in London.

Cook returns to the Pacific with the Resolution and the Adventure; the Adventure stopped briefly in Tasmania where Captain Furneaux collected seeds of Eucalyptus obliqua, later grown at Kew and drawn by Redouté.

1774
Louis XVI ascends the throne of France.

The official account of the Endeavour voyage published; later to be read by Napoleon.

1775
Redouté works on the decoration of the chateau of Carlsbourg.

American War of Independence.

Grain riots in France.

1776
Death of Redouté's father.

Redouté returns to Saint-Hubert to finish work started by his father; works on the church of Heylissem; in Luxembourg receives orders for portraits.

American Declaration of Independence.

Cook's third and final voyage to the Pacific; the expedition visits Tasmania again, where Nelson collects specimens of Eucalyptus obliqua which are to provide the type specimens for L'Héritier's description of the genus.

1778
Deaths of Linnaeus, Voltaire and Rousseau.

Banks becomes president of the Royal Society in London.

France enters American War of Independence.

1779
Napoleon sent to military school in Brienne.

October: Josephine arrives in France with her father.

10 December: Marriage of Josephine at Noisy-le-Grand, France, to Alexandre de Beauharnais.

Banks suggests to a House of Commons committee that Botany Bay is a suitable site for a penal colony.

Cook killed in Hawaii.

1781
September: Josephine's only son, Eugene Rose, born.

1782—84
Redouté moves to Paris to help elder brother Ferdinand Antoine paint stage sets; all his spare time spent at the Jardin du Roi painting plants.

1783
April: Josephine's only daughter, Hortense, born.

December: Separation proceedings begin between Josephine and de Beauharnais.

Treaty of Versailles ends American War of Independence.

1784
The Parisian art dealer Chereau purchases some paintings of flowers by Redouté and makes engravings seen by Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle who becomes Redouté's patron and teacher; L'Héritier introduces Redouté to scientific staff at the Jardin des Plantes.

1785
Redouté's younger brother Henri Joseph joins his two brothers in Paris and starts work drawing natural history specimens.

1785–1786
Redouté works on first drawings for L'Héritier's Stirpes novae.

1786
27 February: Redouté marries Marie Marthe Gobert in Paris.

November: Birth of Redouté's first daughter, Marie Joseph, known as Josephine.

1787
April–December: Redouté joins L'Héritier in London where he makes the first botanical drawing of a eucalypt, an illustration for L'Héritier's Sertum anglicum; learns technique of stipple engraving.

May: Departure of the First Fleet for Botany Bay; no European has visited the place since the Endeavour voyage; no gardeners, botanists or farmers are sent to help establish the colony.

Louis XVI sends a courier to the Russian coast instructing the French explorer La Pérouse to divert his two ships, Boussole and Astrolabe, to Botany Bay to see what the British are up to in the South Seas.

1788–90
Food riots in France turn into peasant revolt.

Josephine and Hortense stay in Martinique.

1788
First Fleet arrives in Botany Bay.

La Pérouse and his two ships arrive in Botany Bay and stay for six weeks; sail on to disaster and are never seen again.

Redouté replaces Van Spaëndonck as painter of flowers for Les Velins du Roi; becomes also official painter of flowers to the Queen (‘Dessinateur du Cabinet de la Reine’); name put forward to the Académie des Sciences.

The Linnean Society founded in London by Sir James Edward Smith.

Redouté becomes a foundation member of the Linnean Society of Paris.

1789
Storming of the Bastille; the French Revolution; Declaration of the Rights of Man; sale of Church lands in France.

1790
Abolition of titles and nobility by Constituent Assembly—everyone now known as Citoyen or Citoyenne.

France reorganised into départements; Corsica gains status of département.

John White, surgeon to the New South Wales colony, publishes his journal about the settlement in Botany Bay in England; includes illustrations and descriptions of just 8 Australian plants.

1791
Departure of D’Entrecasteaux voyage with botanist Jacques Julien Labillardière and gardener Felix Delahaye to search for La Pérouse; both make extensive collections in Tasmania and south-western Australia.

George Vancouver discovers King George Sound in western Australia; the botanist on board, Archibald Menzies, makes extensive plant collections, but nothing is classified or published.

21 June: Arrest of Louis XVI at Varennes.

1792

15 April: Birth of Redouté's second daughter, Marie Louise, known as Adelaide.

Redouté draws 30 plates for Lamarck's L'Encyclopédie; receives the title 'Dessinateur de l'Académie des Sciences'.

First use of guillotine.

France declares war on Austria; Prussia declares war on France.

June: Napoleon witnesses attack on the Tuileries.

August: Second attack on the Tuileries.

Food riots in Paris.

Incarceration of Louis XVI; abolition of royalty in France.

September: First French Republic declared; the calendar and names of months, weeks and days changes, 1792 becoming Year One.

Redouté visits the prison of the Temple to paint a cactus for Marie Antoinette.

1793
January: Louis XVI guillotined.

Jardin des Plantes becomes Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle.

Redouté exhibits for the first time in the Salon des Aquarelles de Fleurs Lauréat en Botanique at the Museum.

Britain declares war on France.

October: Execution of Marie Antoinette.

December: Napoleon leads the Siege of Toulon and is promoted.

A Specimen of the Botany of New Holland by James Edward Smith published in England; contains only 16 Australian plants.

1794
March: Alexandre de Beauharnais imprisoned; guillotined in July.

April–August: Josephine imprisoned, shares a cell with the future Madame Tussaud.

27 July: 9 Thermidor—Fall of Robespierre; end of Reign of Terror.

August: Josephine released from prison
1795

August: the Directoire becomes the executive authority in France—aims to perpetuate the Republic. The most famous Director was Paul Barras.

5 October: known as 13 Vendémiaire. Napoleon helps crush Royalist riots in Paris; this military success makes his reputation.

John Hunter, second governor of the Port Jackson colony, arrives.

1796
9 March: Marriage of Josephine and Napoleon in Paris.

Napoleon, General of the Army of Italy, leads campaign against the Austrians who have long occupied northern Italy.

Redouté moves to an official apartment at the Louvre.

1796—1798
Josephine joins Napoleon in Italy, where she stays for a year and a half; she gardens in Milan.

1797
Peace of Campo Formio.

Gardener Felix Delahaye employed to restore Marie Antoinette's garden at Le Trianon; also Versailles.

25 December: Napoleon elected a member of the Institut (Scientific Secion) by 300 votes.

1798
May: Napoleon departs on Egyptian campaign accompanied by scientists and scholars; wins Battle of the Pyramids and enters Cairo.

Henri Joseph Redouté goes to Egypt as a member of the Commission des Sciences et des Arts d'Egypte.

July: Nelson's victory at the terrible Battle of the Nile.

May: Birth of Redouté's son Charles.

1799
21 April: Josephine purchases Malmaison; Ferdinand Antoine Redouté immediately employed to decorate the salons.

Pierre Joseph Redouté's long association with Malmaison and Josephine begins.

August: Napoleon leaves his army in Egypt, slips across the Mediterranean and lands at Fréjus on 9 October.

9 November: Napoleon's coup d'état of 18 Brumaire; becomes one of three consuls who govern France.

15 November: Josephine and Napoleon move into Le Petit Luxembourg.

Redouté makes 12 illustrations of Australian plants for Labillardière's Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Perouse.

12 December: Napoleon made First Consul.

1800
19 February: Josephine and Napoleon move to apartments in the Tuileries.

June: Napoleon crosses the St Bernard pass and reconquers northern Italy—Battle of Marengo.

Governor King, third governor at Port Jackson, arrives.

French expedition to Australia, led by Nicholas Baudin, departs from Le Havre.

Labillardière's book on La Pérouse published.

Percier and Fontaine appointed architects at Malmaison; renovations of house and garden commence.

Amongst other work Redouté commissioned by Josephine to paint flower portraits for her bedroom at Malmaison.

L'Héritier murdered near his home in Paris.

1800–1803
Ventenat's Description des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues cultivées dans le jardin de J.M. Cels, with 81 plates by Redouté, published in part works; contains illustrations of 11 Australian plants.

1801
February: Treaty of Lunéville with Austria.

August: French in Egypt surrender to British; Britain acquires the Rosetta stone.

Matthew Flinders, commanding the Investigator, leaves England to circumnavigate Australia; also on board are botanist Robert Brown, natural history artist Ferdinand Bauer, landscape artist William Westall, and gardener Peter Good.

1802
3 January: Marriage of Hortense to Napoleon's younger brother Louis.

25 March: Peace of Amiens.

April: Concordat with the Papacy.

The Flinders and Baudin expeditions coincide at Encounter Bay.

2 August: Napoleon elected Consul-for-life.

September: Napoleon moves his summer residence to the royal palace of St Cloud; Josephine continues overseeing Malmaison garden.

Napoleon orders report on the progress of all the sciences in foreign countries.

1802–16
First parts of Les Liliacées published.

1803–04
Return of Baudin's ships from Australia, bringing for Malmaison numerous plants and the black swans.

Napoleon establishes the new Civil Code in France, which is adopted in much of Europe.

1803–05
The first parts of Jardin de la Malmaison published; 49 of the 120 colour plates by Redouté are of Australian plants.

1803
May: End of peace with Britain; Britain declares war on France.

Sale of Louisiana to the United States.

June–July: Napoleon and Josephine make a 'royal tour' through northern France and Belgium, complete with the crown jewels (not worn since the death of Marie Antoinette).

Napoleon visits Boulogne to observe the English coast in preparation for an invasion of England.

The Louvre renamed Musée Napoleon.

Josephine commissions Jean Thomas Thibault and Barthélemy Vignon to build a huge new hothouse, completed in 1805; 50 metres long, heated by 12 stoves.

1804
Redouté exhibits 6 watercolours of flowers at the Salon des Artistes Vivants at the Musée Napoleon.

May: Napoleon proclaimed Emperor of the French.

23 July: Redouté acquires Fleury-sous-Meudon, an old orangerie south-west of Paris, for F18 000.

Labillardière publishes the first part of the first comprehensive book on the Australian flora, Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen, with 265 Australian plants; includes 4 paintings of eucalypts by Redouté.

The Royal Horticultural Society in England holds its first flower show.

2 December: Coronation ceremony at Notre Dame celebrated by the Pope; Josephine becomes Empress Josephine and Napoleon the Emperor Napoleon I.

1805
Redouté named ‘Peintre de fleurs de l’Impératrice’.

Louis Martin Berthault, a former architectural student of Percier, appointed architect and landscape designer at Malmaison.

Felix Delahaye appointed chief gardener at Malmaison.

April: Napoleon becomes King of Italy; Eugene de Beauharnais made Viceroy of Italy.

21 October: Nelson’s great victory in the sea battle off Cape Trafalgar; Nelson is killed but destroys France’s hopes of naval supremacy forever. Napoleon’s plans to invade England crushed; he imposes economic warfare on Britain.

December: Napoleon’s victory over the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz.

Redouté illustrates and Garnery publishes Rousseau’s book La Botanique; goes into 6 editions.

Third coalition formed by Russia, Austria, Sweden and Britain against France.

1806
Prussia joins the coalition but Napoleon crushes them with his victory at Jena.

13 January: Marriage in Munich of Josephine’s son Eugene to Princess Augusta Amelia of Bavaria.

February: Joseph Bonaparte made King of Naples.

7 April: Marriage of Stephanie de Beauharnais, Napoleon’s adopted daughter, to the Grand Duke of Baden Baden.

June: Louis Bonaparte and Hortense proclaimed King and Queen of Holland.

November: Berlin declares economic war on Britain.

1807
Kingdoms of Holland, Westphalia, Italy and Naples are created, as is the Confederation of the Rhine, comprised of German states.

Napoleon makes all the artists leave their aartments at the Louvre so he can expand the galleries; Redouté moves to a 9-room apartment at 6 Rue de Seine, his Paris quarters until his death.

June: Defeat of Russians at Friedland.

July: Treaty of Tilsit with Russians.

October: France invades Portugal.

Berthault enlarges the hothouse at Malmaison and changes its design.

1808
Joseph Bonaparte made King of Spain.

Spanish rise against French occupation; beginning of Peninsular War; French campaign against the British in Spain.

Death of Pierre Ventenat, the botanist who advised Josephine at Malmaison.

October: Aimé Bonpland engaged by Josephine to replace Ventenat.

1809
March: Invasion of Portugal by the French.

May: Annexation of the Papal States and imprisonment of the Pope.

October: Peace of Schönbrunn between France and Austria.

15 December: Napoleon’s need for an heir leads to official divorce from Josephine; Malmaison transferred to Josephine’s ownership.

Redouté takes his family to Saint-Hubert for a holiday.

Death of Ferdinand Antoine Redouté in Paris.

1810
Josephine visits Switzerland.

April: Napoleon marries Princess Marie Louise de Habsburg, daughter of the Emperor of Austria.

Marshal Bernadotte elected King of Sweden.

Louis and Hortense leave Holland.

1811
20 March: Birth at the Tuileries of the King of Rome, Napoleon’s only legitimate son.

April: Arthur Wellesley (future Duke of Wellington) forces Napoleon to retreat from Portugal.

15 Sepember: Birth of Hortense's secret child, the future Duke of Morny, by her lover Charles de Flahaut, the illegitimate son of Talleyrand; Josephine not told.

1812
Napoleon crosses the Niemen to invade Russia with the Grande Armée, the largest army ever formed in European history.

September: Battle of Borodino—French occupation of Moscow; the Russians set fire to Moscow.

November: French retreat—columns of the Grande Armée stretch out over 800 kilometres and fall victim to the Russian winter, Cossacks and the floods of the Berezina; of the 600 000 who cross the Niemen in June, less than one in six return.

1812–17
Publication in parts of Description des Plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre, written by Aimé Bonpland and illustrated by Redouté, includes many Australian plants.

1813
May: Battles of Lützen and Bautzen won by French.

June: British victory in Spain led by Wellesley; flight of Joseph Bonaparte.

October: Napoleon defeated at Leipzig; Wellesley crosses the Pyrenees.

November: Wellesley advances into France.

1814
The Allies, led by the Tsar, who befriends Josephine, march into Paris.

Abdication of Napoleon; banishment to the island of Elba.

Wellesley created Duke of Wellington.

April: Josephine goes to Navarre; returns to Malmaison to entertain the Allied leaders.

April–May: Tsar Alexander a frequent visitor.

29 May: Death of Josephine at Malmaison.

Louis XVIII, brother of the late Louis XVI, returns to Paris.

July: Wellington appointed Ambassador to France.

1815
Napoleon returns to France; the ‘Hundred Days’.

21 March: Napoleon reclaims his rooms at the Tuileries.

Wellington appointed Commander of the Anglo-Netherland and Hanoverian forces and by June opens a 140 kilometre front behind the Belgian frontier.

16 June: The French attack.

18 June: Battle of Waterloo—Napoleon begins his main assault on Wellington’s army; the French lose about half their army and most of their guns; the Allies suffer 23 000 killed and wounded.

21 June: Napoleon reaches Paris and abdicates for the second time on 22 June.

29 June: Napoleon spends 5 days at Malmaison before attempting escape to America.

July: Wellington appointed Ambassador to France.

15 July: Napoleon finally surrenders to the British; asks for asylum in England but instead is exiled to St Helena.

1815–24
Restoration of the hereditary monarchy under Louis XVIII.

1816–24
Publication of Redouté’s Les Roses in 30 parts.

1821
5 May: Death of Napoleon on St Helena.

1822
Death of Redouté’s daughter Adelaide.

1830
Louis Philippe becomes King of France.

1832
Death of the King of Rome.

1837
Death of Redouté’s son Charles in Saint-Hubert.

Death of Hortense.

1840
19 June: Redouté dies of cerebral bleeding while painting a white lily.

The French reclaim the coffin of Napoleon and he is reburied at Les Invalides, Paris, on the banks of the Seine.

1845
Death of Redouté's elder daughter Josephine.

1848
Abdication of Louis Philippe; Second Republic declared.

Hortense's son Charles Louis Napoleon declared president of France.

1851
Coup d'état by Charles Louis Napoleon.

1852
The Second Empire; Charles Louis Napoleon proclaimed Emperor Napoleon III.

Death of Henri Joseph Redouté.

This list contains over 100 of the countless images so far located which Redouté either drew or painted of Australian plants growing in France—-mostly in the Empress Josephine's garden. This is only a beginning. It is hoped that Australian libraries and museums will bring out facsimile editions of Redouté's works and that exhibitions will be staged so that Redouté will take his place in Australia's cultural and scientific history.

These 101 images are listed here in alphabetical order with the names of the books in which they originally appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Each is listed under the original Latin name with the current name in brackets. A page number in bold type following a plant name means that it is illustrated in this book, while a clover symbol means that it is not. If an original vellum of the engraving or colour-plate is held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, or the Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris or—-in a few cases—-in both, then the names of these museums are listed under that of the book. The main libraries and museums in Australia, London and Paris where I have consulted the books are bracketed next to each book.

The originals in the Fitzwilliam Museum were bequeathed by a collector while most of the vellums in Paris were commissioned directly from Redouté himself. Because of the delicacy of the watercolours, now nearly two hundred years old, and the problems of fading, no originals are on public display.

Sertum Anglicum (An English Garland) Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle. 35 black and white plates. Published in 4 parts between 1 January 1789 and 1792. 1 Australian plant by Redouté. (Linnean Society, London)

Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse (Voyage in Search of La Pérouse … during the years 1791 … 1794 …) Jacques Julien Houtou de La Billardière. 2 volumes. 45 fine black and white plates—-13 plates by Redouté. Volume I published in Paris between 22 February and 4 March 1800; Volume II and the Atlas in April 1800. Followed by two editions in English, one in German, and one in Russian. The book contains the first good depiction of a black swan. 12 Australian plants by Redouté. (Mitchell Library)

Descriptions des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues, cultivées dans le jardin de J.M Cels (Description of the New and Little Known Plants Cultivated in the Garden of J.M. Cels) Etienne Pierre Ventenat. Published in ten parts between September 1800 and February 1803. 84 black and white plates. 13 Australian plants, of which 11 are by Redouté. (Mitchell Library)

Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France (Treatise on the Trees and Shrubs cultivated [in open ground] in France) Henry Louis Duhamel du Monceau. Seven volumes published in 44 parts between 1800—1819. 314 black and white plates, 305 by Pierre Joseph Redouté, 3 by his pupil P. Bessa, 1 after Henri Joseph Redouté. 42 Australian trees and shrubs with 18 illustrations. (Royal Horticultural Society, London, and the Natural History Museum, London)

Les Liliacées (The Lily Family) Pierre Joseph Redouté. 8 volumes, published in 80 parts between July 1802 and September 1816. 503 colour plates, all by Pierre Joseph Redouté. 3 Australian plants. (Mitchell Library)

Jardin de la Malmaison (The Garden of Malmaison) 2 volumes, published in 20 parts between 1803 and 1805. 120 colourplates, all by Pierre Joseph Redouté. 46 Australian plants. Dedicated to Madame Bonaparte. (Linnean Society, London)

Choix de plantes dont la plupart sont cultivées dans le jardin de Cels (Selection of Plants Grown in the Garden of Cels) Etienne Pierre Ventenat. 2 volumes published in 10 parts between 1803 and 1808, the year of Ventenat's death. 60 black and white plates, all by Pierre Joseph Redouté. Redouté and Ventenat were working on this at the same time as Jardin de la Malmaison. Dedicated to Citoyen J.A. Chaptal of l'Institut National, Ministre de l'Intérieur. It included 3 Australian plants by Redouté. (Royal Horticultural Society Library, London)

Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen (Specimens of the Flora of New Holland) Jacques Julien Houtou de La Billardière. 2 volumes, published in 27 parts between December 1804 and August 1807; 265 black and white illustrations of Australian plants, 4 by Pierre Joseph Redouté. (Mitchell Library and Linnean Society)

Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre (Rare Plants Cultivated at Malmaison and Navarre) Aimé Jacques Alexandre Goujaud Bonpland. Published in 11 parts between November 1812 and April 1817. 64 colour plates, all by Pierre Joseph Redouté. Dedicated to Josephine. It included 23 Australian plants, of which 20 are by Redouté. (Mitchell Library)

Choix des plus belles fleurs et des plus beaux fruits (A Choice of the Most Beautiful Flowers and the Most Beautiful Fruits) Pierre Joseph Redouté. Published between 1827 and 1833. 144 plates (without scientific dissections), all by Pierre Joseph Redouté. Dedicated to the Princesses Louise and Marie d'Orleans—-the daughters of Louis Phillipe. The influence of Napoleon and Josephine had long gone so it included only 2 Australian plants. (Royal Horticultural Society Library)

Nine of the images of Australian plants painted by Redouté and held in the collection of vellums at the Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, are duplicated in books, but five others, including Banksia serrata, are not.

Of the twenty-six images of Australian plants painted by Redouté and held in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, eight are not duplicated in books.

ß = not illustrated in this book, but name included for interest
Acacia armata page 159
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

Acacia linifolia page 173
Descriptions des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues, cultivées dans le jardin de J.M.Cels
Jardin de la Malmaison
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

Acacia subulata page 84
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Fitzwilliam Museum

Andreusia glabra (now Myoporum tenuifolium var. glabrum) page 168
Jardin de la Malmaison

Anigozanthos flavidus page 14
Les Liliacées

Anigozanthos rufa (now A. rufus) page 40
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Apium prostratum page 74
Jardin de la Malmaison

Banksia marcescens (mistakenly described, now B. marginata) page 2
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

Banksia nivea (now Dryandra nivea) page 27
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Banksia repens page 42
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Banksia serrata page 36
Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris

ß Banksia (species to be determined)
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Bauera rubioides page 163
Jardin de la Malmaison

Bignonia pandorana (now Pandorea pandorana) page 131
Jardin de la Malmaison

ß Bignonia pandorana (Norfolk Island) (now Pandorea pandorana subsp. austrocaledonicum)
Fitzwilliam Museum

ß Billardiera scandens
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

ß Bossiaea coccinea (now B. cineria)
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

ß Bossiaea heterophylla
Descriptions des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues, cultivées dans le jardin de J.M.Cels
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Boronia pinnata page 169
Jardin de la Malmaison

Callistachys lanceolata page 61
Jardin de la Malmaison

Calomeria amaranthoides (now Humea elegans) page 128
Jardin de la Malmaison

Carpodontos lucida (now Eucryphia lucida) page 41
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

ß Casuarina distyla (now Allocasuarina distyla)
Descriptions des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues, cultivées dans le jardin de J.M.Cels

Chorizema ilicifolia Flame Pea page 60
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse
Fitzwilliam Museum

Conchium aciculare (now Hakea aciculare) page 164
Jardin de la Malmaison

Conchium dactyloides (now Hakea dactyloides) page 140
Jardin de la Malmaison

Cristunia neriifolia (now Tristania neriifolia) page 183
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Fitzwilliam Museum

Crowea saligna (now Eriostemon crowei) page 130
Jardin de la Malmaison
Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France

Daviesia corymbosa page 69
Fitzwilliam Museum
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

ß Daviesia denudata (now Viminaria juncea)
Choix de Plantes dont la plupart sont cultivées dans le jardin de J.M.Cels

Dianella caerulea Blue Dianella page 11
Les Liliacées

ß Dillenia volubilis (now Hibbertia scandens)
Choix de plantes dont la plupart sont cultivées dans le jardin de Cels
Choix des plus belles fleurs et des plus beaux fruits
Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France

Diosma serratifolia (now Barosma serratifolia) page 96
Jardin de la Malmaison

Diplarrena moraea White Iris page 28
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Duvalia oxalidifolia page 162
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

Elaeocarpus acuminatus page 97
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Fitzwilliam Museum

Elaeodendron australe (now Cassine australis) page 73
Jardin de la Malmaison

Embothrium salicifolium (now Hakea salicifolia) page 52
Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France

ß Embothrium sericeum (now Grevillea sericea)
Traité des Arbres et des Arbustes qui se cultivent [en Pleine Terre] en France

Epacris pulchella page 184
Fitzwilliam Museum

Eucalyptus amygdalina page 17
Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen

Eucalyptus cordata page 17
Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen

Eucalyptus cornuta page 42
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Eucalyptus diversifolia page 186
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Fitzwilliam Museum

Eucalyptus globulus page 27
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse
Mitchell Library

Eucalyptus obliqua page 30

Linnean Society

ß Eucalyptus obliqua (different image from that in Sertum Anglicum)
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Eucalyptus ovata page 17
Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen

Eucalyptus viminalis page 17
Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen

Exocarpos cupressiformis page 41
Relation du voyage à la recherche de La Pérouse

Ficus rubiginosa Port Jackson Fig pages 32—3
Jardin de la Malmaison
Fitzwilliam Museum

Gompholobium furcellatum (now Jacksonia furcellata) page 132
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre
Fitzwilliam Museum

Goodenia grandiflora page 182
Jardin de la Malmaison
Fitzwilliam Museum

Goodenia ovata page 45
Descriptions des Plantes nouvelles et peu connues, cultivées dans le jardin de J.M.Cels
Fitzwilliam Museum

ß Hakea cineria
Jardin de la Malmaison

ß Hakea sericea
Jardin de la Malmaison

Hibiscus heterophyllus page 126
Jardin de la Malmaison

Hibiscus sabdariffa page 127
Fitzwilliam Museum

Hovea celsi (now H. elliptica) page 124
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

ß Hovea lanceolata
Descriptions des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre

Indigofera australis page 170
Jardin de la Malmaison

Josephinia imperatricis page 176
Jardin de la Malmaison
Fitzwilliam Museum
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Kennedia coccinea page 101
Jardin de la Malmaison
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Kennedia monophylla (now Hardenbergia violacea) page 154
Jardin de la Malmaison

Kennedia rubicunda page 100

Jardin de la Malmaison
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Lagunaea squamea (now Lagunaria patersonia) page 171
Jardin de la Malmaison

Lasiopetalum ferrugineum page 85

I am extremely grateful to the many people in France, England and Australia who have made this book possible. Space does not allow me to name them all, but I must first acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to Joelle Fleming, whose research and translations have shaped this book. Her insights during six months of research have been so remarkable that the book is dedicated to her. And I also thank her husband Ian Fleming. All the strands would never have been pulled together without the continued support and patience of my editor Anne Savage—her contribution has gone well beyond that of an ordinary editor, almost to the point, sometimes, of being a co-author.

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The happiest hours while writing this book have been spent in libraries and in bookshops, and some of the most enjoyable hours have been at the Library of James Cook University, Townsville; the London Library; the State Library of New South Wales; the Mitchell Library; the Townsville General Library; the Chelsea Library; the Royal Horticultural Society Library, London, and, of course, the Linnean Society Library. I extend a special thanks to the anonymous benefactor who donated books on nineteenth-century French history to the James Cook Library—a treasure trove for Joelle Fleming, Maureen Sherriff and myself. I also thank Professor Alan Frost in Melbourne for reading through the manuscript.

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It would be impossible to list all the books consulted. An indication of the volume of printed matter on Napoleon, let alone Josephine, is seen in the catalogue at the London Library, which includes over 3000 books. For the same reason, to include notes and list sources would have doubled the length of the book, as one would have had to quote the evidence—often conflicting—from at least twenty different sources. So instead I list, in alphabetical order by author, the books which have been particularly useful or for which I have developed a special affection. (The dates are those of first publication; often, however, the publishers have changed with subsequent editions.)

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Lawalrée, André Pierre-Joseph Redouté 1759–1840 la famille, l'oeuvre, Centre Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Saint-Hubert 1996
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McLynn, Frank Napoleon, Jonathan Cape, London 1997
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O'Meara, Barry E Napoleon at St Helena. Richard Bentley & Son, London 1888
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Rosebery, Lord Napoleon: The Last Phase, Arthur L. Humphreys, London 1900
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music

There are many CDs available of music by the main musicians associated with Napoleon and Josephine. Giovanni Paisiello (1741–1816) wrote the magnificent Coronation Music for Napoleon I (1804); Le Sueur wrote much ceremonial music for the period; Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842) wrote much music during Napoleon's rule, and continued in favour under Louis XVIII, when he wrote his dramatic Marche Funèbre and Requiem in C Minor, commemorating the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI. Not to be forgotten is the music by Jean Jacques Rousseau, including his once-popular opera Le Devin du Village. And, of course, Beethoven—the Symphony Eroica, and much more.