ORIGINAL

CHAPTER SEVEN

CRAFTSMEN AND BUSINESS PEOPLE

The heady days of the Australian gold discoveries aroused in France so great an interest in this country that the curiosity for things Australian survived long after the gold dust had settled. At least 57 French-language books dealing with Australia were published in France, Belgium and Switzerland in the second half of the 19th century, or more than one per year on average.

Most purported to be the result of the author's own first-hand observations in one or several of the Australian colonies, and most were ostensibly aimed at would-be emigrants. Yet when we decided to emigrate from France to Australia in the early 1950s, there was not a book to be found in French on our future country. It is amazing to think that sixty or eighty years earlier, when emigration was a much more hazardous and a rarer enterprise, information was both more readily available and extensive.

Scholars such as Colin Thornton-Smith believe that interest in Australia was largely due to its "Wild West" image, and that in France, last century, interest generally was proportional to distance. The further and more difficult a country was to reach, the more rewarding it was presumed to be.

But the farthest point is also invariably the most expensive to attain. Consequently, the majority of Australia-bound French migrants tended to be fairly well-off, people hoping to further improve their financial standing through the practice of a trade or the running of a business, or both.

Chapters in this book are devoted to the wool trade, to food and wine and to publishing. But French migrants in many other areas of professional and business life disembarked here.

THE JEWELLERS CAME FIRST

The jewellery and watchmaking craft appears to have been the earliest practised by the French here, with the first person reported

to have set up shop being the notorious Morand, mentioned by Francois Peron during his stay in Sydney in 1802 (see chapter Two).

In 1845, French scientist Eugene Delessert reported a brillant magasin de bijouterie (splendid, or "glittering", jewellery store) in Sydney's George Street, whose owner, a Monsieur Georges Guyon, is "our only compatriot settled in Sydney". He could not have remained alone for long as one Hippolyte Ferdinand Delarue, who arrived from France in the 1840s, also established a jewellery and silversmith store in George Street.

Delarue's tale is recounted by his great grand-daughter Eugenie Crawford in "A Bunyip Close Behind Me". "Before the G.P.O. was built and a clock tower added", she writes proudly, "every gentleman in that part of the city set his watch by Delarue's clock". And in 1851, Richard Comb's store at 454 George Street advertised yet another Frenchman, A.C. Prevost, as head of his clock and watch department.

Even in Albany, Western Australia, a French watchmaker from Brittany, Monsieur Galle, had set up premises in the 1880s. Albany in those days was a port of call for the French shipping line Messageries Maritimes, whose ships, after the opening of the Suez canal, docked there after stopping in Mahe in the Seychelles. Galle rated a mention in an extremely entertaining and informative 1889 publication, "In the Land of Kangaroos and Gold Mines". Author Oscar Comettant, a composer and musical critic, was invited to Melbourne as a judge for the 1888 Centennial Exhibition. His book also describes Melbourne's French Club, whose treasurer Victor Denis was apparently a well-known jeweller.

The number of French jewellers and watchmakers declined in later years, but four were still listed in the first Annuaire francais d'Australie, in 1957, and five in the 1980 edition. The best-known today are De Stoop, a Franco-Belgian family specialised in diamonds and wedding rings with establishments in Melbourne and Sydney.

OH FOR A FRENCH HAIRCUT!

French hairdressers did not emigrate as early as other groups,

but became very popular, especially with Australian ladies, in the second half of the 19th century and well into the 20th.

The Journal de Melbourne of 1858 carries an advertisement for "Bouchet & Jourdan, hairdressers and wigmakers of 96 Bourke St. East". Comettant meanwhile mentions "a French hairdresser very famous in Melbourne for its shampoos and cunning hairdressing". Apparently the same person had also launched a real estate venture, called "General Boulanger's Domain" to the great amusement of other French immigrants. Boulanger was a populist would-be dictator of the time.

First-year copies of the Courrier Australien, in 1892, carry advertisements for "L. Mechain, coiffeur francais, 30 Essex St. Sydney". But the same year A. Chazel of 172 George St. North insists he is "the only first class genuine French establishment caring for hair and beard". Sydney at the turn of the century also boasted A. Jacques, coiffeur pour dames et messieurs, and indeed perhaps it was the French who introduced the "unisex" salons which were later to disappear in favour of the segregated shops. French arrivals in the early 1950s were surprised to meet this "sex segregation", which went as far as vocabulary. It would have been most damaging to a man's reputation then to say he was about to go to a "hairdresser" rather than saying he was about to see a "barber". But the last two decades have seen a return to the old French system.

Many French hairdressers are still in business in Australia today, with 20 listed in three states in the most recent edition of the Annuaire Francais. In Brisbane, Lebanese-born migrant-tycoon Stefan may have become the king of hairdressers, but at 117 Queen Street one can find Roger et Irène, coiffeurs français.

OTHER CRAFTS

We are indebted to a few dedicated persons who while searching through their family history found French forebears whose existence might otherwise have vanished without trace. In Queensland, for example, particularly in the Rockhampton area, the surname Jounquay is fairly common. One Jounquay identified his ancestor as Daniel Jounquay, a silk weaver, then

a family trade, whose father was a Huguenot. Daniel was transported here only a few years after the Napoleonic Wars, and as his descendant put it: "I imagine a lad with a French name and background would not have received much leniency".

Craftsmen on the Australian scene today include Frederic Chepeaux, a <u>ceramiste</u> installed in Sydney, Henri Ninio, a <u>parfumeur</u> in Adelaide, and Bernard Gay, also of Sydney, who makes inlaid floors and woodwork, in French, <u>marquetterie</u>. But these are only a few of the many dozens of French craftsmen and specialists who brought their skills and know-how to Australia.

Our local suburban newspaper recently carried an advertisement saying: "Want your house painted or wallpapered? No job too big or too small. French tradesman. Free quote. Small handyman jobs. Ring Paul on 578 7120."

Here is a French tradesman proud to be so, and well he might. Trades in France are still quite often a family tradition, with expertise passed down from father to son.

For many centuries, "trade secrets" were an essential part of European life, and perhaps more so in France than anywhere else. Before the spread of trade unions, tradesmen were organised in guilds of <u>compagnons</u>, one for each specialist trade, and it was almost impossible to enter a guild unless other relatives were or had been members. After an initial apprenticeship, the prospective <u>compagnon</u> had to complete a <u>tour de France</u>, that is travel the length and breadth of the country during several years, finding temporary work at each stop. He was then put through a gruelling examination by the masters of his Order before being admitted as a master <u>artisan</u> himself. Nowadays nearly all of this has been replaced by trade schools, but the tradition of high quality craftsmanship subsists and could not have been better expressed than by the poet Charles Peguy in a well-known text: <u>Il fallait qu'un bâton de chaise fût bien fait</u>. *

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* The <u>bâton de chaise</u> is the crossbar in a chair, and Peguy chose that example because nobody normally will look at a crossbar. Yet the French crafts tradition was that even a component as little visible as this HAD to be perfect. The quotation means:

Many of the French tradesmen we met in Australia have kept up the age-old tradition, perhaps unwittingly, by spending time in different cities, thus making their own tour d'Australie, gaining experience of the different working materials and practices. French tradesmen can be found in all the larger cities, including Darwin, who will paint houses, lay tiles and carpets, install a swimming pool, put up roofs, do plumbing, tend gardens, electricity, repair cars, make and alter clothes, etc. Probably the painters and mechanics are the most numerous these days. Their prices at times will tend to be above average, but so will the quality and durability of the work performed.

7-4 THE FASHION TRADE : MADE-TO-MEASURE

The clothing or fashion trade started later for French Australians but has remained a constant of present-day Australia. Perhaps we should begin by quoting an 1883 book by Twopeny, "Town Life in Australia".

As regards fashion, Twopeny finds the ladies of Sydney and Adelaide more provincial than those of Melbourne, who are credited with "general love of display, which is almost as characteristic of Melbourne as it is of Paris". The wealthiest, he writes, "send to Paris for their dresses and pay sums, which make one's mouth water, to be dressed in the latest fashion; but I fancy that the French modistes manufacture a certain style of attire for the Australian taste, just as the French merchants manufacture clarets for the Australian market".

It was perhaps the fashion of sending to Paris for dresses that stood in the way of the early establishment of high quality French dressmaking businesses in Australia, and the competition between "French from France" and "French made in Australia" must have been truly severe.

In fact the first French clothes-maker who apparently settled in the country was a tailor for men, one Victor Mauchan, tailleur

civil et militaire, in business in Sydney From 1878. But by the time the Courrier Australien appeared in 1892, several dress-makers were flourishing on the Sydney scene and advertising in the paper. They included Madame Lusi, couturière parisienne, Madame Paul, costumière de Paris, and Mademoiselle E. Reymond, costumière française. Probably the most amazing advertisement in the clothing trade was that of G. Lefebvre, chemisier, who promoted his shirts and collars for sale, priced IN FRENCH FRANCS.

In the course of this century, one of the most colourful figures of Melbourne's French community is Andree Macdonald, born Andree Louise Tessier in 1897 in the 12th arrondissement of Paris. She attended a trade school in dressmaking and obtained such good marks that she quickly landed a job ... making sleeves. Later, seeking a change, she worked as a corsagière to the house of Cogenhern, suppliers of bridal wear for high society weddings.

Mobilisation Générale in August 1914 led to an immediate and total shutdown of all activities not involved in the war effort. Fortunately, as Cogenhern were also established in London, Andree was able to move there, earning 27/6 to begin with and £5 a week once her English was good enough, a huge salary at the time. The German air raids were the greatest problem, and it was when shaking off debris from one such bombing that Andree first laid eyes on a soldier wearing an Australian uniform. His name was William Macdonald. Once the war was over they were, of course, married, and soon on the way to Sydney. The trip was momentous and Andree, 65 years later, remembers every minute! Her most dramatic memory was of arrival in Fremantle, when it was discovered that two "diggers" had contracted bigamous marriages, each having left a family in Australia. The pair had to disappear, and their "new" wives were bundled back to England.

A recommendation from a London customer, the Marchioness of Dufferin, secured a dressmaking job for Andree - work to order only - with Farmers, a rather better-class Sydney store at that time. After a two-year stay in London, during which time the couple's son was born, David Jones hired Andree at a wage "three times what men were getting then", she said. But still better was to

come. In 1930, J.C. Williamson's, the great theatre entrepreneurs, were planning to stage a show called "Wild Flowers" with dozens of magnificent dresses, but nobody to make them. The job, together with rooms and staff, was offered to Andree whilst in Melbourne for a few hours on her way back from a second sea voyage to the Old World. Even husband Willie was promised work in the transport department. Although the offer meant leaving Sydney for Melbourne, it was too good to refuse. Andree's enthusiasm motivated the staff, the dresses were ready on time and the show proved to be a great success in all the capital cities.

In 1935 Andree decided to launch her own business. ANDREE DE PARIS operated for two decades until 1956 as an exclusive, made-to-measure only, fashion house located on the ninth floor of Albany Court, Collins Street, Melbourne. Asked when she had retired, Andree said "I didn't!" After closing the salon she continued to work for a few clients. There was no need to spend on advertising, for once a lady had become a customer, the rest of the family inevitably followed. Andree made dresses for several governors' wives, from Lady Dugan in the early days to Lady Murray in 1984. She also counted among her clientele the Essington Lewis, Churnside and Nicholas (of Aspro fame) families, Hephzibah Menuhin and Susan Peacock.

When in June 1940 General de Gaulle appealed to the French not to surrender but to start resistance abroad, Andree heard the call on her own radio receiver and was deeply moved. She joined the France Libre (Free French) committee set up by Andre Brenac (see Chapter Fourteen) and presided in Victoria by wool-buyer Jean Legrand.

After the war, the France-Libre associations became the Association Franco-Australienne and Andree was elected vice-presiden of the Victorian association. She is also the co-founder and Victorian president of the Société d'entraide francaise. Aged 89 and still fit she remembers clearly the 682 French people in need of support that the Societe has assisted in the last 20 years.

7 - THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Moving from "made-to-measure" to prêt-à-porter, Maglia, which employs about 100 people in its Melbourne suburban plant in Collingwood, appears to have the largest workforce of all French Australian firms.

Silvain and Claire Attali arrived from France in 1952. Back home Silvain had studied law and economics. One of his cousins, Jacques Attali, is one of the country's leading economists and an adviser and close aide of President François Mitterrand. "Maglia of Melbourne" was founded by the Attalis in 1954, and right from the start they decided on a well-defined range of products with the aim of becoming a leader in the chosen specialist field.

Thirty-two years later that goal has largely been achieved. The company manufactures sportswear, bathing suits in particular, mostly designed by Claire Attali who visits France each year in order to keep up with new trends. There is probably not a single clothing shop in the whole of Australia, whether large or small, whose owners or managers are unaware of the existence of Maglia.

In Adelaide, another couple, Colette and Olivier Foubert started up a business venture in 1973 based on the design, manufacture and wholesale distribution of Ladies' fashions. From 1974 to 1976 they prospected interstate markets and concluded their best chances of success lay in concentrating on areas shrugged aside by many other manufacturers - cocktail and evening wear at first, bridal gowns soon after.

They use much French material, tulle in particular, and Colette, the company designer, reports steady growth over the past few years which she believes has given the firm a 10 per cent share of the Australian manufacture of bridal wear.

Excluding sub-contractors, the company's fulltime staff totalled 19 people late 1986, including the two Foubert parents and three sons, Xavier in production, Eric in business administration and Herve, who had just started. Their comment: "This special family characteristic of our enterprise makes its strength. We

have already proven our ability to take our share of the local market in an extremely competitive field, despite a complete lack of funds at the start and tight finance due to a constant and rapid growth in sales figures ... we are extremely confident in having the same ability to penetrate overseas markets."

Fouberts now have a controlling interest in three other companies involved in fashion retail, wholesale and fabric imports. French is the usual working language in both their factory and offices.

In Sydney, Philippe Auriat, who arrived in Australia in 1982 aged 29, created the label Plein-Air, and in July 1985 his first fashion parade at the Stables Theatre in Kings Cross was written up by the Sydney Morning Herald.

NOW TO BUSINESS

There is no doubt that it was the first two international exhibitions ever held in Australia, in Sydney in 1879-80 and in Melbourne in 1880-81, which suddenly attracted a large number of French businessmen (businesswomen had not at that stage been heard of), perhaps up to several hundred, to this country.

One of those responsible for this surge of interest was Richard Twopeny, who we might describe as an "honorary French Australian", although he was in fact neither. English-born and partly French-educated, Twopeny was known as a man of wit and great resources. He settled in South Australia at the age of 19 and dedicated much of his working life to international exhibitions, Paris in 1878 and then the two Australian exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne. For some time he associated himself with Jules Joubert, mentioned in Chapter Six, in running exhibitions privately, and had been awarded the French title of Officier d'Académie. Twopeny was often to be seen on centre-stage as a wine judge, but above all he was a remarkable judge of Australian society, which he described in his 1883 book "Town Life in Australia".

The picture he left of late 19th century urban Australia is that of a highly prosperous society and one in the process of self-discovery, demanding the best from overseas

while being reluctant to sacrifice its own mores and tastes. In such a society, it was to be expected that European business would attempt to carve out a market and this required the presence here of a merchant class. Twopeny reported in about 1880 that "the French and Germans are both making strenuous efforts to establish a market here, and the Germans especially are succeeding". The Germans of course were far more prolific in this country than the French, prompting Comettant to remark in 1889:"the Germans who will soon be as numerous as the rabbits that the Australians are so anxious to get rid of".

But while the Germans may have easily surpassed the French in the number of migrants and quantity of exports, the size of the French contribution was nevertheless substantial. In 1887 for example, the Germans in population terms outnumbered the French by eight to one (39,000 people against 5,000), but German exports to Australia were not even double those of the French (£640,000 against £380,000).

It was a Golden Age of opportunity and expansion for the new class of French migrant "merchants" that was to last until the economic depression of 1893 which hit Melbourne more severely than Sydney. The business people involved in the sale of French goods were joined by brokers who bought Australian wool and skins. Together they formed "French Clubs" patterned on those in Britain, places to sit, eat, play billiards and meet other gentlemen (never ladies!) over a drink or two, establishments totally different from the cultural and ethnic associations which exist today.

Comettant in his book describes the Melbourne club in Flinders Street, whose real name was the French Society of Victoria. It was a three-storey affair, with a large dining-room, a second room with bar and two billiard tables set on the ground floor. The first floor was comprised of a reading room, a music room complete with piano, a library and washrooms, and private accomodation was available on the second floor. To Comettant and to other official judges of the 1888 Centennial Exhibition, the French Club was "the house that enabled me to live in Australia almost as though I had never left home". Founded only four years earlier, the club in

1888 had 500 full members and 150 honorary members, the latter described as "Australian friends of the French". A Monsieur Cayrou was the president, Sylla Enis was the vice-president, Victor Denis (already named) the treasurer and M. Luchal the secretary. The society had set up a relief fund for needy French people but requests apparently were extremely rare.

Other French businessmen in Australia mentioned by Comettant include Monsieur Phalempin, director of the bank, Comptoir National d'Escompte, and "one of the most respected members of the French colony", and Monsieur and Madame Prunier who lived in a "very nice house in St. Kilda". Prunier was an importer of spirits who sold a sweet brandy called "Salvation Army Cognac" because "the more you drink of it, the closer you are to heaven".

But Comettant reserves his highest praise for French-born Melbourne businessman Georges Burk, credited as responsible for the resounding success of the 82 French exhibitors at the 1880 Exhibition. The French had obtained 120 awards there, and many of the proud exhibitors had later entrusted representation of their companies to Burk. Among them were Le Creusot (metallurgy), Baccarat (crystal), Christofle (jewellery and silverware) and Haviland (china). Burk formed a partnership with another Frenchman, Francart, and the pair in their first year ran up sales of £60,000, accounting for about one-seventh of total imports from France to all the Australian colonies.

Sydney also had a French club, and in 1889 the president was a J. J. Lacuauhme, with the vice-presidents listed as C. Van de Velde and Henri Kowalski, a musician. (see Chapter Eleven) Sydney had a smaller population and less wealth than Melbourne in the period spanning 1860 to 1895, yet there appears to have been more French migration to New South Wales than to Victoria once the attraction of the gold rush had died down. In 1887, there were 1,500 French people in N.S.W. against 1,300 in Victoria. As regards the business community, the trend became even stronger in the 1890s and remains so today. French business people visiting Australia stop over without fail in Sydney and often in Canberra, but rarely go to the other state capitals.

The 1890s also saw the birth in Sydney of the French Chamber of Commerce as well as that of the Courrier Australien, which stated in its first issue in 1892 that it aimed to "speak for all those (French) persons who have made Australia their new homeland" (see Chapter Nine).

The Courrier from the very start began to carry French business advertisements which bear testimony to the wide range of areas in which these firms operated. To name but a few:

- Maurice Segur, importateur de Byrrh (listed several times as a member of the Chamber of Commerce committee),
- Doublet et Compagnie of 165 Clarence St, who were general importers of French products including books of which they offered "to import each month from Paris the latest in French publications",
- Jacques Albert of 108 King St, luthiers et marchands de musique,
- Louis Gille, who offered "articles of religion and church decoration",

And there were also hotels and restaurants, detailed in Chapter Ten, as well as music lessons, mentioned in Chapter Eleven.

In the 20th century the French business community has maintained both its presence and its viability. But in comparison with the boom days of the 1880s and 1890s, a larger proportion of the importing trade has reverted into the hands of major French companies. Preferring direct control to local representatives, such companies now send trusted managers from France for stints of a few years in Australia, who then move on to other parts of the world. These temporary residents do not come within the general scope of this book.

This recent change in attitudes is perhaps the result of the general concentration of industry taking place in the western industrialised world. But in the case of the French, it may possibly have been reinforced by feelings of mutual distrust. French-based companies, more so than others, often apparently lack confidence in the self-employed representative or agent, particularly with respect to financial commitments. Conversely, many an agent for French firms has slowly lost faith in the "principal", or

French producer and supplier, upon finding that the principal is also doing direct business with customers in the agent's territory.

But some French Australians DO act as agents for French products, such as Michel-Henri Carriol whose company "Trimex" imports a wide variety of goods, ranging from mineral waters to foie gras, cosmetics and Christian Dior. With sales offices in all states, Trimex appears to be the largest "independent" French Australian importer in the country. While some readers may believe the import and sale of French products is not a real service to Australia and might even put Australians out of work, we beg to differ. Firstly there is a demand for most of these goods, for which there are no locally-made substitutes. Secondly, if they were not directly imported by French firms, they would be shipped through British companies, as was the case some 30 or 40 years ago, which import only goods not in competition with their own, while selling others at a much higher price, and thus maintaining the image of French-made products as being synonmous with luxury.

7-7 LET'S DO IT .... BUT A LITTLE BETTER

While commerce may no longer be a challenge to French Australian entrepreneurs, they have, in the last three or four decades, shown their ability to find a wide range of viable substitutes. Along with people such as the Attalis or Fouberts, the following have also made a mark on the Australian business scene.

The Cassegrain "empire"

Gerard Cassegrain uses a letterhead printed with the words "G. CASSEGRAIN (FROG)", a nickname ascribed to most of us at one time or another.

Yet the name of Cassegrain must be sufficiently well-known by now in the Port Macquarie-Hastings district (described by the local pamphlet as "the fastest growing area in N.S.W.'s fastest growing region") to dispense with the batrachian qualifier.

Born in 1923 in the French city of Orleans, Gerard trained as a motor mechanic in the 1940s then went to work on a farm. The alternative at the time was Service du Travail Obligatoire (forced labour) in Nazi Germany. He was probably no stranger to

farmwork since his father had operated one of the world's largest rose farms, which went bankrupt during the Depression.

Gerard Cassegrain, his wife Françoise and their three young children migrated to Australia in 1951. They stayed in Sydney a little over a year then moved to Port Macquarie, where Gerard found work in a plywood mill. In 1955 he became a logging contractor, a job which must have given him some idea about the type of business lacking in the region, because in December 1964 he opened Expressway Spares in a shed near Wauchope on the Pacific Highway. In the meantime three more children had been born to the couple.

His judgement proved correct, and with the help of great vision and hard work the enterprise began to show rapid growth. Extensions were built on the original shed in 1966, again in 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1980, 1984 and 1985. On a plan, the initial premises seem minute and mingy, given that Expressway Spares now occupy 7,000 square metres and employ a staff of 30. Cassegrain mails out over 5,000 copies of their Stock and Equipment List each month, demonstrating that the market has extended well beyond the region. To quote the local pamphlet, where Cassegrain is one of seven establishments of which the Port Macquarie-Hastings district is proud; "Expressways is one of the largest non-affiliated spare parts organisations in the whole of Australia, selling new and reconditioned parts for earthmoving and construction ... overseas markets ... maintenance repair and service section ... sell complete units".

In recent years, Expressway Spares has become "a member of the Cassegrain group of companies". The group's other main company, it seems, is Cassegrain Vineyards, headed by John, Australian-born son of Gerard and Françoise. (see Chapter Ten) The Cassegrain group also sells small farming estates to urban-dwellers preparing for retirement under a venture known as Clos Farming Estates. And how the group is moving into rose-growing, although not yet on the same scale as their forebears in France.

Through the chain of enterprises runs a strong family bond. In a "twentieth anniversary message", in 1984, Gerard Cassegrain says he feels "proud of the staff ... and I am truly proud of my

family, all of whom work with me in our business and who have stood by me through those early difficult years".

Engineering

Eugene Dominique Nicolle arrived in Australia in 1853 with both French and English engineering experience, including work in the design of the London Crystal Palace. In Australia he soon turned to the problem of refrigeration, an area in which he broke new ground and left a major legacy.

Early in 1863, the Sydney Ice Company announced the availability of a new product - ice, in seven-pound blocks, manufactured by an apparatus invented by Nicolle. The process was based on liquifying ammonia, and two years later Nicolle is listed as part-owner and manager of the Sydney Ice Works, working in association with pastoralist Morris and famous businessman of the times Thomas Mort, best remembered in Sydney by "Mort's Docks".

With the financial support of his partners, Nicolle then embarked on a long, tough and frustrating quest to find a means of freezing meat on shore and preserving it on board ships so as to sell Australian frozen meats to overseas markets. By 1868, Nicolle had failed to find a solution and quarrels between the partners had become increasingly acrimonious. It was left to another French engineer, Charles Tellier, who was not an Australian resident though he spent some time here as well as in Argentina, to finally see through the first-ever refrigerated cargo shipments, in 1875. Nicolle's cooling systems, however, were to be widely adopted.

Engineering

To begin with, Western Australia. Roger Abonnel migrated from Lyons in 1952, where he had been a toolmaker, and soon found similar work in Melbourne. There he met Anne Com,

also a French migrant, but from Brittany. The couple married and have had two children. After a few years spent in Melbourne with various jobs, Roger and Anne, like many native-born Australians, decided to heed the call to "Go West".

By 1966 Roger had set up his own company, Abonnel Precision Engineering, which now employs a staff of around 10 to produce "prototype tools" (their description) for different industries and to carry out the maintenance of mining equipment for the north-western mining industry, said to be the backbone of the nation.

A great number of French migrants filling in their first job application forms here a few decades ago were caught unawares by questions on "hobbies, sports etc", unable to grasp the connection with the job offer. (Many, years later, were to realise that had they penned in "golf" as a sport, their prospects of advancement would have been far better than those of, say, domino players). Well Roger needed no prompting to embark on hobbying. In a state where sailing, by the boss of a company, can quadruple the company's sales of beer, Roger adopted lawn bowls, a sport completely foreign to a Frenchman, and has become the first player in his club to achieve success in all four club championships.

In Victoria at least two manufacturing and engineering firms were founded and operated by French Australians. Before becoming a successful industrialist, Fernand Jardel, who has French and Australian engineering qualifications, established something of a record - the highest number of migrations to Australia we came across, three in all! It is not uncommon for migrants, dissatisfied with their stay, to return home and then decide that Australia was better after all, and migrate once again. Jardel went through it all once more, each time by sea and with his wife Patricia and four children.

Jardel's first contact with Australia was on his way to the Antarctic, where he remained as Chief Engineer of the French Antarctic expedition from late 1956 to early 1958, fourteen months spent in the cold. He was the Base Officer in charge when Dr. Philip Law, head of the Australian Antarctic team, paid the French a first official visit. This led to his being offered a

post with the Australians, and brought about the first family move to Australia.

The various grounds for moving back and forth were difficult to fathom, but the third and so far last of them took place in February 1966.

At that stage, Jardel had patents and designs for special types of filing equipment. He found partners here with capital and a manufacturing plant was set up. The venture was fairly successful commercially, but the partnership cracked. The Jardels lost the rights to their own registered patents and were left, once again, out in the cold.

So they started all over again. Fernand by then was 53 and had to design new products. Fifteen years later he runs a company called Planex, which makes micrographic filing equipment for drawing (architects, town planners, etc.) and general offices, while Patricia runs a sister company, Rodia, that produces the plastic accessories to fit into the metal products of Planex. They share premises in a 4,500 square metre factory and employ 30 people. Planex has some 2,000 customers, mainly in Australia, but with an export market stretching as far as China and Hong Kong.

Also in the Melbourne area is the Melbourne Saw Manufacturing Company. For Raymond Ballot, making saw blades was a family tradition. His parents produced band saws in the Lyons region, and he had learnt all the "trade secrets" before landing in Australia in February 1952.

A few months later, in July that year, Ballot started the Melbourne Saw Company in the northern suburb of Thomastown. It now employs 26 people and has manufactured 300 different models of circular saws, not only to cut through timber but also through plastics and metals.

When Raymond started, there were a few manufacturers in Sydney and Melbourne, but most were involved in the finishing of blades imported from England or the U.S.A. He says the situation is largely unchanged. While dozens of firms are listed in the Yellow Pages in each state, the majority are servicing firms, including a few which also import blades. Ballot's firm,

however, is the only one in Australia to produce circular saws from A to Z, beginning with the appropriate steel.

But for the Melbourne Saw Manufacturing Company, Australia would be completely reliant on imports which, Ballot contends, are originally manufactured for countries with different conditions. Raymond Ballot instead has surveyed local conditions relentlessly, following up changes over the years to continually improve his finished product.

Now to New South Wales. Owned and operated by Daniel Beltran, a native of the Vosges in eastern France, the Imatco Aluminium Company started up in 1980 in Glenbrook, Blue Mountains. Unlike the previous industrialist , Beltran arrived without a trade, having worked in France as a sales representative. After his arrival here in 1968, he worked as a cook and a cleaner before obtaining a job in a B.H.P. foundry. This was where he first learnt about the making of aluminium products.

After further training, he founded Danville Aluminium in 1972 and then sold the firm. His current company Imatco has a staff of 24 and is specialised in the production of aluminium structures such as windows, doors, frames, etc. It deals principally with government departments and has contracts in other states and in the Northern Territory, making an annual turnover of $3 million.

SUCCESS (OR OTHERWISE)

But not all business ventures are successful and undoubtedly some French migrants have fared badly. We met one such person, Roger Garin-Michaud, on the eve of his departure, with his wife and young son, back to France.

Another native of Lyons , with a background in banking and finance, he settled in Darwin where he had a brother and decided to set up a business the city did not as yet have. It was to be an International Bookshop offering a vast range of adult and children's books in five different languages, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and German. It took him five months to build up the stock, a range considerably greater than that of

any other foreign language bookshop in Australia. By April 1984 the shelves were stacked and Roger embarked on a $10,000 publicity campaign on Territory radio and television, with short frequent commercials in the five languages announcing the Jape Plaza international bookstore. The response was disappointing. There were foreigners in Darwin but only a small minority were interested in buying books. Furthermore, some authors and titles sold well but since his policy had been to carry a wide range, he was soon out of stock of a few best-sellers and left with thousands of unsaleable titles. Eight months later he decided to move to one of the larger southern cities to seek sounder business. In a small shop in Melbourne's Prahran market sales picked up, but it was nevertheless an extremely disenchanted family whom we met. Their only comfort lay in the fact that despite huge financial losses, aggravated by the Australian devaluation of almost 50 per cent since 1984 against West European currencies, they still had enough money left to pay for their return fares home.

Moving to the other end of the spectrum, which French Australian might be rated the highest achiever in terms of financial success and business acuity? Only one name stands out - that of Emmanuel Margolin.

Melbourne residents of the 1950s will remember the endless advertisements in the motor market columns for "Emmanuel Car Sales", featuring the same small photo of the same smiling face. That was Margolin. This pioneer stab at a personalised sales approach apparently hit the buying public in exactly the right place, with Emmanuel selling some 900 cars each week. Then in 1961 he decided to sell his used and new car business, leaving Melbourne and putting his money and energy into real estate, property development and the like, concentrating on boom state Queensland.

Margolin undoubtedly made more than a few million, but decided to channel vast quantities of his fortune into what many might label a "folly", a dream-home of unparalleled dimension and baroque inspiration which Keith Dunstan, in a Melbourne Sun article of 1983, described as "Australia's most amazing house".

Australia's "Xanadu" stands about 40 kilometres west of Sydney at Mulgoa and is christened Notre Dame "because the cathedral in Paris is a building of timeless beauty", Margolin told Dunstan. The buildings alone cover some 14,000 square metres, more than 120 times the area of an average comfortable home, and were constructed to survive a span of 1,000 years. At the time the article was written, Emmanuel lived in the yet unfinished palace with wife Cecile and son Paul. Because they enjoyed riding, there was a stable of 70 horses, but also a wild-life park teeming with hundreds of deer, kangaroos and emus, a swimming pool, tennis court and pavillion, squash court, billiard room, artificial lakes and Buddhist temple. To come were a helipad, aviary and pond to accomodate 1,000 multi-coloured Japanese carp.

Margolin's seven-bedroom, eleven-bathroom home, complete with extensive servants' quarters, has been fitted and furnished in a style in keeping with the exterior grandeur. Not only do the waterfalls and fountains outside recall the extravagance of the Chateau de Versailles built by France "Sun King" Louis XIV, but the antique tapestries and furniture point to a marked taste for the refinement of 17th century France.

Notre Dame is open to visitors on Sundays, with tours organised from Sydney. So for anyone unable to afford the trip to Versailles ...

CHAPTER ~~EIGHT~~

FRENCH LANGUAGE TORCHBEARERS

8- [illegible] TEACHERS OF FRENCH?

In 1788, when British White Australia saw the light of day, French was considered through most of Europe to be THE universal language. To the upper classes of England, Prussia, Scandinavia, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the learning of French was an integral part of education.

In the most affluent families French tutors and governesses were therefore part and parcel of the household. No wonder then that the MacArthurs, Australia's first wealthy and established family, engaged a French tutor, Gabriel Huon de Kerillau, an emigre officer and a Huguenot who was one of the first French migrants to this country.

It was not until the 1860s, however, that the private schools, which were then mushrooming, began to offer the teaching of French to Australia's budding "elite". From the 1870s, directories in the major cities started to carry lists of "Teachers: Languages", which included a few French names, and by the mid 1880s advertising for French lessons had become increasingly abundant. In the Melbourne press of the time, a "Professeur Meunier, from the Universite de France"(a curious institutional reference, given there was no such establishment) advertises almost as often as do sellers of miracle cures. But this book is only concerned with real French people who taught French, a description not applicable to all who made a living from teaching the language, many of them incapable of couching their advertising copy in correct French.

When the Courrier Australien started up in Sydney in 1892, it immediately issued "strong advice to take lessons only from native teachers", proving there were indeed some such people about. Even in such remote places as Launceston, a French teacher by the

name of Raoul Senac was said in 1903 to have been named Officier d'Académie, a distinction only bestowed upon teachers with many years of practice and a good record of achievement.

In Victoria, the history of French teachers can be traced not only through advertisements in the press but also through research carried out for a recent Ph.D thesis by Marjorie Theobald of Monash University on Ladies' Colleges. Theobald says the first French teaching family was that of Julie (nee Mathieu) and Lewis Vieusseux, who started their "Ladies College" in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, in 1857. There was a strong emphasis on French, Music and Fine Arts, and by 1882 some 9,000 girls had passed through the school.

In 1867, another ladies' college, which advertised that "French will be the language of the school", was opened in Victoria Parade by a "Monsieur et Madame Hertog".

As for the St Kilda Ladies College, it soon became known as "Madame Permezel's College". A Permezel around 1858 had emigrated from the Dauphiné, a south-eastern region of France, and many descendants of that name still reside in Australia today. The college traded heavily on its "Frenchness" and became "the" college for the top families of the turn of the century.

Julie and Nelie Pignolet ran a much smaller school called L'Avenir Ladies College at around the same time. It was originally aimed at educating the daughters of French wool-buyers but appeared to have continued to take in "anglophone" pupils until the outbreak of World War One.

The Liet couple, Augustin and Augustine, migrated in the 1870s from the Charente region. Augustin was principally a businessman but the couple also were listed as language teachers in directories of the time and ran advertisements for French lessons in the Melbourne press. A Liet memorial Prize for French has become a feature at the University of Melbourne. Colette Reddin possesses a collection of Liet souvenirs, including a photograph of their Brighton home called "Charente"- which they had "made into a centre for French culture ... held soirées musicales et dramatiques".

The best-known teaching venture in Melbourne, however, was that of Madame Mouchette. Berthe Mouchette was a painter of some talent who seems to have developed an enthusiasm for Australia at a geographical conference in Paris in 1881. She sailed here the same year along with her husband, who found a position at the French consulate in Melbourne, and her sister Marie Lyon. She at first conducted drawing lessons, a venture which proved quite successful. But in 1885, after her husband's death, Berthe and her sister decided to buy "Oberwyl", a small private school in St Kilda (the building still stands but perhaps not for much longer) which they turned into the nearest possible approximation of a French school.

Four years after its inception, Oscar Comettant visited Oberwyl which, he wrote "brings up girls from the best families, not only from Victoria, but from the whole of Australia, ... more than a hundred pupils and 27 teachers, both French and English". He notes there was a "class of little girls conducted entirely in French". Madame Mouchette, whom he describes as being "the epitome of the accomplished Parisian, gracious, pleasant, unaffected and most distinguished", told him that "through my infant class, where the children are aged from five to eight, I hope to teach the whole new generation to speak fluent French, in a country where our great writers are scarcely known, even by name".

Berthe and her sister Marie went to live in Adelaide after 1892, where Marie, under the nom-de-plume of Noel Amir, was to write fiction and have three books published. Oberwyl continued for many more years, with Mouchette's aim, of spreading the knowledge of French literature and giving students more fluency in French, attained to some extent within the social elite of the period.

Sydney's best remembered French teacher of French would undoubtedly be Augustine Soubeiran, who by the end of last century and well into this one came to be known simply as Mademoiselle.

Born in France in 1858, she can first be traced as a private teacher of French in Woollahra in 1884. One of her friends was Louise Gurney, who opened her own school in 1887. Soubeiran joined its staff as a French teacher and in 1891, when the school was named Kambala, became co-principal. Her language lessons appear

to have been a source of inspiration to many students, but her greatest impact stemmed from the role she played during World War One. More than anyone else in Sydney, she made the Australian public aware of the plight of her countrymen and women, raising £ 100,000 in aid that was distributed in France in 1917. She died in Sydney in 1933, and a tribute in the Kambala school magazine said of her : "She performed an equally great service to the Australians, for she showed them a living example of fine French womanhood".

The Roman Catholic orders, especially those of French origin, also played a leading role in the teaching of the language. The first Marist Fathers and Marist Brothers were mentioned in the chapter on Hunters Hill, where one of their schools stands to this day. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and early into the twentieth, a considerable number of nuns and monks left France due to increasing pressure for secularisation, or the separation between church and state, under the government of Emile Combes, himself a doctor in theology and former Roman Catholic priest.

Sister Clare Percy Dove, in "Brynmawr, the High Hill, the Story of the Sacre Coeur, Glen Iris", 1976, wrote: "As one glances back over the years, certain events stand out ... perhaps the most remarkable of all was the coming of the French nuns in the early years of the century". They brought with them, she said, "standards of exquisite taste... an aura of cultural refinement", teaching French language and culture, needlework and embroidery.

Alec Sourdin, one the persons interviewed for this book, said he had noticed many years ago that students of the Sacre Coeur college in Rose Bay had a handwriting that could only have been taught by a native French person. He later discovered that the Sister teaching writing had indeed been French. And there is no doubt that not only the French sisters and monks who came here for religious reasons, but also those who joined French teaching orders such as the Marists and Notre Dame de Sion, made a substantial contribution to the teaching of the language as a school subject. In more recent years, the Catholic school system has tended to "phase out" the teaching of French in favour of Italian, with the exception of upper-class colleges

During the period when French was considered to be a more or less "elitist" school subject, a vestige of colonial times, the socially prestigious colleges made a point of employing native French speakers when possible, to enable their students to acquire a polished accent and achieve higher than average academic results. High results were indeed obtained in the poetry and conversation exams conducted by the Alliance Française. But as far as general academic achievement is concerned, a brief survey of those Australians who have attained the highest level of spoken and written French, in particular those who went on to teach the language in universities, would tend to show that the state school system, especially in New South Wales, produced the best results.

In recent years also, an increasing number of native French speakers have joined the state school system. Or rather, the different state Education Departments have displayed a growing willingness to employ such people since the 1960s. Most of these teachers come here as the spouse of an Australian national. They often have a French degree and on arrival work to obtain Australian qualifications, such as a Diploma of Education, while giving private lessons, working for the Alliance Française, waitressing or driving cabs.

There are no statistics available on teachers showing their national origins, but general consensus put the number of native French teachers in Australia in 1987 at between 100 and 130. The general view is also that the offspring of French Australian teachers rarely follow in their professional footsteps, unlike the children of other "francophone" groups such as Mauritians or Middle-Easterners. Several of these teachers were interviewed for this book, but their number was too high and their individual histories too similar to recount. So we end this section with an apology.

FRENCHMEN/WOMEN AT UNIVERSITIES

Universities from the start showed a greater inclination than high schools to employ real French academics ... on condition they could be found. Until the severe financial restrictions placed on universities in recent years, which have compelled lecturers to hold on to their jobs, vacancies for language appointments were generally filled in the country of the language concerned. Many French lecturers were recruited with the assistance of a French

government agency established precisely to place French academics, or future academics, abroad. And many of the successful appointees stayed on. This marks a fundamental difference with the situation in the secondary system, where both private and public institutions were content to wait for the supply of native teachers from the ranks of the migrants.

The University of Sydney pioneered the practice by appointing Anselme Ricard*in 1854, who stayed only a year in Australia. After him, Pierre Ambroise Dutruc was appointed reader in French in 1855, a post he held for 12 years. Before taking on the job, and after leaving it, Dutruc was a wine merchant but also a scholar and the author of "Dutruc's French Grammar", published in Scotland and highly appreciated both there and in London. In Sydney, his eduational "Comedies and Dramas" were published.

Sydney university discontinued the teaching of French and German between 1868 and 1881, which gave Melbourne a chance to catch up. When French classes were resumed in 1882, it was with an authentic Frenchman on the staff, Etienne Thibault. What was not as authentic was the doctorate he claimed. Margaret Kerr, in an unpublished thesis "The Teaching of French Literature at the University of Sydney 1887-1955" (to which we owe much of our information), notes that no doctoral thesis under the name of Thibault had been registered in France. This fact, together with a letter to N.S.W. Premier Henry Parkes soliciting an appointment to the State Library to replace his late friend and compatriot Marin La Meslee, "so that I could support Marin's three orphaned children", led to Thibault being relieved of his post in 1884.

Another Frenchman took over, A.V.A. Bulteau, lecturer in charge from 1885, and later an assistant under Mungo MacCallum (the first of the name in a family where the oldest son is invariably named Mungo). Bulteau's family came from Roubaix, the home of many wool-buyers., and descendants reside in Sydney, where Margaret Kerr interviewed his grandson, Dr Volney Bulteau. He was remembered as stern and pedantic, an enthusiast of Moliere and Hugo.

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* Despite his French name he may also have been German. He held a German doctorate and had written books in both French and German.

After leaving his university job in 1890, Bulteau taught in various Sydney schools until his tragic death by drowning at the age of 53. Bulteau generally travelled home on the Milson's Ferry, correcting his students' work during the trips. But on that last fatal day, a gust of wind blew some of his papers into the water, Bulteau tried to catch them up, and fell overboard in the process.

For many years after 1890 the teaching staff of the Sydney University French department was either British or Australian. Professor Nicholson was Australian-educated but spoke French at home with his Swiss "francophone" wife.But from 1922 onwards at least one member of the staff was a native speaker, Robert Andraud at first, then C.H. Barbier, followed by many more. Considering that until 1955 the staff comprised three to four people, at time five, this shows the unversity's concern to expose students to modern-day, genuine French. In fact many academics who studied French at Sydney university never fail to astonish native French speakers by their fluency and accent, or rather lack of it - people such as Ross Chambers or Wallace Kirsop, to name but two, who when asked what part of France they came from, would answer "Sydney"! Ross Steele, often interviewed on French radio or television, and Alan Chamberlain are two more Australian-born "French" academics whose books were published in France *

At the University of Melbourne the teaching of French began in 1881, but the first Frenchman to teach his native tongue and its literature was not appointed until 1902. His name was Maurice Carton, but his first appearance on the city scene, where he was listed in the 1891 Directory as a "teacher of drawing", was as Fernand Maurice. Even later, after resurrecting his long lost surname, he used it as a half, choosing as his "official" surname the hyphenated "Maurice-Carton".

Carton spent 18 years of his life at Melbourne university, not just as a lecturer but as head of the department, and more. To his students, who swelled from 11 in 1902 to 125 in his last year, 1920, he came to embody all things French, language, literature, character and patriotism. His influence rapidly spread beyond the university grounds, particularly through the various journals he published, detailed in Chapter Nine.

* and help teaching French pupils.

Carton was 70 years old when he left his university post, and not even retirement deterred him from teaching French. In 1931 at the age of 80 he was still working for the Correspondence School and giving lessons. A few of his last students are still about, remembering him as "a cheery and wonderful person." He died in 1934.

Carton received the French Légion d'Honneur from the hands of Sir John Monash, who was entitled to represent the President of the French Republic on such an occasion as he was himself the holder of the highest rank in the Légion d'Honneur. Monash, who was Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, pronounced the traditional investiture in French.

For the use of secondary schools, Carton wrote several books, all in French but using a simplified vocabulary and style. One was a brief history of France, another was an anthology of selected texts from the 17th to the 19th century, with commentaries.

Carton before retiring had struggled to convince the university authorities to name another Frenchman as his successor. The battle at first appeared to have been in vain, as he was followed by A.R. Chisholm. But Chisholm soon was to be seconded by a lecturer who was as French as one could possibly be, despite his Armenian name, Nazar Karagheusian. Born in Paris in 1898 of Armenian descent, "Kara", as he was generally known, emigrated to Australia in the early 1920s. He first tried his hand at business, only to prove that there are exceptions to the common belief that Armenians are the best businessmen on earth.

In March 1923, "Kara" was appointed a lecturer in French, and a senior lecturer in 1928. Apart from the World War Two years, when he served with the Australian Forces in the Middle East and in New Guinea , he stayed with the French department for over 30 years.

Many of "Kara"'s former students have vivid memories of his lively teaching to this day. Onetime colleague Stan Scott writes that "Kara" will best be remembered as "one of the great raconteurs, filling a room with his personality, telling endless stories ... with an infectious sense of fun that turned many a chance encounter into a gala occasion".

From the 1960s, the staff of French departments increased dramatically before being cut back slightly from 1983 onwards. The university of Sydney, which in 1954 boasted a teaching staff of four, later had 20 to 21 members on staff, although not all were fulltime employees. Given that French was also being taught in two other universities in the Sydney metropolitan area, there was thus an around tenfold increase in French academic staff in that city in two decades.

Simultaneously, the number of French nationals involved in tertiary teaching has also grown at so fast a pace that we can mention but a very few of them here. Not only phonetics but a wide range of literary and cultural subjects have been entrusted, with success, to both imported and immigrant French academics. Many former French students will remember Antoine Denat, who taught in four different universities in three states (New England, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne) before retiring in Melbourne, where he died in 1976. Born in the southern town of Castres, his accent méridional was a constant delight to colleagues and (sometimes) to students. His focus was mainly on contemporary poetry, theatre and research into new literary fields of expression and form, such as the nouveau roman. He wrote several volumes of essays and poetry, some published in Australia, others in France.

At Melbourne university, Micheline Giroux must have lectured to more students than anybody else still at work today. She joined the staff in 1960 for a two-year appointment, was asked to stay, and remains there to this day. Her name is sure to elicit a smile from any former student, whether it be for her lively classes or numerous stage performances.

The foundation professor of French at Monash university was French scholar Roger Laufer. Was his appointment meant to create a tradition? He was succeeded by Ivan Barko (he is considered to be French but because of his birthplace was "claimed" by Egon Kunz in "The Hungarians in Australia"), and later by Jean Garagnon, an expert on 18th century literature who has since returned to a university in France.

Brisbane university's French department for a long time was graced by the quiet erudition of Marcel Chicoteau. Since 1975, it has had Jean-Michel Raynaud, who made a name

for himself in France when he discovered a collection of documents on Voltaire in the legal archives of a Paris notary F. Arouet, which was Voltaire's real surname, and had them published under the title Voltaire soi-disant. The same department now has 'acquired' one of France's top linguists, Jacques Montredon, author of language courses and grammar books.

In Adelaide, James Cornell, who held the chair of French for a great many years before retiring in 1969, said .. the first authentically French national to be appointed there was Maurice Valet, in 1951. He was succeeded as a lecturer by Henri Souillac, who resigned in the mid 1960s to become France's first Conseiller Culturel in Canberra. When Souillac ended his diplomatic career, he returned to live in Sydney with his Australian-born wife. Adelaide's French department in the meantime was joined by other French staff, Nicole Garçon, who has taught there for over 20 years, Andree David and Blandine Stefenson nee Villette, who were also still on the staff in 1986.

These days, the only French-born Frenchman to hold a chair of French in the country is the University of New South Wales' Jean Chaussivert. Born in Paris, he studied there until he was called up to do his military service in Algeria. He has sad memories of that period of his life, a long 28 months, a war without cause where defeat was at hand from the start, and an experience which influenced his decision to emigrate. Chaussivert met his New Zealand-born wife in Scotland, where he was a "French assistant , and eventually obtained a post with the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, from 1964 to 1972. It was in 1973 that he transferred to the University of New South Wales.

Chaussivert's original field of expertise was nineteenth century literature, particularly the poet Verlaine. More recently, he has taken rising interest in Franco-Australian documentation and history, finding a wealth of French manuscripts in Australia's state and national libraries to study and report on. Sydney's Pasteur Institute of 1888 to 1892, for example, has been the subject of more than 100 documents or articles, he said. (see Chapter Eleven).

Several of Chaussivert's staff share that interest, in particular compatriot Anne-Marie Nisbett, author of a book on New Caledonian literature and of another on female characters in North African literature. She was a founder in 1985, and first director, of the French-Australian Research Centre, which in a few months of 1986 planned a seminar of 200 participants on Laperouse, a course on the "French-Australian cultural connection", a poetry prize, exchanges with France and New Caledonia and several publications.

Melbourne has also moved in the same direction with the foundation in 1986 of an Institute for the Study of French-Australian Relations, headed by Colin Nettelbeck, which publishes a journal entitled "Explorations". There is only one French person on the committee, Anouk Smetana, as representative of the Alliance Française.

These research centres, whose aims bear some relation to this book, constitute an exciting and encouraging development which would have been unthinkable only three or four years ago.

WHEN FRENCH BECAME A CAUSE CELEBRE

Why the title "French Language Torchbearers"? As said in the first chapter, the French language, after World War Two, was in great danger of losing its status as an international vehicle of communication.

William Bostock in his (Australian-published)"Francophonie" recalls that: "when the foundation of the United Nations Organisation was being undertaken in San Francisco (April-June 1945), only English, Spanish and Russian were proposed as working languages and French was admitted only after energetic protests and with a majority of only one .... since those times, and as a result of carefully planned, systematic and sustained efforts, French has made a dramatic comeback".

Australia, like the rest of the "non-francophone" world, was part of the strategic master-plan to revive the influence of the tongue, and that plan was instrumental in bringing to these shores a number

of people probably more deserving of the title of torchbearer than the teachers and lecturers of last century.

Since around 1960, the French Embassy in Canberra has had on its staff a Conseiller Culturel. His employees in turn numbered only one or two at first, but have since grown to a force of 12 in 1986, responsible for education, language teaching, science, research and technology information, exhibitions, cinema, television, ethnic radio and music.

Then, around 1970, the French government also decided to dispatch to each of the Australian states a Conseiller Pédagogique, a title which was later changed to Attaché Linguistique and which could best be interpreted as "deputy ambassador for the (French) language" The main role of these delegates is to offer counselling in the teaching of French in state schools, but they are also involved in many other aspects of language promotion.

There is a small network of French bi-national schools, one in Canberra with 400 pupils, two in Melbourne with 40 and one in Sydney with 80. There are also two colleges, one in Canberra, Narrabundah, one in Melbourne, St. Leonards, which prepare for the Baccalaureat International, simultaneously with the Year 12 (Australian) certificate, hitherto the HSC. * The French are alone in offering both primary and secondary schooling facilities overseas, a fact which often prompts diplomats or multinational executives to send their children through the French system rather than send them home to boarding schools.

And the Alliance Francaise, France's oldest established cultural organisation, has centres in 18 Australian towns and cities. Set up in France in 1884, it took the Alliance only six years to reach Australia. Berthe Mouchette, mentioned above, founded the Melbourne Alliance in 1890. After promptly increasing its dues from five shillings to one Pound (about $80 today), the Alliance for some time had an image of being more a status symbol than a cultural body. But this projection has now become a thing of the past, and the Alliance today organises frequent showings of French films, lectures and debates which are well-attended both by Australians speakers or learners of French, and by a few French residents. Classes are offered for all levels of students and are largely self-supporting through members' subscrip-

* Information from Liaison 87, a 72-page booklet obtained

tions, now much lower than they were last century. The French government appoints and maintains a directeur des cours in the main cities, but not through all the 18 centres.

All the appointees listed
- Services Culturels, 12
- Attachés Linguistiques, 6 or 7, aided by 30 to 40 "assistants each one attached to two or three schools
- Teachers in the French bi-national schools, 15 to 20
- Alliance Française directors, 5 or 6

are French graduates, some of whom spend only a few years here while others choose to stay or to return and settle.

Take the case of Brisbane's Alliance Francaise director Alain Duval. Born in Paris, he migrated to Australia in 1969 and studied at Melbourne Teachers College to become a secondary teacher. After moving to Queensland in 1973 with his wife Margaret, who he met in Melbourne, Alain began to teach and then joined the Alliance, a very small affair at the time. When after 1978 the post became a fulltime occupation, Alain Duval's success in recruiting vast numbers of students forced the Alliance to move to larger premises. It also opened its own Cine-Club, bookshop and video, with Duval no longer a transient but a settler at the helm of a thriving cultural business.

While most of the others mentioned above are only transients, their functions constitute a permanent aspect of French community presence in Australia, and are peculiar to the French, giving this cultural battle force of about 70, we believe, a definite place in our survey of the French in this country.

The Alliance Française centres, moreover, attract hundreds of eager learners and francophiles, as well as providing part-time employment for many French migrants with tertiary qualifications. Migrants often also seek work with private courses, where the latest trend is to offer conversation/lessons cum refreshments French-style, transforming the learning of the language into a form of entertainment.

But are all these "torchbearing" activities strong enough to maintain the place of the French language and culture as was intended when the worldwide campaign began back in the 1950s?

We believe the answer largely is in the affirmative. Enrolments in secondary and tertiary French classes showed a steady decline from around 1975 but have been picking up again in recent years. And the level of knowledge of the language, if not of literature, has improved substantially.

In the 1950s almost all Australians who attended secondary school learnt French, but very few were able to understand even the simplest phrase. Three decades later, a far greater number never learnt the language at school, but those who did were exposed to authentically French sounds and usage, and trained to a level where they can make themselves understood to native French speakers. Today's oral skills, indeed, in speaking and listening, hardly bear comparison with the standards of a quarter of a century ago.

In addition, up to a million Australians travel overseas each year since the introduction in 1971 of cheaper excursion fares. And many of these would-be travellers learn or improve their French before departure by enrolling in private courses, following radio classes or through self-teaching methods.

According to enquiries in 1985 in bookshops specialising in language, tourist and foreign books, more tourist guides to France were sold than to any other country and more self-teaching courses in French were sold than all other languages put together. As regards foreign language books, the Europa Bookshop in Adelaide, where there are fewer French than in any other state, but where descendants of German immigrants abound, said 50 per cent of their sales were books in German, 30 per cent were French while other European and Asian languages accounted for the remainder.

It therefore appears that French language and culture, as well as France as a touristic destination, are more popular than ever with the Australian public. This is further highlighted by the fact that the frequent anti-French appeals in this country are aimed at purchases of French goods, or sales to France of

certain products (uranium ore and recently even the use of French airlines), but so far have spared travel to France and the use of the French language, cuisine, etc.

And that is a state of play which will of course suit everyone. To almost every French person, commerce matters little, culture matters a lot and language matters most of all.

The only complaint French Australians have is that French has not yet been accepted as a "community language". Liaison 87, quoted earlier, says some 100,000 people in Australia use French daily in their homes, although only about a quarter of them are actually French. And that figure does not include the 7,000 teachers and 200,000 students learning the language! In "Multilingua Australia", author Michael Clyne says 64,856 people named French as their first language in the 1976 census. This would rank French as Australia's fifth most widely-spoken language other than English, well ahead of many officially "recognized" community languages today. So the "torchbearers" have yet another obstacle to overcome and another struggle to win.