

Riawunna invites you to a public seminar by

When: 5:30pm
Thursday 30th July 2009

Where: Life Science Lecture Theatre
Sandy Bay



The Mystery of the Dumoutier Busts

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The Muse de l'homme in Paris contains several plaster busts of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Two of these are copies of the well-known sculptures of Truganini and Wourredy by Benjamin Law. There are four others which are named Menalarguerna, Guenny, Timmey and Bourakooroo. According to the Muse de l'homme and other sources, they are life masks acquired by the phrenologist Pierre Marie Alexandre Dumoutier on the second voyage of Dumont D'Urville to the south seas. They are featured as such in the publication of that voyage - Dumont D'Urville, Voyage au pole sud et dans l'Océanie sur les corvettes l'Astrolabe et la Zelee - in the volume entitled Anthropologie par M. le docteur Dumoutier, but in fact written after Dumoutier's death by Emile Blanchard, and in the accompanying Atlas. To the extent however that we can confidently identify the subjects of the busts, particularly that of Menalarguerna, or Mannalargenner, it is quite clear that, if they are what they are claimed to be, they could not possibly have been produced during Dumoutier's visit to Hobart in 1839-1840. The mystery therefore is when the busts were actually made, by whom, and for what purpose, and why indeed they were claimed for Dumoutier at all. While I can't at this time answer these questions, I will hazard some guesses.

Professor Sandra Bowdler is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeology, University of Western Australia.