

The Inaugural
Lang Cove History Prize
2016



Arthur, Luce and the Fleur-de-lis 1916-2016



A History of the Fence at 44 College Road South, Riverview, NSW

by Margaret A Clark
August 2016

Arthur, Luce and the Fleur-de-lis 1916-2016

A History of the Fence at 44 College Road South, Riverview, NSW

Introduction

You think you know the story. He fought in the war and they met and came here to live. You know a name here, a place there. But when you try to gather it all together, to place one down after the other in a sequence, the names and places burst like bubbles in the air. Their story is a chimera.

Only now, when they are all dead, the significance of conversations rises to consciousness. And the questions. In 2016 - the 100th anniversary of that terrible hellhole of world history, the Battle of the Somme - while we honour the courage and recognise the remarkable contribution of the Australian Imperial Forces to the Allied victory on the Western Front, who of them is left to know, to hear their stories told, to feel some pride rise above their pain?

At 44 College Road South, Riverview, there is a monument to a love that ignited in that furnace, and to one soldier, Arthur Frederick King, who served at the Somme - fought, was badly wounded and emotionally damaged but survived; and to his French bride, Luce Marie Victoire née Antoine, for whom he tried to build a house (and a fence) that was a little bit of France. Outside Number 44, the fence that Arthur built still stands, its shape changed forever, the bright red bricks buried beneath render and paint. But the iron palisades stand, and atop each sits a small cast-iron *fleur-de-lis*, the national flower of France.



Illustration 1. 44 College Road South, 2016



Arthur and Luce King

I knew Luce and Arthur King. They were my neighbours when my husband and I and our four children moved into Number 40 in early 1980. A block of land (Number 42), belonging to Arthur, separated the two properties. I crossed it and sat in the old kitchen at the back of the house with Luce while she told me about her life. Luce was a gentle and generous-hearted Frenchwoman, with thickly accented but absolutely fluent English, her silver hair always in a neat chignon, earrings on her ears. She talked about how well-established her French family was and how comfortable the life she led in France before the war; and about how difficult it was for her when she first came to Australia after the war. Luce told me she had been born in Amiens. She described herself to me as a 'Rose of Picardy' - *Do you know the old war song?* she asked me. *I do*, I told her and I sang a few lines for her:

Roses are shining in Picardy, in the hush of the silver dew,
 Roses are flowering in Picardy, but there's never a rose like you!
 And the roses will die with the summertime, and our roads may be far apart,
 But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy!
 'tis the rose that I keep in my heart!¹

Written in 1916 it was one of the most popular WWI songs right around the time Luce met her soldier sweetheart, Arthur King. I didn't know then that 'Picardy' - the French *Picardie* - contained the Somme. *Have you heard of the Somme?* Luce asked me. I'd heard of Gallipoli, our 'glorious failure', but of the Western Front, my ignorance then was profound. Perhaps the words *The Somme* resonated a little because I'd seen the banners of veterans marching on Anzac Day. But my understanding of that experience - indeed our national understanding - has grown so much as to be unrecognisable since the day I sat with Luce in her dimly lit kitchen and was asked that question in her thickly accented English, *Have you heard of the Somme?*

My son, Theo, now 38, remembers as a small boy wandering up the path to visit 'old Mrs King' who always welcomed him warmly. He noticed she had three little flags standing on her windowsill and asked her why. She picked up her miniature Tricolore, Australian flag and Stars and Stripes: 'When there is a war,' she demonstrated with each little flag, one after the other, 'I wave the flags - for the French, for the Australians, and for the Americans.'

I sat with Mr King, too, surrounded by his scientific magazines and books in his dark living room towards the centre of the house from the kitchen. He was nearing the end of his life then, but his mind was still bubbling with curiosity. His London accent clearly stamped him English. (I presumed then that he had been a soldier in the British forces.) He ordered Luce to bring us a cup of tea, and told me about building the house on farmland that he himself had cultivated; how he had owned an acre or more but sold it off over time. How he had built the house himself and made some later changes which he was pleased had escaped the eye of the local Council inspectors.

Arthur 'didn't like neighbours'², so the block at Number 42 was being reserved for his daughter, Marie-Françoise, who had married and gone away to live. The corner block on the other side of

¹ Lyrics by Frederick Weatherly and music by Haydn Wood 1916

² Paul Thompson, grandson of Arthur and Luce King, pers. comm., August 2016.

Number 44 was also still vacant. His son, Bernard had been given one of Arthur's blocks at Number 25 Riverview Street and lived there with his wife Mary, and their daughter Ann-therese.

As Arthur and Luce became more frail, Marie-Françoise returned from her unhappy marriage to care for her parents. When Arthur died in 1983, she took up her legacy and built a house there. We became friends.

I ask Luce's granddaughter, Ann-therese King what she remembers of her grandmother: 'The food she cooked; her generous, warm, gentle, loving personality. Her Catholicism was huge for her; but even more was her attachment to France.'³

My own memory of Luce, my sweet and kind neighbour, is of her framed in the kitchen door on the north side, the side nearest to our house. I can still hear her voice, calling to her daughter from the kitchen door - *Marie! Marie!* - her French 'r's rolling out across the neighbourhood.



**Illustration 1. Neighbours meet on College Road South.
Luce King, 88, daughter Marie-Françoise with the author, 1985**
(Photo courtesy Paul Thompson)

In 1989 Luce moved to *Lynvale* nursing home, Lane Cove. In her bed there, to the end, she remained *une Française*, silver hair pinned into a roll above her forehead and chignon at the back, smooth round earrings on her ears. She died in 1993, aged 96.

In November 2014, Bernard died; in August 2015 Marie-Françoise; in February, 2016 Bernard's wife, Mary.

In 2016 Australia began to commemorate the Battle of the Somme. And I remembered the Fence.



³ Ann-therese King, granddaughter of Arthur and Luce King, pers. comm., August 2016.

Number 44: The House and the Fence



**Illustration 2. The house at 44 College Road South, Riverview 1995 before demolition.
The fleur-de-lis heads of the iron palisade fence can be seen in foreground.**
(Photo by Theo Clark Media, Sydney)

After Luce's death, in 1994 the Kings' property at Number 44 went up for sale. The purchasers, Richard and Kerry Nicholls, found there was a preservation order on the house and also on the fence. The cottage that Arthur had built was dilapidated. The fence was crumbling.

What was it that drew this preservation order? The website of the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage refers to a 'Lane Cove Heritage Study 1987, Number B203. Author Robert Moore, Penelope Pike and Lester Tropman and Associates':

'Statement of Significance: Interesting gates and front fence suggest an earlier large residence. The cottage now occupying the site is of architectural interest. Further research necessary...

Historical notes: The small timber cottage which now occupies the site has a galvanised iron roof⁴. Gables have decorative finials. cast iron columns and wrought iron work support the front verandah. Interesting substantial brick gates and decorative cast iron palisade fence suggest a more substantial residence may have occupied the site. Further research needed.⁵

⁴ The date given for the Heritage Study is 1987, by which time the original iron roof had been tiled. The King grandchildren say it has been tiled all their lives - so sometime before or during the 1960s it was changed. It is a mystery why the house is described as having an iron roof in 1987. One suspects the text came from some earlier source. Early photos confirm the original roof was iron.

⁵ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au> accessed 6/7/2016



Illustration 3. The fence, 44 College Road South, Riverview,
 (photo from the collection of Paul Thompson, grandson of Arthur and Luce King)

Following his research, Richard Nicholls challenged the preservation order, and after a five-week fight with Lane Cove Council, it was lifted from the house. The Kings' cottage was demolished and replaced by an elegant two-storey house inspired by Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta⁶. The fight against preservation of the fence continued throughout 1994; but eventually it too was lifted. By then, the Nicholls had decided to preserve it voluntarily. The brick archway above the front gate had already crumbled and some of the stepped capping on top of the brick pillars also. The damaged layers were removed, reducing their height. Each pillar was capped with a low four-sided pyramid. The Nicholls added an extra pillar to the right of the driveway and a driveway gate.



Illustration 4. Arthur's fence being preserved by new owners, the Nicholls family 1995.
 (Photo by Richard Nicholls, courtesy Ann-Therese King)

⁶ Mrs Kerry Nicholls, owner with husband Richard, of Number 44 1995-2013, pers. comm. 2013.

‘More research needed...?’

In fact no grand - or other - residence ever existed on the site before Arthur King built there. Any ‘further research needed’ has been done by John and Pam Ball in their excellent *History of Riverview: the Suburb* (2013, pp 208-219). They give a full background to the *Riverview Heights* subdivision in 1909-10, and detail the purchases made by Arthur King from 1920 onwards, including Lot 3 in College Road (now 44 College Road South). ‘The only improvement on the four lots was a weatherboard room on Lot 3 which had a UCV of £190 and an ICV of £220 in 1920.’

Addressing the suggestion made in the 1987 Heritage Study, the authors conclude: ‘As only one house was ever built on the site, the suggestion about “a more substantial residence” cannot be correct.’ (p 219)

In their assessment of the fence at Number 44, those carrying out the Heritage Study did not know and could not therefore take account of Arthur’s King’s love for his ‘Sweet Lucy’ - Mrs Luce Marie Victoire King - and his determination to give the fence something of the grandeur to which Luce had been accustomed in her life in France before she married him!



**Illustration 5. Luce Antoine’s family ‘chateau’ at Auzances, Creuse, Central France. 2014.
Was it this design that inspired Arthur when he built his fence at 44 College Road South?
(Photo courtesy Paul and Sally Thompson)**

Arthur



Illustrations 6. Pte. Arthur Frederick King, 6th Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Imperial Force, c. 1919.

(Photo from the collection of Paul Thompson)

*No 1779 Pte Arthur F. King. 6th Bn
No 2 Coy. No 2 Command Depot.
Westham Camp. Weymouth
6/10/18*

My Own Sweet Darling Lucy.

Again today is Sunday and I have received your beautiful and loving letter of the 29th Sept containing the exquisite little card 'Les Fiances' and the newspaper cutting of praise for the Brave Little Army that I am so proud to belong to. ...

How proud I am to read that the French esteem so highly the Australian Soldiers. I love them very much, they are big, hard men, men who live hard, fight hard & think less of death than any other body of men I have ever met. They seem to be very irreligious, & sometimes uncouth, but they are brave & large-hearted, and although naturally we have men of all kinds with us I think their code of honour is the most admirable that is to be found. (pp1-2)

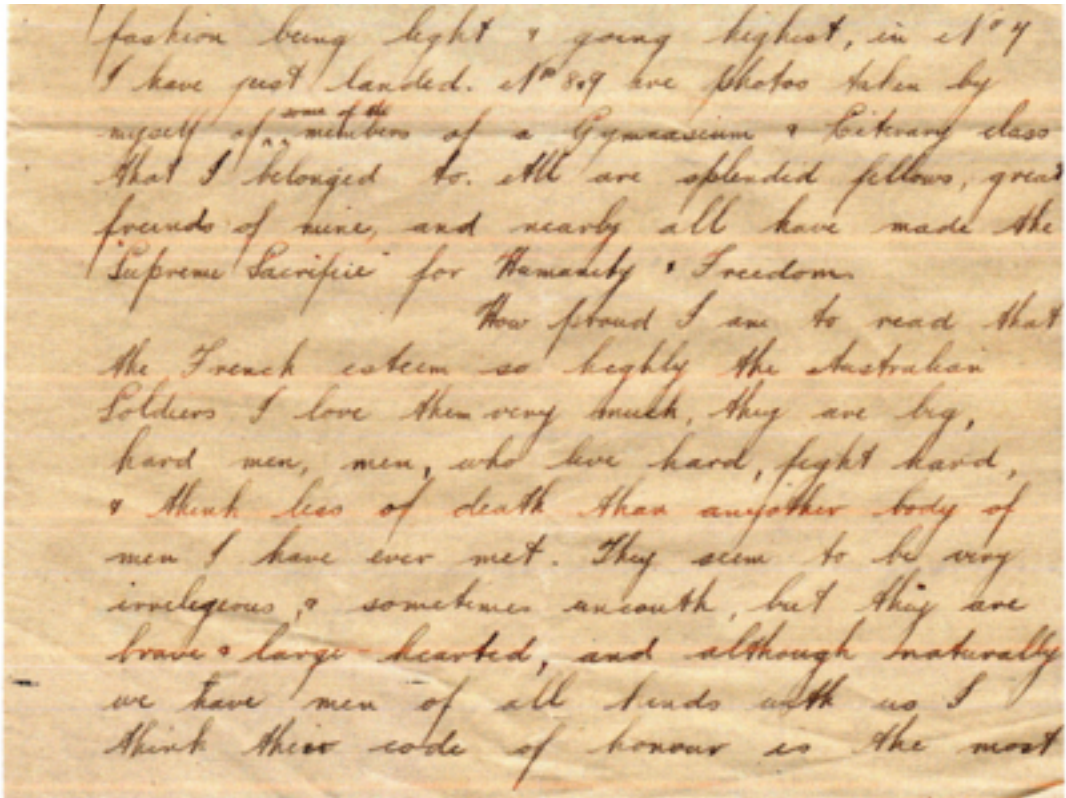


Illustration 7. Extract from letter to Luce, dated October 6, 1918
 (Letter courtesy of Ann-therese King)

Arthur Frederick King began life inauspiciously circa 19th February, 1891⁷, the product of an illicit affair between the son of an upper-class English family and a house maid⁸, Mary Amelia Selina Britton. The maid was married off to a willing man named Mr William King, of Wood Green, London. Arthur's birthplace is given as Crouchend, London, on his enlistment papers. The family story⁹ is that the natural father later married but managed to have only daughters. His own father said he must have a male heir if he were to inherit, so he came looking for Arthur to make him his heir. But William King refused his offer, saying, 'You didn't want him then, you can't have him back now.' Arthur's mother died in 1913. In a letter to Luce in 1918, he writes:

I am enclosing the photograph of my Mother which was taken before she was married. I do not know who the little baby is that she is holding, I could find out but I have never asked anybody questions about Mother's young life and only know what she chose to tell me. The little photo is just an amateur one taken a short time before her death. ... I am sending them for you to see & take care of, as I am wearing them out in my pocket book. (p2)

(Letter courtesy of Ann-therese King)

⁷ His birth year is unconfirmed. Arthur was '23 years 10 months' when he enlisted on January 9, 1915. ⁷ A birth of an Arthur King is registered at Hackney, London, 1891. www.findmypast.com.uk August 2016

⁸ Paul Thompson, Arthur's grandson, pers. comm. August 2016.

⁹ Paul Thompson, *ibid.*

Arthur went to work in the City in an Insurance firm. However, according to his grandson Paul, he found some practice of theirs unethical. When he confronted them, they threatened to ruin his prospects of work in the City.



Illustration 8. Arthur King, London, c1907

So two days before his 19th birthday on 17th February, 1910, Arthur turned his back on his homeland and took ship on the Orient Line's *Otway* to Queensland to become a sugarcane cutter. His letter to Luce of October 6, 1918, includes some photos, one of which he writes 'is my "outfit" in Queensland Australia and I am enjoying a good feed as close observation will show. In No.2 I am like a "Black Man" and am cutting Sugarcane, the one without the hat is I.' (p.3)

When War was declared, Arthur tried to enlist in Brisbane but his short stature was against him¹⁰. Hearing that troops were being enlisted in Melbourne, and with advice from a friend on how to 'raise' his height, he managed to be measured at 5ft 4in - still below the acceptable 5ft 6in. Nevertheless on January 9, 1915, he was accepted and assigned to the 6th Battalion¹¹, 4th Reinforcements, which were being raised to reinforce the Anzacs in the Dardanelles - Gallipoli!

Gallipoli and the Dardanelles was the 'first great adventure' for the 6th Battalion. Arthur and company embarked on April 13, 1915 and reported for duty on May 27. He may or may not have

¹⁰During the course of the First World War the standard for minimum height for enlistment in the AIF was altered. The requirement in August 1914 was for a height of 5ft 6in. In June 1915 the minimum height requirement was changed to 5ft 2in. It was again lowered to 5ft in April 1917.

¹¹The 6th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 5th, 7th and 8th Battalions, it was recruited from Victoria and, together with these battalions, formed the 2nd Brigade.

been involved in their first encounters with the Turks at Anzac Cove but took part in the 2nd Brigade's assault on Cape Helles at the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula. The Australians had been asked to help in the battle for a tiny Turkish village called Krithia, a key goal of the British landings.

The British, French and New Zealanders had already suffered horrendous casualties. ...The 2nd Brigade lined up in Battalions and advanced under murderous fire to the now famous battle cry of Colonel [James Whiteside] McCay, who urged the Battalions onwards crying out "Now then Australians, which of you men are Australians? Come on Australians." (Austin, 1992 px)

The advance took a terrible toll on the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions. In just over one hour, 1000 men had become casualties. A harsh awakening for the many young adventurers who had volunteered, Arthur among them.

Ever after, Arthur might describe his exploits at Gallipoli with some sense of the exhilaration and daring of it all. But he rarely, if ever, spoke about the Western Front¹². The 6th battalion arrived in France in March 1916 in time for the major offensive, fought between July 1 and November 18 1916, known as the Battle of the Somme.

The initial day of the offensive, 1 July 1916, remains the most costly day in the history of the British army. It suffered almost 60,000 casualties, a third of whom were killed, and the name "Somme" has become synonymous with slaughter. ...

When exhaustion, and the cloying mud of a particularly wet autumn, caused the offensive to be abandoned in November, the allied forces had managed to advance only 12 kilometres ... at a cost of 420,000 British and Dominion, and 200,000 French casualties.

<https://www.awm.gov.au> accessed July 2016

The major contribution of 6th Battalion to the Somme offensive was at Pozieres, where they had been sent to relieve the 48th Battalion (12th Brigade) on the night of 14th/15th August.



Illustration 9. The main street of Pozieres after German bombardments of July–August 1916.
(Australian War Memorial photo EZ0097)

¹²When as a young history student, his granddaughter Ann-therese recorded an oral history with Arthur, 'he didn't name any particular Battle. It all seemed a bit of a blur.'

Imagine a gigantic ash heap, a place where dust and rubbish have been cast for years outside some dry, derelict, God-forsaken up-country township. Imagine some broken-down creek bed in the driest of our dry central Australian districts, abandoned for a generation to the goats, in which the hens have been scratching as long as men can remember. Then take away the hens and the goats and all traces of any living or moving thing. You must not even leave a spider. Put here, in evidence of some old tumbled roof, a few roof beams and tiles sticking edgeways from the ground, and the low faded ochre stump of the windmill peeping over the top of the hill, and there you have Pozières.
(CEW Bean *Letters from France* Melbourne, 1917, pp.113–4 AWM website)

Rain poured down on the 6th Battalion as it marched into an area that was under constant shell fire. One corporal described the effect on the men: ‘Coming up we passed a lot of wounded. So early in the morning, it has a bloody rotten effect on us all.’ (Austin, 2005, p172)

Even before moving into the front line, the Sixth was taking casualties, especially from being buried in the trenches as a result of the shelling. ... The trenches taken over by the Sixth, had been badly damaged by the enemy shelling, and according to Lieutenant Abson, were “smelling very badly of the dead.” (Austin, 2005, p172)

It was possibly here at Pozieres that Arthur ‘jumped out of a shellhole a split second before a shell landed on it and killed all his comrades’. Recounting this to his granddaughter several decades later, he broke down crying and could not continue.¹³ On August 16 Arthur received a ‘GSW’ - gunshot wound - to the left knee. He was sent to recuperate in England. The wound was described as ‘mild’, but would leave him with a slight limp for life. He returned to France in time for Christmas. After a series of hospital admissions for boils and ‘sickness’ during January and February of 1917, his Service notes record him being admitted to No 5 Convalescent Depot at Cayeux-sur-Mer, a pretty town on the north-west coast of France where his life fortunes were about to change.

For it was there that he met Luce Marie Victoire Antoine, the young woman who would become his wife. Luce and Arthur met at Cayeux-sur-Mer some time during Arthur’s convalescence in 1917. But Arthur’s war was not over.

The Battle of Passchendaele, better known as the Third Battle of Ypres, began on July 31, 1917. This was a major campaign, fought with the main objective of capturing the ridges south and east of the Belgian city of Ypres in West Flanders. On the 19th September, Arthur King received a serious wound to the head and left ear. It may have been here that he was left for dead in the trench, which was overrun by Germans then recaptured by the French. Someone noticed him move and he was rescued¹⁴. Before long he was leaving France again to recover and heal in England This time he would not be returning to fight.

Luce and Arthur corresponded throughout 1917 and 1918. On October 6, 1918, he writes,

How fine the news of the war continues to be? We in England are all delighted and full of Hope that soon we shall have Germany on her knees begging mercy of Belgium and France, it will be useless of her turning to Britain for mercy because Britain will fight on until France & Belgium have punished her enough. ...

¹³ Ann-therese King, pers. comm. August 2016.

¹⁴ Arthur recounted this to both his grandchildren. Pers. comm. Ann-therese King and Paul Thompson. 2016

I am well and should be very happy and bright but somehow I am dull. The weather is cold and cheerless, the weather affects me considerably. Although I am quite alright & quite happy yet I am dull & the weather is the cause. If I had not promised to write every Sunday I should do no writing today.

Today we would speculate that it was not the weather bringing Arthur so low but the weight of his memories of Pozieres and the Somme. Shellshock. Depression. PTSD - none of these epithets had yet come into use to characterise the impact of WWI on fighting men.



LUCE



Illustration 10. Luce Marie Victoire Antoine c 1910

(Photo Courtesy Lane Cove Local History Library, Lane Cove NSW File 204/2044691)

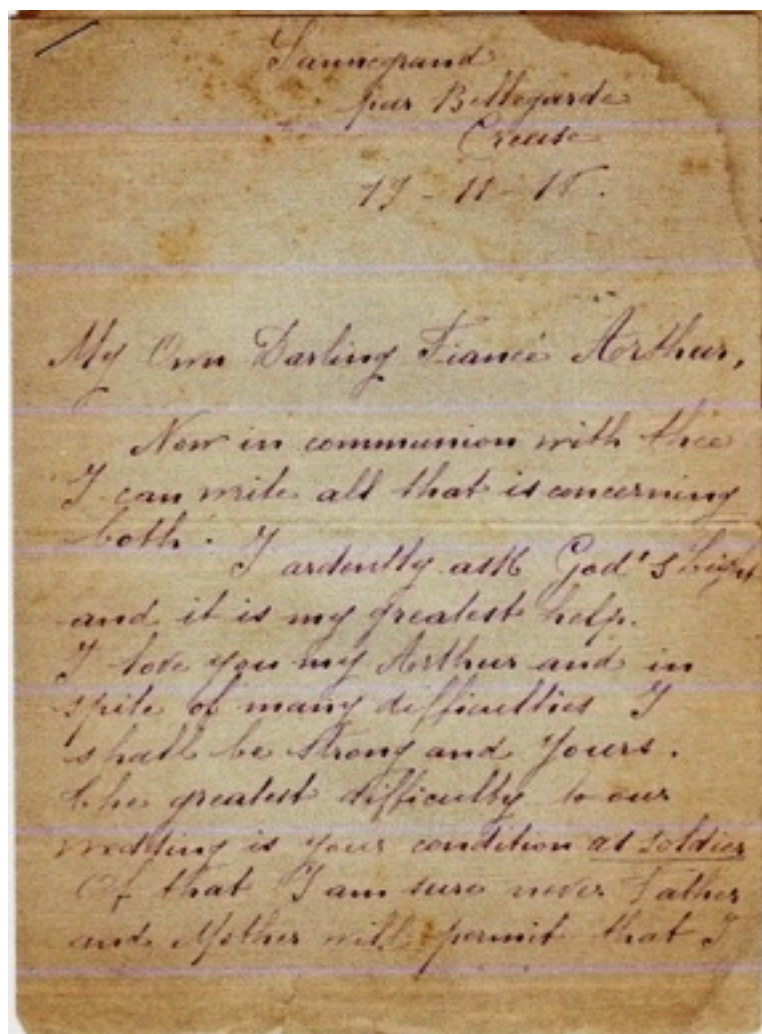


Illustration 11. Letter from Luce Antoine to Arthur King, dated 19-11-18.
(Courtesy Ann-therese King)

Sannegrans
par Bellegarde, Creuse
19-11-18

My Own Darling Fiancé Arthur, ...

I love you my Arthur and, in spite of many difficulties I shall be strong and Yours. The greatest difficulty to our wedding is your condition as soldier. Of that I am sure never father and Mother will permit that I marry you while you are [still] a soldier. Do you understand Darling? For them it is not a situation. Oh! For me the things appear all differently. I love you so much and I have so confidence in you! Without hesitation I shall marry you as soon as possible soldier or not. Because knowing myself I know I am able with Arthur my dearest husband to do wonderful efforts for assuring our life sweet and very happy. But I am not like you master of me to freely act, and I can only wed you when you are a civil man.

Luce Marie Victoire Antoine was born on January 12, 1897, one of five children, at Amiens, Somme, Picardie, in France. Her family owned properties all over France, including a small Chateau at Auzances in Creuse, Central France. Her father, Michel François Annet Antoine was an *entrepreneur* (Luce's wedding certificate) which can be interpreted as a businessman or builder - perhaps both. According to the family he was a Master Builder and Architect¹⁵. Her mother was Marie Philomene Pinchon.



Illustration 12. The 'chateau' at Auzances, Creuse owned by Luce Antoine's family.
(Photo courtesy of Paul Thompson.)



Illustration 13. Luce and her brother Gaston, living *la vie en rose* before the War
(Photo courtesy of Paul Thompson.)

¹⁵ From 'A Brief History of Luce's Life', written by Marie-Françoise (King) Thompson about her mother, 1990, pers. comm. to the author.

THE FIANCÉS

By 1918, despite the continuing opposition of her father at least, they were engaged. Each, in their own way, was preoccupied with plans for their future. Arthur, on October 6, 1918, wrote,

Yes, My Darling, I am an "Anzac", but that does not mean that I shall soon be in Australia. The thing that Premiers and Prime Ministers promise this year "sometimes" is put into force, perhaps in one or two years time, I hope that soon the war will finish, that when I go to Australia again I shall be able to take my Darling little wife with me and that will be when my Sweet Lucy chooses. ...

I am worried a little trying to think what I should do for our future happiness and security. There is so much that I could do and yet so little that I am at present able to, that I fear I shall have to wait until I can see you and have a serious talk on what to do for the best. However Sweetheart all my thoughts are Prayers for you all my hopes are in our future. Because I love you as I had never realised it was possible to love and I have always been an Idealist.

*Now "Au Revoir"
My Beautiful & Perfect bride to be
With Every Prayer to God For You.
From Your Arthur.*

Luce, in her flawed English which Arthur will correct by return mail, urges a different plan of action:

Then my sweet fiancé here is the plan which seems the clearest. You must be discharged in Australia, for don't forfeit the advantages that your discharge offers in this country. Therefore in [sic] First, as soon as possible, you will go alone in Australia for preparing our situation and little home. My darling my wish is to live with you alone. Our love is precious it is an inestimable treasure.

With pleasure I shall do [sic] the acquaintance of your friends but our intense life will be only for us. We shall be so happy to please to each other! Then my Darling you will go in Australia to be discharged and come back to me to be married. Please my dearest tell me you will be soon free, your little Lucy wishes so much to be yours! ...

Darling in your last letter I understand very well this sentence where you explain when you return to Australia as a returned soldier the government of this country will give to you a piece of land valued at anything near £2000 (50,000 francs in French). But I don't understand enough this second sentence "And at very little interest (up 5 per cent per year) will lead me £500. It is the opportunity of a life time for the men who have the slightest initiative intelligence and industry." Please will you give to me the exact meaning in French. My Bien Aimé give me much to think about our dear future. I must think all that you think. I promise you I shall not be worry. Now you know my desires and what I think for the best.
(p4-7)

There was another matter on Luce's mind.

Be not afraid for your Catholic baptism. As soon I shall be at Cayeux. I go to see the priest speak to him of you. He has already baptised many Protestant soldiers who are married in our church. If you come soon to me you will be baptised in these days, with me you will learn the chiefs verities of our religion. (p.4)

In the event, Arthur's plan prevailed. On March 18, 1919 Luce and Arthur were married at Cayeux-sur-Mer in a civil ceremony at the Town Hall and at St Joseph's Catholic Church. A photo of the bridal couple shows Arthur in his AIF uniform, wearing two Wound Badges above the cuff of his left sleeve; and near his shoulder, the Anzac 'A' badge attesting to his having served at Gallipoli (pinned to his purple-and-red 6th Battalion Unit Patch). The rising sun badge of the AIF on his collar.



Illustration 14. Luce and Arthur, at the time of their wedding in Cayeux-sur-Mer 1919.

(Photo Courtesy Lane Cove Local History Library, Lane Cove NSW File 204/2044692)

At the civil ceremony on March 17, 1919, both parents were 'here present and agreeing' as 'Arthur Frederick KING, sugar cane planter, conscript¹⁶, born in Hornsey¹⁷ (England)' and Luce Marie Victoria Antoine were pronounced 'joined by marriage in the name of the law.' Luce's brother, Marcel, was also present as a witness.

¹⁶ Arthur was not a conscript. This may have been a presumption of the writer as Australia, along with South Africa and India, was one of the only countries not to introduce conscription despite PM Billy Hughes' two referenda on the issue..

¹⁷ A question mark in brackets follows this place name. Perhaps Hackney is the correct place, where the birth of an Arthur King in 1891 is registered on the website <http://www.findmypast.com.uk>. This date is consistent with Arthur's age given at enlistment as 23 years and 10 months on 9/1/15. A birth date in February 1892, as shown on this marriage document, makes him 22 years and 11 months at enlistment on 9/1/15.

An extract of their marriage certificate from the church, which is included in Arthur's War record, gives clues that Luce's father, François, continued his opposition to the marriage or at least absented himself on that day. Where the form asks for Luce's Maiden Surname, *Pinchon* has been typed, which is her mother's maiden name. (*Antoine* is handwritten then crossed out on the form.) Under *Name, Address and Occupation of Father*, her mother's name has been handwritten - *Philomene Pinchon*¹⁸.

Following the wedding, François Antoine promptly disinherited his daughter.



After a few months at an AIF Base in Weymouth, England, on July 9, 1919, Arthur and Luce sailed for Sydney on the *Prinz Ludwig*, arriving in Sydney on September 9. What did Arthur have to offer Luce on arrival? He had not lived in Sydney before the war. No 'little home' was ready. Together with her husband, she who had expressed the wish to 'live with you alone' where 'our intense life will be only for us' moved in with friends.

On New Year's Eve, 1919, Arthur received his discharge. He was, along with all those who had served, granted a War Gratuity, in his case at a rate of 'One shilling and six pence per diem' under the terms of the War Gratuity Act No 2 of 1920. If we say that Arthur had served for approximately six years, and do the sums, we might estimate he received no more than £165 - most likely less. He might presumably also have had some savings from his war service.

Clearly Arthur had planned to take up a Soldier Settlement land grant, as referred to in Luce's letter. But his plans changed. In an application to the Soldier Settlement Branch of the Lands Department, he described his changed circumstances.

*College Street
Longueville
5/Aug/'20*

*To the Director of Returned Soldier Settlement
Sir*

I am a returned soldier "Land Applicant" and have had to cancel my efforts to be repatriated on the land owing to continued unforeseen [sic] illness¹⁹ of my wife & my own serious rheumatic condition. I have written to the Repatriation Dept & and they have cancelled proceedings on my behalf. Nevertheless my wife and I are determined to go on the land as soon as health permits with the Repat'n Dept's assistance if possible or later, without it. To be near hospitals and doctor I have taken an ordinary labouring situation near the above address where with my "Bond"²⁰ I purchased almost an acre of land which I have

¹⁸ Luce's mother's name was given as Marie Philomene Pinchon on the Town Hall document.

¹⁹ Luce's 'illness' may refer to her pregnancy or complications thereof.

²⁰His "Bond" is presumably his War gratuity.

well under cultivation. I write you this sincerely Sir, to assure you that by wish & intention I am a farmer & wish to know if under these circumstances you can grant me the privilege that is granted to many returned men (who have probably been more fortunate) of the gift of tools to the value of £10, but instead of tools my need is a "Planet Jr" Cultivator. If I cannot receive it as a gift with the Dept assist me to buy it in any way? The price is £7/10/0. With this implement & my acre of land I could in time earn a living & be making headway toward final settlement on the farm. I intend to go "On the Land" as soon as health permits. I am only working in my present capacity because immediate need of money and medical attention compels me to.

*Thanking You in Anticipation
I Anxiously Await Your Reply,
Gratefully Yours,
Arthur F King
late No 1779
6th B'n.²¹*



Illustration 15. Contemporary photo of a now antique 'Planet Jr.' Cultivator which Arthur King sought from the Soldier Settlement Branch of the Lands Dept.
(Photo on eBay, August 2016)

The date and content of Arthur's letter are at odds with John and Pam Ball's *History of Riverview* (2013). Their research suggests Arthur purchased Lot 6 (see over for diagram of the subdivision) of the Riverview Heights subdivision (in Riverview Street) in October 1920 for £73. (p. 214) However Arthur's letter says he already owned an acre and had it 'well under cultivation' by August. Perhaps the purchase was finalised in October following some earlier arrangement with the vendors, allowing Arthur to begin work on his land before completion of the purchase.

In November 1920, Lots 2-4 in College Road were bought by a Mr Owen McGrath for £225; but were transferred to Arthur King on February 4, 1922²², around the time Luce became pregnant with their second child. Lot 3 in College Road would become Number 44 College Road South. There was already on that Lot a 'weatherboard room' (Ball and Ball, p214). Did Luce, Arthur and their

²¹State Records Authority, Soldier Settlement Loan File for Arthur F King, Longueville. Container 12/7099 Item 05491. Accessed August 2016, Western Sydney Reading Room, Sydney.

²² Possibly Mr McGrath was a friend and purchased Lots 2-4 for Arthur, allowing him time to repay the money. He may have been already working these Lots, as indicated in his letter, by August 1920. Information concerning Arthur's purchases is detailed in John and Pam Ball's *History of Riverview: the suburb*, (2013) including his later purchases, which may have been made possible by money Luce received on her father's death from her siblings. They wished to rectify the injustice of her being disinherited by their father when she married Arthur.

one-year-old daughter Marie-Françoise move into that 'room'? Was it to that 'room' that Luce brought Bernard Antoine, who arrived in October 1922? Or were Arthur, Luce and their two children still living with friends. Either way, it should not surprise that before Bernard was two years old, Luce took the children and returned by ship to France. While she was away Arthur began to build the house.



Illustration 15. River View Heights subdivision plan (c1910).
 (Courtesy Lane Cove Library/State Library of NSW Reference LHM 994.4134/1910/FIS)



A ‘Little Home’ for Luce

Arthur King variously gave his occupation as ‘planter’ (emigrating to Australia), ‘bicycle fitter’ (on his enlistment papers), ordinary labourer in his letter to the Department of Lands; and ‘machinist’s assistant’ at the time he purchased his land in College Road South. One thing is certain, Arthur was a very skilful builder.

Granddad could build anything’, recalls Ann-therese King of Arthur. ‘Dad [Bernard] said they had no toys growing up in the Depression era but his dad built a bike for him easily. He built great gym equipment for us children on the northern flank of his house. It was just well established that he could fix or build anything and the joke was that he didn’t pass those skills on to Dad.

(Pers. comm. August 2016)

The house Arthur built for Luce was a simple affair, but there is a fine delicacy about its profile. It was a timber cottage on brick foundations, set back from the road, with two bedrooms opening through french doors onto the covered front verandah, either side of the front door. The living/dining room was in the centre of the house and the kitchen and laundry at the back. One stepped down from the kitchen and crossed a terrace to the outhouse. A pitched galvanised iron roof, with decorative finials on the gables, flattened out somewhat to continue forward over the verandah, supported by slender iron columns with a small acanthus-like decoration towards the top. The verandah railings enclosed wrought iron panels each featuring a large *fleur-de-lis* motif. Steps onto the centre of the verandah were semi-circular, concrete or possibly stone. These latter two features - the *fleur-de-lis* panels and the rounded stone steps were two of the French touches Arthur added for his beloved Luce.



Illustration 16a.

Arthur’s house (from the south) and 16b. From the north c 1926

(Photos courtesy of Paul Thompson)



Illustration 12. Arthur’s ‘French flourishes’ - French doors from the bedrooms onto the front verandah and wrought iron *fleur-de-lis* panels enclosing the verandah.

(Detail of photo courtesy Paul Thompson)

Arthur added certain ‘French’ flourishes. ‘He wanted there to be a little bit of France about it’, recalls Arthur’s grandson Paul Thompson. ‘I think Granddad was quite frightened that Grandma wasn’t going to come back.’ (Pers. comm. Aug 2016).

He was right to be concerned. Luce and the children had left in 1923²³. Three years had passed and no sign of her return. Luce, having found her life in Sydney extremely difficult, now in France was living once again in fine style - allowing for the post-war deprivations - in the family chateau at Creuse, her children and herself looked after by maids and other staff. The company of her siblings added to the pleasures. Her father tried hard to persuade her to stay. The temptation was almost overwhelming.

‘I didn’t want to come back’, Luce confided to me in one of our conversations in her old kitchen. ‘But my mother said, “Luce! You must go back. You are married now. He is your husband. You must go back! And so I came.”’ Reluctantly, Luce embarked from Toulon on the Orient Line’s SS *Orsova* with her children, listed as Master B. and Miss M. King, arriving at Fremantle on May 4, 1926²⁴; and thence onward to Sydney.



Illustration 13. Orient Line SS *Orsova*
(Photo courtesy Michael Kenyon, Sydney)

²³ I have not been able yet to find a record of Luce’s date of departure for France or arrival there. Marie-Françoise, in her memoir of Luce refers to ‘several years’ there. And in her own memoir, to ‘some years’.

²⁴ National Archives of Australia, <http://www.naa.gov.au> - Commonwealth of Australia Quarantine Service List July-August 2016.

Meanwhile, Arthur was building the piece de resistance: the fence. A photograph of Luce's family chateau at Auzances, Creuse in Central France, shows the fence on the boundary of the property. Rundown, aged, nevertheless, there is a resemblance to Arthur's fence. Is this where he got the inspiration? Had Luce sent a photo? Or was it perhaps some other French property he had seen associated with Luce. *Fleur-de-lis* palisades were a common form of fencing in Sydney, so it may not be necessary to look to France for Arthur's inspiration. But it is the substantial nature of the fence, the height, the brick archway, that suggest his inspiration was not simply Sydney suburbia. Wherever he received the inspiration for his handiwork it was a lovely fence.

When Luce returned to Arthur, Bernard spoke only French. There was some adjustment to be made. But the little family began their life together at Number 44 College Road South. It would be their family home for nearly seventy years. Next door at Number 42, Marie-François would live out her days to the age of 94. On her death, her son Paul and his wife Sally moved in and continue the association. Bernard remained at Number 25 Riverview Street till he too died aged 92. His wife Mary lived there till her death in 2016. The house still remains in the ownership of their daughter, Ann-therese King.



Illustration 14. Luce beside the fence. Arthur's vision fulfilled.
(Photo courtesy Paul Thompson)



Illustration 15. and 16. Luce with Bernard and Marie-Françoise on the French steps, c 1928 and 1932. (Photos courtesy Paul Thompson)



Illustration 17. Marie-Françoise at the Archway.



Illustration 18. Luce and Arthur, grandparents. With Ann-therese King.

From Marie-François King Thompson's memoir of growing up at 44 College Road South:

I recall my early years in Lane Cove with many fond memories. College Road in those days was a real country road, unsealed with many potholes. One one side of the road were a few houses on the other bush and cow paddocks, leading down to Burns Bay. ... Many hours were spent walking down the numerous bush tracks to gather wild-flowers, maiden-hair fern and blackberries. ...

Most of the houses in College Road had big backyards. Some of our places were like little farms. We had a cow, a pony, sheep, ducks, chickens, cats, dogs, fruit trees, grape vines, vegetable gardens and a cart. We were almost self-sufficient. We had our own milk, made our own butter, cheese, sometimes bread... My friends visiting Lane Cove would refer to it as "spending a day in the country". ...

*My memories of Lane Cove are happy and numerous, far too numerous to relate them all at this point in time. ...
I love Lane Cove and hope to live here for many years to come.'*

(‘Lane Cove 1927-1939, As I remember it’, Author’s copy, dated 11th May 1988)

Riverview was kind to the Kings. And the Kings gave much to Riverview.



Echoes

Standing on College Rd South at Riverview, one is used to a certain soundscape. In summer, the thwack of leather on willow echoes from the fields at the bottom of the hill where the College schoolboys play their cricket matches as they have done since the 1880s. Through wintry Saturday afternoons, their cheers and rugby war-cries ring out now as they did in the 1920s, when Arthur King, 30-year-old veteran of Gallipoli and the unspeakable Battle of the Somme, began to build a cottage and fence at 44 College Rd South, to provide the ‘little home’ his French bride, now the mother of his two small children, longed for.

Into the mortar between the bricks he stirred his memories, hopes and dreams and tried to control the fear that she might never return to him. Then Luce Marie Victoire did return, though her heart would always ache with longing for her family and for France. Their children grew and thrived and loved the home that their parents made for them. As adults, they each lived and died in their homes on the land given to them by their father.

To the listener who knows the story, another soundscape echoes from the small *fleurs-de-lis* on the palisades - the last vestige of Arthur's beautiful fence. The faraway blast of shell and gunfire that thundered across the Somme Valley one hundred years ago. The sudden surprised cry fading to silence, the heavy wet thud, as a comrade, a mate, was hit and died in the mud beside you. Or perhaps it is your own harsh cry as shrapnel rips through your skull. The orders, the shouting and

the urging, the mad, reckless, hurrahs that drown out the chattering of your teeth. The moaning, the hoarse breathing of those lying and dying on the stretchers around you when you wake in insurmountable pain.

These sounds haunted the builder of that fence to his dying day. And yet around him as he worked, placing brick on brick on brick, fell the soothing hush of the bush. The soft near-silence, the buzz of blowflies at midday; the silken warble of a magpie at dawn; the wild high calling of cockatoos.

And what does the knowing listener hear echoing from these small cast-iron flowers to remind them of Luce Marie Victoire Antoine King? Perhaps it is the deep liquid boom of the oceans that separate Australia from France. Or the whispered words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *Flower-de-Luce*²⁵ (1866):

*Thou art the Iris, fair among the fairest,
Who, armed with golden rod
And winged with the celestial azure, bearest
The message of some God. ...*

*O flower-de-luce, bloom on, and let the river
Linger to kiss thy feet!
O flower of song, bloom on, and make forever
The world more fair and sweet.*



Margaret A Clark 2016

²⁵ Flower-de-luce was the old English for fleur-de-lis. *Flower-de-Luce* was the title poem of a collection published in 1867 of poems by American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Arthur King, a poetry lover - he gave Luce a copy of *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* during their courtship - may well have known it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin, Ron, *As Rough as Bags: The History of the 6th Battalion, 1st AIF, 1914-1919*, a Slouch Hat Publication, Australia, 1992, 2nd Edition, 2005.
- Australian War Memorial website, <http://www.awm.gov.au> The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) badges 1914-1918. Accessed August 2016
- Ball, John and Ball, Pam, *A History of Riverview: The Suburb*, Outershaw Press, Riverview 2013.
- Bean, C.E.W, *Anzac to Amiens*, 2014 Edition, Penguin Books, Australia.
- Eulogy for Marie Thompson, undated but c. August, 2015., courtesy of Paul Thompson.
- <http://www.diggerhistory.info>, accessed July-August 2016.
- <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> - Passenger Lists leaving UK 1890-1960;
- England and Wales Births, 1837-2006
- <http://gw.geneanet.org> - Accessed July-August, 2016.
- <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au> - Soldier Settlement Loan File for Arthur F KING: Container: [12/7099], Item Number: Loan 05491, Item Title: KING Arthur F, Longueville Accessed July-August 2016, File located and copied at Western Sydney Reading Room.
- Interviews, August 2016, Paul Thompson, son of Marie-Françoise, grandson of Arthur and Luce King; and Ann-therese King, daughter of Bernard A King and granddaughter of Arthur and Luce.
- KING Arthur Frederick et ANTOINE, Luce Marie Victoria, Texte français - extraite d'acte de mariage, No 13, 17 Mars, 6992. Obtained from the local government records, Cayeux-sur-Mer. With English translation by Muriel Moreno. Document in possession of Ann-therese King.
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 'Flower-de-Luce', from *Flower-de-Luce*, a collection, published 1867.
<http://www.bartleby.com/356/221.html>, Accessed July 2016.
- National Archives of Australia, <http://www.naa.gov.au> - Commonwealth of Australia Quarantine Service List for SS *Orsova* arrival in Fremantle, May 4, 1926. Accessed July-August 2016.
- National Archives of Australia, <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/> War Service records for Pte. Arthur Frederick King 6th Btn, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division AIF. Accessed July-August 2016
- New South Wales State Office of Environment and Heritage, website,
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=1920046>,
Heritage Study of 44 College Road South, Riverview 1987, Number B203. Author Robert Moore, Penelope Pike and Lester Tropman and Associates. Accessed July 2016.
- Nicholls, Cameron, 'Micro-History 44 College Road South, Riverview', Class Assignment 1996. Courtesy of Ann-therese King.
- Thompson, Marie-Françoise, 'Lane Cove 1927-1939, As I Remember it', May 11, 1988. Owner's copy.
- Thompson, Marie-Françoise, 'A Brief History of Luce's Life', September 30, 1990. Owner's copy.
- War Gratuity No 2 of 1920, <https://www.legislation.gov.au> accessed August 2016.