

THE FOUNDATION AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE *ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE* OF SYDNEY

Antecedents : Paris and Melbourne

On 21 July 1883 the French diplomat Paul Cambon, then Resident General in Tunisia, initiated a meeting with interested parties to establish a mechanism for the support of the teaching of French in Tunisia. One of the participants was Pierre Foncin, a former Professor of Geography, one of the most vocal representatives of the so-called "Geography Movement"¹ in France and a former Director General of Education. At the time Foncin was an Inspector General in the Ministry of Public Instruction. He immediately saw the potential of Cambon's idea for a much broader project: "C'est dans ce Comité [...] que naquirent l'idée et le nom de l'*Alliance française*." *Bulletin de l'Alliance française* (Paris), henceforth *BAF*, 1909, p.224

Foncin was the true founder of the *Alliance*, bringing together two fundamental aspects of the political agenda of the then Prime Minister (or more accurately "Président du Conseil") Jules Ferry, that is the ideal of compulsory free education for all and the urgency of colonial expansion to enable France to regain its self-esteem, restore its image abroad and strengthen its international position in each of the main areas of economic, political and cultural influence after the disaster of the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath. As a militant geographer passionately committed to colonial expansion and as a senior educational administrator, Foncin was the ideal agent to combine and implement these policies. Concerned as he was ²with diminishing birth rates in France and the reduction in the number of speakers of French in the world, he saw the acquisition of colonies as a means of increasing the globe's Francophone population: "Puisque [la France] manque d'enfants, qui l'empêche de franciser les fils de ses sujets et protégés coloniaux? [...] Le premier effet de cette annexion morale doit être l'enseignement de notre langue." *BAF* 1888, pp.166-73

There was, however, more to the pedagogical project of the *Alliance française* than merely this desire to increase the population of the French Empire: as knowledge is the key to progress, Jules Ferry was deeply convinced that France had an obligation to bring science, technology and culture to the other nations of the world, especially the nations of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. This was a manifestation of what Albert Salon calls French "messianism". Salon 1983 pp.31-39

The founding fathers described the *Alliance* as an "Association nationale pour la propagation de la langue française dans les colonies et à l'étranger". Its major planned activities were listed as follows:

- setting up and subsidising French schools, or introducing French classes into schools where there are none
- training teachers, if necessary by setting up Teacher Training Colleges
- distributing rewards to enhance school attendance
- awarding prizes and travelling scholarships to the best students
- encouraging the publication of works capable of assisting the *Alliance* in its efforts, in particular work on pedagogical theory and practice
- publishing a Bulletin
- holding lectures and facilitating a range of other forms of "propaganda".²

Clearly the initial emphasis had been on

- (1) the *Alliance's* colonial vocation (even though promotion of French in foreign countries was also included)
- (2) work in and through the school system (thereby targeting the school-age population)
- (3) the promotion of language (rather than language and culture).

After a few years, however, this agenda gradually changed, and within a decade or two the character of the *Alliance* diverged substantially from Pierre Foncin's original objectives, even though he remained the effective leader of the organisation until the beginning of World War I, initially as Secretary General and subsequently as President.

First of all, the original assimilationist policies started to be questioned and the paternalistic model, the one-way process of the French giving and the natives or foreigners receiving, began to shift towards an increasing interest in other civilisations, gradually generating the idea of what became known much later as the "dialogue des cultures".

One can also observe a decline of the colonial branches of the *Alliance*. The *Alliance's* official historian³ suggests that the reason for diminishing activity in the colonies was the growing presence of the State-sponsored French education system in these territories:

L'Alliance, au début de la colonisation, avait tenté de suppléer à la carence des services officiels de l'Instruction publique dans les territoires nouvellement conquis; mais à mesure que ces services (en Tunisie, au Maroc,

à Madagascar notamment) vont prendre la relève, l'Alliance aura tendance à s'effacer et à ne plus jouer qu'un "rôle d'auxiliaire". Bruézière 1983, p.62

This gradual shift away from the emphasis on schools in the colonies coincided with the increasing popularity of French classes for adults in "developed countries" (as we would now call them) and the Paris *Alliance française* summer schools for foreigners, launched in 1894. A year earlier, in 1893, the wish was expressed at the Annual General Meeting of the *Alliance* "que notre Association [...reporte] toute l'énergie de son action dans les pays étrangers proprement dits". *BAF* 1893, p. 11

Another significant change was the replacement of the exclusive emphasis on language by a more eclectic interest in language and culture, the latter in all the richness of its manifestations (literature, music, theatre, art, etc.) No doubt this change was one of the consequences of the shift from school education to adult education, and from predominantly colonial audiences to a Western-type public.

With the waning of the paternalistic model, the *Alliance* became increasingly decentralised, whilst still maintaining strong ties with the Centre. The resulting balancing act became one of the distinctive features of the organisation: it aimed to harness the goodwill and resources of the local populations, using the latter as volunteer workers in the service of French cultural expansion, whilst also enjoying French government support. The ambivalent status of the *Alliance* as an independent institution with strong links to the executive (the cultural arm of government) occasionally causes tensions but on the whole — and provided there is some give and take on the periphery and a tactful approach to control by the Centre — it has miraculously proved to be workable. In view of the large financial and administrative autonomy granted to its foreign committees, the changing *Alliance* was now structurally best adapted to the requirements of regions where the local membership was both sufficiently self-motivated and sufficiently prosperous to be at least partly self-supporting. Not surprisingly the countries of Europe and North America, as well as Australia, had a clear advantage over less developed nations.⁴

The first *Alliance française* to be established in Australia saw the light of day in Melbourne, in 1890, six years after the foundation of the *Alliance* in Paris.⁵ In 1888 a French-speaking Mauritian settler, Mr Astruc, proposed the establishment of a branch in Melbourne. On the advice of the Melbourne French Consul Léon Déjardin the Secretary General in Paris, Pierre Foncin, approved the idea but not the proposer.⁶ A French or an Australian *délégué*

was preferred, and Astruc's employer, Francophile Melbourne solicitor J. Woolf, was designated in the first place. Eventually, however, the first Australian *Alliance* committee was chaired by a woman, Mme Berthe Mouchette, a Melbourne artist, art teacher and joint owner (with her sister) of the St Kilda Girls' School "Oberwyl". Pierre Foncin's choice of Mme Mouchette was probably motivated by his preference for a teacher as founder and leader of the Melbourne *Alliance*.⁷ In fact Mme Mouchette was able to bring together the pedagogical and the social objectives of the association. She was so successful in attracting the cream of Melbourne society to the *Alliance* (with leading socialite Lady Clarke as "Présidente d'honneur") that, when two years later she moved to Adelaide, Melbourne's high society took over the Committee, with wives of governors and supreme court judges and a few carefully selected members of the French community running it.

To sum up, within three or four years an initiative originally put forward by a Mauritian immigrant was diverted first to his Australian employer, a legal man, then to a French woman in the teaching profession, to be eventually appropriated by the Melbourne establishment. It remained under the control of the latter for a considerable time.

Although the Melbourne *Alliance* organised examinations for students of French, distributed prizes to encourage the study of the language, put on literary and musical soirées, set up a library and generally promoted French culture, it was most reputed — perhaps unfairly — for its social connections. By the end of the century the need to open up the organisation and lessen its dominance by Melbourne society pushed Vice-Consul (and later Consul) Paul Maistré to attempt to reform the Melbourne *Alliance*, by then called the "Alliance française de Victoria". He strove to introduce greater professionalism into its pedagogical and cultural activities and make it more sensitive and better adapted to the needs of ordinary citizens. After some pyrrhic victories, Maistré's long struggle ended in defeat — the Melbourne establishment, bypassing the Australian authorities, used its London connections to demand and obtain Maistré's recall through the traditional French-British diplomatic channels — this took place in 1908.

This depressing episode, meticulously recounted and analysed by Colin Thornton-Smith,^{Thornton-Smith 1994 & 1997} illustrates some of the fundamental choices all branches of the *Alliance* have to face from time to time. Should the *Alliance* be a closed social club or a professionally run organisation open to all? But also, should the *Alliance* be governed by a locally elected committee, or should it be controlled by a "délégué" of the Paris

headquarters or a seconded French civil servant? Choices are not always as straightforward or as obvious as one would expect — complex issues are often at stake.

Towards the establishment of an *Alliance française* in Sydney : the birth of a library (1896)

In the second half of 1895, five years after the foundation of the Melbourne *Alliance*, the French Consul General in Sydney, Georges Biard d'Aunet,⁸ personally took preliminary steps to set up, if not an *Alliance française*, at least an *Alliance française* Library.⁹ 1895 was his third year in his Australian posting, and his wife had just decided to return to France with their two sons to enable the boys to enjoy the benefits of a French education. It is quite likely that the *Alliance* initiative was connected with the Consul General's new found leisure. His commitment was total, and when he set up a committee, he personally assumed its effective chairmanship virtually for the rest of his term in Sydney, whilst he was content with the honorary presidency of the other local French institutions (Benevolent Society, Board of the *Courrier australien* and French Chamber of Commerce).

Although we do not have a precise date for it, we know that Biard d'Aunet established a *Comité de patronage* some time in the second half of 1895. The following report appeared in the *Bulletin de l'Alliance française* of Paris in its December 1895 - January-February 1896 issue:

Grâce aux efforts dévoués de M. le Consul de France à Sydney, une bibliothèque française vient de s'organiser dans cette grande ville. Un Comité de patronage comprenant le gouverneur, le cardinal-archevêque, le ministre de l'instruction publique, le chancelier de l'Université, le consul de France et nombre d'autres personnalités en vue s'est formé pour assurer le succès de l'entreprise. Le Comité central de l'*Alliance française* a fait récemment un important envoi de livres à cette bibliothèque¹⁰

The establishment of this preliminary committee of distinguished patrons in the second half of 1895 explains why and how the legend was born of 1895 being the foundation year of the *Alliance française* of Sydney — even though there was no *Alliance* Library in 1895 — let alone an *Alliance française*.

The Library was officially opened on 1 March 1896¹¹ It began with a collection of 600 volumes, many of them donated by the Paris committee of the *Alliance*. In June of the same year the French Ministry of Public

Instruction sent a further 160 books, and soon afterwards the Paris *Alliance* despatched another 120 volumes. The following year, one of the Library's life members, Mr Higginson, donated the sum of Frs 500 for the purchase and binding of books. *Courrier australien*, henceforth CA, 8.1.1898

The Library was run by a management committee chaired by the Consul General and always referred to as "le Comité de Direction de la Bibliothèque" or simply "le Comité de la Bibliothèque", never as the "Comité de l'Alliance française". CA 31.10.1896, 2.1.1897, 25.12.1897. 8.1.1898. 17.6.1899. 29.7.1899 An Annual General Meeting of subscribers was held around Easter, generally at the Wool Exchange in Macquarie Place. CA 3.4.1897 The Library was located in the rooms of the Consulate General in the Bond Street Chambers (2 Bond Street) although the intention was that when more resources became available, it would move into its own premises with a suitable reading room. CA 31.10.1896 By October 1896 it had sixty-five subscribers, including some life members. The Governor of New South Wales himself took out a life subscription. CA 28.3.1896 At a meeting held on 22 December 1897, the Library Committee noted with satisfaction that the demand for French books had been well in excess of its original expectations.

Two and a half years after its opening, the Library's holdings consisted of 1641 volumes and 3,722 loans had been recorded since the opening date of 1 March 1896. Books were catalogued in three categories: literature, miscellaneous essays ("études diverses") and teaching material, including dictionaries, etc¹²

No reason has ever been given for the Consul General's decision to establish a lending library in the first place rather than a fully fledged *Alliance française* from the outset, but the most likely explanation is that since Sydney already had a private sector French cultural organisation, Mme Juliette Henry's *Cercle littéraire français*, established in 1893, the Consul General did not wish to compete with it¹³ One of the ironies of Georges Biard d'Aunet's conciliatory attitude to Mme Henry was that the beneficiary of his thoughtful way of proceeding could not be persuaded that the Consul General was not her mortal enemy¹⁴

The *Cercle littéraire français* held literary and musical evenings on the first Wednesday of every month, not unlike the *soirées* of the Melbourne *Alliance*. Such functions were consistent with international norms as described by Pierre Foncin in 1897:

Dans la plupart des Etats de la civilisation occidentale [l'Alliance] se borne à un rôle purement littéraire. [...] Elle contribue à la fondation de cercles de conversation française, de bibliothèques françaises, de sociétés françaises où des étrangers se réunissent pour entendre des lectures et des conférences françaises, pour jouer des pièces françaises, ou même pour danser et s'amuser honnêtement en français. *BAF* 1897, p. 14

After a short illness Mme Henry died in 1898¹⁵ and her *Cercle* was disbanded. *CA* 29.1.1898, 5.2.1898

A year later, in 1899, there being no longer any need to restrict the activities of the Sydney *Alliance* to those of a lending library, Georges Biard d'Aunet took steps to establish a fully fledged *Alliance française*.

The foundation of the *Alliance française* of Sydney (8 June 1899)

In its 17 June 1899 issue the *Courrier australien* announced the upgrading of the Sydney Library management committee to a proper *Alliance française* Committee.

Sur l'initiative de M. le Consul général de France et avec le concours de l'*Alliance française* de Paris, une Bibliothèque française a été fondée il y a trois ans à Sydney. [...] Le succès sans précédent — du moins en Australie, — de cette institution, a appelé l'attention du Conseil d'Administration de l'*Alliance française* de Paris, qui a fait parvenir ses félicitations au Comité de la Bibliothèque et l'a invité à étendre son action en Nouvelle-Galles du Sud pour l'encouragement de l'étude de la langue et de la littérature françaises. Pour répondre au désir exprimé par l'*Alliance française*, le Comité de la Bibliothèque, dans une réunion spéciale tenue le 8 de ce mois, a décidé de se transformer en *Comité de l'Alliance française* à Sydney.

It is difficult to know, without access to the archives of the *Alliance française* of Paris (quarantined, as we have seen, in Moscow), whether the actual initiative came from the Paris headquarters or from Georges Biard d'Aunet in Sydney. On circumstantial evidence and in the absence of conclusive proofs, the latter seems far more likely, despite the *Courrier's* contrary claim.

The *Courrier australien* of 17 June 1899, referring to the close relationship between the Victorian *Alliance française* and Melbourne's high society,

commented somewhat ambiguously both on the implications of the Melbourne committee's policies and on Sydney's lack of similar patronage:

Le Comité de l'Alliance française de Melbourne ne demeure pas inactif mais il se manifeste et rayonne plus spécialement dans le monde fashionable [sic]. Chaque année il donne une ou deux soirées littéraires et musicales qui réunissent un public très select, dont lord et lady Brassey [the Governor and his wife] font presque toujours partie. Les résultats d'une propagande ainsi limitée ne peuvent pas être considérables. Ils ont cependant leur valeur. Si le Comité de Sydney avait trouvé des appuis et des patronages aussi effectifs que ceux de lord et lady Brassey, de lady Clarke, etc..., qui ont témoigné la plus grande bienveillance au Comité de Melbourne, il eût été sans doute fort heureux de les utiliser.

The criticism of the Melbourne *Alliance* is barely disguised. As far as the new Sydney *Alliance* is concerned, there is every reason to believe that the choice of different priorities was deliberate, and came from the Consul General himself: they did not include the courting of the local establishment.

The key phrase in the June 17 *Courrier australien* announcement was the words "l'encouragement de l'étude de la langue et de la littérature françaises". All the plans formulated and the action undertaken by the new Sydney Committee during the months following the meeting of 8 June 1899 point to a wholehearted adherence to this specific policy. The Sydney *Alliance* was not going to compete with its Melbourne counterpart for social triumphs — its ambitions were almost exclusively pedagogical. Given Pierre Foncin's approval of the predominantly social and cultural orientation of Western-type branches of the *Alliance*, Sydney's exclusively pedagogical orientation is unlikely to have come from Paris but was almost certainly the choice of Georges Biard d'Aunet.

The Sydney *Alliance* invited members of the public to join the new association¹⁶ By the end of November 1899 it had one hundred and twenty-two members of whom more than half (seventy-four) were also library subscribers.

The Sydney *Alliance française* under Georges Biard d'Aunet (1899-1904)

The *Courrier australien*, which became the Sydney *Alliance's* "official organ" from its issue of 16 September 1899, reported little or no change in the composition of the Committee during the Biard d'Aunet years. We have seen that its predecessor, the Library Management Committee, consisted primarily of members of the Sydney French community, with possibly one committee member of non-French background¹⁷ This situation carried over to the fully fledged *Alliance* committee, which appears to have been controlled virtually single-handedly by the Consul General, without any visible input from either the Sydney French community or local Australian Francophiles. In 1902 the Committee consisted of the Consul General, Georges Biard d'Aunet (President), MM. Brasier de Thuy, le R.P. Le Rennelet, Paul Marcus (Treasurer), Eugène Michaut (Secretary), Louis Nettement (Secretary of the Examinations sub-committee), Emile Rougier (known as Dr Rougier), Maurice Ségur and Charles Shard. Of these Nettement, Michaut and Marcus were on the consular staff, and once again Shard was the only possibly non-French-born member. In contrast to the Melbourne *Alliance*, neither women nor Australians were represented on the full committee¹⁸ — it was a "paternalistic" committee, in every sense of the word.

As we will see, the sole objective of Biard d'Aunet's *Alliance* was the encouragement of the study of French. It was not until late in 1903 that in a radical departure from its original "pan-pedagogical" policies, the Committee accepted to be associated with a social event, a ball — an *Alliance française* benefit ball — described as a "Bal-Conversation" [sic]. It was held on 6 October 1903 in the Paddington Town Hall, under the presidency of the Lady Mayoress, Mrs T. Hughes. This function was honoured by the presence of the State Governor, Sir Harry Rawson, and Miss Rawson, his daughter. According to the *Courrier australien* it was a hugely successful evening as it was attended by "[des gens] du même monde" who all knew each other, — a good definition of the "Tout-Sydney" — it would be a precedent for similar functions in the future. *CA* 10.10.1903

At a meeting of the full Committee held on 23 June 1904 Georges Biard d'Aunet confirmed his resignation as President of the *Alliance française* of Sydney, to take effect on 30th June, foreshadowed at the preceding committee meeting, although he was prepared to continue on the Committee as a private member. Louis Nettement (Biard d'Aunet's Deputy Consul) took over as President, with Dr Rougier as Vice-President. On the incoming

President's motion, Georges Biard d'Aunet was made Honorary Life President ("Président d'honneur perpétuel"). Although the reason for Biard d'Aunet's resignation had not been given officially at that stage, in fact he stood down in anticipation of his forthcoming retirement.^{CA 2.7.1904}

Soon after its establishment in 1899 the Sydney *Alliance* defined its priorities as follows.^{CA 17.6.1899}

- creation of a special library sub-committee ("commission chargée de la bibliothèque") responsible for the continued maintenance, growth and development of the library^{CA 9.2.1901}
- prizes for the study of French (offered to the University of Sydney and a list of selected secondary schools)
- help to teachers ("professeurs et institutrices" [sic]) with the acquisition of up-to-date textbooks, either as gifts or by obtaining substantial discounts (approx. 50 %) for them, an offer apparently very few schools took up but which the *Alliance* was determined to maintain as a means of improving teacher development^{CA 9.2.1901}
- plans for the setting up of a reading room with periodicals, reference books, maps, guides, railway timetables, shipping schedules, etc, to facilitate both study and travel in France (access would be free to this room, NOT restricted to members)
- plans for the introduction of examinations leading to the conferral of *Alliance française* "diplômes de capacité" for proficiency in French — eventually the Committee introduced a "certificat de capacité" and a higher "diplôme de capacité" as its seals of approval of persons qualified to teach French — in order to assist families in the choice of competent teachers for their children, the ultimate purpose being the encouragement of teachers proficient in the language at the expense of those with inadequate skills (mainly spoken skills).

All these objectives relate exclusively to the teaching of French and French literature, which had also been the main motivation for the setting up of the Library in 1896¹⁹ The *Alliance*, together with the *Courrier australien*, held very definite views on how the language had to be taught. The *Courrier* had argued, right from its foundation in 1892, that French was taught in the colony as a dead language, through exclusively bookish methods and often by poorly qualified foreigners, i.e. non-French citizens. In its editorial of 29 July 1899, dealing with the topic of "L'enseignement de la langue française en Australie" in the very context of the recent establishment of the *Alliance française*, the *Courrier* criticised traditional approaches to the teaching of the language:

Demandez à n'importe qui dans un salon, un club, s'il parle français. La réponse est non. Demandez s'il a étudié le français. La réponse sera oui. [...C'est que, les études ont été faites] sans plaisir, sans intérêt, par conséquent, sans profit.

For once the paper recognised that the situation was no better in France: "[Les Français] eux aussi ont perdu leur temps, leur argent et leurs efforts à l'étude mal comprise et stérile des langues étrangères." Since, however, new teaching methods had been developed, a young country such as Australia, free of the tyranny of old routines, was in a privileged position to take advantage of them.^{CA 29.7.1899 and 12.8.1899}

From its very first meetings, the Committee resolved to take a variety of steps to bring about a change in the teaching of French in New South Wales. At a meeting held on 7 September the President reported on his discussions with the Minister for Education, J.A. Hogue, who was sympathetic to his request that the teaching of French in the schools of the colony "ait un caractère plus moderne et plus pratique".^{CA 9.9.1899} Subsequently the same pressure was exerted on Hogue's successor, J. Perry: Georges Biard d'Aunet offered the assistance and advice of the *Alliance* Committee and proposed that the so-called "Direct Method" be used on a trial basis in a small number of selected schools.^{CA 9.12.1899} The President also liaised with the Council of the Teachers' Association of New South Wales and convinced it to establish a sub-committee with a brief to review the selection of textbooks for the study of French in the colony²⁰ in consultation with the *Alliance française* Committee.^{CA 9.9.1899}

The new Sydney *Alliance*, in contradistinction to its Melbourne counterpart, aimed at becoming "un centre, un point d'appui, auprès duquel pourront se rallier et trouver conseil, assistance, les propagateurs de l'enseignement du français." ^{CA 29.7.1899} For this admirable intention to be translated into actual practice, it would have been necessary to establish a climate of trust. Unfortunately neither the Consul General nor his Committee nor the official organ of the *Alliance*, the *Courrier australien*, possessed the necessary tact to create such a climate and make teachers receptive to their initiatives. Whilst the reasons for Biard d'Aunet's dissatisfaction with the teaching of French in New South Wales were understandable, compromise and flexibility, rather than abrasive attitudes, would have been far more useful to achieve change, especially from the outside. The *Courrier* in particular encouraged confrontation — in an editorial published soon after the setting up of the fully fledged *Alliance* Committee, it suggested that the "mesures encourageantes et bienveillantes" originally contemplated by the Committee

were inadequate and a more aggressive approach was needed to achieve reform.^{CA 29.7.1899} Georges Biard d'Aunet must have been torn between his diplomatic training and his natural love of a good fight. The latter usually prevailed²¹

Let us take an example of this push for change. Originally the winners of the prizes offered by the *Alliance* to the best students of French in New South Wales were selected by the teachers themselves in the schools concerned but at a meeting held on 18 January 1900 the Committee resolved to take control and use the prizes to influence the style of teaching in the colony, putting the emphasis on French conversation. From then on, small *Alliance française* panels of native speakers, including at least one lady if the candidates were girls, conducted examinations to determine whether the prizes would be awarded at all and if so, to whom. Whilst there had been eleven institutions participating in the *Alliance* prize award exercise in the first year (1899), their number was almost halved the following year²² The message was getting through: the purpose of the new rules was to promote proficiency in the spoken language and keep a check on the standard of the teaching of French in Sydney.

Simultaneously strong pressures for reform were developing at both the University and in the State Education Department. These pressures were to lead to the adoption of the so-called "Direct Method" which had originated in France and Germany a decade earlier.²³ In the opening years of the twentieth century the "Direct Method" was enthusiastically embraced by G.G. Nicholson, the young lecturer who had just been appointed to supervise the teaching of modern languages at the University of Sydney, and Peter Board, the new Director for Education.²⁴

The Direct Method Movement, which had been so enthusiastically recommended by Georges Biard d'Aunet to the Minister for Education in 1899, went largely ignored by the *Alliance* and the *Courrier australien* once the University and the Education Department had adopted it. By 1902 the French weekly described it as "la tarte à la crème' des réformateurs".^{CA 11.1.1902}

There was another source of conflict with the local teaching profession. At several stages in its history the *Courrier australien* argued that only native speakers of French should be allowed to teach French. In the very first year of its publication, in 1892, the *Courrier* declared its hostility to non-French teachers of French: "this journal protests against non French French teachers. [...] The Native Teacher, Nothing But The Native Teacher [...]".²⁵ The same

views were reasserted by the paper in 1897, under F.O. Cailliau's directorship, with reference to a vacancy at the University of Sydney.^{CA} 27.11.1897

The *Alliance française* set its targets at a more realistic level, advocating that French should be taught only by teachers trained and certified by recognised French educational institutions or, failing that, by the *Alliance française* itself. Understandably this policy was not, and indeed could not, be embraced by the University of Sydney, or any other university in Australia or elsewhere.²⁶ Its French equivalent would have been laughed out of court by the Sorbonne — in fact foreigners were not employed by French universities until well after World War II.

Nicholson himself adopted the compromise solution of always having a native speaker on his staff to provide a model of good spoken French. He instituted the position of "lecteur" — this person was specially brought to Australia from regions of France where (in Nicholson's opinion) the purest French was spoken. Their employment was normally limited to three years, in order to ensure that their French was "up-to-date" and uncorrupted by English language interference.²⁷

The *Alliance* Committee in Sydney eventually decided to offer a "Certificat de capacité pour enseigner la pratique usuelle et élémentaire" and a higher "Diplôme de langue et littérature, pour enseigner dans les écoles, institutions et collèges", the "Diplôme" also covering the teaching of literature.^{CA} 9.2.1901 In Biard d'Aunet's mind both these qualifications were to complement University qualifications, with the clear implication that by themselves the latter were not to be trusted.²⁸ In 1904 the Sydney *Alliance* explicitly invited Honours graduates to have their qualifications confirmed by the *Alliance*.^{CA} 7.5.1904 Biard d'Aunet's principled but rigid policies, whether right or wrong in themselves, constituted strong disincentives to closer cooperation with the local educational authorities.

At the beginning of 1905 Georges Biard d'Aunet's twelve-year term as Consul General came to an end. There is no doubt that he was a remarkable (if flawed) Consul General. He was also an exceptional *Alliance* President, with outstanding achievements to his name. Nonetheless the time had come for new directions.

The *Alliance française* after Georges Biard d'Aunet: the Pinard years (1905-1908)

Louis Nettement's presidency was to be shortlived. In May 1905 he returned to France and subsequently settled in Egypt. He was replaced by the Vice-President, Emile Rougier, a surgeon and research scientist, and the representative of the Pasteur Institute in Australia, who also doubled as part-time Russian Consul. Dr Rougier appears to have remained President for the best part of five years, until March 1910, although he seems to have spent some of that time in France, on research missions.²⁹ The position of Honorary Secretary was held by Paul Marcus, one of the longest serving staff members of the Consulate General whose career, with the exception of a stint in Auckland and another in Melbourne, was Sydney-based, and who appears to have been responsible for the day-to-day running of the *Alliance*. Dr Rougier was a well respected senior member of the Sydney French community, with considerable intellectual authority, but there is nothing in the records to suggest that he was actively involved in the work of the *Alliance*.

The new distinctive feature of the Sydney *Alliance* from 1905 to 1908, under Albert Pinard's term as Consul General, was the high level of community participation in its activities. This was in sharp contrast to the previous period, since until mid-1904 control was concentrated in the hands of the President. Instead of remaining a one-man show, as it tended to be under Georges Biard d'Aunet, the *Alliance* was now enriched by the contribution of an increasing number of members of the local French community, often women — and simultaneously there was a growing involvement of Australians in the activities of the *Alliance*. It would appear — but this is more an educated guess than a certainty — that the inspiration and the driving force behind this collective effort came from the Honorary President, the Consul General, rather than the President. Albert Pinard seems to have continued in his predecessor's footsteps but in the guise of an *Eminence grise* and the paternalistic style of his predecessor gave way to a more open, community-friendly approach.

Albert Pinard's popularity was partly due to his own contribution (including a substantial donation of books to the *Alliance* Library, obtained from fellow members of the "Société des Gens de lettres" in Paris) and partly to his daughter Claude's enthusiastic and spontaneous participation in the work of the *Alliance*. Pinard had begun his career in the administration of the "Bibliothèque Nationale" in Paris, then worked for many years as a journalist before joining the consular corps in 1886, serving mainly in the Far-East and

the Middle-East. In contrast to Georges Biard d'Aunet's colder, self-reliant and solitary style (partly due to his family's return to France in 1895 and, at a more general level, to the tensions between France and Australia during much of his term of office), the new Consul General, together with his wife and mainly his daughter, helped the local French colony to open up and build bridges towards the Australian community, no doubt basking in the warmth of the recently signed *Entente cordiale*. He was more flexible in his approach to people and problems than his predecessor, and as a result his term as Consul General was both happy and successful.

The first signs of a "socialisation" of the Sydney *Alliance* had already appeared in the last months of Biard d'Aunet's presidency, but clearly the trend was to accelerate under his successors. French conversation evenings to attract new Australian members were organised by a new "Comité des Dames" set up under Louis Nettement's presidency^{CA 2.7.1904} and the same sub-committee was also responsible for the organisation of the recently introduced "Concours de récitation" for students of New South Wales schools.

Social and cultural gatherings were first held at Baumann's Café at 107 Pitt Street but they soon moved to St James' Hall in Phillip Street where the catering was generally entrusted to a friendly neighbour, Gaston Liévain, the owner of "Paris House", a well-known eating and meeting place for Sydney French residents and Francophile Australians.³⁰

In September 1906 the *Alliance* held an open "brainstorming" session for members and interested outsiders to determine the best ways of involving the public and raising funds for both the library and miscellaneous activities designed to promote the study and practice of the French language. The meeting attracted approximately 50 participants, including State politician Sir William McMillan, and the 1907 programme of activities partly emerged from their deliberations. Such a meeting was a significant innovation for the *Alliance*, so tightly controlled for so many years by its founder until the last months of his term in Sydney in 1904-1905. These initiatives foreshadowed the rise of a rejuvenated *Alliance française*.

At a farewell dinner in October 1906 for Brasier de Thuy, the outgoing Sydney Agent of the Messageries Maritimes shipping line, the Consul General, Albert Pinard, referred to the long association of the guest of honour with the Sydney *Alliance française* in his capacity as Vice-President, and the worry the performance of the *Alliance* tended to cause him. Albert Pinard reassured Brasier de Thuy that "l'Alliance va entrer dans une ère de

renaissance — grâce à d'inappréciables dévouements". [...] Bientôt elle marchera d'un pas assuré, de pair avec ses sœurs", i.e. the Benevolent Society and the Chamber of Commerce. *CA* 12.10.1906

Activities were supported by carefully thought out marketing techniques: tickets were sold by the *Alliance* as well as Angus & Robertson, Paling's and Aengenhyster's Music Store. Admission was free to members but cost 2/6 to visitors and one shilling to students and their teachers. The *Courrier* commented that the 1907 programme (eight evenings) would satisfy "à la fois les amateurs de bonne musique et de littérature française". *CA* 12.4.1907

These meetings, which attracted between 200 and 400 participants each, went under different names over the years: "Causerie, musique" (1904), "Lectures françaises" (from 1905 onwards),³¹ "Soirée artistique et littéraire" (1906), "Soirée-entretien" and "Soirée-lecture" (1907-08), etc. Programmes included short talks, recitation of poetry, musical items, reading or performance of short plays or excerpts from longer plays,³² and almost invariably an opportunity (either in the interval or at the conclusion of the formal proceedings, or both) for French conversation. The periodicity of these meetings generally varied between eight per annum to a regular monthly schedule.

The organisers, normally two members of the Ladies' Committee on a rotating basis, were highly aware of the importance of the spatial arrangements in the meeting hall:

Le Comité désirant être agréable aux personnes qui recherchent des occasions de converser en français a pris des dispositions spéciales dans ce but. Des sièges seront placés tout autour de la salle et la circulation sera très aisée. Nous rappelons que la galerie est à la disposition des personnes qui ne voudront que jouir du spectacle. Le programme musical sera court et il y aura une ou deux récitaions. Rafrâichissements à 10 heures." *CA* 3..5.1907

From 1908 refreshments were followed by dancing ("sauterie") until 11.30 pm or midnight.

There was a new spirit and indeed a new sense of warmth in the relations of the rejuvenated *Sydney Alliance* with both the Sydney French colony and France's Australian friends, including institutional partners such as the Education Department and the University. The *Sydney Alliance's* "socialisation" took an open and therefore less threatening form than Melbourne's more exclusive and "select" social agenda. It was a happy and

dynamic period in the history of the young organisation, facilitating the creation of solid links of friendship between its French and Australian members.

On 5th January 1909 the architect of this renewal, Albert Pinard, aged 56, died of a stroke^{CA 8.1.1909, 15.9.1909} and Vice-Consul Victor Bruel took over the running of the Consulate General in an acting capacity.

The transition period (1909-1910)

After Albert Pinard's untimely death in January 1909 the Sydney *Alliance* began to show signs of fatigue. The impetus gained during Pinard's term in Sydney was all but lost. Instead of the feverish activity of the preceding years, the Committee only planned two functions for 1909, on 28 June and on 30 August respectively. It also found it necessary to launch an appeal to the membership of the *Alliance* and to the Sydney French community to fill the vacancies on what was now called the "Comité des Soirées". All this confirms the hypothesis we formulated in the previous section that the true source of inspiration behind the rebirth of the *Alliance française* had been the Consul General himself, Albert Pinard, even though he only occupied the position of Honorary President.

His successor, Hippolyte Frandin, was no more than a shooting star on Sydney's horizon. He arrived here in November 1909, ten months after Pinard's death, coming from the Dominican Republic. After thirteen months, in December 1910, he left for France, ostensibly for health reasons. A few weeks later he was back in Sydney, but only for a short time, having accepted a post of "Ministre plénipotentiaire" in Bogota (Colombia), a promotion for him in a part of the world he was familiar with. By June 1911 he was gone. The Consul General's wife or family were never mentioned during his short term in Sydney which suggests that he had never intended to commit himself to this posting for any length of time. It is difficult to tell what contribution he would have made had he stayed in Sydney longer, but neither his long series of articles on the Dominican Republic in the *Courrier australien* nor what little we know of his public pronouncements while in Sydney point to a major loss.

On 17 March 1910 the Committee of the *Alliance* met under the chairmanship of the Consul General (M. Frandin) and elected a new Executive.³³ It was a new-look *Alliance*, with its first female president, Mlle Augustine Soubeiran, Co-Principal of Kambala School. Lady McMillan, Sir

William McMillan's French-born wife, continued as Vice-President — she was to be decorated with the Gold Medal of the *Alliance française* of Paris in the course of the year. Paul Marcus continued as Honorary Secretary-Treasurer whilst Mrs Lee became "Déléguée au Comité des fêtes", a new post on the Committee to formalise liaison with an important sub-committee, once again bearing a new name.

At the same meeting, the Consul General presiding, the Committee decided that in future all *Alliance* functions would need to be formally approved by the Committee before they could proceed, a decision that points to some likely recent tensions^{CA 25.3.1910} unless it was no more than the gratuitous manifestation of bureaucracy. There was one function held in the first half of 1910 and three in the second half. In October the Governor General and Lady Dudley agreed to becoming patrons of the *Alliance*.

The Annual General Meeting took place on 16 December 1910 but without the President, Mlle Soubeiran. No explanation was given of her absence but since her biographers often refer to frequent (unidentified) health problems, it is more than likely that her failure to appear was due to some form of a minor breakdown. (Given the official recognition she received for her services the following year, her absence could in no way have had a dishonourable cause.)

At the Annual General Meeting of 16 December 1910 Pierre Durieux was elected President and he remained in that post for over four years. (He actually chaired that meeting, the first time this was done by a President rather than by the Consul General or his Deputy in their capacity as Honorary Presidents.)

When Pierre Durieux retired from the presidency in January 1915, in his speech the then Consul General (Alexandre Chayet) referred to the "sensitive circumstances" under which Durieux had taken over the presidency: "M. Durieux a assumé la présidence de l'Alliance française de Sydney dans des conditions particulièrement délicates, et il a eu le mérite de s'acquitter de ses fonctions avec un tact qui lui a concilié tout le monde."^{CA 12.2.1915} This discreet reference to the events of 1910 is consistent with the interpretation that Mlle Soubeiran was forced to retire from the presidency of the *Alliance* by ill health but did not want her illness to be identified or discussed.

This transition period, from the death of Albert Pinard in January 1909 to the arrival of Alexandre Chayet in November 1911, saw the Consulate General run first by acting consular staff, then by a Consul General who would be

remembered for the shortest term in the history of the post, and finally again by acting consular staff, whilst with Mlle Soubeiran the *Alliance* experienced a presidency lasting almost exactly nine months, from mid-March to mid-December 1910. It was a profoundly unstable and thoroughly unsatisfactory period for the Sydney French colony in general and the *Alliance française* in particular.

With Pierre Durieux's election to the presidency at the end of 1910 the *Alliance* would recover promptly, but the transition period for the Consulate General was to last the best part of another year, pending Hippolyte Frandin's departure in June and Alexandre Chayet's arrival in November 1911.

The *Alliance française* under Pierre Durieux's presidency (1911-1914)

Pierre Durieux had been an active participant in *Alliance* activities in the golden years of 1907 and 1908, before taking over the president's position at the end of 1910 from the incapacitated Mlle Soubeiran. Reporting on one of the 1907 functions, the *Courrier australien* referred to him as someone "sans l'assistance duquel les Soirées de l'Alliance perdraient beaucoup de leur entrain".^{CA 30.9.1907} It therefore came as no surprise that Durieux was to prove to be an experienced leader and a dynamic *animateur*.

The year 1911 began with the announcement that the *Alliance française* in Paris conferred its Gold Medal on Mlle Soubeiran, "la dernière présidente de cette association à Sydney, en reconnaissance de son zèle, de son dévouement à cette œuvre et des services qu'elle lui a rendus".^{CA 7.3.1911} The conferral took place at the Hotel Australia on 23rd June, in the form of an "At Home" [sic] offered by Mme Georges Playoust to the local French community. The conferral itself was performed by the Acting Head of the Consulate General, H. P. Armand. There were approximately 100 guests, welcomed at the door by the hostess, Mme Georges Playoust, assisted by Mme Armand and Mlle Soubeiran herself.

FOUNDATION DATES - STAGE I: 1896

In a review of the main events of 1896, the *Courrier australien* (2.1.1897) lists the foundation of the *Alliance française* Library as one of the most interesting.

Courrier Australien.

SYDNEY, 2 Janvier, 1897.

À NOS LECTEURS.

En entrant dans la 6^e année de la publication du *Courrier Australien*, le Directeur de ce journal et ses collaborateurs sont heureux d'exprimer à leurs abonnés et aux chefs de maisons de commerce qui annoncent dans ces colonnes, tous leurs remerciements pour le bienveillant appui que les uns et les autres leur ont témoigné jusqu'à ce jour. Ces marques de sympathie sont un encouragement précieux, qui doit les engager à persévérer dans la voie déjà tracée, et à renouveler leurs efforts pour donner à cette œuvre éminemment française, le maintien d'un journal français en Australie, le développement toujours plus considérable qui lui convient.

Le Directeur et ses collaborateurs saisissent en outre avec empressement ce renouvellement de l'année, pour présenter, à tous leurs lecteurs, leurs vœux de prospérité les plus sincères,

Le Directeur,

LEON H. MAGRIN.

L'ANNÉE 1896:

L'une des créations les plus intéressantes de l'année est sans contredit l'établissement de la bibliothèque de l'Alliance française que nous devons à l'initiative et à l'heureuse influence de M. Biard d'Aunet, consul général de France à Sydney.

A la suite d'un premier envoi de 250 volumes, don gracieux de l'Alliance française, cette bibliothèque a été inaugurée le 1^{er} mars dans les salons du Consulat Général. Son comité de direction présidé par M. Biard d'Aunet, assisté de MM. Blanc, Dr. Rougier, C. Shard. J. Rigoreau et E. Michaut, a immédiatement décidé toutes les mesures générales nécessaires au fonctionnement régulier de la bibliothèque. Les efforts de ce comité ont été couronnés d'un très grand succès, car il a obtenu, dès le début, le patronage des plus hautes personnalités australiennes.

FOUNDATION DATES - STAGE II : 1899

The *Courrier australien* (17.6.1899) reports the decision of the Library Committee on 8 June 1899 to upgrade the French library to a fully fledged *Alliance française*.

Samedi, 17 Juin 1899.

L'Alliance Française

A SYDNEY.

Nos lecteurs savent que, sur l'initiative de M. le Consul général de France et avec le concours de la Société "l'Alliance française" de Paris, une Bibliothèque française a été fondée il y a trois ans à Sydney. Cette Bibliothèque possédait au jour de son inauguration 500 volumes. Elle en possède aujourd'hui 1740, reliés, timbrés à sa marque. Le nombre des prêts aux lecteurs s'élève à 5,600. Tous les écrivains français, anciens, classiques et contemporains, y sont représentés. Chaque mois, elle reçoit de Paris un lot composé pour une partie d'actualités et pour le reste d'ouvrages complétant la collection des grands auteurs.

Le succès sans précédent, — du moins en Australie, — de cette institution, a appelé l'attention du Conseil d'administration de l'Alliance française de Paris, qui a fait parvenir ses félicitations au Comité de

la Bibliothèque et l'a invité à étendre son action en Nouvelle-Galles du Sud pour l'encouragement de l'étude de la langue et de la littérature françaises.

Pour répondre au désir exprimé par l'Alliance française, le Comité de la Bibliothèque, dans une réunion spéciale tenue le 8 de ce mois, a décidé de se transformer en *Comité de l'Alliance française* à Sydney, a nommé une commission chargée de l'administration de la Bibliothèque, et a adopté les résolutions suivantes :

Adhérents à l'Alliance française.

Une liste d'adhérents à l'Alliance française est ouverte. Elle comprend :

- 1° Les souscripteurs à la Bibliothèque de l'Alliance de Sydney.
- 2° Les personnes qui verseront à titre de cotisation annuelle la somme de *5 shillings*. Ces personnes auront droit à l'*usage de la Bibliothèque pendant trois mois*, à compter du jour de leur versement. Après ces trois mois écoulés, elles auront la faculté, soit de renouveler au même prix pour trois autres mois, soit de devenir souscripteurs pour un an (à compter de leur premier versement) en complétant leur souscription par le versement de *15 shillings*.
- 3° Les souscripteurs perpétuels qui ont versé ou verseront la somme de *5 guinées*.

This was the first of a series of gestures of official recognition either by the Paris headquarters of the *Alliance* or by the French Government, to reward volunteer workers of the Sydney branch for their respective contributions.³⁴

Going back to the beginnings of Pierre Durieux's term of office, the first public function under his presidency, a "Soirée artistique et littéraire", took place on 30 May 1911, at St James Hall in Phillip Street.³⁵ It was a very lively evening with a varied programme which attracted a full house. A well received innovation was the participation of the Australia Hotel Orchestra, a practice which was to continue for some time. The second of a total of three functions for the year attracted the following compliment from the *Courrier*: "sous l'énergique impulsion de son dévoué Président, M. Durieux, l'Alliance française de Sydney avance de succès en succès." *CA* 28.7.1911 From Durieux's election to the presidency in December 1910 until the end of 1911 the number of members jumped from 102 to 142.

The Durieux Committee also set up a publicity sub-committee ("un sous-comité de propagande", in the parlance of the Paris *Alliance française*) chaired by Lady McMillan. The new sub-committee, a ladies' committee, was also entrusted with the organisation of the 1912 season of "soirées littéraires et artistiques". It included a significant number of Australian members.

To enhance the impact of the following Annual General Meeting (called for 19 January 1912), Pierre Durieux's committee mailed invitations to all members of the *Alliance*, a significant departure from past practice. The following year members were also sent voting papers so that they could return them by mail.

Another innovation consisted of much closer cooperation with the Education Department in the organisation of the *Alliance* examinations, including the use of Departmental venues and facilities. In 1912 the *Alliance* Committee, in conjunction with the Head of the Teaching Service in New Caledonia,³⁶ planned to organise a five-week summer school (5.1.1913 to 12.2.1913) at the Noumea Colonial College. The syllabus, drawn up in consultation with the University of Sydney and the New South Wales Education Department, included classes on the French language, historical grammar, French composition, phonetics, classical and modern literature, translation, aspects of art, history and social life in France and French diction. This groundbreaking initiative, which was not to be implemented until half a century later, had to be cancelled because of the outbreak of an epidemic of plague in New Caledonia.

The *Alliance* held three "soirées" in each of the 1912 and the 1913 seasons, but only two in 1914^{CA 4.4.1913, 8.8.1913, 22.8.1913, 1.5.1914} — the last one on 4 August 1914, the day after Germany declared war on France. By late 1914 the activities of the *Alliance* were scaled down and the 1915 examinations cancelled.^{CA 25.12.1914}

Early in 1915 the then Honorary Secretary, R. Thévenet, announced that Pierre Durieux would not stand for another term. The Durieux presidency, one of the truly scintillating periods in the early history of the Sydney *Alliance*,³⁷ petered out in the anxieties of the outbreak of the Great War. Pierre Durieux, a *boute-en-train* in the *Alliance* well before he became a charismatic president, was, with founder Georges Biard d'Aunet, the most dynamic leader of the *Alliance* prior to the end of World War I.

The slowing down of the *Alliance* in the second half of Durieux's term, especially in 1914, was not exclusively due to the worsening international situation — there were also some local reasons, which to this day are easier to describe than to explain.

In November 1911, approximately a year after Durieux's election, the new Consul General for the Commonwealth of Australia, Alexandre Chayet, arrived in Sydney. He was to remain here until just a few months before the end of the war.³⁸

Chayet's case is highly intriguing. His term in Sydney was a long and successful one, partly on account of his friendly, outgoing personality and partly because of the very special circumstances of World War I and its unique impact on French-Australian relations. He was well liked by the local French community, got on well with Australians and entertained a friendly relationship with New South Wales Labor Attorney General (1910-1913) and later Premier (1913-1920) W.A. Holman, well known for his pro-French sentiments. The Chayet-Holman association was reminiscent of Georges Biard d'Aunet's long friendship with another Francophile Premier (and subsequently Prime Minister), George Reid,³⁹ around the turn of the century.

Although arguably Chayet did more, personally, for the promotion of French language and literature in Sydney than any of his predecessors and possibly most of his successors, and although he continued to act as Honorary President of the *Alliance* and to chair its Annual General Meetings (when they were held), objectively his behaviour points to some deep distrust of the institution. Whatever his conscious intentions might have been, his actions

amounted to a systematic sabotage of the *Alliance* as if he sought to destroy it.

In November 1911, the month of Chayet's arrival, the *Alliance* Library was forced to move from the premises of the Consulate General (where it had been located since its foundation in 1896) unless it was prepared to pay £87 rent per annum. The Committee preferred to move to 1 Hunter Street where the rent was only £80. *CA* 10.11.1911, 24.11.1911, 1.12.1911, 26.1.1912 It is difficult to understand why, after fifteen years, the Consulate General withdrew its hospitality from the Library, and it is equally difficult to believe that such a decision could have been made by an Acting Consular Head of vice-consular status (H. P. Armand) just on the eve of the arrival of the new Consul General, unless it was in consultation with the latter. It is also difficult to understand why, for the sake of £7 per annum, the *Alliance* Library left the Bond Street Chambers for a new location in Hunter Street, unless there was some friction with the Consulate General — had the friction been with H.P. Armand, the logical course of action would have been to wait until the arrival of Alexandre Chayet to ask him to arbitrate the conflict.⁴⁰

This was only the first of Alexandre Chayet's anti-*Alliance française* gestures, assuming — as we provisionally do — that the eviction of the Library was his handiwork. In April 1913, less than eighteen months after his arrival in Australia, he launched a series of "Conférences en langues modernes" on the premises of the Royal Society in Elizabeth Street. His initiative was on behalf of a "groupe de personnes désireuses de faciliter l'étude des langues modernes" in Sydney — theoretically French and German, but for all practical purposes essentially French. The inaugural lecture was given by the Consul General himself, on 28th April 1913, under the title "Un voyage en France". *CA* 2.5.1913, 24.3.1914 There were at least five further talks in French held in May and June 1913 in the same series. By early 1914 these lectures were sponsored by a formally constituted "Société des conférences en langues étrangères", with Alexandre Chayet as its president. Between April and June 1914 six talks were scheduled in French (we have no record of meetings devoted to other languages). These talks would have lent themselves admirably to an *Alliance française*-sponsored series and would have enhanced Durieux's programme of activities. Bypassing the *Alliance* was an odd gesture.

But that was not all. Exactly two years after the launch of the foreign language lecture series, Alexandre Chayet delivered a final blow to the already foundering *Alliance* — but that was in April 1915, a few months after Pierre Durieux's withdrawal from the Committee. The story of the

constitution of an "Institut de conversation française" will be told under the next heading, where it belongs chronologically, together with an attempt to explain why the Consul General chose to bypass the existing framework and facilities offered by the *Alliance*.

The war years

At one level the absence at the front of so many members of Sydney's French families⁴¹ and the death of several, the suffering of the French nation during a very long and a very cruel war as well as Australia's participation in the conflict and the sacrifices this entailed both in human terms and in the form of disruptions to normal life at home easily explain the hibernation period the Sydney *Alliance française* experienced from early 1915 until after the Armistice.

At another level, however, the war years should have provided the *Alliance* with a unique opportunity to grow and flourish, and this opportunity was not seized. Never were the links between Australia and France closer and warmer than during the Great War. The *Courrier australien* remarked in 1916 that "depuis que les Australiens combattent sur le sol français, ce sentiment d'union est devenu plus général et a pénétré plus profondément dans toutes les classes de la société."^{CA 21.7.1916} French-Australian friendship in Sydney reached a peak a year later, in 1917, when "France's Day" took over the streets of Sydney and a sum of over £100,000 was collected for French war victims. There was a public meeting as well as a military parade in the City. At night a concert was held at the Town Hall. The *Courrier* reported that "la nuit le spectacle a été féerique, les roues lumineuses, les festons, draperies et guirlandes de lampes électriques aux couleurs françaises produisaient l'effet le plus agréable et le plus inattendu."^{CA 20.7.1917} As we will see, the war years saw an extraordinary proliferation of new societies celebrating the French presence in Australia and French-Australian friendship, but the *Alliance française* was excluded from all this, at least in Sydney.

The Annual General Meeting of 29 January 1915 elected a new Committee, which no longer included Pierre Durieux.⁴² He was replaced as President by the Agent General of the "Messageries Maritimes" shipping line, E. de Baillou, who seems to have taken on the job out of a sense of duty rather than enthusiasm. M. de Baillou's health was indifferent and his condition deteriorated during his first term. He was re-elected at the beginning of 1916 but died in office towards the end of his second term, in January 1917. He

was replaced by Paul Lamérand, the first of a long series of wool buyers to lead the association.⁴³ The wool buying families of Sydney ran the *Alliance* for the best part of three decades, until some time after World War II.⁴⁴

Despite declining membership, reduced support from the remaining members and the temporary discontinuation of all financial assistance from either the *Alliance* headquarters in France or the French Government, the Committee valiantly fought to continue with its usual schedule of activities.

Far more harmful to the survival of the *Alliance* than the war were the otherwise admirable initiatives of the Consul General, Alexandre Chayet. Soon after Pierre Durieux's withdrawal from the *Alliance*, the Consul General, in consultation with Campbell Carmichael, the Minister for Education in the Holman government and subsequently with his successor, A.H. Griffith, launched a new institution, baptised "l'Institut de conversation française". He was to invest himself totally in this new enterprise, chairing and practically running the Institute single-handed. The *Courrier australien* reported on 16 April 1915:

Frappé des inconvénients résultant de l'absence d'un lieu de réunion où se pussent perfectionner mutuellement dans la pratique du français par la conversation, tous ceux qui s'adonnent à l'étude de notre langue, M. A. Chayet, Consul Général de France, s'entretint récemment de cette question avec M. Campbell Carmichael, alors ministre de l'Instruction publique. M. Carmichael, reconnaissant la justesse de ces desiderata, décida de mettre à la disposition d'un comité pour l'encouragement de l'étude du français, la grande salle de l'école supérieure de jeunes filles, Elizabeth Street. Son successeur, Mr Griffith, a bien voulu confirmer cette décision. Une réunion s'est tenue cette semaine sur l'initiative de MM. A. Chayet et Carmichael pour constituer le comité de la nouvelle société et tracer sa ligne de conduite.

The "Institut" was created for "l'encouragement à l'étude du français en général et plus particulièrement à la pratique de la conversation". CA 23.4.1915 The format of these meetings is clearly described in an article of the *Courrier* dated 23 July 1915:

Les séances de l'"Institut de conversation française" se tiennent tous les mardis à 8 heures du soir dans la grande salle de l'Ecole supérieure des filles, Elizabeth et Castlereagh Streets; elles débutent par une conférence en français, suivie d'une conversation, également en français, par groupes, sous la direction de personnes de bonne volonté parlant notre langue. Aucune cotisation n'est exigée. Aucune rémunération n'est accordée.

The Institute's programme of weekly meetings began in the middle of 1915 and continued throughout the remainder of the Consul General's term in Sydney, until the middle of 1918, and beyond.⁴⁵ When he left Sydney in June 1918, Alexandre Chayet regarded the "Institut de conversation française" as one of the major achievements of his term in Australia and asked his friends and associates, if they wanted to please him, to continue the good work.

There was a proliferation of French-Australian societies during the war. Some had specific objectives which no existing organisation could cover, such as the "Union française de la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud", a rallying point for French citizens in the State, or the "French-Australian League of Help", created to raise money to support French victims of the war, an organisation in which Mlle Soubeiran, amongst others, played a key role. In 1916 the Consul General created another ephemeral association for music lovers, the "French Music Society". The wartime lectures, conferences and workshops of the Modern Language Association of New South Wales primarily dealt with French topics, the other major foreign language in Australian schools, German, having been ostracised during the war. The Berlitz School also organised a series of lectures on 19th century French poetry, delivered by Th. Rouel, the Director of the School for Australia,^{CA 22.9.1916} whilst Sydney University's Extension Board launched a series of seven public lectures on France, with the participation of such luminaries as Mungo MacCallum, Christopher Brennan, E.G. Waterhouse, Francis Anderson and others.^{CA 15.6.1917} The *Alliance* alone was excluded from all these activities.

At its Annual General Meeting on 18 May 1916 the *Alliance*, faced with a rent in excess of its total income, decided to accept the offer of rent-free accommodation for its Library by Mlle Boggio, the owner of the "Modern School of Languages" at 36 Moore Street,⁴⁶ on the corner of Castlereagh Street. The Library moved from Hunter Street to Moore Street on 1st June 1916. The only financial commitment for the *Alliance* was a modest contribution to the outgoings, such as the cleaning bill. This was the second forced move for the *Alliance* Library during Chayet's term as Consul General. In a short article on the background of the *Alliance française* of Sydney written in 1943 by its then President, Jacques Playoust, the survival of the Library was described in the following way:

Pendant toute la période de la dernière guerre l'Alliance a passé des moments très durs. Il fut même proposé à une réunion du Comité de la fermer, mais encore une fois grâce à la générosité de quelques membres, des économies réalisées et de l'aide bénévole de Mademoiselle Boggio (maintenant Mme Parmentier), Mademoiselle Lamérand (maintenant Mme Flipo), Madame

Henri et Mesdemoiselles Eugénie et Antoinette Playoust, qui ont assuré pendant toute la durée de la guerre le service de la bibliothèque, elle a su survivre. ^{Playoust 1943}

At the same 1916 Annual General Meeting the *Alliance* Committee, under E. de Baillou's presidency, decided to launch a fundraising campaign to put the finances of the *Alliance* in order. This appears to have yielded good results, as the Annual General Meeting of 1917 was told that the campaign, together with Mlle Boggio's hospitality to the *Alliance* Library, allowed all the debts to be cleared without the need to dip into the reserve funds. The Library was even able to order new books and periodicals. The Consul General is reported to have told members of his "Institut de conversation française" that the *Alliance* had an excellent library, ^{CA 11.2.1916} which suggests that deprived of all its other functions, actual or potential, the *Alliance* had regressed to its original pre-1899 status as a mere lending library.

The membership now stood at only 114. (It first fell from 165 in 1914, towards the end of the Durieux presidency, to 126 in 1916.) At the time of the following Annual General Meeting, held on 22nd March 1918, it further reduced to 97. ^{CA 5.4.1918}

It was not until the Annual General Meeting of that year, held on 22 March 1918, only three or four months before Alexandre Chayet's departure for another posting (but in his presence) that an office-holder of the *Alliance*, Honorary Secretary-Treasurer E. Guiot, was brave enough to explain the true reason for the decline of the *Alliance* in Sydney:

Il serait judicieux d'émettre une opinion suggérée par la nature même et le but de notre Société, c'est que l'usage seul de nos livres ne satisfait peut-être pas les besoins ou l'attente de certains de nos nouveaux adhérents australiens et que, pour parfaire l'éducation par la lecture, il serait heureux de pouvoir y ajouter l'audition de notre langue. ^{CA 5.4.1918}

The statement might be convoluted but the meaning could not be clearer: deprived of its traditional role as a provider of lectures and conversation gatherings, the *Alliance* had little hope of satisfying its Australian membership and therefore of surviving. E. Guiot must have been expressing the Committee's well considered views since from 8 February 1918, the following announcement was printed in every weekly issue of the *Courrier australien* under the *Alliance française* heading: "Dès que les circonstances le permettront, la Société reprendra ses conférences et concerts, auxquels la

susdite cotisation donne droit." Ostensibly, the unfavourable circumstances referred to in the notice pointed to the war, but in fact the real reason for those circumstances was a situation deliberately created by the Consul General whose term in Sydney was drawing to an end.

The question then arises as to why the Consul General, an experienced diplomat, a man praised for the "aménité de son caractère"⁴⁷ and for his passionate commitment to the propagation of the French language and French culture, a cause to which he gave countless hours of his time and an enormous amount of his energy throughout his term in Sydney, did everything in his power to downgrade, paralyse and destroy the *Alliance française* of Sydney, of which he was the Honorary President.

Until further research is carried out on Chayet's background and career, this question cannot be answered with any certainty. It is not inconceivable that in a previous posting he experienced difficulties with the local *Alliance française* or the Paris headquarters and developed a hostility or mistrust towards the institution in general.

It is more likely that as a person with egalitarian principles, he saw the *Alliance* as an establishment-dominated social club restricted to the privileged few and therefore unsuitable to be an instrument of broader cultural policy aimed at the whole of the Australian population.

We have only circumstantial evidence that Chayet's ideology was egalitarian. Speaking of the Consul General, New South Wales Labor Premier W.A. Holman, who had a long-standing association with him, praised Alexandre Chayet for his ability to mix with working class people and his willingness to do so. At one of the farewell functions for the Consul General, the Premier was reported by the *Courrier australien* to have said that "M. Chayet est de tous les personnages officiels celui dont la présence dans une réunion est accueillie unanimement avec joie par toutes les classes de la société, celui qui est vraiment *persona gratissima* aussi bien dans les milieux ouvriers qu'à l'autre extrémité de l'échelle sociale".^{CA 21.6.1918} Chayet's determination to ensure that admission to the meetings of the "Institut de conversation française" was free, the trouble he took to negotiate the rent-free use of Education Department premises for these meetings and his insistence on not paying any of the speakers for their contribution point to a deep desire to open his Institute to all. It is a form of commitment to the ideal of "free education" and a rejection of the principle of "user pays". He might have felt that none of this could be achieved through the *Alliance française*.

This conceded, the fact remains that in November 1911 he evicted the *Alliance* Library from the premises of the Consulate General, or at least condoned its eviction, in April 1913 he launched a lecture series leading to the establishment of the "Société des conférences en langues étrangères", in April 1915 he set up an "Institut de conversation française" and in February 1916 he founded the "French Music Society", each time encroaching on the existing or potential domain of the *Alliance française*. Whatever his conscious intentions might have been, "objectively" he did everything to undermine the *Alliance*.

When his successor, M. Campana, a man with mainly Middle-Eastern and North-African consular experience, arrived in Sydney on 19th August 1918, he wisely declined to take over the effective presidency of the "Institut de conversation française", and contented himself with the position of Honorary President. This augured well for the future and foreshadowed Consul General Campana's support for the rebirth of the *Alliance française* of Sydney under the leadership of the local French wool buyers' community.

Summary

Like the Paris headquarters in the eighteen-eighties, the Sydney *Alliance française* began its life in 1896 on a paternalistic model. A mere lending library for the first three years of its existence, founded and run almost single-handedly by Consul General Georges Biard d'Aunet, it graduated to a fully fledged *Alliance française* three years later, in June 1899. The Consul General continued as effective President, with the support of a Committee which included only men and, with one possible exception, only Frenchmen. Under Biard d'Aunet's presidency the *Alliance* had no social ambitions, and, apart from the Library, its sole focus was pedagogical — thus again duplicating the pattern followed by the Paris *Alliance* fifteen years earlier.

Georges Biard d'Aunet's Committee used the *Alliance* examinations to try to make an impact on the teaching of French in the schools of New South Wales and at the University of Sydney. Although he made an attempt at diplomacy in the language he used in his dealings with his Australian partners, deep down the attitude of the *Alliance* under his fairly rigid leadership tended to be confrontational — his disapproval of the teaching of French in Australia was hardly disguised⁴⁸ and he failed to recognise or encourage the very real attempts that were made in the early years of the new century by both the University and the Education Department to reform the teaching of modern languages.

However that may be, the *Alliance française* of Sydney was established by Georges Biard d'Aunet and for ten full years the *Alliance* was Georges Biard d'Aunet, in the sense of Louis XIV's dictum, "l'Etat c'est moi".

The Consul General's control began to relax a year before his retirement, early in 1904, and the Sydney *Alliance* embarked on a process of socialisation, which accelerated first in mid-1904 when the Consul General stepped down from the presidency, and then again in February 1905 when he returned to France.

This process of socialisation meant several things:

- the *Alliance* began to organise social functions, lectures, conversation groups, concerts, dances
- the *Alliance* started to involve Australians in its activities, not only as recipients of its services but also as genuine partners, organisers and even policy-makers
- the *Alliance* was no longer run by a single person, however keen and devoted, but by a group of people prepared to make use of the goodwill of the local French community.

During the term of Georges Biard d'Aunet's successor, Albert Pinard (1905-1909), there was no "strong" president running the *Alliance*: Louis Nettement's term was too short to lend itself to a proper assessment whilst Dr Emile Rougier, a man of diverse interests, was a mere figurehead. The true impetus and inspiration came from a keen and outgoing Consul General who, however, preferred to lead from the wings, as an *Eminence grise*, rather than as the effective president of the organisation. The implementation was left to an eager group of local enthusiasts. It was a period of collective leadership, and 1907 and 1908 in particular were golden years for the *Alliance*.

Albert Pinard's untimely death in Sydney in January 1909 broke the pattern and cooled the enthusiasms. A slowing down of activities followed, during a long, two-year transitional period. Neither Hippolyte Frandin's brief term as Consul General nor Augustine Soubeiran's even shorter tenure of the presidency made any positive impact on the *Alliance*.

After two years of this period of instability and lack of direction, Pierre Durieux, already known as a dynamic *animateur* during the Pinard years, took over not only the position of President but more significantly the effective leadership of the *Alliance* for a dynamic four-year term. Under his energetic guidance cultural activities (especially of the "get-together" kind, in

the form of "soirées") flourished, the membership grew and an increasing number of Australians got involved in the life of the *Alliance*. These were again golden years, reminiscent of the Pinard period.

Less than a year after Pierre Durieux's accession to the presidency the Library's eviction from the premises of the Consulate General (where Georges Biard d'Aunet had installed it over fifteen years earlier) came as a warning of the threats to come. The eviction coincided with the arrival of the new Consul General, Alexandre Chayet. Pierre Durieux lasted another three years in the presidency, until January 1915, but in the last year of his term there were clear signs of a slowing down of activities. Whether this was due to the worsening international situation followed by the outbreak of World War I, or the otherwise excellent Consul General's negative attitude to the *Alliance*, is difficult to tell, but Durieux stood down, no doubt discouraged by these developments.

The following four years (1915-1918) saw the *Alliance française* of Sydney regress to its first incarnation as a mere lending library (1896-1899), except that, cast out of the Consulate General and no longer able to pay rent in independent premises, it was now a war refugee in Mlle Boggio's "Modern School of Languages". Its other roles were appropriated by Alexandre Chayet's "Société des conférences en langues étrangères" (1913), his "Institut de conversation française" (1915) and even his "French Music Society" (1916). Whilst all French activities, including cultural activities, proliferated and flourished in wartime Sydney, a severe fall in membership and lack of support from above caused the *Alliance* to face financial ruin and moral extinction. Its presidents, E. de Baillou (1915-16) and Paul Lamérand (1917-18), were unable to reverse the trend completely, at least during Alexandre Chayet's term as Consul General.

The rise of the *Alliance* after the war is another story, which remains to be told. We must leave this chronicle interrupted at this point. We think the story was worth telling, given that even the President of the *Alliance* in the nineteen-forties, Jacques Playoust, in a short but invaluable article on the then recent history of the organisation, thought that nothing much had happened before World War I: "Je ne crois pas que l'*Alliance française* de Sydney ait fait fortement parler d'elle avant la guerre de 1914." Playoust 1943

In the same article Jacques Playoust correctly identified the Fashoda crisis, the Boer War and the Dreyfus Affair as the hurdles foundation President Georges Biard d'Aunet had to overcome when he established the *Alliance française* of Sydney in the late eighteen-nineties. He could have added the various regional problems in the Pacific, such as transportation to New

Caledonia and the New Hebrides question, all serious impediments to the progress of French-Australian relations in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

As it happens, the *Alliance française* of Sydney overcame all these obstacles and lived. The political climate improved dramatically with Edward VII's succession to the British throne and, thanks largely to the enthusiastic contribution of the Sydney French community, the *Alliance* prospered during most of the decade preceding the outbreak of the war.

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NOTES

¹ Advocating a better of knowledge of the outside world as well as colonial expansion and the defence of French interests abroad. On the "Geography Movement", see Murphy 1948, pp. 1-40, and Girardet 1972, pp. 32-35.

² Bruézière 1983, p.11. It is noteworthy that at the time the word "propaganda" had not yet acquired the negative connotations it now has.

³ Maurice Bruézière's centenary history of the *Alliance française* of Paris contains invaluable information on the foundation and the spread of the *Alliance* in the world. It appeared in 1983, a few months before the actual centenary. Whilst the book is extraordinarily rich in facts and suggestions, it is not a definitive history: further research is needed to fill gaps, clarify obscure points, rectify misunderstandings and provide an analytical commentary. The recent discovery of the *Alliance française* archives in Moscow — they had been removed by the Germans during World War II — might one day open the way for a re-examination of our current knowledge. The archives are not currently accessible. (We owe this information to M. Francis Lecompte, 'Directeur de l'action à l'étranger' in the Paris *Alliance française* — see personal communication of 6 November 1998 — who has also been exceptionally helpful in providing us with the relevant texts from the *Bulletin de l'Alliance française*.)

¹⁴ The early history of the *Alliance française* of Paris and the changes it underwent in its first three decades will be discussed in more detail in a study entitled "L'*Alliance française* sous Pierre Foncin (1884-1914): contexte, naissance, mutations" (forthcoming).

⁵ The birth and life of the *Alliance française* in Australia inspired a collective volume published in 1990 on the occasion of the centenary of the *Alliance française* of Melbourne (Nettelbeck 1990). On the history of the Melbourne *Alliance*, see also Thornton-Smith 1994 and Thornton-Smith 1997.

⁶ It is worth noting that not only was the initiative of the first *Alliance française* in Australia taken by a Francophone immigrant, but the oldest surviving French-language periodical in Australia, the *Courrier australien*, was also founded by a Francophone settler, Polish aristocrat Charles Wroblewski (1892). In the second half of the 19th century (anticipating the second half of the 20th century) Australia was a multicultural country, until, with Federation, the white (picket) fence of immigration and the walls of economic protectionism went up for the best part of fifty years.

⁷ The Committee first met on 6 June 1890.

⁸ On Biard d'Aunet, see Kirsop, 1995 and Nettelbeck 1995.

⁹ The Sydney *Alliance* has no archives of its own for the period under scrutiny (1895-1918), and whatever material exists on Sydney in the archives of the Paris *Alliance* is inaccessible in Moscow. (See Footnote 3.) There are however some available sources of information which still remain to be fully explored, such as the local French consular reports sent to the Quai d'Orsay and currently stored in the Archives of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Nantes, and the personnel files of Sydney consular staff in the Archives of the Ministry in Paris. Before a definitive history of the Sydney *Alliance* can be written, the archives in Paris, Nantes and Moscow will need to be checked out. For all these reasons the present paper, which builds on Denis

Pellet's first sketch of the early history of the Sydney branch ("The birth of an *Alliance*" in Nettelbeck 1990, pp. 27-33) can be no more than a report on our present state of knowledge, to be verified, confirmed and amplified subsequently. The history of the Sydney *Alliance* between 1919 and 1943 was summarised in a short but important article by its then President, Jacques Playoust, in the 50th anniversary number of the *Courrier australien* dated 3 September 1943. (At the time it was believed that the *Courrier* had been launched in 1893, and not, as was the case, in 1892.) The Playoust article underestimates the achievements of the Sydney *Alliance* prior to 1919, which is all the more surprising as the Playoust family had actively contributed to its accomplishments.

¹⁰ *BAF* December 1895 - January-February 1896, pp. 77-78. Its role was clearly one of public relations only.

¹¹ A confirmation of this date can be found in *CA* 11.4.1896, 2.1.1897, 3.12.1898, 17.6.1899, etc.

¹² Statistics published in the *Courrier australien* of 2.7.1898 show that approximately two thirds of the loans were to French residents and one third to Australians, although a little under half the loans to Australians were on a casual rather than a subscription basis, whilst over 90 % of the loans to French residents were to subscribers. (See *CA* 17.6.1899.) Casual borrowers were required to leave a refundable deposit of three shillings per volume, and to pay threepence per volume for the loan. Subscribers paid one guinea per annum, reduced to one pound in 1899, whilst life members paid five guineas. Subscribers could originally borrow two volumes at a time, a limit raised in 1899 to three, and could keep them for three weeks, after which a sixpence fine was payable per volume per fortnight. In 1901 the library was open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 2 pm to 5 pm, and on Saturdays from 10 am to 12 noon.

¹³ On Mme Henry see *CA* 29.1.1898 and 5.2.1898. In the characteristic style of the period, the *Courrier* informed its readers that Mme Henry "accueille les amateurs à son 'At Home' habituel", offering them "récréations littéraires et musicales". (See *CA* 10.10.1896.) In fact these "At Home habituels" had been held at the "Australian Chambers" at 289 Pitt Street in the City, at least until mid-1897 when Mme Henry transferred her functions to the larger "Tattersall's Chambers" on the corner of Hunter and Castlereagh Streets, where a comfortable and well appointed hall was reported to be able to receive up to 300 guests. (See *CA* 19.6.1897.)

¹⁴ In a forthcoming article, based on unpublished French archival material, Wallace Kirsop will reveal the details of Mme Henry's numerous approaches to the French Government (up to the President of the Republic): "Madame Henry writes to Félix Faure", to appear in *Explorations*, 1999.

¹⁵ Soon after her death an *ad hoc* committee undertook to collect funds for a Sydney University Annual Memorial Prize in her name, to be awarded to a student of French language and literature, but the sums collected proved to be insufficient for this purpose, and instead a tombstone for her grave at Sydney's Waverley Cemetery was commissioned with the money. (See *CA* 23.4.1898 and 9.7.1898.)

¹⁶ All library subscribers automatically became members of the *Alliance*. New members could join by paying an annual subscription of five shillings, which also entitled them to library services for three months, after which period they had a choice

of remaining *Alliance* members without access to the library, or paying a supplement of fifteen shillings to retain access to the library for the rest of their subscription year. Life membership with entitlement to library services cost five guineas.

¹⁷ Charles Shard, Director of the Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris. (We have not been able to ascertain his nationality so far.)

¹⁸ When late in 1902 the *Alliance* introduced its new "Concours de récitation", its organisation was entrusted to a "Comité des Dames" — an innovation for the Sydney *Alliance* — consisting of Mme Brasier de Thuy, Lady McMillan and Mme Rougier — Lady McMillan, the wife of NSW politician Sir William McMillan, being of French extraction. (See CA 3.1.1903.) In 1904 the sub-committee for the "examens de capacité" of the *Alliance* included Georges Biard d'Aunet (President), Mme Brasier de Thuy, Mlle Soubeiran, M. Durand and Louis Nettement. (See CA 26.3.1904.) Incidentally, this was the first time that the name of Mlle Soubeiran, a future President of the *Alliance*, appeared as a participant in an *Alliance* activity other than in her capacity as Co-Principal of a school receiving *Alliance* prizes. Unless new evidence is produced, it would seem that there is no foundation for the oft-repeated legend that Mlle Soubeiran was one of the founders of the Sydney *Alliance*.

¹⁹ "Cette excellente institution [qui a déjà] puissamment contribué à répandre en Nouvelle-Galles du Sud la connaissance de la langue et de la littérature française" ("Bibliothèque de l'*Alliance française*", in *Courrier australien* 8.12.1898.)

²⁰ At its meeting of 7 September 1899, the Committee also considered the possibility of promoting the teaching of French in the colony's pre-school establishments.

²¹ On the Consul General's temperament and background, see Kirsop 1995. For a brief presentation of his 12-month warfare with Earl Beauchamp, the Governor of New South Wales, see Barko 1999. (A detailed account of the same incidents, based on unpublished manuscript material, is in preparation.)

²² 1899: University of Sydney, Women's College, Sydney Grammar, St Ignatius, St Aloysius, Fort Street Model School for Boys, Public High School for Girls (Sydney Girls High), Miss Gurney and Mlle Soubeyran [sic] (Kambala), Couvent du Sacré Cœur, Church of England Grammar, Miss Baxter (Argyle School). 1900: Fort Street, Argyle School, Abbotsleigh, Girls' High, Presbyterian Ladies College and Normanhurst Girls — a seventh school, Scots College, having applied too late. (On the early history of the prizes, see CA 9.2.1901, Supplément *Alliance française*.)

²³ The "Direct Method" placed an overwhelming emphasis on the imitation of native speaker models of speech, giving lower priority to the study of grammar and the practice of reading and writing.

²⁴ On G.G. Nicholson, the history of the teaching of French in Australian universities and the introduction of the "Direct Method" in Australia, see Hick 1964, Kerr 1970, Barko 1988, Barko and Martin 1997.

²⁵ CA 21.5.1902, quoted by Forwood 1983, p.47.

²⁶ The *Courrier australien* itself recognised that there was more to a university syllabus than the mastery of the spoken language. (See CA 29.7.1899.)

²⁷ Native speakers of French were not fully integrated in French departments' staff structures in Australian universities until the nineteen-fifties.

²⁸ The history of the relationship between the University of Sydney, on the one hand, and the local French community and the *Alliance française*, on the other, is a rich and rewarding topic which would deserve a separate study in its own right.

²⁹ There appears to be a paucity of information on Annual General Meetings or the composition of the Committee in the *Courrier australien* for this whole long period.

³⁰ For other references to "Paris-House" and its function in the life of Sydney's French and Francophile community, see also A. R. Chisholm, *Men were my Milestones*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1958, pp. 84-95 and *The Familiar Presence*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp. 56-62. Some lecture-type functions were held at the Royal Society of New South Wales, in Elizabeth Street.

³¹ This series was put together by Albert Pinard and a young university lecturer, Dr Norman Gough, thus establishing much closer links with the University's French Department.

³² Molière, Racine, Musset, Rostand, Labiche, Emile Augier, Pailleron, etc.

³³ We have not found any record of an Annual General Meeting or a change in the composition of the Committee until December 1910.

³⁴ Thus in August of the same year, the same Mlle Soubeiran was made "Officier de l'Instruction Publique" (she had already held the title of "Officier d'Académie" for a decade or so), whilst in 1912 Mme Maurice Ségur was appointed "Officier d'Académie", with a Paris *Alliance* "Médaille d'honneur" conferred on Mrs Alfred Lee and Mrs A.C. Jewett, in the same year. Finally in 1913 the President, Pierre Durieux, was appointed "Officier d'Académie".

³⁵ Organised by Mrs Higginbotham (the late Mme Henry's daughter) and Mrs Jewett.

³⁶ M. Peyrot, "Chef du Service de l'Enseignement en Nouvelle Calédonie" (See CA 29.11.1912, 7.2.1913.)

³⁷ The other one being the post-Biard d'Aumet years, under Consul General Albert Pinard's inspiration.

³⁸ Alexandre Chayet's varied career had taken him to Tananarivo, Smyrna, Trebizond, Helsingfors, Tiflis, Düsseldorf, Stuttgart and Montreal. He was posted to Sydney from November 1911 to June 1918.

³⁹ George Reid, later Sir George, was New South Wales Premier and the fourth Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. He was a sworn enemy of protectionism.

⁴⁰ Only further research in the archives of the *Alliance française* of Paris and those of the Quai d'Orsay might provide an answer to these intriguing questions.

⁴¹ See Dwyer 1998.

⁴² Consisting of P. Lamérand, M. Ségur, G. Playoust, A. Wunderlich, C. Shard, E. de Baillou, E. Buissez, R. Vigier de Latour and R. Thévenet. (See CA 5.2.1915.) At its first meeting the Committee elected its Executive, with E. de Baillou as President, A. Wunderlich as Vice-President and R. Vigier de Latour as Honorary Secretary. Félix Ségur was coopted to fill the position of Treasurer. (CA 5.3.1915.)

⁴³ He was re-elected for a second term in 1918.

⁴⁴ Incidentally, in 1917 Pierre Durieux, who a year earlier had become a committee member of the "Institut de conversation française", also rejoined the *Alliance* Committee, but as a simple member, not as an office-holder.

⁴⁵ The lectures previously organised by the "Société des conférences en langues étrangères", Chayet's earlier creation, seem to have been discontinued after May 1915, but in 1918 a similar series was organised at the University by the Teachers' College, mainly on French topics (CA 3.5.1918.)

⁴⁶ Moore Street, linking Pitt Street and Castlereagh Street, was soon to be incorporated in Martin Place.

⁴⁷ Words spoken at Alexandre Chayet's farewell dinner. (CA 21.6.1918.)

⁴⁸ We also know from a confidential report to his Minister written in 1898 that he was not impressed by Australian scholarship in general: "l'esprit lent et routinier des populations [...et] le niveau peu élevé et le caractère superficiel des études scientifiques [...] entravent l'essor du pays". (See Nettelbeck 1995, p.9.) Ten years later, however, he referred to his attraction to Australia and his pro-Australian bias. (See Kirsop 1995 p.32.)

APPENDIX A

L'Alliance française de Sydney entre 1919 et 1943

Courrier australien 3.9.1943 — Numéro spécial pour le 50ème anniversaire de la publication

Alliance Française

Je ne crois pas que l'Alliance Française de Sydney ait fait fortement parler d'elle avant la guerre de 1914. Ses efforts ont été certainement entravés par les événements politiques — Fashoda, la guerre du Transvaal, le procès Dreyfus. Comme maintenant, du reste, elle avait à se subvenir de ses propres moyens, souscriptions à la Bibliothèque, fêtes payantes et cotisations. Elle ne recevait que quelques prix que l'Alliance Française distribuait aux principales écoles pour encourager l'étude du Français [sic]. Ce n'est que bien plus tard qu'elle a commencé à organiser ses propres examens. Elle a dû malheureusement les abandonner très vite, à cause de l'état précaire de ses finances, pour ne les reprendre définitivement qu'en 1931 avec 153 candidats. Pendant toute la période de la dernière guerre l'Alliance a passé des moments très durs. Il fut même proposé à une réunion du Comité de la fermer, mais encore une fois grâce à la générosité de quelques membres, des économies réalisées et de l'aide bénévole de Mademoiselle Boggio (maintenant Mme. [sic] Parmentier), Mademoiselle Lamérand (maintenant Mme. [sic] Flipo), Madame Henri et Mesdemoiselles Eugénie et Antoinette Playoust, qui ont assuré pendant toute la durée de la guerre le service de la bibliothèque, elle a su survivre.

En 1932, grâce à l'impulsion du Consul-général Dussap, les soirées de conversation furent inaugurées. Ce fut l'âge d'or qui commençait. Mr. Dussap obtenait pour l'Alliance des subventions de Paris, frs 10.000 en 1933, frs 5000 en 1934 et frs 10.000 en 1935.

L'Alliance en a profité pour reconstituer sa bibliothèque et pour augmenter sa propagande. On ne peut pas laisser passer cette période sans mentionner la "Troupe de Théâtre d'Amateurs" sous la direction de Monsieur Henri Segart (Consul-général de Belgique) qui joua pendant plusieurs années des pièces au profit de l'Alliance et fit de cette manière beaucoup de bonne propagande pour la cause française. Cette période d'aisance ne dura pas et en 1936 le gouvernement ayant cessé ses subventions la lutte pour la vie recommençait. La situation financière était redevenue précaire à la déclaration de la guerre actuelle, mais la providence vint de nouveau à notre

aide, cette fois-ci sous la forme de Monsieur Thévenet qui mit deux belles salles à notre disposition pendant la durée de la guerre à titre gracieux. Nous avons donc pu continuer nos activités et, je suis heureux de le dire, avec un certain succès. Le nombre de nos membres se maintient largement. Nos soirées sont plus suivies par le public. Il y a eu plus de 600 candidats à nos examens cette année, chiffre qui dépasse tous ceux des années précédentes. Il est à déduire de ceci que malgré les événements, l'Australien continue à s'intéresser à la langue et la culture françaises et, si plus tard, avec les jours meilleurs, Paris pouvait nous aider, je ne crois pas être trop optimiste en prédisant des résultats tangibles. D'ici là, nous devons continuer à subsister par nos propres moyens. Il faut que les Français (ils doivent donner l'exemple) et les amis de la France se serrent les coudes s'ils veulent entretenir la diffusion de la culture française.

Je ne veux pas terminer ce petit article sans parler plus particulièrement de la Bibliothèque de l'Alliance. Nous en sommes fiers. Elle se compose de quelques 5000 volumes. Tous les grands écrivains français sont représentés et même depuis la guerre, nous avons reçu les principaux ouvrages des écrivains français qui ont pu s'échapper en Angleterre et en Amérique.

Jacques PLAYOUST
Président de l'Alliance Française de Sydney