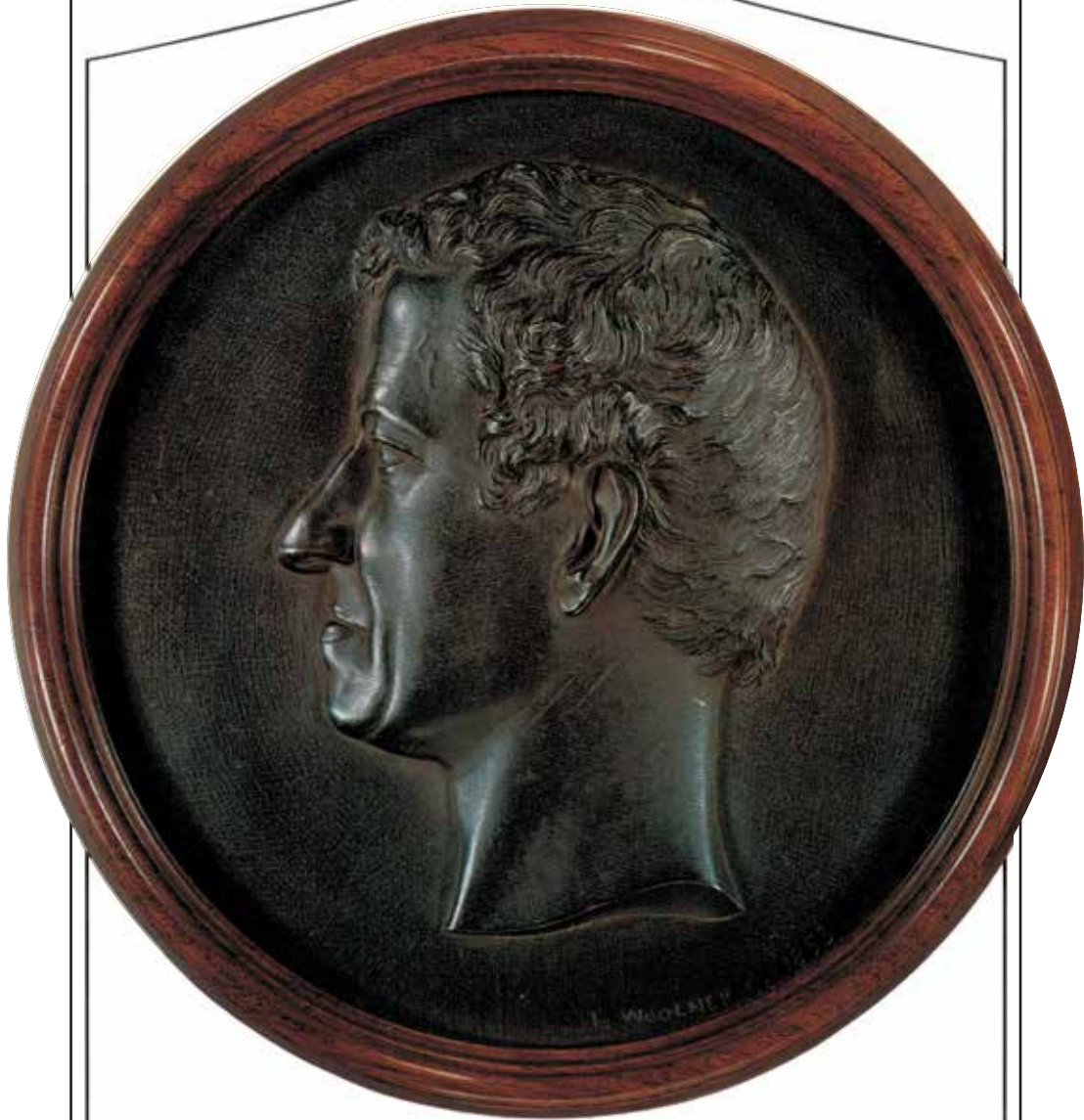


# LA TROBEANA



**Journal of the C. J. La Trobe Society Inc.**

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## *La Trobeana*

Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc  
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The C J La Trobe Society Inc was formed in 2001 to promote understanding and appreciation of the life, work and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe, Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor.  
www.latrobesociety.org.au



*C. J. La Trobe*



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### FRONT COVER

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor  
Charles Joseph La Trobe  
1853, diam. 24cm. Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe.  
Signature and date incised in bronze l.r.: T. Woolner Sc. 1853: / M  
La Trobe, Charles Joseph, 1801-1875. Accessioned 1894  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H5489

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## A Word from the President

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As our summer drifted into winter this year I was reminded of the wonderful legacy La Trobe left Melbourne, indeed Victoria – the circle of gardens around the city. A recent article in the National Trust's newsletter referred to it as 'Melbourne's Emerald Necklace'. That vivid phrase truly captures the beauty of our gardens. I am fortunate to work next to the Treasury Gardens that flank two sides of the Government buildings on Treasury Reserve. I observe how office workers pack the lawns during fine weather, sitting under the trees, enjoying a lunch time respite from work. Of all Melbourne's glorious gardens the Botanic Gardens are probably La Trobe's most important garden legacy. When you consider all the problems facing La Trobe in establishing a new city yet he had the foresight to put land aside by the river for what is now one of the great botanic gardens of the world. The gardens are an integral part of our lives and millions of people walk and relax there all year round. The gardens have now developed an intricate system of water conservation measures to help maintain this 'emerald gem'. I am sure La Trobe would have been impressed with these conservation schemes.

Indeed, water was another area where La Trobe showed forward thinking. He realised that if the city was to grow and prosper it required a regular water supply. Tim Gatehouse's article researches Melbourne's first water supply. In fact, part of Melbourne's original water system, the Melbourne Water Works Tank, was located on the edge of the then town behind St Patrick's Cathedral. This 'pressure tank' was initially filled with water from the Yarra, and later from the Yan Yean Reservoir. I understand that it has been preserved and relocated to Werribee Sewage Park. The remarkable nineteenth century government photographer Charles Nettleton recorded the tank and the building of

Yan Yean. Beautiful albums of his photographs still remain at Public Record Office Victoria and at the State Library.

Also in this issue, Associate Professor Peter W Sale from La Trobe University, whose interest as a scientist is in pasture and crop agronomy, considers how the District/Colony fed itself in the earliest days of settlement when others struggled, as was the case in Sydney, and posits a view that will intrigue readers.

Two important articles in this issue provide us with further insights into Charles Joseph La Trobe in our ever-expanding understanding of the extraordinary founder of Victoria. Emeritus Professor John Barnes, who has a deep knowledge of the life of Charles Joseph La Trobe, examines the formative years of the young La Trobe, firstly through his father, Christian Ignatius La Trobe, and later, through his education at Fulneck and in another sense in the wider world of Switzerland. These were to shape the spiritual and psychological wellspring of his vision for a new society.

Dr Dianne Reilly has contributed yet another interesting study of Charles Joseph La Trobe which exemplifies the breadth of his vision for the establishment of a cultured and learned society, one in which an educated man like Redmond Barry might himself flourish. The meeting of minds of two such men was to be of major significance to the cultural life of Melbourne.

As always, I would like to thank the many contributors to *La Trobeana*. Our journal continues to offer an amazing variety and wealth of information on La Trobe and his times.

**Diane Gardiner**  
**Hon. President C J La Trobe Society**

## The Chancellor's Column

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Charles Joseph La Trobe was a keen botanist. Thanks to his love of botany and his vision, we enjoy today the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens, an internationally renowned landscaped garden with a mix of native and exotic vegetation and over 10,000 individual species. Charles Joseph La Trobe must have stood upon the site of the Botanic Gardens in 1846 and seen beyond the uninspiring marshland and swamp before him. He saw not just the beauty but the value in bringing botany to the people.

It is the ability to see things beyond the immediate and to imagine what might be possible that characterises the work of researchers. Today researchers at La Trobe University address the major challenges of our time with similar vision and open-mindedness by looking beyond what is known. Often this means looking in unlikely places and sometimes to unlikely plants to find answers.

The La Trobe Institute of Molecular Sciences (LIMS) scientists recently identified a molecule in the flower of one such unlikely plant, the tobacco plant that fights off fungi and bacteria, and surprisingly has the ability to identify and destroy cancer cells. The defence molecule called NaD1, works by forming a pincer-like structure that grips onto lipids present in the membranes of cancer cells and rips them open, causing the cells to expel their contents and explode. The lead investigator in this research, Dr Mark Hulett, believes that this discovery has potential for use in cancer treatment. Dr Hulett is aware that 'there is some irony in the fact that a powerful defence mechanism against cancer is found in the flower of a species of ornamental tobacco plant,' but he says this is a welcome discovery, whatever the origin.

Scientists are now looking at the next step, which is to undertake pre-clinical studies to determine what role NaD1 might be able to play in treating cancer. The preclinical work is being conducted by the Melbourne biotechnology company Hexima Limited and so far the preliminary trials have looked promising.

Dr Hulett is confident that there is potential for this discovery to translate to therapeutic use in humans. As anyone who has had an up-close experience of cancer will know, one of the biggest issues with current cancer therapies is that the effect of the treatment is indiscriminate. The remarkable difference with NaD1 is that it can target cancerous cells and have little or no effect on those that are healthy. This discovery has huge potential for other therapeutic applications as well.

One could imagine that Charles Joseph La Trobe, the 'man of a thousand occupations' as Washington Irving described him, would be delighted to think that today in the University named after him the discipline of botany is held in such high regard, and that scientists have the necessary vision to make such amazing discoveries.

**Adrienne E Clarke AC**  
**Chancellor, La Trobe University**





Unknown artist  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, c.1824  
Pencil drawing on cream paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria,  
H81.20/1

## La Trobe: a prologue to his Melbourne years

By John Barnes

**John Barnes is Emeritus Professor of English at La Trobe University. His interest in La Trobe has a personal aspect, as his great-grandmother came from a Swiss family which emigrated to Victoria from Neuchâtel in 1854. John is a long-time member of the La Trobe Society, and was formerly on its Committee. In this article, he discusses the period before Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived in Port Phillip in 1839, based on his newly completed manuscript of a biography of La Trobe.**

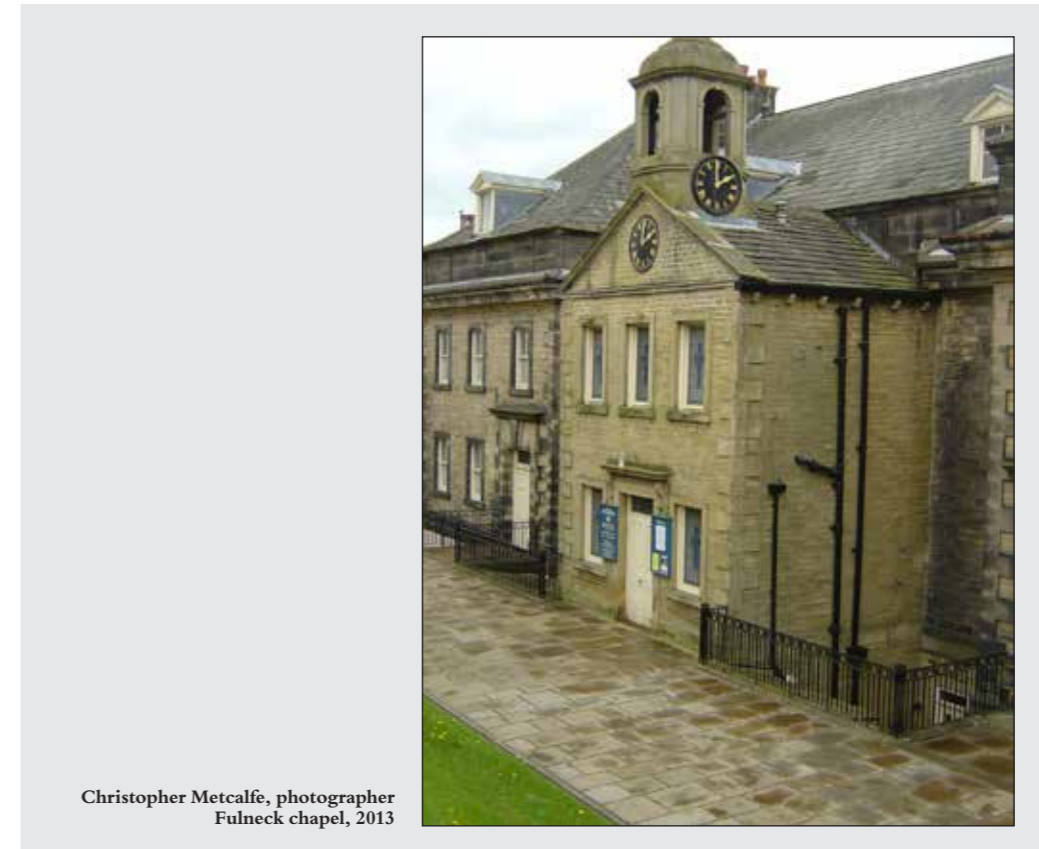
**This address was given on the occasion of La Trobe's 213th Birthday that was celebrated on 30 March 2014 at Domain House.**

When Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived in Melbourne in October 1839 to become Superintendent of the new settlement, his life was more than half over. As many people will know, he was born on 20 March 1801 and died on 4 December 1875. In the years prior to his appointment he seems to have had no clear career goals, and probably neither he nor anyone else foresaw the direction that his life would take: that he would become a long-serving colonial official in the antipodes. At the time of his marriage in September 1835 he had no professional qualifications and no

financial resources. He had enjoyed years of travelling and writing about his travels, but with marriage and the prospect of a family he needed a regular income larger than that he received from his books. Soon after he had made what he called 'an "all for love" marriage', he told his publisher friend John Murray that 'I feel that I must have done with all my slovenly, careless, easeful bachelor habits which only care for today & shut the eyes on tomorrow & fall to scramble for filthy lucre like my neighbours'.<sup>1</sup> He pinned his hopes of 'filthy lucre' on a government post. In his new-found happiness he could joke about the evils of the patronage system, telling

Murray: 'Alas for sinecures! great & small – no one dreams of such things now – & yet it is a great pity, for there is no contesting the comfort of which they were productive'. As we know, the post he eventually gained was far from being a sinecure.

brother John. Incidentally, one can say almost nothing about La Trobe's mother, except that she was a clergyman's daughter whose family came from Yorkshire. Christian Ignatius was the eldest son of Benjamin La Trobe, who had been converted to the Moravian faith while still



Christopher Metcalf, photographer  
Fulneck chapel, 2013

Of the four sons of the Rev. Christian Ignatius La Trobe, Charles Joseph was the only one who did not prepare himself for a career. His two older brothers both studied theology – Peter, the eldest, followed his father into the Moravian Church, and John chose to be ordained in the Anglican Church – and his younger brother, Frederic, qualified as a doctor. Reflecting the patriarchal values of the time, his two sisters, Charlotte and Agnes, were not expected to have any professional qualifications. As the *Dictionary of National Biography* records,<sup>2</sup> it seems probable that Joseph (as he was known within the family circle) seriously considered following his brothers and taking holy orders. However, although he was a deeply sincere Christian, whose understanding of the world was shaped by his Moravian education, he never made that commitment to the religious life which would have restricted his ability to pursue other interests.

His father, Christian Ignatius, had managed to reconcile his sense of religious vocation with his passion for music, as did his

a young man in Ireland and who had quickly become the leader of the church in England. The career of Christian Ignatius in the Moravian Church was an unusual one. He was ordained, and was for a time the minister of the Fetter Lane congregation, but the elders decided that he 'did not have a predilection for the Christian ministry' – that is, he was not suited to pastoral work.<sup>3</sup> He occasionally preached when invited by other ministers, and often played the organ for services. His particular talent was for administration. Following his father's early death in 1786, he succeeded him as Secretary of the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, a position he held for nearly fifty years. When he retired in 1836, his eldest son Peter took up the post in which he remained until his sudden death in 1863. Altogether, the tenure of the three La Trobes who occupied the post added up to eighty-nine years, a remarkable record. Christian Ignatius is remembered especially for having set up and edited *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, which reported on the work of Moravian missionaries in various parts of the world.

'From my childhood', Charles Joseph writes in *The Rambler in North America*, 'I had been accustomed to hear of missionary labour, missionary trials, and missionary joy and sorrow, and to see those who had spent their lives freely in the service of God among the heathen'.<sup>4</sup> No doubt when his children were young Christian Ignatius had stories to tell them of those foreign

Ignatius was a very affable man, and much of his success came from his ability to get on with all sorts of people, not only missionaries and the people in the missions – the Hottentots liked him so much that they wanted him to stay with them – but with officialdom. He was tactful, had a great deal of political nous, and was very adept at finding his way through the thickets of

Christopher Metcalfe, photographer  
House on the upper terrace at  
Fulneck, 2013  
Benjamin La Trobe is said to have lived  
in this house



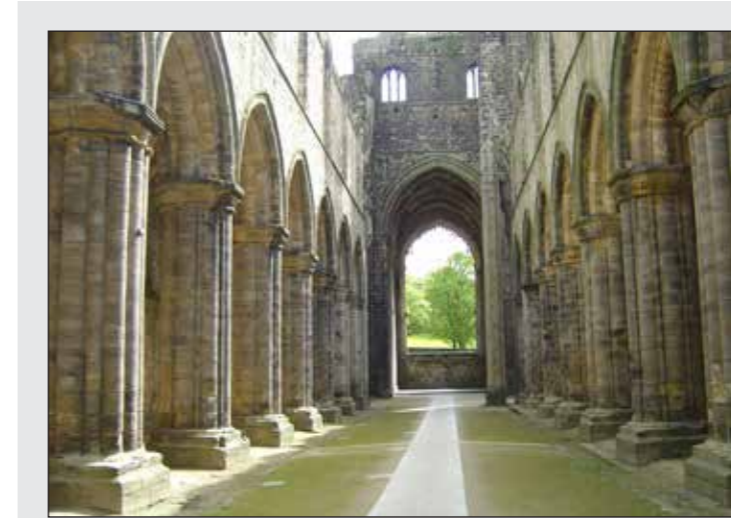
Christopher Metcalfe, photographer  
Lower terrace at Fulneck,  
to the left of the chapel, 2013

parts – Greenland, North America, the West Indies, South Africa and Surinam – in which there were Moravian missions. Christian Ignatius seems to have had a flair for the dramatic: in the official records of the Moravian settlement of Fairfield there is a report of his interrupting a conference of the elders to read them a letter just received which reported 'the painful and dangerous encounter of Bro Smith of Grünkloof with a tyger'.<sup>5</sup> Charles Joseph could not help but be influenced by this missionary background and it fundamentally affected his view of the situation of the local Aborigines when he came to Melbourne. He had been brought up to think of the indigenous people as 'heathens' in need of the Christian gospel, and he accepted without question the current view that they would become 'civilised' only if they were Christianised.

Christian Ignatius was never a missionary, but in 1815 the Moravian establishment entrusted him with a delicate task of sorting out problems among the mission establishments in South Africa. His very readable *Journal of a Visit to South Africa*, with its mixture of observation and reflection, provided a model when his son came to write his own travel journals. Christian

bureaucracy in Whitehall. By the time Charles Joseph was seeking government patronage, the name 'La Trobe' had long been identified with Moravian missionary activities, which were highly regarded in government circles, an association that was undoubtedly in the young man's favour when eventually the colonial officials considered him for a post.

However, while Christian Ignatius devoted himself most conscientiously to carrying out the responsibilities of his office, he managed to live what was almost another life as a musician. His role in introducing German music to England and in changing English tastes is only now being fully appreciated. Dr Charles Burney, who did not have German, relied upon the young man's help in writing about German music in his landmark four-volume *General History of Music*, published between 1776 and 1789. Music played a central role in the worship of the Moravians, and soon after his ordination Christian Ignatius was helping to prepare the first English edition of the Moravian hymn-book. As a clergyman he continued not only to play music (he could play a range of instruments, and modestly said that he played the clarinet 'tolerably well') and to compose (his compositions include three



Christopher Metcalfe,  
photographer  
Kirkstall Abbey, 2013  
Ruined twelfth century  
Cistercian abbey, near Leeds,  
on north bank of the river Aire

piano sonatas dedicated to Haydn, with whom he became friendly) but also to prepare *Selections of Sacred Music from the Works of some of the most eminent Composers of Germany & Italy*, a work that ran to six volumes, published between 1806 and 1825. So, as he was growing up Charles Joseph heard from his father about musicians as well as missionaries. He learnt to play the pianoforte and sang in a deep bass, like his father, who rejoiced that, as he put it, 'all my children have musical souls'.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the enjoyment of music Charles Joseph shared his father's liking for sketching and for travel, and his keen interest in natural history, especially botany, and in architecture. And in temperament he seems to have been very like his father. A contemporary who knew Christian Ignatius well describes him as a congenial companion: at dinner he 'seasoned his morsels with pleasantries and poignant sayings which young and old doted on'.<sup>7</sup> As a young man in London he had been criticised by the Moravian leaders in London for having so many acquaintances. He himself quoted in his *Journal* a friend who wondered 'how a man of so lively disposition, could belong to a community so recluse and religious, as that of the Church of the Brethren, in which there were so many checks, by particular regulations, against the world, and its pleasures and amusements'.<sup>8</sup> We have no accounts of Charles Joseph as a child, beyond a brief remark of his father's, and his own later reflections. What we can glean about him as a young man in Switzerland suggests that he inherited his father's sociability.

In his *Letters to my Children*, written during the 1815 voyage to South Africa and published in 1851 by his son John, Christian Ignatius addresses his fourteen year-old third son in this way:

My dear Joseph,

My time for these several days past, has been very pleasantly occupied in writing letters to my dear children on various subjects connected with the history of my life, and it is your turn now. But I have been rather at a loss to know what subject would suit or please you best. You are of a lively, cheerful disposition, and perhaps would best like some merry story, by which you might be amused as well as instructed. But I believe it will be best to reserve such for conversation, when we next meet on Settle Scar, or at the Ebby and Flowing Well, near Giggleswick'.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps it is not always easy for a father with a 'lively disposition' to get the measure of a son with a 'lively, cheerful disposition'. There may be a hint here that Christian Ignatius found this son to be something of a challenge, but in the reference to an excursion in the Yorkshire dales there is certainly an indication of shared enjoyment.

Charles Joseph was born in London, 'within the sound of Bow bells', but most of his formative years were spent in the north of England. Like his father he was sent to the boys' boarding school at Fulneck, near Pudsey, and later to Fairfield in Droylsden, near Manchester. The whole of his early life – until he went to Switzerland in 1824 – was spent in these two Moravian communities or his father's house close to the Moravian chapel in Fetter Lane, London.





Andreas Jeklin, 1823–1895, artist  
Heinrich Zollinger, graveur  
Intérieur de l'établissement de  
Montmirail, c.1853  
Bibliothèque publique et  
universitaire, Neuchâtel



Jean-Henri Baumann,  
1801–1858, artist  
Vue de Montmirail, c.1825  
Aquatint  
Bibliothèque publique et  
universitaire, Neuchâtel

Both the communities were in the countryside, so it is not surprising that Charles Joseph grew up to prefer the country to the city. Fulneck, at which a highly regarded school still flourishes, is set on the hillside of a beautiful valley, and in spite of the growth of suburbia it still has a feeling of rural tranquillity. It was founded in the 1740s, when the Moravian organisation was barely twenty years old. The eighteenth century church, which was the creation of the German aristocrat, Count Zinzendorf, renewed a medieval religious tradition that originated in what is now the Czech Republic. The count, a Lutheran, had sheltered on his estate at Herrnhut in Saxony remnants of the anti-papal congregations of the Unity of the Brethren (Unitas Fratrum) which had come into being in the fifteenth century in Bohemia and had been dispersed during the Counter-Reformation.<sup>10</sup>

The Moravian settlement at Fulneck is built like a village, with two rows of stone buildings facing one another, and a burial ground ('God's Acre') on the slope below. It may be of interest to note that in Moravian burial grounds the graves are marked by square, flat stones, recording only the name and dates, which are set in the grass. The Boy's School, which Charles Joseph attended, and the Chapel, the heart of the settlement, are located on the lower terrace. When I visited there last year a substantial house on the upper terrace was pointed out as the house

in which Benjamin La Trobe (Charles Joseph's grandfather) lived during the ten years from 1857 when he was headmaster of the school.

The Moravians put great stress upon education, and their schools attracted non-Moravians by the quality of the curriculum and the teaching. There is no doubt that Charles Joseph received a good academic education. But the influence of a school is not confined to what is learnt in the classroom. The child is father to the man, as Wordsworth wrote; Charles Joseph's early years at Fulneck shaped the sensibility and outlook on life of the man who came to Port Phillip. By the time he was sent to Fulneck, the atmosphere and the way in which the boys were handled was more liberal and less puritanical than it had been. Cricket was not yet played at the school, but the boys had a field for use as a playground, and skating was no longer deemed to be a 'carnal pleasure' that should be denied to them on moral grounds. From the early years of the school the main recreation of the boys appears to have been walking. A favourite walk of Charles Joseph and his companions was to the ruined Kirkstall Abbey, an experience that could only have stimulated his interest in landscape, architecture and history. It is perhaps relevant here to remind ourselves that Charles Joseph's uncle, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, is acknowledged as 'the father of American architecture'. Architecture remained an interest

throughout Charles Joseph's life; but even stronger was his love of exploring landscapes, climbing hills and descending into caves, and running 'every kind of risk for the love of mischief & vain glory', as he himself said.<sup>11</sup> His aesthetic enjoyment of the natural world went along with an enjoyment of physical adventure, and it is not surprising that he became such an intrepid traveller.

From its beginnings in the 1740s there was an emphasis at Fulneck upon discipline and, most of all, upon self-discipline. The boys were under constant supervision, and I have wondered whether Charles Joseph's liking for going off on his own in the countryside was, in some degree, a reaction to the sort of control that was exercised. That control extended to the actual reading of literature, which was censored, and one nineteenth century commentators has remarked: 'The Moravians had their 'Index''.<sup>12</sup> Most significant of all was the kind of introspection which the Moravians encouraged, and which became second nature to Charles Joseph. 'I have been taught from my Childhood to bend my spirit to the will of God', he was to acknowledge, as he struggled to settle on his future course.<sup>13</sup> Throughout his life, including his years at Port Phillip, his characteristic response to whatever confronted him was to try to discover the 'will of God' and act accordingly. To unsympathetic colonists this habit often made him appear to be weak and indecisive.

We know comparatively little about Charles Joseph's life before he went to Neuchâtel in October 1824, by which time he was 23 years old but still unsure of what sort of life he wanted to pursue. Years later he was to confide in a correspondent in Switzerland:

Switzerland has twice been an asylum to me—once ten years ago this very autumn. When after my mother's death I paid a first visit, & secondly in 1829, when disgusted with having lost a year in awaiting a tardy fulfilment of a promise of patronage by Lord Godrich [sic], then prime minister, I returned to my unobtrusive perch among your mountains like a bird escaped from its cage.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt that the experience was liberating for the young man, who portrays himself in *The Alpenstock* as melancholy and depressed on his arrival. Among the families of the bourgeoisie in this closely knit Protestant society he found congenial companions, who

shared his cultural interests and became lifelong friends. By the end of his first visit, March 1827, Switzerland 'had long ceased to be a foreign land' to him, and by the end of his second visit in 1831 he may already have fallen in love with Sophie de Montmollin, a member of a leading Neuchâtel family.



Peggy Metcalfe-Clerc, photographer  
Erlenbach church, 2013

Why did he choose to go to Switzerland? In the opening pages of *The Alpenstock* he describes the feelings of 'wonder and awe' as he gazes upon the 'magnificent scene', looking across Lake Neuchâtel to the Alps. Like an increasing number of English people he shared the Romantic fascination with mountain scenery. And why Neuchâtel? The most likely explanation is that there was a Moravian girls' boarding school at Montmirail, a few miles outside the town, and that the La Trobe family had personal contact with the principal and his wife – the wife was, in fact, a niece of La Trobe's uncle by marriage. For the first time in his life he was living outside a Moravian community, but at Montmirail, which he visited every Sunday, he was again in a familiar atmosphere. It was a link that he maintained throughout his life. In *The Alpenstock* he says that Montmirail means so much to him that he must 'bridle' his feelings.

At the beginning of his first summer expedition La Trobe called at the village of Erlenbach in the valley of the Simmenthal. He had an introduction to the clergyman and his family, with whom he immediately formed a close and lasting relationship. The parsonage became a 'home', where he stayed often, 'one of those spots to which my heart clings with an

affection which is interwoven with the thread of my being', he wrote in *The Alpenstock*,<sup>15</sup> where he describes his delight in the people and the setting. There have been changes since La Trobe's time, but I discovered on a brief visit last year that the place retains much of the idyllic character that it possessed for him.

guide, and there is no doubt that his marriage brought him happiness. As for profession, all he could claim was that he was, like his friend Washington Irving, a 'poor devil author'. That he finally achieved the government patronage that he sought was, in some part, due to his book, *The Rambler in North America*, which was



Peggy Metcalfe-Clerc, photographer  
View of the Simmental from Erlenbach church, 2013

Charles Joseph is not effusive in print but reticent as he is about his private feelings, what he writes about Montmirail and Erlenbach and the people there leaves no doubt of their importance in his emotional and imaginative life. He was probably fortunate that he did not gain the patronage back in England that he sought after his first visit to Switzerland. The second stay in Switzerland deepened his attachment, and led to further travel and writing. Just before he returned to England at the end of the excursion described in *The Pedestrian* he met Albert de Pourtalès, who was keen to travel and was not sure that he wanted to go on with his studies at Geneva. Albert's rich and powerful family were happy for the young man, not yet twenty one, to make a tour of the British Isles with Charles Joseph, who acted as his guide and companion. Out of that association came the two-year tour they made to North America and Mexico – and two more travel books, which consolidated his reputation as a travel writer.

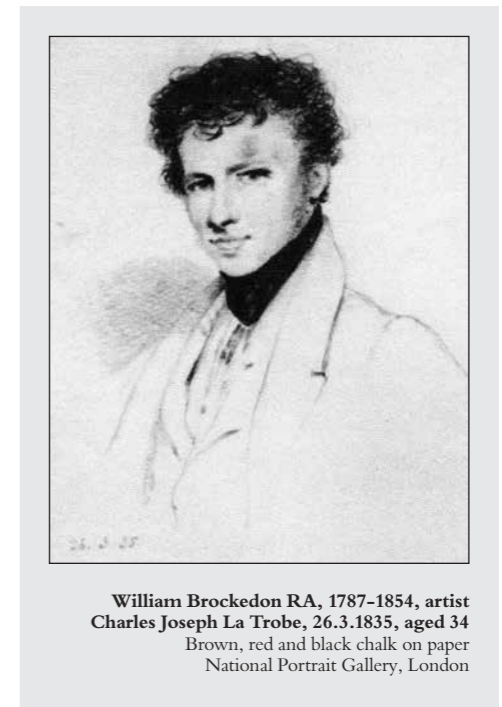
By the end of that tour he was ready to give up travelling and settle down. He was still of a 'lively, cheerful disposition' if the 1835 sketch by his friend Brockedon is any

praised by the influential Tory magazine, John Murray's *Quarterly Review*, and was read with approval by influential men such as Sir George Grey, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Colonies.<sup>16</sup> To the Colonial Office in 1837, seeking someone to report on the education of freed slaves in the West Indies, Charles Joseph fitted the bill: he was of a family identified with missionary work (the Moravians had been the first missionaries in the West Indies) and he had shown himself in the book on America to be a good reporter. Perhaps most important of all, Lord Glenelg, the Colonial Secretary, was a friend of the La Trobe family.

Charles Joseph's capable handling of that assignment led to the offer of the sub-gubernatorial post at Port Phillip, in which for the first time in his life he had authority over the lives of others. This appointment was far from ideal for him and Sophie: they missed the culture of Europe, and felt keenly the separation from family and friends. He did have opportunities to travel in Victoria and Tasmania, but under the burdens of office he was increasingly unable to pursue the intellectual pleasures that he had known in his early life.

Charles Joseph La Trobe accepted the sacrifices he had to make and did his duty to the point of exhaustion. His achievements as Superintendent and later Lieutenant-Governor, particularly during the near-crisis of the gold rushes, seem to me to have been under-rated; they are all the more impressive when one considers how little prepared he was for the responsibilities of his office. He had never held any executive position; he was deeply conservative – 'born a Tory with a most religious horror of radicals & democrats'<sup>17</sup> – as he himself said only a few years before coming here; and had been more interested in scenery than in the social and political problems that the Industrial Revolution brought to Britain. He had never had taken much interest in politics and administration but proved to be a most conscientious administrator. One may argue about the soundness of some of his judgments and actions on specific issues, but there can hardly be any argument about his personal integrity and his devotion to the ideal of the public good.

As I see it, the exercise of power tests the moral strength of those who hold it, and by that test the travel writer who became a governor is most worthy of our remembrance.



William Brockedon RA, 1787-1854, artist  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, 26.3.1835, aged 34  
Brown, red and black chalk on paper  
National Portrait Gallery, London

- 1 La Trobe to John Murray, 22 October 1835. John Murray Archive, MS40672, National Library of Scotland.
- 2 Stanley Lane-Poole, 'Latrobe, Charles Joseph (1801-1875)', in *National Dictionary of Biography*, vol.32, London: Smith Elder, 1892, pp.182-3.
- 3 John Mason and Lucy Torode, 'Three Generations of the La Trobe Family in the Moravian Church' *Moravian History Magazine*, March 1997, p.23.
- 4 *The Rambler in North America, 1832-1833*, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1835, vol.2, p.152.
- 5 F. H. Mellows, *A Short History of Fairfield Moravian Church*, Fairfield, 1977, p.41.
- 6 C. I. La Trobe, *Letters to my Children*, edited with an introduction by J. A. La Trobe, London: Seeleys, 1851, p.27.
- 7 E. Holmes, *Musical Times*, September 1851, p.219.
- 8 C. I. La Trobe, *Journal of a Visit to South Africa in 1815 and 1816* [1818], Facsimile Reprint with new introduction by Frank R. Bradlow, C. Struik, Cape Town, 1969, pp.328-9.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.66
- 10 The name 'Moravian' was originally a kind of nickname, referring to the origins of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren in a part of Bohemia.
- 11 La Trobe, Manuscript journal of a journey in the Tyrol 1829-30. MS 13003 State Library of Victoria.
- 12 R. A. Willmott, Preface to *Poems of James Montgomery*. London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1860.
- 13 La Trobe to Madame de Pourtalès, 30 June 1833. MS 133354/44 State Library of Victoria.
- 14 La Trobe to Madame de Pourtalès, 8/11 August 1834. MS 133354/43 State Library of Victoria.
- 15 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Alpenstock; or, Sketches of Swiss Scenery and Manners, 1825-1826*, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1829, p.19.
- 16 *Quarterly Review*, September 1835; George Grey to Peter La Trobe, 31 March 1843. MS 133354/5 State Library of Victoria.
- 17 La Trobe to Madame de Pourtalès, 30 November 1833. MS 133354/44 State Library of Victoria.



# *Two Gentlemen of Melbourne Town: Charles Joseph La Trobe and Redmond Barry*

By Dr Dianne Reilly AM

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**M**arvellous Melbourne!  
Melbourne – the most liveable city in the world! Melbourne – UNESCO City of Literature! Melbourne – the cultural capital of Australia! These are all phrases we accept as apt descriptions of the capital city of Victoria. But how did this elevated cultural status arrive? If we reflect on what our home town was like 175 years ago, and the mammoth efforts of some of those early visionary settlers to impose order in the colony, we will gain an idea of how it all came about.

Towards the end of 1839, two gentlemen arrived, just over a month apart, in Melbourne, then the centre of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. The first of them to set foot on the soil of the colony on 1 October was Charles Joseph La Trobe, at 38 years of age, the newly-appointed Superintendent of this recently established British colony. Just two weeks later, on 13 November, a young lawyer by the name of Redmond Barry, 26 years old, arrived by ship from Sydney. Both were full of the excitement

and hope for what they might achieve in this truly embryonic centre in a new and little understood land. What were their first impressions?

Melbourne in 1839, only four years after the first white settlement, must have presented quite a shock to these well travelled men who were used to the sophistication of London and Dublin, and who had each spent time exploring much of what European cities had to offer. Added to this, La Trobe had already travelled widely in the New World.

They came to what was more or less a frontier town, and those who lived there had just one major preoccupation: to improve their material lot in life. There was no thought among the residents of creating a community of cultured colonists with benefits for all. Melbourne – named in 1837 for the British Prime Minister Lord Melbourne – was a staging post for these British settlers, as they headed to the hinterland, seeking a better life than the one they had left behind. In contrast, their new leader La Trobe's

approach to his public duties was based essentially on his personal views on religion and morality which he considered should be central pillars in the success of the new community. He was certain about his civilising mission in this outpost of empire:

Melbourne lacked the infrastructure and culture which permeated even the smallest city in Europe from which most immigrants had come. The legal system in Melbourne was in a very rudimentary state, with the Court of Quarter Sessions having only just been established under



Artist unknown  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, c.1835 (detail)  
Oil  
Frontispiece to *The Rambler in Oklahoma*,  
Oklahoma City: Harlow, 1955



W. A. Hirschmann, engraver  
Governor La Trobe, c.1851 (detail)  
Wood engraving, coloured  
Roy Morgan Research Centre collection  
Original engraving published  
Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, 1886

It will not be by individual aggrandizement, by the possession of numerous flocks and herds, or of costly acres, that we shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness, but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great.<sup>1</sup>

The Melbourne that greeted La Trobe and Barry was physically less than picturesque. It is true that Robert Hoddle had surveyed the settlement and laid out the grid system of its streets. But as they soon discovered, Collins Street was the only street worthy of the name, while Elizabeth Street followed a frequently-flooded creek bed, and Flinders Street was little better than a bog. The locality of the Block – that section of Collins Street between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets, later to become Melbourne's most fashionable promenade – was swampy and unpleasant. The water supply for Melbourne was increasingly inadequate and polluted from the discharge of slaughterhouses and cesspits into the Yarra River. There was no town council before 1842 to take care of local affairs. All revenue for developments in Port Phillip was allocated by the government in far-off Sydney, a distance of 872 km to the north. The only building of note was the gaol, and that was not yet completed. The infant settlement of

Irish barrister Edward J. Brewster, who also held the position of Commissioner of the local Court of Requests.<sup>2</sup>

No development could take place without finance being allotted by the government in far-off Sydney. La Trobe had to obtain permission from Governor Gipps for every improvement he wished to make in Melbourne. As historian 'Garryowen' later described it, Melbourne was then, physically, in a basic stage of its existence:

It was a kind of big 'settlement' ... with houses, sheds and tents in clusters, or scattered in ones and twos. There were streets marked out, but ... so dispersed that after dark residents incurred not only trouble but danger in moving about ... the majority of the business or residential tenements were made up of colonial 'wattle-and-daub', roofed with sheets of bark or coarse shingle ...<sup>3</sup>

Such was the metropolis of the domain La Trobe had come to administer, and to which Barry hoped to contribute as a practitioner of the law. In addition, there was a vast area of pastoral land to manage and a mere few thousand inhabitants. Melbourne in 1839 had a European population of about 3,000,<sup>4</sup> a figure that was to jump to 11,700 in the census of March 1841,<sup>5</sup> and thereafter, to multiply in leaps and bounds





**Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist**  
**Commandant's House, Melbourne, 1883**

Watercolour

From a pencil sketch made on the spot by the late Admiral P.P. King when he accompanied Governor Bourke who came to make permanent arrangements for the settlement of Port Phillip in 1837. Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H38115

Note: This house was between Spencer and King Streets. The tents in the background are those of Sir Richard Bourke, the Governor, in March 1837.

to reach 77,345 for the whole of Port Phillip in 1851.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the town's promise, La Trobe realized when he arrived to take up his post, how unprepared he was for the task ahead.

Even so, the townspeople of Melbourne were enormously proud of what had been achieved in such a short time-span, and of what the settlement had to offer newcomers, including La Trobe. A week after his arrival, a local newspaper preened itself at the settlement's amazing growth:

Already Melbourne, which eighteen months ago possessed only three brick houses, is a flourishing town, with a population of between two and three thousand souls, and containing most of the appendages of an advanced civilization. It has five places of worship of different denominations of Christians, a Court of Justice, two Schools, two Banks, one Club with sixty members, a Fire and Marine Assurance Company, and two Newspapers are efficiently supported. Of the learned professions there are six Clergymen, twelve Medical Men, and five Lawyers. Such is the present state of Melbourne.<sup>7</sup>

The scarcity of women was a pronounced feature of early Melbourne society. The historian William Westgarth, writing of 1840, the year of his own arrival, noted that 'Ladies and children were comparatively rare objects'.<sup>8</sup> However, a little later, he was impressed with society in the town and wrote that: 'We have a number of highly respectable people here ... Ladies come forth to the city for their shopping, and dandies occasionally glimmer forth, parading in the sunshine...'<sup>9</sup>

Westgarth took his readers on a walking tour of Melbourne as it looked in 1840: 'Taking central Collins-street, which was then... the chief seat of business, and beginning with "The Shakespeare", at the market corner, where originally Fawkner opened the first public-house, and proceeding eastwards to Swanston-street, there was a good sprinkling of brick-built offices, stores, and shops', offering every good house and garden...' and on the opposite side, 'The Reverend Alexander Morison's Independent Church and adjacent manse...The Scots Church, lower down, of which the Reverend James Forbes was minister, was then being built. Not till the next year was the creditably large Mechanics' Institute begun. ... [and] the first Custom House was being erected'.<sup>10</sup>

However, the squatter Charles Griffith in his 1845 book *Present State and Prospects of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales*, warned women at home of the dull life-style that awaited them in Melbourne: 'There is little to substitute for the amusement and excitement of English life - no exhibitions - no popular preachers - no morning call - nothing worthy of the name of shopping - rather seedy balls, and very few dinner parties'.<sup>11</sup>

It is through original contemporary watercolours and sketches, and a few diaries and publications, that we are able to grasp just how basic were the living conditions. One can only marvel at the courage of the two gentlemen, La Trobe and Barry, in their first months in Melbourne. Did they think of fleeing back to Europe?

### **Let us consider Charles Joseph La Trobe**

He had had minimal training and experience for his new role. He was reliant on the direction of his superior officer, Governor George Gipps in Sydney where he had spent his first six weeks in Australia.

La Trobe had none of the training and experience which usually qualified a man for such an important administrative role. The typical colonial governor in those days had a naval or military background. Charles Joseph's experience was radically different. He was a refined and sensitive man who had spent years as a dilettante, imbibing all that was cultural and learned.

*House, Melbourne*, a watercolour by Robert Russell, based on a pencil sketch made by Captain (afterwards Admiral) Phillip Parker King, dated March 1837, showing the cottage and the wide open spaces around it.

The La Trobes were required to bring with them everything necessary for their life in a relatively unknown colony, including a



**John Mather, 1848-1916, artist**  
**Redmond Barry's Residence off Bourke Street, 1915**

Watercolour

Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H294  
Barry built this house in 1842 and lived there until 1852



**Sarah Susanna Bunbury, artist**  
**Mr La Trobe's House Jolimont, July 1st 1842**

Ink, pen and wash on cream paper

Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H5531

The La Trobes had arrived in Melbourne after a two-week voyage from Sydney on board a barque, the *Pyramus*, on 30 September 1839, having encountered ferocious gales in Bass Strait. On the following morning, the Superintendent was rowed ashore to Liardet's Beach, now Port Melbourne.<sup>12</sup> Despite the incessant heavy rain, he had walked into town for a first unofficial view of his new domain. The next day, 2 October, the weather was so bad that passengers were unable to go ashore. However, on the following day, he noted in his diary: 'Landed with family, 1 p.m. Land Sale, 3 p.m. Received and answered address of inhabitants'.<sup>13</sup> After being rowed up the Yarra River from the port on 3 October 1839 - 175 years ago this year - in poor weather to a makeshift landing stage, the Superintendent and his family were warmly welcomed by hundreds of Melburnians in a sales room where a land auction was being conducted.<sup>14</sup> La Trobe was hastily sworn in during an interval in the colony's third sale of town and country land. He was then accompanied to the first home of the ten-month-old Melbourne Club which, at that time, occupied the former hotel building of founding colonist John Pascoe Fawkner on the south-eastern corner of Collins and Market Streets.<sup>15</sup>

The La Trobe family stayed with Captain William Lonsdale, the Police Magistrate, on their arrival, in his cottage between Spencer and King Streets, east of Batman's Hill. The image on the previous page depicts the *Commandant's*

prefabricated cottage which was erected not far from where the Melbourne Cricket Ground is situated today. They called their new home *Jolimont*. This diminutive building, progressively extended over the years to accommodate a growing family, was to be their home throughout their time in Port Phillip.

It was evident on the day of his arrival in Melbourne that La Trobe was eagerly anticipated by the local population who expected him to act quickly on their desire for separation from the controlling powers in Sydney. He was hailed as 'the patriotic founder of a new State',<sup>16</sup> but what they did not recognize was that La Trobe would, at all costs, do his duty by the Governor in Sydney and the Colonial Office in London.

Soon after his first glimpse of Melbourne, the new Superintendent wrote to his friend the publisher, John Murray in London:

You, my dear Sir, have I believe never been transported 16,000 miles from civilization, & cannot imagine what it is to be cast so far beyond the reach of the thousand daily means of improvement & enjoyment which they possess who breathe the air of Europe ... I have called our present position Exile, & so it is to all intents and purposes ... Society is, of

course, as you may suppose, in its infancy. The arts and sciences are unborn...<sup>17</sup>

Many of us are familiar with the main events in La Trobe's life, and especially realise the importance of his vision and his strenuous efforts on behalf of the fledgling colony of Port Phillip, later to become Victoria but it is worth recounting the following points:

- La Trobe was born on 20 March 1801 in London, the fifth child and third son of Christian Ignatius La Trobe and his wife Hannah, both of Huguenot descent.
- Charles Joseph's education from the age of six until he was eighteen and his religious upbringing were in the Moravian faith, a protestant, non-conformist and evangelical denomination which traces its history to the fifteenth-century Bohemian Brethren in Moravia, a part of what is now the Czech Republic. Generations of the La Trobe family were prominent in the Moravian church.
- From eighteen to twenty-three, Charles Joseph was a teacher in another Moravian school at Fairfield.
- He was engaged as tutor for three years from 1824 to the young Swiss Comte Albert de Pourtalès in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, and took advantage of the location to indulge his passion for hiking and climbing in the Alps. His first book, *The Alpenstock*, was published in 1829, and *The Pedestrian* followed in 1830.
- From the spring of 1832, he went on a tour of three years to North America and Mexico with his former student, after which he published his third book *The Rambler in Mexico* in 1834, and *The Rambler in North America* appeared the next year.
- La Trobe and Pourtalès returned to Switzerland in 1835. That same year, La Trobe proposed marriage to Sophie de Montmollin, a cousin of his protégé, and the ninth of thirteen children of a wealthy Swiss aristocrat Frédéric Auguste de Montmollin.
- Charles Joseph and Sophie were married at the British Legation in Berne in September 1835.
- La Trobe was then sent to the British West Indies by the Colonial Office to inspect the schools which had been provided for the education of nearly 800,000 recently emancipated slaves.
- Following the success of this mission and the

high regard by the Colonial Office for his three volumes of reports, he was offered the post of Superintendent of the Port Phillip District.

- La Trobe had many obstacles to overcome throughout his time in Victoria.

He had recognised soon after his arrival what a handicap being part of the greater New South Wales was for progress in Port Phillip, but many of the unruly population he had to govern were impatient and considered he was doing nothing to promote separation. He, in the meantime, was pursuing it cautiously but



**Barnett Johnstone, 1832-1910, photographer**  
**Queen's Hall Reading Room,**  
**Melbourne Public Library, 1859**  
 Albumen silver photograph  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H3679

vigorously, setting in place the appropriate and necessary requirements such as Port Phillip representation on the Legislative Council in Sydney (1842), a sound basis for economic viability, and orderly management and institutions in Melbourne, such as the Melbourne Town Council (1842) and the City of Melbourne (1847), believing constantly that the timing of separation was an all-important matter. When it eventually came in 1851, separation was a great achievement for La Trobe and cause for universal celebration in the new colony of Victoria.

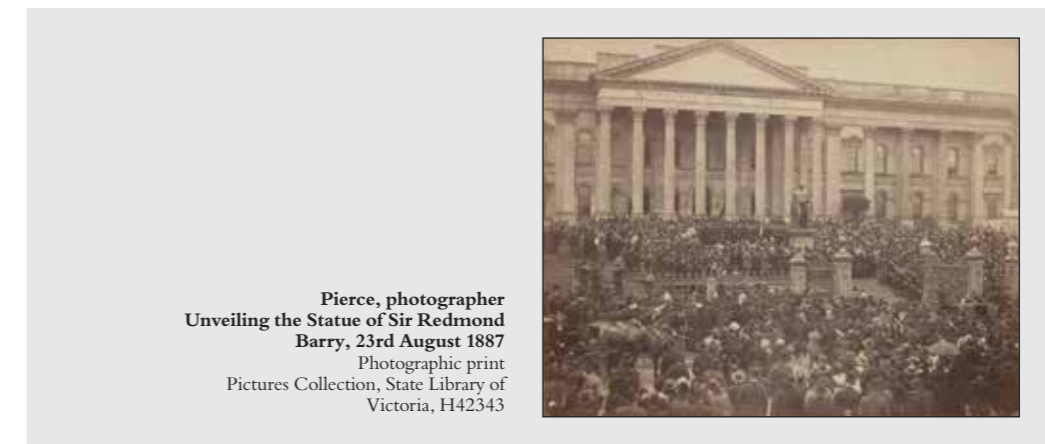
La Trobe had been instructed when taking on the role of Superintendent to ensure the well-being of the Aboriginal people of Port Phillip. In spite of, or perhaps, because of his tragic experience of witnessing the North American Indian tribes 'melting like snow from before the steady march of the white',<sup>18</sup> he supported the then current Colonial Office policy of assimilation of Native populations. He saw his direction as attempting to bring Christianity to the indigenous people of Port Phillip, but all attempts to urge them to give up their freedom and to conform to European requirements failed, due to their own well-established belief

systems and lifestyle. The Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate under Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson was already in place when he arrived in Melbourne. He soon realized that it was a dismal failure and closed it down on 31 December 1849.

La Trobe had used his artistic talent in his previous travels to describe the places he visited and the scenery about him. It is fortunate that 437 of his images are still in existence today in the Pictures Collection of the State Library of Victoria. Of these landscapes and sketches, 168 watercolours and drawings record his years in

the announcement of the gold discoveries come any earlier, New South Wales would not have relinquished its valuable territory in the south!

He was unpopular with the Press, partially because of the Miner's Licence he imposed on the diggers even before they had a chance to dig for gold. A vitriolic campaign was launched against him for everything he did and everything he did not do. In fact, the Melbourne *Argus* published a serial advertisement 'Wanted a Governor. Apply to the People of Victoria!',<sup>21</sup> and the *Geelong Advertiser* ran a campaign against him, calling him in an editorial 'Our Victorian



**Pierce, photographer**  
**Unveiling the Statue of Sir Redmond**  
**Barry, 23rd August 1887**  
 Photographic print  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of  
 Victoria, H42343

Australia, touring Victoria and visiting Tasmania and Sydney. In Victoria, his sketches on these tours documented the landscape in the earliest period of European settlement and, as such, provide rare and valuable first-hand evidence of the topography at this time.

No sooner had the advance news of separation been received, and at the same time the new bridge – the second bridge – over the Yarra River officially opened, than the single most revolutionary and momentous event in the history of the colony occurred. Gold in enormous quantities was discovered, creating the dominant and most far-reaching issue of La Trobe's many years in Victoria. Not only did he have to manage the needs of a huge influx of miners, but he also tried to ensure that the infrastructure in Melbourne and on the goldfields was adequate. Despite La Trobe's misjudging of the goldfields administration, the historian Geoffrey Serle, in his definitive study of the gold rush, came to the conclusion that, when faced with the appalling difficulties of the times, La Trobe had tried to 'govern chaos on a scale to which there are few or no parallels in British colonial history'.<sup>19</sup> He had, in fact, managed to keep the colony for which he was responsible operating in circumstances 'in which the archangel Gabriel might have been found wanting'.<sup>20</sup> There is some thought that, had

Tsar',<sup>22</sup> a dictator imposing an unrealistic and impossible tax when no goldfield in 1851 had yet proven its worth.

La Trobe was an explorer who charted routes, notably to Gippsland to investigate a report of coal deposits, and to Cape Otway where, after two abortive attempts, he personally blazed the trail to, and was responsible for the erection from 1846 to 1848 of the essential light house on that dangerous rocky promontory,<sup>23</sup> and on other points on the 'shipwreck coast'.

In his years as administrator of the colony, La Trobe made ninety-four major horse-back rides through country Victoria, as far afield as Mt Gambier in the west and deep into Gippsland in the east, which he carefully documented in his private diary, and sketched the scenery wherever he went. La Trobe did not receive the support he needed to manage this difficult colony from either Governor FitzRoy in Sydney, or from the Colonial Office in London. In addition to his official burdens, he was caring for their young children, and for Sophie who was in failing health. Today, it would be called a 'hardship posting'!

In February 1853, Sophie, and the children returned to Switzerland where she died a year later. La Trobe was to read of her death



in a newspaper from London, delivered to him before he received the sad news by letter from the family. He had resigned at the end of 1852, and finally departed for England in 1854. He had spent nearly fifteen years in the colony, administering it during the most formative and most turbulent period in its history. He returned to England and went directly to Neuchâtel to reclaim his children who were being cared for by their aunt and grandmother.



Photographer unknown  
Redmond Barry, 1813-1880, c.1860  
Private Collection, with permission

### ***And how did Redmond Barry view his new home?***

As his biographer, Dr Ann Galbally has recorded, 'his capital was small'<sup>24</sup> and he needed immediately to establish himself in a legal position in the town. 'He could and did to an extent join the feverish land speculation that was underway'<sup>25</sup> when he stepped ashore, selling some of his land soon after having acquired it. But for Barry, Port Phillip was perhaps his last opportunity to redeem his reputation and establish himself in a respectable position in society.

Redmond Barry was born at Ballyclough, County Cork, Ireland on 7 June 1813. He was the third son and fifth of the thirteen children of Henry Greene Barry, a soldier elevated to Major-General after the Napoleonic Wars, and his wife Phoebe, née Drought. His father succeeded to the Barry estates and title of the 'MacAdam Barry', and inherited in 1821 the substantial family seat of Barraclough House where Redmond lived as a child. Redmond Barry was proud that he 'could trace his ancestry back to William de Barri of Pembrokeshire, Wales,

whose sons took part in the Norman invasion of Ireland of 1169 to 1172. In 1180, Robert de Barri had been granted three baronies in the Kingdom of Cork',<sup>26</sup> and the subsequent generations of the family increased and prospered.

The Barrys of County Cork belonged to the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the ruling class in Ireland despite being a minority, who held virtually all political power. Members of this ruling class commonly identified themselves as Irish, while retaining English traditions in politics, commerce and culture. It is interesting to note, given La Trobe's Huguenot heritage, that a larger but less socially prominent element of the Protestant Irish population were the immigrant French Huguenots, and other dissenters, who settled in Ireland from the 17th century, among them his ancestor Jean Latrobe who had fled France in 1688 because of religious persecution.

Redmond Barry was brought up as an Anglican, and educated firstly in Cork, and then at a boarding school in Bexley, Kent, which specialized in preparing boys for the army.<sup>27</sup> Due to the relative peace after the Napoleonic Wars, no commission was available to him and he became an undergraduate at Trinity College, Dublin, studying Latin, Greek, Hebrew and English Literature, and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1837. At more or less the same time, he undertook studies at Kings Inns in Dublin and at Lincoln's Inn in London, and he was called to the Irish Bar in November 1838. As with many younger sons of Irish Ascendancy families, Redmond began to think of emigration to Sydney since opportunities in the Australian colonies for careers and advancement seemed a more attractive alternative to remaining in Ireland.

After a quick visit to Paris and some Belgian cities,<sup>28</sup> he packed his belongings, catalogued his book collection, had his portrait painted, and set sail from Plymouth on board the *Calcutta*, bound for Sydney. The scene was set for events which changed the course of his future ambitions on the first day out of port when his eye was caught by the attractive Mrs Scott and he loaned her his copy of Lord Byron's poems. It was only a matter of days before he had entered into a full-scale and very public affair with her. At one stage, he offered an 'Explanation to Mr Scott', but unfortunately the wronged Mr Scott 'took a liking to Barry and invited him to his cabin!'<sup>29</sup> The liaison with Mrs Scott continued in a very indiscreet fashion, so much so that, having been found by Mr Scott *in flagrante delicto* – in the act, so to speak – Barry was firstly denied access to the dining saloon, and then confined to his cabin by the Captain for the rest of the voyage.

On reaching Sydney on 1 September 1839, Barry went ashore with the young Irish lawyers Edward Sewell and James Croke, who later in Melbourne were to become his close friends. While Sewell and Croke and the ship's Captain Nass were received at Government House, Barry was not. News of the shipboard scandal had spread in town, made even worse by the fact that he continued his liaison with Mrs Scott ashore. Although he did meet Governor



Photographer unknown  
Louisa Bridget Barrow, 1823-1888, c.1860  
Private Collection, with permission

Gipps, very few Government briefs came his way during the whole of Gipps' term as Governor. Despite his passion for Mrs Scott, Barry came to the conclusion that his future lay in Port Phillip. He left her, hysterically bewailing her abandonment, with gifts of 'a ring and a pen', noting that they had cost £1 7s 6d'.<sup>30</sup> He sailed for Melbourne on the *Parkfield* on 30 October, in search of a secure and fruitful position in the law, arriving on 13 November 1839.

One of the first activities for this qualified but inexperienced barrister was to renew his acquaintance with Edward J. Brewster, Chairman of the Court of Quarter Sessions in Melbourne, who had been called to the Irish Bar at King's Inns the year before Barry. The Quarter Sessions had only been established in Port Phillip that year, and the Magistrate's Court and a Court of Requests for handling the recovery of small debts were the extent of the court system. Barry soon set himself up to await clients. His principal source of income was property conveyancing<sup>31</sup> but business was slow. The Supreme Court of New South Wales met for the first time in Melbourne on 12 April 1841, with Mr Justice Willis presiding as Resident Judge and he admitted Barry to practice.<sup>32</sup>

In the two years before Governor Gipps and La Trobe removed Willis from office, Barry, despite gross provocation from the Bench, demonstrated his unfailing courtesy and respect for the law in all his courtroom dealings with the Judge. His diaries record the stress that Willis inflicted on the young barristers acting for clients in his court,<sup>33</sup> yet Barry retained his equilibrium at all times.

When separation was proclaimed in 1851 and La Trobe was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the new colony of Victoria, 'he made Redmond Barry its first Solicitor-General, and William Stawell first Attorney-General'<sup>34</sup> and commissioned them to report on the administration of justice at separation that led to the proclamation of the *Supreme Court (of Victoria) Act 1852*.

Barry was appointed to the Court as Senior Puisne Judge, a position he held until his death in 1880. When Sir William a'Beckett retired as Chief Justice in 1857, Barry fully expected to be appointed his successor, given that he had been on the Bench for five years, during which he had been Acting Chief Justice for two years. However, due to some political machinations, William Stawell was appointed Chief Justice by the then Governor Sir Henry Barkly, based on his 'impeccable record of legal service to the Crown...and a reconstructed and now ... totally blameless personal life to go with it',<sup>35</sup> following a shock religious conversion in 1848. Barry thought that his hard work ensured him the position<sup>36</sup> and that his unconventional personal life was his own business. It was a disappointment from which he would never recover.

In 1846, he had made the acquaintance of a young married woman with limited education from Cork, Mrs Louisa Bridget Barrow, the wife of Patrick Barrow, a labourer and stonemason, who lived very near to Barry's residence in Bourke Street East. Barry had continued his love affairs in the early years after his arrival in Melbourne, and there are several annotations in his Day Book of regular assignations with a variety of women. Gradually, the listing of his conquests lessened and, in August 1847, he noted: 'Barrow confined of a son',<sup>37</sup> the first of his four children with her, all of whom took his name. Though they never married, they were devoted to one another until the end of Barry's life. Mrs Barrow and Barry both owned farms in High Street Road, Syndal, and they lived in separate city residences: Barry now at Carlton Gardens near the Royal Exhibition Buildings, where he entertained 'on a scale of some splendour',<sup>38</sup> and Mrs Barrow at 82 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, in a house built for her by Barry.

From 1841, Barry became Standing Counsel for Aboriginal people brought before the law. He asserted that nothing in the establishment of British sovereignty in the colonies had given the law authority over them for aggressive acts between themselves, nor had they willingly relinquished their right to the land. Logically they retained sovereignty over their own community.<sup>39</sup> In addition, since they were not Christians, they could not take the required Oath before the Court. His interest in and unprejudiced approach to the Aboriginal people lasted all his life. He took his appointment as Standing Counsel 'very seriously, fighting hard for his clients in court and saving a number from the gallows'.<sup>40</sup>

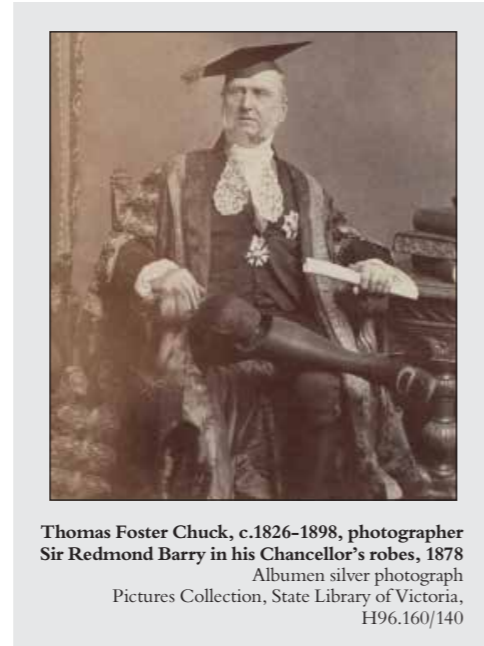
Barry had the reputation of being a harsh judge, but that was not always the case. The late Chief Justice John Harber Phillips described Barry as 'a black-letter lawyer with strict regard for precedent', one who based his opinions on well-established legal rules.<sup>41</sup> Justice Phillips' position was 'that Barry was an ideal judge for his times',<sup>42</sup> that is to say, a hard-working lawyer devoted to the establishment of sound legal practices in the fledgling colony.

Barry was intimately involved in the trial of thirteen Eureka rebels who had been arraigned on the difficult-to-prove charge of high treason. With Barry's persuasive defence, they were all acquitted. At Beechworth in 1878, he sentenced Ellen Kelly to three years' gaol for aiding and abetting the attempted murder of a police officer. Two years later in Melbourne, he presided over what was his most famous trial, that of her son, Ned Kelly. His aim was to deactivate the growing perception of Kelly as a hero, making the point that: '... There is a class which disregards the evil consequences of crime...', and that a stop had to be put to lawlessness in the community.<sup>43</sup>

Barry then directed the jury to rule out the possibility of a conviction on the lesser charge of manslaughter for Kelly's role in the Stringybark Creek police killings years before, and a guilty verdict was handed down after just over half an hour. Barry sentenced Kelly to death by hanging with the traditional: 'May God have mercy on your soul'. Kelly replied: 'I will go a little further than that, and say I will see you there where I go.'<sup>44</sup>

Barry died suddenly on 23 November 1880, just twelve days after the hanging of Kelly. He was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery and, although not recorded on the headstone, Mrs Barrow joined him upon her death nine years later. A public appeal was held to erect a memorial to Sir Redmond Barry, and the sculptor Percival Ball completed James Gilbert's

monumental bronze of Barry in his robes as Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. 'Erected by a Grateful public to perpetuate the memory of invaluable services rendered to Victoria', the statue was unveiled outside the Public Library, Melbourne in August 1887.



### Two high achievers

It is an extraordinary fact that so few really great people built most of the cultural institutions Victorians take for granted today. Charles Joseph La Trobe and Redmond Barry were first among these high achievers.

They were well educated, handsome young men when they arrived, sharing a deep knowledge and love of music, gardening and all things cultural. Barry's social circle revolved around the Melbourne Club, of which he was President three times in 1844, 1846 and 1858, and his close association with La Trobe, who was elected a member of the club in 1844. They shared many interests, but their guiding force was a passion for what Barry constantly called 'our adopted Country'.<sup>45</sup>

Any less determined, less committed individuals than La Trobe and Barry might have found too daunting the task of establishing and enhancing those institutions necessary to a developing and independent colony. Together, they laboured over the establishment of the University of Melbourne and of the Melbourne Public Library, now the State Library of Victoria. Barry continued their joint work alone after La Trobe's departure in 1854, undertaking the role of Chancellor of the University and Chairman of Library Trustees from 1853 until his death in 1880.

La Trobe can be credited with planting the institutions of government in Melbourne. He was in many cases the prime mover for the establishment of many valuable and necessary institutions, including: the Melbourne Hospital, now the Royal Melbourne Hospital; the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum; the Philosophical Society of Victoria, now the Royal Society of Victoria; and the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute, now the Melbourne Athenaeum.

He was personally responsible for selecting the site of that 'veritable Garden of Eden',<sup>46</sup> the Royal Botanic Gardens, and for setting aside huge tracts of land on the periphery of Hoddle's city grid, for recreational purposes. These included: the FitzRoy Gardens, the Flagstaff and the Treasury Gardens, as well as the vast expanses of Royal Park. La Trobe was appointed as a Companion of the Order of the Bath in 1858, an award made by the Sovereign to a small number of civil servants.

As Sir Ninian Stephen once remarked, Redmond Barry 'opened everything in Melbourne worth opening'.<sup>47</sup> He was certainly the driving force behind a litany of cultural societies and community organisations, including among many others, the Horticultural Society (Vice-President with La Trobe as patron), and the Philharmonic Society (President 1853 with La Trobe as patron).

Barry presided over the International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1866. He was also passionate about representing Victoria on the world stage as Commissioner for Victoria at the international exhibitions in Paris (1855), in London (1862) and in Philadelphia (1876).

Despite his busy schedule representing Victoria in London in 1862, he made the time to escort two of La Trobe's daughters,

probably Eleanora and Mary Cecilia, on a special viewing of the International Exhibition in South Kensington, on a site now occupied by the Natural History Museum. La Trobe, writing from his residence *Whitbourne Court* in Worcester, thanked Barry for his kindness in a letter dated 20 June 1862, saying that 'the two lassies never forget the advantage they had in your kind countenance and escort to the Exhibition', and he invited Barry to visit them at their home.<sup>48</sup>

For his extraordinary input to Victoria, Barry was created a Knight Bachelor (Kt) in 1860 and a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG) in 1877.

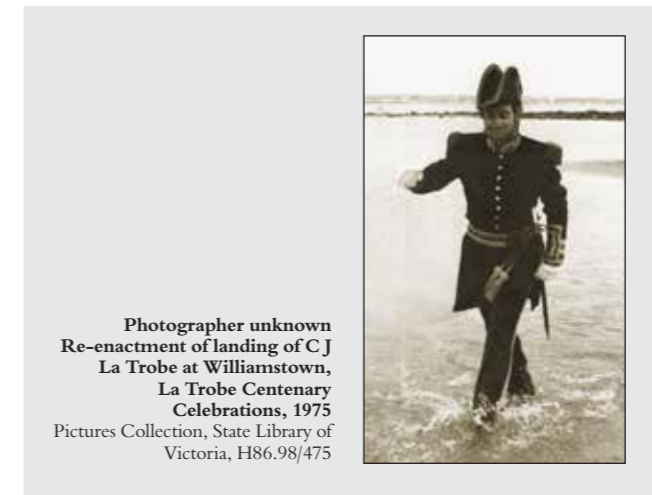
La Trobe and Barry had a strong life-long friendship based on mutual respect and shared experience. Barry had made his first call on La Trobe six days after his arrival in the hope of promoting his chances for a government position in the law. They were to remain close friends for the whole of La Trobe's administration, and this was a factor in encouraging Barry to remain at Port Phillip. Barry's Day Books list his regular calls upon La Trobe in his office, and the infrequent but enjoyable dinners he had at La Trobe's residence. In their shared professional lives in Melbourne, it may be said that there was 'strong mutual sympathy between the two men'.<sup>49</sup>

To slightly misquote, the historian 'Garryowen': 'La Trobe and Barry were the most remarkable personages in the annals of Port Phillip, for they threw in their lot with the destiny of the Province when it was a weak struggling settlement in 1839, and identified themselves with every stage of its wonderful progress until they left it a bright and brilliant colony ...'<sup>50</sup>

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- 2 Ann Galbally, *Redmond Barry: an Anglo-Irish Australian*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995, p.40.
- 3 Edmund Finn ('Garryowen'), *Chronicles of Early Melbourne, 1835 to 1852*, Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, 1888, p.108.
- 4 Henry Gyles Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria, from its Discovery to its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia*, Melbourne: Longmans, Green, 1904, p.244.
- 5 *Statistical Register of Victoria*, edited by W.H. Archer, Melbourne: J. Ferres, 1854.
- 6 *Australians: historical statistics*, edited by Wray Vamplew, Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987, p.26.
- 7 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.3.
- 8 William Westgarth, *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria*, Melbourne: George Robertson, 1888, p.108.
- 9 William Westgarth, Letter to Mrs Westgarth, his mother, 24 December 1840, copy: Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Quoted in Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen and Good Society in Melbourne before the Gold Rushes*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980, p.62.
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- 15 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*, Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 1996, p.174.
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- 19 Geoffrey Serle, 'Noble Vision and Harsh Realities: C.J. La Trobe and Early Victoria', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 47, 1976, pp.265-76.
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- 22 *Geelong Advertiser*, 26 August 1851.
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- 24 Galbally, p.41.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Galbally, p.4.
- 27 Ibid., p.14.
- 28 Ibid., p.30.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p.37.
- 31 Ibid., p.41.
- 32 Peter Ryan, 'Sir Redmond Barry', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 3, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Sue Reynolds, *Books for the Profession: the Library of the Supreme Court of Victoria*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012, p.12.
- 35 Galbally, p.81.
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- 37 Galbally p.68.
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- 41 Ibid., p.25.
- 42 Ibid, p.24.
- 43 From Barry's address to the court on sentencing Ned Kelly to death. Quoted Galbally, p.191.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Wallace Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and Libraries', *La Trobe Journal*, no.73, autumn 2004, p. 57. Quoted from 1860 re-edition of the 'Address of His Honor Mr Justice Barry on the opening of the Circuit Court, at Portland, on June the 14th, 1852', p.51.
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Photographer unknown  
 Re-enactment of landing of C J  
 La Trobe at Williamstown,  
 La Trobe Centenary  
 Celebrations, 1975  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of  
 Victoria, H86.98/475

# The La Trobe Song: a research report

By Helen Armstrong

**Helen Armstrong is a Volunteer Guide at La Trobe's Cottage and a committee member of the C J La Trobe Society and of the Friends of the La Trobe's Cottage, coordinating publicity and website content. She joined the Editorial Committee of La Trobeana at the end of 2012 and enjoys growing into another role associated with the legacy of Charles Joseph La Trobe.**

As described in the last issue of *La Trobeana*,<sup>1</sup> the centenary of La Trobe's death on 4 December 1875 was commemorated with a two-week program of events during December 1975. A total of forty-three events included historical re-enactments, exhibitions, presentations by eminent historians, church services, sporting events, unveiling of commemorative plaques, a book launch at Government House and a tree planting in the Royal Botanic Gardens; notably also, a La Trobe song was composed for the commemoration.<sup>2</sup>

The La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee, formed within the Department of the Premier to organise the celebrations, had as one of its members Robert King Crawford, Melbourne City Council Arts Officer (Parks and Gardens Department). Described on his website as Superintendent of the Arts for the City of Melbourne from 1972 to 1987,<sup>3</sup> he organised the re-enactments in central Melbourne, which included La Trobe's landing on the Yarra Bank followed by a procession to the Flagstaff Gardens where a land auction was enacted, a changing of the guard at La Trobe's Cottage prior to

the opening of an exhibition of La Trobe's watercolours and drawings, and La Trobe reading the document of the Foundation of Victoria. He also composed *The La Trobe Song* performed by Shirley Jacobs at these re-enactments.<sup>4</sup>

From the Report of Activities:

A special La Trobe song was written by Mr Bob Crawford and sung by Shirley Jacobs. It had a catchy tune and was very well received. The song was recorded on tape and distributed to radio stations for playing during the commemoration.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the tape recording of the La Trobe Song did not arrive in time for the church service at Neuchâtel in Switzerland.<sup>6</sup>

Shirley Jacobs was well known in the Melbourne music scene, and in prison reform circles, during the 1970s and 1980s. Her fine,

strong voice was well suited to the folk songs of that period. Another of her specialities was composing and singing songs for children.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, no recording of her singing *The La Trobe Song* can be located.

However, the song was later included in Crawford's *Eureka Stockade* opera of 1984, when it was sung by baritone John Lidgerwood.<sup>8</sup> A recording may be heard on the Society's website, through a link provided under Works About La Trobe.

Members and others may enjoy listening to a song that so successfully captures the essence of Charles Joseph La Trobe.



***The La Trobe Song***  
Words and music Robert King Crawford<sup>9</sup>

Who fought the fight of down-trod and needy – Charles La Trobe  
Against the power of the great and greedy – Charles La Trobe  
Who battled for the Blacks and ill and retarded – Charles La Trobe  
And among the poor was well regarded – Charles La Trobe

**Chorus**

*He was a poet, painter, explorer mild  
Mountaineer, writer, sportsman untired  
Botanist, Governor and again and again  
La Trobe was a gentleman  
La Trobe was a gentleman.*

He was a man of great mental stature – Charles La Trobe  
Loved traditions, God and nature – Charles La Trobe  
Stopped the convicts landing in his city – Charles La Trobe  
Though a man of love and a man of pity – Charles La Trobe

**Repeat chorus**

Who kept his helm in the depression – Charles La Trobe  
Goldrush, landboom and recession – Charles La Trobe  
And without training and without backing – Charles La Trobe  
Made Victoria great where others were lacking – Charles La Trobe

Oh la la La Trobe the gentleman  
Oh la la La Trobe the gentleman  
Oh la la La Trobe the gentleman.

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1 Helen Armstrong, 'Celebrating Charles Joseph La Trobe (1801-1875)', *La Trobeana*, vol.13, no.1, March 2014, p.26.  
2 *Report of the Activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee, December 1975*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1976. The Contents page and printed Programme can be viewed on the Society's website.  
3 <http://www.kingcrawford.com.au> (accessed 10 April 2014). Crawford, born in 1927, established one of the earliest all-Australian record companies, Planet Record Corporation, in 1953.  
4 *Report of the Activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee*, p.9.  
5 *Ibid* p.30  
6 *Ibid* p.28  
7 Australian Folk Music and Australian Folk Singers and Musicians, <http://australianfolk.blogspot.com.au/2011/01/shirley-jacobs-songs-of-love-and.html> (accessed 10 April 2014)  
8 *Eureka Stockade*, by Bob 'King' Crawford and Doug Surman, compiled and digitized by Geoffrey Orr, Caulfield North: Lyric, 2010 (CDL182, 2 compact discs). The song is track 2 on the first CD.  
9 *Report of the Activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee*, Appendix I [p.53]

# *Feeding the Colony – Feeding the World*

By Peter W Sale

Dr Peter W Sale is Reader and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering, School of Life Sciences at La Trobe University. Dr Sale joined the staff of La Trobe University in 1988. He has research interests in the impacts of elevated CO2 on crop performance, on the rhizosphere and phosphorus acquisition, and in phytoremediation. In 1998, he was awarded the National University Teaching Award in the section for Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. He is particularly interested in pasture nutrition and assisting farmers to adopt practices for improving performance of crop and pasture plants growing in infertile soils in southern Australia and in developing countries. He was the project leader for the National Reactive Phosphate Rock Project from 1991 to 1996, and has supervised numerous postgraduate students in the field of pasture and crop agronomy. His interests in agriculture in developing countries resulted in a University Teaching Grant from the Rotary Foundation to teach at Universities in Uganda in 2007. In 2008, Dr Sale together with other authors from the University of Melbourne, published the second edition of *Agriculture in Australia: an introduction*.

This is an edited address given by Dr Sale at La Trobe University AgriBio Centre, Bundoora, on the occasion of The La Trobe University Annual Lecture, 2 July 2013.

## **Introduction**

When I was asked by the Dean of our Faculty to address the C J La Trobe Society and talk about agriculture in the very early days of Victoria, I thought why not? I have always been impressed by the agriculture in this favoured corner of our continent, but I always wondered what it was like in the early days. I agreed but soon realised that I had to immerse myself in the early history of the State of Victoria. In particular, I needed to understand the role that the first Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, Charles Joseph

La Trobe, had to play (or not play) in developing a secure food supply for the early settlers. I have to say that it has been a captivating and rewarding experience, and very useful for a lecturer who teaches undergraduates about the science of agricultural production.

My first impressions of Charles Joseph La Trobe were that he had a pretty rough time in the job. He received a huge amount of criticism from different quarters, and at first I wondered why there would be a La Trobe Society for this person. As I explored further into the early



records, I had the good fortune to meet with a senior lecturer in History at this university, who made the statement that: ‘Governor La Trobe was my hero!’ He was referring to all the reserves and townships that La Trobe had set aside to retain for future generations of Victorians. Since that day I have come to learn about all the good things that La Trobe has done for us. In December 2012, my son was married in the Fitzroy Gardens. It was a wonderful setting and so I would like to thank La Trobe personally for those beautiful gardens. But when I think about the good things he did, I am reminded that no one is perfect, and the first Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria had his failings. I think he must have struggled with his thoughts and feelings because of them.



Sir Francis Grant, 1803-1878, artist Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1855  
Oil on canvas  
City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

### ***Superintendent La Trobe: his task of feeding the settlers in Port Phillip***

One of the early things that I can recall from Australian history was that food was scarce in the early days of settlement at Port Jackson from 1788. The soils were poor, the seasons were difficult, there was no understanding of the local conditions, and there were few farmers among the early convicts and the marines of the New South Wales Corps. Attempts to grow crops were failures, and the colony ran very short of food. So questions arose as to whether the same situation prevailed in the early years of the Port Phillip District, almost forty years later? Also,

as the District (and later Colony) underwent a fifty-fold increase in population between 1839 and 1854 during the La Trobe years, did the local population experience any food shortages?

To answer the question about food shortages in the district, I had to read widely. My readings included letters from the early settlers, from the Superintendent and his friends, and also many reports by historians. Not once did I see any mention of problems with food supply, or people going hungry. The staple food was based around wheat, flour and potatoes — and yes, there were deficits in local wheat production. However, the local merchants were able to import wheat or flour without difficulty. I concluded there were no problems with food supply. Clearly the issue of having to feed the residents of the Port Phillip District was not on La Trobe’s ‘radar’.

It seemed to me that there were more pressing issues for La Trobe to deal with than being concerned about the local agriculture and the food supply. I will touch on these later. But first, one has to question why the early settlers at Port Phillip fared so much better than the earlier arrivals at Port Jackson when it came to feeding themselves.

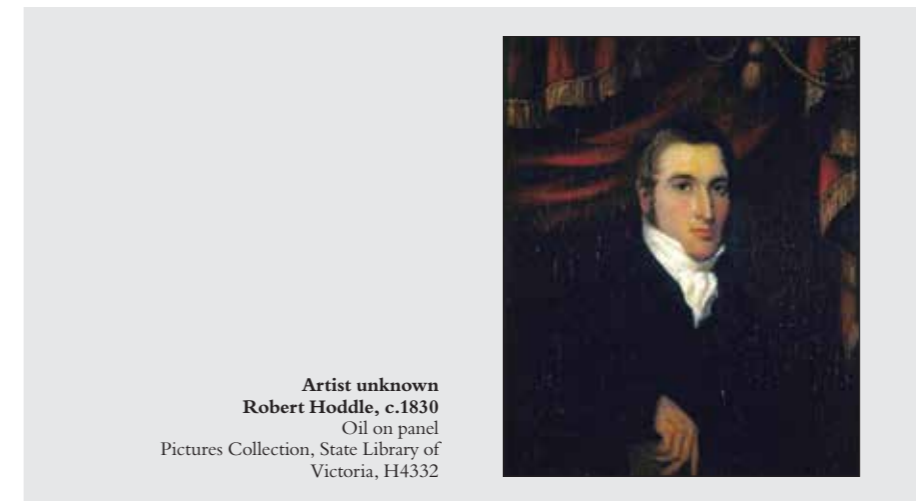
### ***Early agriculture in Australia: Port Phillip vs Port Jackson***

So why did the early settlers at Port Phillip cope better than their counterparts at Port Jackson, forty years earlier? Well, I think there were three reasons. The first two relate to the fact that ‘mother nature’ has been, and hopefully will continue to be, kind to the Victorian landscape. First is the issue of rainfall, and this little corner of the continent, around Port Phillip Bay and its hinterland, receives a very handy 600-700mm of annual rainfall that falls mainly in the winter and spring, just when it is needed by wheat and autumn-sown potatoes.

The second reason relates to the soils of the local district. These were described very favourably by Robert Hoddle, the senior surveyor in the Port Phillip District when he began surveying the land to the east of the settlement on the Yarra River. He wrote about the potential of the excellent agricultural country of adjoining parishes of Bulleen, Warrandyte and Yering particularly along the river’s south bank, and the fertile black volcanic land at Kangaroo Ground, abundant with kangaroos.<sup>1</sup> Hoddle had an eye for good farming country when he saw it.

If the land to the east of the settlement was good, so too was the land to the west. Victoria has this wonderful basalt plain that stretches all the

way from Melbourne to Portland. It appears that about five million years ago, some weaknesses in the earth’s crust developed to the west of where Melbourne now is, and molten basalt belched up and spread across the land, and then weathered into fertile clay soils that are rich in minerals. My soil science colleague, Nick Uren, was telling me that the district of Whittlesea was the granary of Melbourne in the early days. I found this surprising until I looked at a map of soils around Whittlesea and, sure enough, there was a great deal of basalt to the west, and low-lying alluvial country to the south.



Artist unknown  
Robert Hoddle, c.1830  
Oil on panel  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H4332

### ***The early settlers of the District: plenty of get-up-and-go***

The third reason why the District had minimal problems with food supply was, I believe, due to the early farmers who settled the land. To my mind, they were ‘real goers!’ Now it was very hard to find out much about the early settlers who grew food crops for sale, until I came across the La Trobe University PhD thesis by Dmytro Ostapenko titled ‘Land-cultivators of the Colony of Victoria in the late 1830s-1860s’. In his thesis, Dmytro challenged the view of many historians, who reported that the early crop growers in the district struggled with poor markets, low prices and unknown environmental conditions. He argued convincingly that many of the early European settlers were able to turn their predominantly small/middle-sized farming ventures into quite profitable enterprises.

To understand why Dmytro reached these conclusions, you need to understand the conditions encountered by a new settler who arrived by ship and aspired to own and farm land in the new colony. Imagine that you are a new settler, arriving by ship in Melbourne town, on an assisted passage with a large family and little money. You arrive in 1839-1840 (before the financial conditions turned nasty in

the depression in the early 1840s) to find that all the good land around Melbourne has been purchased: there is a land boom under way, and the prices have ‘gone through the roof’. You soon realise there is no good land available, and it was too expensive anyway.

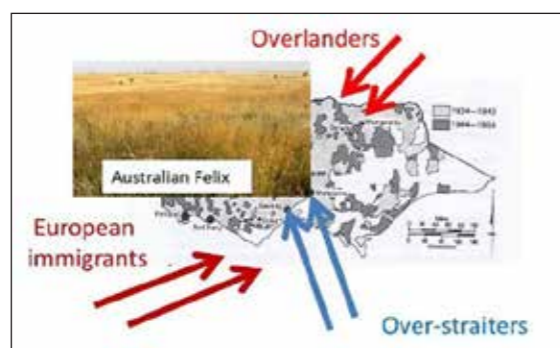
So how could you become a successful farmer? Well, Dmytro pointed out that if you were smart you would realise that there were plenty of opportunities. Now I contend that many of our immigrant forebears were smart for the most part, as they had the initiative to

make the trip to the Australian colonies to search for a new, more rewarding life. These smart arrivals would realise that labour was scarce, so it meant that there were plenty of jobs. The larger landholders, who had bought up the land, could not afford the labour to farm their land close to town and the markets, so good land could be leased. The lease could be paid in kind with produce, so you did not need a lot of cash to get started.

The large families meant that you did not need to pay labour as the family could provide the workers, even though some might be a little under aged! Some of the older children could get a job to provide the essentials for the family. You grew what was in demand by the expanding population: wheat, potatoes or hay for the horses. You needed to learn how to grow crops successfully, and fast. In short, you could seize the opportunities and become an early entrepreneur.

Dymtro tells the story of a John McMillan, a poor family man from the western highlands of Scotland, who received a free passage to Port Phillip in the early 1840s. He arrived with a wife, nine sons and a daughter, and nothing in his pocket. He was able to get a job on the second day as a stonemason’s labourer. The older

boys also got jobs to earn money. John then bought a milking cow, and the young children grazed the cow on nearby crown land. Then they were able to increase cow numbers, and lease a small squatting station for the herd. Next, they purchased forty-two acres at Brighton, and cleared the timber with family labour. The land was fertile and the first crop of wheat yielded three-quarters of a tonne per acre. In 1845, they harvested twenty-two tonnes of wheat and seventy tonnes of oaten hay, and their total assets exceeded £1,000. Now the John McMillan story was not uncommon. It goes to explain how the new settlers, with hard work and large families could seize their opportunities, and grow basic foodstuff for an expanding market. So, if it was not the food security for the expanding settlement of the Port Phillip District, then what were the contentious issues that made life difficult for the Superintendent of the District? Let me now discuss just a few of the difficult ones.



### Separation from New South Wales

For the first eleven years of his appointment in Port Phillip, La Trobe encountered constant agitation by the local settlers for independence from New South Wales. All the money raised in the District went back to Sydney, with minimum amounts being spent locally. The Port Phillip settlers were forced to be subservient to a remote Governor in Sydney. La Trobe reported to Governor Gipps in Sydney, so he answered to this northern Governor and to the Colonial Office in London. He was told by Gipps to be cautious, not to act in haste, and to consult with Sydney and London. It took up to one and six months respectively to get a response, so that La Trobe could not act quickly anyway. Behind the scenes, he reasoned with the Governor for the need for separation, but he did not speak publicly of this view and so the local folk thought that their Superintendent did not see their point-of-view. He stood apart, and above them.

On many matters Charles La Trobe was subjected to absolute vitriol in the local press as there were no libel laws in those days. For example, an advertisement in *The Argus* newspaper in 1852 read: 'Wanted, a Governor!'.<sup>2</sup>

And there had been worse still: 'they must know that his very name stinks in the nostrils of every man in the neighbourhood'.<sup>3</sup> It must have been so difficult for La Trobe to be on the receiving end of such unrelenting criticism to which he did not, or could not, respond.

### The battle with the squatters

On a more positive note, La Trobe took the battle right up to the squatters. He arrived in 1839 when one of the biggest 'land grabs' in our history was in full swing. It all started with Edward Henty who took over country in Portland in 1834. Then Batman and Fawkner started a settlement on the banks of the Yarra. But it was Major Thomas Mitchell, who explored through central and western Victoria and encountered the most attractive grassland. The grasslands were in a pristine condition thanks to the fire-stick farming methods employed by

the indigenous tribes. This made the grassland so suitable for sheep and cattle that Mitchell called it 'Australia Felix'. The word was out – there was grazing land to be had in the western district of Port Phillip. Wonderful grazing land was available, there was money to be made, there was wealth to be accumulated – and of course, there was a big demand for Australian wool from the English woollen mills.

The 'squatter invasion' of the Port Phillip District began soon after the reports surfaced about Major Mitchell's discoveries. They came from all directions. First the 'over-straiters' brought their sheep over by boat from Van Diemen's Land. The 'overlanders' drove their stock down from the north. And when the word got to England then another group of 'cashed-up' immigrants arrived, bought stock and moved in. Governor Bourke in Sydney had said that it was illegal to take up grazing land, as it was Crown Land, and its occupation needed to be controlled in an orderly manner. However, the Governor soon realised that there was no way that his decree would be followed, so he said that for an annual licence fee of £10 graziers could squat on Crown Land.

There seemed to be continuing conflict during the 1840s between the squatters on the one hand, and Governor Gipps and Superintendent La Trobe on the other. Things came to a head in 1844 when Gipps decided to increase the license fees, based on stock numbers. At the same time he reduced the size of the largest runs to twenty square miles (5,180 hectares). Then there was the land that La Trobe reserved for townships, schools and roads. The squatters did not want to lose this land, but La Trobe 'stuck to his guns' and prevailed. The big issue, however, was that the squatters wanted tenure to their land and to own it outright. They agitated and lobbied in New South Wales and in London, and in 1847 the Colonial Office gave in and granted them short-term leases and the right to freehold their leased land. But you see, La Trobe did not grant any short-term leases, so there were no large blocks of land converted to freehold title. In my view, these were his finest hours. He effectively prevented monopoly of the land by the few over the interests of the many who were to follow in the future.

### The collision with the indigenous people

La Trobe was instructed to take care of the indigenous inhabitants in the Port Phillip District. Now it was on this issue that I think he got the job of Superintendent of Port Phillip in the first place. His family had been active in the movement to abolish slavery, he had seen first hand the problems with the indigenous tribes in North America, he had been working with the emancipated slaves in the West Indies, and he displayed empathy with the plight of oppressed people. Unfortunately, as much as he might have tried, La Trobe could not stop the collision between the indigenous people in Port Phillip and the European settlers. And so he witnessed the demise of the indigenous tribes, and this I would imagine, caused him a great deal of anguish. He had seen the same thing happen in North America.

### The Convicts Prevention Act

This was a very unpleasant piece of legislation enacted by the Legislative Council in Victoria. It effectively barred ex-convicts from coming to Victoria. They were not wanted in the 'non-convict' colony of Victoria. The Colonial Office in London was upset by this Act and said it did not agree: the convicts had served their time in penal servitude, so they should no longer be discriminated against and should be free to move to Her Majesty's colony of Victoria. La Trobe was ordered to disallow the Act. However, the Act was made even more discriminating. La Trobe was in a real

bind. He ended up not doing anything and so earned much displeasure with the authorities in England.

### Chaos on the gold fields

Finally, mention should be made of the debacle that was taking place in the Victorian goldfields during the last few years of La Trobe's term in office, by which time he had been promoted to Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria. It began in 1851 when gold was discovered in the Ballarat region, and many left their jobs to try to seek their fortune on the goldfields. It was a real mining boom and outside people flocked to the new colony of Victoria to try their luck. The colony needed cash, so the Legislative Council set up the thirty-shilling licence fee to provide the right to dig for and profit from gold. This license fee was a lot of money in the early 1850s. So there was a lot of unrest among the miners and a lot of cruel public criticism of La Trobe. Surely this criticism, which was a feature of his time in the job, must have been getting to him? He actually wanted to do away with this tax and replace it with an export tax on gold, but the Legislative Council would not support him on this issue. It was yet another stressful episode for the Lieutenant-Governor. Dissent continued to simmer on the goldfields and revolt eventually followed, after La Trobe had had enough and had returned to England.



### Food production today in the State of Victoria

So here I must leave La Trobe and his difficulties, and 'fast forward' 160 years to the present. And today we find, like the early settlers before us, that our corner of the continent has a rich agricultural sector. Although the state occupies only three per cent of the land area of the continent, it produces twenty-five per cent of the agricultural produce and twenty-eight per cent of the agricultural exports. In 2011 we generated over eleven billion dollars of farm gate value. We rank first among Australian states in the production of dairy products, apples and pears, and some vegetables, second in poultry products, barley and oats production, and third



Centre for AgriBioscience, La Trobe University, Bundoora, 2013  
Photograph courtesy of La Trobe University



for wheat, canola, beef, sheep products, pork and potatoes. To use the cliché, when it comes to Agriculture – then ‘Victoria punches above her weight’.

Our current political leaders in the state hold high hopes for the sector. Minister Walsh, from the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, has set Victorian farmers the goal of doubling agricultural production by 2030 to meet the growing demand for food. Now the Minister knows quite a lot about our local agriculture, as he has been in irrigated horticulture and is a past-president of the Victorian Farmers’ Federation. Perhaps we should take note when he makes the point that ‘over the next twenty years, agriculture could be for Victoria what mining was for Western Australia’. So the expectations are very high for Victorian agriculture.

### Feeding the world

The final part of this address refers to ‘Feeding the World’. In this respect, we have all heard about the growing world population that will reach nine billion people by 2050, and the need for extra food to feed these extra people. Predictions are that we will have to increase world food production by seventy per cent. Annual world grain production reached 1.8 billion tonnes in 2000, but that will need to rise to around 3.8 billion tonnes per annum by 2050, to feed not only the extra humans, but, importantly, the extra animals that will be needed to meet the demand for animal protein.

The question is whether the world can provide the extra food for its people, and feed grain for its domesticated animals. Or will we suffer the fate of the Mayans, who according to Jared Diamond, reached their population limits and were then hit with a cruel series of dry

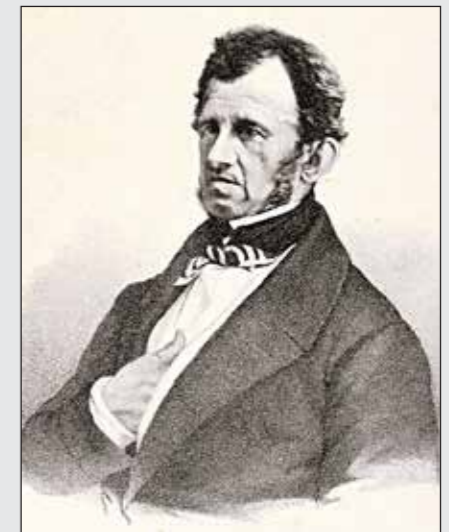
years?<sup>4</sup> Well, there are those who talk about the warming climate, the declining agricultural land, the lack of water, the uncertainty with energy and phosphate rock, and so on. In contrast, I am an optimist who believes in human ingenuity, and that invention is the ‘daughter of necessity’.

My basic premise is that if we are going to improve our agricultural production – as our Minister requires us to do, and humanity will plead for us to do – then our agricultural scientists and our farmers will need to be very innovative and develop more efficient production practices, which will deliver continuing productivity gains. Our society will have to become more committed to research and development. And this is where the new building that we are in, the AgriBio – the Centre for AgriBioscience here on the La Trobe University campus – will play a part.

The AgriBio is the largest, best-equipped ‘state-of-the-art’ research facility in Agricultural Biosciences in Australia. There will be up to 400 scientists, including over 60 PhD students, who will work in this place. I am quietly confident that the AgriBio will play its part in the discovery of knowledge and understanding to underpin the innovation which will be desperately needed in the future. Certainly you will see that the research infrastructure is here, but of course the building alone is not enough. It will be up to the scientists in this place and the funding community that supports them to ‘deliver the goods’.

So ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, let me ask you to ponder, as you walk through this brand new research facility, what the Lieutenant-Governor would have thought about the AgriBio. Well, of course we will never know. My thoughts are that he would be immensely proud of this place, in the grounds

of the university that bears his name – as we are, who work here. La Trobe was an enthusiast in the sciences, particularly in the life sciences. His special area of interest was in botany and the plant kingdom. There is much interest here in the AgriBio in the quest for knowledge and understanding of plants, particularly those that are consumed by humans and animals. I think Charles Joseph La Trobe would have approved of this quest!



Hamel & Co, lithographers  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, c.1854  
Chalk lithograph with tint stone on cream paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H30625

### Acknowledgements

I would very much like to thank the following people for their generous assistance in helping me understand the context for this paper: Dianne Reilly, Jenny Morrison, Charles Fahey, Dymtro Ostapenko and Nick Alessi.

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### Endnotes

- 1 H. S. McComb, ‘Surveying the Yarra Yarra River’, *The Australian Surveyor*, vol.7, 1938, pp.241–245.
- 2 *The Argus*, 20 October 1852, p.5.
- 3 *The Argus*, 25 September 1849, p.2.
- 4 Jared Diamond, *Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed*, New York: Viking, 2005, pp.157–177.



Photographer unknown  
**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, contributor**  
**Yan Yean Reservoir, 1859**  
 Albumen silver photograph  
 Annotated in La Trobe's hand, lower right mount  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H18112

**Annotation reads:**  
 Yan Yean Reservoir - 20 miles north of Melbourne  
 begun 1854  
 first sod turned by C J La Trobe 1853  
 embankment 3,159 feet in length  
 height 81 feet, width 20 at top, 170 feet bottom  
 puddle brink ten feet below natural  
 surface, 11 feet top, 30 feet bottom  
 surface 1,800 acres, 2½ miles across at  
 widest part, 9 miles circumference  
 maximum depth 25 feet 6 in., contains  
 6,500,000,000 gallons, drainage of 405,000 acres

# Melbourne's first Water Supply: the La Trobe Family's contribution

By Tim Gatehouse

**Tim Gatehouse is an eighth generation descendant of Henry Antes, the leader of the Moravian community in Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, and the great-grandfather of Charles Joseph La Trobe. He is a retired solicitor with an interest in historical research.**

When the water from the Yan Yean Reservoir was turned on in Melbourne on New Year's Eve 1857, it marked the completion of the first major public work in Victoria, built at the enormous cost of £750,000. It was one of the largest and most technologically advanced water supply systems in the world, to which some of Britain's most highly qualified hydraulic engineers had contributed.<sup>1</sup>

Three members of the extended La Trobe family were involved in this enterprise. Charles Joseph La Trobe, in his official capacity as Lieutenant-Governor, helped to initiate the scheme and foster its progress. His first cousin John Frederic Bateman, an English hydraulic engineer, invented some of the major components of the system which reticulated the water throughout Melbourne. Bateman's father-in-law, the Scottish born engineer William

Fairbairn, was the agent of the Victorian government in Britain, responsible for procuring and shipping the components of the system which could not be procured locally.<sup>2</sup>

One of the main reasons for choosing the site of Melbourne was the availability of fresh water. A rocky reef known as 'the Falls', which ran across the river near Queen Street, separated the fresh water from upstream from the salt water that penetrated from the bay.<sup>3</sup>

When Charles La Trobe arrived in Melbourne in 1839, the only means of water

In 1849 Sir Charles FitzRoy, the Governor of New South Wales, had agreed in principle to assist the Melbourne Corporation financially in the construction of a water supply. Knowing that a very strong case would have to be made before any money would become available, La Trobe directed that a thorough survey be made of all potential sources of water.<sup>10</sup>

Fortuitously at this time La Trobe received a request for employment from James Blackburn, an architect, engineer and surveyor who had been transported to Van Diemen's Land for embezzlement. By 1849 he had



**Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist (attrib.)**  
**Site of the Yan Yean Reservoir, 4 March 1851**  
 Pencil on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H6114



**Charles Norton, 1826-1872, artist**  
**Yan Yean, c.1857**  
 Watercolour on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H88.21/120

distribution was by water carts, whose barrels were filled from pumps on the river bank above the Falls.<sup>4</sup> But as the town grew, so did the pollution of the Yarra,<sup>5</sup> and demand grew for a safe and reliable water supply. Various schemes for pumping water from further upstream where water would be less polluted were proposed but foundered for practical, political and economic reasons.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Melbourne Corporation, created in 1842, was given wide powers to regulate the water supply, it was not given the powers to raise the necessary money to pay for it,<sup>7</sup> and the colonial government was not prepared to diminish its own powers by giving them to the council.<sup>8</sup> Nor was the government prepared to give these powers to private enterprise, for the practical reasons that no local entrepreneur was large enough to raise the necessary capital locally, nor had sufficient reputation to enable it to borrow funds outside the colony. There was also a residual sentiment common to both the colonial government and the town council that the water supply was too important to be placed in the hands of private speculators. This sentiment extended to public works other than the water supply, with the result that most nineteenth-century infrastructure in Victoria was financed and managed by government instrumentalities.<sup>9</sup>

been pardoned and received permission to leave that colony.<sup>11</sup> Blackburn had designed and supervised the construction of the water supply for Launceston, designed another for Hobart, and was the architect of many notable buildings in Van Diemen's Land. La Trobe was impressed by Blackburn's abilities and used his influence to have him appointed surveyor to the Melbourne Corporation.<sup>12</sup>

After examining all previous proposals and other alternative sources, Blackburn reported in 1850 that the most viable scheme would be to dam the Plenty River at Yan Yean, approximately twenty miles to the north of Melbourne, from where the water could be piped by gravity to the city. This would provide sufficient water for a population of 70,000, three times the then population of Melbourne, and more than adequate before the population explosion that followed the later discovery of gold. As an additional safeguard, La Trobe obtained the opinion of Clement Hodgkinson, the widely respected future surveyor-general, who endorsed Blackburn's proposal.<sup>13</sup>

However, when separation from New South Wales was finally achieved in 1851, Governor FitzRoy's tentative offer of financial assistance lapsed, and responsibility for provision of the water supply passed to the



newly constituted Victorian government.<sup>14</sup> Still opposed to increasing the powers of the council by giving it responsibility for the water supply, the government transferred these powers to a body of salaried commissioners. The revenue generated by gold removed the obstacle of obtaining the necessary finance, and in 1853 a loan of £600,000 was raised on the security of the gold revenues.<sup>15</sup>



**Nicholas Chevalier, 1828-1902, artist (attrib.)**  
**Matthew Bullock Jackson, 1858**  
 Wood engraving, published in the *Illustrated Melbourne News*.  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria,  
 IMN 16/01/58/37



**Artist unknown**  
**James Blackburn, c.1833 (detail)**  
 Oil on canvas  
 Collection Joel Blackburn

To construct the scheme, a twenty-seven year old English engineer, Matthew Bullock Jackson was appointed chief engineer. Jackson had extensive experience in England with hydraulic engineering works and earth-wall dam construction of similar design to what was proposed at Yan Yean.<sup>16</sup> Blackburn was appointed consulting engineer, the severe injuries he sustained in a riding accident precluding him from the senior post. Jackson amended Blackburn's scheme so as to provide water to a much larger population than had been envisaged by Blackburn.

Work officially commenced on the dam on 20 December 1853 with a ceremony featuring La Trobe turning the first sod. The ceremony did not go quite to plan due to the late arrival of many of the invited dignitaries, whose carriages had difficulty crossing the Plenty River. When the ceremonial wheel barrow did not appear either, La Trobe reportedly 'threw off his coat and dug up several shovels full of earth, throwing them into the air to the cheers of the onlookers'.<sup>17</sup> A plaque near the Yan Yean embankment commemorates the event.

La Trobe left Victoria the following year. His journal records that his 'last good ride in Australia' in March 1854 was to Yan Yean in the company of William Stawell, the attorney general, to see what progress was being made.<sup>18</sup>

At La Trobe's request a bottle of Yan Yean water was sent to him in England on the completion of the work.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the magnitude of the scheme, Matthew Jackson recommended that one of the major English contractors such as Thomas Brassey be engaged, but the commissioners insisted that local contractors be employed as far

as possible.<sup>20</sup> As no local contractor was capable of carrying out the whole work, it had to be farmed out to various firms. That Jackson succeeded in coordinating their activities was evidence of his later much maligned management skills.

Many of the components of the system were available only in Britain. Amongst these were the valves for regulating the water flow, the stopcocks for cutting off the water supply to individual premises to facilitate repairs and maintenance, the fire plugs to provide high pressure water for firefighting and cleansing the gutters, the twenty-four and thirty inch diameter cast iron pipes to convey the water from Yan Yean to Melbourne and the smaller pipes for reticulating the water throughout the city.<sup>21</sup>

To coordinate the procurement and shipping of these components the Victorian government appointed as its agent the Manchester engineering firm William Fairbairn and Sons.<sup>22</sup> Fairbairn was an eminent Scottish-born engineer, who had been apprenticed to George Stephenson, credited with the invention of the steam train. In 1817, Fairbairn had established his own engine-making business in Manchester, later expanding into bridge and ship building, and civil engineering. While working on a flood control project in Ireland, he engaged as his assistant a young engineer named John Frederic Bateman, who later collaborated with

him on other projects. Bateman subsequently married Fairbairn's daughter Anne. In 1869 Fairbairn was created a baronet for his work on the modernization of Manchester, and is commemorated by his statue in the Manchester Town Hall.<sup>23</sup>

John Frederic Bateman was born in the Moravian community of Lower Wyke near Halifax, Yorkshire in 1810. His mother was

according to Moravian principles. Any activities of Bateman as an inventor do not appear to be recorded, but like many of those involved in manufacturing at all levels, he may have made attempts to improve the processes. For various reasons some inventions succeeded and others did not. But not all potential inventors could be another Arkwright.<sup>25</sup> Considering that at this period Moravian marriages were arranged by church elders, and that Bateman's father-



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer**  
**Cairn with plaque near the**  
**Yan Yean embankment, 2014**

Mary Agnes La Trobe, the sister of Christian Ignatius La Trobe. He was, thus, the first cousin of Charles Joseph La Trobe and brother of Edward La Trobe Bateman, the artist, architect and garden designer who lived in Victoria from 1852 until he returned to Britain in 1869.

His father was John Bateman, often disparagingly dismissed as an unsuccessful manufacturer and inventor. On his children's baptismal certificates he is recorded as a manufacturer. Lower Wyke, like all Moravian settlements, was not only a religious community but also a self-supporting economic unit where members were engaged in farming and small-scale manufacturing, frequently of textiles. As with John Frederic Bateman's great-great grandfather Henry Antes, the business manager of the Moravian communities in Pennsylvania, John Bateman in all likelihood fulfilled a similar role at Lower Wyke.<sup>24</sup>

Moravians aimed at self-sufficiency, not large-scale commercial enterprises, which were not part of their ethos. Compared with some of the entrepreneurs who were making fortunes from the industrialisation of Britain at this period, Bateman may have appeared insignificant, but he would not necessarily have been regarded as such

in-law Benjamin La Trobe was the head of all the Moravian congregations in England, it is highly unlikely that his daughter would have been permitted to marry a husband regarded in Moravian circles as unsuccessful.

John Frederic Bateman was educated at the Moravian schools at Fairfield near Manchester and Ockbrook in Derbyshire. After being apprenticed to a surveyor and mining engineer he set up his own practice as a civil engineer in 1833. Following his work in association with William Fairbairn on flood control in Ireland, he concentrated on hydraulic engineering, and soon became recognized as an expert on dam construction at a time of increased demand for water in Britain, resulting from a rapid increase in population and industrial activity.

Bateman's greatest work was the construction of the Manchester water supply. Taking almost thirty years to complete, it brought water to Manchester from the hills above the city by a series of dams, tunnels and aqueducts. He also built water supply systems for Glasgow and many cities in the north of England, and designed systems for places as diverse as Constantinople, Buenos Aires and many British colonies. Bateman built more

dams in Britain than any other engineer, before or after him. He was well rewarded for his work, and in 1858 purchased Moor Park, an imposing eighteenth-century house on an estate in Surrey.

In 1883 Bateman added the La Trobe name to his own by Royal Licence and adopted the La Trobe arms out of respect for his grandfather, Benjamin La Trobe. He died in 1889. In 2000 a plaque commemorating his work on the



**John Frederic Bateman**  
Source: [www.manchester-celebrities.co.uk/celebrities/engineers5.html](http://www.manchester-celebrities.co.uk/celebrities/engineers5.html) (accessed 28 May 2014)



**Sir William Fairbairn, 1st Baronet**  
Source: [www.gracesguide.co.uk/William\\_Fairbairn](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William_Fairbairn) (accessed 28 May 2014)

Manchester water supply was placed at the top of the deepest air vent above the 2,800 meter long Mottram tunnel in the hills near the city. On the plaque Bateman is described as 'Pioneer water engineer extraordinaire'.<sup>26</sup>

The system of stopcocks and fire-plugs was developed by Bateman during the construction of the Manchester waterworks in the 1840s, and subsequently used at Hobart and Dunedin in 1862.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps, there was an element of nepotism involved in the choice by Fairbairn of the system invented by his son-in-law, but Fairbairn had become aware of Bateman's abilities long before he married his daughter, and in all probability it was simply the best available. The reticulation system designed for Melbourne provided for a stopcock protected by an iron cover outside every house. Only one cover now remains in Napier Street, Fitzroy – although not in its original position. It bears the inscription 'Bateman's Patent Melbourne Waterworks'.<sup>28</sup>

The efficacy of the fire-plugs was demonstrated on New Year's Eve 1857, when the water was first turned on and spectators were drenched by soaring jets of water. The halving of the cost of fire insurance premiums resulting from the provision of an adequate water supply was rather more appreciated.

Despite the obvious benefits it brought to Melbourne, the Yan Yean scheme was not

an unmitigated success, and attracted much criticism in the years following its inauguration. There were three Parliamentary inquiries into matters which included the over-run of the estimated costs, the pollution of the water and the bursting of the pipes. Much of the blame was unfairly laid at the door of the chief engineer Matthew Jackson, especially after he was forced, by illness brought on by the stress of the criticism, to return to England.<sup>29</sup> Many

of the problems were caused by the omission of some components in an attempt to contain costs, and by the perceived need to placate local interests at the expense of efficiency. Much of the technology involved was cutting edge by world standards, and many of the difficulties that arose in the course of construction had not been foreseen during the planning. Trying to solve them in a location remote from the centre of scientific knowledge only added to the problems.

The three members of the extended La Trobe family involved with the Yan Yean scheme emerged relatively unscathed from the barrage of criticism levelled at it. Although at its inception there was considerable debate over details, there was general recognition of the need for a reliable water supply, and public opinion supported Charles La Trobe's work in initiating the scheme and fostering its progress.

The reticulation system appeared to work well at first, but was subject to two major defects which took some time to become apparent. Due to a delay in the arrival of the water pipes from Britain the gas company, whose reticulation system was being installed simultaneously, was able to lay its pipes in the centre of the streets, the position intended for the water pipes. The water pipes were then relegated to being laid below the gutters. At times of low water pressure, when the fire-plugs were opened to flush the gutters, the back flow washed filth from the gutters

into the pipes. Bateman, however, never visited Melbourne and was not responsible for the defective installation of the pipes and fire-plugs.

Of greater concern was the composition of the small pipes of the reticulation system that connected individual properties to the water mains. These had been procured by Fairbairn from the Manchester firm, Newton Keates and Co. They were made of lead with a tin lining. If the lining was damaged, as frequently occurred when the pipes were bent or welded, a chemical reaction caused by the soft Plenty River water in turn caused lead salts to be discharged into the water, resulting in many cases of lead poisoning. All the piping was eventually replaced.<sup>30</sup>

The Newton Keates and Co. pipes were clearly not one of Fairbairn's better choices, but given the pioneering state of the technology involved, it is difficult to assess to what degree Fairbairn was to blame.

The cast iron pipes which conveyed the water from Yan Yean to Melbourne were procured by Fairbairn from the Cochran Engineering works in England. They were initially subject to frequent ruptures, but this was due to the omission from the system, as an economy measure, of the reservoir at Preston, which had been designed to relieve the water pressure. After this reservoir was constructed, bursts rarely occurred.

Other difficulties with pollution and poor water pressure were gradually rectified over many years, but did not negate the overall effectiveness of the scheme that provided Melbourne with an ample water supply throughout the years of enormous population growth following the gold discovery. Yan Yean was later augmented by other reservoirs to meet the continuing demands of an expanding metropolis,<sup>31</sup> but these did not require the pioneering initiative to construct what was one of the most ambitious water supply systems in the world, to which the La Trobe family on both sides of the globe made a vital contribution.

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- 11 Michael Cannon, *Old Melbourne Town before the Gold Rush*, Main Ridge: Loch Haven Books, 1991, p.101.
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- 19 *The Age*, 1 January 1858, from Dingle and Doyle, p.2.
- 20 Dingle and Doyle, p.23.
- 21 Binnie, p.249.



- 22 Ibid, p.246.
- 23 *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*, <http://www.gracesguide.co.uk> (accessed 24 April 2014).
- 24 Tim Gatehouse, 'The American Ancestors of the La Trobe Family', *La Trobeana*, vol. 11, no. 2, June 2012, pp.46-51.
- 25 Sir Richard Arkwright is considered the father of the modern industrial factory system and his inventions were a catalyst for the Industrial Revolution. (Ed.)
- 26 Edward Irving Carlyle, 'Bateman, John Frederic La Trobe-', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1901 Supplement, vol. 1, pp.138-9.
- 27 *The Mercury*, Hobart, 23 January 1862, p. 3, and *The Otago Witness*, Dunedin, 2 May, 1862, p.6.
- 28 Miles Lewis, 'Fitzroy History Society Gertrude Street Walk, April 27 & 28, 2013', notes (available online).
- 29 Binnie, pp.252-255.
- 30 Ibid, p.247.
- 31 Yan Yean Reservoir was taken offline in February 2007 because of dwindling water levels, but still remains part of the Melbourne Water system. (Ed.)

## Forthcoming events

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### JULY

#### Friday 18

##### Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture

**Time:** 6.30-8.30pm

**Venue:** Morgans at 401, 401 Collins Street, Melbourne

**Guest Speaker:** Member Dr Sue Reynolds, Senior Lecturer, School of Business IT and Logistics at RMIT University

**Topic:** La Trobe's other library: Charles La Trobe, Redmond Barry and the Library of the Supreme Court of Victoria  
An illustrated lecture presented by The C J La Trobe Society.

Refreshments

**Admission:** free

**RSVP essential:** Phone: 9646 2112 (please leave voice message)

**Email:** [secretary@latrobesociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@latrobesociety.org.au)

### AUGUST

#### Tuesday 5

##### La Trobe Society Annual General Meeting and Dinner

**Time:** 6.30pm

**Venue:** Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place, Melbourne

**Guest Speaker:** Member Caroline Clemente, Honorary La Trobe Society Fellow, State Library of Victoria

**Topic:** La Trobe and the Pre-Raphaelites: launching a brilliant career in Melbourne, 1853

**Cost:** \$85 per person

**RSVP:** essential by July 29 2014

Invitations have been sent out for this event

### OCTOBER

#### Friday 3

##### 175th Anniversary of La Trobe's Arrival in Melbourne

**Venue and format of function:** tbc

Invitations will be sent out closer to the date

### NOVEMBER

#### Sunday 9

##### 175th Anniversary of St James' Old Cathedral

**Time:** 10am

**Venue:** St James' Old Cathedral, Cnr King & Batman Streets, West Melbourne

Annual Pioneer Service, celebrating the laying of the foundation stone of St James'

#### Wednesday 12

##### La Trobe University Alumni and Advancement Lecture

**Time:** 6-8pm

**Venue:** State Library Theatre, La Trobe Street, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Dr Tim Flannery

**Topic:** Science-related theme, tbc  
Invitations will be sent out closer to the date

#### Friday 28

##### Christmas Cocktails

**Time:** 6-8pm

**Venue:** Melbourne Savage Club

**Speaker:** tbc

Invitations will be sent out closer to the date

### DECEMBER

#### Sunday 7

##### Anniversary of the Death of C J La Trobe

**Time:** 11am

**Venue:** St Peter's Eastern Hill, 15 Gisborne Street, Melbourne

#### Tuesday 16: tbc

##### Candlelit Carols at La Trobe's Cottage

**Venue:** La Trobe's Cottage,

Cnr Birdwood Avenue and

Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne

## Back Issues

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Back issues of La Trobeana are available on the Society's website, except for those published in the last twelve months.

The back issues may be accessed at [www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html)  
They may be searched by keyword.

## Contributions welcome

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BACK COVER  
La Trobe Family coat of arms

INSIDE FRONT COVER  
Charles Joseph La Trobe's coat of arms,  
taken from his bookplate



