

# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 22, No 3, November 2023**

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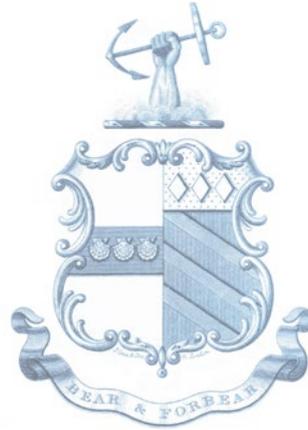
## *La Trobeana*

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](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au)

*La Trobeana* is published three times a year: in March, July and November. The journal publishes peer-reviewed articles, as well as other written contributions, that explore themes in the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe, aspects of the colonial period of Victoria's history, and the wider La Trobe family.



*C. J. La Trobe*

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### **FRONT COVER**

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1853  
Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe, diam. 24cm.  
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 Victoria, H5489

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## A Word from the President

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Yet again, the November edition of *La Trobeana* is filled with new and fascinating detail of life in Port Phillip and Victoria during the La Trobe era.

Of relatively recent times, much research has been carried out into the life and work of Charles Joseph La Trobe, mostly through the articles published in our journal *La Trobeana*. However, until now, little has been revealed of his journey home to England in 1854 from the time he was about to 'Leave the Heads 14 years, 7 months, and 6 days since I first entered them' on arrival in 1839. In the article 'The *Golden Age*: La Trobe's Journey Home', John Botham has analysed this voyage, having sourced original documents to describe in detail this homeward route which took La Trobe via such places as Sydney, Tahiti and Panama, before crossing the Atlantic to Southampton. It is a fascinating story.

Catherine Gay's delightful article about 'The La Trobe's Cottage Needlework Samplers' gives us an appreciation of aspects of the education of girls in the nineteenth century and beyond. Through her detailed research, Catherine has pointed to the fact that needlework samplers were a significant part of everyday life at the La Trobes' home – Agnes, Eleanora and Cecilia La Trobe and Rose Pellet all being taught from a very young age the sewing skills necessary in their future years. A photographic reproduction of a sampler originally made at *Jolimont* in 1847 by nine-year-old Rose Pellet, daughter of the family's Swiss housekeeper Charlotte, is on display at the Cottage. Do have a look at this lovely piece of her work next time you visit La Trobe's Cottage.

Drawing on his great interest and knowledge of both architecture and gardening, Tim Gatehouse's article 'Woodlands Homestead, Bulla' is a treasure chest of not only details about

the history of the homestead and its estate, but also about the original owner, pastoralist and magistrate William Pomeroy Greene, and those who have since held the property to the present day. Greene purchased the land in 1843, having just arrived from Ireland with his extensive family, equipped with a prefabricated timber house which was later extended considerably. *Woodlands* is close to Melbourne and many of his friends, including Charles Joseph and Sophie La Trobe, were regular visitors there. This is a wonderful description of the life of well-to-do settlers in early Port Phillip.

Historian Dr Andrew Lemon's accomplished article, 'The *Fencer's Manual* and William Clarson: the publisher's tale', began its life as the La Trobe Society's Rare Book Week address which launched Melbourne Rare Book Week 2023. It delves into mysteries surrounding the first book published under the imprint of Clarson, Shallard & Co. in colonial Melbourne in 1859. The book was *The Fencer's Manual* by Robert Meikle, and Andrew examines the quirky and sometimes scandalous behaviour in the background to its production in a typically witty and historically acute manner. He also provides a useful summary of the history of publishing in Melbourne from John Pascoe Fawkner's first hand-written issues of the *Melbourne Advertiser* in 1838 and the various other newspapers appearing in the La Trobe era.

I look forward to seeing many Society members and their guests at the final event for 2023: Christmas Drinks on Friday 8 December at the Melbourne Savage Club.

All good wishes!

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

# The 'Golden Age': La Trobe's journey home

By John Botham

**John Botham is a committee member and webmaster of the La Trobe Society. He spent a career in the RAF and with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority before developing an interest in early Victorian history. He is currently the Chair of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage and has worked tirelessly to develop an understanding amongst government and the public of the heritage importance of the La Trobe's Cottage.**

*This is a revised version of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage annual lecture presented at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria on 2 May 2023.*

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On 5 May 1854, La Trobe finally commenced his journey home after '14 years 7 months and 6 days' of 'exile'.<sup>1</sup> Following formal addresses, a levee and refreshments at the Government Offices in William Street, and to the accompaniment of the band of the 40th Regiment, His Excellency entered an open carriage which was to convey him to the beach at Sandridge (Port Melbourne). The event was widely reported in the press:

The guard presented arms, and Mr La Trobe silently acknowledged the compliment paid him by the assembled spectators, who uncovered as he came out of the building, and cheered him warmly as he drove off, followed by a long cortège consisting of – Colonel Valliant, Captain Carey, and several members of the Government and of the Melbourne Corporation... The carriage, at the head of an impromptu procession of vehicles and horsemen, then proceeded rapidly along Collins-street and over the Prince's Bridge in the direction of Sandridge.<sup>2</sup>

On his arrival at the pier, the barge of HMS *Electra* commanded by Captain Morris lay waiting to convey him on board the *Golden Age*. Three cheers were given as 'Mr. Liardet had the honour of paying the last act of respect... by handing His Excellency into the barge'. The 'numerous flotilla of boats waiting at the

pier... filled by a great number of the officers of the Government and gentlemen, and some few ladies... all followed in the direction of the *Golden Age*'.<sup>3</sup>

On reaching the ship, there was a salute from the fore-castle and 'three cheers were given as Mr La Trobe stepped on board'. About ten minutes later the anchor was raised, accompanied by a further three cheers from the boats for Mr La Trobe and three for Captain Porter, master of the *Golden Age*. Once past Gellibrand Point lighthouse 'the volume of smoke issued from her funnel in increasing volumes, and, cracking on at full speed, she was soon far away in the distance'.<sup>4</sup>

Much has been written about La Trobe's final years in Victoria: the difficulties of governing after the Gold Rush, the vitriol of the press and poor health of his wife. He had submitted his resignation on the last day of 1852 and sent his family home on the *Blackwall* in February 1853. He soldiered on waiting for his successor until early 1854 when he finally felt 'at liberty to anticipate the arrival of... Sir Charles Hotham by a few weeks'.<sup>5</sup> Hotham was expected to depart England by the March steamer and hence arrive in late May, but he delayed another month, ultimately arriving on *Queen of the South* on 21 June.<sup>6</sup>

With the *Golden Age*'s new route from Australia via Panama widely advertised, La Trobe was persuaded, and 'changed my



Endicott & Co., New York, lithographer  
 Australian Steamship Company's steamship 'Golden Age'  
 Hand coloured lithograph  
 Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia, NK831

intention of returning by the Horn, and resolved to return by the Isthmus of Panama and the West Indies'.<sup>7</sup> It must have been a very late decision, as he only wrote of his intention to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Newcastle, on the morning of his departure.<sup>8</sup>

The deep final blow before his departure was learning of his wife Sophie's death in the English newspaper *Morning Post* delivered at Melbourne on 27 April 1854, just eight days before he left.<sup>9</sup> It seems that his friends Bishop Perry and his wife invited him to stay at Bishops court rather than leave him to grieve on his own at *Jolimont*.<sup>10</sup>

La Trobe must have had mixed feelings as the *Golden Age* steamed down the bay: desperation to be reunited with his family, but sadness at leaving his home and work of fourteen years; relief at escaping from the strain of government, but pride in what had been achieved as the small Yarra settlement grew into a thriving city, and Port Phillip became the 'golden' self-governing colony of Victoria.

Accompanying La Trobe on the *Golden Age* as far as its anchorage for the night near the Heads were Attorney-General William Stawell, Harbour-master Charles Ferguson, and other Government officials. He would have been glad of their company to help distract him from the sad remembrance of his last farewell to Sophie and the children as they departed the previous year. With him for the whole voyage was his

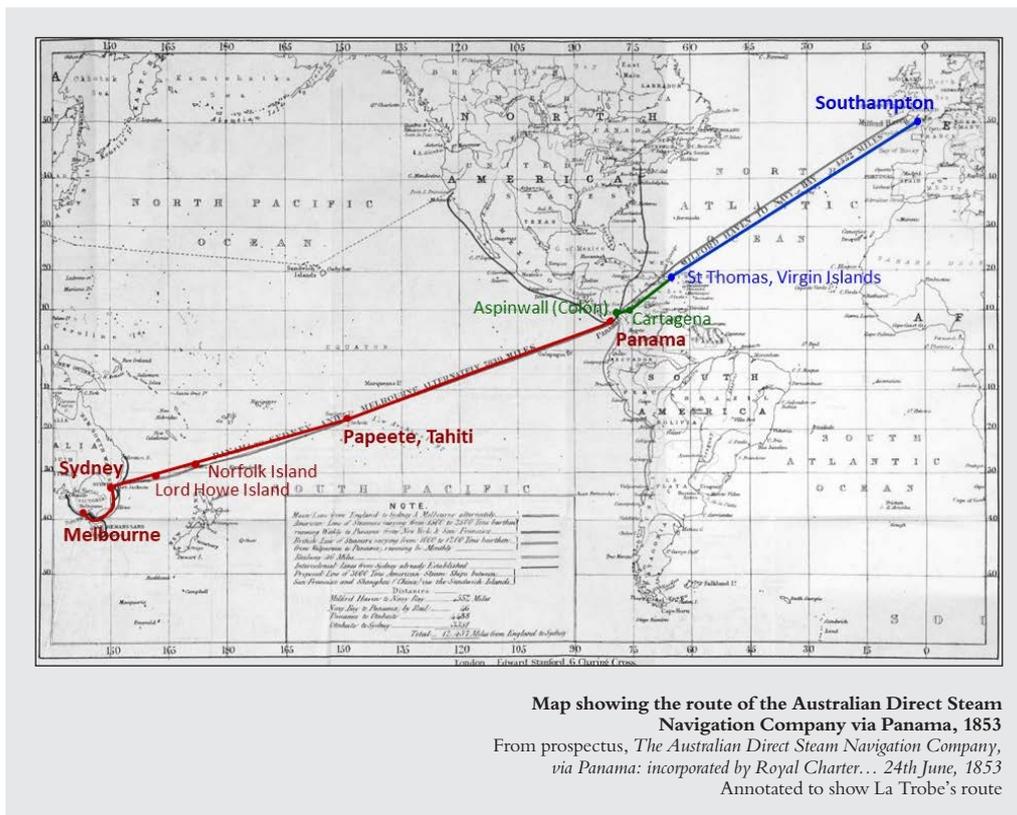
aide-de-camp, Captain Robert Carey, who had taken the post after arriving with the 40th regiment in 1852. During his term he had been La Trobe's companion on his many trips to the bush. Carey had distinguished himself in the Afghan war of 1841-42 and was returning to England to serve in the Crimean War.<sup>11</sup>

At eight the following morning the *Golden Age* and La Trobe left Port Phillip for the last time.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Golden Age*

The *Golden Age* was a 2,182 ton, wooden-hulled, paddle steamship with three barque rigged masts. It was built by William H. Brown in New York in 1853 for the New York and Australian Navigation Company, and intended for the Australia Panama route. Its distinctive feature was the diamond-shaped beam of the walking-beam steam engine protruding above the decks: named walking-beam because the crank arm looked like a walking leg as the beam nodded.<sup>13</sup> Although a more primitive design and less efficient than the engines being developed in England, it was simple, robust and lighter in weight, as much of the supporting structure could be made out of wood.<sup>14</sup> Newspapers described the superior comfort provided for passengers:

The saloons are panelled in rose, satin, and zebra woods; upholstered in crimson and gold plush and rich



hangings; gilded with taste; adorned with mirrors, and furnished with the newest appliances for the pleasures of the table. In the upper saloon the same general arrangements prevail, although, in place of the satinwood panelling, the sides are finished in white and gold... There is a large safe on board which is intended for the storage of gold dust during a voyage.<sup>15</sup>

The ship was under the command of Captain David Dixon Porter of the United States Navy. He had taken leave of absence from the Navy during peacetime to gain experience in handling steamships; after returning to the Navy he eventually became the second man to hold the newly-created rank of admiral in the United States Navy.<sup>16</sup>

The *Golden Age* had made the passage from Liverpool to Melbourne via the Cape of Good Hope in the record time of fifty-one days running time, arriving on 13 February 1854. A further eighteen days were spent in ports loading coal, including an unscheduled stop at King George's Sound in Western Australia to supplement the coal from the Cape which had proved inferior.<sup>17</sup> With more experience of the route, it was expected that the time would be considerably reduced, making a steam vessel competitive with the best of the sailing ships, which could face considerable delays becalmed

in the doldrums.<sup>18</sup> Even more time could be saved by taking the Panama route, which kept well clear of the Southern Ocean's foul weather; calmer seas better suited steam ships and were more agreeable for the passengers.

After some coastal voyages between Melbourne and Sydney, the *Golden Age* commenced its intended route to Panama, via Sydney and Tahiti. The cost for a saloon passenger was 60 guineas (£63).<sup>19</sup> At Panama, passengers and cargo would be transported across the isthmus by the newly constructed railway and thence by Royal Mail Steamer to Southampton. Unfortunately, the completion of the railway had been delayed and the first quarter of the way would need to be undertaken by mule over the hills north of Panama City. Even with this inconvenience, the journey across to the Atlantic coast would be completed in seven hours.<sup>20</sup>

### Sydney

When the *Golden Age* arrived in Sydney on 8 May, La Trobe would have made his way to Government House to say farewell to Governor FitzRoy and other officials. On learning that Sir Charles was away from Sydney until the 10th, La Trobe wrote a letter to him headed 'Government House' and dated 9 May,<sup>21</sup> but he may have been able to meet him before the *Golden Age* departed the next day. On sailing

down the harbour, 'the Ex Governor of Victoria was saluted, not only by the battery, but by the *Prinz Frederic*, a Dutch 36-gun frigate, which recently arrived here from Batavia'.<sup>22</sup>

### *Sydney to Tahiti*

'On clearing the heads at noon... our course lay in a north-easterly direction. We stood away with a fair wind and smooth sea, and before dark the land was lost in the distance. Sail was now made, and we proceeded at a very rapid rate. The night proved rather boisterous, a heavy sea running; it did not, however, much affect the vessel'.<sup>23</sup>

This description by the correspondent of the Sydney newspaper *The Empire* marks the start of a fourteen-day voyage to Tahiti, taking them past Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands. The correspondent wrote two long articles for *The Empire* providing much detail and colour and they enable us to understand what La Trobe would have experienced. There are some hints that La Trobe wrote a diary, but one has not been discovered. However, he did make fifty-eight sketches and two text notes<sup>24</sup> on the journey and it is possible to reconstruct La Trobe's activities from them.

La Trobe made his first sketch of the journey as they passed Lord Howe Island. The *Empire* correspondent wrote:

On Saturday, the 13th, at dawn, Howe's Island was in sight directly in our course. We soon neared it, and passed the northern point about 2 p.m. This island is somewhat remarkable in appearance, consisting of two very lofty hills with an extensive valley between. It is partly encircled by a chain of low detached rocks, and terminates on the south side in a... perpendicular cliff.<sup>25</sup>

Little is recorded of life on board. La Trobe had Carey for company and there were many other people who would have provided interesting social interaction. One was Edward Hargraves, the reputed discoverer of gold in Australia;<sup>26</sup> they probably had different views of the benefits of the gold discovery. Another was Doctor George Playne who had arrived in Port Phillip soon after La Trobe in 1839. After a few years as a pastoralist on the Campaspe, he established a medical practice in Melbourne.<sup>27</sup> And of course, there was Captain Porter. He later received direct promotion from Commander to Rear Admiral during the Civil War. After the war he was appointed Superintendent of the Naval Academy and became very influential in

Ulysses S. Grant's presidency.<sup>28</sup> So this man of great energy and resourcefulness would have been an interesting host at the captain's table.

La Trobe would have most relished the relaxation of the voyage without all the pressures of office. He took up sketching again and threw himself into exploration at every opportunity. His three sketches of Norfolk Island include a distant view of Phillip Island to the south, the last a close view as they passed the northern headland:<sup>29</sup>

On the morning of the 15th, Norfolk Island was made, distant about 30 miles. Towards noon we were close to its western shore, which presented a continuous line of cliff, from which arose a range of hills covered to the summit with leafy pines. Rounding the north-eastern extremity, the other side of the island opened before us affording a very fine prospect – the heights stretching away to the eastward, their sides dotted here and there with patches of garden and cultivated ground. This island continued an object of much interest to all on board till it faded from the view towards sun-set.<sup>30</sup>

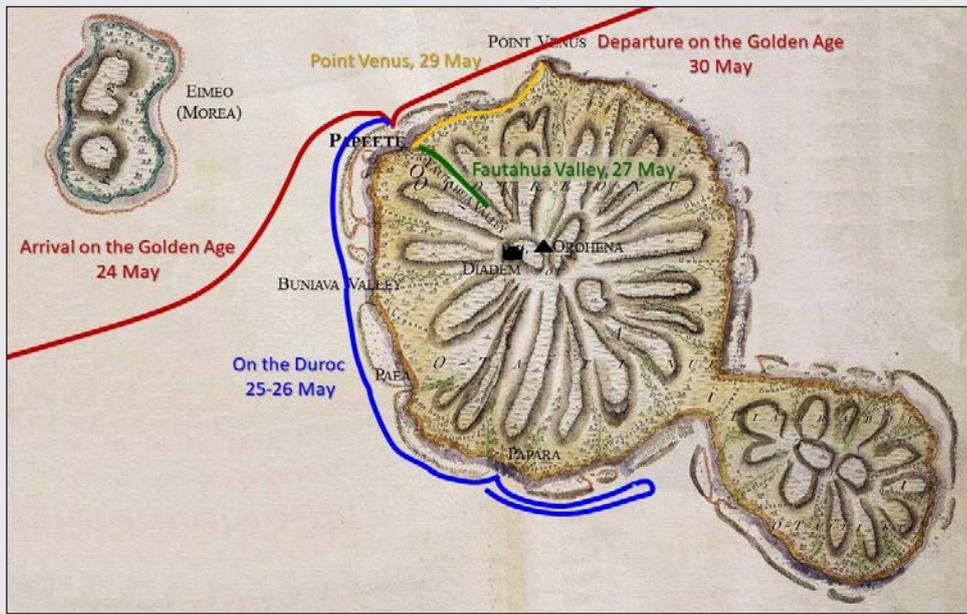
A week later they reached the island of Raratonga, where La Trobe sketched its outline, adding: 'Dark clouds overshadowing deep glens – here & there a flying sun-beam passing over the plants or lighting up the... vines on the shore. A magnificent view.'<sup>31</sup>

Strong headwinds then checked progress, but 'at daylight on the morning of the 25th, Tahiti and the neighbouring Island of Morea, lay before us at no great distance; the morning was very fine, and we glided rapidly along through a smooth sea between the two islands in admiration of the scenery on either side'.<sup>32</sup> La Trobe sketched the south of Morea (he called it Eimeo) and also Buniava (now Punaaru) Valley on the main island.<sup>33</sup> The pilot boat came to meet them and they steered for the entrance, coming to anchor at Papeete about noon.

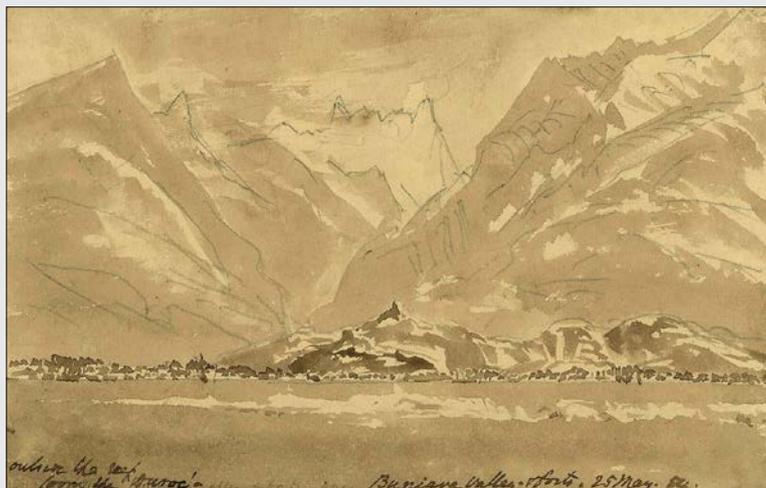
### *Tahiti*

Papeete on the north-west coast is the capital of Tahiti and also the capital of French Polynesia, a dispersed collection of 121 islands. The *Empire* correspondent described the scene as the *Golden Age* approached the capital:

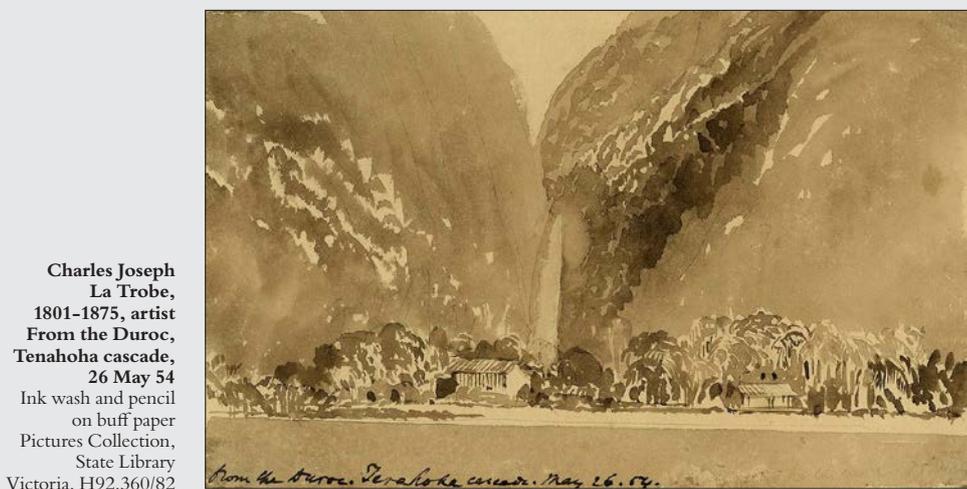
The coral reef... appears to run quite round the Island... In the centre of the reef is a narrow passage of about a mile



Rigobert Bonne, 1729-1794, cartographer  
 Carte de l'Isle O-Taiti, 1780  
 Map of Tahiti adapted to show La Trobe's journeys

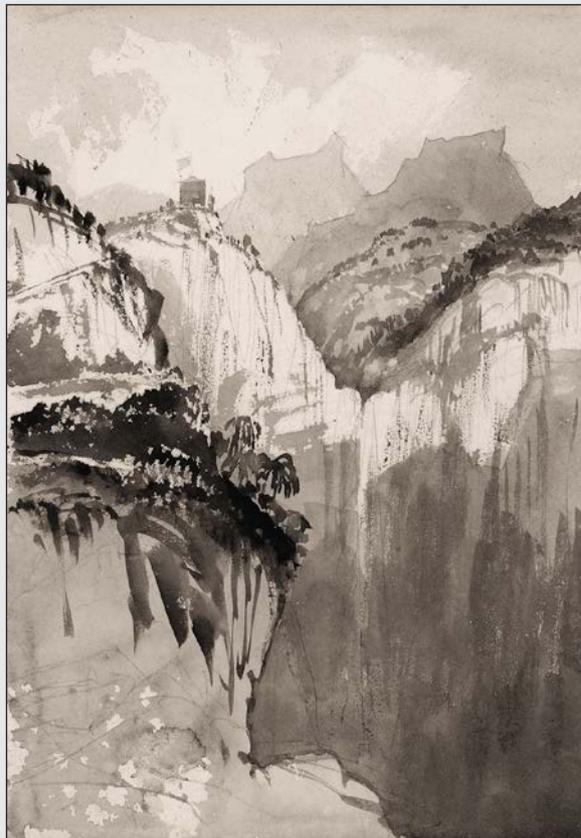


Charles Joseph  
 La Trobe,  
 1801-1875, artist  
 Buniva Valley &  
 forts, 25 May 54  
 Ink wash and pencil  
 on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection,  
 State Library  
 Victoria, H92.360/74



Charles Joseph  
 La Trobe,  
 1801-1875, artist  
 From the Duroc,  
 Tenahoha cascade,  
 26 May 54  
 Ink wash and pencil  
 on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection,  
 State Library  
 Victoria, H92.360/82

**Charles Joseph La Trobe,**  
1801-1875, artist  
**Fort Fautahua, Diadem  
Peak, Tahiti (27 May 54)**  
Ink wash and pencil on paper  
Pictures Collection, State  
Library Victoria, H92.360/97



in width constituting the mouth of the harbour... The town stands on the strip of low land which borders the bay, the principal buildings lining the beach, which forms a kind of crescent; the mountains rise close behind and extend in a chain the length of the island. Some of them are remarkably lofty...

Our arrival, as may be imagined, created not a little bustle, and much praise is due to the Governor for the disposition evinced to facilitate in every manner our operations here. No sooner were we at anchor than the French war steamer was got under way, and despatched to take in tow the vessels containing the coals. Before night the three ships were moored alongside, and a band of 100 natives at work. The coaling has been continued day and night, by alternate gangs...<sup>34</sup>

It would take the *Golden Age* six days to load the coal needed for the remainder of the voyage.

La Trobe had done his homework on Tahiti, producing a list of key people to contact, not least the British Consul, Mr Millar,<sup>35</sup> who was likely to have helped La Trobe in exploring

the island; he accompanied him on at least one day. La Trobe's fluency in French would also have helped him network with local people.

La Trobe's sketches indicate his activities in Tahiti, since he added dates, and named some of the places depicted. Although some names have changed, it has been possible in some cases to locate the site of the sketches by comparing them with three-dimensional digital maps.

On 25 May, his first full day, La Trobe boarded the French government steamer *Duroc*<sup>36</sup> for a four-hour trip to Papara on the south coast. He made four sketches on the journey: the first was of Buniava Valley but from a different angle than the earlier one since he was able to see up the valley to the Diadem peak, a distinctive crown-like ridge. Next came Paea and the Orohero (Orafero) Valley. Rounding Point Maraa at the start of the south coast, he sketched Les Grottes de Maavaa (Maraa), still a popular tourist site. His last sketch for the day was of a long waterfall just west of Papara.<sup>37</sup>

They overnighted at Papara, either on board the *Duroc* or in the village. The next morning La Trobe made three sketches, one of the house of the old Chief Tatee and two of a banyan tree: he seemed fascinated by its aerial

roots. On the return journey they continued beyond Papara, and La Trobe sketched some buildings in a valley, but with no clue to its location among many valleys east of Papara. Having turned and passed Papara again, he made a new sketch of the waterfall which he labelled Fuet Valley, and also Terahoha cascade. There are many waterfalls just west of Papara so, even with his labels, it is difficult to identify its location precisely. He made two sketches around Paea again and another at Buniava Valley with the Diadem.<sup>38</sup>

On 27 May he explored up the Fautahua (Fautaua) Valley behind Papeete, making eight sketches on the journey. The first is from the entrance to the valley with the Diadem behind, the next of Sugar Loaf, a sharp peak in the valley, then five of Fort Fautahua. Two of these he worked up on different paper into finished paintings. A little beyond the fort, on a plateau he made a closer sketch of the Diadem.<sup>39</sup>

The next day he travelled to the point north of Papeete with Carey, Dr Johnston and Mr Millar to the cottage of Mr Nutt, a retired English skipper. La Trobe added a note about this visit to his list of Tahiti personalities:

I saw on the 28 May at the point Papiete, an aged native woman emaciated & grey haired who is noted as remembering the arrival of Wallis on the first discovery of the Island in 1769 as well as the subsequent visits of Cook 69, 70 & 73. She lives in the establishment of a Mr Nutt a retired English skipper – Her name Ona-a-fara.<sup>40</sup>

Much later he dictated an expanded version of this story to his daughter Eleanora, with his signature suggesting that he was then quite blind. The native chapel between Taunoi and Papeete with Eimeo (Morea) in the background was the focus of at least one sketch on 28th. Another two sketches around Papeete of views towards Eimeo are not dated.<sup>41</sup>

La Trobe's last full day on Tahiti saw him visiting Point Venus, the northern-most point in Tahiti and the place where Cook set up his observatory to track the transit of Venus in 1769. His two sketches were a view towards the point as he approached, and from the point towards Mount Orohena, the highest mountain on Tahiti. Back in Papeete he sketched the view behind the Hôtel du Gouvernement.

With 1,400 tons of coal on board, the *Golden Age* departed on 30 May at 10am.<sup>42</sup> La Trobe made eight sketches during the

departure. The first two were of Fautahua Valley again with the Diadem behind, one of a valley farther north and two off Point Venus.<sup>43</sup> As the *Golden Age* headed north-east to Panama, he then made three outline sketches of Tahiti from around 'twenty, twenty five and forty miles' distance.<sup>44</sup>

La Trobe's Tahiti sketches were dominated by dramatic landscapes well demonstrating his love of the Romantic, particularly in his five sketches of the fort in Fautahua Valley. Three appear to have been rough onsite sketches with two, probably drawn later, more developed. He did, however, make some sketches of buildings and other points of interest, probably as mementos of his journey.

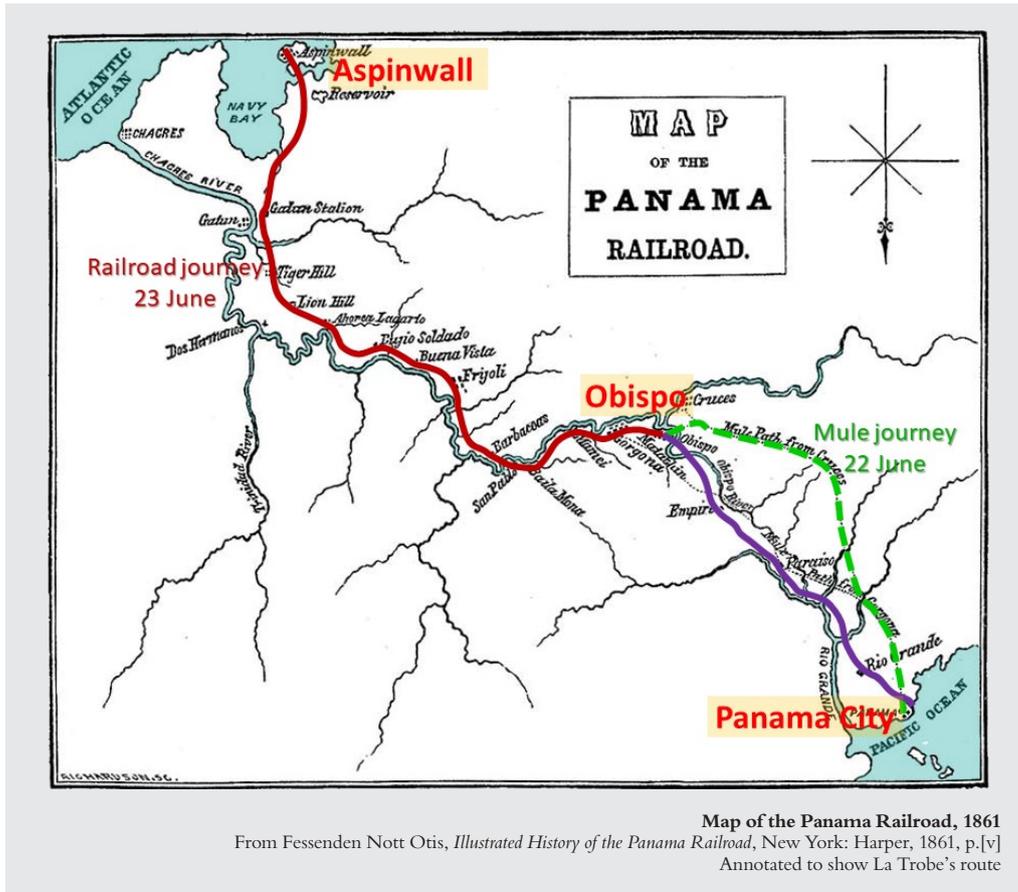
### *Tahiti to Panama*

On the second half of the voyage across the Pacific, 'the most delightful weather prevailed, with a sea so smooth that a small boat might have made the trip with perfect safety'.<sup>45</sup> However, the mood changed when a passenger 'Mr Carey, died of consumption... His health was bad when he embarked at Sydney, and he rapidly drooped after leaving Tahiti. The funeral service was performed by the Rev. Mr Cunningham, another of the passengers, and the body committed to the deep.'<sup>46</sup>

On the second day we passed the Chain Islands. This was the only land seen (the Galapagos having been left to the southward) until nearing the Gulf of Panama, when Coco [Cocos] Island was sighted. On the 18th the coast was made, we ran down the Gulf, close to shore, and came to anchor in the bay the following morning, at daylight, about two miles from the town. The passage has been longer, by two days, than was anticipated, owing to the bad quality of the coal taken in at the island.<sup>47</sup>

La Trobe made two sketches during the approach to Point Malo, their landfall in New Grenada at the start of Panama Bay, and two more of Taboga Island, about twenty kilometres south of Panama City, as they passed the next morning. *The Empire* reported:

In an hour or two most of the passengers and baggage were safely landed... it is rendered not a little perilous at times by some of the rascally boatmen, who, instead of taking passengers through smooth water to the Mole, think fit to carry them across a kind of reef, over which huge



rollers come sweeping, threatening at every moment to overwhelm the boat, and then land them in the surf, where you must wade up to the middle in water, or consign yourself to the tender care of a crowd of villainous-looking negroes, who, plunging and screaming about the boat, seize upon and carry away indiscriminately both persons and baggage. Our boat hire cost us two dollars each person, including luggage.<sup>48</sup>

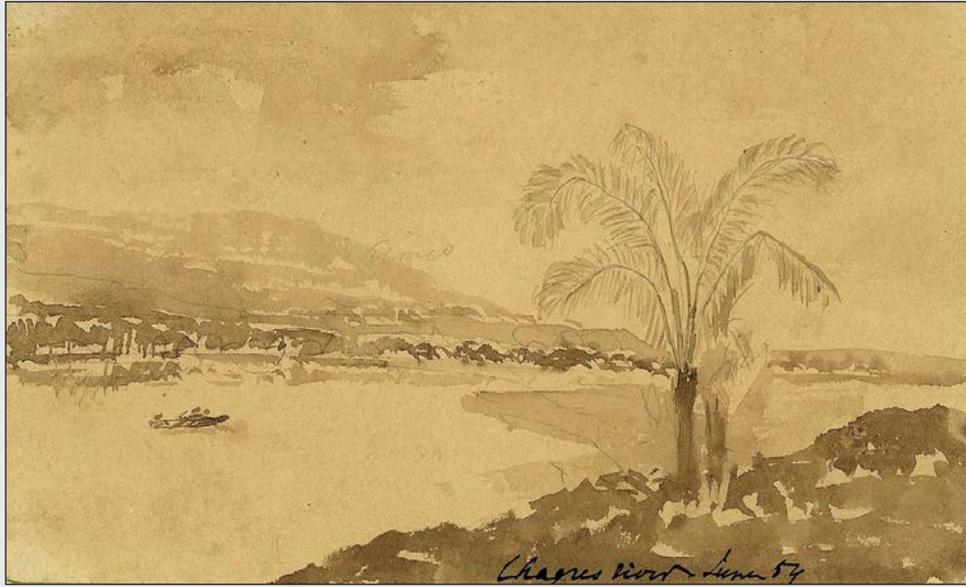
The *Golden Age* had crossed the Pacific in thirty-nine days, including six days coaling in Tahiti—quite an achievement on an inaugural voyage. However, this was its only voyage on that route. Coal had proved more expensive than expected and much inferior to Welsh coal, resulting in a longer voyage. Passenger numbers were disappointing as people were put off by the uncertainty of the transit across the isthmus, and by a new company offering the passage. The postal authorities chose not to send mail on the ship, thus depriving the voyage of that income. The result was a loss of up to £10,000 on the journey. Abandoning plans for a regular Pacific service, the company sold the *Golden Age* to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, who placed her on the Panama to San Francisco

route, until the completion of America's transcontinental railroad in 1869 took all the traffic from Panama. She was moved to the Yokohama to Shanghai route and in 1875 sold to the Mitsubishi Mail Steamship Company, who renamed her *Hiroshima Maru* and operated her until about 1890.<sup>49</sup>

### *Panama*

Panama City was a small Spanish colonial-age town on the Pacific Ocean side of the western isthmus of New Grenada. The Republic of New Granada, established in 1831 consisted primarily of present-day Colombia, Panama and Venezuela:

This country, like many of the neighbouring nations, is at present in a state of civil war. The revolution broke out in the month of April last, headed by one General Melo, who succeeded in obtaining possession of Bogota (the capital) and had himself declared supreme chief. General Herrera and most of the national Congress fled. Several engagements have taken place and recruiting parties are busy here, enlisting and forwarding men to the interior.<sup>50</sup>



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist  
Chagres River, June 54

Ink wash and pencil on buff paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H92.360/106

Due to poor communication between its east and west coasts, the United States of America sought an alternative to the long trek across the country or the hazardous voyage around Cape Horn. With the 1848 discovery of gold in California, many gold seekers used a route across the isthmus as a short cut, taking up to eight days in canoes and on mules to cross. A railroad offered a solution and in 1850 work commenced at a swampy island on the Atlantic coast, but it proved far more difficult to build than expected; swamp, rainfall, disease and huge engineering challenges conspired to cause delays and cost overruns. Up to 10,000 workers died and costs rose eight times above the original estimate. By June 1854 just fifty of the seventy-nine kilometres of railroad had been completed as far as Obispo:

The railroad is expected to be finished in a few months. A number of Chinese are at work upon it, and reinforcements of labourers are daily expected. It reaches at present to within 18 miles of Panama. Travellers proceed by mule to the present terminus, near Obispo, a six hours' journey over a pretty level country, and from thence reach Aspinwall, per rail, in two hours. The expense of crossing is about 30 dollars, everything included.<sup>51</sup>

Since it took some time for all the passengers and freight to be transported by mule and train to Aspinwall, the Atlantic terminal, it

was an advantage to start the journey last, there being little of interest on the Atlantic coast. Hence La Trobe spent two days around Panama, described in *The Empire* as:

...not a large town; in the palmy days of Spain, however, it must have been a fine city, as is evidenced by the many ruined churches, &c, to be met with on every side. The present cathedral is a noble building, but sadly out of repair. The city is walled round, and has strong fortifications towards the water; these are now in the last stage of decay, and tumbling to pieces in many places. The island of Toboga [Taboga], some 12 miles from Panama, is the rendezvous for the shipping; it possesses a small town, and a good secure bay.<sup>52</sup>

La Trobe would have had three nights in a hotel in Panama City. The first day was spent exploring around the city, making two sketches of houses. The next day he took a boat to Taboga Island where he made five sketches, three from the boat and two on the island. One showed a deep rocky gully with a clear stream, which he described as 'my bathing place'.<sup>53</sup>

On 22 June La Trobe set off for the six-hour journey by mule to Obispo. The correspondent noted that 'Rumours are rife of attacks on the road, but are, most likely, idle reports; most of the travellers, however, think it best to arm themselves for the journey'.

A specific word picture emerged: 'One of our passengers cut rather a droll figure, as mounted on a diminutive mule and armed with a very long old fashioned sword, which hung dangling from his waist, he rode out of the town'.<sup>54</sup> This sounds very like La Trobe!

La Trobe's own sketch was of mules carrying packs and people travelling through a narrow gully in a forest. He must have overnighted at Obispo as it was the 23rd when he made two sketches there. Another two are of the Chagres River, which flows close to the railroad, probably made during the train journey.<sup>55</sup> In a letter to Agnes, La Trobe wrote: 'The passage of the Isthmus gave an old traveller like your papa no trouble'.<sup>56</sup>

At Aspinwall, the passengers disembarked from their train and either stayed at one of the many hotels, or made their way to waiting ships. The Royal Mail Steamer *Dee* was waiting for the passengers for England.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Crossing the Atlantic***

The *Dee* was a 1,849 ton paddle-steamer with a single engine of side-lever design and three masts brig-rigged. She was used for communication around the West Indies, rendezvousing with the larger steamers for onward transit to England. The side-lever engine was a development of the beam engine used in the *Golden Age*, having the advantages of a lower centre of gravity and it could be contained below decks.<sup>58</sup>

The *Dee* departed Navy Bay on 24 June and the next day called at Cartegena, an old colonial city on the coast of what is now Colombia. The convent of Santa Cruz de la Popa sits on a steep mound near the town and La Trobe made two sketches of it.<sup>59</sup>

At St Thomas in the British Virgin Islands reached on 1 July, the passengers transferred to the Royal Mail Ship *Magdalena* for the voyage to England, departing the next day. The 2,313 ton *Magdalena*, was built in 1852 for the West Indies to England route. She was fitted with twin side-lever steam engines and three masts barque-rigged. After leaving St Thomas, a large number of passengers who had crossed the isthmus were

attacked by fever, with four being buried at sea.<sup>60</sup> Otherwise the voyage was uneventful, the ship arriving at Southampton on 16 July.

### ***Arrival in England***

The passengers disembarked the next day. La Trobe went to Radley's Hotel, opposite the Terminus and Dock House, and immediately wrote a long letter to Agnes:

It is not two hours since I set foot on the soil of old England again... I have no doubt that this announcement will take you as well as my English relatives by surprise as no letter which can have come to hand up to this date, will have led them to think it possible that I could be home before the middle of next month, if then... I may be detained by one thing or other a fortnight or so in London – but I promise to come & see you & dear Grandmama & all my dear Swiss relations, to whom I owe so much for your sakes and for all the love they have shown to me & mine, without unnecessary delay.<sup>61</sup>

The next day, he walked across to the terminus and caught a train to London, where he stayed with his brother Peter at 27 Ely Place, Holborn,<sup>62</sup> and went to Downing Street to report his arrival to Lord Newcastle. Three weeks later, he left for Neuchâtel to be reunited with his children.

His relatively short break between the pressures of office and the unenviable task of obtaining further employment in England was at an end. His primary purpose in returning by Panama may have been speediness, but the prospect of exploring Tahiti and Panama would have undoubtedly appealed to his love for adventure. As he wrote to Agnes: 'The whole voyage from first to last as far as I and my trusty aide-de-camp Captain Carey who has accompanied me, are concerned, has been most beautiful and pleasurable'.<sup>63</sup>

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#### **Endnotes**

1 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, in association with the State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.226; Charles Joseph La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 17 July 1854, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354, Folder 25, Box 3.

2 *Argus*, 6 May 1854, p.4.

3 *Ibid.*, *Banner*, 9 May 1854, p.10.

4 *Argus*, 6 May 1854, p.4.

- 5 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854.
- 6 *Argus*, 22 June 1854, p.4.
- 7 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854.
- 8 La Trobe to Lord Newcastle, Colonial Secretary, Downing Street, 5 May 1854, SLV, MS 7662 Box 650/12.
- 9 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854; *Morning Post* (London), 4 February 1854.
- 10 La Trobe wrote to Charlotte Pellet from Bishops Court on 29 April 1854, SLV, MS 7873.
- 11 Robert Carey (1821–1883) obtained rapid promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel and after returning to Australia served in the New Zealand Wars. He retired as a Major-General in 1866. *The History of the Careys of Guernsey*/ William Wilfred Carey, Edith Frances Carey, Spencer Carey Curtis, London: Dent, 1938, p.169.
- 12 *Australian Notes*, p.226.
- 13 [natlib.govt.nz/records/22373245](http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22373245) (accessed 3 January 2023) and [www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/panamafleet.shtml](http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/panamafleet.shtml) (accessed 3 January 2023).
- 14 [www.wikiwand.com/en/Marine\\_steam\\_engine](http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Marine_steam_engine) (accessed 3 January 2023).
- 15 *Courier* (Hobart), 2 January 1854, p.2; *Argus*, 11 January 1854, p.4.
- 16 James Russell Soley, *Admiral Porter*, 1913, New York: Appleton, pp.80–81, 462.
- 17 *Banner*, 17 February 1854, p.8.
- 18 The doldrums are a belt of very weak winds north of the equator in which sailing ships were often becalmed.
- 19 *Courier*, 10 April 1854, p.4.
- 20 *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston) 22 April 1854, p.5.
- 21 La Trobe to Governor FitzRoy, 9 May 1854, SLV, MS 7662 Box 650/12.
- 22 *Adelaide Observer*, 27 May 1854, p.7.
- 23 *Empire*, 9 October 1854, p.6.
- 24 Many of these are illustrated in Dianne Reilly (ed.) *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches*. Melbourne: State Library of Victoria, in association with Tarcoola Press and National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1999, pp.234–255. All sketches are available online at SLV, via Tahiti Folio, H92.360/58–121.
- 25 *Empire*, 9 Oct 1854, p.6.
- 26 Bruce Mitchell, 'Hargraves, Edward Hammond (1816–1891)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (accessed online 23 January 2023).
- 27 Martin Playne, *Two Squatters: the lives of George Playne and Daniel Jennings*, Hampton, Vic., Martin Playne, 2013.
- 28 Soley.
- 29 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/62, H92.360/63, H92.360/64.
- 30 *Empire*, 9 October 1854, p.6.
- 31 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/65.
- 32 *Empire*, 9 October 1854, p.6. The correspondent had not adjusted his calendar after crossing the date line; the *Golden Age* arrived on 24 May.
- 33 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/78, H92.360/69.
- 34 *Empire*, 9 October 1854, p.6.
- 35 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/94A.
- 36 La Trobe wrote 'from the Duroc' on seven sketches made on 25 and 26 May.
- 37 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/74, H92.360/70, H92.360/72, H92.360/71.
- 38 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/86, H92.360/85, H92.360/84, H92.360/79, H92.360/82, H92.360/89, H92.360/75, H92.360/73.
- 39 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/83, H92.360/91, H92.360/97, H92.360/93, H92.360/95, H92.360/92, H92.360/96, H92.360/90.
- 40 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/94A.
- 41 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/99, H92.360/81, H92.360/100.
- 42 *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 8 December 1854, p.3.
- 43 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/103, H92.360/102, H92.360/101, H92.360/87, H92.360/88.
- 44 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/67, H92.360/68, H92.360/66.
- 45 *Empire*, 5 January 1855, p.4.
- 46 Not Captain Carey, but a passenger embarking at Sydney, *Empire*, 5 Jan 1855, p.4.
- 47 *Empire*, 5 January 1855, p.4.
- 48 *Ibid*.
- 49 *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 8 December 1854, p.3. <https://www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/panamafleet.shtml> (accessed 28 January 2023), [http://www.2mass.reunioncivilwar.com/References/golden\\_age.htm](http://www.2mass.reunioncivilwar.com/References/golden_age.htm) (accessed 28 January 2023).
- 50 *Empire*, 5 January 1855, p.4.
- 51 *Ibid*. The railroad was completed in January 1855.
- 52 *Ibid*.
- 53 La Trobe, SLV H360.92/114, H360.92/115, H360.92/116, H360.92/108, H360.92/117, H360.92/118, H360.92/113.

- 54 *Empire*, 5 January 1855, p.4. (La Trobe's naval sabre with leather scabbard is held in the State Library Victoria collection, H28256, accessioned 1966. The belt and sash are held by the National Trust of Australia, Victoria.)
- 55 La Trobe, SLV H360.92/120, H360.92/119, H360.92/121, H360.92/105, H360.92/106.
- 56 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854.
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 <https://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ref=20495> (accessed 31 January 2023)
- 59 La Trobe, SLV H92.360/111, H92.360/110.
- 60 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 La Trobe to Agnes, 17 July 1854.

# The La Trobe's Cottage needlework samplers

By Catherine Gay

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*This is a revised version of a talk given at La Trobe's birthday celebrations at La Trobe's Cottage on Sunday 19 March 2023.*

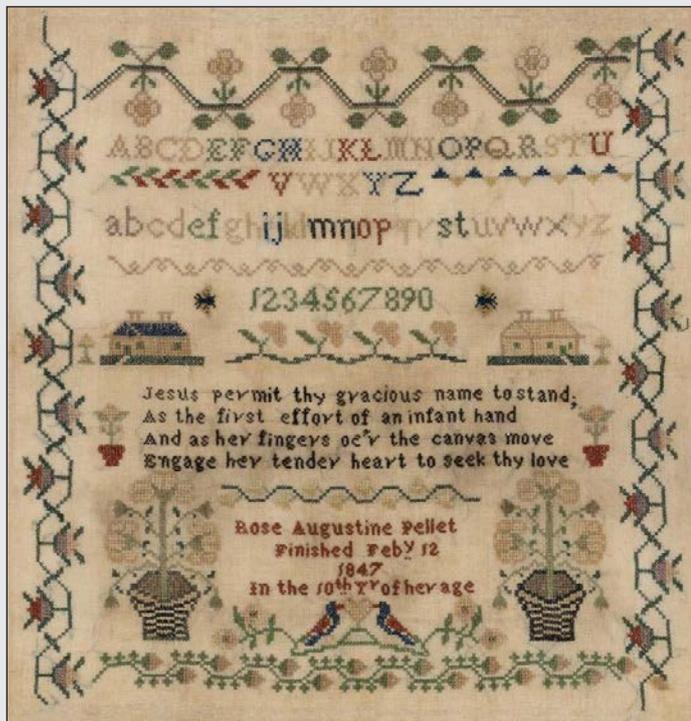
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Five significant needlework samplers from National Trust of Australia (Victoria)'s collection are held at La Trobe's Cottage. Girls made samplers, pieces of cloth embroidered with text and motifs, in nineteenth-century Australia to demonstrate their sewing skills. These samplers are not original to the Cottage but exemplify girls' and young women's education and roles within colonial Australian society. Though little provenance information survives, girls likely completed these samplers in Britain before they were brought over to Victoria and kept in family hands until donated to the Trust.

A photographic reproduction of a sampler originally made at the La Trobes' home *Jolimont* has recently joined the collection. Nine-year-old Rose Pellet, daughter of the family's Swiss housekeeper Charlotte, finished her piece in 1847 (see next page).<sup>1</sup> Now housed at the National Museum of Australia, it is one of the oldest surviving Victorian-made samplers held in a public collection. Rose's sampler shows that sewing was central to daily life at *Jolimont*, and a common task undertaken by girls and women across Australia.

## *Sewing education*

Spanning class, age, and to some degree ethnicity, most girls learnt to sew in nineteenth-century Australia. Working-class, middling and well-to-do girls across the continent made needlework items.<sup>2</sup> Sewing was an essential feminine skill in the nineteenth-century British world and was central to a girl's education. Being able to sew was a signifier of her future role as a wife and mother who could attend to clothes-making and mending, and make a comfortable, neat home for her husband and children. Needlework served as an essential skill for working-class girls, who worked on family farms, in factories, domestic service or other casual jobs like laundry work or piecework, from their early teen years. Working-class girls and women needed to know how to make and mend, as textiles were expensive and needed to be conserved. First Nations girls and young women learnt vital material knowledges, like weaving and stitching possum skin cloaks, from Elder women. In their attempts to 'Christianise' and 'civilise' Indigenous children, colonists taught First Nations girls European-style needlework.



**Rose Pellet, maker**  
**Needlework sampler, 1847**  
 National Museum of  
 Australia, 2007.0098.0001  
 Photographic reproduction at  
 La Trobe's Cottage.  
 Includes two Australian  
 parrots, lower centre

Girls would first pick up the needle at a young age, usually around five or six years old. Needlework training could include plain sewing, decorative embroidery, knitting, crochet, darning, tatting, weaving and spinning. Sewing was often taught alongside other skills a girl would need. These included reading, writing and arithmetic, but also other material skills required for household work, such as cooking, laundry, cleaning or gardening. Middle-class and wealthy girls would often learn household management, how to organise servants and balance household budgets.

Though little is mentioned in written accounts, sewing would have been essential to the La Trobe daughters' education and an almost daily task as they grew up. Charles and Sophie La Trobe raised three daughters and one son at *Jolimont* between 1839 and 1853. Mothers and female kin often taught girls how to sew at home. Poorer girls were sometimes trained at charity schools. Some genteel girls went to Ladies' Seminaries and private schools which focussed on imparting feminine skills, including needlework. Well-to-do girls were often tutored by governesses who would teach needlework alongside other accomplishments such as music, drawing and languages.

The La Trobe daughters, Agnes, Eleanora (Nelly) and Mary Cecilia (Cécile), alternated between small private schools and governesses. Sophie worried about her daughters' education.

No regulated schooling system existed in Melbourne in the 1840s. Most schools were privately run by church groups or individual women, such as Mrs Anne Gilbert whose school at the Mechanics' Institute in Collins Street was attended by Agnes.<sup>3</sup> A governess, Susan Meade, taught Agnes in the mid-1840s. In 1848 Eleanora attended Mrs Charlotte Conolly's school in Collins Street, but Sophie wrote 'it is only till I have been able to find someone to come and teach them both at home'.<sup>4</sup> Sophie preferred a home education and eventually acquired a Swiss governess, Madeline Béguin who was known in the family as Maddy, to teach her children.

Rose Pellet, as the daughter of a staff member, sometimes learnt alongside the La Trobe daughters, but at times she was schooled separately. Rose attended Mrs Mary Wintle's school in 1845, aged around seven, where Sophie La Trobe stated she 'improv[ed] in her learning and sewing'.<sup>5</sup> Sewing was a consistent task in Rose's life. Sophie gave Rose projects, including 'sewing baby clothes for poor people'.<sup>6</sup> This request points to the inclusive position of Rose and her mother in the household. Charlotte was both a companion and friend to Sophie, and Rose a close friend with Agnes, Nelly and Cécile.

Needlework remained a curriculum staple for girls' education throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The colonial Victorian government regulated state-run



**Sarah Fryer, maker  
Needlework sampler, 1839**  
National Trust of Australia  
(Victoria), LTC 057  
Includes the Tree of  
Knowledge, lower right

education in the 1860s and standardised the curriculum, which included needlework. When compulsory education was introduced in 1872, girls took needlework as a required subject. They had to pass a minimum standard of sewing at a yearly examination.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Needlework samplers***

Most girls made a sampler as part of their needlework training.<sup>8</sup> A sampler is a piece of fabric, which varied in size,<sup>9</sup> embroidered with various letters, numbers, inscriptions, patterns and motifs. Girls learnt how to do numerous stitches, like cross-stitch, feather stitch, satin stitch and others, which would create different textures and effects.

Sampler making was originally employed in Europe in the sixteenth century, used by women to record intricate embroidery patterns and stitches. By the end of the eighteenth century it had morphed into a task for girls to showcase their needlework skills. Girls made samplers at home and at school. A sampler proved that a girl could stitch letters, numbers and decorative images, competencies she would use to mark valuable household linens with family initials, create decorative objects for the home, such as cushions or antimacassars, or adorn clothing and accessories. Samplers could act as a material resumé for working-class girls employed in domestic service, a demonstration that they could mend and make household linens and clothing.

In its nineteenth-century Australian form, a sampler consisted of a square or rectangular piece of backing fabric (the ground) on which 'bands' (or rows) of various combinations of stitches were placed.<sup>10</sup> A sampler could depict an alphabet, numerals, symbols and motifs, decorative borders, commonplace verse or religious scripture. Samplers usually finish with the name and age of the maker, along with the location and date of production. It is difficult to find an Australian sampler with each of these features: most include a mixture.

Sarah Fryer's sampler, currently on display at La Trobe's Cottage, was likely made in Britain when she was ten years old in 1839; it shares most of these typical characteristics. Notably, it depicts Adam and Eve next to the Tree of Knowledge, a scene which is also stitched on a smaller sampler in the Cottage, made in 1802 by an unknown creator (picture p.21).<sup>11</sup> Religious scripture and imagery are common features on samplers. Sewing was seen as a contemplative activity that taught Christian girls piety and patience. Stitching verse from the Bible was thought to reinforce religious messages to girls. Another sampler in the Cottage, wrought by seven-year-old Charlotte Brett in 1800 has four pieces of scripture on it,<sup>12</sup> including 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth', a common sampler inscription.<sup>13</sup>

Rose Pellet's sampler includes typical sampler themes like religious verse, an alphabet,



**Ann Brown, maker**  
**Needlework sampler, 1832**  
 National Trust of Australia (Victoria), LTC 002  
 Includes a Scotch thistle, lower left

numerals, decorative borders, flower motifs and her age, name and the year. It also includes a cottage in mirror image, bees and two Australian parrots. Rose likely made it under the tutelage of the governess who worked for the La Trobe family.

Though no samplers attributed to the La Trobe daughters survive, it can be assumed that like Rose, each of the girls worked a sampler as part of their education. When she was sent back to Switzerland to be educated in 1845, Agnes sewed an embroidery sampler on board ship under the tutelage of the captain's wife, who wrote in her diary towards the end of voyage, 'Agnes has been tolerably good today and has completed her sampler of which she is not a little proud'.<sup>14</sup> Agnes did not see her mother and sisters for another eight years, and her father for nine, and during this time sewing and garment-making became a way for Agnes to maintain family connections. Handmade needlework creations crossed the oceans from Switzerland to Melbourne: Nelly and Cécile made Agnes a pair of slippers in 1849, which they likely

embroidered, and in 1852 Agnes sent her father a pair of hand-sewn 'pretty slippers' as a gift.<sup>15</sup>

### *The significance of samplers*

Samplers are not just emblematic of girls' sewing skills. Children's thoughts, feelings and presence are hard to find in extant historical sources.<sup>16</sup> Girls, marginalised by gender and age, are often further silenced in traditional historical archives. Turning to objects girls made, like samplers, can provide access to young people's often overlooked experiences and insight into their broader roles within their community and society.

Samplers serve as symbols of a girl's labour, her physical usefulness to her family in the colonies, including her domestic work and economic utility. Often the only surviving (or clearly attributed) example from a lifetime of sewing, a sampler can stand in for hundreds of items mended and made by a girl, then woman, across her life. Samplers show that girls were expected to work and be useful from



**Unknown maker**  
**Needlework sampler, 1802**  
National Trust of Australia  
(Victoria), LTC 097  
Small sampler featuring the  
Tree of Knowledge

a young age, whether around the house or in paid employment.

Needlework samplers were important cultural objects that maintained links to a migrant's home. Often samplers can be attributed to English or Scottish makers by the colours and motifs used. Ann Brown's sampler, made in Edinburgh in 1832, depicts a Scotch thistle, a marker of her Scottish ethnicity.<sup>17</sup> Needlework could serve to reinforce a migrant girl's ethnic identity.

Samplers could also become a marker of a migrant's former life. Two of the cottage samplers are known to have accompanied migrant women to Melbourne. Ann Brown sailed to Australia with her sampler. She likely kept it with her all her life and passed the piece on to her descendants. Agnes Melrose made her sampler when she was ten years old in 1844 and brought it with her to Melbourne as a young woman in 1855.<sup>18</sup> She married David Christie at Heathcote in 1857 and would have used the sewing skills represented in her sampler throughout her married life.

Samplers also provide insight into girls' cultural roles within a settler-colonial society. Australian-made samplers are notably similar to, and sometimes indistinguishable from, their British equivalents.<sup>19</sup> Unless key identifying features exist, such as the inscription of an Australian location, or clear provenance, it is hard to tell whether a sampler was made in Australia

or overseas. The evolution of the Australian sampler generally follows that of the British, highlighting the close ties between the two forms. Likely taught by adult women who grew up in Britain or Ireland, girls acquired British models and designs. In making objects that were very similar to their British antecedents, girls' needlework carried on traditions from the metropole and contributed to a British settler-colonial culture.

We must also remember that needlework samplers are creative pieces. Though they were made under the instruction of adult women, use similar forms and borrow motifs and inscriptions from one another, every sampler is unique. Samplers are creative works made by an individual maker influenced by generations of other needleworkers. Surviving examples show girls' creativity and inventiveness in their style and designs.

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The La Trobe's Cottage needlework samplers serve as a reminder of sewing's significance to everyday life at *Jolimont*. It was a ubiquitous task carried out by the girls and women who lived there. Needlework was key to Agnes, Eleanor and Cecilia La Trobe's education, and a frequent task for Rose Pellet. It was taught to the girls from an early age. Surviving samplers show that the majority of girls and women, regardless of class, race or ethnicity, sewed, embroidered and mended in nineteenth-century Australia.

Needlework samplers were important objects that demonstrated a girl's material skills. As tangible artefacts, they can act as evidence of a girl's usefulness to her family and her cultural contributions to her community. For migrant women, samplers could serve as a marker of their girlhood and a keepsake of home. The survival of the Cottage samplers is testament

to their importance in girls' and women's lives. These handcrafted objects were safeguarded and protected by their makers and their descendants. Needlework samplers can ultimately give us access to girls' often overlooked experiences and provide insight into their otherwise potentially silenced lives.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Rose Pellet, Embroidery Sampler, 1847, 2007.0098.0001, National Museum of Australia, Canberra.
- 2 For examples of the diversity of girls' needlework see: Queen's Orphan School, Basket sampler, 1838, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; Eliza Winter, Sampler, alphabet with birds and flowers, Melbourne, 1847, HT 38738, Museums Victoria; Mary Ann Sebire at age 11, Sampler, c.1869, object registration 993 house, Mont de Lancey Collection, Wandin North, Vic.; Margaret Fraser, 'With My Needle: embroidery samplers in colonial Australia', Thesis (Masters), University of Melbourne, 2008, p.43.
- 3 Margaret Bowman, *Cultured Colonists: George Alexander Gilbert and his family, settlers in Port Phillip*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne Athenaeum & State Library of Victoria, 2014, pp.10-12, 21.
- 4 Sophie La Trobe to Susan Norton (née Meade), Jolimont, 15 September 1848, MS 11382, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria. Advertisement for the school, *Port Phillip Gazette*, 2 October 1848, p.5.
- 5 Sophie to Agnes La Trobe, 15 August 1845, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, MS 13354, folder 27, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Victoria. Board of Education, *General Regulations*, No. 21, 1864, p.13, and No. 48, 1868, p.2; Victoria, *Education Act 1872*.
- 8 Useful works on the history of sampler making include: Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: embroidery and the making of the feminine*, London: Women's Press, 1984, Chapter 5; Carol Humphrey, *Samplers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 (Fitzwilliam Museum handbooks); Maureen Daly Goggin, 'An "Essamplaire Essai" on the Rhetoricity of Needlework Sampler-Making: a contribution to theorizing and historicizing rhetorical praxis', *Rhetoric Review*, vol.21, 2002, pp.309-338; Chloe Flower, 'Wilful Design: the sampler in nineteenth-century Britain', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol.21, no.3, 2016, pp.301-321.
- 9 Larger samplers, such as Ann Brown's 1832 piece LTC 002 measures 38.5 by 33.5cm; Sarah Fryer's 1839 LTC 057 measures 32.5 by 32.5 cm; and Rose Pellet's 1847 NMA 2007.0098.0001 measures 31.5 by 30.5 cm; whereas a small sampler by Eliza Winter 1847 (Museums Victoria HT 38738) measures 18.5 by 15 cm; and that by an unknown maker 1802 LTC 097 measures 13 by 10 cm.
- 10 On Australian samplers, see: Marion Fletcher, *Needlework in Australia: a history of the development of embroidery*/ Marion Fletcher with the assistance of Leigh Purdy, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989, Chapter 3; Lorinda Cramer, *Needlework and Women's Identity in Colonial Australia*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, Chapter 2; Margaret Eleanor Fraser, 'With My Needle' (*op. cit.*, thesis, note 2).
- 11 Sarah Fryer, Sampler, 1839, LTC 057, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Collection. Also: Unknown maker, 1802, LTC 097.
- 12 Charlotte Brett, Sampler, 1800, LTC 051, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Collection. It is not feasible to reproduce this sampler.
- 13 For instance, Alice Winter, Sampler. c.1866, HT 38899, Museums Victoria.
- 14 Diary of Kezia Ferguson on voyage of 'Rajah' from Port Phillip to London, 1845, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, MS 13354, folder 24, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria. Entry for 13 September 1845.
- 15 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes, 1 January 1849; Charles La Trobe to Agnes, 12 June 1852, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, MS 13354, folders 27, 28.
- 16 Kristine Moruzi, Nell Musgrove and Carla Pascoe Leahy (eds.), 'Hearing Children's Voices: conceptual and methodological challenges', in *Children's Voices from the Past: new historical and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Cham [Zug, Switzerland]: Springer, 2019, pp.1-25.
- 17 Ann Brown, Sampler, 1832, LTC 002, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Collection.
- 18 Agnes Melrose, Sampler, 1844, LTC 035, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Collection. It is not feasible to reproduce this finely-embroidered sampler.
- 19 Fletcher, p.8.



Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Woodlands, front, 2022

# Woodlands Homestead, Bulla

By Tim Gatehouse

**Tim Gatehouse is a retired solicitor with interests in the history of pre-goldrush Victoria, architecture, gardening and libraries. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals. He has also published the titles *Samuel Lazarus: Foreman of the Jury at Ned Kelly's Trial* (2016), *On Board with the Bishop: Charles Perry's Voyage to Port Phillip on the 'Stag'* (2017), *The Two Wings of Bishopscourt* (2017), *Titanga: A Homestead in the Landscape* (2021), and other booklets.**

Visible on a slight rise from the north side of Melbourne Airport and close to the small township of Bulla is *Woodlands Homestead*. The building was constructed in stages, mostly in the pre-goldrush years, and has strong links with Charles Joseph La Trobe and other personalities who were prominent during his period of office and later in Victoria's history. Like La Trobe's *Jolimont*, the first section of *Woodlands* is a prefabricated house, but in the case of *Woodlands*, the original house is almost completely intact, including some of the original internal decoration.

In 1840 the parish of Bulla Bulla was surveyed for sale by Robert Hoddle into portions of 640 acres (one square mile, 259 hectares). One of the purchasers in 1843 was

William Pomeroy Greene. Born in Ireland in 1797, he was a son of William Greene and Mary Yorke, both from the close network of governing Protestant families known in Ireland as the Ascendancy. William Greene had been employed by the East India Company but had lost heavily in the scheme to build the Grand Canal linking Dublin with the Shannon River in the west of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> At the age of eleven in 1808 William Pomeroy Greene joined the navy and was posted to his first ship as a midshipman in 1810. In 1816 he fought in the Anglo-Dutch fleet under the command of Lord Exmouth at the bombardment of Algiers which brought about the release of European slaves captured by the Barbary pirates.<sup>2</sup> Greene also fought in the first Anglo-Burmese War in 1824. During the occupation of Rangoon after the city was captured by the British he contracted a fever, in



Unknown artist  
**William Pomeroy Greene, as a midshipman**  
Mary Stawell, *My Recollections*,  
London: 1911, p.[8]



Unknown artist  
**Anne Greene, née Griffith, 1826**  
Mary Stawell, *My Recollections*,  
London: 1911, p.[72]

all probability malaria, which undermined his health for the rest of his life and led to him being invalided out of the navy on half pay with the rank of first lieutenant in 1826.

In that year he returned to Ireland and married Anne Griffith (c.1795-1865) who came from a similar background to William. She was a daughter of Richard Griffith a member of the Irish Parliament and a half-sister of Sir Richard Griffith the author of the eponymous survey and valuation of land in Ireland. After leaving the navy William was appointed agent of the estate of John Foster (1740-1828), later the first Baron Oriel, speaker of the Irish House of Commons. The appointment was an example of the patronage exercised through the complex web of relationships in the Ascendancy families. Lord Oriel's wife Margaretta Amelia Burgh (1737-1824) was a sister of Anne Burgh (1746-1782), the grandmother of Anne Griffith. John Foster was the last speaker of the Irish Parliament before the union with England in 1800.

After William's appointment as Lord Oriel's agent, he and his wife moved to *Collon House* in County Louth, Lord Oriel having built a new house, *Oriel Temple*, as his own residence. Situated in the village of Collon, the house was surrounded by gardens and opened onto extensive parklands planted with exotic trees and shrubs.<sup>3</sup> Seven children were born to William and Anne while living at *Collon House*: Molesworth Richard Pomeroy Greene (1827-1916), Rawdon Foster Greene

(1828-1878), Mary Frances Elizabeth Greene (1830-1921), William Frederick Pomeroy Greene (1831-1862), Richard Griffith Pomeroy Greene (1835-1849), George Henry Greene (1838-1911) and Charles Greene (1840-1908).<sup>4</sup>

William Greene's health continued to deteriorate and in 1842 the family travelled to the spa town of Bad Kissingen in Bavaria in the hope that he would benefit from the mineral springs.<sup>5</sup> Afterwards they made an extensive tour of Europe as they journeyed back to Ireland. With no improvement in William's health emigration to a warmer climate seemed to be the only solution. Greece was considered a possibility. After gaining independence in 1829 the Greek government under King Otto wished to attract immigrants with capital as a means of counteracting the poverty of the newly-created nation. However, the reports of Port Phillip sent back by Anne Greene's brother, Charles Griffith who had emigrated there early in 1842, were so favourable that they decided to follow him, feeling that a British colony would provide greater security and a more familiar society than they might find in Greece. (Meanwhile, William had developed interests in Port Phillip, in partnership with Frederick Armand Powlett on *Pentland Hills*, a short distance north of Melbourne, in 1837 and on nearby *Moranding* from 1838.<sup>6</sup>)

They sailed from Plymouth on 8 August 1842 in the 500-ton ship *Sarah*. On board were William and Anne Greene, their seven children, a governess, a butler, a carpenter and his family,



**John Skinner Prout, 1805-1876, artist**  
**Mount Macedon, c.1847**

Watercolour

Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia, NK311/4  
 The *Woodlands* landscape, showing she-oaks around granite boulders

a head groom and second groom, a herdsman, a gardener, a cook and his wife, a house maid, a nurse for Charles the youngest child and a 'useful boy'. A distant cousin, William Foster Stawell, and two young men, Richard Singleton and James Ellis who were not relatives but travelled under William Greene's care, accompanied them on the chartered vessel. It had been planned that Anne Greene's sister Charlotte and three other cousins would also travel with them, but due to the illness of the cousins' father they decided against it, as did Charlotte Griffith. Their places were taken by the Sydney merchant Thomas Walker, his sister and another passenger, Mr Wray, to whom they were not related.

Also on board were two thoroughbred horses and William Greene's hunter, a Durham cow, two bulls that belonged to William Stawell, farming and gardening implements and a prefabricated wooden house. Reading matter was provided by a comprehensive library which was afterwards supplemented by the regular delivery of new books from Sydney.<sup>7</sup>

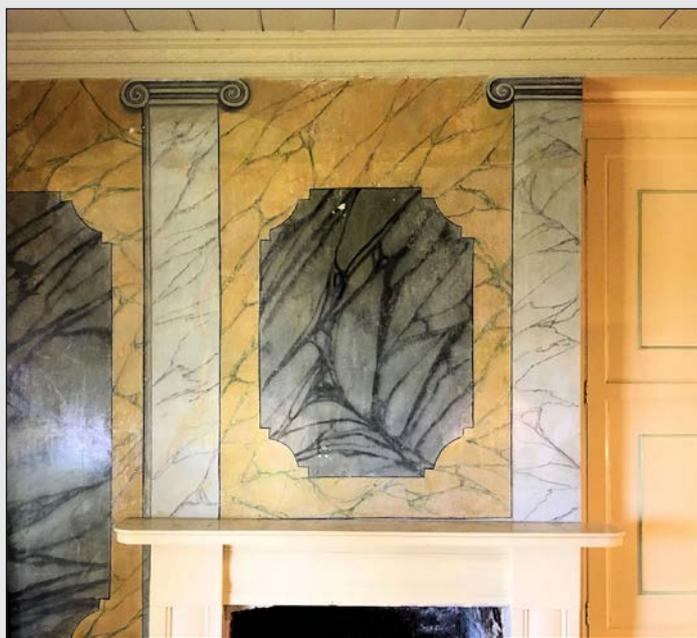
After a pleasant and uneventful voyage, they arrived in Melbourne on 1 December 1842 and initially went to live with Charles Griffith in the house in South Yarra named *Little Rockley* which he rented from the police magistrate, Major Frederick St John. Here they remained until a permanent home could be established.

William Greene's naval service entitled him to a land grant of 640 acres. In 1843 after exploring the country in the vicinity of Melbourne he decided on a block in the Parish of Bulla Bulla twenty-three kilometres north of Melbourne, purchasing Crown Allotment 2. With a frontage to Deep Creek, the property comprised undulating grassland timbered with red gums, the Moonee Ponds Creek flowing through it.

The Greenes' prefabricated wooden house had been manufactured by Peter Thompson, a London builder whose houses had been recommended to them by friends who had used them for living quarters in India. Other Thompson houses of a similar design to *Woodlands* were sent to South Australia and New Zealand.<sup>8</sup> Thompson was one of several suppliers of prefabricated houses which were popular with colonists in the 1830s and 1840s due to the shortage of adequate accommodation. It took from April to June 1843 to erect the *Woodlands* house under the supervision of the Greenes' carpenter. During this period the male members of the family and the workmen lived on the site in tents and temporary huts, and the women remained in Charles Griffith's house at South Yarra.

The house consisted of timber framing clad with weatherboards, most of the timber being Baltic pine. The framing timbers were

**Decorative scheme in third bedroom, west wing, 2023**  
This room is almost unchanged from the 1840s



marked with Roman numerals as a guide to construction. The house comprised five rooms, the largest being the dining room and drawing room, both measuring 24 by 20 feet (7.3 by 6.1 metres) with shallow bay windows on the western walls. These rooms were separated by three bedrooms of equal size. All rooms opened onto a creeper-covered verandah through French windows and were connected by a wide corridor 80 feet (24.4 metres) long. The space between the weather boards and interior lining boards was filled with brickwork (known as brick nogging) to provide insulation.<sup>9</sup>

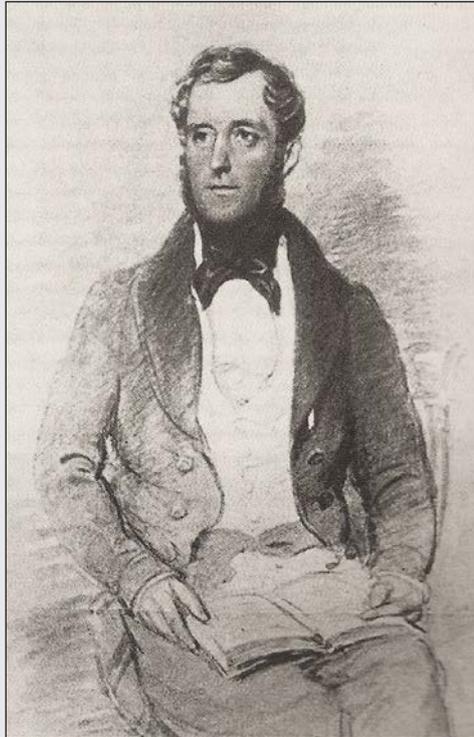
The house was sufficiently complete for the family to move in on 9 June 1843. By that date the property was well on the way to becoming self-sufficient. Fences had been built to enclose stock, wheat and other crops sown, vines and fruit trees planted, and wells sunk. By the end of 1844 the Greens had 1,200 sheep as well as cattle and milking cows, enabling them to produce their own milk, cheese and bread, as well as butter and cheese for sale.

The Greens' daughter Mary (later Lady Mary Stawell after she married fellow passenger William Stawell, who was afterwards knighted as the second chief justice of Victoria) wrote in her memoirs, 'Our house was a long time in being finished as we were constantly making improvements'.<sup>10</sup> Between 1843 and 1847 the north, south and east wings were built,<sup>11</sup> and a marble paved verandah added to the west wing. The original section of the house, subject to minor alterations, remains as the west wing of the house. The north and south wings

were prefabricated structures also provided by Thompson but were erected later. The east wing, used mainly as servants' accommodation was built last, using local materials with some prefabricated components, which by 1846 were available cheaply due to the falling demand for prefabricated houses. The room in the south-east corner, built of roughly sawn boards and containing a bread oven may have been the first kitchen, built separately from the house but later incorporated into it as the house expanded. The original roof covering of diamond-shaped zinc tiles was later replaced by corrugated iron.

By 1845 a large building constructed of stone, brick and timber incorporating a barn, coach house, stables and shearing shed was built to the east of the house. A short distance away a cottage was built for the married tutor and his family. He replaced the governess, Miss Ormsby, who had come out with the Greens, but whose romantic entanglements necessitated her return to Ireland. Other outbuildings were constructed as the need arose.

Although the family occupied the house in 1843 the internal painting was not completed until the end of 1849. It was the usual practice to wait for the plaster to thoroughly dry before being painted but six years seems excessive, so there may have been other reasons for the delay. The painting process was complex, the walls being first distempered, then undercoated with oil and white lead. After being top-coated, the decorative finish was applied. Some vestiges of the early interior decoration survive throughout the west wing. The most



**Unknown artist**  
**William Pomeroy Greene in later life**  
Jane Lennon, *Red Gums and Riders: a history of Gellibrand Hill Park*, Melbourne: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1993, p.16



**Unknown photographer**  
**Mary Stawell, née Greene, c.1874**  
*My Recollections*, London: 1911, p.[152]  
Mary arrived at *Woodlands* in 1843 aged thirteen and was married there to William Stawell in 1856 by the Dean of Melbourne, Dr Hussey Burgh Macartney

significant is the decorative scheme in one of the bedrooms, an architectural design of grey and white faux-marbled pilasters with Ionic capitals separating similarly coloured wall panels against a yellow background. Shadowing on one side of the pilasters gives a three-dimensional effect.

Although a garden was established with seeds brought from Ireland shortly after the completion of the west wing, most of the original planting has gone, with no trace of the original plan. The only trees surviving from the Greenses' time are three *Magnolia grandiflora* in the courtyard. Two were planted in the 1840s and the third propagated from another which was removed after being found to be diseased.

Since the Greenses emigrated in the early 1840s, they were not subject to the difficulties experienced by the first colonists, and having settled on land close to Melbourne they were able to enjoy its social amenities. Being entitled to a land grant and possessing considerable capital, William Greene was able to establish himself relatively quickly without having to purchase land at inflated prices.<sup>12</sup> Thomas Alexander Brown (later Browne, best known as novelist Rolf Boldrewood), writing of *Woodlands* as he remembered it in the 1840s, described it as

'neither a farm nor yet a large estate', while the household and habits were more like those of an English country house.<sup>13</sup> The Greenses not only succeeded as colonists but to a large extent were able to transfer their Anglo-Irish culture to the antipodes. One of its characteristics was a distinctly patronising attitude to settlers of English or Scottish origin as exemplified by Anne Greene's assessment of Frances Perry, the wife of Charles Perry, the first Bishop of Melbourne, 'a lively, good little woman, nothing very particular as a companion, and has a good deal of English wit or kitten liveliness'.<sup>14</sup> The Perrys were guests at the homestead on a number of occasions.<sup>15</sup>

Anglo-Irish settlers dominated the social life at *Woodlands*. Regular visitors included Anne Greene's brother Charles Griffith, William Stawell and Hussey Burgh Macartney, the Dean of Melbourne and a cousin of Anne Greene.<sup>16</sup> It was while the Dean and his family were staying there in 1851 that the house was nearly destroyed by the bushfire that devastated much of Victoria on 6 February 1851, known afterwards as Black Thursday. To escape the heat, they were sitting in the corridor reading Shakespeare aloud when Mary discovered that the forest in front of the house was in flames. With difficulty the fire was beaten back from the building.<sup>17</sup>



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Woodlands, from the north, 2022**

With the discovery of gold, *Woodlands* was on the popular route from Melbourne to the rich diggings at Mount Alexander, and all kinds of people were received there at this time being housed in the men's hut (workers' accommodation). Officers accompanying the weekly gold escort to Melbourne camped overnight on the property. Nearly all the servants, including the butler, soon left for the diggings.

In contrast to Anne Greene's dim view of settlers not of Anglo-Irish origin, she had a positive view of the Indigenous inhabitants who camped by the creek when they first went to *Woodlands*. As her daughter Mary later wrote: 'They were very intelligent... I do not know why they have so often been described as a very inferior race... they were very different then from what they became afterwards when they had learnt to drink, smoke and wear European clothes'.<sup>18</sup>

William Pomeroy Greene was admitted as a member of the Melbourne Club in December 1843,<sup>19</sup> and made a magistrate in January 1844.<sup>20</sup> Charles Joseph La Trobe was a frequent visitor to *Woodlands*, and Anne Greene and Sophie La Trobe became friends.<sup>21</sup> On a very hot day in February 1845 William caught a chill after riding out with La Trobe.<sup>22</sup> He had been in poor health for a couple of years,<sup>23</sup> and did not recover, dying on 5 March 1845 aged forty-eight.

After her husband's death Anne Greene took over the management of *Woodlands*, assisted by her second son Rawdon Foster Greene (1828-1878). Additional land was purchased and

by 1854 the estate comprised 1,025 hectares. Rawdon Greene was a founding member of the Port Phillip Farmers' Society (later the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria) and the Victoria Turf Club (later the Victoria Racing Club). He established a model farm at *Woodlands* and organised private race meetings and steeple chases on the property. In 1858 Anne Greene donated the land for St Mary's Church of England and paid most of the construction costs. Bishop Perry presided at the ceremony when she laid the foundation stone.<sup>24</sup> In 1974 the church was moved from the property to its present site in the township of Bulla to allow for the expansion of Melbourne Airport.

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Anne Greene died in 1865 leaving *Woodlands* to Rawdon. He sold it the following year, moving to a grazing property in the Riverina. *Woodlands* was purchased by Andrew Sutherland (1819-1880) who used it as a country house, his home being in St Kilda. Sutherland was born in Scotland and after emigrating developed business interests which included directorships of the National Bank of Australasia and other companies.<sup>25</sup>

In 1873 Sutherland sold *Woodlands* to pastoralist Charles Brown Fisher (1818-1908). Born in London, he was a son of South Australian pioneer Sir James Hurtle Fisher. On moving to Melbourne Charles Fisher became prominent in racing circles and was vice-president of the Victoria Racing Club. In partnership with his brother James, he invested in pastoral properties in all the Australian colonies except Tasmania



Unknown photographer  
Woodlands, east wing

Source: 'Living Legends Woodlands Homestead' brochure, 2015

and Western Australia. These included Victoria River Downs in the Northern Territory and over 1,200 hectares in the vicinity of *Woodlands* including the *Cumberland* and *Oaklands* estates. He sold *Woodlands* in 1886 but having overreached himself in the years preceding the 1890s depression he was declared bankrupt in 1896 and returned to South Australia where he died in reduced circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

*Woodlands* was purchased in 1886 by a syndicate composed of Melbourne businessmen: Benjamin Fink, Thomas Bent (both members of parliament), Aaron Waxman, Mark Moss, and grazier William Atkins McIntosh.<sup>27</sup> None lived on the property on a permanent basis, but all were prominent speculators in the land boom which ended in the depression of the 1890s. Even properties as distant from Melbourne as *Woodlands* were regarded as having potential for profitable subdivision.

In 1887 William Henry Croker (1850-1922) joined the syndicate and in 1889 bought out the other members, becoming the sole owner of the property. Croker was born in Canada and after emigrating to Victoria became a solicitor specialising in maritime law. His main residence was a house named *Maritimo* in The Strand at Williamstown overlooking the harbour. He used *Woodlands* as a country house where he could enjoy his main recreations: hunting and horse racing. Croker was the foundation president of the Oaklands Hunt Club and *Woodlands* became a venue of the Melbourne hunting fraternity. He gradually sold the land surrounding *Woodlands* which by 1896 was reduced to only forty-nine hectares.<sup>28</sup>

Croker sold *Woodlands* in 1917 to Cowra Chaffey (née Crozier, 1879-1950), the daughter of a New South Wales pastoral family. Her husband Benjamin Chaffey (1876-1937) was

the son of George Chaffey (1848-1932) who with his brother William Benjamin Chaffey (1856-1926) established the irrigation district in north-western Victoria centred on Mildura. Benjamin Chaffey was born in Canada but came to Victoria in 1886 with his parents and uncle when work commenced on the irrigation scheme. After the scheme came close to collapse during the 1890s depression George Chaffey left Victoria to establish irrigation settlements in California, while William and Benjamin remained. William persevered with the settlement at Mildura and Benjamin became a sheep grazier owning *Moorna Station* near Wentworth and several other stations in New South Wales. Like previous owners of *Woodlands* Benjamin Chaffey was closely connected with the turf, a successful racehorse owner and capable administrator, being chairman of the Victorian Amateur Turf Club. In his business life he was a director of Goldsbrough Mort. After World War I the Chaffey family did much work raising funds for returned soldiers.

In 1919 they made substantial alterations to the exterior of *Woodlands* to the design of architect Daniel R. Dossetor. The gables were extended over the verandahs and the posts were replaced by granite pillars on the south and west wings; a bay-window in the dining room and a new entry porch were built on the south side. The original verandah on the west wing was dismantled and moved to the east wing. The aviary in the courtyard was constructed and a new garden laid out around the house, watered from the Moonee Ponds Creek by an irrigation and sprinkler system. Chaffey died at *Woodlands* in 1937, heavily in debt due to bad seasons and the worldwide depression.<sup>29</sup>

Charles Brown Kellow (1871-1943) who purchased the property in the year of Benjamin Chaffey's death started his business career

importing and manufacturing bicycles which he also raced. He then moved into the sale of motor vehicles, establishing the firm of Kellow Falkiner in 1910, specialising in the importation of prestige British, European and American cars. Kellow purchased *Gundaline Station* in the Riverina and like previous owners of *Woodlands* had racing interests, his horse *Hallmark* winning the Melbourne Cup in 1933. Utilising the water supply installed by Benjamin Chaffey, Kellow's daughter Winifred enhanced and expanded the garden to its present size. In 1939 Kellow sold *Woodlands* and died four years later at his house in South Yarra.<sup>30</sup>

The purchaser was Frank McClelland Mitchell (1872–1947). He had a lifetime career in Broken Hill Proprietary Pty Ltd having worked there for fifty-three years at the date of his death, the last twenty-one as company secretary. At the time of his purchase *Woodlands* comprised forty-nine hectares, but by 1945 he had bought back much of the original holding, including that which surrounded *Cumberland Homestead* which had been sold by William Croker. *Woodlands* now comprised 767 hectares on which Mitchell raised a high-quality flock of sheep.<sup>31</sup>

Mitchell's widow lived at the property until her death in 1958. It was then leased for grazing. During this period the condition of the house, farm buildings and garden deteriorated. A small portion was sold in 1961 for Melbourne airport and in 1981 the property was declared a national park, the homestead being given a level of restoration during 1983 to 1984. In 2006 sixty-eight hectares were leased from Parks Victoria for champion racehorses to live in retirement.<sup>32</sup> The homestead and its grounds and gardens are now open to the public, as is the adjoining national park. The property is listed on the Victorian Heritage Database, as being of historical, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and archaeological significance to the state of Victoria,<sup>33</sup> and is included in a proposal for World Heritage listing of Australian portable buildings.<sup>34</sup> Despite being almost beneath the north-south flight path of Melbourne airport and overlooking a nineteen-hectare solar farm on the west, *Woodlands* retains a rural aspect. Apart from the Chaffey additions of 1919, its appearance is little changed since the days when it was visited by La Trobe.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Mary Frances Elizabeth (Greene) Stawell, *My Recollections*, London (for private circulation), 1911, p.4. This title giving the history of the Greene family and the early history of *Woodlands*, and containing correspondence of William and Anne Greene, was used extensively; supplemented by Jane Lennon, *Red Gums and Riders: a history of Gellibrand Hill Park*, Melbourne: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1993. William Greene's year of birth was deduced from the family memorial gravestone in the Melbourne General Cemetery, Section O, Number 117, C-E, and from membership records of the Melbourne Club.
- 2 A. Salame, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Algiers in the year 1816*, London: John Murray, 1819, pp.100–109.
- 3 Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*, rev. ed., London: Constable, 1988, p.229.
- 4 Stawell, p.10, and Ancestry (accessed 2 March 2023).
- 5 Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen: and good society in Melbourne before the gold rushes*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980, p.29.
- 6 Ralph Vincent Billis and Alfred Stephen Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Melbourne: Macmillan, 1932, pp.236, 220.
- 7 Stawell, p.22.
- 8 John Stacpoole, *Colonial Architecture in New Zealand*, Wellington, N Z, A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1976, p.26.
- 9 Stawell, pp.44, 78.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.79.
- 11 Peter Lovell, *Woodlands Homestead Complex: an historic structure report, the building fabric*, Melbourne: National Parks Service, 1981, pp.100–109.
- 12 de Serville, pp.162–163.
- 13 Rolf Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories* [first published 1884], Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1969, p.167.
- 14 Anne Greene to her mother-in-law, 31 July 1848, Stawell, p.85.
- 15 For instance in May 1848 for a few days on their return from Port Fairy and Geelong, 'Bishop of Melbourne's letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, July 20th, 1848', *Colonial Church Chronicle and Missionary Journal*, Vol.2, 1849, pp.(279), 344; and in April 1849 on a journey to the Ovens region, 'A Letter from the Lord Bishop of Melbourne... November 1849', *Church in the Colonies*, Vol.5, No.24, June 1850, p.83, also A. de Q. Robin (ed.), *Australian Sketches: the journals and letters of Frances Perry*, Carlton, Vic.: Queensbury Hill Press, 2002, p.122.
- 16 Jane Macartney, Diary, MS 012929, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, contains numerous references to these visits.
- 17 Stawell, p.94.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp.66–67.
- 19 Melbourne Club archives, 'admitted 8 December 1843', courtesy Dr Alan Gregory.
- 20 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 16 January 1844, p.131.
- 21 Marguerite Hancock, *Colonial Consorts: the wives of Victoria's governors, 1839–1900*. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Press, 2001, p.18.

- 22 Stawell, p.68, 'on dismounting he was chilled'. Perhaps this resulted from a fast ride with La Trobe who was known for riding his horses hard (Peter McL. Hiscock. 'La Trobe and his Horses – testing times', *La Trobeana*, vol.17, no.3, November 2018, pp, 5–14).
- 23 Anne Greene to her mother-in-law, 26 September 1843, 5 February 1845, Stawell, pp.51, 64–66.
- 24 *Argus*, 28 July 1858, p.5.
- 25 Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: the upper class in Victoria 1850-1880*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1991, p.442.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p.296.
- 27 Lennon, p.35.
- 28 Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers: the complete illustrated history*, [rev ed.], South Yarra: Lloyd O'Neil. 1986, p.94.
- 29 *Argus*, 4 March 1937, p.10, Obituary Benjamin Chaffey.
- 30 H. A. Broadhead, 'Kellow, Henry Brown (Charles) (1871–1943),' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 20 January 2023).
- 31 Lennon, p.49; *Herald*, 19 December 1947, p.8, Obituary Frank McClelland Mitchell.
- 32 The Living Legends, <https://www.livinglegends.org.au> (accessed 2 March 2023).
- 33 Victorian Heritage Database report, Woodlands, H7822-0018, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/8679/download-report> (accessed 2 March 2023).
- 34 'Portable Buildings of the Nineteenth Century: a proposal for World Heritage listing', [by the] Portable Buildings World Heritage Nomination Task Force, Melbourne, April 2021 (unpublished), p.13.

# ‘The Fencer’s Manual’ and William Clarson: the publisher’s tale

By Dr Andrew Lemon AM

Historian Andrew Lemon is a Fellow and former President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. He has published widely, specialising in Australian social and cultural history in their British and colonial context. Andrew is perhaps best known for his monumental three-volume *The History of Australian Thoroughbred Racing* (1987-2008). In 2005 the University of Melbourne awarded him the degree of Doctor of Letters for his published work, and in 2012 he was John H Daniels Research Fellow at the National Sporting Library and Museum in Virginia, USA.

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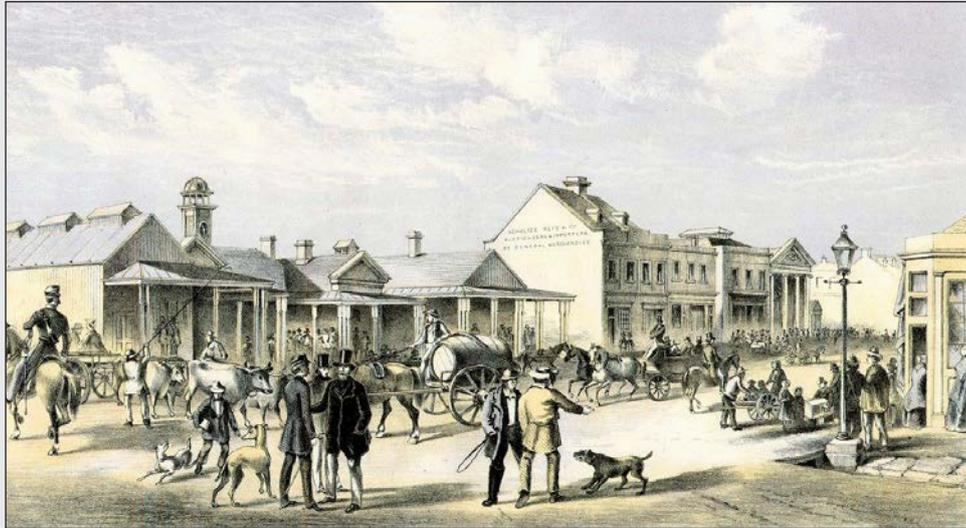
This article began its life as an address to the C J La Trobe Society to launch Melbourne Rare Book Week 2023, delving into mysteries surrounding the first book published under the imprint of Clarson, Shallard & Co. in colonial Melbourne in 1859. The book was *The Fencer’s Manual* by Robert Meikle. Why was this worth an exploration?

First, because it represented the beginnings of a great Australian publishing house. The company Clarson, Shallard & Co. took over the premises and business of a pioneering printing and publishing partnership (Slater, Williams, Hodgson). It evolved into Clarson, Massina & Co., and subsequently A.H. Massina & Co, a dominant name in Australian publishing for the next century. This was the publisher who first put the genius of Marcus Clarke and of Adam Lindsay Gordon before a book-reading public.

Second, because of the curious story of the author, Robert Meikle. Who was he? He was not a celebrity. This is the only book he ever wrote. It appeared at a time when the sport of fencing and sword fighting barely had a following in the new colonial city of Melbourne. Why did Clarson, Shallard & Co. choose to publish this as the first book under its imprint?<sup>1</sup>

Back in 2019 I set about answering these questions in an address to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for Rare Book Week, the text of which was published in the *Victorian Historical Journal*.<sup>2</sup>

An even more extraordinary sequel has emerged: a set of bizarre circumstances that brought scandal and disaster into the life of William Clarson, the publisher who, with Joseph Shallard, put *The Fencer’s Manual* into print. I will summarise my earlier talk, ‘The Swordsman’s Tale’, before moving to the tragic sequel: surely ‘The Publisher’s Tale’.



Edmund Thomas, 1827-1867, artist  
David James, 1837-1898, lithographer  
The old post-office, Melbourne, 1853 (c.1870)

Tinted lithograph  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H90.91/605  
Bourke Street East viewed from Elizabeth Street  
Clarson, Shallard & Co., 94 Bourke Street, was located on the south side between Swanston and Russell Streets, to the right of the picture

We can begin by situating the emergence of Clarson, Shallard & Co. in colonial Melbourne, with a cursory publishing chronology, commencing in the La Trobe era.

### 1838

In January, John Pascoe Fawcner produces the first hand-written editions of the *Melbourne Advertiser* followed by eight printed issues, ceasing in late April. In October, George Arden and Thomas Strode publish the first *Port Phillip Gazette*.

### 1839

Fawcner resumes publication in February under the title *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*. Other newspapers follow.

### 1840

George Arden's *Latest Information with Regard to Australia Felix* appears under the imprint of George Arden and Thomas Strode: perhaps the first commercial book published in Melbourne. George Cavenagh launches the *Port Phillip Herald*, antecedent of the *Herald*.

### 1843

The *Port Phillip Magazine* is published. Its April edition, its last, was the first to use lithographs engraved by Thomas Ham, a key figure in Melbourne's printing history.

### 1846

William Kerr's *Argus* begins publication.

### 1850

From July 1850 to August 1852 the brothers Thomas, Theophilus and Jabez Ham jointly publish *The Illustrated Australian Magazine*.

### 1854

The Cooke brothers launch the *Melbourne Age*, selling two years later to the Symes. George Slater, William H. Williams, and Arthur Thomas Hodgson commence as printers and publishers in Bourke Street, Melbourne.

### 1855

Slater, Williams, Hodgson titles include *How to Settle in Victoria* by 'Rusticus', *Medical Philosophy* by Dr Thomas Berigny, and the *Gardener's Magazine*.<sup>3</sup>

### 1856

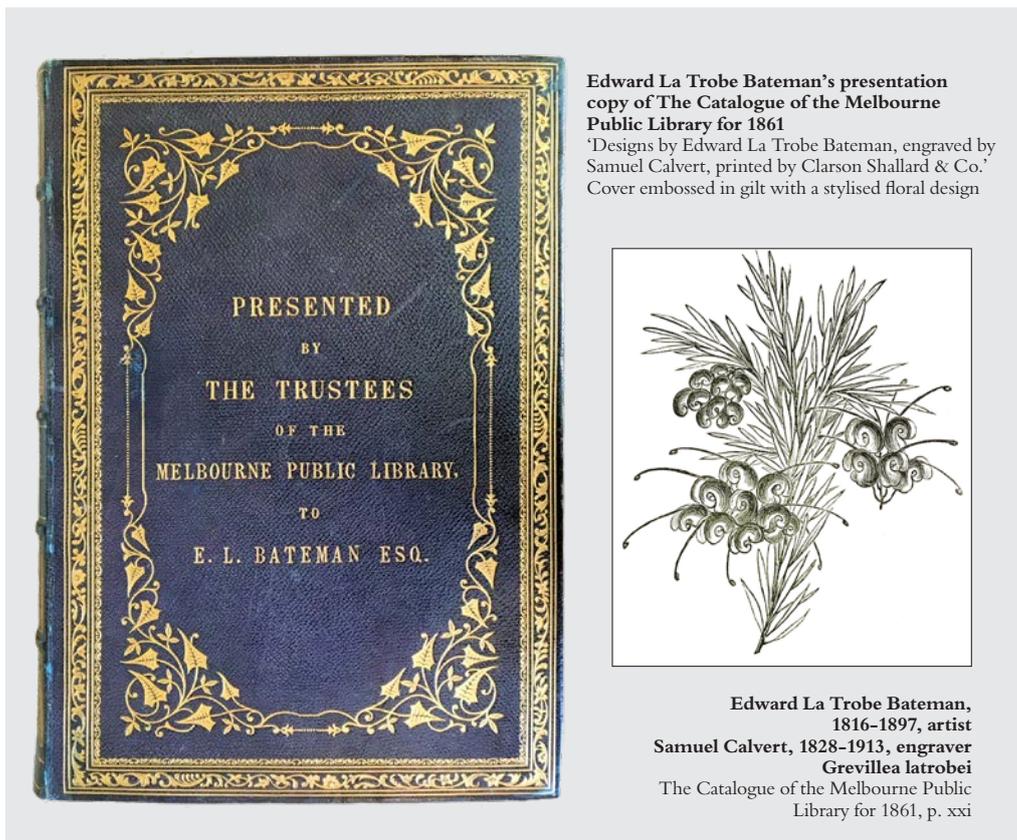
Slater, Williams, Hodgson publish Daniel Bunce's *Language of the Aborigines of the Colony of Victoria and other Australian Districts*. In June, notice is advertised of the dissolution of the Slater, Williams, Hodgson partnership: Slater continues bookselling and W.H. Williams carries on the printing branch at the same premises, 94 Bourke Street; Hodgson moves to Castlemaine.<sup>4</sup>

### 1858

W.H. Williams is awarded a prize for his typography at the Victoria Industrial Exhibition.<sup>5</sup>

### 1859

Advertisements note the sequestered estate,



**Edward La Trobe Bateman's presentation copy of *The Catalogue of the Melbourne Public Library for 1861***  
 'Designs by Edward La Trobe Bateman, engraved by Samuel Calvert, printed by Clarson Shallard & Co.'  
 Cover embossed in gilt with a stylised floral design



**Edward La Trobe Bateman, 1816-1897, artist**  
**Samuel Calvert, 1828-1913, engraver**  
**Grevillea latrobei**  
*The Catalogue of the Melbourne Public Library for 1861*, p. xxi

or insolvency, of W.H. Williams, Printer.<sup>6</sup> William Clarson and Joseph Shallard begin publishing at 94 Bourke Street under the imprint 'Clarson, Shallard'. Their first book title is *The Fencer's Manual*.

### **Clarson, Shallard & Co.**

Don Hauser in his monograph *Printers of the Streets and Lanes of Melbourne (1837-1975)* describes the publisher as originally a partnership of four men—William Clarson, Joseph T. Shallard, Alfred Massina and Joseph T.B. Gibbs—formed to acquire the insolvent business of Slater, Williams and Hodgson.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear whether Massina or Gibbs were financial partners with Clarson and Shallard right from the start. Massina had previously worked as a printer with Williams.<sup>8</sup>

The business ran for the next seven years as Clarson, Shallard & Co., a progressive enterprise. In 1859 it demonstrated typography at the Victoria Industrial Society exhibition at Cremorne Gardens.<sup>9</sup> At the 1861 Exhibition it displayed a working printing press.<sup>10</sup> It printed scorecards with pictures of the players for a famous cricket match—the All England Eleven versus the Eighteen of Victoria—held on New Year's Day 1862.<sup>11</sup> It published a beautiful 700 page catalogue for the Melbourne Public Library, embellished by fifty-seven illustrated sub-titles

and vignettes of a floral nature, designed by Edward La Trobe Bateman and engraved by Samuel Calvert.<sup>12</sup>

State Library Victoria holds three copies of this treasure inscribed by Redmond Barry. One of the copies has the wonderful handwritten inscription: 'Presented to Charles Joseph Latrobe [*sic*] Esquire C.B., by the Trustees of the Library founded by him, in testimony of respect', signed 'Redmond Barry, Nov. 28, 1862'. Another copy inscribed 'Presented to my good friend Augustus Tulk', signed 'Redmond Barry, June 19, 1862', was donated to the Library in 1942 by J.K. Moir, distinguished twentieth-century book collector who gifted the noteworthy Moir Collection. Tulk, first Librarian of the Melbourne Public Library, had arrived in Melbourne with his family on his own two-masted sailing ship in July 1854.<sup>13</sup>

By public advertisement in November 1863, both Shallard and Clarson withdrew from the active partnership in favour of Massina and Gibbs, yet the imprint continued as Clarson, Shallard & Co.<sup>14</sup> William Clarson evidently had not yet entirely severed his involvement in the business.

The publishers continued to do well. They produced an invaluable annual *Almanac* ('a sound useful epitome of information on many subjects

Samuel Calvert, 1828-1913,  
artist  
Robert Meikle, c.1817-1868,  
lithographer  
On guard, 1859

Robert Meikle, *The Fencer's  
Manual*, Melbourne: Clarkson,  
Shallard & Co., 1859, frontispiece



of daily interest to colonists').<sup>15</sup> They set up a Sydney branch office in Pitt Street and in 1865 began producing the monthly *Illustrated Sydney News*.<sup>16</sup> The Sydney office inaugurated the *Australian Journal*, 'a weekly record of amusing and instructive literature, science and the arts contributing to the necessities, the comforts and the luxuries of life'.<sup>17</sup>

Two years later, in 1867, the company divided. The Sydney business became 'Gibbs, Shallard & Co.' The Melbourne business became 'Clarson, Massina & Co.'<sup>18</sup> The two companies collaborated. In its new guise, the Melbourne business printed and published a wide range of titles and authors, beginning with the Marcus Clarke novel, *Long Odds*, while Clarke's greatest work (originally titled *His Natural Life*) was first serialised in the *Australian Journal*, which he edited.<sup>19</sup> Clarson, Massina & Co. published Adam Lindsay Gordon's *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* in 1870, the book appearing just days before the melancholic poet and steeplechase rider took his life at Brighton.

It was not until the end of 1877 that the Clarson name disappeared from the imprint page, as will be explained. From that time, the business continued simply as A.H. Massina & Co.

### ***The Fencer's Manual: swordsman and lithographer***

The copy I consulted had been for a long time in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's collection. It was fragile, in need of conservation. The full title is *The Fencer's Manual: a practical treatise on small-sword exercises, also, single-stick play, defence of sabre against bayonet, cavalry, &c., club exercises, preparatory extension motions, hints to professors and amateurs, &c., &c., with illustrations.*

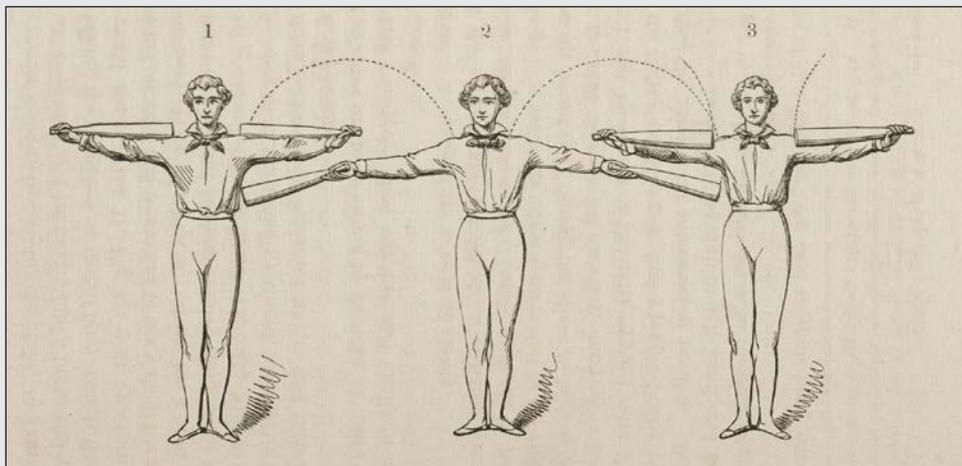
The imprint page tells us that it is printed and published in Melbourne by Clarkson, Shallard & Co. It is 22 cm high, runs to 82 pages and has six leaves of plates.

The most particular points of interest are its distinctive lithographic plates. The frontispiece depicts a fencer in full flight and is signed 'Calvert', denoting the prolific colonial artist Samuel Calvert.<sup>20</sup> One plate demonstrates sword-fighting foot positions. Another shows you how to exercise with your Indian clubs.

The book is comparatively rare. The National Library of Australia's Trove network identifies holdings in only four Australian libraries: its own, the State Libraries of Victoria and New South Wales, and Newman College.<sup>21</sup> The RHSV copy is still not included in Trove.

In my article in the *Victorian Historical Journal* I examine the comparatively late emergence of gymnastics (and fencing as an associated discipline) as an organised sport in early colonial Melbourne. Racing, cricket, athletics, rowing and football prevailed. On rare occasions when gymnastics were advertised, this was chiefly as entertainment, not sport, as exemplified by 'The Grand Assault of Arms' at the Protestant Hall in Stephen (today's Exhibition) Street 1853. Here, the company thrilled audiences with 'display at Broadsword, Fencing, Single Stick, and the exciting attack of BROADSWORD V. BAYONET... Interspersed with Professor Parker's Cœur de Lion feat of cutting a Solid Bar of Lead, a Leg of Mutton, AND A WHOLE SHEEP, at one stroke, each with the broadsword.'<sup>22</sup>

'Professor Parker' was keen to advertise 'a class for instruction in the manly and athletic arts of self-defence, broadsword, stick-play and



Samuel Calvert, 1828–1913, artist  
 Robert Meikle, c.1817–1868, lithographer  
 Indian club exercise, 1859

Robert Meikle, *The Fencer's Manual*, Melbourne: Clarson, Shallard & Co., 1859, plate 2

fencing'. His slogan, 'No More Sticking-up', was designed to appeal to those with a fear of bushrangers. There were few takers. After a few more performances of the Grand Assault, Parker decamped to Sydney.<sup>23</sup>

With the removal of Parker, a new immigrant to Melbourne, Robert Meikle, sensed an opportunity. He began advertising anonymously in the *Argus* on 22 December 1854: a private gymnasium teaching 'FEATS with the Sword, Gymnastics, Fencing and Single Stick Play according to the system of Mr Arnold, Bond-street, London'. Gentlemen desirous of instruction or practice were invited to send their details to 'Mr. M., care of Messrs Slater and Co., 94 Bourke-street'.<sup>24</sup>

At last on 26 March 1856 Mr M. revealed himself as 'Mr Meikle'. In almost identical wording, he advertised his 'School of Arms... according to the system of Mr Arnold, of Bond-street, London'. Mr Arnold, it was asserted, was the most eminent English professor of these arts who had 'attracted to his School of Arms all the distinguished amateurs, including many Noble Lords, Officers of the Guards, Royal Navy &c'—and here was the most important piece of information: 'the advertiser has on numerous occasions during several years fenced with nearly all of them'.<sup>25</sup> The Melbourne class met at premises in Russell Street,<sup>26</sup> two evenings a week.

Again, Mr Meikle gave his contact address as 94 Bourke Street east, the business address at the time of Slater, Williams and Hodgson. Evidently Robert Meikle was a colonial Clark Kent, mild-mannered lithographer at the

printing office by day, sword-fighting Super Meikle by night.

Our Fencer was certainly a lithographer.<sup>27</sup> In a parliamentary debate in the Legislative Assembly he was specifically identified as such. In 1857 David Blair, MLA for Talbot, was demanding an enquiry into the administration of the Public Lands Department. As an example of mismanagement he spoke of the recent unfair sacking of Mr Meikle, 'lately lithographic draughtsman in the department, a man of twenty-eight years' experience in his branch, and who had been dismissed for that for which he ought to have been rewarded and advanced'.

Mr Blair explained that a physical altercation had occurred between Mr Meikle and the head of his department, a Mr Jones, 'a man of brutal manners, unskilful character, and one who was in the habit of venting his ill-humor [sic] on the employees under him'. Jones, in this account, provoked the incident. 'This Mr Jones had on one occasion the temerity to insult, in the most shameless manner, Mr Meikle, and he was justly punished by a knock-down blow.' Mr Meikle had then sought 'over and over' an interview with the head of the department to explain the facts of the case, 'but he could never obtain one'. An internal inquiry acquitted Meikle of wrongdoing but he was dismissed nevertheless.<sup>28</sup>

Six years later under a different administration Meikle regained government employment.<sup>29</sup> We can logically assume that between stints at the Lands Department he was working as a lithographer initially with Slater, Williams, Hodgson and then with the new

business of Clarson, Shallard at the time his book came out, and that he personally prepared the plates from Samuel Calvert's drawings.

### ***Family legends: tall tales and true***

Genealogical history helped me assemble more information about the life and career of Robert Meikle even though—as family sources usually do—they tipped a barrel of red herrings across the path. Robert Douglas Meikle was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, around 1817. He was about thirty-six when he arrived with his wife Emily Williams and their only son Eugene—the boy was nine or ten—in Melbourne around 1853–54. Emily died ten years later.<sup>30</sup>

Despite his enthusiasm for physical fitness, Robert Meikle died in 1868 aged fifty-one, diagnosed with chronic asthma and disease of the heart—his doctor stated he had suffered the condition for eleven years. Probate records tell us he died without a will, owing £10 to a Fitzroy tailor for the supply of smart clothing. He and Emily are buried together in St Kilda Cemetery.<sup>31</sup>

In my article, I explored, and I think exploded, a series of entertaining military myths possibly invented by son Eugene Meikle, and certainly elaborated upon by grandson Hector who by the time of the First World War, worked as a gardener in Brighton. Hector (born 1884, his mother, Lucy, a niece of George Coppin the theatrical entrepreneur) made headlines in the *Herald* in 1916 after Eugene's death by claiming he should now rightfully be styled Sir Hector Douglas Mackenzie-Meikle because his father was really a Scottish baronet, his title inherited through unspecified cousins.<sup>32</sup> Further, Hector claimed improbably that Eugene had fought as a soldier under many flags including in the American Civil War as a Confederate Army officer, in Mexico, and in India where he learnt Hindustani. The would-be baronet further claimed his grandfather Robert (our Fencer) had been a Major with the 71st Foot Regiment, and that Robert's father, John Meikle, had been nothing less than a General, serving in the Peninsular Wars and at Waterloo. Alas, none of these claims withstand scrutiny.

The story of a bicycling gardener baronet in suburban Brighton was so appealing that the *Herald* revisited it in 1922 as 'Baronet and Charlady: Romance Disclosed in Divorce Petition'.<sup>33</sup> The charlady was, of course, his wife, whom he had deserted for another, leaving her with their two young children. The myth had another run in the *Herald* in the 1940s. Since I wrote my article I have been in touch with a direct descendant who agrees, sadly, that the

military stories and the baronetcy sprang from wishful thinking.

### ***William Clarson***

Having solved the mystery of Robert Meikle, I found myself drawn to the more improbable and truly tragic story of William Clarson, the publisher, a man of intellect and capacity. Rare Book Week surely is the opportunity to restore a sense of the actual people to the black-and-white names that stand on the imprint pages and title pages of the old books that intrigue us.

The tale of the first ninety years of A.H. Massina & Co. was told in book form in 1949, reprinted in a facsimile edition by Gary Morgan in 2007. Gary has included detail about two of his own family connections in the business: William H. Williams and Alfred Massina.<sup>34</sup> The characters of Clarson and Shallard are noted only in passing, and the full story of William Clarson needs a book of its own, or an opera. Some short biographical entries for Clarson and for his artist son William Alfred Clarson can be found online but do not do full justice to the complicated story. An outline here must suffice.<sup>35</sup>

Most of the partners in the firm and its antecedents came to the business by the trade of printers: Massina, Williams, Gibbs, Shallard. On the other hand, William Clarson was of literary disposition, which he combined with a passion for nature and practical expertise in gardening and horticulture. I imagine he was chiefly the 'words man' of the early business.

Alas, his personal life was a mess from beginning to end. For Clarson, the abrupt end to his direct involvement in the publishing company correlated with the sensational court case *Clarson et uxor v. Blair*, the news story of 1871–72. It was lurid, awful, humiliating to all parties. Clarson may have been in the moral right but he came off the worse. *Plus ça change*: libel cases involving sex, compromising letters, indecent photos, misuse of power, famous judges, breathlessly arrogant barristers, and contested versions of what really happened, all sold newspapers then, and they still do. It is a truism that in defamation cases, no one wins, lawyers excepted.

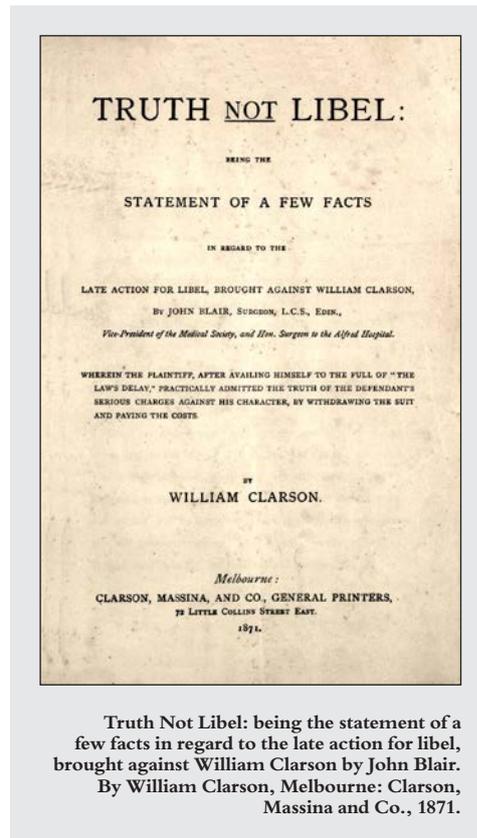
The main characters in this case were: publisher William Clarson; Caroline Clarson, his second wife (who had the wonderful maiden name of Caroline Eliza Harriet Ruth Stabback); and eminent physician Dr John Blair, whom Mrs Clarson alleged had taken more than a professional interest in her in the earlier years of her marriage (unknown to her husband), while the doctor countered that she had been infatuated with him, almost a stalker in modern

parlance. In court, the case played out with roles by the leading barristers of Melbourne, Richard Ireland, George Higinbotham and Hickman Molesworth; and the presiding judge, the omnipresent Redmond Barry.

William Clarson was born in Tamworth near Birmingham, around 1832. He was twenty-one when he came to Melbourne with his first wife Sarah and infant son, (William) Alfred.<sup>36</sup> Alas, Sarah died within a year of their arrival. Fifteen months later, on 10 July 1855, William married Caroline Stabback, eight years his senior. She was a dressmaker from Middlesex who had arrived as a single assisted immigrant to Melbourne in 1852.<sup>37</sup> Their marriage would last for two decades, but there were no children. As noted, William Clarson entered the book and printing partnership with Joseph Shallard in 1859, but he was already associated with the trade. Representing the Typographical Association, he was part of a push in 1858 to erect a Trades Hall and Literary Institute in Carlton.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile he played a prominent role in the Horticultural Society of Victoria, and eventually followed Ferdinand von Mueller as a vice-president in 1867. He became the honorary director of the Society's new experimental gardens in Burnley. Then came the chaos.

In 1870 an anonymous circular was distributed in Melbourne, attributed to 'a lady', denouncing the candidacy of Dr John Blair for election as honorary secretary and surgeon at the new Alfred Hospital being built near St Kilda Road. Blair had been one of the advocates for the hospital, and plans were well advanced for Prince Alfred himself, the Duke of Edinburgh, to attend a fund-raising ball in Melbourne. Dr Blair immediately launched an action for libel against William Clarson for the large sum of £1,000, claiming that the circular had unambiguously charged the doctor with unprofessional conduct.<sup>39</sup> Newspaper gossip soon filled out the details: the circular had spoken of 'an act of immorality' and 'improper attentions'. Clarson confirmed he was the lady's husband, while protesting implausibly he was originally 'not aware of her having taken this decided step [to issue the circular], but entirely approves of it, and has accepted service of the writ.'<sup>40</sup>

Months passed as lawyers prepared the cases. In June 1871, Dr Blair dropped his action. Later he would claim that this was out of consideration, 'because the firm in which Mr Clarson is a partner was at the time in commercial difficulties.'<sup>41</sup> William Clarson, perhaps taking inspiration from *The Fencer's Manual*, was not prepared to accept this affront to his honour. *En garde!* With a printing press at his disposal he issued a new pamphlet titled



**Truth Not Libel: being the statement of a few facts in regard to the late action for libel, brought against William Clarson by John Blair. By William Clarson, Melbourne: Clarson, Massina and Co., 1871.**

*Truth Not Libel*, and in August launched his own defamation action in his own and his wife's name—*Clarson et uxor v. Blair*—seeking double damages of £2,000.<sup>42</sup>

By the time the matter came to trial at the end of February 1872, this was the most sensational story in Australia, breathlessly reported and misreported around the colonies. For five days in a packed courtroom the judge, Redmond Barry, and a jury of twelve gentlemen heard the sensational evidence. The reputations of Clarson, Mrs Clarson and Dr Blair were in turn ripped to shreds by the cross-examining barristers and lampooned in the papers. There was much drama for the press. One of Mrs Clarson's friends accompanying her into court, 'a tall, dark-complexioned young woman, went off into a hysterical fit, directly she saw Mr Blair'—leading Mrs Clarson audibly to hiss, 'Oh, you wretch' at the defendant in the witness box.<sup>43</sup> As always, public sympathies were divided according to the version of events reported and the bias of the readers. The judge drew the jury's attention to weaknesses in Dr Blair's defence, but was not sympathetic to Mrs Clarson. The jurors retired, and soon enough found in favour of the man. He, according to some accounts, celebrated with his QC, Richard Ireland, by 'careering through the streets in a stylish red-wheeled drag, drawn by the well-known pair of chestnuts', to the cheers of supporters in Collins Street.<sup>44</sup>

Once again, William Clarson resorted to the printing press to assert the unfair result of the trial but conceded that he would not pursue an appeal. Twenty-three closely printed pages in his pamphlet argue the case in forensic, almost obsessive, detail.<sup>45</sup> The financial costs, and the evaporation of his hopes of £2,000 in damages, were the final steps in ending William's formal business association with Alfred Massina, although the imprint name Clarson, Massina persisted.<sup>46</sup>

Moral support came immediately when the young lady of the 'hysterical fit' in the court, one Annie Gertrude Clampett, launched her own case against Dr Blair, for indecent assault: 'injured in body and mind'. William Clarson was forced to deny reports that he had instigated this new case.<sup>47</sup> Dr Blair's lawyer argued that the complaint was beyond the statute of limitations. On the very day the case was scheduled to be heard, in mid-June, it was found that Miss Clampett had quietly departed the colony for England, boarding the clipper *Windsor Castle* as it prepared to leave Port Phillip Heads, by a small boat from Queenscliff. Dr Blair was forced to deny reports that he had paid her way.<sup>48</sup> The coda to these events was that the doctor's wife, Mary Blair, who had testified at the main trial in support of her husband, had Caroline Clarson brought before the court and fined five guineas (£5 5s) for subsequently threatening and insulting her publicly in the street ('You perjured wretch!')—only for the Supreme Court bench, which included Redmond Barry—to uphold Mrs Clarson's appeal against the conviction as unsound in law.<sup>49</sup>

Although in his pamphlet William Clarson made a good defence of his wife Caroline's virtue, the marriage was crumbling. In September he set sail for Europe, alone, having resigned his post at the Horticultural Society of Victoria and at the gardens, to the Society's sincere regret: its members presented him with a testimonial and a purse of sovereigns.<sup>50</sup> A few months later, news reached the colonies that the Royal Horticultural Society in England had elected him a Fellow in recognition of 'the valuable services he has rendered to the cause of horticulture in this colony'.<sup>51</sup>

Caroline and her stepson Alfred headed after him, leaving in November 1872.<sup>52</sup> Alfred went to Paris to study art. It is not easy to track William's moves over the next four years. We find him at Lichfield and Stourbridge, near Birmingham, but also in inner London and at outer-suburban Bromley, Kent, where he was described as 'estate agent' (meaning managing a farm).<sup>53</sup> He continued correspondence with the Horticultural Society in Melbourne.<sup>54</sup> It was

said that von Mueller gave him introductions to celebrated continental and English botanists, including Dr (later Sir) Joseph Hooker at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He supplied Australian plants for the collection, and seeds for the botanic gardens in Edinburgh: the ensuing friendship reportedly saw Hooker propose Clarson as a Fellow of the august Linnean Society, seconded by no less than Charles Darwin.<sup>55</sup> Clarson began adding the coveted 'FLS' post-nominal in his writing by mid-1874.<sup>56</sup> He vigorously represented the interests of Australian wine producers. But early in 1877 personal circumstances propelled him back to Australia.

Australian papers reported at this time that Caroline Clarson had successfully sued her husband in the English courts for divorce on the grounds of desertion and adultery. In fact the divorce proceedings were initiated as early as July 1875. Ever drawn to the printed word, William 'issued a private circular stating that he had a defence, but that after the Melbourne exposure he earnestly desired a separation himself, and so would make no reply to the petitioner's allegations'.<sup>57</sup> Whatever the justifications, it transpires that William Clarson had been deep in a relationship with Annie Gertrude Clampett—even before the 'hysterical fit' during the sensational *Clarson et uxor v. Blair*. When did Caroline know? Her divorce petition cites instances of adultery with 'Annie Gertrude Clampitt' [*sic*] specifically on Christmas Day 1871 'and on other days between that day and the 8th day of July [1875]'.<sup>58</sup> In fact the liaison must have predated that memorable Christmas Day: earlier that year in Melbourne, Annie had given birth to a son, registered at the time as 'William Henry Dudley Clampett', father 'unknown'.<sup>59</sup> Two more sons, Albert and Harold Clampett, were born to Annie in England, in 1874 and 1875 respectively.<sup>60</sup> Later, they would all take the Clarson surname.

With William suddenly heading back to Australia, Annie returned too. They did not travel together. William and his artist son travelled on the *Tanjore*, reaching Melbourne in April 1877.<sup>61</sup> Annie, with her three little boys, sailed in steerage class on the *Lincolnshire*, arriving in May, giving birth to a daughter during the voyage. She registered the new arrival in Victoria in May as 'Florence Clarson': father's name, William Campbell Clarson.<sup>62</sup> On the *Lincolnshire* they had travelled under the surname Campbell: her occupation, 'wife'.

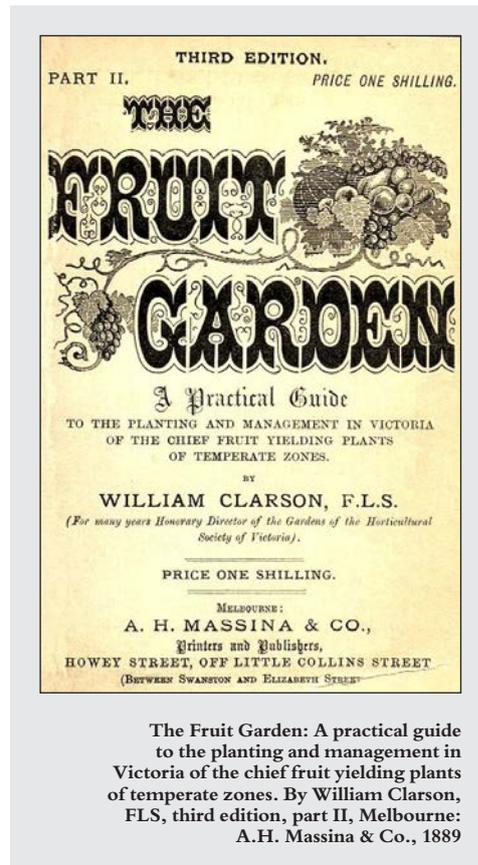
William, Alfred and Annie all shifted promptly to Sydney, possibly living together in a rented 'gentleman's residence' on four acres (1.6 hectares) at Hunter's Hill.<sup>63</sup> Alfred found

work as an artist for the *Illustrated Sydney News*. William's sporadic income mostly came from writing. It was at this time that Massina dropped the Clarson name entirely from his business, but he continued to publish books written by his former partner, beginning with *The Fruit Garden* (1879) which went into multiple editions. Clarson stayed in touch with his old friends at the Horticultural Society in Victoria, and in Sydney joined the committee of the Zoological Society.

The peaceful interlude was brief. Caroline had been awarded £130 annually in alimony by the English divorce court, which might explain an aggrieved William's sudden decision to leave England without paying. A year after he decamped, Caroline pursued him to Sydney. She soon began letting it be known that 'Mrs William Clarson' was in town, presumably contesting any claims Annie might have to the title. In July 1880 Caroline lodged a notice in Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, with a cryptic heading alluding to Annie's Irish birthplace: 'LIMERIC. If ANNIE GERTRUDE CLAMPITT'S Relative, or others interested, will call 136 Victoria-street, Darlinghurst, they can see Mrs WILLIAM CLARSON'S Decree for Separation, and order for Permanent Alimony, as proofs of truths respecting the position of the above'.<sup>64</sup>

It was enough to send William off to Melbourne again, leaving both Caroline and Annie and children in Sydney. It looked like a permanent move: he was welcomed back as vice-president of the Horticultural Society and helped launch an Australian Society for Shorthand Writers.<sup>65</sup> But events moved quickly. News reached him late in the year that son Alfred had failed to return from a fishing, shooting and sketching holiday in Queensland. When police failed in their enquiries, William travelled to Brisbane to organise a search. This time it was Alfred's turn to make headlines around the colonies, in January 1881, as 'The Moreton Bay Crusoe' after 'Seventeen Weeks on an Uninhabited Island'. A mishap or a falling-out with his companion had left Alfred stranded on Karragarra Island for weeks before he made his way to nearby Russell Island.<sup>66</sup> William managed to find him there before returning to Melbourne.

This was not the end of their misadventures. William Clarson was now approaching fifty years of age, just under six feet (1.83 metres) tall, of stout build, fair complexion, fair hair mixed with grey, with goatee and moustache, customarily wearing a grey tweed suit and a light drab soft felt hat. We know this because in August 1881 the New South Wales police issued a warrant for his arrest for deserting 'his wife Caroline'.



William determined to remain elusive. The next month he took passage on the steamship *India* bound for Noumea, leaving the vessel when it called at remote Lord Howe Island.<sup>67</sup>

Here, early in the new year, he was joined by his artist son Alfred, who was equally a fugitive from justice. Alfred was wanted by police—for bigamy. He had married one wife, Martha Payne, a week before Christmas 1881, and a second, Susan Parkinson, on Christmas Eve. The next day he fled Sydney with Martha. Unfortunately for father and son, Lord Howe Island was under the jurisdiction of the New South Wales water police. William and Alfred were duly arrested, brought back to Sydney, arraigned side by side in court. The press had a field day. Arthur explained that he had married the pregnant Susan only under the duress of her angry father. Susan gave birth in the same week that Alfred and William stood in the dock, April 1882.<sup>68</sup>

William was freed only after reaching an agreement with Caroline: he was 'not in a situation' at present but, when he was, he would pay her one pound a week. Alfred, for his crime, was sentenced to four years in prison, with hard labour. During that time, Martha divorced him. After his release, Alfred married Susan, legally, but theirs was not an untroubled life.<sup>69</sup>

Yet there was more. In that same year as the arrests, Annie Clappett gave birth to her fifth child, Charles. William clearly struggled to maintain his alimony payments. Caroline was not going to let her legal entitlement go, advertising her continuing presence in Sydney in May the following year as: 'Mrs Clarson, wife of William Clarson, late of the firm Clarson, Shallard, and Co., of Melbourne and Sydney'.<sup>70</sup> Then, in September, it was 'Gertrude Clempett' [sic] of Redfern who was seeking William, through the police, for 'unlawfully deserting his illegitimate male child, leaving him without means of support'.<sup>71</sup>

It is hardly surprising that William, with Alfred in prison, his own ex-wife demanding alimony, his de facto wife desperate for money for their five children, his prospects bleak, found his health collapsing and his morale broken. He was back in court a month later, this time for the crime inexplicable to modern minds: attempting suicide. The setting was telling: the botanic gardens by Sydney Harbour. He told the magistrate that he had sat down on a bench to write, had taken copious medicines to quell his pains, leading to hallucinations of crimson flowers and trees and sky, before falling into the water.<sup>72</sup>

The court took compassion. William immediately returned to Victoria, again without his family, staying for a year. Somehow the writing continued. Massina remained a friend, publishing more of his books including *The Kitchen Garden and Cottager's Manual* and visitor guides to the Yarra Valley, to the Blue Mountains and to Lord Howe Island. No experience would be wasted. These books were regularly advertised and admired, but William Clarson took a lower profile personally. He came back to Sydney: Annie gave birth to a sixth child there in 1885, Augustine Bede Clarson.<sup>73</sup> But William had no capacity to support the family. In March 1888, as 'journalist' of Darlinghurst, he filed for bankruptcy on his own petition.<sup>74</sup> That should have been the end of any debts to Caroline, yet in April he was before the Newtown court for 'disobeying an order made for the support of his wife' (whether Caroline or Annie was not stated). He was 'imprisoned until such notice was complied with', or twelve months.<sup>75</sup> Whether he went to gaol, or for how long, was also not stated. He was definitely back in Melbourne by the end of that year.

Meanwhile it was his son Harold Clarson who, in July, was wanted by Sydney police under 'the Industrial Schools Act', presumably for misdemeanours or missing school. Harold was described as tall for his age, good looking, blue eyes, fair hair, an inveterate smoker, clothes

very shabby; 'a well-spoken boy'.<sup>76</sup> By October, Annie had taken off with all the children, including Harold, to Melbourne, but there is no sign that she and William reunited. Then Harold ran away from home. In newspapers in April 1889, Annie was advertising for her Harold, 'aged 14 years next July... last seen in South Melbourne Market'. She offered a liberal reward for 'conveying him home to his mother', or threats against anyone harbouring him.<sup>77</sup>

The paradox of William Clarson's life continued: in December 1888 he is delivering a learned and sensible paper to the Horticultural Society on 'Blunders in Acclimatisation' on the baleful introduction of animal pests into Australia. We then find that he has taken up a position to create a model garden at the Agricultural College being established at Longerenong in northern Victoria. In an engaging article for the *Age* under his pen name 'Linnaeus' he describes the work achieved.<sup>78</sup> His time there is short, his departure in mid-year publicly regretted by the students at the college.<sup>79</sup> Did he know the Victorian police were at that moment quietly seeking to apprehend him for 'deserting his illegitimate children'? The 'complainant' told the police that the 'offender' was employed in the Horsham district collecting information for the Horticultural Society.<sup>80</sup>

William moved again, still out of touch with his family. On the home front, dysfunction continued: this time it was Harold's older brother, Albert, who took off. In September 1889 Annie again turned to the press, this time advertising as a 'widow', which in effect she was: 'A lad named Albert Clarson, aged 15 years, left his home, 8 Coote street, South Melbourne, on the 12th August, and has not since been heard of. He is rather fair, with blue eyes, and delicate looking. His mother is a widow, and is very anxious as to his whereabouts'.<sup>81</sup>

And where is William Clarson? From August 1889 he is working busily at the new 'irrigation colony' at Mildura on the Murray River, where his horticultural and publishing knowledge are both in demand. He begins yet another experimental garden which flourishes in no time at all, he lectures wisely to the irrigators, writes articles for the *Mildura Cultivator* and acts as sub-editor of the paper.<sup>82</sup>

But his pain, both physical and mental, becomes too much. On the penultimate day of 1890 at the offices of the newspaper, William Clarson writes his briefest note ever: 'Quite overwhelmed, mind gone, no hope, friendless'.<sup>83</sup> He takes up his gun and shoots himself, but misses his heart. Death follows within hours.

James Matthew, editor of the paper, was deeply shocked. Reporting the horrible demise, which he witnessed, he wrote of Clarkson: 'A man of untiring energy, he was endowed with qualities that fall to the lot of few men'. This was a botanist of great repute, a skilled linguist, stenographer, journalist, his literary style clear and limpid, his conversation brimful of knowledge, his enthusiasm contagious. Clarkson loved birds, flowers and plants for their own sake. 'In his own lines, he had no equal in Australia.'

Matthew understood there was darkness in Clarkson's life: the deceased had alluded to the failure of a law suit that had thrown him into financial difficulties and his besetting depression. 'He had a strong feeling of having failed in life.' Among his last words were that he had 'made nothing'. Perhaps that assertion shocked the editor most of all. It was clear that Clarkson had come to remote Mildura to put his past behind him: 'He has relatives, but little is known of them, as he was very reticent about his family affairs'.<sup>84</sup>

This was the tragic end to a talented man with a troubled life. Yet, made nothing? Friendless? We are left with contradictions. A year after his death, an unusual 'In Memoriam' notice appeared in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>85</sup> It was inserted under the name of his daughter Florence, not yet fourteen:

CLARSON.—In memory of our beloved father, William Clarkson, who died at Mildura, December 30, 1890, late partner of Clarkson, Shallard and Gibbs. Always remembered as a kind, loving father. We are sitting all around to-night and cannot check our tears that fast would flow, as thoughts of love and thoughts of other years, of years where happier hours are gone, whose cherished one has flown, but memory calls him back again as here we sit alone.  
Inserted by his beloved daughter and five brothers.  
Florence M. Clarkson.

What became of them all? Caroline had died at Kogarah, Sydney in 1899. Annie lived on as Mrs Clarkson in Melbourne until her death at the Women's Hospital in 1921, aged eighty-two. Her death certificate contained a convenient half-truth: a 'marriage' to William Clarkson in East Melbourne 'in 1871' before producing their six children. Her eldest son—who was now Dudley Wardley Clarkson, a highly respectable West Australian—lodged a loving notice in Sydney and Perth papers, proudly identifying Annie as 'relict of the late William



Jean Ffrench, photographer  
William Clarkson tombstone, with plaque 2016  
Nichols Point cemetery, Mildura

Clarkson, F.L.S., F.R.H.S.' and loving mother of 'Albert (Rhodesia, South Africa), Harold (London, England), Florence and Augustus [sic], Melbourne: a true devoted mother. Sleep mother till we meet again.' Charles, the fourth son, is not mentioned here but is included on Annie's official death certificate.<sup>86</sup>

In Mildura, a swell of sentiment demanded that William Clarkson should not be left in an unmarked grave. The Mildura Horticultural Society started a fund to erect a memorial. Like many such schemes, it took years to achieve. Matthew of the *Cultivator* urged that 'people ought to see that proper respect is given to the remains of one who, with all his faults—and they were neither few nor small—was one of the foremost men of the time in illustrating and turning to account the resources of the soil'.<sup>87</sup> Finally on 28 April 1900, nearly ten years after William's death, a handsome tombstone was unveiled by the Shire President. It was inscribed 'in grateful recognition of his local services and valued contributions to horticultural literature'.<sup>88</sup> It stands in the Nichols Point cemetery today, broken in parts but handsomely restored in 2015 by descendants, proud to carry his name.<sup>89</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Advertised for example in *Age*, 12 August 1859, p.2, and *Argus*, p.8.
- 2 Andrew Lemon, 'The Swordsman's Tale: The true story of Robert Meikle and 'The Fencer's Manual'', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 90, no.2, December 2019, pp.253-270.
- 3 *Argus*, 31 October 1855, p.4, describes twelve premises destroyed by fire at: 'a row of shops fronting [84] Bourke Street and others at the rear' including the shop of Slater, Williams, Hodgson, booksellers. This seems to have been separate from the main printing office at 94 Bourke Street (East).
- 4 *Argus*, 30 June 1856, p.6.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 4 March 1858, p.5.
- 6 *Age*, 4 June 1859, p.1. Williams returned to business as a printer in Little Collins Street by 1860.
- 7 Don Hauser, *Printers of the Streets and Lanes of Melbourne (1837-1975)*, Melbourne: Nondescript Press, 2006, p.129.
- 8 Frank Strahan, 'Massina, Alfred Henry (1834-1917)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.5, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975, p.222; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1925, p.10 for obituary of Joseph Thomas Burton-Gibbs.
- 9 Reported in *South Australian Register*, 21 April 1859, p.2.
- 10 *Argus*, 7 October 1861, p.5, *Star* (Ballarat), 8 October 1861, p.1
- 11 *Age*, 1 January 1862, p.5.
- 12 Described in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 January 1869, p.8, 'The Melbourne Public Library, No. 1' (reprinted *Sydney Mail*, 30 January 1869, p.10).
- 13 John Arnold, 'Library Profile: Augustus Tulk, Gentleman Librarian', *The La Trobe Journal*, No.62, Spring 1998, p.56.
- 14 *Herald* (Melbourne), 15 December 1863, p.1.
- 15 Advertisement, *Argus*, 5 December 1864, p.8.
- 16 Advertisement, *Sydney Mail*, 19 November 1864, p.1.
- 17 Advertisement, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 1865, p.6.
- 18 Publishers' imprint: *Illustrated Sydney News*, 16 January 1867; partnership advertisement: *Empire* (Sydney), 10 February 1866, p.1.
- 19 Brian Elliott, 'Clarke, Marcus Andrew Hislop (1846-1881)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.3, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.416-418. The title of the book was changed after the author's death to *For the Term of His Natural Life*.
- 20 See Thomas Darragh, 'Samuel Calvert (1828-1913)' in 'Design and Art Australia Online' at [www.daa.org.au/bio/samuel-calvert/biography/](http://www.daa.org.au/bio/samuel-calvert/biography/) (accessed 17 July 2019).
- 21 The Trove record is annotated 'Ferguson no. 12396', referring to J.A. Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941.
- 22 Advertisement *Argus*, 3 June 1853, p.5.
- 23 Advertisement, *Argus*, 14 July 1853, p.8; for Parker's Sydney school see *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 28 October 1854, 12 May 1855.
- 24 Advertisement *Argus*, 22 December 1854, p.8.
- 25 Advertisement *Argus*, 26 March 1856, p.8. See also L.A. Hilden, 'Fencing in Regency England', 10 September 2012: a post online at [regencyfencing.blogspot.com](http://regencyfencing.blogspot.com) (accessed 12 July 2019). Arnold's at 16 Bond Street advertised physical education and evening classes for fencing and gymnastics (for example *Times*, 2 February 1853). George Parker in his Sydney advertisements claimed to have trained there.
- 26 Advertisement *Argus*, 3 June 1856, p.8, 'The Sword - Gymnastics... at 6 Russell-street south'.
- 27 Meikle worked at the Survey Department from 1855, referred to by name in a personal advertisement, *Argus*, 24 May 1855, p.1.
- 28 Legislative Assembly debates, 11 December 1857, reported in *Argus*, 12 December 1857, p.5; mentioned in *Age*, 12 December 1857, p.5. See also Jill Roe, 'Blair, David (1820-1899)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.3, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.179-180. Not related to Dr John Blair, discussed below.
- 29 *Leader*, 14 February 1863, p.3, reported new appointments: 'Robert Meikle to be a photo-lithographer in the Department of Lands and Survey'.
- 30 Eugene Mackenzie Meikle born June 1844, East London: UK BDM index at [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk). His older sister Lucy died in infancy in the year of her birth, 1842. Robert's birthplace Lanarkshire noted on his death certificate, Victoria BDM no. 343, 1868. Death notice, *Argus*, 13 October 1864, p.4: 'Emily, the beloved wife of Robert Meikle, aged forty-five years'.
- 31 Death certificate Victoria BDM no. 342, 1868. Probate and Administration Files, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), series VPRS 28 no. 7/364.
- 32 *Herald*, 2 September 1916, p.4.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 13 April, 1922, p.1.
- 34 The great-great grandparents of Gary Morgan were Eliza Massena [*sic*], cousin of A.H. Massina, and Dr William Florance, whose daughter Mary Eliza married William H. Williams in 1857, See Ronald G. Campbell, *The First Ninety Years: the printing house of Massina, Melbourne, 1859 to 1949*, Melbourne: A.H. Massina & Co., 1949; facsimile edition, Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty Ltd, 2007, pp.[2-3]; *Argus*, 29 August 1907, p.1.
- 35 For William Clarson, see Australian National Herbarium website: <https://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/clarson-william.html>. For William Alfred Clarson, see 'Design and Art Australia Online' at <https://www.daa.org.au/bio/w-a-clarson/biography>.
- 36 England Census 1851. Arrived on the *Caroline Chisholm*: Unassisted Passenger Lists online index, PROV.
- 37 Caroline arrived on the *Blackwall*: Assisted Passenger Lists online index, PROV.

- 38 *Argus*, 5 March 1858, p.4.
- 39 *Age*, 9 September 1870, p.2.
- 40 *Geelong Advertiser*, 10 September 1870, p.3.
- 41 Quoted in *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 March 1872, p.3.
- 42 William Clarkson, *Truth Not Libel: being the statement of a few facts in regard to the late action for libel, brought against William Clarkson by John Blair*. Melbourne: Clarkson, Massina, 1871 (accessible online <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-459343208>).
- 43 *Age*, 2 March 1872, p.2.
- 44 *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 March 1872, p.3.
- 45 William Clarkson, *Last Words in the Case of Clarkson v. Blair: a letter addressed to the 'Medical Gazette' and respectively dedicated to the newspaper writers of the Australian colonies*. Richmond: William Clarkson, 1872 (accessible online <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/243617>).
- 46 Advertisement, *Age*, 21 March 1872, p.1.
- 47 *Age*, 8 March 1872, p.4.
- 48 *Argus*, 21 June 1872, p.4; *Herald*, 19 June 1872, p.3. The case had been listed for 19 June, the date Annie Clampett sailed on the clipper, *Windsor Castle*. The alleged assault occurred in 1866.
- 49 Events chronicled in the Melbourne press from March to September 1872.
- 50 *Argus*, 25 July 1872, p.7. (A sovereign was a twenty-shilling coin, equivalent to a one-pound banknote.)
- 51 *Leader*, 25 January 1873, p.7.
- 52 Inferred from shipping departures (*Age*, 29 November 1872, p.4) recording 'Mrs Clanson' and 'William Clanson' [sic] as passengers on the *Stuperb*. William senior had left in September, alone, by the *Tanjore*.
- 53 *Leader*, 28 June 1873, p.9, speaks of horticultural work in South Kensington. Addresses and 'estate agent' at 'Hayes-place, Bromley' are noted in divorce papers: see note 58. In a lecture at Murtoa in 1889, Clarkson speaks of his experiments 'on the farm of Edward Wilson, of Hayes-place, in the county of Kent': *Argus*, 9 July 1889, p.10.
- 54 *Mildura Cultivator* obituary, 31 December 1890, p.3, refers to him managing a model farm in Kent.
- 55 *Northern Argus* (Clare, South Australia), 17 January 1890, p.3, refers to Darwin. *Australasian*, 7 June 1873, p.26, notes the Linnean Society honour.
- 56 He is 'FLS, FRHS' when awarded a prize for 'best-arranged cottagers' gardens and best taste in training creepers over cottages', *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 10 July 1874.
- 57 *Weekly Times*, 13 January 1877, p.15.
- 58 'Caroline E.H. Clarkson v. Clarkson, Wm', petition, 9 July 1875, England and Wales Civil Divorce records database (1858–1918) at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2465> (accessed 17 July 2023).
- 59 Victoria BDM, no. 1800, 1871.
- 60 'Harold Arthur Clampett' appears in the September 1875 England and Wales Civil Registered Births Index (1837–1915). Date of birth of Albert extrapolated from passenger list: see note 53.
- 61 *Age*, 28 April 1877, p.4, lists Mr Clarkson and son arrival. *Herald* (Melbourne) 26 May 1877, p.2, lists William and W.A. Clarkson then sailing to Sydney.
- 62 Victoria BDM, no. 12573, 1877. 'Ann (30), Dudley (5), Harold (3) and Albert Campbell (1)' are on the *Lincolnshire* passenger list: Unassisted Passenger Lists online index, PROV.
- 63 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1879, p.5, reports Clarkson exhibiting fruit, and 6 August 1879, p.5, joining 'Hunter's Hill and Gladesville Horticultural Society' committee. He and W.A. Clarkson were on the committee of the Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill Regatta, *Evening News* (Sydney), 27 December 1879, p.5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1880, p.8, advertises the property available for immediate lease, with Clarkson as current occupant.
- 64 *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1880, p.1. There was an equally cryptic riposte, perhaps from Annie, two days later in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 July 1880, p.5. Annie was born in Limerick in 1839: more family detail from Brighton (Vic.) Cemetery records at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/212240181/annie-gertrude-clarson#source>.
- 65 Horticultural Society: *Age*, 27 July 1880, p.3. Shorthand: *Age*, 8 October 1880, p.2.
- 66 *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 1881, p.6.
- 67 *New South Wales Police Gazette*, 24 August 1881. *India* shipping list, *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1881, p.2. For the story of the *India*, see Andrew Lemon, *The Pebbled Beach at Pentecost: a novel*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2021.
- 68 *Evening News* (Sydney), 21 April, 1882, p.3. Martha and Alfred divorce: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1883, p.4. Press reports (e.g. *Albury Banner*, 9 June 1882, p.17) refer to her at Lord Howe Island, and sailors raising funds for her return to family in Melbourne.
- 69 Alfred married Susan legally in 1886: their second son, Sidney (1889–1965), was born the year their six-year-old son, Arthur, died. Alfred's art works are in public collections. Death: Queensland BDM no. C/2518, 1906.
- 70 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1883, p.1.
- 71 *New South Wales Police Gazette and Weekly Record of Crime*, 12 September 1883. He is described here as 'a printer'.
- 72 *Evening News* (Sydney), 10 October 1883, p.4.
- 73 Sometimes 'Augustus'. I have not been able to locate his birth or that of Charles in NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages.
- 74 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 16 March 1888, p.1,957.
- 75 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 1888, p.6.
- 76 *New South Wales Police Gazette and Weekly Record of Crime*, 4 July 1888.
- 77 *Age*, 3 April 1889, p.1.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 23 March 1889, p.13. *Horsham Times*, 2 April 1889, p.2, refers to his advice re tree planting in Horsham. He had

written press articles as 'Linnaeus' from at least 1886.

- 79** Letter (dated 29 April) to *Mildura Cultivator*, 9 May 1889, p.7. Farewell presentation: *Horsham Times*, 11 June 1889, p.3.
- 80** *Victoria Police Gazette*, 3 March 1889.
- 81** *Herald*, 24 September 1889, p.3.
- 82** *Mildura Cultivator*, 8 August 1889, p.7.
- 83** *Age*, 1 January 1891, p.5.
- 84** *Mildura Cultivator*, 31 December 1890, p.3.
- 85** *Daily Telegraph*, 31 December 1891, p.1.
- 86** *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September 1921, p.8; *West Australian*, 30 August 1921, p.1. Anne Gertrude Clarson Death Certificate, Victoria BDM no. 1031, 1921. Harold is listed here as 'died', but he married in Western Australia in 1901, had children, and died in New South Wales in 1951. Albert married at Inglewood, Vic. 1911 (BDM no. 6063, 1911), died NSW 1966. Florence died in Sydney, 1964. Charles Peel Clarson spent time at Leonora, WA, around 1900, and died in New South Wales 1929. Augustus died Wollongong, NSW, 1971. See also note 64 above.
- 87** *Mildura Cultivator*, 9 February 1895, p.6.
- 88** *Ibid.*, 12 May 1900, p.5.
- 89** 'Find a Grave' website <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/212236206/william-campbell-clarson#view-photo=208113349> (accessed 17 July 2023).

# Forthcoming events

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Invitations will be emailed to members in advance of each event.  
Bookings are essential, except for the Sunday service

**2023**

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## DECEMBER

**Friday 8**

**Christmas Cocktails**

**Time:** 6.30 – 8.30 pm

**Venue:** Melbourne Savage Club,  
12 Bank Place, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Graham Ryles OAM

Club member Graham Ryles will give us a brief view of the history of the Melbourne Savage Club, a private Australian gentlemen's club founded in 1894 and named after the poet, Richard Savage.

Bohemian in spirit, the club brings together literary men, and those sympathising with literature, the arts, sport or science

**Cost:** \$90 per person

**Sunday 10**

**Anniversary of the Death of  
C J La Trobe – Sunday Service**

**Time:** 11.00 am

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

**Refreshments**

**All welcome**

**2024**

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## MARCH

**Sunday 17**

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30pm – 6.00pm

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

**Topic :** La Trobe Family Portraits: Special Viewing

**Cost:** \$15 per person

**Sparkling wine and cake will be served**

## APRIL

**Tuesday 16**

**Joint La Trobe Society/RHSV**

**AGL Shaw Lecture**

**Time:** 5.30 – 7.30 pm

**Venue:** Royal Historical Society of  
Victoria, Cnr William and A'Beckett  
Streets, Melbourne

**Speaker and topic:** tba

**Refreshments**

**Cost:** \$35 per person

## Bookings

For catering purposes, bookings are essential

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

Or phone Dianne Reilly on 0412 517 061

**For the latest information on  
upcoming events, please refer  
to the Society's events page  
[www.latrobesociety.org.au/events](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/events)**

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They may be searched by keyword.

## *Contributions welcome*

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**The Editorial Committee welcomes contributions to La Trobeana which is published three times a year.**

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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

