

France-Australia by Air

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Introduction

Much has been written about French maritime navigation around Australia, especially in the mapping of the Australian coast. The part played by the French, both men and machines, in Australian aviation history is less well-known. This essay explores the significant role played by the French in the development of Australian aviation, with emphasis being placed on the early days up to and including WWII. There is some discussion of several people, notably Oswald Watt, who were key figures and active in both countries' forces. Appendix One describes the mainly military aircraft used by all three of the armed services.

The French were at the very forefront of the development of lighter-than-air aircraft. When heavier-than-air machines were developed, French pioneers maintained their pre-eminent position. This led to the use of French aircraft and, indeed, the involvement of French airmen, at the very beginning of flying in Australia. However, the flow of knowledge was two-way; the French recognised the importance of the pioneering work of Lawrence Hargrave (1850–1915) and his box kites, which gave improved lift-to-drag ratios, as well as his work on curved aerofoils with thicker leading edges.

Particularly before World War I, the importance of both French aircraft and airmen in Australia was great. During this war, some French-trained Australians, notably Oswald Watt (1878–1921), played significant roles. World War II saw large numbers of Australians take part in air operations over Europe. Many of those involved in the liberation of Normandy had

their services recognised by the French government with the award of the *Légion d'honneur* in 2015–2017. A recent listing¹ gives over 400 such awards, the vast majority of which were to aircrews.

Lighter-than-air aircraft

The Montgolfier brothers (Joseph-Michel, 1740–1810 and Jacques-Étienne, 1745–1799) developed the first practical hot-air balloon, with the first tethered human flight taking place on 15 October 1783, and the first free human flight on 21 November 1783, with Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier and François-Laurent, Marquis d'Arlandes, as passengers. The flight began from the grounds of the Château de la Muette in Paris, passing about 910 metres above the city, for a distance of about nine kilometres. Less than two weeks after this pioneering flight, Jacques Alexandre-César Charles (1746–1823), and Nicolas-Louis Robert (1760–1820) made the first untethered ascension with a hydrogen gas-filled balloon on 1 December 1783.² This was followed, on 7 January 1785, by the first balloon crossing of the English Channel, by Jean-Pierre Blanchard (1753–1809).³

Lawrence Hargrave

Lawrence Hargrave (1850–1915)⁴ was the first in Australia to experiment with powered flight.⁵ Hargrave constructed various monoplane wing designs between 1884 and 1892; in 1893 he invented the box-kite. On 12 November 1894 he linked together four of his box-kites, added a sling seat

¹ William Land, *The French National Orders in Australia*, Sydney, William Land, 2017.

² Charles redesigned the way hot-air balloons were built and invented the valve line which enables the operator to release gas for an easy descent. He also invented the 'appendix', a tube which allows expanded gas out of the balloon, and the *nacelle*, a wicker basket that is held onto the balloon by a network of ropes and a wooden hoop. His work with gases led to the elaboration of Charles' Law in 1787.

http://www.century-of-flight.net/new%20site/frames/balloons_frame.htm, accessed 12 October 2017.

³ <https://doverhistorian.com/2013/10/10/jean-pierre-blanchard-and-dr-john-jeffries-the-first-aviators-to-cross-the-english-channel/>, accessed 12 October 2017.

⁴ http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/hargrave_bio_large_print.html, accessed 12 October 2017.

⁵ <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/early-austn-aviation>, accessed 12 October 2017.

and flew approximately five metres at Stanwell Park. The Hargrave-designed box-kite, with its improved lift-to-drag ratio, provided the theoretical wing model, permitting the development of the first generation of aeroplanes. Unlike many of his competitors, Hargrave believed passionately in open communication within the scientific community; he published the results of his experiments and did not patent his inventions. The first successful aeroplanes incorporated three of Hargrave's crucial aeronautical concepts: the cellular box-kite wing, the curved wing surface and the thick leading edge of the wing. Although the Wright brothers, who carried out the first powered flight on 17 December 1903, had access to Hargrave's work, they did not acknowledge it.

The French, however, freely acknowledged Hargrave's work: the Brazilian inventor Alberto Santos-Dumont (1873–1932) was the first to fly a heavier-than-air machine in Europe, the '14-bis', made of Hargrave box-kites.⁶ This flight took place on 23 October 1906. The French engineer and constructor, Gabriel Voisin (1880–1973) built the first commercially available aircraft, which was based on the stable lifting surfaces of Hargrave's box-kites. In 1889, Hargrave revolutionised engine technology by inventing the radial engine, which reappeared (unacknowledged) in modified form in 1908 as the French Gnome⁷ engine.



Hargrave (seated at left), aided by James Swain at Stanwell Park.

⁶ http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/hargrave_bio_large_print.html, accessed 9 December 2017.

⁷ These engines powered Henry Farman's Farman III aircraft to take world records for distance and endurance, as well as powering the first aircraft to break 100 km/h, as well as the first seaplane to fly, in 1910. They also powered the majority of Allied and German aircraft in the first half of the Great War.

Heavier-than-air aircraft

This section is presented under the headings 'Civil Flying' and 'Military Flying', although there were significant cross-overs.

Civil flying

There is some controversy regarding the first powered flight in Australia. Primacy is claimed for Harry Houdini's flight at Digger's Rest (near Melbourne) on 18 March 1910. The flight was made in a French Voisin⁸ biplane, which was demonstrated again at Rosehill (Sydney).⁹ In 1965, aviation journalist Stanley Brogden stated that the first powered flight in Australia took place at Bolivar (Adelaide) on 17 March 1910—the aircraft was a Blériot monoplane, with Fred Custance as pilot.¹⁰

Wing Commander Harry Cobby wrote in *Aircraft* in March 1938 that 'the first aeroplane flight in the Southern Hemisphere was made on December 9, 1909 by Mr Colin Defries, a Londoner, at Victoria Park Racecourse, Sydney in a Wilbur Wright aeroplane'. Defries had learned to fly in Cannes (France). However, his flight was only about 90 m, at a height of 5 m, and at a speed of about 36 mph. He then lost control and crashed, which led to the opinion that the flight was not controlled and it was not officially recognised.

Despite rival claims for Harry Houdini and Fred Custance, it is acknowledged by historians and the Aviation Historical Society of Australia that, using the definition of flight established by the Gorell Committee of the Aero Club of Great Britain, Colin Defries did, in fact, make the first aeroplane flight in Australia.¹¹

⁸ The 1907 Voisin biplane was the first successful powered aircraft designed by Gabriel Voisin. It was used by Henri Farman to make the first heavier-than-air flight in Europe lasting longer than 1 minute and also to make the first full circle. It had a length of 13 m and wingspan of 11 m. <http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/farman.html>, accessed 5 December 2017.

⁹ <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/early-austn-aviation>, accessed 16 October 2017.

¹⁰ <https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2009/12/02/first-powered-flight-in-australia-episode-3/>, accessed 17 October 2017.

¹¹ <https://www.raafawa.org.au/museum/wa-aviation-history/item/240-beginnings>, accessed 5 December 2017.

William Ewart Hart (1885–1943) was the first person to qualify as a pilot in Australia, receiving the Australian aviator's certificate N° 1, dated 5 December 1911. This was superseded by the *Fédération Aéronautique Internationale's* certificate N° 199, issued by the Royal Aero Club on 29 March 1912.¹² However, the 'first practical flying exhibitions'¹³ in Australia were given by Harry Hawker, an Australian. He received the Royal Aero Club licence N° 279 in October 1912 and later set many records, for both height and distance. He was later appointed test pilot by Sopwith and, on 27 November 1913, Hawker flew the Sopwith Tabloid¹⁴ for the first time. Hawker shipped the aircraft to Australia¹⁵ and, between January and April 1914, he flew it at Melbourne, Sydney, Albury and Ballarat. Hawker was dubbed Australia's 'first real apostle of flight', greatly boosting confidence in the aeroplane.¹⁶

Ernest François Guillaux (better known as Maurice Guillaux) (1883–1917) carried out the first seaplane flight in Australia. Guillaux was born in Montoire (Loir-et-Cher) on 24 January 1883. He gained his French pilot's licence (N° 749) on 19 February 1912. Guillaux bought a Blériot XI aircraft with which he performed the first 'loop the loop' over Paris in January 1913.¹⁷ He embarked on a world tour with his Blériot XI in late 1913.

¹² In September 1911, Hart bought a Bristol box-kite from Joseph Hammond, touring Australia as a demonstration pilot for the British & Colonial Aeroplane Co. Ltd. He received flying instruction from Hammond's mechanic and first flew solo on 3 November 1911. On 18 November 1911, he completed the first cross-country flight of 55 minutes in New South Wales. On 29 June 1912 he won Australia's first air race. Keith Isaacs, 1983, 'William Ewart Hart (1885–1943)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, vol. 9, p. 222.

¹³ Thomas Sheehy, 1983, 'Harry George Hawker (1889–1921)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, vol. 9, pp. 233–234.

¹⁴ This was a revolutionary aircraft, a very fast two-seater single-bay biplane with side-by-side seating. It was powered by a French Gnome engine. During the First World War, they saw service with the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service. <http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/sopwith3.html>, accessed 19 October 2017.

¹⁵ He said that it had been designed especially for Australian conditions. (*The Register*, 19 January 1914, p. 7).

¹⁶ Thomas Sheehy, 1983, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, vol. 9, p. 234.

¹⁷ Lockley, Tom, 2014, 'Maurice Guillaux: France's Forgotten Pioneer Airman in Australia', Melbourne, *Explorations*, No 56, p. 7.

His party arrived at Fremantle on 2 April 1914 and, on 21 April 1914 Guillaux gave a flying display at Victoria Park (Sydney). On 25 April 1914 he flew over Newcastle, the first aircraft to do so. A week later, a major display took place at Victoria Park racecourse, Sydney, when Guillaux performed five loops in succession, which was 'the most thrilling piece of aviation ever witnessed in Australia'.¹⁸

Lebbeus Hordern (1891–1928)¹⁹ had imported a French Farman seaplane which was assembled by Guillaux and his team. Its first flight took place on the waters of Double Bay on 8 May 1914, with Guillaux as pilot. This was the first flight by a seaplane in Australia.²⁰ Guillaux established a flying school at Ham Common (NSW) which, in 1925, became RAAF Base, Richmond.²¹ At the outbreak of war Hordern presented his aircraft to the Australian government, and it was taken on strength at Point Cook as CFS 7, i.e. the seventh aircraft, and first seaplane, of what later became the Royal Australian Air Force.²²

On 16–18 July 1914, Guillaux made an epic flight in his Blériot from Melbourne to Sydney, carrying Australia's first airmail and air freight.²³

¹⁸ *Singleton Argus*, 5 May 1914, p. 3.

¹⁹ Lebbeus Hordern was one of the first civilians to fly over Sydney and, in his early exploits in the air, was associated with M. Guillaux, the French aviator, who taught him to fly. Mr Hordern is credited with having brought seaplanes into Australian waters, using one to undertake survey work in New Guinea. During World War I he served in the Royal Field Artillery and was gassed in action; he was invalided home to Australia in 1917. <http://oa.anu.edu/obituary/hordern-lebbeus-27318>, accessed 26 October 2017.

²⁰ On 8 May 2017, Woollahra Council, the Woollahra Plaques Advisory committee and members of the Hordern family unveiled a plaque to commemorate this seminal event. The French Consul General, Monsieur Nicolas Croizer, was also present. *Wentworth Courier*, 11 May 2017, p. 12.

²¹ <http://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/research/bases/richmond.htm>, accessed 24 October 2017.

²² Tom Lockley, 2014, *Australia's First Seaplane*, Sydney, Aviation Historical Society of Australia, p. 12. (CFS: the Central Flying School which is the Royal Air Force's primary institution for the training of military flying.)

²³ Lipton Tea and O.T. Juice were sponsors of the flight, mounting a large advertising campaign, with some of their products being carried on the aircraft. (Tom Lockley, *Australia's First Seaplane...*, Sydney, Aviation Historical Society of Australia, 2014, p. 11).

However, the outbreak of World War I a fortnight later completely overshadowed the news of Guillaux's feat. Guillaux sailed for Europe on HMAT *Orvieto* on 22 October 1914, accompanying the Headquarters staff of the First Australian Division; he was listed as 'Aviator' (Lockley 2014). He was killed in France on 21 May 1917, testing a new Morane-Saulnier aircraft.²⁴



Guillaux: Guillaux in his Blériot XI.

One of Guillaux's French associates, Jean Claude Charles Marduel (1877–1939)²⁵ briefly continued Guillaux's activities at Ham Common. A Science graduate of the University of Lyon, Marduel arrived in Australia in 1908 as a language teacher. He was taught to fly by Guillaux and became a partner in the flying school. In September 1914 he flew a Caudron G III²⁶ from Ham Common to Randwick Racecourse. This aircraft was later taken on strength at the Central Flying School as CFS 9. Marduel became a naturalised British citizen in 1916 and joined the AFC going with N° 2 Squadron AFC to Egypt and Palestine. After the war he was associated

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 25 July 1918, p. 8.

²⁵ <https://maas.museum.inside-the-collection/2014/10/29/the-story-of-australias-first-airmail-part-11>. Also, the first page of his attestation form for the Australian Flying Corps can be found at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8214798>, accessed 30 October 2017.

²⁶ This was a two-seater, single-engine French biplane, which was widely used as a reconnaissance and training aircraft in World War I. It was used in Mesopotamia by the 1st Half-Flight of the Australian Flying Corps in 1915–1916, and also at the Central Flying School at Point Cook. It was a stable aircraft, which had good visibility, but was soon outclassed for frontline service. http://en.wikipedia/wiki/Caudron_G3, accessed 30 October 2017.

with Aerial Services Ltd., conducting the first aerial surveys in Australia. He died aged 56.²⁷

Clive Harold Voss was another 'early bird'. He learned to fly in France and was issued with an Aviator's Certificate by the *Aéro Club de France* and was probably the first Australian to gain a French pilot's certificate; he was accredited by the Royal Aero Club of Great Britain on 30 November 1912.²⁸ Voss went to France in 1911 to study aviation but, when war broke out, he joined the Royal Army Service Corps. Post-war, he became Australia's first Trade Representative in France. Voss was still in the post when the Germans invaded France in 1940; with his family, he fled to London. After the war, he was appointed to the Australian Embassy in Paris and was made a *Chevalier* of the *Légion d'honneur*²⁹ in 1953. He was appointed MBE 'For services in connection with the development of commercial relations between Australia and France' (*The London Gazette*, 9 June 1955). He died in August 1959, aged 71.

Military flying

Following the London Imperial Conference of 1911 Australia resolved to establish an aviation corps. By the end of 1911 the Australian Army was advertising for pilots and mechanics. In 1912 pilots and mechanics were appointed, aircraft were ordered, and the site of a flying school was chosen. The four aircraft purchased cost £3,200. The Central Flying School at Point Cook (Victoria) was announced on 7 March 1913. The formation of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) paved the way for the use of aircraft for military purposes.³⁰

One of the appointed pilots, Lieutenant Henry Petre, had previously been a flying instructor for the British Deperdussin Company, two of whose aircraft

²⁷ Paul de Pierres, 2014, *Allies Forever: A Record of War Service by Frenchmen and Belgians from Australia*, Wyalkatchem, Paul de Pierres, p. 70.

²⁸ 'Letter from the Aero Club de France of November 12th 1912, requesting the Club to give its sanction to the issuing of Aviators' Certificates to [...] Mr Clive Harold Voss, was considered, and the necessary permission granted', (Official Notices to Members, The Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom, November 30, 1912), accessed 21 December 2017.

²⁹ Schedvin, Boris, 2008, *Emissaries of Trade: a history of the Australian trade commissioner service*, Canberra, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p 26

³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Flying_Corps, accessed 31 October 2017.

were bought by the Australian government. One was taken on strength as CFS 4, but lasted only until 9 March 1914, when it crashed with Petre at the controls; it was written off. The other, CFS 5, ended up in the Australian War Memorial where it is still on display.

The first, albeit minor, operational role played by the AFC was in the invasion of German New Guinea by Australian forces on 11–13 September 1914. Orders were received at Point Cook to send the Farman seaplane and a BE 2C to Sydney, to be loaded on to HMAS *Una* for despatch to New Guinea. However, the aircraft, although sent, were not used in the New Guinea operation because the German forces surrendered quickly, before the aircraft had been uncrated.

The first complete AFC squadron, N^o 1 Squadron, was formed and engaged in the Middle East from early 1916. Three other squadrons operated on the Western Front in France. To support the three operational squadrons in France, N^o 1 (Training) Wing, AFC was formed in England under the command of Lt Col Oswald Watt until its disbandment in March 1919. Walter Oswald Watt, usually known as ‘Toby Watt’, was born in Bournemouth (England) on 11 February 1878, the son of a rich Sydney businessman. The family moved back to Sydney when Walter was one and he returned to England to study at Trinity College, Cambridge (BA 1899³¹, MA 1904³²). Back in Sydney in 1900, he was commissioned in the 5th (Volunteer) Infantry Regiment (Scottish Rifles), and was promoted captain in 1905.³³

Watt returned to England where, at the Salisbury Plain Bristol School, he was taught to fly by two Frenchmen, MM. Jellerot and Tetard. On 5 July 1911, he secured aviator’s certificate N^o 112 in the British Empire.³⁴ He was the first Australian military officer³⁵ to obtain an aviator’s certificate, and possibly the first overseas officer to fly.³⁶ In 1911 he demonstrated prescience when he was reported as saying that ‘the time was rapidly approaching when

³¹ Susan Johnston, ‘Walter Oswald Watt’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1990, vol. 12, pp. 411–412.

³² www.gaestebuecher-schloss-neubeuern.de/biografien/Watt_Walter_Oswald.pdf, accessed 7 November 2017.

³³ *Commonwealth Gazette*, 8 October 1905.

³⁴ *Forbes Advocate*, 24 May 1912, p. 3.

³⁵ As an officer on the Unattached List, his actual army status is tenuous.

³⁶ *Mudgee Guardian & North-Western Representative*, 18 June 1914, p. 34.

an aero corps will have to be inaugurated in connection with the Australian military defence scheme.³⁷

On 14 February 1914 Watt flew his Blériot XI monoplane at Heliopolis (Egypt) and thus became the first British subject to fly in Egypt. In May 1914 Watt left Egypt with his aeroplane and secured employment at the Blériot factory at Buc (Yvelines). On 2 August 1914, the day France declared war on Germany, Watt offered his services and his aircraft to the French government.



Oswald Watt wearing French captain's uniform and in ME/44 aircraft with observer/gunner in front seat.

He entered the *Aviation militaire* section of the *Légion étrangère* as a rank and file *sapteur aviateur*. However, his colleagues in Blériot Squadron N° 30 referred to him as *capitaine* in deference to his rank in the Australian Militia. He was one of only six foreign pilots accepted by the French Government at the outbreak of war.³⁸ He was early in action and in late October 1914 he was piloting an aircraft whose engine failed; it glided to ground, landing at a spot 300 yards from the French trenches and within a firing zone. It was reported that Watt 'was recently promoted to the rank of captain in the French Flying Corps'.³⁹ However, in spite of enquiries made by the author at the French Embassy and also in Paris, a copy of his military record (*livret militaire*) is not available;⁴⁰ there exists a photo of him wearing captain's rank insignia.

³⁷ *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 13 November 1911, p. 8.

³⁸ *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 20 November 1914, p. 8.

³⁹ *The Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 September 1914, p. 5.

⁴⁰ A notice in *The Telegraph* (Brisbane) of 20 November 1914 states that 'for a brilliant piece of flying in a fog he was promoted to the rank of captain', p. 8.

His rank in the French service was, apparently, an honorary one, given in recognition of his Australian rank; however, being an alien, he could not hold a command.⁴¹ Watt flew Nieuport 11 Scouts (single-seat fighter/scout biplanes) with the French Flying Corps. The *Courrier Australien* of 27 May 1921 reported that he was awarded the *Légion d'honneur* in 1915, being the first Australian soldier so awarded; he was also awarded the *Croix de guerre* with three *palmes*. Citations for his French awards are available. (See Appendix Two)

With some difficulty he transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) on 1 March 1916 at Harlaxton (Lincolnshire). His AFC attestation form includes information on his various military ranks.⁴² Australian Military Order 363 of 1916 gives the following relative to the services of Captain W.O. Watt:

20th April 1916

31st Army Corps (French),
General Staff Bureau
No. 2002 P

The General Commanding the 31st Army Corps communicates the following Army Corps Order:

“Captain Walter Oswald Watt, pilot of Squadron M.F./44, has not ceased to show the best qualities of audacity and cool resolution. Always ready to fly at low altitudes to facilitate observation or to take photographs. On 11th April when flying a French Aeroplane attacked by three Germans he put to flight the enemy’s machines.

(Sgd) General Deletoille
Commanding 31st Army Corps”

⁴¹ C. G. Grey, 1921, ‘Oswald Watt the Airman’ in *Oswald Watt, A Tribute to his Memory by a Few Friends*, Sydney Ure Smith (ed.), Sydney, Art in Australia, p. 29.

⁴² Captain in the NSW Scottish Regiment 1900–1907 (captain by exam in 1902); captain, Reserve of Officers, 1907–1914; French Foreign Legion (aviation), *soldat* 2nd class (*sapteur*) Aug. 3 1914–Sep. 3, 1914; *capitaine (titre étranger)* Sep. 3, 1914–Apr. 11, 1916; released to AIF Apr. 11, 1916; Captain Flight Commander Apr. 1916–Sept. 3, 1916 Egypt; Squadron Commander Sept. 16; Jan. 24, 1919, Flight Lieutenant Colonel and Wing Commander; returned to Australia Nov. 6, 1919.

Returning to London after his service with the French, Watt was appointed to N° 1 Squadron AFC in Egypt, reaching Port Said on 31 May 1916.⁴³ On 27 October 1916, he was appointed to command N° 68⁴⁴ Australian Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, which later became No.2 Squadron, AFC. On 23 December 1916, Watt was formally transferred from N° 1 Squadron AFC to N° 2 Squadron AFC, and promoted major.

Watt returned to England on 30 January 1917 as a major, and was appointed to command the Australian Training Wing (composed of four squadrons, i.e. Nos 5, 6, 7, and 8 Sqns, AFC) at Tetbury (Gloucestershire), with the acting rank of lieutenant-colonel, on 20 March 1918. For his services, he was awarded a 'Mention in Despatches' in *The London Gazette* of 19 April 1917 and a second 'Mention' on 28 May 1918. He was also awarded the OBE in *The London Gazette* of 1 January 1919. He was discharged from the AFC and returned to Australia on 6 May 1919. Post-war, he was elected president of the New South Wales Section of the Australian Aero Club, and was involved in promoting flying. In 1920, he was offered the position of Controller of Civil Aviation, but declined because of business commitments.⁴⁵

Watt drowned at Bilgola Beach (Sydney) on 21 May 1921. In 2001, military historian Alan Stephens noted that 'had fate drawn him to a post-war career in the Air Force instead of to business and an untimely death, "Toby" Watt might have challenged Richard Williams as the RAAF's dominant figure in its formative years'.⁴⁶

⁴³ Coulthard-Clark, Chris, 1991, *The Third Brother: Royal Australian Air Force 1923–1939*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, p. 149.

⁴⁴ This numbering was changed to N° 67 Australian Squadron RFC (18 Sep., 1916), then to N° 67 Squadron AFC (24 Apr. 1917), then to N° 1 Squadron AFC (6 Feb., 1918). (Mark Lax, *Videmus Agamus, A History of N° 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps*) www.ww1aero.org.au, accessed 20 November 2017.

⁴⁵ Susan Johnston, 'Walter Oswald Watt', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1990, vol. 12, p. 412.

⁴⁶ Captain Richard Williams was a fellow pilot with Watt in N° 1 Squadron and later commanded the squadron. He had flown solo at Point Cook on 12 November 1914, a member of the first graduating class. Williams became Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams KBE CB DSO and is generally regarded as the 'Father of the RAAF' 'Sir Richard Williams (1890–1980)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1990, vol.12, pp. 502–505; Alan Stephens, 2001, *The Royal Australian Air Force: a History*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, pp. 16–19.

Another Australian who served in the *Légion étrangère* was Francis Luks, born in Burwood (NSW). Luks served with the *Légion* in Gallipoli and in France, later undergoing pilot training. He received his pilot's brevet, becoming a bomber pilot. However, he crashed, suffering severe injuries. He was discharged and returned to Australia.⁴⁷

Some French-born British citizens served with the AFC in France. Lieutenant George Brettingham-Moore was born in Saint-Servan (Brittany). He served with the 40th Battalion AIF before transferring to the Australian Flying Corps. He qualified as a pilot and served with N° 2 Squadron, AFC. Lieutenant Ernest Alexander Devlin Hamilton, was born in Nice (Alpes-Maritimes). After service with the 6th Light Horse Regiment, he transferred to N° 2 Squadron, AFC, later qualifying as an observer. As a member of N° 3 Squadron, AFC, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 3 June 1919.⁴⁸

There were also Frenchmen, living in Australia, who served with the AFC. One such was Henri Buland who was born in Le Havre and enlisted in the AIF on 23 October 1914. He was a photographer by trade. He served at Gallipoli and, on 14 December 1916, he was attached to N° 2 Squadron, AFC. He later remustered from 'photographer' to 'armourer', serving in France with N°s 2 and 3 Squadrons, AFC. He died at the AFC Hospital, Tetbury (England) on 10 February 1919, from influenza (de Pierres 2014, 15).

Aside from those attached to the AFC, there were other Frenchmen, living in Australia, who served with the French Air Service. Georges Crivelli, a Melbourne University graduate, was a non-commissioned officer in the 44th Field Artillery Regiment, fighting in Champagne in 1916.⁴⁹ He transferred to the *Corps de l'aviation* and was promoted to *sous-lieutenant*, having been decorated with the *Croix de guerre avec palme* for his conduct at Péronne.⁵⁰ He died in Paris on 14 November 1923.⁵¹ Theodore Desmarchelier was a wool buyer in Australia who, on the outbreak of war, joined the Balloon

⁴⁷ Paul de Pierres, 2014, *Allies for Ever: A Record of War Service of Frenchmen and Belgians from Australia*, Wyalkatchem, Paul de Pierres, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Paul de Pierres, 2014, *Allies Forever: A Record of War Service by Frenchmen and Belgians from Australia*, Wyalkatchem, Paul de Pierres, p. 51.

⁴⁹ *Weekly Times*, 19 February 1916, p. 38.

⁵⁰ *Courrier australien*, 2 February 1917, p. 4.

⁵¹ *The Argus*, 17 November 1923, p. 17.

Corps, rising to the rank of sergeant in the *Compagnie d'Aérostiers*⁵² engaged in artillery spotting. He returned to Australia on compassionate leave in 1917 and did not return to France (de Pierres 2014, 34). Another Frenchman from Australia, born at Hughenden (Queensland), was *Sous-Lieutenant* Jean Félix-Charles Jallade, who served with *Escadrille F 54*. He died on 12 April 1917 from wounds received at Mourmelon-le-Petit (Marne) during aerial combat.⁵³ Auguste Meyers was born in Noumea in 1886 and moved to Sydney in 1908 to work as a wool buyer. He was called up and arrived in France in 1917, where he was detached to serve as an interpreter with the Royal Flying Corps. After the war, he returned to Sydney and worked again in the wool industry. Raymond Rallier du Baty, born in Lorient (Morbihan), was an adventurer and explorer. Learning of the outbreak of war in 1914 in Tasmania (de Pierres 2014, 89), he returned to France, serving as a seaplane pilot at Dunkirk and taking part in the bombing of Ostend and Zeebrugge Harbours. He founded the seaplane base at Le Havre and later served in the Dardanelles and at Salonika.

Another important person who had only a fleeting relationship with Australia, was *Lieutenant* Léon Bourjade (born Jean-Pierre Léon Bourjade) who was born in Montauban (Tarn-et-Garonne). He was studying for the priesthood in Switzerland when, with the outbreak of war, he returned to France and served as an artilleryman. In 1917 he transferred to the *Corps d'aviation* and joined *Escadrille N.152*, initially flying Nieuport and then Spad XIII scouts. He became the highest-scoring French balloon-busting pilot, with twenty-seven balloons and one aircraft to his credit. After the war he finished his religious studies, and was ordained as a priest on 26 July 1921. He was sent to the Catholic Sacred Heart Mission on Yule Island in Central Province (Papua New Guinea), which at that time was an Australian territory. He died in 1924, apparently from blackwater fever.⁵⁴

As in World War I, some French nationals preferred to serve in the Australian forces during World War II. One of these was Marcel France Dekyèvre,⁵⁵

⁵² This was the world's first aviation unit, created on 2 April 1794 in France, using observation balloons for military intelligence, <http://aerohistory.org/balloons-captifs/avant-guerre.html>, accessed 2 December 2017.

⁵³ www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr, accessed 3 December 2017.

⁵⁴ https://issuu.com/catholicnews/docs/1935_cn19, accessed 3 December 2017.

⁵⁵ The *accent grave* is usually omitted, but was employed by him in his signature on his enlistment form.

a wool buyer, who enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on 27 May 1940. He trained in Australia and the United Kingdom, being commissioned pilot officer on 12 January 1941; he became flight lieutenant in 1943. He served with N° 277 Squadron, RAF⁵⁶ and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the citation reading: 'Flight Lieutenant DEKYVERE has been employed on air-sea rescue duties for some time. He has taken part in many patrols and sorties and has been responsible for saving the lives of many members of aircraft crew. This officer has shown outstanding leadership and initiative as a flight commander'.⁵⁷ He was discharged on 23 October 1945.



Marcel Dekyvere and his wife Nola.

⁵⁶ This was a squadron formed on 22 December 1941 for air-sea rescues. Its aircraft covered the busy area between south-east England and northern France over which large numbers of RAF fighters and bombers operated. <https://www.raf.mod.uk/history/277squadron.cfm>, accessed 3 December 2017.

⁵⁷ *The London Gazette*, 1 October 1943, p. 4357; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* 14 October 1943, p. 2267.

Another was Raymond Baudoin (Bob) de Pierres, an Australian-born son of Guy de Pierres who had served with the French Army in the Great War. Bob joined the Royal Australian Air Force, training as a navigator. He was commissioned pilot officer on 28 May 1943. He served with N° 31 Squadron based at Coomalie Creek Airfield (Northern Territory), operating Bristol Beaufighters. He was killed in action over the Arafura Sea on 19 October 1943.⁵⁸

Some served in the forces of both countries. One such was Jacques Pierre Emile Fourlinnie, born in Lille (Nord-Pas de Calais). He was a wool-buyer in Australia and served with the 11th Colonial Infantry Regiment in Indochina in 1940, returning to Australia on 20 July 1941. On 18 June 1942, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force, serving with N° 43 Squadron⁵⁹ in Darwin and Karumba, as a wireless assistant and later a radar mechanic. He was commissioned pilot officer in the Administrative and Special Duties Branch⁶⁰ and was discharged on 8 February 1946 (de Pierres 2011, 72).

Another to serve both countries was Auguste John Alcide Anger, who was born in Sydney to French parents. He served in Indochina with the *Depôt de Transition Saïgon* in 1939. Following his return to Australia, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on 5 September 1944 and served with N° 2 Aircraft Depot at Bankstown as a qualified oxy- and electrical welder.⁶¹ He was discharged as medically unfit for further service on 21 August 1945 (de Pierres 2011, 69).

Concluding comments

Unlike the aviation-based relationship of the past, the most recent French-Australian partnership of a defence nature is undersea. A contract was signed on 13 December 2016 between Australia and the French company DCNS

⁵⁸ Personal communication from Paul de Pierres, 6 December 2017.

⁵⁹ This was a maritime reconnaissance squadron which also carried out mine-laying, bombing and supply dropping. It operated Catalina aircraft. <https://www.airforce.gov.au/sites/g/files/net3736/f/minisite/static/1469/RAAFmuseum/research/units/43sqn.htm>, accessed 3 December 2017.

⁶⁰ <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/Viewimage.aspx?B=5381557>, accessed 3 December 2017.

⁶¹ <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/Viewimage.aspx?B=5206601>, accessed 3 December 2017.

(the company changed its name to ‘Naval Group’ in 2017) to build twelve submarines, which will give Australia the ‘world’s largest diesel-electric submarines.’⁶² They will be powered by the same pump jet propulsion that gives the French nuclear submarines their advanced stealth technology.

In spite of this recent signing by the Australian government of a contract for the supply of French-designed submarines, it is interesting to note that over the past decade the French Defence Attachés have been mainly aircrew. The French Defence Attaché in 2009–2011 was *Colonel* Philippe Ohl, a helicopter pilot who had commanded a French Army helicopter unit during the Gulf War. The two most recent Defence Attachés are members of the *Aéronavale*. *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Yann Marboeuf, a navigator, served as Defence Attaché (2014–2017) and the current Defence Attaché, *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Philippe Petitdidier (2017 to date) was a fighter pilot flying off the aircraft carriers *Foch* and *Clemenceau*. *Lieutenant Colonel* Pierre Millet, the current Assistant Defence Attaché (2016 to present date), is an air tactical pilot flying C-160 Transall aircraft.

Sydney

⁶² <https://phys.org/news/2016-12-australia-france-submarines.html>, accessed 5 December 2017.

APPENDIX ONE

Aircraft Of French Origin

Civil Aircraft

These are, principally, aircraft manufactured by Airbus Industrie GIE (*Groupement d'Intérêt Économique*), which also manufactures military aircraft and helicopters. Manufacturing and assembly take place in many centres around the world, but the company's headquarters are at Blagnac (Toulouse).

Military Aircraft

The Australian Flying Corps and Royal Australian Air Force⁶³

Fixed-Wing

Deperdussin Type A: The RAAF had two of these aircraft, built by the British branch of the Deperdussin Company. They were single-seat monoplanes operated by the Central Flying School as CFS 4 and CFS 5. They were used as trainers, serving from 1913–1918. CFS 5 was used for engine-starting practice, rigging instruction and for taxi training. This aircraft is on display at Point Cook and is the oldest existing Australian aircraft, either military or civilian.⁶⁴



Deperdussin Type A aircraft with three-cylinder Anzani engine.

Blériot XI: The RAAF had only one example of this aircraft (CFS 6), which was used by the CFS, mainly for ground instruction. It was a tractor-configuration monoplane. The aircraft used by Maurice Guillaux is now held in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.⁶⁵

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_aircraft_of_the_Royal_Australian_Air_Force, accessed 24 November 2017.

⁶⁴ <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C159106>, accessed 24 November 2017..

⁶⁵ <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/6230>, accessed 24 November 2017.

Caudron G.III: This was a single-engine French biplane. It was used by the Central Flying School and also by the First Half-Flight, AFC in Mesopotamia.⁶⁶

Maurice Farman Hydro-Aeroplane: This was the aircraft flown by Maurice Guillaux and was used, as CFS 7, as a trainer by the Central Flying School, 1914–1917.

Maurice Farman MF.7 Longhorn: This was a biplane whose name is derived from the distinctive front-mounted elevator and elongated skids. It was used by the Central Flying School as CFS 15, and also by the Mesopotamian Half-Flight, AFC in 1915–1916.⁶⁷

Maurice Farman MF.11 Shorthorn: This was a biplane used mainly for reconnaissance and as a light bomber early in World War 1, later used as a trainer. It was operated by the Central Flying School, N° 5 (Training) Squadron, AFC in the United Kingdom, and also by the Mesopotamian Half-Flight, AFC in 1915–1916. In September 1917, a MF Shorthorn was flown from Victoria in the search for the German raider *SMS Wolf*; the search was unsuccessful but the MF Shorthorn was the first aircraft to fly on war operations in Australia.⁶⁸

Dassault Mirage IIIO (A & F): The Dassault Mirage III was selected as the Sabre replacement.⁶⁹ Two aircraft were shipped to Australia as fully-equipped major assemblies and were completed at Avalon by the Government Aircraft Factories. The first forty-eight aircraft were assembled in Australia as Mirage IIIO (F) interceptors, with the next fifty being built as IIIO (A) ground attack variants.

Dassault Mystère 20: This is an eight to ten seat corporate jet. Three aircraft were operated by N° 34 Squadron RAAF in 1967–1989.

Dassault Falcon 900: This is a corporate jet carrying nineteen passengers. Five aircraft were operated by N° 34 Squadron RAAF in 1989–2003.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caudron_G3, accessed 24 November 2017.

⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farman_MF.7, accessed 24 November 2017.

⁶⁸ Isaacs, Keith, 1971, *Military Aircraft of Australia*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial pp. 34, 36.

⁶⁹ Wing Commander M.R. Susans (compiler) *The RAAF Mirage Story*, Point Cook, Royal Australian Air Force Museum, 1990, p. viii.

⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_aircraft_of_the_Royal_Australian_Air_Force, accessed 14 December 2017.

Rotary Wing

Aérospatiale Alouette III: This is a single-engine, light utility helicopter. Three aircraft were used (1964–1967) at Woomera Rocket Range for light passenger transport and recovery of missile parts after test firings.⁷¹

Aérospatiale AS.350B Squirrel/Écureuil: This is a single-engine, light utility helicopter. It was operated by the RAAF in 1984–1990.⁷²

Royal Australian Navy⁷³

Aérospatiale AS350BA Squirrel: This is essentially the same as the RAAF version, except for a different engine with wider-chord main-rotor blades and a different tail rotor servo. Thirteen aircraft were operated by 723 Squadron, RAN, mainly for training. Having served the RAN for thirty-three years, it has been one of the most successful airframes in naval aviation history.

NHIndustries MRH 90: This is a medium-sized, twin-engine, multi-role military helicopter. There are two versions: the Tactical Transport Helicopter (TTH) for Army use, and the navalised NATO Frigate Helicopter (NFH). Of the total order of forty-six aircraft, four were manufactured in Europe and the remainder in Brisbane by Australian Aerospace. Six aircraft are operated by 808 Squadron, RAN, the remainder by the Australian Army.

Australian Army⁷⁴

NHIndustries MRH 90: This is the Tactical Transport Helicopter (TTH) variant. Forty aircraft are operated, mainly by the 5th Aviation Regiment, at RAAF Base, Townsville.

Eurocopter (now Airbus Helicopters) Tiger: The Tiger ARH is the attack version ordered by the Australian Army. Twenty-two of the helicopters were shipped to Australia in parts and assembled locally in Brisbane by Australian Aerospace.

⁷¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aérospatiale_Alouette_III, accessed 4 December 2017.

⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Aircraft_of_the_Royal_Australian_Air_Force, accessed 4 December 2017.

⁷³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_aircraft_of_the_Royal_Australian_Navy, accessed 4 December 2017.

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Australian_Army_aircraft, accessed 5 December 2017.

APPENDIX TWO

Citations for French awards to Walter Oswald Watt

JOURNAL OFFICIEL DE LA REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE, 24 février 1915,
p. 968

Le Ministre de la Guerre
Vu le décret du 13 août 1914

Arrête :

ARTICLE UNIQUE – Sont inscrits aux tableaux spéciaux de la Légion d'honneur et de la médaille militaire, les militaires dont les noms suivent :

LEGION D'HONNEUR – Pour chevalier.
(pour prendre rang du 10 février 1915)

M. WATT (W.O.) capitaine, service aéronautique.

De nationalité australienne. Pilot breveté militaire, s'est engagé pour la durée de la guerre le 3 août 1914. Pilote très hardi, du sang-froid à toute épreuve et plein d'entrain. Au cours d'une reconnaissance le 24 octobre, son appareil eut une panne de moteur au-dessus des lignes allemandes. Ne pouvant le ramener dans les lignes françaises, il réussit du moins à atterrir entre les lignes françaises et les lignes allemandes sous un feu d'artillerie des plus violents, qui mit l'appareil hors de service. Le pilote et l'observateur purent toutefois s'échapper. L'avion fut ramené dans les lignes à la faveur de la nuit. Chargé quelques jours après d'une reconnaissance avec un nouvel appareil, le capitaine Watt fut violemment canoné [sic] par une batterie spéciale contre avions. Bien que son appareil fut touché et qu'en particulier le longeron arrière de l'aile gauche, pièce absolument essentielle, eut été fêlé dans toute son épaisseur, cet officier poursuivit sa reconnaissance avec le plus grand sang-froid, et n'attrit [sic] qu'après a - voir complètement rempli sa mission.

CITATIONS à l'ORDRE de l'ARMÉE

ORDRE DU 30 septembre 1915

WATT Walter Oswald Capitaine de l'armée australienne – aviateur à l'esc.
M.F. 41

Officier d'élite – Pilote d'une grande audace et d'un sang froid imperturbable. N'hésite pas à survoler les lignes ennemies à faible altitude chaque fois que les circonstances l'exigent. A effectué de nombreuses reconnaissances très périlleuses et a eu son avion fréquemment atteint par des éclats d'obus (20 juillet; 9, 23, 24 août ; 9, 10, 11 sept.) Blessé à la tête le 10 août, a poursuivi sa reconnaissance avec le plus grand calme.

ARMEE ACTIVE

Infanterie

NOMINATION

Par décret en date du 26 mai 1916

M. WATT (Walter Oswald) Capitaine dans la milice de l'Armée Australienne, est nommé Capitaine à la Légion étrangère (titre étranger pour la durée de la guerre (rang du 6 août 1914).

Par décision ministérielle [sic] du même jour, cet Officier est détaché au service aéronautique.

Cette nomination serait suivie d'une acceptation de démission d'office du Capitaine WATT, à la date à laquelle l'intéressé a été mis à la disposition de l'Armée britannique, le 13 avril 1916.

Proposition approuvée 15 mai 1916.

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