

## Travels

During 1830 Strzelecki left Poland; it is documented that he served as a courier in the 1830 insurrection. He had no formal training in geology but like many of his contemporaries at that time was self - taught. He left for North America during 1834 where he travelled widely as he analysed soil, examined minerals, (*he is credited with the discovery of Copper in Canada*) visited farms to study soil conservation & analysed gluten content of wheat. He visited South America's important mineral areas also the West Coast of Chile up to California during 1836. Strzelecki became a strong opponent of the slave trade whilst in South America. As a guest on the H. M. S. Fly he visited the Pacific Islands; climbed Mount Kilauea in Hawaii, studied languages on the Marquesas Islands. [\[v\]](#)

During 1836 he was a guest on the H. M. S. Fly which was an eighteen - gun Royal Navy sloop that was used for the exploration also chart making of a vast amount of Australia's northeast coast. He reached a height of one thousand two hundred & forty – seven metres when he climbed Mount Kilauea in Hawaii. [\[vi\]](#)

He was a guest of James Busby during 1839 in New Zealand; he reached Sydney in April of that year with letters of introduction to Governor George Gipps. He encountered P. P. King & Stuart Donaldson who became close friends. [\[vii\]](#)

Strzelecki explored the Snowy Mountain Range of New South Wales during 1840. [\[viii\]](#)

During August 1838 he informed Adyna Turno that he planned a geological survey of the country; in December he visited the Bathurst - Wellington district. His field - work for his maps took him in zigzags over New South Wales to the Australian Alps; alone he climbed what he considered the highest peak: then named it after the Polish democratic leader Tadeusz Kosciuszko. His next journey took him with his party through Gippsland (*the area he named after the Governor*) Things went awry after the expedition, which included James Macarthur & James Riley as they passed the La Trobe River. On the edge of starvation, they abandoned the horses with all their specimens then survived for three weeks: thanks mainly to their Aboriginal guides, Charlie Tarra also Jackey, they arrived very weary & starved at Westernport. Strzelecki continued to Van Diemen's Land (*now Tasmania*) where he undertook important work as explorer, geologist also scientific farmer; he also analysed coal deposits. They reached Melbourne in May 1840, completely exhausted. He left Sydney for Singapore during April 1843 prior to his return to London in October. (*Karolina Dymira - Zarzycka, translated by Aga Zano*) [\[ix\]](#)

While in Hawaii Strzelecki checked out chemical analysis, barometric calculations also altitude measurements. He named its Volcano '*Halemaumau.*' Whilst in Tahiti he was a guest of Queen Pomare IV. Following his arrival in Australia during April 1838 he discovered ore of precious minerals including gold in the Great Diving Range. He discovered the source of the longest Australian river, the Murray. His discovery of fertile soils in an area that stretched from the ocean to the mountains he called '*Gippsland.*' It was a very tough expedition with the result that Strzelecki reported that following twenty - six days of trekking '*they all looked like skeletons.*' He travelled to the Far East prior to his return to Europe when his nine - year - long adventure ended. [\[x\]](#)

## England

While domiciled in London he became a British subject during 1845 with his name anglicized to Paul Edmund Strzelecki. He published a *Physical Description of New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land* for which he received the founders medal of the Royal Geographical Society. His publication laid the basis for Australian palaeontology. Charles Darwin in amazement at Strzelecki's achievements wrote to him with the following: '*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.*' [\[xi\]](#)

## Famine Relief

During the Irish Famine of 1847 / 48 Strzelecki distributed relief from funds collected by the British relief association; his work was outstanding, many of his principles became standard procedure. He was commended by both Houses of Parliament also appointed a C. B. [xii]

Strzelecki initially worked through the British relief association within Ireland which had been created by Lionel de Rothschild in London during January 1847. From International contributions of approximately £400, 000: all were entrusted to Strzelecki. His journey to the West of Ireland included counties of Mayo, Sligo also Donegal where along with ensuring free food, he established schools. Whilst in Ireland he wrote to his old friend that *'At first I was only in charge of the western counties. As the calamity was increasing the committee posted me to Dublin as their Executive Officer, giving me forty army officers to supervise operation.....I strained every nerve to justify their confidence in me.'* His description of the poor – house in Carrick – on Shannon stated *'I found the poor – house & hospital crowded with half naked & emaciated men, women & children, a prey to dysentery & fever which terminated fatally. The number of daily deaths exceeded the supply of coffins.'* In Sligo he *'found the streets with the distressed, clamorous through hunger, although orderly, respectful to persons.'* He noted the pressure on Workhouses plus the difficulty of admittance which he referred to as *'To these abodes applications are daily increasing, not only on account of the relief which is sought, but through the anxiety of those conscious of their approaching end, to die in a poor – house and thus entitled to a coffin and a Christian burial.'* (Mac Sweeney) [xiii]

Strzelecki pioneered a scheme to provide meal & clothes to schoolchildren in the Westport Union. Despite falling victim to typhoid fever, he managed to administer aid in sixty – five towns across Ireland. He also helped impoverished Irish families to resettle in Australia. [xiv]

Irish historian W. P. O' Brien in his 1896 *The Irish Famine (London) (page 188)* stated that *'de Strzelecki... who from the first announcement of the Irish Famine, had thrown himself with conspicuous devotion & energy into the movement for its relief.'* *Dublin Evening Mail* reported that; *'at the close of the Relief Operations the Count remained in Ireland to supervise its management employed on the work. He was ten months constantly employed on the work, bearing his own charges, not placing to the account of the fund one single postage stamp. The advanced sum of £253,000 while the expenses of agency amounted only to £150. The Count left Ireland on the 10<sup>th</sup>, carrying with him the affectionate & grateful respect of every Irishman capable of entertaining the sentiment of greeted & admiration for disinterested benevolence.'* [xv]

## Various Achievements

Following Hargrave's discovery of payable gold Strzelecki; supported by Australian friends, undertook his priority claim. Strzelecki's publication in 1856 *Gold and Silver (London)* resulted in his scientific priority being acknowledged. During his final years Strzelecki visited Russia with Lord Lyons. Honours included fellowship of the Royal Geographical & Royal Societies, an honorary D. C. L. from Oxford also during 1869 the K. C. M. C. [xvi]

## Demise

Sir Paul Edmund demise occurred of cancer aged seventy - seven during 1873. His will stipulated *'destruction by burning of his papers with his body to be buried in an unmarked grave.'* He was interred in the Church of England section of Kensal Green Cemetery. [xvii]

## Footnotes

[v] Biography – Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strzelecki-sir-paul-edmund-de-2711>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020]

[vi] *Ireland's Own*

[vii] Biography – Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strzelecki-sir-paul-edmund-de-2711>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020]

[viii] Paul Strzelecki Polish Explorer (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Snowy-Mountains#ref79321>) [Assessed 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020]

[ix] Biography – Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki (<https://culture.pl/en/article/pawel-edmund-strzelecki-intrepid-explorer>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020]

[x] Ibid.

[xi] Ibid.

[xii] Ibid.

[xiii] *Ireland's Own*

[xiv] Pawel Edmund Strzelecki – Intrepid Explorer (<https://culture.pl/en/article/pawel-edmund-strzelecki-intrepid-explorer>) [Assessed 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020]

[xv] People about Pawel Edmund Strzelecki (<http://mtkoscieszko.org.au/english/people-about-strzelecki.htm>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020]

[xvi] Biography – Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki (<https://culture.pl/en/article/pawel-edmund-strzelecki-intrepid-explorer>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020]

[xvii] Ibid.