

Lech Paszkowski
(Melbourne)

Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki Explorer and Scientist¹

Strzelecki is the best known of all Poles who have contributed to Australia's history. He achieved fame and outstanding recognition not only in the Antipodes, but in Great Britain, Ireland, the United States and Canada. Polish people contributed little to proclaim his achievements and building his reputation. Occupied with the vital problems of national survival, they gave little thought to one of the hundreds of their able men who went abroad. In fact eighty-four years elapsed from the time of Strzelecki's death until first serious biography about him was published in Poland², and that only because of the interest of a single writer.

Paul Edmund Strzelecki was born on 20 July 1797 at Gluszyna near Poznan.³ He was a descendant of a respectable family, Strzelecki of Strzelce, which had been known as such since 1391.⁴ The history of this family is outlined by T. Żychliński in the Golden Book of the Polish Nobility.⁵ The wealth and influence of the Strzeleckis declined later, but they maintained the standard of 'middle' nobility. The majority of Paul Strzelecki's relatives were university educated, an impossible attainment in the nineteenth century for the poorest of the gentry.

Paul's father, Francis Strzelecki, was a Polish nobleman, or szlachcic, who rented two handsome estates, Gluszyna and Babki, the former 900 acres, belonging to a Bishop of Poznan. In 1797 or 1798, the Prussian authorities confiscated these estates and Francis Strzelecki moved out, most probably to another leased property.⁶

The Strzeleckis of Strzelce were a proud, old family. The question of Strzelecki's right to a title has been either maliciously or incompetently presented by some Australian authors.⁷

¹ This article originally was published in: *Poles in Australia and Oceania 1790—1940* (Australian National University Press, Sydney – Oxford – New York 1987).

² W. Słabczyński, *Paweł Edmund Strzelecki: Podróże - Odkrycia - Prace* [Paul Edmund Strzelecki: Voyages - Explorations - Works], (Warsaw; 1957).

³ The original birth certificate written in Latin was reproduced in Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴ S. Konarski of Paris to the author 28 October 1954.

⁵ T. Żychliński, *Złota księga szlachty polskiej* [The Golden Book of the Polish Nobility] Vol. 10 (Poznań: 1879- 1908), p. 265.

⁶ Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷ This matter has been discussed in detail in the *Social Background of Sir Paul Strzelecki and Joseph Conrad* by L. Paszkowski (Melbourne: 1980). To write that Sir Paul Strzelecki's parents had no title and not explain to English-speaking readers that they belonged to the Polish *szlachta* or nobility, clouds the issue. The family Strzelecki of Strzelce was well known as far back as 1391. In the 15th century they achieved great renown as a 'senatorial' family which included several Castellans, Palatines and an archbishop. As Joseph Conrad pointed out, the most venerated title in Poland was that of senator. The Senate was the King's Council, something similar to the House of Lords in Great Britain. It consisted of up to seventeen high ranking clergy, thirty-three Palatines (voivodes) or governors of provinces, and eighty-five Castellans, originally commanders of royal cities or fortresses, appointed by the king. The title of senator was not hereditary but the splendour of a 'senatorial' family remained for ever, even if the material wealth declined. After the first partition of Poland the Empress Maria Teresa of Austria issued a proclamation on 13 June 1775, that 'The families, which in the past possessed any title

Paul's mother died in 1807 when he was ten.⁸ The date of the death of his father is not known, but it too must have been early as, at the age of thirteen, Paul was sent to Warsaw where he attended school, most probably that of the Piarist Fathers. He stayed with Józef Żmichowski, a clerk in the law court, who was the husband of Paul's aunt. Paul soon moved to the home of his first cousin, Francis Xavier Kiedrzyński, a well-known lawyer and owner of a prosperous estate near Warsaw.⁹ Both of young Paul's protectors were Freemasons.¹⁰

After about four years in Warsaw, Paul Strzelecki went to Cracow and in 1817, he was taken back to Poznan by his elder brother, Peter. Peter, an officer in Napoleon's army¹¹ had been released by the Austrians after being a prisoner of war. The two brothers went to their sister, Izabella, who had married Józef Słupski, leaseholder on an estate of Skubarczewo near the city of Gniezno.¹²

Paul served with the Prussian army in a cavalry regiment, but left the service after reaching the rank of ensign. He probably spent the next few months as a tutor in the homes of the local nobility. During that period Strzelecki became acquainted with Adam Turno, then a wealthy landowner, and his daughter Alexandrina, whose pet name was Adyna. According to Narciza Żmichowska, Strzelecki tried unsuccessfully to elope with Adyna. There is no real evidence of this affair and it seems that the story has been slightly over-romanticised and exaggerated. Even the likely place of the alleged elopement is wrongly given.¹³

whatsoever, were authorised in accordance with the order, to make use of them as before, on the condition of furnishing proof, without which an abandonment of the rights should be demanded. All those families which have been invested with senatorial responsibilities and those of district governors can assume the hereditary title of Count' (S. Konarski, *Armorial de la Noblesse Polonaise Titree* [Paris: 1958]). As Strzelecki's forefathers belonged to the senatorial order, the family had the right to apply for the title of Count in Galicia, under Austria Empire. They did not bother to apply, or perhaps at time their financial position was not good for them to do so.

There is no proof that Paul Strzelecki ever described himself, signed himself or introduced himself as Count. On the passenger list of the ship *Virginian* in 1834 he described himself as a 'gentleman' and on his naturalisation papers of 1845 he described himself as 'Monsieur'. In both cases he was rather modest. On the title page of his book *Physical Description of New South Wales* he put simply P. E. de Strzelecki, and he signed his preface to *Gold and Silver* in 1856 in the same way. 'Count Strzelecki' on the cover of this booklet proves nothing. It is well known that blurbs and covers are prepared by the publishers sometimes without the author's participation.

In a letter to Maria Reidt, of 23 August 1873, Sir Paul Strzelecki stated that Lord Colchester 'merely for reasons of courtesy adorned' his name 'with the title of Count'. Nevertheless, like scores of other members of the *szlachta* he allowed himself to be called and addressed as 'Count'. Paul Strzelecki's mother was Anna Raczyńska. Her family, Raczyński of Raczyn also belonged to the *szlachta* and their name appears in written record as early as 1541. In the years 1709-95 this family produced four senators. Thus, on both sides, Sir Paul Strzelecki was a descendant of noble families with proud traditions. Strzelecki's genealogical tree shows clearly that at least for six generations his ancestors married into prosperous and most respectable families of the Grand Duchy of Poznan, all of course of the *szlachta* class: Raczyński, Gorczyński, Żegocki, Mościcki of Mościska, Sławski and Soliński de Solno. 'The Count' before his name should be regarded as a sympathetic nickname, quite a blessing for a man with an unpronounceable surname.

⁸ W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁰ W. Słabczyński of Warsaw to the author 28 May 1962.

¹¹ W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28.

¹² Żmichowska, 'O Pawle Edmundzie Strzeleckim', *Ateneum* (Warsaw), 1876. vol. 1, p. 411; W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹³ H. Heny, *In a Dark Glass* (Sydney: 1961), p. 20. wrongly stated that 'the meeting was fixed ... a few miles from Objezierze'. No Turno lived at the time at Objezierze, they moved in eight years later, after the marriage of Vincent Turno, Adyna's brother, to Helena Kwilecka. On p. 42 Heny contradicted herself, when stating correctly that Więckowice the property of Turnos was sold in 1825, it was there where they actually met.

Some biographers have stated that Strzelecki was, at the time, in a poor financial position yet 'he made a short stay at Toplitz, then in Saxony, and later was at Carlsbad'¹⁴. In those days travel was slow and expensive and not everybody could afford such luxury. It is known that Strzelecki visited Italy, Switzerland, which is sufficient proof that he was a gentleman of some means.

In Italy, Paul met Prince Francis Sapieha, who, like scores of other intelligent, well-educated people, was greatly impressed with the brilliant personality of young man. Prince Sapieha, whose family in Poland was only second in standing to the Radziwiłł princes, offered Paul Strzelecki employment as an administrator, or plenipotentiary, on his very large estates, situated on the eastern outskirts of former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In those times only a nobleman could hold such a position.

As an administrator Strzelecki displayed great energy and ability. He restored the estates to a good financial position, but in so doing made himself unpopular among the local officials and nobility. In his last will, Prince Francis, who died in 1829, rewarded his able administrator with considerable estate, worth about one million Polish złotys. Certain members of the late Prince's staff spread calumnies and insinuations about Strzelecki. For example, Żmichowska claimed that Strzelecki had sold four estates to his friends at half price. Investigation proved that none of the alleged four estates ever existed and could not be found in the very detailed Polish Geographical Register, published in eighteen volumes in 1880.¹⁵

In a letter to Adyna Turno of 1 August 1840, written in Launceston, Strzelecki stated:

In your letter you mention the Sapieha affair. That is but one example of all that I suffered in Poland. And yet that episode in my life I find flattering to my ego. At least, envy, hatred, jealousy and desire to triumph could never be attributed to me. For what were the facts? That great landowner Francis Sapieha loses his credit. His fortunes greatly diminished; he is surrounded by dishonest and systematic wastage, and everyone works against him. In such circumstances, he entrusts the whole business to me, an obscure individual, without recommendation or references. He gives me a free hand to deal with 12,00 of his peasantry and to clear up the mess.¹⁶

Eustace, son of Prince Francis Sapieha, refused to pay the price for Strzelecki's work, or recognise his father's last will. According to L. de Noskowski: 'When Strzelecki decided to sue the prince, he committed another grave offence in the eyes of the community. Here was a young man, willing to work, and then having the temerity to go to court. The prince filed a suit against Strzelecki. Long before the matter came to a head, Strzelecki was condemned by public opinion. After all, a prince is a prince, and it is a cardinal sin for a comparatively unknown young man to dare to bring a law action against such an illustrious member of the community. The matter was settled out of court, but it greatly embittered Strzelecki'.¹⁷

There is no evidence to clarify the whole story except Żmichowska's doubtful Reminiscences, and again L. de Noskowski expressed his opinion: 'According to post-war research in Poland, she based her unfavourable criticism on the unconfirmed gossip, rumours and calumnies which had poisoned Strzelecki's life in Poland. It is merely a reflection of family reminiscences and idle provincial gossip unsubstantiated by documents'.¹⁸ As Sapieha's administrator Strzelecki certainly did nothing improper or dishonest, nor was any misconduct ever proved. Firstly, he would not have had audacity to challenge the young Prince in court without a clear conscience and a belief in justice and righteousness. Secondly, Prince Eustace would not have settled the matter out of court if he had the slightest proof of Strzelecki's guilt. Thirdly, the old Prince would not have rewarded Strzelecki without good

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

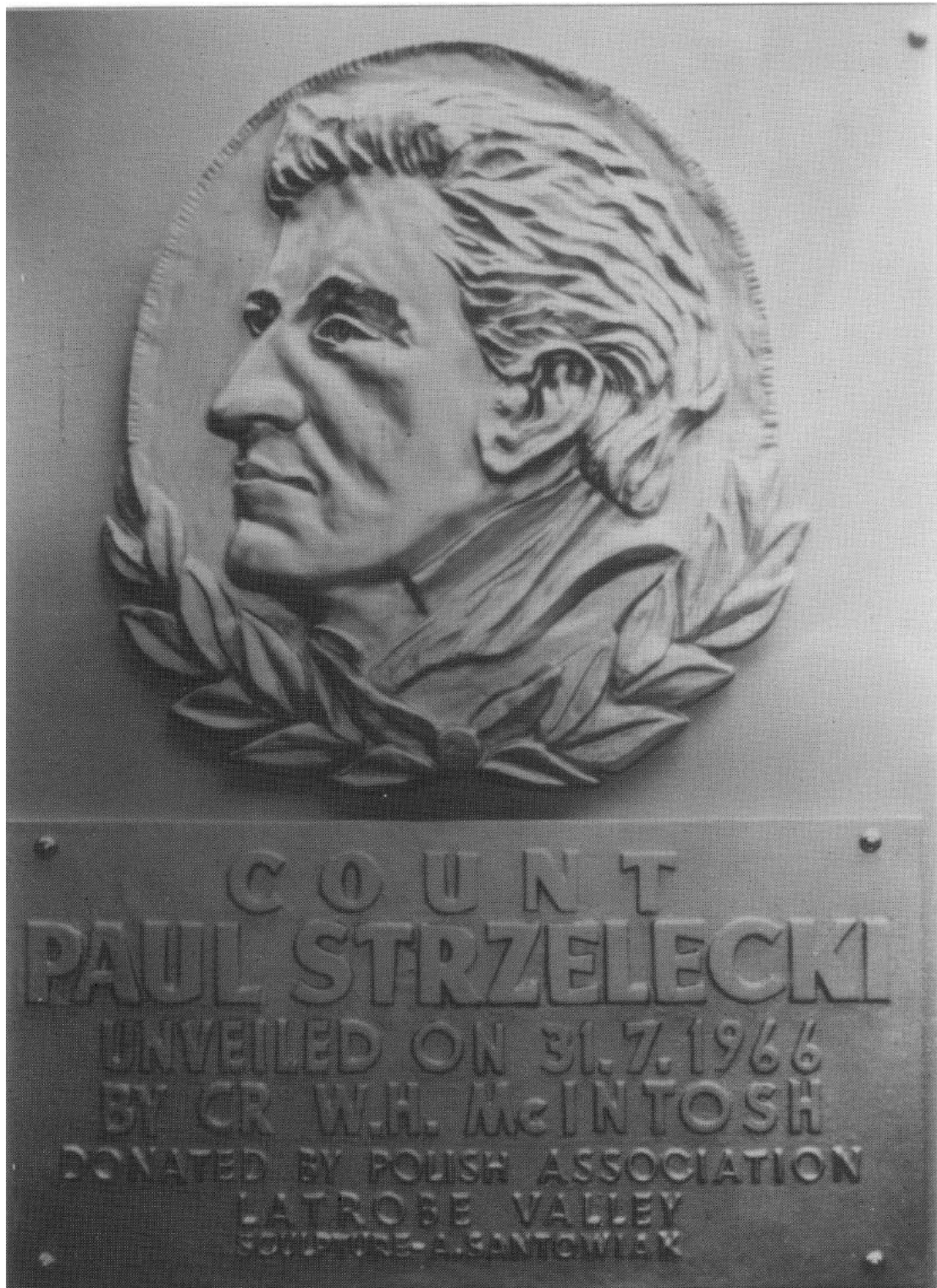
¹⁵ W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p.46.

¹⁶ G. Rawson, *The Count: A Life of Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki, K.C.M.G., Explorer and Scientist* (Melbourne; 1953), p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.195.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

reason. He received from Prince Eustace 12,000 ducats in gold which was about one fourth of the bequest allocated to Strzelecki by the old Prince.



Restored medallion of Sir Paul E. Strzelecki (made by Mr. Artur Santowiak) which was transferred from the State School No. 2779 to the Public Hall in Strzelecki Township (Victoria). Photo: A. Santowiak, 1996.

Unfortunately there are many gaps in the documentation of Strzelecki's life and it has been possible to ascertain his movements after his leaving the Sapieha estates.

Some Polish biographers claim that Strzelecki took part in the uprising against Russia in 1830-31, but this seems unconvincing following his own statement. He attached to his petition for naturalisation two letters of recommendation, from Lord Russell and Sir George Gipps. In the latter Gipps described him as 'a Political Exile', but Strzelecki wrote in his own words: 'This is an error. Mon-r de Strzelecki in sot a Political Exile - he left his native country voluntarily and long before the memorable events of 1830 ...'.¹⁹

From 1831 till June 1834 Strzelecki lived in England, but little is known about this period of his life except that he travelled to the north of Scotland. During these years he acquired his solid knowledge of geology and agricultural chemistry - most probably due to his own studies and observations, as he never claimed higher education and there are no records of his having attended any university. It is a mystery how he became a member of the exclusive Alfred Club of London.

In June 1834 Strzelecki took ship at Liverpool for New York.²⁰ In the United States he started his ten years of voyaging and exploring. He visited Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond and Charleston, going up the Hudson as far as Albany where he saw Niagara, then on to the shores of lake Ontario, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, and back to New York via Lake Champlain and Saratoga. From there he went to the Antilles and Havana. He stopped at Vera Cruz, went to the City of Mexico, proceeded to Tampico, across the Mexican Gulf to New Orleans and up the Mississippi and Ohio to Cincinnati, and back to Baltimore.

From the United States he went by ship to Brazil, visiting Rio de Janeiro and exploring the provinces of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais where he was engaged in geological investigations. He journeyed up the La Plata, visited Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, then Buenos Aires and Argentina. He spent some time in the mineral rich province of Mendoza. He crossed the Andes and climbed peaks of 4,500 m or more. He explored Chile as far as Coquimbo in the north and Concepción in the south, making observations regarding the chemical analyses of the soil and wheat growing. At Valparaiso he boarded HMS Cleopatra, apparently at the invitation of Captain George Grey, RN. On the board the Cleopatra he visited Lima in Peru, Guayaquil in Ecuador, Costa Rica, San Salvador, and the Mexican port of Acapulco, San Blas, Mazatlan and Guaymas. He explored the Gulf of California where he visited the 'most famous mines'. Probably these were the gold and silver mines in the Mexican province of Sonora which are easily accessible from Guaymas. He went as far north as Salt Lake and the Utah deserts.²¹

Strzelecki returned to Valparaiso on 22 June and on 20 July 1838 joined HMS Fly, under command of Captain Russell Elliot, RN. The ship visited Nukuhiva Island in the Marquesas group departing on 23 August. On 10 September the Fly called at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, the spot where Captain Cook has been killed fifty-nine years earlier. Next day the ship arrived at Hilo Bay and Strzelecki went ashore, taking the mountain track with the introduction of the Hawaiian word *ale mau mau* in reference to the burning lava reservoirs. The word is now commonly used by all vulcanologists who seldom realize how it entered their professional vocabulary.²²

¹⁹ M. Paszkiewicz, Poles naturalised in Great Britain in the XIX Century, *Materiały do Biografii, Genealogii i Heraldyki Polskiej* [Materials to the Polish Biography, Genealogy and Heraldry], vol 3 (Paris 1966), p. 110.

²⁰ The original list of passengers of the *Virginian* is reproduced on p. 162 in P. E. Strzelecki's *Pisma wybrane* [Selected Writings]. W. Słabczyński (ed.), (Warsaw: 1960).

²¹ Strzelecki's itinerary is outlined in his undated letter to Adyna Turno (probably written in Sydney on 29 April 1839), published in *Kurier Poznański* [Poznan Courier] of 29 January 1935, and also in his numerous references in *Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* (London: 1845).

²² J.D. Dana, *Characteristics of Volcanoes* (London: 1891), pp. 39, 60-61; W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93; T. Gasiński, 'A Note on Count Strzelecki's Visit to Hawaii', *The Polish Review*, XX nos. 2-3 (1975), p. 223-30.

The Hawaiian Spectator of October 1838 published an article on Strzelecki's observations of the volcano. The same article was reprinted with the author's permission in The Sandwich Islands Gazette & Journal of Commerce 6 October 1838. Another article on the subject 'a more scientific and less impressionistic account of the crater', written by Strzelecki, appeared in the Tasmanian Journal of Natural Sciences, vol. II, 1846. Even today it is considered 'one of the earliest first-hand description of a volcano by the natural scientists of the nineteenth century'.²³

The Journal of the Royal Geographical Soc., vol. 44, 1874, noted that '... Strzelecki took leave of Captain Russell Elliot at Tahiti in November, 1838, and proceeded in a merchant ship to New Zealand ...' He had stayed at Thiti for some time as the guest of the reigning queen Pamore IV.²⁴

At the end of January 1839 Strzelecki landed in New Zealand. He 'was received' there 'by the principal personage in authority, the British Resident, James Busby, who "considered him" to be most gentlemanly and well informed'. 'Strzelecki, always interested in people, particularly in native races, about whom there was so much to be discovered, had at least one conversation with a Maori chief. He questioned Papahia, a Hokianga chief, regarding the state affairs in New Zealand. Carrying letters from the Resident to John and Alexander Busby, at Sydney, Strzelecki left the Bay of Islands on 10 April 1839, sailing for Port Jackson in the French barque Justine'.²⁵

The barque arrived at its port of destination on 25 April and the Sydney Gazette reported among the passengers 'Monsieur le Comte Traliski'. His first impressions of Sydney were very favourable and similar to the observations of Frenchman Jaques Arago, who visited Sydney as early as 1819, and those of Charles Darwin in 1836.²⁶

Strzelecki stayed in the City of Sydney about three months, 'in the course of which he was busily engaged in making friends and spying out the land'.²⁷ The main object of the visit to New South Wales was, he said, to examine its mineralogy.²⁸ The excursions undertaken with a view to that object, led me through a very wild and broken country, often difficult of access, rarely permitting a rapid progress, or affording compensation for no slight degree of labour, fatigue, and privation'.

In the middle of August 1839 Strzelecki started his Australian explorations. His first expedition led to the Blue Mountains and the valley of the Upper Grose River, both which, at that time, had barely been surveyed. Although Major Mitchell and William Govett had both been in the vicinity they had carefully avoided the valleys and ravines. Only nine years before Surveyor Dixon had preceded Strzelecki in this region.²⁹

Strzelecki ascended Mounts King George, Hay and Tomah. Later he wrote an account of this in his book Physical Description of New South Wales: 'The current of the river Grose and its precipitous banks frustrated all my efforts to go round by the source of the river, crossing on the way all its tributary torrents, and plunging anew into those savage solitary defiles which remain in the same state as when the black men first surrendered them to the white'.³⁰

A few weeks later when exploring in the vicinity of Bathurst, Strzelecki found traces of gold.

²³ K. Edwards and D. Scott, *The Geographical Journal*, CXXVIII, (December 1962), p. 558.

²⁴ W. Havard, 'Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, 26 (1940), p. 33; Rawson, *op. cit.* p. 25; W. Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-102; P. O'Reilly and P. Teissier, *Thaitiens: Répertoire bio- bibliographique de la Polynésie Française* (Paris: 1962), p. 438 states that he left Papeete, on 16 January 1839.

²⁵ Harvard, *op. cit.*, p. 34; E. Ramsden, *Busby of Waitangi* (Sydney: 1942), pp. 220,227; Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Słabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 107; O' Reilly and Treissier, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Roy. Aust. Hist. Soc. Journal*, 24, (1938), 17 et seq.; de Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 2; N. Barlow, ed. *Charles Darwin and the Voyage of the „Beagle”* (New York: 1946), pp. 131, 135.

²⁷ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁸ Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁹ Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 39; Rawson, *op. cit.* p.30.

³⁰ Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p.58.

The assistant-surveyor, James McBrien, noted in his Field Book, on 15 February 1823, 'While engaged in a traverse of the Fish River, ... I found numerous particles of gold on the sand in the hills convenient to river'.³¹ McBrien was not a geologist and his samples were never examined by an expert. It is also known that a mica on first sight is often taken to be gold.³² Even if we accept that McBrien did indeed find gold, the important fact is that 'discovery' was completely unknown to anybody until 1853. Percival Serle the editor of the first Dictionary of Australian Biography wrote: 'A discovery that was still unknown so many years later is not worthy of the name'.³³

The alleged discovery of gold by John Lhotsky, his strange silence about it for twenty-six years, and his assertion that it was to be found in the 'intertropical part of continent'. T. G. Vallance has described Lhotsky's claim as 'not proven'.³⁴

On 16 October 1839 Strzelecki wrote to James Walker: 'On this side of the Dividing Range the variety of rocks and embedded minerals augment indications most positive of the existing gold and silver veins ...'

Ten days later, on 26 October 1839, Strzelecki wrote to James Macarthur:

I have specimens of excellent coal, some of fine serpentine with asbestos, curious native alum, and brown hepatise, fossil bones, and plants which I digged out from Boree and Wellington Caves. Particularly I have a specimen of native silver in hornblende rock, and gold in specks in silicate, both serving as strong indications of the existence of these precious metals in New South Wales. It was beyond my power to trace these veins, or positively ascertain their gauge. I would have done so with pleasure. *pro bono publico*, but my time was short, and so were the hands. I regret that the Government, having reserved all the mines for its benefit, did not send here a scientific man, truly miner and mineralogist to lay open these hidden resources which may prove so beneficial to the State.³⁵

The same James Macarthur stated later

that as far as 1839 Count Strzelecki discovered specimens of gold in the country of Wellington. These he exhibited to different gentlemen in Sydney, including Sir George Gipps, the Governor at the time. Count Strzelecki repeatedly told him in private conversation that an extensive gold field existed in the Bathurst district; but Sir George Gipps had requested him to keep the matter secret, as, from the penal condition of the colony in those times, the making known of such a discovery might have been attended with serious consequences ...

[He] remembered distinctly asking Strzelecki why he did not prosecute his discovery farther. The Count replied that the Governor of the colony had warned him of the mischief that might arise in such times, and requested him very urgently not to make the discovery generally known. Soon after this Count Strzelecki sent a few of the specimen to Britain, where they were analysed and compared with samples of gold from the Ural Mountains. The result of this comparison and analysis was the placing on record the superiority of Australian gold over that of the Ural Mountains. Experience had since proved the truth and correctness of the analysis. These facts, he thought, were sufficient to establish Count Strzelecki's claim to the honour of being the first discoverer of gold in this colony.³⁶

³¹ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

³² 'Alleged Gold Discovery - Gold or Mica', *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 January 1878, p. 3.

³³ P. Serle, *Dictionary of Australian Biography*, vol. 2. (Sydney: 1948), p. 377.

³⁴ T. Vallance, 'John Lhotsky and Geology', in B. Kruta et al, *John Lhotsky: The Turbulent Australian Writer Naturalist and Explorer* (Melbourne: 1977), p. 54.

³⁵ Rawson, *op. cit.* p. 39.

³⁶ V & P, Legislative Council of NSW, 5 October 1853; Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Another Australian pioneer, William Adams Brodribb, who met Strzelecki personally at least twice, stated in his *Leaves from my Journal since 1835* that '... he had often remarked to his colonial friends that Australia was an auriferous country'.³⁷

On 5 October 1853 a debate took place in the New South Wales Legislative Council regarding the reward of £ 10,000 being given to Edward Hargraves for his discovery of gold. James Macarthur protested against the use of the phrase 'first discoverer of gold' as officially accorded to Hargraves. His statement on this occasion has already been quoted. On the final vote, twenty-four members voted for the reward to be given to Hargraves, and seven against, including James Macarthur, William C. Wentworth, Captain P.G. King, William Macarthur, Bligh, Allen and Dr Dobie.³⁸

In *The Times* of 16 January 1854, a long comment on the debate appeared, which ended with the following paragraph:

As we have described the matter, there is nothing incompatible in the claims of the different discoveries. The convict imagined the thing; Count DE STRZELECKI and Mr. CLARKE ascertained it by examination; Sir R. MURCHISON deducted it from theory; and Mr. HARGRAVES rediscovered it and gave it publicity and a practical form. As far as competition among these persons goes there is nothing more to say, but a few reflections will suggest themselves as to another of the actors in this remarkable drama. What would have been the history and what the state of the world at this moment if Sir GEORGE GIPPS had not, from view of the most narrow, temporary, and provisional expediency, stifled the great discovery which Count DE STRZELECKI had communicated to him? What advancement of trade, what increase of commerce, what stimulus for all the arts of peace, what augmentation of the general happiness of the human race! The population of Australia would probably count ten to one of its present numbers, and the trade with so large population would have directed a stream of almost boundless wealth to our shores. Who can tell what might have been the effect of this discovery at the time of the Irish famine; or how much of the labour which perished in the workhouses of the West might have been now producing in comfort and affluence all the elements of wealth? It is a melancholy reflection that all these advantages, and a thousand others that would have flowed from them, should have been so long lost to the world, and all for fear that a few thieves should benefit by the discovery!

In a letter of 3 March 1854 from Strzelecki to Captain Phillip Parker King, there is a most interesting comment on his discovery of gold. After expressing his 'best thanks' to James Macarthur for the support of his cause, he stated: ' Lord John Russell told me the other day that he recollects perfectly well having received a letter from Sir George Gipps about it - and having officially written to him to offer me any place in the Colony I could fill with benefit to public service "Had you not been wedded to London as you are said Lord John "you would have accepted what I offered you in N.S.W. and by this you would have been Governor of the Victoria Colony". The italics are Strzelecki's.

A few months later Strzelecki in a letter to Captain Phillip Parker King in Sydney dated 4 June 1854, closed the story with the following words: 'I was frightened by Sir George Gipps, and was gagged without having being bribed. But my papers and the Memorandum of Sir George Gipps must be in the records of the Colonial Departmen[t] - who knew all about it but reminded silent. I was cheated out of reward in this respect ...'.³⁹

The matter was taken up later again by Roger Thery, a former judge of the Supreme Court of NSW in his *Reminiscences*. He recalled that the Rev. W.B. Clarke had laid claim to

³⁷ W. Adams Brodribb, *Recollections of an Australian Squatter* (Sydney: 1883), p. 22.

³⁸ *V & P, op. cit.*

³⁹ Strzelecki to Captain P.P. King, London, 3 March and 4 June 1854, Mitchell Library, Lethbridge Collection, p. 174, 178.

begin the first discoverer of gold in 1841, but after perusing a letter of 1839, written by Strzelecki to Captain P. King, Clarke made the 'amende honorable' to Strzelecki in a letter dated April 1854.

Judge Therry quotes an extract from the Report of the Commissioners of the International Congress of Australian Statistics in 1861: 'History of the Discovery of Gold in Australia. - The first known discovery of the precious metal was made by Count Strzelecki in 1839, and was mentioned by him to some personal friends and to Sir George Gipps, the then Governor of the Colony of New South Wales. It was again discovered and specially noticed by the Reverend W.B. Clarke, of Sydney, in 1841. The attention of the colonial public, however, was not attracted to the subject until existence of an extensive goldfield throughout Australia was announced by Mr. E.H. Hargraves in 1851'.

This document was signed by eight Commissioners at the Offices of the Congress, Somerset House, London, 18 July 1860.

Therry concluded:

The palm of merit as to the fact of scientific discovery is here awarded to Count Strzelecki. On the point, why he did not then prosecute it and make it known, it is but just to allow the Count to speak for himself.

'I was warned', writes the Count, 'of the responsibility I should incur if I gave publicity to the discovery, since, as the Governor argued, by proclaiming the Colonies to be gold regions, the maintenance of discipline among 45,000 convicts, which New South Wales, Tasmania and Norfolk Island contained, would become almost impossible, and unless the penal code should be amended at home, transportation would become a premium upon crime and cease to be a punishment. These reasons of state policy had great weight with me, and I willingly deferred to the representation of the Governor-General, notwithstanding that they were opposed to my private interest'.

1 It is impossible to read the frank avowal of this accomplished geologist - strengthened as to its truth by testimony of Sir George Gipps after his arrival in England - without being impressed with a strong opinion that his claim stand very high indeed to be truly hailed as the discoverer of the precious metal in Australia.⁴⁰

Later, a similar conclusion was reached by Thomas Seecombe, who wrote in the British Dictionary of National Biography: 'The priority of the discovery [of gold] undisputedly belongs to Strzelecki'.⁴¹

The Times Literary Supplement of 10 October 1942, stated: 'It is to Strzelecki's eternal honour that he kept his word to the Governor and did not seek to make any gains himself. Yet he had tapped one of the gold sources which have enriched the Empire. He laid down that a goldfield existed in Wellington County and he was right'.

Thus Strzelecki was penalised for his loyalty to the Government in Australia, and, even to this day, he is still penalised by some writers. Geoffrey Blainey, for example, in *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand* (May 1961) states that Strzelecki's discovery of gold was amongst the least important economically, and that a few museum stones do not make a goldfield. It is hard to see how Strzelecki's find could have become economically important when it was suppressed in the very beginning. It seems just as certain that Strzelecki's pockets or bag could hardly hold more than a few stones.

Strzelecki's second expedition set out from Sydney on 21 December 1839. The objectives were the 'Snowy Mountains, Port Philip, and Launceston and Hobart'.⁴² Before

⁴⁰ R. Therry, *Reminiscences of Thirty Years' Residence in New South Wales and Victoria*. (London: 1863), pp. 365- 69.

⁴¹ *Dictionary of National Biography* vol. LV (London: 1909), pp. 69-70.

⁴² Strzelecki to Stuart Donaldson, Sydney, 21 December 1839: the original letter is in the Mitchell Library.

leaving Sydney he had arranged to meet James Macarthur at Ellerslie. They met there at the end of February 1840, and on 2 March the party, consisting of Strzelecki, James Macarthur, a young Englishman named James Riley, an Aborigine Charles Tarra from the Goulburn Plains, and two convict servants, set out on the historical expedition. The number of horses they had, both pack and riding, is not known.⁴³

Macarthur's object was to 'explore the country between Omeo and Port Phillip'⁴⁴, while Strzelecki's intention was 'to strike from the crossing-place of the Murrumbidgee [near Gundagai] to the south, almost along the meridian of 148', to examine the country both west and east; to bisect the divide in latitude of 37'; to resume the southern direction and follow the winding of the range to Wilson's Promontory, and to rebisect it in the direction of Western Port'.⁴⁵

The two explorers joined forces in a mutually agreed plan, and the expedition was under the leadership of Strzelecki, who had already had great experience during his four years in both Americas. We are also told that 'he was the only one who could use a sextant and find the way and was in sole charge of the navigation ...' The greater part of the financial burden was assumed by Macarthur: 'The entire outfit of the expedition was borne principally by me and cost me upwards of £500'⁴⁶.

On 7 March the party reached Welaregang Station, 'Messrs Hay and Chalmers Station on the Hume', in the foothills of the Alps. They spent the Sunday there reorganising for mountain trip. It seems that the servants and pack horses were temporarily left at Welaregang, but a local Aboriginal guide, named Jacky was added to the party.⁴⁷

In the Mitchell Library is an important document 'James Macarthur's Field Book - 1840'. This little notebook of eight pages was donated to the Mitchell Library in 1942 by the Australian historian Charles Daley. The document is of remarkable historical value because it contains a fairly accurate description of how Mount Kosciuszko was climbed and named in 1840. James Macarthur the only witness to the ascent and the naming of the mountain at its summit by Strzelecki; therefore his account is particularly interesting and valuable as Paul Strzelecki did not leave any detailed description, unless it was in his diary 'Mon Journal' which is still missing. Macarthur's testimony was thoroughly analysed in 1970 by Lt. Colonel Hugh Powell G. Clews, who had an extensive knowledge of the terrain, being the compiler of the first military maps of the area, and a surveyor with the Snowy Mountain Authority. He published a scientific paper Strzelecki's Ascent of Mount Kosciusko 1840, which was applauded as an authoritative work on the subject.

It should be mentioned here that Alan Andrews in his article, 'Futher Light on the Summit: Mt. William IV Not Kosciusko' (1971) and 'Lhotsky, Strzelecki, the Alps and Us' (1972) points out that this 'Field Book' or 'Diary' was not a diary but notes actually 'written later or at least copied out later'.⁴⁸

Macarthur noted in his Field Book that on 9 March 1840 he 'started from Messrs Hay and Chalmers station on the Hume [Murray River] accompanied by Count Strzelecki and two native guides determined to reach the highest point of the Australian Alps'. The next day they crossed the river and advanced more than 6 km into the mountains where they left their horses in the care of Reily, who 'did not feel the same adour of discovery that invited the Count and myself to ascend the highest point in Australia'.

On 11 March the two white men and the two Aborigines 'started at 7 a.m. in high spirit to accomplish' their 'object'. Each man had to carry his provisions and blanket rolled 'au militaire'. 'The Count carried in addition a heavy case of instruments for scientific

⁴³ H.P. Clews, *Strzelecki's Ascent of Mount Kosciusko 1840*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: 1873), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁵ Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 72, 86.

⁴⁷ Clews, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴⁸ L. Paszkowski, 'Historic Climb Recorded in Eight-Page Diry', Supplement to *Como-Monaro Express*, 13 October 1967, p. 12; A. Andrews, 'Further Light on the Summit: Mt William IV Not Kosciusko', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, 59, (June 1973), p. 193; A. Andrews, 'Lhotsky, Strzelecki, the Alps un Us', *Australian Ski Year Book* (Sydney: 1972), p. 11 and the unpublished monograph 'Mount Kosciusko: Its Early Illustration Exploration and Maps', chapter 24, p. 6.

observations'. They marched and ascended a high ridge, but had to descend again to cross a valley. (According to H.P.G. Clews, they reached the top of the Geehi Walls and descended a drop of some 300 m, crossing the Bogong Creek.) The descent was so steep that they climbed the next ridge. The day was hot, 'upwards 90' so they decided 'to accomplish as much of the ascent' as they could 'during the cooler hours of night and only camped when the bright moonlight failed ...'

On 12 March at 'early dawn' they moved again 'and after five hours of tedious ascent' reached an open spot where the packs and blankets were left. From there, they started to climb the steep and rocky Abbot Range.

Macarthur's description continues:

After two hours of toilsome ascent we found ourselves still far from the highest point. After consultation we determined to send back our guides for blankets and provisions and directed them to form a camp on the spot where we then stood. Strzelecki and I proceeded towards the extreme summit which we reached after a very laborious climb. [According to Clews, it was the present Mount Townsend.] We found the actual summit divided into six or more points. The Count by aid of his instruments quickly detected one of them as being in fact considerably higher than where we stood. A deep ravine separating us from this did not deter my adventurous friend, he determined to reach it. As the day was far advanced I thought it more prudent to return towards the point where I had ordered the natives to await our return. Before leaving the Count he told me of his intention of recording his visit to the highest point of Australia by associating the name of Kosciusko with our successful ascent. I could not but respect and feel deep sympathy with my friend when with his hat off he named the Patriot of his Country. Parting on the summit I commenced my descent ...

They parted about 3 p.m. and Macarthur, after some difficulties found the guides in a camp, about five hours later:

I could hear nothing of Strzelecki but immediately despatched Jacky to look for him and very soon after had the satisfaction of shaking my friend by the hand. He had experienced many falls by the way but was unhurt. He produced from his bag the extreme of summit of the rocky height he had gained.

On the 13th we made a rapid descent to the camp, where we left our horses. On the 14th the Count was engaged completing and verifying his observations. He fixed the height he had reached as 7.800 [2,377 m].⁴⁹

The same height for Kosciusko was printed in the Port Philip Herald on 2 June 1840. In his report to Sir George Gipps, written later, Strzelecki stated:

On 15th February about noon I found myself on an elevation of 6,510 feet [1,984 m] above the level of the sea, seated on perpetual snow ... The particular configuration of this eminence struck me so forcibly by the similarity it bears to a tumulus elevated in Krakow over the tomb of the patriot Kosciuszko that, although in a foreign country on foreign ground, but among free people who appreciate freedom and its votaries, I could not refrain from giving it the name of Mount Kosciusko.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ J. Macarthur's Field-Book, Mitchell Library; C. Daley, 'Count Paul Strzelecki's Ascent of Mount Kosciusko and Journey through Gippsland', *The Victorian Historical Magazine* 19, no 2 (December 1941) pp. 43-45; Paszkowski, *op. cit.*; Clews, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

⁵⁰ House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 12, p. 12, Report by Count Streleski (sic!), Paper 120, (London, 26 August 1841). The original manuscript entitled 'Count Strelesky's (sic) Journal', dated Melbourne 26 June 1840, in Mitchell Library, Col. Sec. Papers, 41/2322.

Here Strzelecki's date was wrong, as was his height. H.P.G. Clews commented on the later error:

Strzelecki reported falling while descending from Kosciusko to the camp. This would very probably damage his barometer which is not at all a sturdy instrument and can be damaged very easily. It is possible that he discovered and error in the instrument when checking back at the camp where Riley was waiting. Not realising that the error had arisen after the Kosciusko reading, he probably endeavoured to correct his Kosciusko height and made it 800 feet [244 m] to low.⁵¹

In a letter to Adyna Turno, dated in Launceston 1 August 1840, Strzelecki wrote:

The highest peak of the Australian Alps - it towers over the entire continent which continent of a name dear and hallowed to every Pole, to every human, to every friend of freedom and honour - Kosciuszko ... Here is a flower from Mount Kosciuszko - the highest peak of the continent, the first in the New World bearing a Polish name. I believe that you will be the first Polish woman to have a flower from that mountain. Let it remind you ever of freedom, patriotism, and love.⁵²

Regarding Strzelecki's final approach to the summit Alan Andrews gives a different interpretation than Clews, being convinced that 'when, in 1840 James Macarthur, he [Strzelecki] ascended the Kosciusko Plateau from the west it was on Mt. Abbott that he left Macarthur and from there he proceeded on alone to ascend the summit and bestow upon it the name of that heroic patriot General Thaddeus Kosciuszko. I can see now no reason why he should have stood on Towsend at all'. Andrews also pointed out that the 'deep ravine' was in his opinion Wilkinson Valley and Strzelecki associated the name Kosciusko not only with the highest summit but with the entire massif.⁵³

From time to time one finds statements to the effect that the name of Mount Kosciusko was 'transferred' from a lower to the highest peak of Australian Alps. It is a complete fallcy. The name was never transferred, but a mistake by the Victorian Survey Department was corrected.

The maps made by Strzelecki, which have survived, are on too small scale to be very helpful. Nevertheless, all the first official maps on this area, published in Australia during the years 1851 and 1860, showed Mount Kosciusko as the highest peak in Australia. In 1870 the Victorian Survey Department incorrectly showed the present Mount Towsend, the second highest peak, as Mount Kosciusko. The mistake on the maps was corrected in 1892, and the name of Mount Kosciusko restored to the highest peak.

In 1885 an Australian scientist, Dr Robert von Landefeld, perhaps influenced by the Victorian map of 1870, claimed that he had discovered the highest peak and attempted to rename it Mount Towsend. His claims were refuted by his own guide, James Spencer. This caused a lot of confusion, which still recurs to the present time.

These problems were widely and skilful described by B.T. Dowd in the paper 'The Cartography of Mount Kosciusko', published in the Royal Australian Historical Society Journal, vol. 26, Sydney, 1940. According to an official statement by the Victorian Survey Department of 1955, the peak at present bearing the name Kosciusko is the same as the one ascended by Strzelecki.⁵⁴

One wonders why this fallcy still persists, when the error was corrected as far back in 1892, and explained by experts in the local topography, B.T. Dowd in 1940, H.P.G. Clews in

⁵¹ Clews, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

⁵² Ślabczyński, *op.cit.*, p.156.

⁵³ Andrews, 'Lhotsky, Strzelecki ...', *op. cit.*, p. 10 and 'Mount Kosciusko' chapter 24, pp. 9-10, chapter 25, pp. 4- 5, 10.

⁵⁴ Ślabczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

1970 and Alan Andrews in 1980 in his monograph 'Mount Kosciusko', in chapter 40, 'The Name Droppers'.

According to Clews the party from Mount Kosciusko 'went back to Welaregang, where they returned their borrowed aboriginal guide, and picked up their two servants and supplies, gear and possibly horses, and started south about 16th March'.

They proceeded to Corryong⁵⁵, thence south to Lake Omeo, where for the first time Strzelecki determined the exact geographical bearings of this lake. The country, which extended from that point to Western Port and Wilson's Promontory was merely a blank space on the contemporary maps of Australia.

From Lake Omeo the party went to Mount Tambo where Strzelecki ascended to its summit and marked its exact position on his map. While passing through the Tambo Valley via Tongio the party entered an outstation, Numbla Munjee, in the vicinity of Ensay, which belonged to a squatter named Lachlan Macalister. At the time his nephew Matthew Macalister was temporarily in charge of it. Numbla Munjee had been formed about a year earlier by Angus McMillan, an overseer of Macalister's stock.

There are two interesting comparisons of Strzelecki and McMillan: Geoffrey Rawson's chapter 'Scot and Pole' in his book *The Count and Kenneth Cox* in the chapter 'Pole versus Scot' in his monography *Angus McMillan - Pathfinder*. Any person interested would benefit from reading these two chapters.

The first known explorer who entered East Gippsland, in the Deddick River area, was John Lhotsky in March 1834. This fact was only recently pinpointed by Norman A. Wakefield and confirmed by Dr James H. Willis.⁵⁶

According to James Macarthur: 'On 26 March 1840 we passed Mr. Macalister's station beyond Omeo Plains. Here we found Mr. McMillan absent but received much kind attention and aid from young Mr. Macalister. From him we learned that McMillan had penetrated to fine grazing country about a week previously in the direction we intended travelling, but the party had been obliged to return for want of provisions. Thus far, Mr. McMillan had ascertained the existence of grazing country; we occasionally saw his tracks up to the Riley [Nicholson] River on 6 April but beyond this point we saw no further trace of any party having preceded us'⁵⁷. Cox remarks in his biography of McMillan: 'If this is true, Strzelecki was within his rights in naming the various physical features'.

The first stage of their journey from Numbla Munjee led down the Tambo Valley and was pointed out to them by young Macalister.⁵⁸ They reached Lake King, which was named by Strzelecki after his friend Captain Phillip P. King, and he examined its northern shores. Having no boat he was unable to explore this inland water, but observed the sea by telescope from adjacent hills.⁵⁹

During further progress, the party crossed several streams which Strzelecki named after his friends. The largest of them he named the La Trobe River, probably on 15 April 1840. After crossing this river in the vicinity of Loy Yang, the nature of the country change remarkably and became 'densely wooded' but worst than that was the thick scrub.⁶⁰ The route towards Corner Inlet was altered and the party set out in a direct line for the nearest known white settlement at Western Port Bay. The horses and baggage were abandoned in the vicinity of the present township of Moe.

James Riley described this part of the journey in a letter to his mother:

⁵⁵ Clews, *op. cit.*, p.29.

⁵⁶ N. Wakefield, 'Dr John Lhotsky' Two Excursions in to the Australian Alps', *Victorian Naturalist*, 92, no. 11 (1975), p. 243; N. Wakefield, 'In Steps of John Lhotsky' in V. Kruta et al, *op.cit.*, p. 86; *ibid.*, J. Willis, 'John Lhotsky and Australian Botany', p. 70.

⁵⁷ Rawson, *op. cit.* p.80.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁹ See note 49.

⁶⁰ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p.90; W. Cuthill, 'History of Traralgon', typescript in the La Trobe Library, Melbourne (Private Collection), vol. 1, chapter 1, p. 1 and chapter 3, p. 1.

We were feeling the strain and were quite as exhausted as the horses. We had been on half rations for five weeks, two lb. bread for three people per day and three thin slices of bacon. The Count was fortunately successful in obtaining observations for latitude from which we were (by Major Mitchell's maps) about 25 miles from the north-east point of Western Port, to which we were steering, for the old settlement. On referring to the Navigation Book, we found some of the principal points did not agree, which made us a little doubtful of the Major's maps. We now only had eight days' food at the above rate when we decided to leave everything behind. We stowed away our saddles etc. in trees, taking only what as absolutely required, such as spare shirt, blanket, guns. We left everything else except what was of utmost importance, including, of course, the instruments for observations. We made the flour into three dampers, each man had half and bacon for three days. We saw only one animal monkey or native bear. We got some by shooting, some by the native climbing the trees. We ate them raw when we could not make a fire which was difficult because dry fuel was scarce. Instead of the course being 25 miles [40 km], it proved to be about 70 [112] and the scrub increased up to us instead of becoming thinner. It took us 21 days from the day we left our horses until we arrived at Western Port on 12 May.⁶¹

On 19 May 1840 the party reached Melbourne, nearly five months after Strzelecki left Sydney. He went to the Superintendent of Port Phillip District Charles La Trobe, and presented a letter of recommendation from Sir George Gipps, which is still preserved in the La Trobe Library, Melbourne. The explorers found themselves to be the 'lions' of the hour, as James Riley stated, and the centre of public interest. The journey was described by G. Rawson as 'one of the most difficult and harassing ever made in the annals of Victorian exploration'.⁶²

The Port Phillip Herald of 2 June 1840 published an interview with Strzelecki, Macarthur and Riley under heading 'The Progress of Discovery'. In this article there are a few lines worthy of quoting and perhaps remembering:

The Count more inured to the fatigue and privation ... alone retained possession of his strength, and although burthened with a load of instruments and papers of forty five pounds weight, continued to pioneer his exhausted companions day after day through an almost impervious tea-tree scrub, there throwing himself at full length among the dense underwood, and thus opening by the weight of his body a pathway for his companions. Thus the party inch by inch forced their way, the incessant rains preventing them from taking rest by night or day.

Later in the article there is another paragraph reflecting the bewilderment of the party, caused not only by the faulty distances on Major Mitchell's chart, but also by the three weeks of rain: 'Messrs Macarthur and Riley, acknowledge themselves to be under great obligations to Count Strzelecki, to whom under Divine Providence, they attribute their safety. Although furnished with sextant and artificial horizon, the state of the weather was such that during the last twenty two days, notwithstanding the utmost exertion of the travellers, the latitude and azimuth could only twice be ascertained, but such attention was paid to the variations of the compass, and lying down the course upon the chart that the latest observation did not differ from meridian of Western Port more than two miles'.

During the forty-eight days which Strzelecki spent in Melbourne he was extremely busy and active. He drew the first map of the explored country, which he named Gipps Land, and sent a scientific report to Gipps, attaching another map. He supplied Henry F. Gisborne, at the time Commissioner for Crown Lands in Port Phillip, with notes which the latter used for an article in the Port Phillip Herald. He also prepared the material for a pamphlet with a description of Gippsland and a map.

⁶¹ Quoted by Rawson, *op. cit.*, pp.97-98.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Unfortunately, there is no copy of this pamphlet in Australian libraries. This pamphlet was later reprinted in London by J. Cross. One copy was seen by the Australian collector and bibliographer, E.A. Petherick, as he described it in a bibliography of Australia which he prepared but never published.⁶³

The Australian historian Henry G. Turner states: '... so far as the penetration into heart of Gipps Land is concerned, McMillan was first. In traversing its entire length from east to west the Polish Count and his party can claim precedence'.⁶⁴

Strzelecki's party lost all trace of McMillan near Lake King, crossing the rivers further upstream and proceeding from Providence Pond and Avon River, through country never before touched by the foot of white man. Historically it was the first crossing of Gippsland. McMillan did not cross the La Trobe River until after Strzelecki, and reached the sea at Port Albert on 15 February 1841 - nine months after Strzelecki's crossing of Gippsland.

Strzelecki never tried to conceal the fact that other people had preceded him shortly before he passed through certain part of Gippsland. We find a report by Strzelecki in the British Parliamentary papers, 1841, vol. 17, in which he refers to Buckley and Macalister as 'the two first pioneers into Gippsland...' and repeated this again in the *Tasmanian Journal*, 1842. At that time, of course, it was customary to mention the principal person concerned, in this case Macalister, and not an employee such as McMillan. Likewise in his *Physical Description* Strzelecki never refers to McMillan by name, always citing the latter's employer, Macalister.

In his *Physical Description* Strzelecki wrote:

The great benefit, which resulted from Sir T. Mitchell's expeditions, besides that of corroborating all the geographical features and positions previously ascertained, and determining many new ones not less important, was the discovery of Australia Felix; to the honour of this discovery must be considered due to him, since, though not the first who saw the region, he was the first to make known to the public what he saw. It is true that the Van Diemen's Land graziers knew the country well, and grazed it with their stock long before the arrival of Sir T. Mitchell at the Glenelg. They had also similar stations at Port Phillip, as far even as the south side of Mount Macedon; but as they kept their knowledge secret, and used it merely for their own benefit and convenience, they can now only boast of their good fortune in having found the country, but not of the honour of having discovered it.

Thus, in Strzelecki's opinion finding a country was not the same as discovering it. Neither Sir Thomas, described by Kenneth Cox as 'haughty and difficult' nor any of the Australian writers denied this statement and did not try to ascribe 'the palm of discovery' to the graziers and stockmen who know the country well before the arrival of Sir Thomas Mitchell. But in reference to Strzelecki some of them use a different yardstick.

Sir Thomas did not repay Strzelecki in like coin and, after publication of Strzelecki's pamphlet, gave orders to ignore the names given on the first map of Gippsland made by Strzelecki and to use those given by McMillan. Mitchell's decision was approved by Sir George Gipps with marked dissatisfaction: '...the Governor had seen a sketch prepared by the Surveyor-General's Department dealing with Gippsland and Count Strzelecki's (sic!) discoveries, in which the names applied by the Count had been altered. The Surveyor-General was instructed that in the future no alterations of this character were to be made without His Excellency's sanction'.⁶⁵

There is no indication that young Macalister told Strzelecki, or Macarthur, that McMillan had named the rivers but that the names were nowhere published. When James Macarthur talked with Lachlan Macalister, just before leaving Sydney, about his intended trip

⁶³ Słabczyński in the notes to P.E. Strzelecki, *Pisma wybrane* [Selected Writings], (Warsaw): 1960), p. 219.

⁶⁴ H. Turner, *History of the Colony of Victoria*, (London: 1904), p. 320.

⁶⁵ *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, 23, pp. 380-81; Słabczyński, *Paweł Edmund Strzelecki* (Warsaw: 1957), p. 179; Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

he heard nothing about the movements of McMillan. If it had not been for Strzelecki and Macarthur's expedition these findings may have been kept secret, perhaps for years.

The rush to Gippsland, began with the formation of a syndicate in Melbourne to examine the district⁶⁶. This syndicate was formed before McMillan reached the sea, as the barque Singapore, loaded with settlers, horses, cattle and stores, anchored at Corner Inlet on 13 February 1841, the day McMillan reached the ocean a few miles to the eastward.⁶⁷

The syndicate was formed as a result of Strzelecki's pamphlet and reports. One of the members of the syndicate, William Brodribb, later wrote: 'During our excursions from Port Albert we had come upon trees recently marked or blazed, which had puzzled us a good deal. We knew that Strzelecki had not been there, nor had heard that any other explorer had visited the locality. We ascertained long afterwards that these marks were made by McMillan...'.⁶⁸

In February 1841 another Melbourne pioneer, A. McL. Hunter, tried 'to get into new country' by land and stated that 'People [in Melbourne] are all mad about Gippsland...'.⁶⁹

Strzelecki got all the credit and publicity in Melbourne, as nobody had heard about McMillan. George Arden, author of the first book published in Melbourne in 1840, *Latest Information with Regard to Australia Felix*, referred to Gippsland as 'the splendid discovery of Count Strelenski' (sic). This book was reprinted in London in 1841 under the title *Recent Information respecting Port Phillip and the Promising Province of Australia Felix*.

A distinguished pioneer and historian of Victoria, James Bonwick, noted in his book *Port Philip Settlement* (London: 1883), that the first account given by McMillan about his discovery was in a letter dated on 18 February 1841, at Corrawong.

'Following on the activities of the Singapore's party of pioneers, the development of the new country proceeded rapidly. The "vast and fertile plains" were soon taken up; McAlister and McMillan found, to their chagrin, that many competitors and rivals had appeared upon the scene, though McMillan was able to establish himself in some fine country on the banks of the Avon. It was not due to them that Gippsland was so rapidly opened up, for they had worked in secrecy'.⁷⁰

The settlers and stock were also pouring into Gippsland from New South Wales, and again it was due to Strzelecki's pamphlet and maps. W. Odell Raymond, one of the pioneers, stated in a letter:

... early in 1842, I got possession of a pamphlet published by Count Strzelecki, giving a description of Gippsland, and pointing out by a chart a route into it. This caused me to immediately arrange for the removal of a portion of our stock to Gippsland, and I had, in three weeks after seeing the work, eight thousand sheep on the road, I however, had not started, when I received information that Mr. Albert Brodribb had started from Bathurst, with a number of sheep belonging to Mr. Reeve, for the same destination (and I believe upon the same information - the Count's work).⁷¹

On 28 September 1840 Sir George Gipps wrote to Lord Russell:

Although a cattle station had been pushed these mountains [Snowy Mountains] by a gentleman of the name of MacAlister, the Country between them and the Sea was altogether unknown until the month of March last, when the Count Strzelecki, a Political Exile who since the latter misfortunes of Poland has devoted himself to the pursuits of science, attempted and achieved the exploration of it. I have a satisfaction herewith to forward to Your Lordship a copy of the account furnished to me of this journey by the

⁶⁶ W. Brodribb, 'Gippsland and its Explorers', *The Australasian*, 11 May 1878, p. 584.

⁶⁷ Rawson, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

⁶⁸ W. Brodribb, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

⁶⁹ A. McL. Hunter Papers, La Trobe Library, Private Collection, letter by Hunter, 10-12 February, 1841.

⁷⁰ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 68, 104.

⁷¹ W. Odell Raymond to Tyers, 15 August 1853, in T.F. Bride, ed., *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, (Melbourne: 1898), p. 130.

Count, and I can not do so without making Your Lordship aware of the feelings of respect and esteem, which have been excited towards him amongst the People of this Colony. The Count's Memoir, as well as Copy of his Map, is with his permission transmitted as Appendix C.⁷²

Of those names of landforms given by Strzelecki the following were retained: Gippsland itself, La Trobe River, Barney Plains and Lake King. Another landmark in Gippsland, Mount Fatigue, was named by Captain J. Lort Stokes, who wrote in his book, *Discoveries in Australia*: 'While lying off Alberton, to commemorate my friend Count Strzelecki's discovery of this important and valuable district which he had named Gippsland, I named the summit of a wooded range, 2,100 feet high, over the north shore of Corner Inlet, Mount Fatigue'.⁷³

To close this account of Strzelecki and Gippsland, let me quote two authors, Commander Geoffrey Rawson, Strzelecki's biographer:

It is the conventional custom of the times to deprecate any suggestion of rivalry in the field of exploration. In the case of McMillan and Strzelecki there was some bitterness, chiefly manifested by the former and his adherents, and echoes of this ill-feeling still linger locally. There is documentary evidence that McMillan and his followers, rightly or wrongly, were contemptuous of the Count's claims and resented the honours and awards that followed.

Within a very short time of the journey of McMillan and Strzelecki, settlers were pouring into the new region and this was chiefly due not to the silence and secrecy of McMillan and his employer McAlister but to the well publicised reports of the Count, printed and distributed in pamphlet form and well advertised in the local press.⁷⁴

And Kenneth Cox, the biographer of Angus McMillan:

Strzelecki ... appeared on the scene, whose flamboyant exploits were to set the whole Colony talking, and whose writings were to tear away the veil of secrecy from the carefully hidden schemes of the Scottish pioneers. Strzelecki and McMillan never met, yet the voluble Pole exercised a profound influence on the life of the dour Scot, causing him to resent the 'foreign imposter' for the rest of his days.⁷⁵

Taking some letters of recommendation⁷⁶, Strzelecki left Port Phillip on 10 July 1840 bound for Launceston on board the *Emma* which arrived at its destination a fortnight later.

From the moment of landing in Tasmania Strzelecki found himself under the care of Governor Sir John Franklin, who showed remarkable friendship and placed the entire resources of the colony at Strzelecki's disposal. He also supplied him with the necessary scientific instruments. Lady Jane, Franklin's 'strongminded and intelligent wife was fascinated and enthralled from the first meeting with the stranger'.⁷⁷

The explorer 'spend two years in Tasmania, in the course of which he made the most extensive and detailed expeditions to every part of the island'. He travelled over 3,000 km on the island, chiefly on foot, examining the main features and conducting a geological and topographical survey. 'Headquarters were provided for him at Launceston, where a laboratory

⁷² *Historical Records of Australia*, XX, (1924), p. 841.

⁷³ J. Lort Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia during the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle*, vol. 2 (London: 1846), p. 427.

⁷⁴ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. XVI, 104.

⁷⁵ K. Cox, *Angus McMillan Pathfinder* (Olinda, Vic.: 1973), p. 71.

⁷⁶ Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷⁷ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

was also set up for him .. He met innumerable friends among the settlers [and] he was the best known and most popular man in the island'.⁷⁸

These memories survive, as John Reynolds states 'Strzelecki's amiable personality made him a particularly welcome guest in many Tasmanian homes. Even today there are fleeting memories of this adventurous and cultured Pole'.⁷⁹

In a letter to James Macarthur, dated in Launceston on 22 May 1841, Strzelecki gives an outline of his explorations in Tasmania:

I completed all my survey here. During all the time I was in V.D. I was peregrinating on foot as usual, with two packhorses and three men. My first exploring was to the Eastward of Launceston, including the coast between George Town and Cape Portland and that down to St. George's River , and the South and North Esk, Ben Lomond and Ben Nevis. The second was to the westward - Westbury, Port Sorell, Delorain and Middlesex Plains, Hampshire Hills, Emu Bay, Circular Head, Cape Grim and River Arthur. The third start was at the Western Tier which is to the south of Deloraine & all the Lakes and Frenchmen's Cap & McQuarry Harbour and returning from thence the Valley of the Derwent and N. Norfolk and Mt. Wellington and Tasman's Peninsula and the Huyon and Research Bay & Richmond & Jerusalem & Jericho and Oaklands and the Country from Ross extending towards Swan Port and finally that of Campbelltown and Launceston - which zigzag, computed and evaluated to 2,000 miles. I like V.D., that is all what Nature and Industry has done and is about to do, all beautiful, surprising and surpassing the expectations.⁸⁰

After these three expeditions in Tasmania, during which he climbed the highest peak on the island and named Mount Arrowsmith.⁸¹ On 13 January 1842 Strzelecki climbed the highest peak on Flinders Island, which later Captain Stokes named 'Strzelecki Peaks. According to the Australian historian Charles Daley a hill on Three Hummocks Island in Bass Strait was also named after him.⁸²

Upon his return from the Bass Strait cruise Strzelecki again took up his scientific work for about seven months. During that period his friendship with the Franklins became more firmly established.

Among the early settlers of Tasmania Strzelecki made the acquaintance of James Fenton, who described Strzelecki in A history of Tasmania as 'a man of great energy and physical endurance'. Fenton wrote that Strzelecki found in the Asbestos Ranges of Tasmania 'indications of gold and copper'⁸³.

In another of his books, *Bush Life in Tasmania Fifty Years Ago*, Fenton states that

The Count examined with much minuteness the range of hills which run south from Badger Head, known as the Asbestos Tier. He found plenty of asbestos, a trace of copper, and some auriferous quartz; but, alas! we did not go down to Cabbage-tree Hill, where those lucky prospectors, the Dallys, found, long after that day, the surface treasures which culminated in the Tasmanian goldmine. The count was a most delightful man to converse with. He had travelled over nearly all the world, was cheerful in conversation, had a rich store of anecdote, which he told in a most interesting and often amusing manner, with his strongly marked foreign accent ... he was cheerful

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121-122.

⁷⁹ J. Reynolds, 'A Polish Explorer', *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, June 1929, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁰ Rawson, *op.cit.*, p.122-128, the original in the Mitchell Library.

⁸¹ K. Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania* (Melbourne 1949), p. 291

⁸² C. Daley, 'Count Paul Strzelecki's Ascent of Mount Kosciusko and Journey through Gippsland', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 19, no. 2 (December 1941), p. 53.

⁸³ J. Fenton, *History of Tasmania*, Hobart: 1884), p. 157.

withal, high-spirited, of powerful physique, and gifted with a rich fund of scientific lore.⁸⁴

The Melbourne Herald of 9 December 1853 noted a 'Probable Gold Field' in Tasmania referring to Strzelecki's note 'that in neighbourhood of Frenchman's Cap, there is a place where he thought gold would be found'.

Unfortunately, most of Strzelecki's brilliant quick answers, puns and jokes are lost. One of his retort was reported by another Australian pioneer, William Brodribb. Incidentally, his description of Strzelecki is very similar to that of Fenton:

He was a thinnish wiry man, of vivacity and energy, full of knowledge and anecdote - in short, as genial and pleasant a companion as one would wish to meet. He delighted in telling stories of the Sydney notables. One I recall as characteristic of the man. The late Bishop Broughton, speaking to the Count on his return from a distant exploration, said: "I fear you found a great deal of wickedness and ungodliness in the far interior, where the people are so scattered and where there are no churches". "On the contrary, my lord" said the Count, "it is here in Sydney, where people and churches abound, that I find wickedness rampant".⁸⁵

Another description of Strzelecki was given in Żmichowska's Reminiscence (p. 547) 'One rarely sees a man so attractive in every respect: height, posture right for a monument, sapphirine eyes just to take into one's heart, a most handsome man!' She also stated that he was an 'outstanding horseman'.

Strzelecki left Launceston on 29 September 1842 by the steamer *Sea Horse*, and arrived in Sydney on 2 October.

After a short stay in Sydney, Strzelecki made another expedition in New South Wales, completing a geological examination of Upper and Lower Hunter River Valley. 'He mentions a tract of country between Port Hunter, Port Stephens and Mount Wingen, naming such places as Dart Brook, Karua River, St. Patrick's Plains, Raymond Terrace, Raymond Ferry, Booral, Carrington, Strout, Glendon, Harper's Hill, all centres of geological interest'.⁸⁶

On 15 November 1842 Strzelecki wrote from Port Stephens to the Colonial Secretary, 'Forwarding Jas Nolan or Keena's petition for a Pardon'. As a result of Strzelecki's recommendation, his faithful Irish servant, a convict, transported 'for life' for 'the felony of a Watch', received an absolute pardon on 1 July 1843.

Strzelecki left Sydney on 22 April 1843, on board the small barque *Anna Robertson*, after four years in Australia. This ship sailed along the Great Barrier Reef, and through Torres Strait and the Arafura Sea. He visited the islands of Timor, Sumba, Sumbawa, Lombok, Bali (where he apparently stayed for some time), and Java. It seems that the barque sailed from Surabaja through Makassar Strait, visiting Borneo and Manila, before reaching Hong Kong. In the Mitchell Library there is a letter written by Strzelecki to Captain P.P. King, dated 26 July 1843, with a most interesting description of the infant colony of Hong Kong. In referring to the island visited he says: 'The richness of Nature in every Department of Natural History is surprising - but nothing equal (sic) to that which the doings of the mortal race of the Anglosaxon people exhibits in the new English colony of Hongkong'.⁸⁷

Strzelecki sailed from Canton in a fast Government steamer via Penang, Singapore, India and the Red Sea, disembarking at Suez. After a journey by land to Cairo, he spent then days in Egypt.

He arrived in London on 24 October 1843 seventy-four days after leaving Canton, and nearly six months after his departure from Jackson's Bay. He was undecided whether to settle in England or in France.

⁸⁴ J. Fenton, *Bush Life in Tasmania Fifty Years Ago* (London: 1891), p. 36

⁸⁵ Brodribb, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

⁸⁶ Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁸⁷ Mitchell Library, King Paper, A 3599, p. 148.

He may have been induced to stay in England by a pleasant surprise in the form of the address of recognition from the settlers and ladies of Tasmania, which opened with: 'We, the undersigned, cannot suffer you to depart from our shores without presenting to you the assurance of our sincere regret. The benefits which you have conferred upon our country have added other motives to those of private friendship, which call for a public and united expression of our esteem'⁸⁸. The address was accompanied by a subscription of £400, £100 of which was contributed by Sir John Franklin.

Strzelecki used this money to publish *Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*. This book appeared on the booksellers' shelves in May 1845 and was well received.⁸⁹ Besides flattering reviews, the opinion of Charles Darwin, expressed in a letter to Strzelecki, serves as an authoritative appraisal: 'I congratulate you on having completed a work which must have cost you so much labour and I am astonished at the number of deep subjects which you discuss... I heartily wish that one quarter of our English authors could think and write in language one half as spirited yet so simple'.⁹⁰

The book inspired an American writer James H. Perkins to express his opinion a few years later in the *North American Review*: 'Strzelecki ... has done more to make New South Wales and Tasmania scientifically intelligible than all other inquirers'.⁹¹

The map reproduced in the *Physical Description* was a reduction by J. Arrowsmith from Strzelecki's original map - a colossal map 7,6 m long and 1.5 m wide. Researchers searched for this map for at least two decades, and in 1971 Dr David F. Branagan of Sydney University located it in the Library of the Institute of Geological Sciences, South Kensington, London. The map had been cut into portions, mounted and boxed, apparently by Strzelecki himself. Branagan was instrumental in obtaining two sets of copies on colour negatives for the National Library, Canberra and the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

Although two geological maps were produced earlier in Australia, T. Mitchell's of the Wellington Valley (published 1838) and J. Lhotsky's of Tasman's Peninsula (1837, never published), they were small and of regional value. Strzelecki's map had its priority explained by Branagan: 'Strzelecki plays a most important role in the history of Australian geology - his work is the first attempt to cover a very large part of the continent (approximately 176,00 sq. m.) was compiled largely from personal inspection'.⁹² The map deserves a more detailed evaluation by Australian geologists.

Physical Description after 135 years is still an asset in the scientific literature on Australian geology. The facsimile edition published by the Libraries Board of South Australia in 1967 was quickly sold out.

The well-known geologist, Dr A.N. Lewis of Hobart, wrote in 1939:

Strzelecki was the first writer to publish a systematic account of any scientific studies in Tasmania. The records of his work at practically entirely contained in his *Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*. The book is a classic and held the field as the important work on geography and geology of Tasmania until superseded by R.M. Johnston's in 1888. Now,

⁸⁸ Strzelecki *Physical description of NSW* (London 1845) p. V; Harvard, *op.cit.*, p. 81; the original address is in the Mitchell Library.

⁸⁹ L. Paszkowski, 'Charles Darwin and Strzelecki's Book "Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemens Land"', in *Australian Zoologist* 14 (1968), p. 249.

⁹⁰ W. Słabczyński, 'Darwin's Opinion of Strzelecki and an Attempt to Interpret It', *25th International Geological Congress: Abstracts*, 3 (Sydney 1977): 928-29; Paszkowski, 'Charles Darwin', *ibid.*, p. 246. The photograph of the letter was published by W. Słabczyński in the Polish periodical *Kosmos A*, 7 (1958), pp. 379-80 and in Strzelecki's *Pisma wybrane*, pp. 148-50. The original letter is in the Yale University Library, New Haven, USA.

⁹¹ J. Perkins, *The Memoir and Writings*, vol. 2 (Boston: 1851), p. 499; *The North American Review* LXX (1850), pp. 196-97.

⁹² D. Branagan, 'Strzelecki's Geological Map', *Records of the Australian Academy of Science* 2, no 4, (May 1974), pp. 68-70; T. Vallance, 'Origins of Australian Geology', *Proceedings Linnean Society N.S.W.* 100, part 1, (1975), p. 32; T. Vallance and D. Branagan, 'New South Wales Geology - Its Origins and Growth', in V. Kurta et al, *Dr. John Lhotsky: The Turbulent Australian Writer Naturalist and Explorer*, (Melbourne: 1977), p. 52.

100 years later, it is appropriate to consider Strzelecki's real contribution to science as far as he dealt with Tasmania. This contribution even considering the virgin field in which he worked, was outstanding. My personal tribute to Strzelecki is that 100 years after he wrote, I make constant reference to his book and I have found thereby help which has materially aided my work in the same field ...

It may surprise readers to learn that some of the localities described in the Physical Description have not since appeared in scientific literature. About one of these he says (page 95): "The sources of the river Nive, in the Upper Country and the locality east of Marlborough exhibit the most complete section of this group that is to be seen..." Nevertheless, as far as I know, this locality was not again inspected until 1939. Another locality, Spring Hill, was used by Strzelecki as the basis of his correlation of the coal measures of both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. This also has not since been revised...

As far as geological conclusions or hypotheses go, Strzelecki's work was based on far too little field data and has been superseded by subsequent work. This however does not apply to descriptions of localities or actual geological observations. The descriptive paragraphs opening Chapter III are as good today, as they were when written, and form an admirably concise statement of the physical description of the country which has never been bettered in published literature. Strzelecki's petrology is very mixed and of no use today but the chapter shows a remarkable range of observations and close attention to detail within the limits of the knowledge of the time. His observational acumen is displayed by his classification of different rocks into stratigraphical horizons. Considering the fact that his conclusions must have been largely based on his own observations, they were remarkably close to the truth as demonstrated by more recent intensive study...

It is not to be wondered at that the pioneer geologist made mistakes but the features he actually noted can still be identified in the field and the range of his observations makes the geologist of the 20th century marvel at what one man accomplished in the early days of systemised science...

Strzelecki paid particular attention to the occurrence of coal. These were times when coal was of prime economic importance and were before the discovery of the Tasmanian metal deposits. His description of the various coal basin are most accurate and would serve practically as they stand as good account today...

It is in the department of palaeontology that Strzelecki's work has been assumed prime importance. I have no direct evidence that he possessed and particular knowledge of this branch. He handed his collections to Lonsdale and Morris for description. The results are printed in the Physical Description and form the real basis of Australian Palaeontology, unimpaired by the passage of time. Strzelecki, however, did the collecting. The collection was remarkably complete and shows a wide grip of the subject to enable such a comprehensive and well located group of representative fossils to be got together. It also shows a painstaking labour for which Australian geology will always be grateful.

The other chapters on Botany and Zoology, the Aborigines, Agriculture and Soils are not mainly interesting as historical records but show that Strzelecki was a keen observer and, above all, a writer remarkable for the brevity and lucidity of his descriptions. The book is not much read now but still raises a feeling of amazement in the minds of those students who spare time to dip into it. A scientist's claim to fame rest not so much on the final truth he discovers as on the distance he carries their knowledge towards the

final goal. According to this test Strzelecki still stands first amongst Tasmanian scientific writers.⁹³

On 28 November 1845 Strzelecki was naturalised as a British subject.⁹⁴ A year after the appearance of *Physical Description* the gold Founder's Medal of the Geographical Society was awarded to him. During the presentation, on 25 May 1846, the president of the Society, Lord Colchester, said:

In the course of the last year you have given to the public the result of your labours in the work entitled, "Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land" ... the whole illustrated by comparisons with other countries visited by yourself in the course of twelve years' travel through most of the regions of the world, is a most valuable addition to our knowledge of this interesting portion of the globe; and together with the beautiful geological map, constructed by yourself, and now exhibited before us, and the energy and perseverance required to produce these results proclaim a geographer of no ordinary merit, and form the ground on which has been awarded to you the medal of our royal founder which I have now in the name of the Council, to present to you.⁹⁵

Only three such medals were bestowed by the Geographical Society to Australian explorers: Edward J. Eyre (1842), Paul E. Strzelecki (1846) and Charles Stuart (1847). The latter, a close friend and admirer of Strzelecki named the Strzelecki Creek in South Australia in honour of his friend.

During the autumn and winter of 1846-47 the disaster of the great famine came to Ireland. The British Relief Association was formed in London and Strzelecki almost at once applied for an appointment as one of the agents in Ireland. He offered his services on an honorary basis. He was accordingly appointed Agent for the counties of Sligo and Mayo.

On his arrival he reported that 'no pen can describe the distress by which I am surrounded. It has actually reached such a degree of lamentable extremes that it becomes above the power of exaggeration and misrepresentation. You may now believe anything which you hear or read, because what I actually see surpass what I ever read of past and present calamities'.⁹⁶

The author of the *History of the Great Irish Famine*, Rev. John O'Rourke, wrote that 'large sums were distributed by the British Association, through the agency of the generous and never-to-be-forgotten Count Strzelecki (sic)'. This historian also pointed out that 'A particular feature of this relief system, adopted and carried into effect by the advice of Count Strzelecki (sic), was the giving of clothing and daily rations to children attending school. This was done in twenty-seven of the poorest Unions, and with the best results. By the first of January, 1848, the system was in full operation ... and 58,000 children were on the relief roll of the Association. The number went on increasing until, in March, there were upwards of 200,000 children attending schools of all denominations ...'.⁹⁷

Strzelecki devoted himself to the relief of this great misery and his success was beyond any doubt, although obtained at the cost to himself of an attack of famine fever, traces of which reminded with him for the rest of his days.⁹⁸

⁹³ A. Lewis, 'Strzelecki in Tasmania', in Havard, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-78; also quoted by Rawson, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-133.

⁹⁴ Paszkiewicz, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

⁹⁵ Havard, *op.cit.*, p.86.

⁹⁶ J. O'Rourke, *The History of the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: 1875), pp. 391-92; Havard, *op.cit.*, p.88; Rawson, *op.cit.*, p. 167; Słabczyński, *P.E. Strzelecki*, pp. 240-57.

⁹⁷ O'Rourke, *op.cit.*, p. 510-511.

⁹⁸ Rawson, *op.cit.*, p. 167; *The Times*, Obituary, 17 October 1873, p. 3; Z. Gloger, Edmund Strzelecki, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* [Illustrated Weekly], (Warsaw) 17 January 1874, p. 41; Słabczyński, *P.E. Strzelecki* p. 258-59.



A bronze relief of Sir Paul E. Strzelecki on the facade of the Earth Science Building, Swanston Street, Melbourne University. It was unveiled by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne on June 19, 1988, during the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations. The monument was sculptured by George Frimi and financed by the Polish Australian Cultural Society in Victoria. Photo: A. Santowiak, 1996.

For the important services rendered in Ireland the British Government nominated Strzelecki one of the first Civil Companions of the Bath, bestowed on him on 21 November 1848. In the words of Lord Overstone, when conveying to him the resolution of thanks of the Relief Committee, he had, indeed, afforded 'abundant proof that he possessed those high moral qualities which the British public always hold in the highest esteem'.⁹⁹ In May 1849 Strzelecki was back in London.

The Times of 17 October 1873 stated that 'On his return to London in 1849, Count de Strzelecki found himself famous... Society rejoiced in him, and during the rest of his life he maintained a high position in the ranks of science and literature'.

Strzelecki was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in May 1853. In June of the same year he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London.

His philanthropic interests were not limited merely to Ireland, as he helped to promote the emigration of many impoverished families to Australia. He was an active and esteemed member of Lord Herbert's Emigration Committee and of the Duke of Wellington's Emigration Committee.¹⁰⁰ Among thousands of emigrants whom Strzelecki was responsible for sending to Australia were destitute girls, rescued from the streets of London.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Havard, *op. cit.*, p.88.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89; M. Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm* (Melbourne: 1857), p. 184, ref. to the *Empire*, supplement, 25 July 1854.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, 17 October 1873, p. 3.

He was a member of the Crimean Army Fund Committee and at the end of this campaign he accompanied Lord Lyons on a visit to Sebastopol. Strzelecki was associated with Florence Nightingale and helped her, through his connections, to publish a series of her articles.

When the British Government gave up hope of finding the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin, Lady Jane decided to organise a private search party by her own means. No less the £10,000 would be required to purchase and fit out the yacht Fox. Strzelecki came to her aid and by his effort and by using the good offices of his wealthy friends, was able to assist in the collection of £3,000, thus considerably alleviating the financial burden to Lady Jane.¹⁰²

The expedition sailed from Scotland in July 1857 under the command of Captain Francis McClintock. In the spring of 1859 traces of the lost party were found and Sir John's diary recovered. In memory of Strzelecki's splendid effort Captain McClintock named a large bay on the Prince of Wales Island Strzelecki Harbour.¹⁰³

On 20 June 1860 Strzelecki received the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law from the University of Oxford. On 30 June 1869 he was awarded the Order of St. Michael and St. George, for his 'five years explorations in Australia, the discovery of gold, the discovery of new territory accessible to colonisation and finally for the construction of the topographical and geological maps, based on astronomical observations'.¹⁰⁴

Strzelecki died in London on 6 October 1873, and was buried in the Kensal Green Cemetery. The grave was restored by the Australian and Polish Government in 1943.

There are geographical names still in use in Australia linked with the name of Strzelecki: Strzelecki Ranges, Strzelecki Town, Strzelecki South, Strzelecki Mine, Strzelecki Siding (Gippsland, Vic.); Strzelecki Creek (SA and NSW); Strzelecki Peaks (Flinders Island); Mount Strzelecki (NT); Strzelecki's Old Camp and Strzelecki's Tree (Tas.); Strzelecki Basin, Strzelecki Desert and Strzelecki Plain (SA). In Canada, Strzelecki Harbour is named after the explorer.

In 1927 a Committee was formed in Victoria under chairmanship of Sir James Barret, and thanks to the efforts of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, the Lands and Survey Department and the Department of Education, a line of cairns was erected in Gippsland and unveiled by the governor of Victoria, Lord Somers, as a homage to the explorers of Gippsland: McMillan and Strzelecki. Memorials to Strzelecki were constructed at Heyfield, Loy Yang, Koornalla, Mirboo North, Leongatha, Korumburra, and Corinella.¹⁰⁵

To commemorate Strzelecki's ascent and naming of Mount Kosciuszko a large bronze plaque was placed on a granite boulder on the mountain top. The plaque was unveiled on 17 February 1940 by the then Consul-General for Poland, Ladislas A. de Noskowski and his Australian wife, née Beatrice Barnett.¹⁰⁶

Strzelecki's name and memory have entered the annals of history. At least six books have been written about him as have countless articles in which many different opinions have been expressed. Here are opinions of Strzelecki by three Australians, John Reynolds the Tasmanian journalist and historian, Scrutarius the book-reviewer and Bernard Cronin the author and tutor who nurtured a generation of Australian writers and journalists.

¹⁰² Sir John Franklin had sailed in 1845, in command of the HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*, in an endeavour to discover the North-West passage. The total disappearance of the party was the prime motive in Arctic exploration for the next twenty years or more. The ships were entrapped by ice in September 1846, Franklin died 11 June 1847. Abandoning the ships in April 1848 the survivors, 105 men under Captain F. Crozier, retreated hoping to reach one of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts. Their total loss may have been due partly to starvation but mostly scurvy. Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 184; Ślabczyński, *P.E. Strzelecki*, p. 264.

¹⁰³ Ślabczyński, *ibid.*, p. 264, 292: aerial photograph of the Strzelecki Harbour was published by W. Ślabczyński in *Polscy podróżnicy i odkrywcy* [Polish Travellers and Discoverers] (Warsaw, 1973), p. 372.

¹⁰⁴ Havard, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁵ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 107; L. Paszkowski, 'Obeliski Strzeleckiego w Gippsland' [Strzelecki's Cairns in Gippsland], *Polish Weekly* (Melbourne), 21 December 1963, pp. 10, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Havard, *op. cit.*, p.56-57; Rawson, *op. cit.*, p.78-79; L.A. de Noskowski of Sydney to the author 16 March 1958.

'Strzelecki belongs to that great band of men which made the Nineteenth Century so remarkable. With Humboldt, Franklin, Darwin, and Wallace, he must be regarded as one of the leading explorers of his time'.¹⁰⁷

It has been suggested that Strzelecki was a shallow, self-seeking fortune-hunter with no real claim on the world's regard. But, as Mr Rawson himself asked, would not the shrewd Lord Overstone one of the richest and most influential bankers of the time, the famous Delane of *The Times*, Florence Nightingale, Lord Herbert, Secretary for War, and others with whom he was caught up in close association have unmasked him? But there does not appear to have been a word written against him'.¹⁰⁸

'Few men have led as full and varied a life as Count Strzelecki. His niche in Australian annals is secure for all time, for we are considerably in his debt'.¹⁰⁹

It seems foolish for some present day writers to claim that they understand Strzelecki's personality and motives better than people who knew him and observed him in real life.¹¹⁰

In closing this chapter it may be worth quoting again Geoffrey Rawson: 'Here was a youth from a remote village in his native Poland without money, without influence or help, who not only left his name and fame on a large part of the Australian continent, but who subsequently won for himself a most distinguished position in the highest circles in England. He achieved this worldly success and satisfaction entirely by the force of his own qualities and by his winning personality'.¹¹¹

Strzelecki should be remembered not merely as an early discoverer of gold and silver, nor as the explorer who named Mount Kosciuszko and produced the first map of Gippsland, but as the man concerned with the Australian environment and ecology¹¹², the first man who advocated 'the most ambitious' plans for large-scale irrigation in New South Wales and Tasmania¹¹³, who foretold a very bright future for the Australian wool industry¹¹⁴, the man who first proposed and attempted to organise a vast and detailed geological survey in Australia.¹¹⁵ Strzelecki also 'must be accounted a pioneer of Australian meteorology'.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ J. Reynolds, 'A Polish Explorer', *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, 12 June 1929, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Scrutarius in a review of Rawson's book, *Walkabout* (Melbourne), 1 March 1954, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ B. Cronin, 'Polish Count kept Gold "Find" Secret', *Sun*, (Melbourne), 24 April 1959, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ B. Cronin, in a strong worded letter to Mouni Sadhu, dated 9 April 1962: 'Falsification and distortion of historical facts is going on all the time today, right under our noses. It is a sign of a very sick world. A dearth of creative inspiration has given rise to disgusting type of writer ... In other words, men are busily engaged in destroying noble reputation and, conversely, building up ignoble ones. Nothing, in short, is sacred ... Edmund Paul Strzelecki is the current victim'.

¹¹¹ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹¹² W.K. Hancock, *Discovering Monaro: A Study of Man's Impact on His Environment* (Cambridge: 1972), pp. 12, 57-59; W. Słabczyński, 'Darwin's Opinion of Strzelecki and an Attempt to Interpret It', in *25th International Geological Congress: Abstracts 3*, (Sydney 1977), p. 929.

¹¹³ S. Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*: 2nd ed. (Melbourne; 1969), p. 368; W. Słabczyński, 'Paul Strzelecki and His Contribution to the Opening Up of Australia', *Actes du XI Congress International d'Histoire des Sciences* [Papers of the 11th International Congress of the History of Sciences] 4 (Cracow 1968), pp. 248-51; 1; L. Wigmore, *Struggle for the Snowy* (Melbourne: 1968), p. 47.

¹¹⁴ 'A 7000-mile tour of two States on foot' (a review of the *Physical Description*), *The Australian*, 2 September 1967.

¹¹⁵ Strzelecki to Captain P.P. King, London, 5 June 1845: 'There is great probability that I should be able to secure to the two Colonies a Gvt Establishment called the Economic Geology, which will be a branch of the Office of the Ordinance Geology Survey of Great Britain under the direction of Sir Henry De la Bêche - with a Geologist and a Chemist etc. etc. and through which thorough Geological Survey of the two colonies will be made and such questions of Chemistry and Mineralogy solved, as the development of mining and agriculture may require. As I have *even recently* declined the offer of an Office in the Colonies, and am far from angling for any at Home, my representations have at least a weight of sincerity and disinterestedness by which they are directed, and are thus particularly listened to in

These are some of the main achievements which Charles Darwin called the 'deep subjects' and Bernard Cronin summoned up as a 'debt' owed to him by all Australians.

quarters who have a voice in the Chapter. - You would be horrified to say the best of the scandalous ignorance which is to be met with about the Colonies here!'.
Lethbridge Collection, King Papers, ML A3599, p. 165-66.

¹¹⁶ J. Babicz, W. Słabczyński and T. Vallance in *Geographers: Bibliographical Studies 2*, (London 1978), p. 114; A. Liversidge and R. Etheridge Jnr., eds., *Report of the First Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Sydney. N.S.W., in August and September 1888*. (Sydney: 1889), pp. 70-71 'a very valuable contribution to the Meteorology of the period 1838 to 1842 inclusive'.