

AN EMIGRANT, NOT A TRAVELLER: ADOLPHE PROSPER DUPREZ

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In February 1900 the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Town and Country Journal* carried accounts of the opening by the Minister for Works, E. W. O’Sullivan,¹ of a minor road in rural New South Wales, from Bowral in the Southern Highlands to the Wombeyan Caves. Even today the road is difficult, and marked on maps as ‘not suitable for caravans’.² In 1900 the *Herald* reporter considered it ‘an extraordinary viaduct’—‘it is questionable’, he wrote, ‘whether its equal is to be found anywhere except in some of the Balkan, Himalayan, and Pyreneean passes, and the roads over the American Rockies’.³ The opening ceremony took place beside a twenty-metre tunnel through which the road passed, cut into sandstone, and above which had been carved the inscription ‘A.D. 1899’. One of the guests joked that these must be the initials of ‘a gentleman who had done more to bring this new road into existence than anyone else’—‘Mr Adolf [sic] Duprez’. O’Sullivan took up the idea and, when cutting the ribbons and declaring the road open for traffic, also said that it should be known as the ‘Duprez-road [...] for ever and ever and ever’. Duprez was present among the sixty or so people who attended the ceremony but his reaction to the proposal was not recorded. However, the suggestion of the name was ‘shouted to the echo’, as not only had Duprez ‘worked in season and out of season in his advocacy of the road’, but, the *Herald* report said, ‘he is a resident in the district of upwards of 30 years’

¹ Edward William O’Sullivan—see Bruce E. Mansfield, ‘O’Sullivan, Edward William (1946–1910)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/osullivan-edward-william-7931/text13803>), accessed 22 August 2012.

² See descriptions at, for example, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wombeyan_Caves_Road and <http://www.greaterbluemountainsdrive.com.au/wombeyan.php>

³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1900.

standing, and has succeeded long ago in winning the esteem and approval of everyone there'.⁴

Little further was said of Duprez, although that he was of French origin was alluded to by O'Sullivan. It was noted also that he and the Government Architect who attended the ceremony were the only two men there who had sons serving in the Australian forces in the war then being prosecuted in South Africa. In Duprez's case it was his son, Arthur Offord Duprez, who had volunteered in the 1st New South Wales Mounted Rifles.⁵ The reference to his son would have helped identify Duprez further, but it was not necessary. His name was sufficient to lead to further information about this engaged local citizen.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries French language and culture occupied a privileged place in British society and that of its Empire. However, the France-born community in colonial Australia did not take advantage of this position to establish a strong French presence here. Rather, it has been said, 'French settlers did little to encourage group activities [...]. Their general indifference towards setting up a tight, well organised ethnic community made them almost invisible as a minority group'.⁶ Together with this purported indifference to community, the French were also said to be 'only travellers, and not emigrants'.⁷ That is, they did not settle permanently in

⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1900. See also *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 10 February 1900 and *Bowral Free Press*, 31 January 1900. The *Bowral Free Press* lists all those in the official party—among them representatives of the *Sydney Telegraph* and the *Southern Mail* as well as the *Herald* and the *Bowral* paper—and also as many of those who observed the ceremony as could be named.

⁵ See Australian War Memorial at www.awm.gov.au/research/people, National Archives of Australia, First Australian Imperial Forces personnel dossiers, Series B2455 (NAA/B2455), and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1930. The reference to Duprez's French background occurred in the speech given by O'Sullivan, and was reported in the *Bowral Free Press*, 31 January 1900.

⁶ Ivan Barko, 'French' (2008), at www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/french. Also Anny Stuer, 'French', in James Jupp, ed., *The Australian People*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 359, 358. This reflects an earlier view that the French 'have made themselves so little felt' in Australia that they 'are apt to be overlooked as factors in the progress of development'—see Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1927, p. 109.

⁷ Anny P. L. Stuer, *The French in Australia*, Canberra, 1982, pp. 17, 137–138.

overseas locations, but, after sojourns abroad of varying lengths, they eventually returned to France. In Australia there were those, like Sydney's Doctor Louis Laure, who did return to France after quite long periods of residence here.⁸ But there were others who settled permanently. Their lives militated against the development of a high profile French community not because they left, but because they became 'more involved in local developments than in the promotion and retention of French cultural activities'.⁹ Duprez was among this latter group.

Adolphe Prosper Duprez was born in Hanse, France, twenty miles from Paris, on 22 February 1830.¹⁰ Family history indicates he began to train for the priesthood,¹¹ but, finding it not to his liking, he left France for England, in 1852. On 22 September 1855 he married Louisa Offord at St Dunstan in the West, London, giving his father's name as Victor Antoine. Louisa was the daughter of William and Susannah Offord, her mother originally from Somerset although her parents had been married in London in 1827. Two children were born to the Duprez couple in England—a son, Adolphe, in 1856, at Poplar, and a daughter, Emily, in 1858, at Croydon. In 1858, Duprez later claimed, he sailed to Australia on the *Goldstream*. But there is no ship named *Goldstream* recorded as arriving in Australia in 1858; there is a *Coldstream*, although Duprez is not listed as a passenger on it. His family followed on the

⁸ Doctor Louis Laure came to Sydney in 1868 and, after thirty-two years' residence and prominent professional and community activity, retired to his native Marseilles in March 1901, where he died in 1912—see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1900 and 10 May 1912 and www.access.prov.vic.gov.au, *Index to Outward Passengers to Interstate, U.K. and Foreign Ports, 1852–1908*.

⁹ Stuer, in Jupp, 2001, p. 359.

¹⁰ See Duprez's obituary in *The Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900; Duprez's naturalisation (NSW State Records) and death (8361/1900, NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages index) suggest an 1830 year of birth.

¹¹ 'Memoirs of Constance Mary Middleton' regarding Adolphe Prosper Duprez, at www.ancestry.co.au. Constance Middleton was Adolphe and Louisa Duprez's granddaughter, the daughter of Miriam Pugh, née Duprez, Adolphe's fifth child—see NSW Registry of Births, Death and Marriages indexes (at www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/familyHistory, marriages 4298/1888 and 2903/1914, births 7733/1892) and *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 19 May 1888.

Parsee in 1859. Louisa's age was then given as twenty-eight years, Adolphe's three and Emily's one.¹²

The incentive for Duprez to migrate to Australia was the continuing discovery of rich goldfields in New South Wales and Victoria, but it is possible Duprez might have had first-hand knowledge of Sydney at least. An Adolph Duprez, an able seaman from the ship *Plantagenet*, an English vessel carrying migrants from London to New South Wales, had been brought before the Water Police Magistrate in Sydney on 11 August 1854 for 'wilful disobedience of lawful commands'. There being no prosecution he was 'discharged and sent on board'.¹³

Duprez's obituary states he sought his fortune first in Victoria, at Bendigo and Ballarat, before he 'visited pretty well all the more important goldfields of Australia, including Kimberely, Shoalhaven and Wyalong'.¹⁴ The birth records for his children support this image of a peripatetic life—births and deaths are recorded at Broulee on the south coast, and at Binalong and Bathurst in the central west, before daughter Miriam's birth was recorded at Tamworth in 1867. The family finally settled in Bowral in February 1868¹⁵ and, two years later, Arthur Offord's birth was recorded at nearby Berrima. This accords with newspaper reports from 1900 that Duprez had been in the Bowral district for thirty years, and Louisa Duprez's 1915 death notice, which stated she had been 'probably the oldest resident of Bowral', where she had lived for 47 years.¹⁶ Dreams of gold riches having been put aside, Duprez established a

¹² *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900; marriages and births, FreeBMD (<http://www.freeBMD.org.uk>) and <https://familysearch.org>, England marriages 1538–1973; assisted migrants arriving in Sydney and Newcastle, 1844–59 and Adolphe Prosper Duprez, naturalisation, 18 February 1885, at <http://www.records.nsw.au/staterecords>; Louisa Duprez's age at the time of her migration indicates a year of birth of 1831; her death notice in 1915 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August 1915) also suggests 1831 (she was in her 85th year). The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1859, lists Louisa, Adolph and Emily 'Duprey' among recently arrived 'pre-paid migrants'; *The Empire* of the same date spells their name correctly as 'Duprez'.

¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 August 1854. However, this man was said to be 28 years of age at the time and A. P. Duprez would have been 24.

¹⁴ *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900. A family memoir suggests the family went straight to the New England diggings—see 'Memoirs of Constance Mary Middleton'.

¹⁵ *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900.

¹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August 1915.

bakery in Bong Bong Street, Bowral,¹⁷ which he sold in March 1887, having unsuccessfully advertised the ‘commodious premises’ and ‘Baking Business in full swing’—‘a good-paying concern’—in July 1886: ‘The excellent quality of the bread and cakes from this establishment was the admiration of the whole neighbourhood’.¹⁸ He retired to his orchard and garden,¹⁹ and travelled around the district in his spring-cart, sometimes fossicking for gold, ‘accompanied by his faithful dog, “Shot”’. A mid-year trip to Mount Werong, near Oberon, in which he was drenched in a thunderstorm, was said in his obituary to be a contributing cause of his death on 30 August 1900.²⁰

His enthusiasm for the Caves and the road to them was not the only example of Duprez’s public spiritedness. In 1889 he was recorded as a committee member of the Bowral free trade association, and in 1891 was listed as a potential candidate for local government election. More practically, during times of water shortage in Bowral, he offered to help with water from his private well. In February 1899 the *Australian Town and Country Journal* reported: ‘Mr A. P. Duprez, of Shepherd-street, has offered to supply the ratepayers with water from his well, the council to erect the necessary pump, besides clearing out the well and boring some 6ft or so deeper. The council accepted a similar offer made by Mr Duprez in 1886.’²¹ His obituary also lists membership of Bowral’s first ‘Vigilance Committee’, involvement in ‘the erection of St Jude’s handsome new church’, enthusiasm for Bowral’s Cottage Hospital, and his many years as a judge in the Moss Vale Show’s bread and cake section. As well as advocating for the construction of the Wombeyan Caves road he was also an advocate for the improvement of the road to Upper Burragorang. In brief, the obituary concluded, ‘Mr Duprez’s life was full of incident, and variety,

¹⁷ Duprez’s Naturalisation Certificate, as well as providing his arrival details and stating he was a native of Hanse, France, and aged 54 in 1885, gave his occupation as baker. Duprez’s obituary implies the bakery, known as ‘Bowral Bakery’, was established in 1869. *Greville’s Official Post Office Directory of New South Wales 1872*, listed an ‘Alphonse’ Duprez, of ‘Bowral’, as a labourer.

¹⁸ *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900.

¹⁹ See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1886 and 11 March 1887.

²⁰ *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900; ‘Memoirs of Constance Mary Middleton’.

²¹ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 25 February 1899. Also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1889 and 24 January 1891.

and change'.²² His fellow townspeople recognised his local eminence and his funeral was 'one of the largest and most thoroughly representative [...] accorded to a resident of Bowral'.²³

Despite his public activities, Duprez's main legacy to his adopted home was perhaps his children. Although Adolphe junior died while still a child,²⁴ daughters Emily, Miriam and Louisa Jessie (born 1876) and sons William Alexander (born 1861) and Arthur Offord survived to adulthood. Emily, Miriam and William Alexander married, and had families of their own.²⁵ William Alexander had a long and eventful career in the New South Wales Police Force, retiring in 1920 at Wagga Wagga with the rank of inspector. A Mason, he was also a stalwart of the Sydney suburban Pratten Park and Ashfield Bowling Clubs at the time of his death in 1936.²⁶ Just a decade and a half after Adolphe Prosper's death, four of William Alexander's sons enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in the First World War, three—Arthur Alexander, Offord William and Hamilton Adair—serving overseas. Arthur Alexander was awarded the Military Cross. Offord William who was with the 7th Light Horse Regiment died of wounds at Kantara on the Suez Canal on 20 September 1916, after the 17 September abortive attack on al Mazar in Sinai.²⁷ Another of Adolphe Prosper Duprez's grandsons, Charles Longworth Parker, Emily's son, served at Gallipoli and in the Camel Corps and was twice wounded, in 1915 and 1917.²⁸ Arthur Offord also enlisted again in the AIF, reprising military service in South Africa in the Matabele War and the Boer War, served as a lieutenant and was wounded twice. Employed by the Sydney Harbour Trust, after unsuccessful careers as a cattle breeder and diamond

²² *Bowral Free Press*, 1 September 1900.

²³ *Bowral Free Press*, 5 September 1900.

²⁴ Two other Duprez children also appear to have died in infancy: Louisa, born and died at Bathurst in 1863, and Frederick, died at Bathurst in 1865—see NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages—indexes on line (<http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au>).

²⁵ See NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages—indexes on line (<http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au>).

²⁶ *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*, 12 October and 16 December 1920.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 1936; Australian War Memorial at www.awm.gov.au/research/people.

²⁸ See Australian War Memorial at www.awm.gov.au/research/people and National Archives of Australia, B2455, First AIF service records.

miner in South Africa, Arthur Offord was, at the time of his death, a member of the South African Soldiers' Association, the Masonic Club, the Masonic Lodge Perseverance and the Masonic Alpine Club.²⁹

Duprez's children appear to have been thoroughly Australian. This may have been aided by their mother's English background, although the extent to which Duprez himself held on to his French heritage is unclear. His association with St Jude's (Anglican) Church and burial in the Methodist, not Catholic, portion of the Burradoo cemetery suggest he took on his wife's and in-laws' religious associations. He is said to have retained some superficial Catholic habits, such as not eating meat on Friday and fasting in Lent, and to have 'also maintained the French custom of drinking wine with meals, but when short of wine would drink water with a little vinegar added'.³⁰ But it is certainly true he threw himself into local Bowral business and public life, and, as Duprez himself said at the opening of 'Duprez road', 'he had [...] done what any man should have done for the district'.³¹

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²⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1930.

³⁰ 'Memoirs of Constance Mary Middleton'.

³¹ *Bowral Free Press*, 31 January 1900.