

Letters from Victorian Pioneers to Governor La Trobe, 1853

By Dr Dianne Reilly AM

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When Charles Joseph La Trobe departed from Melbourne on 5 May 1854, he left with some regret, despite the anxieties of office which had left him a dispirited and worn-out man. On La Trobe's last sighting of Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale from the deck of the modern steamer the *Golden Age* on 6 May 1854,¹ he noted sadly in his diary: '8 am, Leave the Heads 14 years 7 months and 6 days since I first entered them'.² He had grown to love this land and had decided that, in retirement, he would write a history of its earliest days. He had on 29 July 1853 sent a circular letter³ to a number of early settlers,⁴ requesting information about their experiences as new residents, describing the time and circumstances of their first occupation of various parts of the colony. Whilst the circular letter has not been located we know from the specific accounts of settler interaction with the Indigenous people in most of the letters that La Trobe had specifically requested information on the Aboriginal people. Thomas Learmonth, in responding to 'the... point on which Your Excellency desires information is with regard to the aborigines, their number and their demeanour towards the first settlers', wrote a detailed account of the experiences at *Buninyong*.⁵

It is not known how many people were sent the circular letter, nor if all recipients replied, but he took home with him 'at least fifty-eight letters or papers, detailing the personal experiences of the pioneers of Victoria'.⁶ His intention was to use these letters, together with material he had gathered over nearly fifteen years, to write his foundation history of the district he had governed so conscientiously.

La Trobe's broad-ranging education in the Moravian tradition gave him a continuing scholarly interest in many subjects,⁷ including history, which was ever present as he encountered the new world, and especially the Port Phillip District.⁸ La Trobe's instructions from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, with his Evangelical leanings, had singled out the state of the Aboriginal people and the relations between them and the settlers as a significant responsibility for him. As we know, La Trobe's earlier experience in the West Indies had been a major determinant of his appointment.⁹ Hence, as La Trobe left Victoria in 1854 it is not surprising that he had stipulated the inclusion of references to the Aboriginal people in the circular letter which would allow him to record and reflect upon his legacy when he came to write his proposed history.



Alexander Denistoun Lang, 1814?-1872, lithographer
An exploring party looking for a sheep run, 1847
 Lithograph with hand colouring
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H29755

Through force of habit, La Trobe kept numerous fragmentary notes¹⁰ of many of his experiences and the people he met. Although over many years La Trobe had accumulated much material in preparation for writing his history, he had made little progress, apart from a document he annotated as 'Ch.II'.¹¹ This was a detailed account of the failed 1803-04 settlement at Sorrento under Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins, and he intended it to precede details of the years before and during his own administration in Melbourne. Although La Trobe's notes were mostly sketchy and disorganised, he had retained these to jog his memory when he came to write his book. In addition, his manuscript 'Australia: Memoranda of Journeys, Excursions and Absences, 1839-1854', and two volumes of 'Australian Notes, 1839-1854',¹² which amplified events to a limited extent, were recorded in more durable notebooks which he would have found useful for this purpose. These 'Memoranda' and 'Notes' were edited and published as *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes* in 2006.¹³

La Trobe's time on his return to England was necessarily taken up with his growing family, lobbying the Colonial Office for a further appointment, continued travelling to and from Europe and extensive correspondence with many friends. However, in 1872, now blind and ailing, La Trobe had lost the energy for such a huge enterprise and wrote from his home *Clapham House* in the village of Litlington, Sussex, to his friend and executor, Melbourne merchant James Graham, that:

As I am in the prospect of a move, as you know, in the course of the autumn, so taking time by the forelock, and attempting to put my house in order, I have collected a number of documents, addressed to me...in 1853, by old colonists, to whom I applied for information respecting the early occupation and settlement of our Colony. I intended to have made a certain use of this information myself, but, from circumstances, was prevented doing so.¹⁴

La Trobe had become totally blind by October 1865 and relied on his daughter Eleanora Sophia, 'Nelly', to act as his scribe.¹⁵ On accepting the fact that he would never have the ability to complete his proposed history of Victoria, he went on to say that he was sending to his friend a small parcel of letters. La Trobe obviously realised the enormous historical value of this cache of documents since he took into account every important eventuality for their permanent security:

The day may come, however, when it may be considered of too great interest to be lost, and I therefore propose that the parcel should be deposited somewhere where it will be accessible when that day comes, say the Public Library or other public archives. On this point perhaps you will consult those who ought to be consulted. I think it may be a little early to make



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
Mr Carfrae's Ledcourt, 1850

Pencil and sepia wash on paper — unfinished
Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria

unrestricted use of the contents of these letters. In sending them to you, however, I am securing their being deposited where they ought to go.¹⁶

Graham duly sought the advice of the Chairman of the Public Library Trustees, Sir Redmond Barry, and fellow trustee David Charteris McArthur. They wisely selected the Melbourne Public Library as the permanent home for this invaluable research collection about Victoria's colonial history. In fact, the arrival of these letters in 1872 marked the beginning of the acquisition of original Australian material by the library, and the formation of the Australian Manuscripts collection.

Publishing history

After long delays, Dr Thomas Francis Bride, then Librarian of the Public Library, was given the task by the Library Trustees of transcribing the letters, and preparing them for publication. Robert S. Brain, the Government Printer, published 1,500 copies of the work of 325 pages, complete with index, as *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* in March 1898. Although 58 letters are indicated in the table of contents, there is no letter No.57 included. As an addendum, *Specimens of the Language of the Barrabool Tribe, and List of the Members of the Tribe, collected about 1842* was incorporated. This document of six pages had been compiled by 'Mrs Davenport,

daughter of the late Capt. Sievwright [*sic*], Assistant-Protector of Aborigines'.¹⁷ This first unillustrated edition contained a 'Rough Sketch of the PORT PHILLIP COUNTRY', enclosed with Thomas Learmonth's letter from his residence at *Buninyong* where he and his brother had established a homestead in 1838. The map highlights the names of pastoral stations settled up to 1837, and also those occupied in 1838, thus showing the extent of settlement prior to La Trobe's arrival in the colony. The general importance of the book was considered to be the fact that it contained 'the first impressions of those who had ample opportunities of learning at the fountain head what could be learned amid the hardships of early colonial days'.¹⁸

In 1969, a new enlarged edition was published by Heinemann, much to the satisfaction of historians, such was the demand for the letters. It was meticulously edited and annotated by journalist and author Charles Edward Sayers. That same year, Sayers, who wrote for the Melbourne *Herald* and the *Age*, was the biographer of the founder of the *Age*, David Syme.¹⁹ He was also the author of twenty books, including numerous Victorian local histories.

In 1983, another edition of the work, enhanced with a large number of illustrations, was produced by Melbourne publishers Currey O'Neil. This and the previous edition, both of 455 pages, contained an introduction and notes



George Alexander Gilbert, 1815-1877, artist
View of Station Peak - (Native You-Yangs), taken from the
Point Henry Road Geelong, Victoria, 1856
 Pencil with added watercolour and Chinese white on paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H1573
 William John Turner Clarke took up the Station Peak run in 1837

by Sayers, and the 1983 edition was embellished with a foreword by historian and writer Helen Vellacott, editor of *Diary of a Lady's Maid: Government House in colonial Australia* (MUP, 1991), and *A Girl at Government House: an English girl's reminiscences 'below stairs' in colonial Australia* (Currey O'Neil, 1982).

Sayers described the new edition as 'a republication, not a facsimile'. It differed from the 1898 volume in that a number of letters sent to La Trobe were not included, since they were considered to have contributed 'little importance to the theme of the work'. These were very brief letters dated August and September 1853 from John Carfrae of *Ledcourt* near Stawell, Charles Wade Sherard of Creswick's Creek, Henry Dwyer of Victoria Valley and Edward Grimes. Importantly though, the new edition included brief notes on persons and incidents mentioned, and short biographical descriptions by Sayers of each of the letter-writers. Sayers made the decision to transcribe the letters in full, but to delete all addresses, and the salutations to La Trobe at the beginning of each document, and the signatures at the end. These, however, appear in the 1898 edition. The editor changed the random order of the original volume, arranging it 'to present some chronological and district groupings'.²⁰ The headings he decided upon were: First Seekers; Portland Bay, Western

District; North-East and Gippsland; Central Plains, Wimmera; The Mallee and the Murray; Aborigines.

Joseph Tice Gellibrand

An important discovery made during C.E. Sayers' research for the preparation of the new edition of *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* was a complete transcript of Joseph Tice Gellibrand's memorandum of a trip to Port Phillip which is incomplete in the 1898 first edition. This is included in full in the new edition as the introductory document in the 'First Seekers' section. The complete document in Gellibrand's handwriting is held in the collection of the Mitchell Library in Sydney, while the incomplete copy used in the first edition is in the Australian Manuscripts Collection at State Library Victoria.²¹

Joseph Tice Gellibrand (1792?-1837) was born in England, and admitted as an attorney in London in 1816. By a warrant of 1 August 1823, he was appointed attorney-general of Van Diemen's Land, a position he held from his arrival in Hobart Town in March 1824, until his dismissal by Governor Arthur in 1826, charged with unprofessional conduct, a charge he fought for the rest of his life. He was a prominent member of the Port Phillip Association.



Batchelder, photographer
The late Peter Snodgrass Esq., MLA
Wood engraving from photograph
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,
IAN20/12/67/13
Published in *The Illustrated Australian News for*
Home Readers, 20 December 1867

His memorandum fully describes a journey he undertook from Hobart to and around the Port Phillip District from 17 January to 24 March 1836. The document details the journey and life on board the ship *Norval*, and the arduous overland journey from Westernport to the settlement on the Yarra River where, among other founding settlers, he met Henry Batman, John Batman's brother. His various excursions ashore are described as he travelled around Port Phillip Bay to Geelong and the Barwon River, and on the return journey, visiting the Anakie Hills, Barrabool Hills, the Maribyrnong — 'a large saltwater river', and the Plenty River which he named. At Indented Head, he recorded his meeting with the Aboriginal people there, and his long conversation with 'the wild white man'²² William Buckley 'who appears to be of nervous and irritable demeanour, and that a little thing will annoy him much...'.²³ Gellibrand noted that 'the country... far exceeds my expectations... and from the account given by Buckley, I have every reason to believe there are Millions of acres of equal quality extending to the westward'.²⁴ On a subsequent visit to Port Phillip from Hobart in February 1837, Gellibrand and his companion and fellow lawyer, George Brooks Legrew Hesse,²⁵ disappeared near Birregurra on an expedition from Geelong on an inland route to explore the hinterland of Port Phillip. Although an unsolved mystery for many decades, some contemporary accounts considered it likely that they had lost their horses and perished in the heat of summer,²⁶ or been murdered by Aboriginal people. However, a

recent study re-examines the historical evidence, and sheds new light on what might have become of them.²⁷

Importantly, Gellibrand documents some of the earliest accounts of European interactions with the Aboriginal people, 'a fine race of men' who impressed him with their 'strong and athletic appearance', being 'very intelligent and quick in their perceptions',²⁸ and well-disposed at the unexpected appearance of his party of Europeans. He also gives a vivid account of an incident when shepherds had abducted an Aboriginal woman and he had intervened.²⁹

Gellibrand's account of his arrival at Westernport and of the settlement on the Yarra has enormous historical significance not only for the detail of the early days of the new colony, but it is also a document which is close in time to John Batman's more well-known diary of 1835, and adds to descriptions conveyed in Batman's diary of what was to become the city of Melbourne.

The Letters

The majority of the letters to La Trobe comment on the interaction between the new settlers and the Aboriginal people whose land they occupied. The observations reveal a range of attitudes to the Indigenous people and to experiences of conflict on the frontier. It should be noted that there is no letter from Niel Black (1804-1880), well-known pastoralist on the *Glenormiston* run near Terang. In about 1852, he had returned to his native Scotland in search of a suitable wife, and remained there for five years until he married Grace Greenshields Leadbetter in 1857. It is therefore probable that he did not receive La Trobe's circular requesting details of his fascinating life in the Western District from his arrival there in 1839.³⁰ Some samples follow of the observations made by other recipients of the circular, although perusing all the *Letters* of course builds up a more complete perception of experiences and attitudes among the Europeans.

Thomas Learmonth of *Buninyong* observed that 'considering the wrong that has been done to the aborigines in depriving them of their country, they have shown less ferocity and have established the desire to retaliate less than might have been expected'.³¹ Rev. James Clow was of the opinion that: 'Like other savages, they are naturally revengeful, but it is to be feared that on too many occasions their atrocities have not been committed without grievous provocation'.³² Thomas Manifold at Warrnambool held the view that: 'Their manner towards the first settlers had generally the semblance of extreme friendship, but... whenever they got a chance,



Unknown artist
Aboriginal people watching sheep droving, c.1850
 Ink wash over pencil
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H26595

w[ould] plunder or murder even those from whom they had only a few minutes previously received presents and food'.³³

Foster Fyans (1790-1870), first Police Magistrate in Geelong, settled in 1837 at Fyansford at the junction of the Barwon and Moorabool rivers, one of the earliest places of settlement in the Geelong region. In 1840, he was sent by La Trobe to the Portland Bay District where he remained for some years as Commissioner of Crown Lands, before resuming the role at Geelong of Police Magistrate in 1849. In his letter, besides other graphic descriptions of clashes between settlers and the Aboriginal people, he gives a detailed report of the killing of a shepherd by an Indigenous man near Port Fairy. His Aboriginal guide, Bon Jon eventually shot the man who committed the murder, and was hauled before Judge Willis, whom Fyans described as 'a most disreputable old rip', and much to Fyans' displeasure, the charge was dismissed. Fyans predicted that: 'From long experience, particularly in Portland Bay District, I am convinced that the number of aborigines in 1837 in this district could not exceed 3,000, and I feel thoroughly convinced the race will be extinct in 20 years or less'.³⁴

The epic journey of Captain John Hepburn demonstrates this settler's courage and determination to make a living in an unknown land. In partnership with John Gardiner and Joseph Hawdon, he made his first overland journey to Port Phillip from New South Wales

in 1836 with sheep, cattle and horses which they sold to those already at the settlement. Two years later, on his second overland trip, this time in partnership with David Coghill, Hepburn again visited the settlement where no accommodation was to be had, meeting William Buckley, and noting that Captain Lonsdale was commandant, before going on to take up a run in the West Coliban district on 15 April 1838. This he named *Smeaton Hill* after a village in his native Scotland. He recounted numerous meetings with the Aboriginal people, acknowledging that 'a hostile feeling did exist' in his men.³⁵ There was much sheep stealing, and some murders on both sides, although 'I am happy to say I never injured one beyond thumping him with a stick'.³⁶

Charles Wedge recalled that, at the area around the Victoria Range near Dunkeld in the Grampians, the Aboriginal people began to attack sheep as early as early as 1836 and that 'these depredations did not cease till many lives were sacrificed, and, I may say, many thousands of sheep destroyed'.³⁷ Wedge, a nephew of John Helder Wedge of the Port Phillip Association, was brutal in his responses to sheep stealing, killing many Indigenous people on the land he occupied in his quest for wealth from wool.³⁸

Hugh Murray who settled the Colac region in 1837, claimed that the Aborigines 'never lost an opportunity of stealing our sheep...' and described the inhumane treatment inflicted on them by the settlers: 'In such cases the settlers assembled and pursued them,

and when their encampment was discovered they generally fled, leaving behind them their weapons, rugs etc., which, together with their huts, were destroyed'.³⁹ William Clarke recalled that at his run in the East Wimmera, 'when my people found it necessary to defend themselves, a number of blacks, I am sorry to say, was shot'.⁴⁰ George Faithful recalled a ferocious fight around present-day Benalla on 11 April 1838 in which between ten and fourteen servants and a very large number of Aboriginal people were killed in an all-day fight.

The reckless and hard-riding squatter Peter Snodgrass took up the station *Doogalook* on Muddy Creek, west of Yea, on his arrival in Port Phillip from Sydney in 1837. He, on the other hand, had a deep sympathy for the plight of the Aboriginal people in the district, noting: 'From their first acquaintance with the white population, their numbers have diminished from disease and other causes, until there are perhaps scarcely one-fifth of the [original] number... and it seems probable that in a few years they will become extinct'.⁴¹

An educated and adventurous young settler Edward Bell arrived at Melbourne late in 1839 and immediately left with cattle for the Western District. There he took up three stations in succession: *Mimamiluke* on the Devil's River, *Englefield* on the Glenelg River, and *Green Hills* near Mount Rouse. He recorded that: 'The collisions with the blacks, which I had heard of on almost every station after my arrival in the Western District, if they took place at all, were kept very quiet'.⁴² He did hear, however, of savage encounters by the settlers with some Aboriginal groups, and with devastation to his own cattle, was of the opinion that: 'It was scarcely to be wondered at that the settlers took the law into their own hands on such occasions'.⁴³ Later, Bell was to take up a civil service appointment and became La Trobe's private secretary before becoming a Commissioner of Crown Lands.

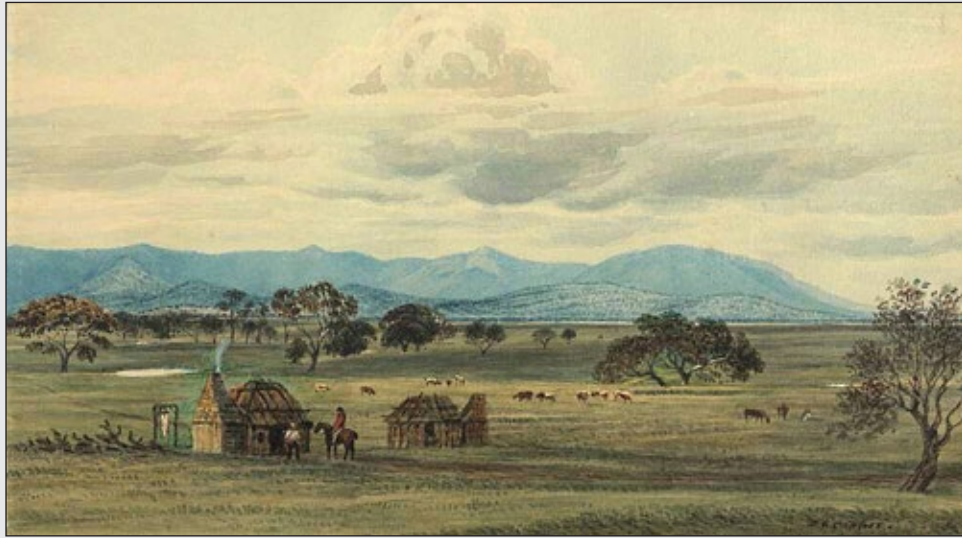
Thomas Winter, formerly a merchant in Hobart Town for a number of years, sent his 'Notes on Port Phillip' to La Trobe via a contact, William Swainson (not Swanston, as wrongly printed in the 1898 edition of the *Letters*). Swainson was a botanist who visited Victoria in 1852. He listed more than 600 species of eucalypt for the Victorian Government, and it may have been at this time that he passed Winter's Notes on to the Lieutenant-Governor. Swainson was a valuable member of Dr Ferdinand Mueller's expedition to the Dandenong Ranges in 1853. Thomas Winter came over to Port Phillip in 1843 to check on his pastoral investments. He had funded a venture with William Forlonge, a pastoralist professionally trained as a wool-sorter

in Leipzig before settling in Van Diemen's Land, to run stock in the two localities of Pigeon Ponds and Chetwynd on the Glenelg River, both in the far west of the Port Phillip District. Plagued by drought and the depression of the 1840s, the venture failed. Forlonge was bankrupted, and Winter was reported to have lost his £9,000 investment.⁴⁴ While Forlonge went on to great success as a grazier and politician in future years, Winter returned to Van Diemen's Land.

Winter's brief 'Notes on Port Phillip' describe his first sighting of Port Phillip Bay as a 'harbour resembling an inland sea'.⁴⁵ He found 'the situation of Williams Town... very pretty',⁴⁶ and 'Melbourne is also beautifully situated on a gently sloping hill, upon the banks of the Yarra, and surrounded by a lovely country, lightly covered with trees, chiefly eucalyptus and acacia'.⁴⁷ He was impressed that, in nine short years, about 150 wooden houses had been built on the site of Melbourne but, owing to 'the lack of large, sound timber fit for building... the greatest part of Melbourne is built with wood from Van Diemen's Land'.⁴⁸ As he travelled to the Western District to oversee his grazing land, he discovered that 'The sheep, cattle and horses, and indeed every animal that has been sent here, thrives in an extraordinary manner. Lambs three months old weigh as much as their mothers, while the cows are like fatted beasts'.⁴⁹

Of the Indigenous people he encountered, Winter noted: 'The natives are numerous and troublesome; indeed, they are the greatest drawback to the colony, since they cannot be trusted. Several murders have been committed by them, but not lately...'.⁵⁰ The Kulin had strongly developed concepts, 'totally different from the European understanding of land ownership, regarding the use of resources and the sharing of them... Alienating the land was literally unthinkable to them'.⁵¹ This showed itself in different ways from simple curiosity or amazement at the arrival of Europeans on their land, to retaliations with violence as the settlers took over. As historian James Boyce has noted: 'For settlers, the principal obstacle to realizing spectacular profits from wool exports was the Aborigines'.⁵² Thomas Winter observed that, already in 1843, the European influence in a material way on Aboriginal traditions, so obvious in later years, was starting to become apparent: 'The original clothing, both of men and women, seemed to be two mats made of skins joined together, the one hanging before, the other behind. Now most of them have some article of English clothing'.⁵³

Alfred Taddy Thomson, an educated young Englishman, brought his own disenchanted philosophy on the life of a squatter



Duncan Elphinstone Cooper, 1813/14 -1904, artist
First station and huts, Mount Cole & the Pyrenees in the distance, 1842

Watercolour
 National Library of Australia. PIC B4 R9051
 From a series depicting Challicum station at Fiery Creek

to his letter for La Trobe from Fiery Creek. He recounted that he had overlanded 4,000 sheep with John Whitehall Stevens from Yass to the Ovens in 1840, a journey of five months. After what he described as a miserable time without a permanent base, they made their camp near the head of the Broken River above Mansfield on a section of Watson and Hunter's *Barjang* run. He recorded that the Indigenous people were 'very troublesome', noting that several settlers had been murdered, and hundreds of sheep stolen. 'The effects of these atrocities upon the minds of the men... where nothing distracted their ideas or prevented their brooding upon the one subject, was great'.⁵⁴ In 1841, they took the run named *Yalla-y-Poora*, a station on the (usually) rapidly flowing Fiery Creek north of present-day Streatham, which they held in partnership. A near neighbour was G.W. Thomson, a pioneer squatter who settled on the *Challicum* station that same year. Alfred Thomson gave up the hardships and solitude of life in the bush, returning in 1854 to London where, for over twenty years, he acted as paintings selector for the trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria.

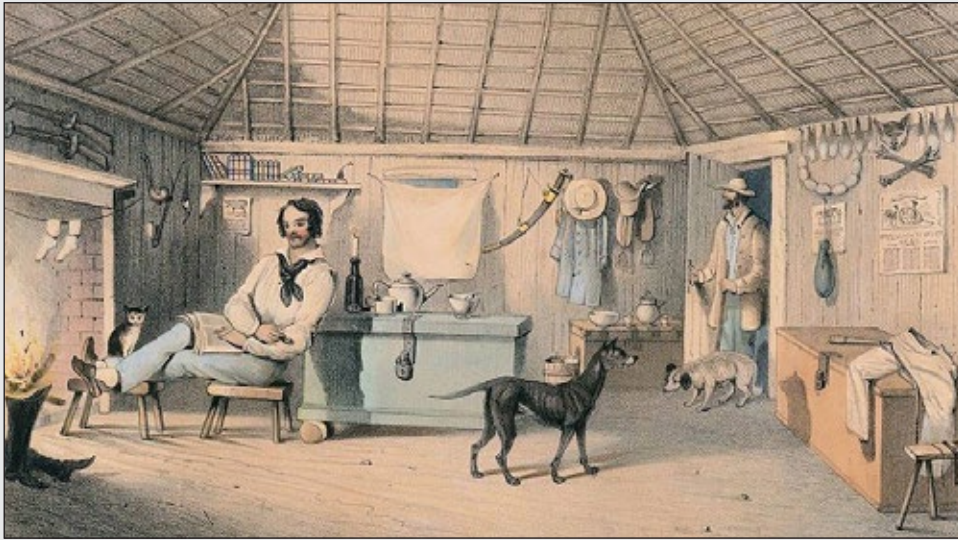
William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines

One of the many responses received by La Trobe was from William Thomas, a London schoolteacher when he was appointed in 1838 as one of four assistant protectors to George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip District. He was allocated the Port Phillip, Westernport and

Gippsland districts and, in 1839, established his base at Narre Warren. Years of privation followed for Thomas and his family since he was often away from his wife and children while he travelled around the country with the Aboriginal people.⁵⁵ He had a warm sympathy for them, and focused on the practical tasks of keeping them alive, avoiding the perils of city life and maintaining harmony between black and white. He was not supported by Robinson in carrying out his self-sacrificing duties. When the Protectorate completely failed in 1849, La Trobe appointed him as Guardian of Aborigines, a role in which he was able to continue his activities in caring for the Indigenous people.

Until his death Thomas was chief government adviser on Aboriginal affairs and was the most influential witness at the 1858-59 select committee of the Legislative Council on Aborigines. His recommendation to establish reserves and supply depots throughout Victoria was accepted in a modified form and in 1860 became the policy implemented by the new Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines.⁵⁶

As John Mulvaney (1925-2016), renowned authority on the history of the first Australians, as well as on archaeology and anthropology generally, has noted: 'he was more successful than any other first generation settler in attempting to comprehend and sustain Aboriginal society... He had striking success in settling intertribal disputes and preventing racial strife. His bravery and moral conviction were undoubted, but his advocacy of Aboriginal causes made him



Alexander Denistoun Lang, 1814?-1872, lithographer
The squatter at home 1839: bad news from the outstations, c.1847
 Lithograph with hand colouring
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H17036

unpopular in colonial society'.⁵⁷ For nearly three decades, Thomas kept a daily diary of his life and work with Aboriginal Victorians through his journal entries. He also wrote long memoranda about Aboriginal society for Robinson, Sir Redmond Barry and La Trobe. His extensive diaries were edited and annotated by historian Dr Marguerita Stephens, and published in four volumes in 2014.⁵⁸

Two of his memoranda directed to La Trobe are included in *Letters to Victorian Pioneers*. The first of these, letter 13, a 'Brief Account of the Aborigines of Australia Felix', gives information in great detail about their itinerant way of life in search of food, the code governing the Aboriginal family and the group, and the conflict which arose when the Europeans took over. This includes the strict marriage arrangements made, punishment for such crimes as murder, theft and adultery, and the customs associated with the corroboree.

Thomas appended a list with biographical notes of each of the twenty-five 'Men composing the Native Police on 1st January 1843'. Billibellary, 'clan headman for one of three sections of the Wurundjeri-willam patriline of the Wurundjeri-balluk clan',⁵⁹ was one of these, and Thomas gives him credit that 'through his influence the native police was first formed'.⁶⁰ Useful and telling statistical returns are included with his letter: 'Return showing number of Aborigines committed and tried for offences against Europeans in the Colony of Victoria, 1849-1853' (four — with names, offences, locations, verdicts and sentences), Return

showing number of Europeans committed and tried for offences against Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, 1849-1853' (one), and Aboriginal population statistics, including the number of deaths and births, to the end of 1853.

Letter 14, 'Account of the Aborigines', goes on to discuss 'Aboriginal traditions and superstitions'. Thomas had observed no trace of any ceremony analogous to the 'ancient ophiolatry' (the worship of snakes) which was believed by Europeans in some quarters at that time. He documented the legends concerning the creation of man and of woman, how man first came into possession of fire, and the fearful being Mindye, the Rainbow Serpent. Thomas' first-hand description of the speed and efficiency with which the Aboriginal people could construct a new camp site, exemplifies their energy and group spirit:

They commence barking and building; in one half hour I have seen one of the most beautiful, romantic, and stillest parts of the wilderness become a busy and clamorous town, and the beautiful forest marred for materials for their habitation, and as much bustle as though the spot had been located for generations.⁶¹

Although he is of the view that 'there is not a more peaceable community than the blacks when but one tribe is present',⁶² he did witness a fight between the Barrabool and Buninyong blacks north of Melbourne, but reported no deaths. 'My impression ever was, *and is still the*

same, that, from the blacks as a body, to Europeans there is no danger whatever; it is our damnable drink that has made them so nauseous even to ourselves, without our for a moment calculating the beam in our own European eye'.⁶³ Thomas viewed the ceremony of Murrum Turrakerook, or female coming of age, and the ceremony of Tib-but, or male coming of age, which he described in some detail. As a postscript to this letter, he inscribed a personal note to La Trobe, referring to his culturally sensitive report: 'You are a married man, or I would not have stated on the female coming of age. It will show you that these people have some respect for laws of nature; in fact, they are more delicate than white people in many respects'.⁶⁴

Henry Edward Pulteney Dana, Native Police Corps

La Trobe himself contributed to the collection the document concerning Henry Edward Pulteney Dana (for a portrait see p.14). Dana trained at Sandhurst with the prospect of a commission in the army of the East India Company. When this failed to eventuate, he went to Van Diemen's Land in the late 1830s, and on to Port Phillip in 1842. In Melbourne, he renewed acquaintance with Charles Joseph La Trobe whom he had met in London, and they became firm friends. La Trobe soon appointed him to set up a Native Police Corps under the general supervision of the Assistant Protector of Aborigines, William Thomas. His second in command was Dudley Charles Le Souëf, son of William Le Souëf, Assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Goulburn River District.⁶⁵ The Native Police Corps was one of the earliest police forces in Victoria. It employed Aboriginal men to help impose British law across the colony and intervene in any frontier conflict between newly arrived European settlers and local Aboriginal communities. The aim of the corps was 'co-operative policing between settlers and Melbourne's Aboriginal inhabitants, and lasted until 1853'. Over the decade of its existence, 'about one hundred men joined the Corps, recruited initially from the Boon wurrung and Woiwurrung groups, but later from all areas of the Port Phillip District'.⁶⁶ Based at Narre Warren, the Native Police were a mounted, armed and uniformed corps, ably managed by their commandant, Captain Dana, who held their trust and, as a police officer, was concerned only that they carry out their duty satisfactorily.

The corps was mainly deployed on the margins of European settlement as a defence against sheep stealing, but the men also carried out some routine European police work. Problems arose, however, when the native police were directed to track and capture

known Aboriginal offenders.⁶⁷ The sending of Aboriginal police to search for and arrest their own people was demoralising to them. A notable weakness in the system was that Dana preferred to retain them as a troop of mounted police, and did not take advantage of their tracking skills. The Native Police Corps rendered valuable service to the squatters and to the administration as the main force representing the authority of the crown. It would seem to be a miscalculation that the native police were given the role of collecting licence fees from diggers even before they had a chance to strike gold, and Dana appeared to ignore or tacitly approve brutality used on occasion by the troopers against the defenceless miners. There were plans to establish a chain of police stations staffed by European and Aboriginal police across Victoria, but Dana's sudden death in November 1852 marked an end to this, and the Corps was disbanded in the following year.

The chronicle included is really La Trobe's commendation for Dana and for the Native Police Corps, written on 22 January 1853 to Sir John Pakington, Secretary of State for the Colonies. He described the circumstances under which he had been inspired to raise a unit of Indigenous men to police 'the collisions between the settlers and the aborigines [as they] became unavoidably more serious and fatal'.⁶⁸ Under Dana, the Corps 'at once formed a link between the native and the European, and gave many opportunities for the establishment of friendly relations'.⁶⁹ La Trobe had 'no hesitation in saying that the entire credit... is due to Mr Dana, for no one who did not bring to the work his tact, energy, firmness, and moral and physical powers of endurance, could have succeeded'.⁷⁰ Given the position in which his widow found herself with four young children, La Trobe recommended that a substantial gratuity should be paid to her by the British government.

Letters from Victorian Pioneers is an invaluable and absorbing record of the earliest years of settlement of the Port Phillip District. Many of the descendants of the pioneers who responded to La Trobe's request to document their early experiences still live in Victoria. Richard Zachariah interviewed a number of those who have connections to the Western District, an area that La Trobe knew well, and has written an interesting and challenging account titled, *The Vanished Land: disappearing dynasties of Victoria's Western District*.⁷¹

More importantly, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* is a first-hand account of the meeting of Europeans with the traditional owners of

this land. The peaceable contacts, as well as the inevitable clashes between the two are recalled and documented. It would be true to say that if La Trobe had not sent out his circular requesting information about the colony in its earliest days, most of the letters would not have been written. 'It is a tribute to his foresight that the documents he solicited have now been published three times and are still an essential source for the writing of early Victorian history.'⁷² Had La Trobe not ensured their safety for posterity in the secure environment of State Library Victoria, perhaps they would not have survived his own generation.

Note

Unless specified otherwise, references are to the first edition of Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc., addressed by Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria*, Melbourne: Published for the Trustees of the Public Library by Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, 1898 (digitised versions accessible via C J La Trobe Society and State Library Victoria websites).

Biographical notes

- AITKEN, John** (1792?-1858), pioneer sheep breeder and grazier; first settler 1836 in the Gisborne-Sunbury district at *Mount Aitken*. Bought *Mount Elephant* No.2 run, west of Geelong in 1852. Mentioned settlers who followed in Batman's footsteps to Port Phillip. Described his encounter with and fear of Mount Macedon Aboriginal people. Letter no.41, pp.206-208.
- ARMYTAGE, George** (1795-1862), grazier and landholder, held *Ingleby* station, near Winchelsea on the death in 1842 of his brother Thomas who arrived from Van Diemen's Land in 1836. It was Thomas' son who searched for Gellibrand and Hesse without success, then discovered Lake Colac, Buninyong, and the Stony Rises. Among numerous substantial runs and houses, George Armytage built the *Hermitage*, Newtown, Geelong in 1851. Letter no.21, pp.138-141.
- BELL, Edward** (1814-1871), overlander and grazier, later La Trobe's private secretary before becoming a Commissioner of Crown Lands, arrived Sydney 1839. Overlanded to Port Phillip with James Watson and Alexander McLean Hunter. After arrival at Melbourne, held *Mimamiluke* run on the Broken and Devil's Rivers near Eildon in 1841. Later in 1841, settled *Englefield* station on Glenelg River, taking up *Green Hills* station near Mount Rouse in 1846. Described 'troublesome' episodes with Aboriginal people when his cattle were speared. Private Secretary and aide-de-camp to La Trobe 1851-1853. Letter no.34, pp.168-182.
- BLAIR, James** (1813-1889), police magistrate, arrived Sydney from Ireland 1835. Became police magistrate at Portland Bay in 1840, and Commissioner of Crown Lands for Portland Bay District 1843-1846. He bought *Clunie*, near Harrow 1844, and he owned other property in the district. Noted that he found 'the natives aggressive'. Director Union Bank 1846 and Bank of Victoria 1863-66. Letter no.32, pp.163-165.
- CAMPBELL, Archibald Macarthur** (1817-1897), pastoralist, arrived Port Phillip from Glasgow 1841. Took *Ganawarra* run on Murray River near Koondrook 1844-1855, and in 1850s held other properties in western Victoria. Describes Aboriginal aggression and his own calm reactions. Letter no.24, pp.143-145.
- CAMPBELL, Colin** (1817-1903), grazier at *Mount Cole* and *Buangor* near Ararat from 1840. Educationist, Anglican priest. Took a deep interest in culture, education and welfare of the Aboriginal people, employing them on his properties. Opposed anti-Chinese hysteria in late 1850s. Appointed 1853 to inaugural council of University of Melbourne. Letter no.44, pp.222-227.
- CARFRAE, John** (1821-1885), pastoralist, held *Ledcourt*, oldest pastoral residence in the Stawell region from 1848-1858. La Trobe visited in March 1850 and sketched the house. He apologised to La Trobe for lack information since he had lived on the station for only five years and knew little of its history. Appears only in 1898 edition. Letter no.5, pp.10-11.
- CHIRNSIDE, Thomas** (1815-1887), grazier, arrived Adelaide with brother Andrew in 1839, reaching Sydney two months later. Overlanded cattle to Adelaide. Took *Point Cooke* (later Point Cook) sheep run (1852), *Loddon* run and *Mount William* station (both in 1842). They went on to acquire numerous other properties including *Mokanger*, *Victoria Lagoon* in the Grampians, *Kenilworth South*, *Wardy Yallock*, *Cumong*, *Mount Elephant*, *Wyndham* (Werribee) and *Carranballac* (near Skipton). Letter from Thomas discussed characteristics of settlers in the different colonies. Described Port Phillip as 'the Eden of the colonies'. Letter no.48, pp.233-238.
- CLARKE, William John Turner** (1805-1874), known as 'Big' Clarke, pastoralist. Took up *Station Peak* in the You Yangs between Melbourne and Geelong, and some of the Little River area early in 1837. Moved to Dowling Forest near Ballarat and then to the Pyrenees. Owned *Woodlands* on Wimmera River from 1841, not making his home in Port Phillip until 1850. Described hostility of the Aboriginal people. Letter no.33, pp.165-167.
- CLOW, James (Rev.)** (1790-1861), arrived Port Phillip from Scotland 1837. Held first Presbyterian service in what was later Melbourne. Assisted first resident Presbyterian minister Rev. James Forbes. Settled *Corhanuarrabul* run, Woiwurrung name for Mount Dandenong, 1838. Homestead *Tirhatuan* on Narre Warren Creek. Described settlement of area, and earthquake felt at Dandenong. Considered atrocities by Aboriginal people would not have 'been committed without grievous provocation'. He and his wife moved to *Oakhill* on Bellarine Peninsula near Queenscliff in 1855. Letter no.15, pp.100-107.
- CLOW, James Maxwell** (1820-1894), son of Rev. James Clow, grazier, occupied fine sheep country at *Balerook*, near Nhill in the Wimmera district, from April to October 1847, where he experienced 'a friendly reception from the Aborigines of this isolated tract' until an accidental shooting some months later. Letter no.16, pp.107-108. Owing to ongoing scarcity of water at *Balerook*, he explored into the desert in search of pastoral country. Most of Wimmera district settled before his arrival. Took up a licence in November 1847 to graze sheep on remote *Pine Plains* station, north of Lake Albacutya on southern edge of the Mallee, now part of Wyperfield National Park. Described murder by tribesmen of 'Geordie', Aboriginal leader, on the station. Letter no.17, pp.108-114.
- DANA, Henry Edward Pulteney** (1820-1852), Commandant, Native Police Corps 1842-1853. Held *Nangeela* on Glenelg River north of Casterton 1840-1844. In 1842, La Trobe offered him the role of organising a corps of Aboriginal police. This document is a commendation of Dana and the Native Police Corps, written by C.J. La Trobe after Dana's sudden death on 24 November 1852. Letter no.53, pp.266-269.
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- DAVENPORT, *Frances Anna* (1823?-1897), daughter of Charles Wightman Sievwright (1800-1855), Assistant Protector of Aborigines. Mrs Davenport's document 'Specimens of the language of the Barrabool tribe and list of members of the tribe, collected about 1842' appears only in the 1898 edition, pp.307-311.
- DRYDEN, *Edward* (1808-1886), grazier at Mount Macedon, one the first settlers in region in 1839 with Charles Peters. *Dryden's Station* was marked to the west of Diogenes Mount (Hanging Rock) on Hoddle's map of 1844. Dryden and Peters divided their property in 1840s; Dryden named his newly formed station *Newham*, after which the settlement near Hanging Rock was named. Letter no.8, pp.20-21.
- DWYER, *Henry* (fl. 1841-1855), settled *Victoria Valley* run near Dunkeld in Grampians in 1841. Built a slab hut, later replaced by *Barra Head* homestead. Dwyer held run until 1855. Cryptic very short letter describing problems in raising sheep and encounters with Aboriginal people. Appears only in 1898 edition. Letter no.22, p.141.
- FAITHFULL, *George* (1814-1855), first settler in 1838 of *Bontherambo* on the Oxley Plains (Wangaratta). Wrote of a battle with Aboriginal people near Benalla in 1838 with deaths on both sides. Letter no.27, pp.150-154.
- FISHER, *David* (1801-1879), grazier and pioneer of Geelong, ran his flocks over the future site of the city, while managing the Derwent Company for the Mercer brothers. By March 1837, when Governor Bourke arrived on a tour of inspection, had built 'the first house worthy of the name' on land by Barwon River. In 1850, he subdivided part of William Robertson's *Roslin* estate into 58 allotments, creating village of Ceres. Letter no.6, pp.11-19.
- FOSTER, *John Leslie Fitzgerald Vesey* (1818-1900), civil servant, landowner and author, arrived Port Phillip from Dublin and Sydney in 1841. In 1844, took sheep to *Natte Yallock* on Avoca River in Victoria's central highlands; went into partnership with his cousin, William Stawell, on neighbouring property, *Ratherscar* 1847-1850. Represented Port Phillip in New South Wales Legislative Council 1846-48 and 1849-50. He served as Colonial Secretary under La Trobe 1853-May 1854, and then acted as administrator of the colony until Governor Sir Charles Hotham arrived in June. His letter listed various fellow pastoralists on the Avoca, and he had no trouble with the Aboriginal people. Letter no.36, pp.185-186.
- FYANS, *Foster* (1790-1870), first Police Magistrate, Geelong, settled 1837 at Fyansford at junction of the Barwon and Moorabool rivers. Sent by La Trobe in 1840 to Portland Bay District as Commissioner of Crown Lands; resumed as Police Magistrate, Geelong 1849. Reported on clashes between settlers and Aboriginal people, predicting 'the race will be extinct in 20 years or less'. Letter no.18, pp.114-129.
- GARDINER, *John* (1798-1878), overlander (1836 with Hepburn and Hawdon) and pastoralist, established in 1837 the large station *Brushy Park* at Mooroolbark on the Yarra. Returned to England 1853. Brief biographical note about him by C. J. La Trobe. Letter no.25, p.146.
- GELLIBRAND, *Joseph Tice* (1786-1837), pastoralist and explorer. 'Memorandum of a Trip to Port Phillip' in 1836: incomplete text in 1898 edition (held at State Library Victoria); complete text in new edition (held in Mitchell Library). Letter no.56, pp.279-301.
- GRIMES, *Edward* (1772-1858), pastoralist, took up *Benalla* pastoral run in 1842. Auditor-General of Victoria 1853-1855. His very brief letter lists eleven names of settlers who could be followed up for information. Appears only in 1898 edition. Letter no.45, p.227.
- HALL, *Charles Browning* (1817?-), first settler of Hall's Gap, Grampians 1841; followed Mitchell's route northwards, establishing a station *La Rose* near Lexington 1841 and *Mokepilly* east of Grampians 1842; occupied *Glenmona* run near Clunes 1842-1852. Detailed account of Aboriginal lifestyle; shared cordial relations. Appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Goldfields at Castlemaine. Letter no.43, pp.210-222.
- HART, *John* (1809-1873), sea captain, trader and politician, overlanded several times from Portland Bay to Adelaide via Kangaroo Island, and returned by sea. Numerous sealing expeditions; explored Darling River. Entered South Australian Legislative Council 1851, and went on to be Premier three times. Letter no.58, pp.302-306.
- HENTY, *Stephen George* (1811-1872), arrived at Portland from Swan River Settlement June 1836. Met Major Mitchell, explorer, at Portland 29 August 1836. In his letter, described settling *Merino Downs* run August 1837, and soon stations adjoining *Merino Downs*, *Sandford* and *Connell's Run*. Stephen Henty was the first white man to visit the Blue Lake, Mount Gambier. Letter no.52, pp.260-265.
- HEPBURN, *John* (1800-1860), overlander and pastoralist. In partnership with John Gardiner and Joseph Hawdon, made overland journey to Port Phillip from New South Wales in 1836 with sheep, cattle and horses. Took *Smeaton Hill* run near Creswick in West Coliban district in 1838. He built *Smeaton House* 1849-50, and was the area's largest landowner. He recounted numerous meetings with Aboriginal people. Letter no.12, pp.43-64.
- HUTTON, *Charles* (1808-1879), pastoralist, overlanded to Port Phillip 1838; took *Campaspe Plains* run near Heathcote 1840; established *East Strathdownie* run on Glenelg River near South Australian border 1845. In his opinion, influenza responsible for diminution of Aboriginal people on his run. Letter no.40, pp.204-206.
- JAMIESON, *Hugh* (1817-1887), pastoralist, arrived Port Phillip with brothers 1839; settled at Tallarook near Seymour 1840; later *Vale of Tempe* (later *Tarcomb*) cattle run nearby. Ran with his brother *Yerre-Yerre*, (*Mildura Station* from 1858) on River Murray 1847-1878. In his letter, addressed to Bishop Charles Perry, gives a full account (typical of contemporary views) of Aboriginal people as a rapidly disappearing race. Letter no.54, pp.269-275.
- JAMIESON, *Robert* (1812-1894), pastoralist, arrived Port Phillip 1838. After overlanding to Sydney to conclude arrangements, settled *Jamieson's Run* at Cape Schanck 1839, before exploring and taking up *Yallock*, in 1839, later *Tobin Yallock*, now Lang Lang on Westernport 1839-1845. Other runs he held were *Eumeralla*, near Macarthur in Western District, and *Stoney Point* on Mount Emu Creek near Darlington. Worked well with Aboriginal people before going to *Yallock* where conflict with them caused much damage. Letter no.30, pp.159-160.
- LEARMONTH, *Thomas* (1818-1903), and his brother, Somerville Livingstone Learmonth (1819-1878), pastoralists, brought sheep in 1837 from Van Diemen's Land, occupied land at Inverleigh, and then at *Buninyong*. Settled at *Erchildown* on the north of Lake Burrumbeet in 1838, renowned for merino sheep and fine homestead. They named Mount Elephant and Mount Misery. Included map of district with letter to La Trobe. Thomas considered rapid disappearance of Aboriginal people due to the 'vices introduced by the white man', and to the change in their traditional way of life. Letter no.11, pp.37-43.
- MACKAY, *Dr George Edward* (1811-1888), pastoralist, settled first at *Myrthee*, then at *Whorouly* on the Ovens River. Purchased *Tarrawingee* run near Wangaratta 1853. Attacked by armed Aboriginal men in 1840; servant killed; buildings, crops destroyed; thousands of cattle and 4 horses killed. Letter no.37, pp.186-188.
- MANIFOLD, *Thomas* (1809-1875), landed sheep at Point Henry from Van Diemen's Land 1838. With brothers John and Peter, settled on Moorabool River at Geelong, before taking up *Purrumbete* (Camperdown), raising cattle, sheep and horses. Thomas bought *Grasmere* on Merri River near Warrnambool 1844. Unfavourable attitude to Indigenous people. Letter no.20, pp.135-137.

- McLEOD, *John Norman* (1816-1886), arrived with sheep at Indented Head, Port Phillip from Van Diemen's land 1837; established pastoral runs *Borhoneyghurk* on the Moorabool River, north of Geelong, and *Moreep* near Steiglitz. About 1849, McLeod sold these runs; purchased *Tahara* and *Winninburn* stations on the Wannon River between Merino and Coleraine. These he sold, purchasing *Castlemaddie* near Portland 1853. Letter no.1, pp.1-3.
- McMILLAN, *Angus* (1810-1865), explorer and pastoralist, made three journeys through Gippsland bush to open up land for pastoral settlement from Port Albert to Mitchell River. The first of these is documented here as 'Memorandum of Trip by A. McMillan, from Maneroo District, in the year 1839, to the South-West of that District, towards the Sea-Coast, in Search of New Country'. He relied on Omeo black trackers to find cattle trails to Port Albert. He settled *Bushy Park* cattle run on the Avon River north of Maffra in 1840 where he reported two attacks by local Aboriginal people in his first year. Letter no.51, pp.254-259.
- MERCER, *George Duncan* (1814-1884), grazier, one of a family of brothers, sons of George Mercer, partner in Port Phillip Association, arrived Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land 1838. Initially took up runs on Leigh River. After demise of Port Phillip Association and its successor the Derwent Company, took over in 1841-1842 some properties, including *Weatherboard* station, near Geelong, and *Mount Mercer* on Yarrowee River. Observed the Aboriginal people and found them 'occasionally troublesome'. Letter no.28, pp.154-157.
- MOLLISON, *William Thomas* (1816-1886), pastoralist, followed his brother Alexander Fullarton Mollison to Port Phillip 1836; by 1837, they had squatted on the Coliban River grazing their cattle between Mount Macedon and Mount Alexander. Seven stations comprised their vast run by 1838, including *Pyalong* near Kilmore. Assistant Protector Parker occupied their *Loddon* station as a reserve for Aboriginal people. Letter no.35, pp.182-185.
- MURRAY, *Hugh* (1814-1869), grazier, Colac district's first permanent white settler, arrived in Colac from Van Diemen's Land with sheep in 1837, when he was 23. He settled a run of 6,000 acres on the shores of Lake Corangamite where he built his fine homestead *Borongarook* in 1840. Murray mentioned sheep-stealing of Colac tribe of Aboriginal people. Letter no.2, pp.3-5.
- PATTERSON, *John Hunter* (1810-1859), took up *Greenhill* station, Bacchus Marsh district 1836. Held *Tourbouric* (Toorboorac) settlement on the Campaspe Plains from 1843. *Moorabee* taken up in 1851. Sold his mutton to diggers on adjacent Heathcote goldfield. He found the Aboriginal people hostile, all his efforts to improve their condition unsuccessful. Letter no.3, pp.5-7.
- PYKE, *Thomas Henry* (1808-1861), landholder, arrived from England 1838; took over *Upper Werribee* run, Ballan, and purchased *Morton Plains* station in Wimmera in 1850; house destroyed by fire 1854. During the gold rush, sold mutton to diggers. Favourably disposed to Aboriginal people. Letter no.7, pp.19-20.
- RAYMOND, *William Odell* (c.1810-1859), sheep and cattle grazier, took *Stratford* run on Avon River and *Strathfieldsaye* on the banks of Lake Wellington, both in Gippsland. Relied on Aboriginal people on exploratory journey in 1842 through Gippsland to Western Port. Letter no.19, pp.129-134.
- ROBERTSON, *John George* (1803-1863), grazier, botanist and naturalist, settled *Wando Vale* near Casterton in 1840, a property adjoining *Muntham*, a run taken up by the Henty brothers in 1837, and occupied by Edward Henty. *Dergholm* and *Roseneath* stations taken up by Robertson 1841. Letter no.9, pp.22-35.
- ROSE, *Philip Davis* (fl. 1842-1852), grazier, took up *Rosebrook* station 1842 on north side of the Grampians, with a view to Rose's Gap which was named after him., holding it for ten years. Lengthy description of his interaction with Aboriginal people. Letter no.26, pp.146-150.
- SHERARD, *Charles Wale* (1820-1889), Creswick Creek, spent two years 1841-1843 in Jamieson's run at Westernport, before moving to various areas in Port Phillip. He was at Creswick's Creek (named Creswick from 1858) near Ballarat as an actuary from 1870. He gave a detailed list of early settlers in a brief letter to La Trobe. Described settlement of country on road to Melbourne from eastern head of Western Port Bay. Appears only in 1898 edition. Letter no.10, pp.36-37.
- SIMSON, *Hector Norman* (1820-1880), landholder, arrived Melbourne 1839; settled *Charlotte Plains* run on the Loddon River with his brothers. They squatted along the Loddon River and Deep Creek, increasing their holdings enormously — now covering sites of the towns Maryborough, Carisbrook, Bet Bet, Timor, Havelock, Laanecoore, with *Castlemaine* on its east boundary. Found the Aboriginal people 'very troublesome, constantly taking sheep in large lots by force from the shepherds'. Letter no.4, pp.7-10.
- SNODGRASS, *Peter* (1817-1867), reckless and hard-riding squatter, arrived from Sydney in 1837. Took up *Doogalook* station, on Muddy Creek west of Yea. He challenged two Melbourne men to duels: William Ryrrie on New Year's Day 1840, and Redmond Barry in August 1841. In both cases, Snodgrass fired too soon, his opponents nobly firing into the air. Indicated in his letter to La Trobe his deep sympathy for the plight of the Aboriginal people. Letter no.42, pp.208-209.
- SPLATT, *William Francis* (1810-1893), merchant, arrived with brothers at Port Phillip 1840-1841 and established business as Splatt Brothers. A family of land speculators in Wimmera, Mallee and north-east Victoria. Letter no.29, pp.157-158.
- STURT, *Evelyn Pitfield* (1816-1885), brother of explorer Charles Sturt, arrived Sydney 1836. In 1837, aged 21, he was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands for the huge Murrumbidgee District. Resigned 1839, overlanding sheep to Adelaide, before taking up the *Compton* run at Mount Gambier. Went to Melbourne 1849, becoming Superintendent of Melbourne and County of Bourke Police in 1850, and Police Magistrate 1853-1878. His long, philosophical document describes the beauty of the country he traversed. Letter no.49, pp.238-250.
- TAYLOR, *William* (1818-1903), grazier, arrived Port Phillip 1840. With a friend, squatted on land along Moorabool River. Settled first at *Longerenong* in the Wimmera until they subdivided it four years later, and selling to the Wilson brothers. In 1846, he bought *Overnewton* run on the Keilor Plains. His letter to La Trobe took the form of a 'Statement of Progress of the Settlement of that portion of the Wimmera District around and beyond Mount Zero, during 1843-46'. Letter no.38, pp.189-192.
- TEMPLETON, *John* (1836-1870), overlanded aged 18 months with his mother, Janet Templeton, to the *Seven Creeks* run, near present-day Euroa, where they remained until 1843. He later took *Hurdle Creek* near Myrtleford. Despite address of his letter to La Trobe, he never held land at Kyneton. Letter no.46, pp.228-229.
- THOMAS, *William* (1791-1867), Protector of Aborigines, sent to La Trobe his 'Brief Account of the Aborigines of Australia Felix' describing their form of government, daily life, marriage rites. Listing of men composing the Native Police Corps, January 1843. Statistics relating to Aboriginal population. Letter no.13, pp.65-83. His second letter describes Aboriginal traditions, ceremonies and superstitions. Arrangement of native encampment. Fight between the Barrabool and Buninyong tribes. Letter no.14, pp.84-100.

- THOMSON, *Dr Alexander* (1800-1866), surgeon, arrived Port Phillip March 1836 and settled in the village on the Yarra, preceding John Batman by two months. Met first clergyman to visit Wesleyan Rev. Joseph Orton. Moved to Geelong 1836. Built his house *Kardinia* on the Barwon River at Belmont 1837. Deplored the decrease in Aboriginal population. Letter no.50, pp.250-253.
- THOMSON, *Alfred Taddy* (1818?-1895), *Yally-y-Poora* station, Fiery Creek near Streatham 1841-1854. He did not enjoy the privations of the squatting life, and retired to London in 1854, acting as selector of pictures for the National Gallery of Victoria for more than twenty years. Letter no.47, pp.229-233.
- TYERS, *Charles James* (1806-1870), surveyor, magistrate and Commissioner of Crown Lands for Gippsland; appointed surveyor in charge of the Portland district 1841. He laid out the town and completed a marine survey of the bay. He attempted to find a route to Port Albert in 1843; succeeded by sea 1844. Spent 31 years in the Port Phillip District. Letter no.39, pp.193-204.
- WEDGE, *Charles* (1810-1895), surveyor, nephew of surveyor John Helder Wedge, was in Port Phillip establishing the *Werribee* run for his father Edward Davy Wedge in 1836. Parents and sister were swept away and drowned in 1852 flood of the Werribee River. Charles Wedge was brutal in his responses to sheep stealing and the killing of many Indigenous people. Letter no.31, pp.161-163.
- WINTER, *Thomas* (fl. 1840s), merchant in Hobart, came to Port Phillip in 1843 to check on his pastoral investments with pastoralist William Forlonge in the two localities of Pigeon Ponds and Chetwynd on the Glenelg River, in the far west of the Port Phillip District. Plagued by drought and the depression of the 1840s, the venture failed. Forlonge was bankrupted, and Winter was reported to have lost his £9,000 investment. Pessimistic about future of the Aboriginal people. Letter no.55, pp.275-279.
- YOUNG, *Sir Henry Edward Fox* (1808-1870), Governor of South Australia 1848-1861; enthusiast for development of river navigation on the Murray. Describes voyage on the *Lady Augusta* from Swan Hill in September 1853. Letter no.23, pp.142-143.

Endnotes

- 1 The *Golden Age* actually sailed from Melbourne on the evening of 5 May 1854. *Argus*, 6 May 1854.
- 2 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.226, 5 May 1854.
- 3 Referred to in La Trobe's Letter to James Graham (included in preface to first edition of *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*) regarding the return of the letters to Melbourne.
- 4 It is established that this privately printed flyer was despatched on three particular dates: a few on each of 26 and 27 July, and most on 29 July 1853. Ref. C.E. Sayers Preface to new edition (see endnote 20) p. xii.
- 5 Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc., addressed by the Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq.*, Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library, 1898, p.42.
- 6 *Ibid.*, Preface, p. v.
- 7 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the making of a governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, p.27.
- 8 Reilly Drury, pp.23-31; John Barnes, 'A Moravian "Among the Heathen": La Trobe and the Aboriginal people', *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.1, March 2017, pp.14-24.
- 9 Reilly Drury, pp.124-126; John Barnes, *La Trobe: traveller, writer, governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, p.232.
- 10 Charles Joseph La Trobe, Notes on Early Settlement, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 10749.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Charles Joseph La Trobe, 'Australian Notes 1839-1854; Memoranda of Journeys, Excursions and Absences, 24 March 1839-5 May 1854', Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, H6944.
- 13 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006.
- 14 La Trobe to James Graham, 19 March 1872, in L.J. Blake, ed. *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975, p.77.
- 15 Blake, op. cit., p.67.
- 16 *Ibid.* (included in preface to the first edition of the *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. v).
- 17 Mrs Frances Davenport was the eldest child of Charles Wightman Sievwright (1800-1855), Assistant Protector of Aborigines, with responsibility (from 1838 until his dismissal in 1845) for the whole of what would later become the Western District of Victoria.
- 18 *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Preface, p. vi.
- 19 C.E. Sayers, *David Syme: a life*, Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1965.
- 20 Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc.*... edited with an introduction and notes by C.E Sayers, Melbourne: Heinemann, 1969 (Currey O'Neil, 1983), p. xi.
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