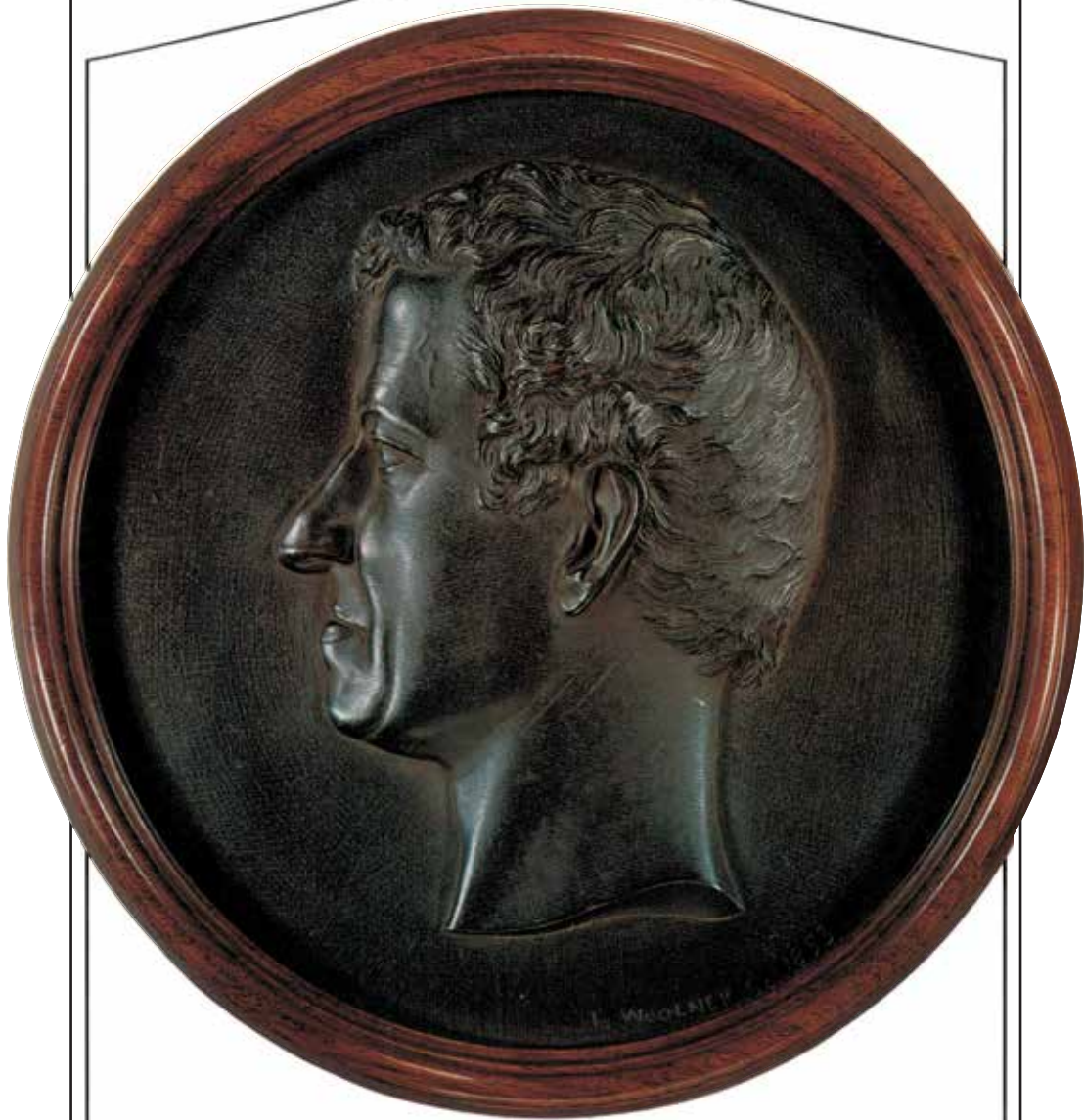


LA TROBEANA



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.
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Editorial Committee

Loreen Chamber (Honorary Editor)
Helen Armstrong, John Botham, Susan Priestley, Dianne Reilly, Fay Woodhouse

Designed by

Michael Owen michaelowen.mto@gmail.com

For contributions and subscriptions enquiries contact:

The Honorary Secretary: Dr Dianne Reilly AM
The C J La Trobe Society
401 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Phone: 9646 2112
Email: secretary@latrobesociety.org.au

FRONT COVER

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

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A Word from the President

In this issue a couple articles feature the craft of letter writing. Charles Joseph La Trobe not only wrote voluminous accounts associated with his work and his travels, but he wrote many letters that have become a treasure trove to those of us who seek to know him at a personal level. Two articles, one by Eva Millie and the other by Loreen Chambers in collaboration with Dr Kate Lack in Whitbourne, Herefordshire, reveal much about him: his compassion, disappointments, stoicism, his wit and his charm. Furthermore, a little-known period of La Trobe's retirement years at Whitbourne Court has been illuminated by their research. A delightful poem penned by La Trobe in a friend's *Commonplace* book in 1829 reveals a whimsical side to him.

Dr Douglas Wilkie has written an important article based on careful research of the sequence of events between the discovery of gold and that of separation from New South Wales which suggests a new perspective. Finally, Daryl Ross, our vice-president has written an account of a little-known Swiss, Adolphe de Meuron, a nephew of Sophie La Trobe who settled in the Neuchâtel enclave in the Yarra Valley. Shorter reports will also be of great interest.

The C J La Trobe Society continues to promote understanding and appreciation of the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe through its many activities, its support of the National Trust's commitment to La Trobe's Cottage and through *La Trobeana*. This multi-faceted endeavour depends on the involvement of hundreds of people: its loyal members; the cottage volunteers, house guides and gardeners; committee members of both the La Trobe Society and the Friends of La Trobe Cottage; our webmaster and coordinator who maintain our website, and last but certainly not least the editorial committee of *La Trobeana*, who provide us with an excellent journal, as well as our designer. I should also add that the support by the many people who contribute articles and reports to *La Trobeana* is of paramount

importance to giving expression to our growing knowledge and understanding of the foundation decades of Victoria's history.

Recently Professor Tim Entwisle, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, announced the death of the Separation Tree after two attacks by vandals. The Separation Tree was a truly wonderful link of over four centuries to Melbourne's botanic past. For the Society it had an even more poignant connection as Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe, realising the importance of gardens and the significance of preserving these old Yarra river gums, had the land set aside as a Botanic Garden. Indeed, the National Trust collection of La Trobe drawings has a sketch by him of some old gums near his home *Jolimont* that still remained.

The gnarled old Separation Tree had immense Australian significance too. It was under this huge tree that La Trobe stood and announced the news of the separation of Victoria from New South Wales to wide acclaim. I am sure you will share with me a sense of loss at its demise and commend the Gardens for preserving some specimens of this important tree.

La Trobe Society members were well represented in the latest Australia Day 2015 Honours List with two of our members receiving awards in acknowledgement of their talent and hard work in the community across many fields:

Raymond Kingsley Davis OAM

For service to the community through youth and heritage organisations, and to the law.

Judith Ada Ryles OAM

For service to the community of Melbourne.

From all of us, congratulations to them both!

Diane Gardiner

Hon. President C J La Trobe Society

Tributes

JOHN JOYCE

Members of the La Trobe Society were greatly saddened to learn of the death on 4 March 2014 of John Joyce, a member of the Society since its foundation in 2001. John was a genial presence at all our functions and lectures with his delightful wife Beverley, herself a tireless supporter of the work of the La Trobe Society. John loved to reminisce about his early life at Banoon, the family farm, and about his days during the Second World War as a student at Geelong Grammar School. He is greatly missed.

RHONDA NOBLE

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Rhonda Noble on 22 August 2014 who, with her husband Brian was a long-time member of the La Trobe Society. Prior to her retirement she was Director of the La Trobe University Museum of Art. Rhonda graduated from La Trobe University, her thesis tracking the material culture of the Australian Central Desert people. The University's art collections, in particular its fine collection of Aboriginal works, developed progressively under her direction. She will be greatly missed for her warm personality and depth of knowledge and experience.

MARGOT HYSLOP

Margot Hyslop passed away after a long illness in October 2014. She had been a member of the La Trobe Society for many years. Margot had a career of 42 years in librarianship, working in the La Trobe Library of the State Library of Victoria in the 1960s and then as Reference Librarian and later as the Collection Development Librarian in the Borchardt Library, La Trobe University. She was well known to scholars and others, especially through two reference works she compiled: *Victorian Directories, 1836-1974: a checklist* (1980), and 'Charles Joseph La Trobe in the State Library: a bibliography', published in *The La Trobe Journal* in 2003. She was highly esteemed in her senior roles at La Trobe University, from where she retired in December 2001. She is a sad loss.

Ten Thousand Fathoms Deep: Charles Joseph La Trobe's decision to postpone gold exploitation until after Separation

By Douglas Wilkie

Douglas Wilkie has written widely on the origins of the Victorian gold rushes, and has investigated a number of non-typical lives of men and women who immigrated to Australia as part of the British government's early nineteenth century policy of transporting convicts across the seas.

His PhD thesis at the University of Melbourne was entitled 'The Rush that Never Started: forgotten origins of the Victorian gold rushes of 1851'. An MA research thesis, at Monash University, 'The Deconstruction of a Convict Past', investigated the lives of two Van Diemen's Land convicts who came to Port Phillip during the 1840s: Joseph Forrester and Charles Brentani. An earlier MEd thesis was 'A History of Education in the Amherst and Talbot Districts 1836-1862' investigating the provision of education in that district from first settlement, through the gold rush period, to the establishment of the Common Schools in 1862.

Dr Wilkie's articles have included, 'Finding Forrester: The life and death of Joseph Forrester, convict silversmith', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol.17 (December 2012); 'Madame Callegari in Australia: the identity of Alexandre Dumas's narrator in *Impressions de voyage: journal de Madame Giovanni*', *Explorations*, 54 (Winter 2013); 'Earth, Wind, Fire, Water – Gold.' *History Australia*, vol.10, no.2 (August 2013); 'The Convict Ship Hashemy at Port Phillip: a case study in historical error', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol.85, no.1 (June 2014); 'Exodus and Panic? Melbourne's reaction to the Bathurst gold discoveries of May 1851', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol.85, no.2 (December 2014).

The year 1851 was the year in which the Port Phillip District separated from New South Wales and became the colony of Victoria. It was also the year in which the great Victorian gold rushes began. Many historians, and an even greater number of non-historians, believe these two events occurred within weeks of each other simply by coincidence. However, the origins of many of the events and decisions of 1851 can be found in events that took place during the preceding two or three years.

In particular, this article discusses the extent to which Charles Joseph La Trobe's response to a largely forgotten 1849 gold

discovery in the Pyrenees Ranges of the Port Phillip District may have been influenced by Port Phillip's anticipated separation from New South Wales. Underpinning the desire for separation from New South Wales was the seemingly inequitable financial arrangements that existed between Sydney and Melbourne.

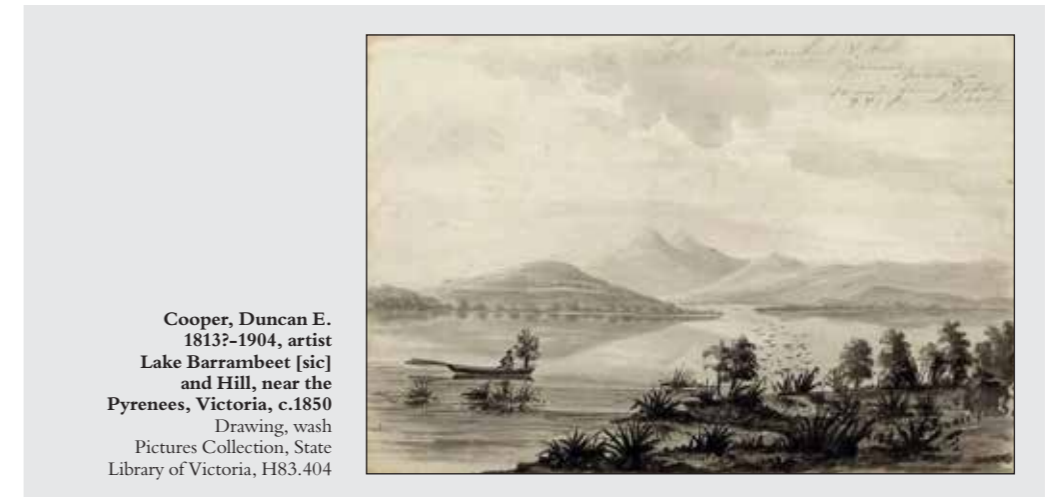
In brief, at the end of January 1849, the Frenchman, Alexandre Duchene, announced to the Melbourne *Argus* that an extensive gold field existed in the foothills of the Pyrenees Ranges, north-west of Melbourne.¹ Duchene, a watchmaker and jeweller, together with Charles Brentani, a retail jeweller, and Joseph Forrester, a silversmith, had visited the site with Thomas

Chapman, a shepherd, who discovered gold on the property of squatter Charles Browning Hall.² Following a disagreement with the others, Duchene returned to Melbourne with a plan remarkably similar to that followed by Edward Hammond Hargraves three years later. Duchene intended to make the discovery public, claim a reward from Charles La Trobe (then Superintendent of the Port Phillip District) and seek an appointment as Goldfields Commissioner.³

Finding La Trobe out of town on a visit to Portland, and being accused of foul play by Brentani's wife, instead, Duchene broke his story

Governor of New South Wales, Charles FitzRoy who was due in Melbourne in March, about six weeks away.⁶ In the meantime, La Trobe told his friend, Ronald Gunn, that instead of gold he would prefer 'a good vein of coal' and that he was happy for the gold to remain hidden 'ten thousand fathoms deep'.⁷

When FitzRoy arrived in Melbourne it was decided not only that Alexandre Duchene would receive no reward and no appointment, but also that there would be no exploitation of the gold field.⁸ To ensure this, the police and troopers remained at the Pyrenees until after FitzRoy's visit.⁹



to the *Argus* and left, as proof, a fourteen-ounce nugget of almost pure gold. Duchene's story was published in a special edition of the *Argus* on 31 January, and immediately started a rush of several hundred people to the goldfield.⁴ Unlike those who took part in the Hargraves-instigated rush of 1851, these hopeful gold-seekers had no idea what they were looking for, or how to go about it.

The ignorance of the hopeful gold seekers was fortunate for Charles La Trobe, who was not to return to Melbourne for another six days, and there was nobody in Melbourne who could respond to the situation. As soon as La Trobe returned, he dispatched Captain Dana and 'all the available police' to disperse the gold seekers. He then met with Alexandre Duchene and was convinced of the truth of the story. La Trobe then sent Crown Lands Commissioner Frederick Powlett and his troopers to provide additional support for Dana.⁵

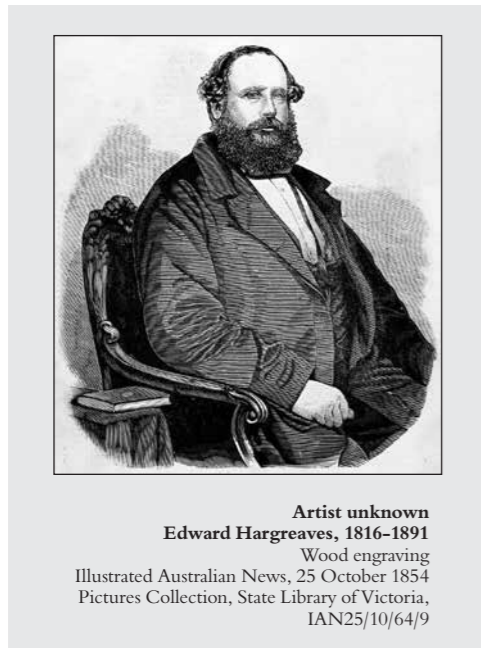
Having acted to protect the integrity of the gold field and of squatter Hall's property, La Trobe told Duchene that his request for a reward and appointment as Gold Fields Commissioner required a decision from the

Duchene subsequently went to California where he told of his experiences with the gold discovery 'west of Sydney' – for the benefit of his American audience. Melbourne, which few had heard of, had become Sydney, which all Californians knew about – and how he had been refused a reward and government appointment. It seems likely that Edward Hargraves, also in California, heard Duchene's story of failure and made plans to ensure his own intended discovery of gold west of Sydney would be met with a successful claim for both reward and commission.¹⁰

There are numerous reasons Charles La Trobe decided to discourage the exploitation of the Pyrenees gold field in 1849. First, although gold was potentially a source of great wealth, he believed it could also lead to great social disruption.¹¹ Second, the district had only forty police who already struggled to maintain law and order in the essentially frontier society. Third, there were thousands of ex-convicts and exiles in the district who were popularly believed to be the cause of an increasing incidence of crime. In addition to these valid reasons for not wanting a gold rush, as La Trobe had told Ronald Gunn, the prevailing preference was

for a useable deposit of coal that would power transport and industry.¹² In May 1850, a £200 reward was offered to any person who could identify a workable coal-field anywhere on Crown land, 'within a reasonable distance of Melbourne or Geelong'.¹³

As important as these factors may have been in influencing La Trobe's response to the discovery of a gold field, there was a longer-standing and more pervasive issue that must also have influenced his decision not to publicise the discovery, once the potential richness of the gold deposit became apparent.



Coincidental with the plans of Duchene and Brentani to search for Thomas Chapman's gold field on squatter Hall's property in the Pyrenees, there were other squatters attending meetings in Melbourne during December 1848 and January 1849.¹⁴ Whether participants were discussing land regulations, public works, immigration or convicts, the solutions inevitably came back to one thing – the need for political and financial independence from New South Wales. Squatter William Forlong called for new land regulations to be suspended 'until the boon of Separation from the Middle District is conceded'.¹⁵ John Pascoe Fawkner believed no changes should be made 'until this colony is separated from the Middle District'. Squatter or not, separation from New South Wales was seen by all as the solution to the district's problems, and it was the separation issue that touched almost every decision and event in Port Phillip.

Since 1836 the Port Phillip Association had wanted independence, and in 1839 the *Port Phillip Patriot* hoped that newly appointed

Superintendent Charles La Trobe would 'never rest until he compel the distant government to hearken and tend to our wants, which we are aware is no feeble task. ... We must have a local Government –at present we have it not'.¹⁶ La Trobe did not rest, and constantly urged separation and a better financial deal for Port Phillip. But the District's revenue was mainly spent elsewhere in New South Wales, despite Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, directing that the territorial revenue generated in the District should be spent in the District. Governor George Gipps in Sydney feared 'the appropriation of Port Phillip money to Port Phillip purposes alone would leave the citizens of Sydney under a total inability to pay their bounties'.¹⁷ Gipps's attitude explained it all, and La Trobe later complained, in a typically understated way, that expenditure on Port Phillip had 'scarcely been what it might have been', and that he did things 'as well as I can with the tools that are given to me'.¹⁸

Indeed, the tools given to La Trobe did severely restrict what he could do. His original instructions clearly stated: He must not incur expenses not provided for by the Legislature or authorized by the Governor; He must not transfer funds provided for one purpose to another purpose; He must endeavour to make savings wherever possible, but the savings were not to be spent on other items. Furthermore, 'any person who authorises a departure from any of the three foregoing Rules, does so on his own responsibility'.¹⁹ There were times when La Trobe took that responsibility and justified his actions later, but his instructions were, in George Arden's words, 'far too limited for the prosperity of the place', and the 'only influential power attached to his position' was 'the weight which is supposed to attend his remarks and suggestions'.²⁰ Unfortunately, the weight of opinion in the Sydney Legislature was often greater than that of La Trobe's suggestions.

In Hobart the *Courier* was supportive:

We cannot help coming to the conclusion that the Port Phillipians are not only justified, but called upon in their own self defence, to endeavour to separate themselves from New South Wales ... every remonstrance on their part is treated with comparative contempt by Sir George Gipps ... considering the enormous revenue they [in Sydney] have derived therefrom, they should have been a little more careful of the good

government of the district, and a little more liberal in giving them emigrants.²¹

While the *Courier's* advice may have anticipated peaceful legislative separation for Port Phillip, even the most violent revolutions, such as those that spread across Europe in 1848, can begin with seemingly small dissatisfactions. Riots before the election of June 1843, and

Perhaps La Trobe was simply stating the obvious, but the newspaper editors, and the Town Councillors, failed to recognize either La Trobe's 'repeated requests for action' or the efforts he made 'behind the scenes'. La Trobe himself reflected that the hopes of Port Phillip residents had 'led them to over-rate both my official and my personal powers'.²⁵ It sometimes took unbiased outsiders, such as Charles Baker, to see La Trobe's dilemma. Baker thought



between Melbourne's Catholics and Orangemen in 1846, showed how easily violence could erupt in Melbourne, and by 1848 La Trobe blamed the *Argus* and its editor, William Kerr, for keeping alive a 'violent and disgraceful party spirit' in Melbourne.²² Kerr turned his attacks upon La Trobe in the belief that the Superintendent was not doing enough to secure separation. La Trobe, however, had been appointed as an administrator, not a policy maker, and throughout the 1840s, as Jill Eastwood observed, he 'acted on Gipps's two rules: Keep your government out of debt and preserve the peace of the country'.²³ In particular, the *Argus* seized upon La Trobe's comment to FitzRoy in 1847 that Port Phillip had 'neither the experience nor the means of prudently devising or properly executing many important works, highly conducive to the prosperity and comfort of the inhabitants', and that Port Phillip would need to 'await a period of greater maturity & more settled and manageable principles of internal government' before progress could be made.²⁴

La Trobe's 'situation is by no means enviable, as a great variety of duties devolve upon him, whilst he is much fettered in action, and thwarted in measures by the Governor of the Colony, reference to whom frequently causes injurious delay'.²⁶ London had promised separation but repeatedly delayed acting and by mid-1848 dissatisfaction was nearing breaking point.²⁷

When news of the 1848 French Revolution appeared in the Melbourne press on Tuesday 13 June it was possibly the trigger for Thomas McCombie to announce on the same day that he would ask the Town Council to petition for La Trobe's removal.²⁸ McCombie's motion was debated on the Thursday and by the following week not only was news received that the French unrest had spread to England and Scotland, but that the revolutionary fervour had gripped at least some of Melbourne's separationists who had issued a proclamation announcing 'the overthrow of the dynasty of La Trobe, and the establishment of the Republic of Victoria'.²⁹

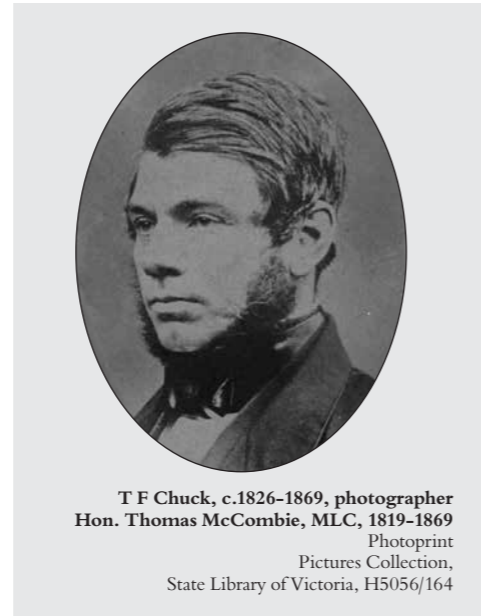
In Seymour, a correspondent wondered whether 'a little bit of an *émeute*³⁰ in Melbourne, would cause our valuable Superintendent to follow the example of the King of the Barricades?'³¹ The *émeute* occurred in Melbourne a few weeks later when the separationists took the radical act of nominating Earl Grey to represent Melbourne in the Legislative Council in Sydney.³² The *South Australian Register* thought it was a 'Capital Joke' when Grey was overwhelmingly elected.³³ A subsequent petition told Grey that New South Wales and Port Phillip 'have ever been two colonies – their separateness having ever been the reality, and their union the fiction'. Furthermore, 'the revenue we have lost is not a mere pecuniary loss, it is the loss of schools and churches, of public worship and education, of effective police, of social and political advancement, of a population of 20,000 souls, and a good effective government in all its branches.'³⁴ The electors again requested that Port Phillip revenues be used 'for the exclusive benefit of the district in which they accrue'.³⁵

La Trobe was equally frustrated – they were exactly the outcomes he wanted for the district – nevertheless, he told FitzRoy the election of Grey was 'improper, impolite and absurd' and indicated the unfitness of many of the residents for self-government.³⁶ On the other hand, he told his friend Ronald Gunn in Launceston:

You will have seen that political agitation is not confined to the other end of the world: but that the Port Phillip people have [been] trying their hand at something extraordinary ... the Electors of Melbourne to cap the absurdities of the time, soberly set to work [to] nominate, poll & elect Earl Grey to sit as their representative & battle the watch with the Sydney folk for Port Phillip. Don't laugh. One gets a little tired of all this – but after all must stick to it, & do one's duty as well as may be.³⁷

Although La Trobe may have laughed privately, the chance of serious *émeute* was increasing, and in forwarding their petition he added, 'the longer that act of separation from New South Wales ... is delayed, the more difficult will the task of governing become', and he emphasized, 'the erection of the district into a distinct colony will at once remedy much that is anomalous in the present state of things'.³⁸ FitzRoy told Grey that the actions of the Port Phillipians were 'intended to prove the discontent

of the inhabitants of the district and city generally at the delay that has occurred in establishing Port Phillip as a separate and independent Colony and Government'.³⁹ Fortunately, news reached Melbourne in June 1849 that the *Constitutional Act* that would ultimately separate Port Phillip from New South Wales had been drawn up. It would eventually be debated and passed by the British Parliament in June 1850.⁴⁰



During that debate, the dilemma faced by La Trobe was enunciated in the House of Lords by the Bishop of Oxford who observed that if Crown nominees in Australia 'adopted the Government side in a disputed question, they would be reproached as being slaves ... if they espoused the popular cause they would be branded as traitors'. The Bishop also feared 'the convict population, and those sprung from convicts, would ... become absolutely dominant' in a Legislative Assembly and recommended a Legislative Council made up of 'older men' of 'a higher class suffrage', elected in rotation so that 'a majority should never represent the dominant cry of the mass of electors at any given moment'. Aware of a rebellious spirit in Australia, the Bishop warned of following 'the precise track already so fatally marked by disappointment and disaster' in the American colonies.⁴¹ La Trobe was all too aware of the 'dominant cry of the mass' and of the rebellious spirit in Port Phillip.

After his visit to Melbourne in March 1849 when both La Trobe and deputations of residents forcefully demanded to have anticipated convict ships diverted to Sydney, Governor FitzRoy was also aware of Port Phillip's rebellious sentiments.⁴² On 29 October 1849 FitzRoy advised London that, because the impending separation of Port Phillip threw some doubt over future funds,

he recommended dividing the immigration allocation for 1850 into 'equal proportions for the Sydney and Port Phillip Districts'.⁴³ Despite this, by January 1851 FitzRoy's cousin and friend of La Trobe, Godfrey Mundy, noted that Port Phillip contributed one third of all New South Wales revenue, and observed, 'No wonder, then, that New South Wales is reluctant to part with so important an integral part of herself, and that Port Phillip, endowed with the name of Victoria, feels strong enough to stand alone'.⁴⁴ Kirsten McKenzie has noted that Mundy was 'in a good position to comment' on such matters.⁴⁵ By contrast, John Ward's entry on FitzRoy in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* remarkably states that 'separation of the Port Phillip District was not resented in New South Wales'.⁴⁶

In hindsight it is easy to say that progress towards Separation during the late 1840s was inevitable, however until late 1850 nothing was guaranteed – the decision had been postponed several times, and in 1849 the British Parliament had neither debated the issue, nor agreed to necessary constitutional changes.⁴⁷ It was not a *fait accompli*. People had thought that about the end of transportation, but that decision had just been reversed. In the meantime, Port Phillip revenue continued to flow into Sydney; ex-convicts from Van Diemen's Land continued to flow into Port Phillip; new convicts were reported to be on their way from England; and the police force was seriously below strength.⁴⁸ In the midst of all this, a potentially rich gold field was discovered in the Pyrenees Ranges of Port Phillip. How was La Trobe to respond? He sent in nearly half of his existing police force to stop the rush, and kept the police on site for the next two months.

Although La Trobe could not find the original discoverer of the gold field, Thomas Chapman, he did see the samples shown to him by Duchene and Brentani, and he personally visited the site at least twice over the next two years. He was there at the time William Campbell found gold near Clunes in March 1850, and, given the widespread knowledge of gold among Port Phillip District squatters, it seems probable that La Trobe also believed a potentially rich gold deposit existed in the Pyrenees. He acknowledges as much in October 1851 and in 1854, when Campbell claimed a reward for being the first to discover gold near Clunes, La Trobe told him clearly that Thomas Chapman deserved that recognition.⁴⁹

Separation finally occurred on 1 July 1851, and A.G.L. Shaw suggested it was simply an 'accident' that within a month a gold field was announced at Clunes, not far from the 1849 discovery.⁵⁰ While the historiographical

definition of 'accidental' events could be argued at length, it is apparent that La Trobe's actions in February and March 1849, in effect, postponed official acknowledgement and exploitation of the Pyrenees gold until after Separation. As he said in October 1851, he would have preferred the search for gold to be delayed beyond 1851, until a time when the new government and its agencies, especially the police force, were better established.⁵¹ The pressures of a larger population, calls for industrial and economic development, and renewed interest in the exploration of local gold fields, even without the impetus and excitement generated by Edward Hargraves's announcement of gold at Bathurst, ensured that any local gold confirmed in 1851 would start a rush that was unstoppable.

While Shaw drew no connection between the timing of the 1851 Clunes discovery, the date of separation, and the issues surrounding the 1849 event, others have drawn tentative, but unexplained, connections. William Newnham suggested that, 'there were several good reasons' pre-1851 discoveries were not publicly announced, and that 'it may not have been coincidence that the official announcement was made after separation'. But Newnham did not explain the 'good reasons'.⁵² Robyn Annear hinted at a similar conclusion in *Bearbrass* when she said, 'announcement of the local [gold] finds was held back until Separation became official'.⁵³ She gave the thought no further discussion.

While neither La Trobe nor FitzRoy could have foreseen the extent of gold deposits waiting to be exploited, at the beginning of March 1849 FitzRoy clearly thought minerals revenue could be used to subsidise emigration.⁵⁴ La Trobe also wanted Port Phillip to benefit from mineral resources, but he could be forgiven if he assumed FitzRoy was thinking only of balancing Sydney's accounts. Throughout 1849 there were numerous occasions when decisions, such as those concerning property rights, building public facilities, and other projects, were postponed until 'after separation' because the benefits would be greater then.⁵⁵ Indeed, a few weeks after FitzRoy's visit to Melbourne in March 1849, La Trobe told the town council that 'real progress would have to wait until separation was achieved'.⁵⁶

La Trobe was actively looking for a workable coal deposit, but if a rich gold field was to be found in the Pyrenees, and even if issues concerning convicts, pastoral rights, law and order, and social disruption did not exist, it would be more financially advantageous to Port Phillip to exploit the gold resource *after* separation rather than *before* separation, when most of the revenue would go to Sydney.⁵⁷

La Trobe would not be the only one to think so—as soon as it heard of the 1849 Pyrenees discovery *Bell's Life in Sydney* assumed 'the gold will not be procured in any large quantities, until the "Act of Separation" be passed'.⁵⁸

That was undoubtedly what La Trobe hoped. However, a few months before Port Phillip was separated from New South Wales in July 1851, gold was conveniently found at Bathurst, enabling Sydney's threatened coffers to be replenished; but it also hastened the 'rediscovery' of Victoria's own gold fields. While these would ultimately provide the massive revenue stream that would turn Melbourne into the marvellous place that La Trobe had always wanted, it was too soon. As La Trobe observed on 10 October 1851:

Had the position of the new colony been a more settled and favourable one – had it possessed the power of a timely and firm legislation ... a much more satisfactory system for the working of the gold-fields ... might and ought to have been set on foot from the very outset.⁵⁹

The beginning of the Victorian gold rushes and the achievement of separation from New South Wales, in July 1851, was not a mere

coincidence as Geoffrey Serle put it.⁶⁰ Nor was it simply chance or accident as A.G.L. Shaw suggested.⁶¹ J.D. Lang thought it was Divine Providence; and Geoffrey Blainey looked to economic factors to explain what happened.⁶² It was more complex than any of these.

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- 1 The following summary of the Chapman discovery, and the Duchene, Brentani and Forrester expedition to the gold field, is based upon a comprehensive analysis of a wide range of primary and secondary sources. These can be found in Douglas Wilkie, '1849 The Rush That Never Started', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2014, pp.32-66. The thesis represents the first time the 1849 discovery and its aftermath have been analysed in detail. Although the discovery has been mentioned briefly by many others, it has never been fully investigated, and there is no single source that adequately covers all the aspects mentioned here. For the interested reader, it is hoped that the thesis will be published in book form in the near future. In the meantime, the author welcomes correspondence from those seeking further details.
 - 2 *Port Phillip Gazette* quoted in *Launceston Examiner*, 14 February 1849, p.3.
 - 3 *Melbourne Daily News*, 7 February 1849 quoted in *Cornwall Chronicle*, 14 February 1849, p.370; For full details and sources see Wilkie, '1849 The Rush That Never Started', pp.79-80.
 - 4 'Important Discovery – Port Phillip a Gold Field', *Argus*, 31 January 1849, quoted in *Maitland Mercury*, 14 February 1849, p. 4.
 - 5 Memo, La Trobe to Powlett, 7 February 1849 on back of Halloran to La Trobe, 26 January 1849 49/317, VPRS 2877, P0, Unit 4, PROV; Powlett to La Trobe, 22 February 1849, 49/12, Outward Letter Book, Commissioner of Crown Lands Western Port, VPRS 103, P0, Unit 1, PROV.
 - 6 *Launceston Examiner*, 14 February 1849, p.3 quoting *Port Phillip Gazette*, 3 February 1849.
 - 7 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Ronald Campbell Gunn, 2 March 1849, MS Q641, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW; also cited in Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the making of a governor*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, p. 235.
 - 8 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 31 May 1851, p.339; *Daily Pacific News*, 23 December 1850, p.1. For a detailed discussion of this meeting see Wilkie, '1849 The Rush That Never Started', pp.116-117.
 - 9 McLelland to Dana, 17 March 1849, Unregistered Papers Relating to the Native Police Corps, VPRS 4466, P0, Unit 1, 5, PROV.
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- 15 The term used for New South Wales district of the larger New South Wales before Separation as distinct from the Port Phillip District. See http://hccda.anu.edu.au/pages/NSW-1846-census-01_3
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Whitbourne and Whitbourne Court 1858-1866

By Dr Kate Lack & Loreen Chambers

Dr Kate Lack is a freelance historian. She lives in Whitbourne, close to The Court. She recently used the eighteenth and nineteenth century population of the parish as the basis for a major research project into population mobility and social change, and this eventually became a thesis for a (second) doctorate, awarded by the University of Birmingham. Kate also specialises in medieval history, having a MPhil in Anglo-Norman politics, and has written on church history and community research projects. She is currently the Chairman of the Bromyard and District Local History Society, which has an unrivalled archive of early photographs and documents. See www.bromyardhistorysociety.org.uk, and her website at www.KatherineLack.co.uk.

Loreen Chambers is the Hon. Editor of *La Trobeana* and has an interest in the homes where Charles Joseph La Trobe and his wife Rose lived in the last twenty years of his life, after the hardship years of colonial administration.

Loreen would like to acknowledge the generous assistance Dr Kate Lack gave her when she and her husband John Chambers visited the Bromyard area in June 2014. Loreen would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Mr Roger Clarke, who currently lives in the central and oldest portion of Whitbourne Court, in allowing them access to the garden and to the house.

Part 1, 'Our Pretty Retreat': Charles Joseph La Trobe at Whitbourne Court By Loreen Chambers

This is an edited version of an address entitled 'Epilogue: Charles Joseph La Trobe 1854-1875' given to The Friends of La Trobe's Cottage on the occasion of La Trobe's 213th Birthday that was celebrated on 30 March 2014.¹

On 3rd April 1855 the newly widowed and despondent Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe, recently returned home after over fifteen years absence,² wrote from a wintry and cheerless London to Charlotte Pellet in Victoria: 'My children are well, thank God, both in Switzerland & England. Little Charlie, as well as Agnes,³ are

at school, –but I hope in the process of time to have a home to receive my children in'.⁴ 'A home to receive my children in' – a home with family gathered round and old friends to stay were powerful needs in this most private of men. One senses that, despite La Trobe's appetite for exploration of the new and the excitement of keenly-observed landscapes and



Photographer unknown
Garden view of Whitbourne
Court, undated
Collection, Bromyard and District
Local History Society, UK



Charles Joseph
La Trobe, 1801-1875,
artist
Not titled but identified
as Whitbourne Court,
c.1858.
Ink, wash and pencil and
paper
19.4 x 28.4 cm
Pictures Collection,
State Library of Victoria,
Australia, H 92.360/160

La Trobe the artist

In his earlier life, Charles Joseph La Trobe had produced hundreds of sketches of very fine quality. Until recently it wasn't known whether La Trobe had taken up his usual pastime of sketching at Whitbourne Court. In September, Dr Kate Lack of Whitbourne sent three photographs taken in the garden of the Whitbourne Court in the period after the La Trobes

had left. John Botham, subsequently, made the startling and exciting discovery that a hitherto unidentified ink and wash painting of a house painted by La Trobe was in fact a garden view of Whitbourne Court. There are several other pictures (mostly landscapes) held in the Pictures Collection of the State Library of Victoria which are now under investigation by BDLHS members.

architecture, the intimacy of domestic life was increasingly the touchstone of his existence. La Trobe's choice of Sophie de Montmollin, a quiet, serious and anxious person, and a delicate and private woman was an interesting choice for an ambitious colonial servant. Or was it? There is a sense that La Trobe had need of a career that paid an adequate compensation for what he recognised as an arduous missionary-like posting, but he was never driven by money; never avaricious as some of his colonial detractors would have had him. And of course the lady-like refinement of the well-born Sophie also appealed to another side of La Trobe that he was to repeat in the choice of his second wife Rose. La Trobe was himself a gentleman, refined and courteous in the traditional sense of courtliness – of gracefulness, good taste, sobriety, formality

and reserve. The dismay and distress he felt toward what he perceived as an ungrateful and parsimonious government on his return was, in part, fuelled by his anguish, his rancour that his civilizing mission in life, a deeply-felt desire born of his Huguenot heritage,⁵ was to be given so little recognition. Secondly, the pension he sought was not based solely on this need for recognition but on the other deeply-felt desire of his which was to create a home for his children. And it had to be a home suitable for a gentleman, a retired Lieutenant-Governor.

Charles Joseph La Trobe was to find great happiness in the comfort of a devoted second wife and mother for his children for the remaining twenty years of his life. She was Rose Isabelle de Meuron, widowed herself and the sister of

his late wife Sophie. She was some twenty years younger than La Trobe, and had cared for the La Trobe's eldest child Agnes in 1845 when she had been sent back to Switzerland, just eight years old, to be cared for by her mother's family in Neuchâtel. Rose and Charles Joseph La Trobe were married on 3 October, 1855 at Neuchâtel and within two months were seeking a home in England. The need for a suitable home was great as Rose was to bear the first of two daughters she and Charles Joseph were to add to the already full household.

smaller estate in the Cuckmere valley in East Sussex, where he died 4 December 1875. He is buried in the churchyard of St Michael the Archangel, Litlington.

The year 1858, was a significant year for the La Trobes. Firstly, Charles Joseph was awarded the Companion of the Bath and, at the same time, had resigned himself to an 'early retirement'.¹⁰ Secondly, the La Trobes had returned to Switzerland to await the birth of their second daughter, Isabelle.¹¹ Even here,



John Chambers, photographer
Whitbourne Court entrance, 2015

There were many manor houses available for lease in the nineteenth century for which agents were seeking tenants from among the returning colonial servants, retired naval officers and rising professional men. Charles Joseph La Trobe was one such man, and upon his arrival in England, he was to lease *Ightham Mote* in Kent which he took from December 1855 to June 1856. The Mote was a romantic medieval moated house which was then only partly habitable, and here and in the local area La Trobe once again took up his leisure pastime of touring and painting. *Ightham Mote* had the advantage of being within easy railway access to London where La Trobe could visit his club,⁶ see his friends and, most importantly, engage in the painful process of negotiating with the Colonial Office for further appointments or, as it increasingly looked like, an appropriate pension.⁷

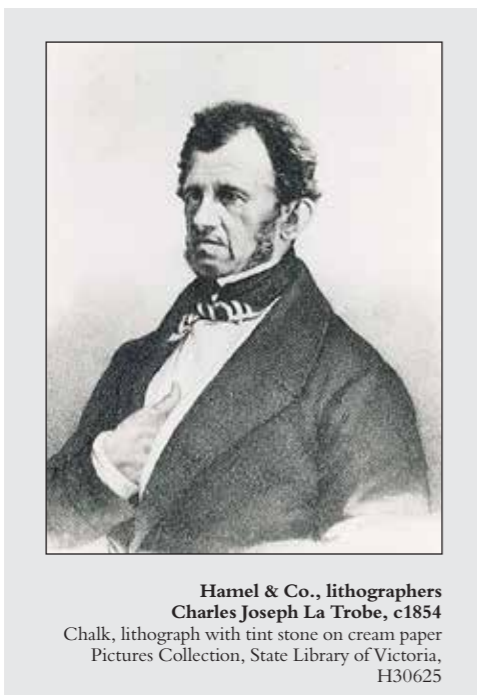
Then, there was a short period when La Trobe lived at Addington Vale in Kent where Rose's first daughter, Daisy⁸ was born in September 1856. Following the birth of his second daughter, Isabelle, in Switzerland in 1858, the La Trobes took up the lease of *Whitbourne Court*. La Trobe's final home was to be *Clapham House*,⁹ an equally handsome but

Charles Joseph was sketching in the mountains.¹² Earlier in the year, however, La Trobe had returned to England and was staying at the Moravian settlement in Bedford while looking for a suitable, more permanent home. La Trobe was to find such a home at *Whitbourne Court* in Herefordshire, and here the La Trobe family stayed until 1866.

Finding Whitbourne Court

La Trobe wrote to Agnes on 19 January 1858:

[On] the 13th Thursday a cold but fine bright day I drove out early to Whitbourne & passed 4 or 5 hours in inquiring & inspecting in & about the Court – being civilly rec'd by all the people there – & being much pleased upon the whole. In summer when I had seen it, it was a lovely spot – & even in winter was not without beauty. In the evening I returned to Worcester... The 14th I went early to Malvern – crossed the hill over



Hamel & Co., lithographers
Charles Joseph La Trobe, c1854
Chalk, lithograph with tint stone on cream paper
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria,
H30625

where the clouds were flying in quite a picturesque manner, & descending to W. Malvern spent 2 or 3 hours with Count & Countess Wengierski, the owners of Whitbourne Court, talking about various matters. I returned later in the afternoon – to Worcester & Cheltenham...returned homebound on the 15th – so far as Goring where I turned aside to pass 8 hours with our dear friends the [?] but still reaching London at night...

About Whitbourne Court, I must tell you more another time. After holding conference with Mamma on my return I have written to intimate my desire to take a lease of it and enter into possession in the course of the summer – provided it be put into the necessary repair. There will be room enough for our small tribe I think at all times and many advantages such as one can only have in the country.¹³

This letter is interesting on a number of levels. Firstly, it tells us when and how La Trobe came to find the house he was later to describe as 'our pretty retreat',¹⁴ although we are not sure how he came to have the house recommended to him. The tranquillity and

beauty of the Bromyard district with its rolling hills covered with fine trees and open farmlands, and the Malvern Hills beyond, were a powerful inducement to a man like La Trobe who had spent his entire life in the countryside. Nearby, too, was Bromyard, an ancient and still-thriving market town with its 'black and white' Tudor and Stuart buildings and market square.

Whitbourne Court, itself, was one of the notable houses in the district in a secluded village setting. Its history, perhaps, also appealed to La Trobe as it stood on the moated site of an early manor house which had been the summer palace of the Bishops of Hereford. It was now a handsome late Georgian-style stone building, although possibly a little run down, but with an extensive garden and lake, and orchard and kitchen garden. Beyond were water meadows and fields.¹⁵ On a practical level, *Whitbourne Court* was commodious enough for Charles Joseph and Rose La Trobe with their family of six children, a number of servants and house guests.

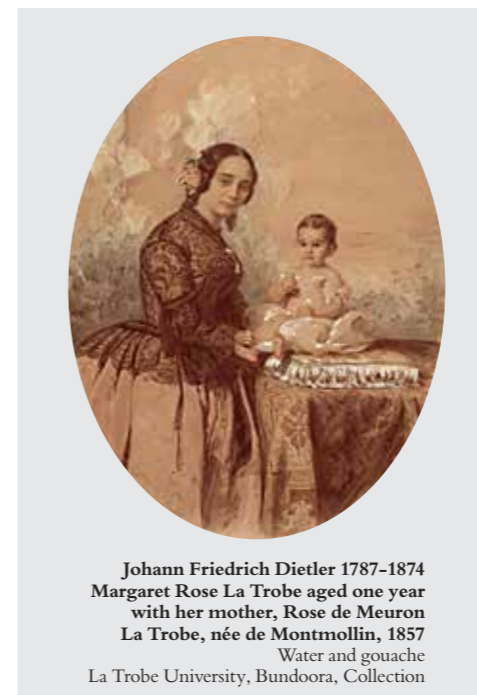
Life at the Pretty Retreat

In May 1860, we get a fascinating glimpse of La Trobe's life at Whitbourne. In a letter to Charles Macarthur he wrote that he could not get up to London because of the expense and other difficulties:

That suits my present circumstances – to keep quiet as I can in the country, keep my family straight as maybe – & what is more difficult – servants up to their collars – what a plague they are! – all the world over! – look after my kitchen & flower garden, 3 cows, 1 horse, half a doz. pigs or piglets – some dozen cocks, hens and ducks – now and then look at the papers, & do all I can to keep the wolf from the door.¹⁶

Despite the complaints, this letter sounds just like the usual complaints of the gentry everywhere. A ride on a horse would have cleared that grumpiness in the past,¹⁷ but increasingly that was to be denied him.

The 1861 census found the La Trobes and their servants at home, a total of fourteen people. In the house were Charles La Trobe, aged 60 and Rose, aged 39, together with all but one of their children, Agnes aged 24, Nellie 19, Charlie 15, Daisy 4 and little Isabelle aged just two. Also with them on a visit was La Trobe's older sister Charlotte who was to live with them in the future at *Clapham House*. Then



Johann Friedrich Dietler 1787-1874
Margaret Rose La Trobe aged one year
with her mother, Rose de Meuron
La Trobe, née de Montmollin, 1857
Water and gouache
La Trobe University, Bundoora, Collection

there were those aforementioned troublesome live-in servants: Three young women from Wurtemberg, Christine Wisser the head nurse and housekeeper, her 19 year old sister Dorothea who acted as nurse, and another Dorothea Hilgus (Hilgers?) the 22 year old cook. In addition, there was Agnes Ringrose a 22 year old housemaid from Southwell in Nottinghamshire, William Biddle the 20 year old groom, a local Whitbourne lad, and young Michael Hurreman (?) the house servant from Leicestershire who was 14 years old. Children were often even younger than this as the Poor Laws after 1834¹⁸ had forced parents to send their children out to work. It is interesting to note that in the nineteenth century, servants were the most mobile of any class. La Trobe would probably have had other servants who came in from the village to do the rough work in the garden and in the house. One can see, however, that the La Trobes lived quite modestly by comparison with John Freeman Esq. at *Gaines*, or rather *New Gaines*, (the ancient timber house having been demoted to a farmhouse and a splendid early Georgian mansion built). The Freeman household consisted of nine family members who lived together with eleven indoor servants, including a butler, footman and lady's maid, all considered essential in such a household.

Whilst we do not know if La Trobe visited local people, we can surmise that he would have had many a conversation with the Reverend Robert Biscoe MA JP, who was the Rector at Whitbourne from 1833 until his death in 1870. He was also a prebendary (honorary canon) of Hereford Cathedral. St John the Baptist, a

12th century stone church with a square tower which housed six bells, was situated next door to *Whitbourne Court*.¹⁹ Robert Biscoe lived in the handsome rectory opposite Charles La Trobe at *The Court*, and was the same age.²⁰ La Trobe, as a Moravian Protestant,²¹ a devout Christian and educated man would have valued the company of such a neighbour.

Despite their reputations as an easy-going and privileged class, many of the Anglican clergy in the nineteenth century often formed an educated elite with considerable scientific, political or cultural interests if they were so inclined. The Reverend Robert Biscoe was one of the many gentry clergy who, mostly second or third sons, acquired good livings for most of their lives and mixed easily with the local gentry. Indeed, Robert Biscoe's second daughter, Frances Biscoe married Sir Richard Harington who bought *Whitbourne Court* in 1877.

It is hard to say what social intercourse the La Trobes had with other local gentry, many of course would have worshipped at St John's. How welcoming were the established gentry to such newcomers? The old landed wealth of the Freemans of *Gaines* and the new wealth of the Evans of *Whitbourne Hall*, then building their huge neo-Palladian house in the years 1860-62 on a three thousand acre estate, were on good terms with each other.²² La Trobe, a gentleman of distinction and with a wife who was singularly well-born, albeit foreign, might well, however, have been welcomed if he had been so inclined. Certainly, before 1854, he had been used to visiting many of the settlers on their huge sheep runs and was well received. But there and on official duties he had sometimes been seen as somewhat aloof, overly formal and unsociable.²³ He was fundamentally, however, a private man and one is inclined to think he mixed little in the area as evidenced in a letter he wrote to his friend, the renowned naturalist Ronald Gunn²⁴ in Tasmania:

I live quietly as maybe with my excellent second wife and my children – two of whom little girls both 5 & 6 years old are my play things, at a retired country house on the Herefordshire border – behind the Malvern Hills. I have hitherto found solace and occupation in my domestic circle – with my book,²⁵ drawing, paint brushes – looking after gardens & small interests of a small establishment, seldom come up to town except when forced.²⁶



Photograph shows the proximity of the church and Whitbourne Court whose entrance drive and front façade can be seen on the right.

John Chambers
Photograph 2014
St John the Baptist Church, Whitbourne

However, as will be seen, his other letters give us a picture of a man of sensibility and charm, always interested in people.

Good and true friends

La Trobe certainly did not lack good and true friends from the past in Australia, men for whom he had a great deal of affection. House guests were frequent at *Whitbourne Court*, such as the reliable, and intelligent Captain William Lonsdale,²⁷ soldier and Police Magistrate, and Frederick Powlett,²⁸ a pioneer pastoralist from Bacchus Marsh, a like-minded man, a confidante and friend, who acted as his agent for the sale of his land in Melbourne after La Trobe returned to England. La Trobe was to write of Powlett after a visit to *Whitbourne Court* that he was 'the same excellent honest hearted fellow as ever, trailing his puppy dogs about with him, & leaving no end of trifles behind him, wherever he goes'.²⁹

Charles La Trobe certainly needed to go into Worcester to transact business or to take the train to London if friendship called. One old friend and soul-mate, Charles Perry, the first Anglican Bishop of Melbourne was one.³⁰ As well, there was the formidable Lady Jane Franklin, widow of Sir John Franklin,³¹ Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1837 to 1843. Lady Franklin famously financed the search for her husband when he disappeared while seeking the Northwest Passage in the Arctic.³²

The letters of La Trobe

La Trobe wrote hundreds of thousands of words in his life time; and apart from official correspondence including regular personal letters to Governor Gipps in Sydney, he wrote extensive travel journals of his time in Victoria between 1839 and 1854. His writings were alive with the names of people he met and the adventures he had, whether in rocky terrain, parched landscape or flooded creeks; and in these we find the administrator, the adventurer, the botanist and the artist.³³ These writings reveal not only the exterior talents of the man, but as L. J. Blake wrote in his Introduction to the *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*: 'It is in his letters that the real La Trobe emerges; enlightened, artistic, enthusiastic and witty: a graceful writer; a man who valued his friends; a person of great sincerity and integrity; a man of vision.'³⁴

Many of these letters, relate to business such as those that were sent to his agent and friend James Graham in Melbourne, but even these convey an intimacy that transcends the transaction of business; then there were others to friends 'on the land' whom he met or who had been colonial officials and shared many a horse-back mile with him, that reveal a La Trobe of many moods, some anxious or despondent, others mischievous and humorous. All of them are informative, intelligent and engaging.

La Trobe's concerns about his finances frequently emerge in these letters. Increasingly

he had relied on the sale of lots from *Jolimont* his subdivided estate in East Melbourne. With such a large household, including servants to support, his need for income to support them all beyond his life time was a constant source of anxiety.

The tone of a letter to David Macarthur, the manager of the Bank of Australasia and a long-time friend, is characteristic of La Trobe's throughout this period:

A Happy New Year to you and Mrs McArthur... I need not say that I shall be glad to receive the quarterly remittances (£200) which you propose making if you continue in a position to do so. I do not say but I may have to scrape a little here and there, till better times come, – for tho' I have no debts I have assumed certain obligations and certain liabilities beyond the maintenance of house and home, which swallow up a good fraction of my income – but never mind. I have seen worse times!³⁵

At other times he could be ferocious as when he advised Powlett not to 'give the dirty Powers-that-be ... the slightest reason to get their lever under you'.³⁶ La Trobe was also a witty, if acerbic raconteur. To Macarthur he could also write the following:

Who should I stumble on the other day in Worcester but *Misther Brewster!* Now the worthy curate of All Saints in that city. I wonder if he ever makes a mistake and addresses his congregation 'Jintlemen of the Djury' instead of 'Dearly beloved brethren'. However I am told he has turned himself out of a bungling lawyer into a very active and worthy clergyman. But I must not take up your time or my own in yarning.³⁷

And there is another side again to La Trobe. Ever solicitous of old relationships, to Rose Amiet, daughter of Charlotte Pellet the La Trobe house-keeper who grew up alongside the La Trobe children, he wrote in some distress upon hearing of her early widowhood: 'May God be your comfort and a father to your fatherless children and enable you to bring them up in His Fear: so prays your old friend!'³⁸

When news of Powlett's death reached him a year later, he wrote:

I need not tell you how deeply I [feel] by the sad intelligence brought me by the mail of the unexpected death of our dear old friend. What a bereavement for all who knew him and above all for his orphan child. You know how long and sincerely we have been attached to each other and how loyal and enduring his friendship. I feel the loss is to me irreplaceable.³⁹

La Trobe was always a keen observer of men: loyal and compassionate to those whose talents and values he respected; but disdainful of and at times ferocious in his judgment of others he saw as incompetent or corrupt.

The world outside Whitbourne

Always a traveller, from his youth climbing in the Swiss Alps or on the trails of North America, to his dozens of horseback rides in the barely explored regions of Victoria, La Trobe continued to journey in old age, undeterred by increasing blindness. A citizen of the railway age and the steam boat he visited his friends in London and Rose's family in Switzerland. In London, he sometimes stayed at the Athenaeum Club. On another occasion he and Rose with their two little daughters stayed en route to London at Bourne East Cottages, Hemel Hempstead where they were visiting a relative.⁴⁰

Charles La Trobe also visited the Continent a number of times for medical and family reasons. Indeed, it was on one of his trips to France to settle his daughter Agnes with friends that he experienced a catastrophic failure of sight in his remaining good eye, describing his experience thus:

I had to lose no time in returning home literally groping my way alone and hourly increasing blindness, by Paris, Dover, and London, till I reached home on the evening of the 14th [October 1865]. Since my arrival the care of my wife who for the time, with my two little girls is my only companion...⁴¹

Giving up Whitbourne Court

Even before this dramatic incident, La Trobe was concerned about settling his

family, even temporarily, somewhere on the coast of England or even to the head of Lake Geneva. Most tellingly, he wanted a house for Agnes and for his sister Charlotte, one which would be 'a warm & cosy retreat however humble somewhere on the south coast.' In the same letter, La Trobe describes how he and Rose travelled in one stretch from Whitbourne to Penzance in May 1865, '9 hours from Worcester! & came back by Totnes, Dartmour and Exeter'. He regretted that Cornwall was so far from London and would scout up and down the Devonshire coast.⁴²

There were a number of reasons why La Trobe gave up Whitbourne; in part it was financial. His pension from the English Government of £333.6.8 that had been awarded him in July 1864,⁴³ he remarked: 'may pay for boots and breakfast if not breeches and beefsteaks'. And he went on to say 'Nelly [his daughter then aged 23 years old] my amanuensis blushes'.⁴⁴

Secondly, he probably considered the need for his daughters to be securely settled in life through marriage. If La Trobe had hoped that any of his three older daughters might find suitable husbands, only Agnes was to marry in his life time and that was just before La Trobe died in 1875 when she was 37 years old. Of the others, Cecile married late in life, like her sister, to a Swiss, and Nelly, the blushing scribe, was to die unmarried at Eastbourne at the age of 96. It is a reminder of the isolation of genteel women who might pass quiet lives of pious usefulness in rural areas like Whitbourne, however pretty a retreat it might be. The La Trobe girls were considered foreign, perhaps, living in a household at Whitbourne with a Swiss-born wife and German house servants. Ready access to London meant that there was also easier access to Switzerland where cousins abounded and other connections to its cultured and aristocratic society were to be found.

La Trobe's increasing blindness and

Part 2, Whitbourne: Home from home in the Welsh Marches?

By Dr Kate Lack

Whitbourne is in many ways an unusual place, but yet it would seem to have been an eminently suitable location for La Trobe's retirement. Herefordshire has for centuries been a deeply rural county, sparsely populated and relying on agriculture and its spin-off trades. Never industrialised, it was too far from the rapidly-urbanising West Midlands Black Country to feel much in its shadow. From most parts of the county, on the other hand, the Welsh mountains are visible – mountains that

possibly other physical ailments, such as 'ague' which he later mentions,⁴⁵ were to disable him increasingly after the age of sixty-four. Despite having been a superbly athletic young man and an intrepid adventurer who wrote travel books of his time in the Alps and in Mexico, La Trobe had lived an arduous life in the extreme, and his health was running down.

In June 1865, as he contemplated leaving Whitbourne he wrote: 'We have had a most splendid season – my hay crop is in and will bring in a few pounds towards moving'.⁴⁶ In April 1866 he wrote again to James Graham:

Now goodbye. We are fairly now in spring weather and I can smell the violets and primroses which my children gather for me even if I cannot see them. My kindest regards to Mrs Graham and all inquiring friends... I believe that I may still name a dozen or so in the old province.⁴⁷

This may have been one of La Trobe's last letters from Whitbourne, and although he still had another nine years or so of life, the tone of this letter amounts almost to a song of lamentation with its reference to springtime meadows which are now only a shadow of a world in which he once rejoiced.

As early as 1864, nineteen months before he lost his sight, however, he was to write: 'If I preserve the sight of one eye I have nothing to complain of. If not, God's will be done. I have a brain and a memory which as long as they retain life will be stored and alive with beautiful pictures'.⁴⁸ His joy at observing landscape had, in the past, enabled him to depict God's creation of the natural world.⁴⁹ Now, we see the essence of the man who, reconciled to his end, could summon the spiritual courage to accept the loss of his most precious talent.

might have resonated with La Trobe's pleasure in the Swiss scenery.

Yet Whitbourne had been on a major route since time immemorial. A prehistoric trackway had become a Roman road, then a Royal Mail road and finally a coaching route, turnpiked for greater speed and efficiency, and this road cut right through the parish, within a mile of *Whitbourne Court*. There was no railway here in La Trobe's time, although the navvies were



In La Trobe's time the house was owned and occupied by a yeoman farmer called Joseph Collins.

Unknown photographer
Photograph c.1890
Colbridge, Whitbourne
Private collection, Sir Nicholas Harington,
Whitbourne, UK.

already at work only a few miles away; but twelve miles east along the turnpike was Worcester station, with frequent trains to London, Bristol, Cheltenham and Birmingham.

Whitbourne Court, the house which La Trobe leased here, was located in the heart of the old settlement, adjacent to the twelfth-century church which was itself on the site of an earlier (probably Saxon) church. The Court had also been extensively rebuilt, but at its core was a medieval manor house of the bishops of Hereford, the centre of the manor which was coterminous with the parish. The bishops had many manors, which together supplied their considerable household expenses, but in time Whitbourne had become one of their favourites, and a frequent summer residence in the late medieval period. The trio of key buildings was completed by the Rectory, just over the lane from the Court and Church. The heart of the building is now early Tudor, although it, too, stands on a medieval site, but there is a handsome Queen Anne facade and a Victorian extension at the rear.

Yeoman farms and smallholdings of Whitbourne

By the mid nineteenth century, the Court estate had been sold off into lay hands, but the bishop remained nominally the lord of the manor, with all the parishioners (even the richest ones) his tenants. This, and other accidents of history,

meant that no one landholder was dominant in the parish, and it allowed the survival of a more equitable system of yeoman farming, with many small farms and smallholdings, and few estates of over one hundred acres. It also enabled the survival of the socially-levelling tradition of live-in 'farm servants', many of whom were themselves the sons and daughters of yeomen farmers, long after this way of life had died out in most parts of England and been replaced by poorly paid daily waged 'agricultural labourers'.

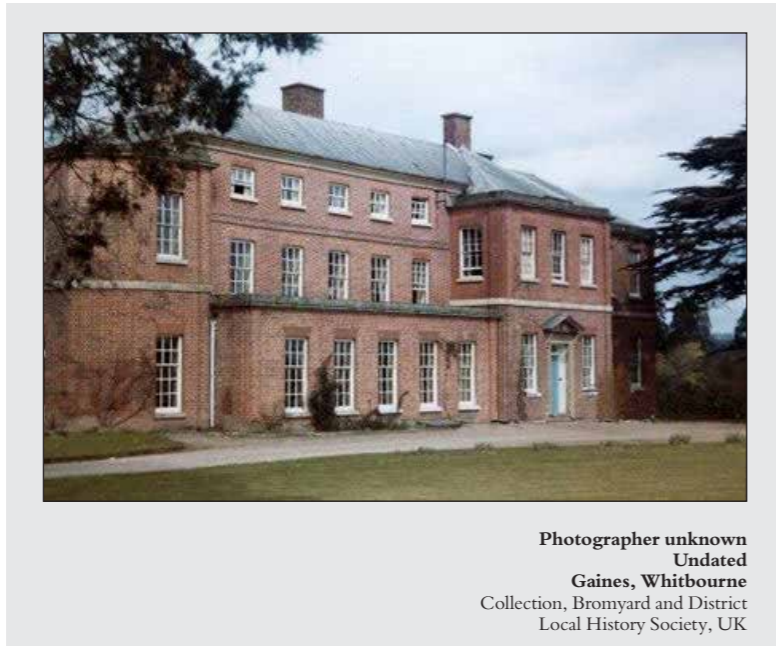
Many of the village families, whether the Freemans of Gaines, who could name their ancestors way back beyond Bellingham Freeman who built the new house in the early 1700s, or the multi-branched Collins family, proud yeoman farmers with relations in every part of the parish, or the humbler smallholders, were old 'Whitbourne folk', whose families had been in the village since Tudor times. The richest families may have looked wider than the parish for many of their social connections, but so too did the middling and poorer sort, finding wives in Worcester or the neighbouring parishes nearly as often as they married their childhood friends.

So the Whitbourne to which La Trobe moved was mostly a place of hope, and modest prosperity, with yeomen farmers free to try different crops as they chose, trying to beat the ever-fickle markets; a high literacy rate, helped by the village school which had opened way back in 1797; good employment prospects,

with women in particular able to benefit from opportunities in domestic service in Worcester, Malvern, Cheltenham and Bath, or remaining at home and out-working for the booming Worcester glove trade. Above all, the area could boast a falling death rate.

Whitbourne Hall: harbinger of change

One early sign of the changes ahead, which La Trobe might well have observed, was the modern tendency for engrossment, exemplified by the rapid development of the Whitbourne Hall Estate. In addition to the biggest old farms, at *Gaines, Huntlands, Tedney* and *Poswick*, which



Photographer unknown
Undated
Gaines, Whitbourne
Collection, Bromyard and District
Local History Society, UK

had their origins way back in the Middle Ages, Longlands farm became the centre of a new type of estate, when Edward Bickerton Evans (1789-1871) began buying up land and smallholdings as property became available in the parish from the late 1850s. Mr Evans had co-founded a highly successful vinegar-making firm in Worcester in 1830, and by the 1850s, after serving a term as Mayor of the City, he was looking for somewhere to invest his newly-acquired wealth and create a 'country estate'. Whitbourne seemed ideal, with many properties coming on the market as the yeomen began to struggle under the burden of mortgages. Edward Evans had the established gentry as neighbours, such as the Freemans at Gaines, the Wights at Tedstone Court and the Barnabys at Brockhampton. Above all, Evans had the prospect of a railway connection to Worcester slowly making its way towards the parish. Between 1860 and 1862, Edward Evans put his grand plans for the new house up above Longlands into effect, landscaping acres of grounds and planting hundreds of ornamental

trees, which 150 years later are now at last fully mature. Here was another family with whom the La Trobes might mix, if they were so minded.

Whitbourne's people and a wider world

Despite their rural situation, it would be wrong to think of the inhabitants of Whitbourne as strangers to the wider world. Any family with children in service, or a parent who had once been (and this probably accounted for all but a handful of households), knew plenty about travel, with Whitbourne folk having worked in London since at least the 1700s. And broader horizons, too, were not unknown: Morgan

Godwin had spent a few years in New England in the 1670s, before publishing a book about the native Indians, and a local farmer had left the local red clay soils to set up a tobacco plantation in the West Indies.

Inevitably, perhaps, a Whitbourne petty thief was transported: one of the first men from the parish to 'settle' in Australia. The eldest son of a smallholder on the edge of the Common land, William Mitten stole a handkerchief, some cash and small household goods in 1831, at a time of poor harvests and low income for the poorest yeomen, when many families were feeling the edge of hunger; because of a previous offence in 1826, he was sentenced to two months hard labour at Hereford Assizes, and then transported. He sailed on *The Asia*, arriving in New South Wales in 1833, and received a Ticket of Leave to settle in the Dungog district, near Newcastle, in 1837. Thereafter, he seems to vanish from view: there is no evidence of him ever returning to Herefordshire.

Another family, blacksmiths by trade, supplied some of the earliest voluntary settlers of Australia, and here it is tempting to wonder if there might be a connection with La Trobe. William and Jane Lloyd ran the Whitbourne blacksmiths business, and their four surviving sons all followed them into the trade. But even a large parish with plenty of passing trade could only support one or two smiths; some of their boys had to move elsewhere. Their widowed daughter-in-law, Mary, was running the village carrier service to Worcester when the La Trobes were at *The Court*. Samuel, their third son, born in 1809, applied for an assisted passage to South Australia, soon after the colony first began advertising for settlers in the local paper.⁵⁰ Both Samuel and his wife Maria were literate, a crucial factor in first accessing the information and then applying for an assisted passage.⁵¹ They sailed on *The Lysander* from London via Plymouth, on the south coast, and reached Port Adelaide in September 1840, together with their three surviving sons and Maria's elderly father.

Four years later, Samuel's elder brother John, who was also literate, also applied for an assisted passage, this time to Port Phillip.⁵² The family sailed on *The Abberton* from London, so they must have saved enough money to pay for the journey to London, and lodgings there

while waiting to board ship, as well as enough to compensate for their lost earnings on the voyage. They called in at Cork, Ireland, in late May, sailing again on 1 June and dropping anchor at Port Phillip Bay on 22 September 1844: John aged 37, his wife Eliza aged 34 and their four sons: Isaac (10), Josiah (8), Ezekiah/Issachar (4) and Felix (1).⁵³ The arrival is noted in the *Sydney Shipping Gazette*, no.30 on October 12th, which comments that there were 156 adults travelling steerage, as well as eighty-one children and fifteen infants. With names like these, might it be possible to trace these Lloyd boys, and maybe even discover if their father could have come into contact with La Trobe. Can we hope that this might provide another thread in the trail leading him to Whitbourne as a retirement home?

Thus, in the decades after La Trobe left the parish, life became more difficult, with more children surviving infancy and a corresponding pressure on jobs, just as mechanisation began to threaten the old employment opportunities on the land and force down wages. As a result the standard of living suffered, making more people try their luck in the new industries of Birmingham and the Black Country. However, while the La Trobes were at *Whitbourne Court*, these troubles were only distant rumbles of thunder in a summer sky.

Part 3, Whitbourne in La Trobe's time 1858-1866: a reflection

By Loreen Chambers

Herefordshire people had a proud tradition as an independent yeomanry. The census of 1861 tells us that in La Trobe's time, there were still many small farms and tenant farms in the surrounding area where fruit and hops were grown, and dairy herds were milked. Whitbourne village itself had two inns, the *Wheatsheaf* and *The Live and Let Live*, a post office, a few shopkeepers, a shoemaker, a lath render, wheelwright, carpenter, a basket maker, a butcher, a couple of coopers and carpenters, a blacksmith and a Free School with an average attendance of from ninety to one hundred. Many of the older children had left school by the time they were eleven or twelve to work on the farms. Many women worked as milkmaids, cooks, laundresses and dressmakers. Thus, Whitbourne reflected the full range of traditional occupations, many of which were beginning to disappear in the Midlands as the Industrial Revolution took hold, but were holding fast in this part of the world.

As the decade went on, however, there was a loss of work on the farms as landowners struggled not only with rising costs but also with shrinking markets, in part, because of the

cheap produce coming in from the Empire. At the same time as this flight from the land by farm labourers and villagers was occurring,⁵⁴ there was the attraction of work in the cities and beyond in the Empire.

La Trobe himself in his role as a Governor of one of the wealthiest colonies in the Empire was to be a harbinger of the changes occurring both at Home and in Victoria. The wool grown in the Western District of Victoria, an area La Trobe had traversed on horseback many times, was to bring the first of these changes as the 'golden fleece' made its way to the woollen mills in the Midlands.

And for skilled and un-skilled rural workers alike, such as shepherds and farm hands, saddlers and blacksmiths from places like Whitbourne, the colony of Victoria beckoned. Gold mining throughout the 1850s was to attract thousands seeking their fortune, land-hungry men and women who would, in time, demand farms of their own and manhood suffrage.⁵⁵ Charles Joseph La Trobe must have observed the arrival of many such rural dwellers who came to the Port Phillip District. However, in the

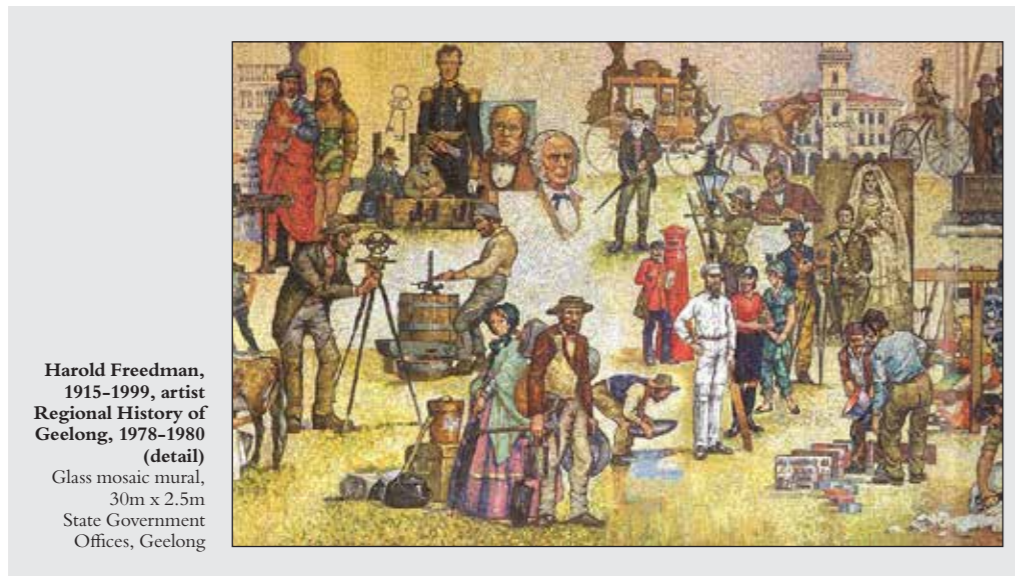
primitive and chaotic, even violent, conditions of the frontier and the gold fields, where ex-convicts and bushrangers abounded, class counted for little, and youth, brawn, courage and guile were paramount.

La Trobe, always a man guided by strong moral principles, would have been confounded by what he experienced there. Now domiciled once again in rural England, he was to find peace in his 'pretty retreat'. Deeply conservative, he appreciated and understood the nuances of class in a place like Whitbourne and the traditions of rural society.

Home and family were always to be a refuge, a retreat from the world's troubles. Although *Whitbourne Court* and later *Clapham House* could scarcely be described as a cottage, there are parallels with that earlier refuge a pretty retreat too at Jolimont, on the rural edge of Melbourne, a place where peace, piety and culture prevailed, and a gentleman might live surrounded by family.

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- 1 This address was the companion piece to an address given on that occasion by Emeritus Professor John Barnes, published as 'La Trobe: a prologue to his Melbourne years', *La Trobeana*, vol.13, no.2, July 2014, pp.6-13.
 - 2 La Trobe departed England for Port Phillip District in March 1839 and left there in May 1854.
 - 3 Agnes, the eldest was eighteen years old and Charlie was nine.
 - 4 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Charlotte Pellet, his former housekeeper, 3 April 1855. The source of this and subsequent letters, unless noted otherwise, is: L. J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975.
 - 5 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the making of a governor*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006, chapter 1: 'A Huguenot Heritage', especially pp.24-25. The Moravian Church members were Protestants who fled persecution in Roman Catholic Europe. Charles Joseph La Trobe, although born in London, was educated at the Moravian school at Fulneck in Yorkshire from the age of six.
 - 6 La Trobe was elected to the Athenaeum Club 27 March 1855.
 - 7 Richard Heathcote, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe and the English Country House', *La Trobeana*, vol.9, no.3, November 2010, pp.35-39.
 - 8 Margaret Rose La Trobe 1856-1932.
 - 9 John Barnes and Christopher Metcalfe, 'Farmer La Trobe' at Clapham House', *La Trobeana*, vol.12, no.3, November 2013, pp.24-28.
 - 10 Dianne Reilly, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: an appreciation', *La Trobe Journal*, no.71, autumn 2003, p.12. She has suggested that La Trobe may have accepted that any further government postings were unlikely when he received the award Companion of the Bath in 1858, thus 'resigning himself to enforced early retirement'.
 - 11 Isabelle-Castellane Helen La Trobe born June 1858-1877.
 - 12 One of La Trobe's sketches of Oberhofen is dated 28 April 1858.
 - 13 La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 19 January 1858, from Bedford, MS 13354/25, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

- 14 La Trobe to Frederick Powlett, 25 May 1865.
- 15 <http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/3968.html> (accessed 24 February 2015)
- 16 La Trobe to David Charteris Macarthur, 11 May, 1860. (La Trobe spelled the name as McArthur.)
- 17 For example, ten years before he was writing to Ronald Gunn that 'Sometimes I think I am a little jaded – but a rough ride and scramble in the scrub bring me round most wonderfully', La Trobe to Gunn, 10 December, 1850.
- 18 <http://www.fairhall.id.au/resources/journey/poorlaw%201834.htm> (accessed 24 February 2015)
- 19 The church was extensively remodelling after La Trobe gave up his lease in 1865. Phyllis Williams, *Whitbourne: a bishop's manor*, Whitbourne: Hamish Park, 1979, p.164. (Produced in conjunction with the Bromyard & District Local History Society, The Department of Extramural Studies, University of Birmingham and The Workers' Educational Association.)
- 20 Robert Biscoe 1801-1870. Charles Joseph La Trobe 1801-1875.
- 21 Moravians worshipped in local parish churches if there was no Moravian mission nearby.
- 22 Kate Lack interview 21 June 2014. Dr Lack says that there was some social intercourse with the local gentry and the Evans family.
- 23 Dianne Reilly, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: an appreciation', p.12.
- 24 Ronald Campbell Gunn 1808-1881. Gunn was a naturalist and editor of the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*. He was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London (1850) and of the Royal Society (1854)
- 25 La Trobe was writing a history of Victoria, but it was never completed. See Alexander Romanov-Hughes, 'La Trobe's History of Victoria', *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.1, March 2015, pp.35-38.
- 26 La Trobe to Ronald Gunn, 19 January 1864. This was written from London where La Trobe was attending matters relating to his older brother's estate of whom La Trobe was the executor.
- 27 B. R. Penny, 'William Lonsdale (1799-1864)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967, vol.2, pp.124-126.
- 28 P. M. Sales, 'Frederick Armand Powlett (1811-65)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.2, p.349.
- 29 La Trobe to David Charteris Macarthur, undated fragment of a letter but possibly 16 January 1860.
- 30 James Grant, 'Soulmates: C J La Trobe and Charles Perry', *La Trobeana*, vol.10, no.1, February 2011, pp.25-32.
- 31 La Trobe to Gunn, 19 January, 1864.
- 32 Alison Alexander, *The Ambitions of Jane Franklin: Victorian lady adventurer*, Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2014.
- 33 *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Tarcoola Press in association with State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006.
- 34 L. J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, p.9.
- 35 La Trobe to David Charteris Macarthur, 16 January 1860.
- 36 La Trobe to Frederick Powlett, 25 May 1865.
- 37 La Trobe to David Charteris Macarthur, undated fragment of a letter but possibly 16 January 1860.
- 38 La Trobe to Rose Amiet, 19 December, 1864.
- 39 La Trobe to James Graham, 18 August 1865.
- 40 Ibid, 21 March 1866, from Bourne East Cottages, Hemel Hempstead.
- 41 Ibid, 24 October, 1865.
- 42 La Trobe to Frederick Powlett, 25 May, 1865.
- 43 Reilly Drury, p.250.
- 44 La Trobe to James Graham, 22 December 1865.
- 45 La Trobe to Alexander Mollison, 20 December, 1870, from Clapham House, Litlington, Sussex.
- 46 La Trobe to James Graham, 25 June 1865.
- 47 Ibid, 16 April 1866.
- 48 La Trobe to Ronald Gunn, London, 19 January, 1864.
- 49 *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches*, Yarra Glen, Tarcoola Press in association with State Library of Victoria and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1999, Notes by Victoria Hammond, especially p.66.
- 50 *The Berrows Worcester Journal*, which was available in Whitbourne and Bromyard, carried frequent advertisements for 'suitable artisans and servants' for the new Australian colonies, as soon as transportation ceased to be viable. Samuel Lloyd's application for an assisted passage is preserved at the PRO, CO 386/149-151.
- 51 Samuel and Maria were married in Whitbourne in 1831, and both they and Samuel's older brother William signed their names on the certificate; it is now agreed that reading was a higher priority than writing, and the ability to sign your name can be used as a surrogate for functional literacy.
- 52 PRO VPRS 14; John and Eliza were married at St Andrew's Worcester in 1832, and the wedding was witnessed by a couple from Whitbourne.
- 53 www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia (accessed 1 February 2015)
- 54 G. E. Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England*, London: Futura Publications, 1979 (first published 1976), pp.68-69 and pp.215-217.
- 55 Richard Broome, *The Victorians: Arriving*, Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1984, pp.90-91.



Harold Freedman,
1915-1999, artist
**Regional History of
Geelong, 1978-1980**
(detail)
Glass mosaic mural,
30m x 2.5m
State Government
Offices, Geelong

The Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe: a legacy to us

By Eva Millie

During the seventeen years Eva Millie and husband David have been living in Queenscliff, Eva has participated in several creative writing groups, notably the U3A group which meets in Portarlington. Eva belongs to the Historical Museum of Queenscliff where plans are afoot to establish a memorial to La Trobe within the Borough.

He gazes out from the portrait, a benign expression on his face, a tall impressive figure surrounded by his more bucolic contemporaries. Positioned next to him is the set of keys, itself the subject of a story from this time in the history of the colony. The person is Charles Joseph La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and later Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, from 1839 to 1854. The portrait has been adapted from the painting by Sir Francis Grant,¹ and is part of the mosaic mural in the foyer of the State Government Offices in

Geelong that traces the history of the region and its people from the earliest times to the present computerised age.² La Trobe was no stranger to the burgeoning town of Geelong and visited it many times.

Charles Joseph La Trobe was born in London in 1801, of a family of Huguenot descent, members of the Moravian Christian church. He was educated in a Moravian boarding school, himself becoming a teacher. After a time Charles moved to Switzerland where he spent time climbing the great mountain passes of the



George Alexander Gilbert,
1815-1877, artist
**View of Jolimont, Melbourne,
Port Phillip, 1843-44**
Pastel on paper
Pictures Collection, State Library
of Victoria, H5278



Samuel Prout Hill,
1821-1861, artist
**Old Government
House [Hobart] c.1850**
Watercolour and body
colour on tinted paper
Allport Library and
Museum of Fine Arts
Tasmanian Archive and
Heritage Office

Alps, and he took a position as tutor to the young Comte de Pourtalès in Neuchâtel. Later with his former pupil he travelled to North America and Mexico, crossing the continent, navigating rivers and covering the prairies. Afterwards he wrote up the story of his escapades that was published in two books.³ After he arrived back in Switzerland Charles fell in love with Sophie de Montmollin, daughter of Comte Frédéric Auguste de Montmollin. They were married at the British Legation in Berne in 1835.

In 1837 the British Government posted Charles to the West Indies to investigate and report on the conditions of newly-freed slaves there. His three reports which were the outcome of his time there certainly influenced the Government to make the decision to send him to Australia as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, on a salary of £800. The family departed in 1839: Charles, Sophie and their young daughter Agnes. With them went a prefabricated cottage to be erected in Port Phillip. On their

arrival La Trobe bought at auction twelve and a half acres of sloping land by the Yarra River. He named the site *Jolimont*. His cottage stood in spacious grounds where Australian trees and shrubs grew around it. Today remains of this building may be seen standing in the Domain, reconstructed by the National Trust and furnished with many original artefacts.

How did La Trobe view the situation in which he now found himself? From the outset he must have recognised the immensity of the challenge facing him. He would have quickly become aware that the pioneer settlers, who had for the most part great aspirations for the development and advancement of the infant colony, were looking forward to an opportunity to cut the traces with New South Wales and to have the Government there recognise Port Phillip as an independent entity. The population was swelling. At the time of La Trobe's arrival there were close to 6,000 residents and growing, as he observes in a letter to his publisher friend,

John Murray: *'My people are rapidly increasing in number, a good-natured, busy speculative impatient set, giving me three cheers one day and abusing me like a pickpocket the next ...'*

[Melbourne, 15 December 1840]

In 1841 there was an economic collapse with falling prices, growing bankruptcies, loss of jobs and La Trobe was forced to organise relief for the unemployed. He had no experience in administration, but he did have the support and favour of Governor Gipps of New South Wales, who held La Trobe in high esteem. Was Superintendent Charles La Trobe the person who would support the infant colony through these difficult teething times and eventually set it on its feet to prosperity? In the same letter to John Murray he writes: *'My position thus far has been a singular one, and not without its difficulties; but I have scrambled forward with as good courage as I could muster ...'* [Melbourne, 15 December 1840]

La Trobe was possessed, however, of a high moral conviction and a vision for Victoria which he thought to make a reality. This he stated in his first public address to a room full of people in Great Collins Street:

It will not be by individual aggrandisement... that we shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness, but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great.⁴

The collections of Charles Joseph La Trobe's letters, which are housed in state libraries and other repositories,⁵ reveal much to us of the life of this man during his time in Australia. He was a literate and prolific letter writer. His letters appear to be to a small number of people only, to his wife and to a few close friends. With them though he shared his observations and confided his thoughts and feelings. La Trobe was a man with many skills. He was physically fit and quite happy on horseback in the bush, he was a botanist and geologist, an artist and sketcher of the landforms he came across – in fact, as has been said, 'a complete virtuoso'.⁶ Receiving a letter from him would have made for interesting reading and at times revealed a wry humour. In writing to Ronald Campbell Gunn, a friend and confidant in Van Diemen's Land: *'What a pity you and I are not idle men with plenty of loose time and spare cash.'* Melbourne, 2 March 1849.

The published letters can be considered in two parts: those letters from the years he spent as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and

then Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria; and those from the time he returned to England, writing to his friends in Australia. Each part reveals interesting traits of the man's character. The former letters, from the Australian perspective, show us La Trobe as a pioneering administrator and an explorer: one seeking a way forward for his people with the establishment of wise laws and institutions, at the same time one who is at home in the countryside, confronted by mountains to climb and bush tracks to traverse. It also shows him as a concerned and loving husband and father. His later letters indicate a man in the winter of his life, physically afflicted, with financial concerns, but not overcome by them. The following will show how each part is played out through his correspondence, how he interacts with others and the type of person this reveals.

Part 1: Australia

Ronald Campbell Gunn was a naturalist, botanist and editor of *The Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*, whose acquaintance La Trobe made when he was posted to Van Diemen's Land for four months in 1846/47. They had many interests in common and from this their friendship developed. Both were fascinated by the natural sciences, and exchanged their widespread knowledge, observations and conclusions in their letters. From La Trobe we have the description of a mountain climb in the Grampians and details of the discovery of Lubras' Caves which were subterranean caverns thought by the aborigines to be inhabited by 'headless lubras'.

Another time La Trobe tells of the discovery of what he thinks is the grave of Joseph Gellibrand, explorer, who with his friend George Hesse disappeared in 1837 and was never found. Again, in a letter to Gunn La Trobe discusses rumours of the find of a long snouted animal, a 'bunyep' or 'bunyip', a controversial find indeed: *'... a long snouted animal something of this shape: a long bill-like snout the forehead rising abruptly the eye place very low – strong grinders, cavity for brain very large.'* Government House [Hobart Town] 23 January 1847.

Letters from this time give us an idea of the extent of development and exploration of Victoria. In writing to both Sophie and to Ronald Gunn, La Trobe tells of his travels of discovery through the southern part of the colony, at one time looking for a pathway through to Cape Otway prior to establishing a much needed lighthouse there. Later, in another letter to Gunn, after the opening of the lighthouse, we are told: *'At the beginning of last month I made a very amusing excursion to Cape Otway, where our first*



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
Rose's Gap, The Grampians, 1850
Sepia wash on paper
National Trust of Australia (Victoria) collection
Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection
State Library of Victoria



George Alexander Gilbert, 1815-1877, artist
Point Nepean, Shortland's Bluff, Queenscliff,
Point Lonsdale, c.1854
Pencil and Chinese white on tinted paper
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H6635

class light is now fully in operation ...' Melbourne, 2 March 1849.

All the time La Trobe was noting landforms, physical features of land and sea, making meteorological observations, discovering and sketching new species of plants and animals, and noting it all for future reference. The regions covered by La Trobe's extensive trips of exploration are impressive, as we see in a letter to Gunn: *'... thro' the Pyrenees, Grampians, the upper Wimmera & Glenelg districts, Portland, Port Fairy Warrnambool & so home.'* Melbourne, 7 April 1848.

Always the artist, his observations on the beauty of the country through which he rode, and sometimes walked or climbed, can be seen in a letter to Sophie, writing from the Grampians:

The thunder storm had cleared the air & we had beautiful views of the Grampians towards which we directed our steps ... The scenery of the Gap or opening in this part of the Grampians range is really very fine. The precipices of naked & broken rock rising 1000 feet over the wooded parks.

Rose's Station, Grampians
[14 March 1848]

La Trobe visited Geelong many times, and watched its growth with keen interest. In a letter to Gunn, La Trobe mentions the 'keys', found in the excavation of a lime kiln at Geelong, some fifty feet below the surface, and depicted in Freedman's mosaic mural: *'The keys were corroded – but the precise form & character of the wards even were distinguishable. I cannot suppose that 50 years had elapsed since they were dropped or washed up on that*

beach ... Is not this very extraordinary.' Melbourne, 23 September 1847. Years later La Trobe was to allude to these keys and their significance in letters to his friend, Alexander Mollison.

La Trobe's connection with Geelong extended as far as Shortland's Bluff (now Queenscliff), where the family had a cottage and where in the early years Sophie and the children would be joined by Charles taking a break between working engagements. The family enjoyed many a pleasant holiday on the beach or in the surrounding bushland. Sadly, they had to relinquish their cottage and the time spent there owing to the demands of work back in town, and it would seem also to Sophie's ill-health. Years later Charles looks back to their time there, a note of yearning in his voice: *'I cannot forget that the last time I was here, it was with you my darling, & my dear children, & my heart is 'un peu gris'.'* The Corsair in the middle of Port Phillip, 28 October 1853.

The letters from Charles La Trobe to his family shed another light on the life of Charles and that of Sophie and the children; here we see him as a loving husband and father. It seems from the outset that Sophie was of delicate health during her time in Australia (bearing in mind that in this time she bore three more children, having arrived with just one child, Agnes). Charles was a good correspondent and during his trips through the country, visiting already settled centres, as well as exploring new opportunities, his letters to Sophie were frequent and talked about the places he visited, as well as showing concern both for her and the children. To his wife he writes: *'I pray God that you have been recovering from the effects of your tumble ... Poor Cherie – take care of yourself & don't take a spite against Vic & riding ... God bless you my darling.'* Muston's Creek, 11 February [i.e. March 1850]

La Trobe's thoughts were often with the children, as he writes: *'Kiss the dear Children – Charley, Nelly & Cecile. Tell the little girls that I am very anxious about them ...'* The Inn, Mount Sturgeon, 12 March [1850]. Agnes is not mentioned in these letters, as five years earlier she had been sent to Switzerland for her education.⁷

The passing of the Separation Bill by the English Parliament in 1850 was cause for celebration in Melbourne, as citizens rejoiced in their independence from New South Wales. We see a slightly roguish side to La Trobe's personality here in the public parade held to celebrate the occasion. As Sophie was indisposed, her friend Georgiana McCrae deputised for her, wearing Sophie's apparel and riding in the carriage with La Trobe, the children and their governess, 'with the most gracious salaams' in front of 20,000 spectators. We observe the festivities taking place in the Botanic Gardens in the area of the Separation Tree, with the distribution of 2,000 buns to children there.⁸ Later as Lieutenant-Governor, La Trobe takes stock of his new workload in light of the gold rush and comments in a letter to Gunn: *'You may imagine that never had young governor a stranger role to play or a more extraordinary crisis to meet as best he may.'* Melbourne, 6 February 1852.

By this time La Trobe was feeling the strain of work. The pressures increased considerably with the discovery of gold in Victoria, and the responsibilities of administration in the goldfields and of the thousands who flocked there. In a letter to his brother, Peter, he expresses his concern: *'I have been fully up to my work so far but not without the feeling that under the strain I could not keep it up long without giving in.'* Jolimont, 24 September 1853.

Meanwhile Sophie, who was never very robust, had again fallen ill, and her husband decided to send her and the children back to Europe for the care she required, expecting himself to be relieved of his position and to join her shortly. In February 1853 Sophie and the children left for England. Later that year in his family's absence, La Trobe took a trip down the bay on the *Corsair* and visited Shortland's Bluff once more. His first duty was to announce a change of name for the town, 'which I have called Queenscliff' (after Queen Victoria). There is a poignancy in his letter to Sophie, written after a time spent in the town retracing his and his family's steps, harking back to the happy days they had enjoyed there: *'My dear wife yesterday & today I see you at every turn – on the beach, on the hill, at the Lighthouse, on the set of our pretty cottage – the children run way down the steep pathway to their sand & calling out Papa! Papa!'* The *Corsair*, off Shortland's Bluff, 30 October 1853. Sadly,

he was not to see his wife again, as she died in January 1854 before he arrived back in England.

Charles La Trobe returned to England in late 1854 disillusioned and weary. His financial situation was always cause for concern, with no likelihood of another similar position forthcoming from the British Colonial Office, and no immediate ongoing remuneration or pension. In 1864 after lobbying from his friends, he was finally awarded a small pension of £333, but the growth of his financial interests in Australia were still vital to him. Among these was the sale of *Jolimont*, which consisted of two dwellings, together with the surrounding land. In a letter to his friend Gunn he writes: *'but I must wait for better times and the realization of some of my morsels of land at Jolimont.'* London, 19 January 1864.

Part 2: England

These letters of La Trobe cover the time of his return to England. David Charteris Macarthur was Melbourne Manager of the Bank of Australasia, a friend and correspondent of Charles La Trobe; as was James Graham, business man and agent for La Trobe's financial interests in Australia. When La Trobe returned to England, Macarthur and Graham took over the management of his financial affairs in Australia. Victoria was then living through a time of straitened economic growth. Concerned about his assets there, La Trobe comments rather scathingly in a letter to Graham: *I shall be very glad to hear that your precious Government has found the means of getting the Colony out of the difficulties into which it appears they have involved it.'* Whitbourne Court, Worcester, 19 February 1866.

Correspondence between La Trobe and both David Macarthur and James Graham continued. To Graham he writes: *'I embrace with eagerness & gratitude the proposal which McArthur [sic] makes in this note to me, that you & Sturt would be linked with him in a new power of attorney to be forwarded to me for signature by next mail.'* Whitbourne Court, 18 August 1865.

Frederick Armand Powlett was a pastoralist and a holder of public office in the history of early Victoria, and a personal friend of Charles La Trobe. It would seem that after La Trobe's return to England, their correspondence became a means of Charles remaining in touch with affairs in Victoria. This is a typical letter, one friend to another in which he chats about the mundane comings and goings of life, enquiring after Powlett's daughter Horatia, who had at times enjoyed the hospitality of the La Trobe family in Melbourne. Mention is made of the future of his two properties at *Jolimont* which

are up for sale, but because of a recession in the economy making a sale is difficult: *'I am getting a little impatient to realize when anything like a decent offer of purchase comes forward and if the sum offered for the upper house is not to be rejected ... should not be sorry to know that it at best was off our hands.'* Whitbourne Court, Worcester, 25 May 1865.

La Trobe was deeply grieved by the death of his friend Frederick Powlett. He writes to Graham: *'I need not tell you how deeply I feel by the sad intelligence brought me by this mail of the unexpected death of our dear old friend.'* Whitbourne Court, 18 August 1865.

specially designed aid. He was completely blind when he confided to Graham: *'That letter would also inform you to what degree I have been suddenly deprived of the power of sight, which I had retained since the extinction of my left eye ...'* Whitbourne Court, Worcester, 18 November 1865.

In his last letter to Graham, La Trobe bequeathed a parcel of documents of historical significance. These had been collected in 1853 about the early days of the colony. La Trobe charged Graham with their safe keeping: *'In sending them to you ... I am securing their being deposited where they ought to go.'* [Clapham House,



Frères Bruder, photographers
Charles Joseph La Trobe C.B., 1868
Carte de visite
Australian Manuscripts Collection, State
Library of Victoria, MS 9790/Item 2

It would seem that on his return to England, La Trobe was having a 'hard time of it'. He was still grieving the loss of his wife Sophie. His children were living with her family in Switzerland, and until Charles had a home in England, he had little to offer them. In 1855, though, he married Rose de Montmollin, Sophie's sister, and the family set up residence in England. People supposed that La Trobe had made his fortune in Australia, but this was not the case and his financial need was always very real, a small quarterly remittance from investments in Australia being hardly sufficient.

For many years he had worried about his eyes. As early as 1848 he had complained to Gunn that he could hardly see beyond his nose, though his country 'rambles' continued unabated. His condition grew steadily worse, with his letters finally being written by one of his daughters until he was able to make use of a

Lewes, Sussex] 19 March, 1872. These valuable historical resources were later placed in the Melbourne Public Library.⁹

Although now blind and dependent on others, La Trobe's interest in life continued. In an exchange of correspondence with Alexander Mollison, a pastoralist of similar mindset, he refers to the subject of the 'keys' found in the lime kiln twenty five years before. Again he discusses the geological phenomena he has already described, but which he: *'now attributes... not to an upheaval of the coast, but to a subsidence... in the water level.'* Clapham House, Lewes, Sussex, 20 December 1870.

In 1875 Charles Joseph La Trobe died, but not without leaving behind a legacy of which all Victorians should be justly proud. Despite many obstacles and always risking opposition or lack of cooperation to many of his decisions, La Trobe's

achievements are many. The foundation stones for our cultural institutions: the State Library of Victoria, the University of Melbourne, our beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Philharmonic Society, and others, all owe their existence to the wise vision and encouragement of Charles La Trobe. Yet for all his achievements there was a simplicity and a charm in the man who in a letter to Graham writes: 'We are fairly now in spring weather & I can smell the violets & primroses which my children gather for me even if I cannot see them.' Whitbourne Court, 16 April 1866.



John Chambers, photographer
Whitbourne Court, 2014

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 Reilly, Dianne, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: an appreciation', *La Trobe Journal*, no.71, autumn 2003, pp.4-15.
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Endnotes

- 1 Sir Francis Grant, *Charles Joseph La Trobe*, oil on canvas, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection.
 - 2 Harold Freedman, *Regional History of Geelong*, 1978-1980, glass mosaic mural, 30m. x 2.5m, State Government Offices, Geelong.
 - 3 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Rambler in North America, 1832-1833*, London, 1835, 2 volumes, and *The Rambler in Mexico, 1834*. London, 1836 (both titles published by R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside).
 - 4 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.4. (The Address is printed in this issue of *La Trobeana*, pp.46-47.
 - 5 Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria; Dixson and Mitchell Libraries, State Library of New South Wales; Royal Historical Society of Victoria; and University Archives, University of Melbourne.
 - 6 Washington Irving, *A Tour of the Prairies*, London: John Murray, 1835, p.5; quoted in Reilly Drury, p.71.
 - 7 Excerpts of letters from La Trobe to Agnes, from 1845 to 1854 when she was 8 to 17 years of age, are available on the C.J La Trobe Society website at: www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/LettersToAgnes.pdf
 - 8 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae, new edition with a note on the text by Marguerite Hancock, Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, pp.9-12 and pp.260-262.
 - 9 *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the aborigines, etc.*, Addressed by Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., edited by Thomas Francis Bride. Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library, 1898. (Republished with introduction and notes by C. E. Sayers, 1969 and 1983.)
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La Trobe's History of Victoria: a research report

By Alexander Romanov-Hughes

Alexander Romanov-Hughes trained as an accountant and administrator before branching out into genealogy and family history. He was the office manager for the Genealogical Society of Victoria before spending over eleven years with the Department of Defence at Victoria Barracks and nearby locations. He wishes to thank Dr Kevin Molloy, Manuscripts Librarian at the State Library of Victoria, and his staff for providing access to La Trobe's papers.

When Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe prepared to return to Europe in the early 1850s, he made plans to write a history of the colony of Victoria. Most notable of these plans was the preparation of a printed circular, copies of which he sent in late July 1853 to those residents of the colony whom he believed to have been among the first settlers of their various localities. No copy of this circular is known to have survived though some of the content has been recorded. La Trobe asked each recipient for information as to the time and circumstances of first settlement and occupation

of their local area. He also enquired as to what they knew about the habits and customs of the aborigines. In making this request he was careful to point out that he was seeking this information in a private capacity and not in connection with his position as Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor. La Trobe received about sixty replies to his circular, and the amount of information in each reply varied considerably. Those individuals who were experienced in preparing reports, such as Captain Foster Fyans, generally provided more detailed replies. When La Trobe sailed from Port Phillip in May 1854 on the *Golden Age* he took all of these letters with him.

Back in Europe La Trobe collected additional information and made some progress in collating information from the letters. He gave each letter a number and prepared a list of topics, noting against each topic the number of those letters which contained some information on that topic. He then prepared a further list of topics to which he added a transcription of the information from the letters on that topic. These topics included a listing of areas around Victoria such as 'The Wannon', 'The Grange', 'The Coliban' etc., and the numbers of aborigines in each area. He also prepared a list of additional sources which he wished to consult for further information. These would of course have supplemented La Trobe's own vast knowledge about the Port Phillip District. About 1855 he obtained the following list of Officers who had been on board *HMS Rattlesnake* at Port Phillip in 1836 and 1837 (together with their location in 1855):

HOBSON, William (Captain) – Died as Governor of New Zealand in 184[2]

RICHARDS, Charles (1st Lieutenant) – Died in 1844 – a Captain and CB

HENRY, Hastings R (2nd Lieutenant) – Now Captain Yelverton in command of *HMS Arrogant*

SYMONDS, Thomas M C (3rd Lieutenant) – Captain, late in command of *HMS Arethusa* in Black Sea

POPE, Charles (Master) – Master Attendant Chatham Dockyard

WILLIAMSON, C C (1st Lieutenant, Royal Marines) – Retired Major, Royal Marines

KING, Daniel, MD (Surgeon) – Died at Halifax in 1847

BROWN, Thomas (Purser) – Died in China in 1843

NORCOCK, John Hen. (Mate) – Died Commander in 1854

COOKE, John M (Mate) – Commander, half pay

BENETT, John C (Mate) – Retired from H.M.S. 1838 – a missionary in Canada

SHORTLAND, Pet. Frederick (Mate) – Commander, employed in survey at Bay of Fundy

BOWLER, John W (Assistant Surgeon) – Surgeon

BATEMAN, Samuel H (Second Master) – Dead

ILSON, John (Midshipman) – Lieutenant, half pay

GIRDLESTONE, Thomas B (Midshipman) – Dead

SURTEES, Frederick A (Midshipman) – Drowned at Plymouth by upsetting of boat in 1838

LODDEN, Charles A (Midshipman) – Lieutenant, half pay

PECHELL, Charles (Midshipman) – Lieutenant, half pay

McGRIGOR, Charles G (Midshipman) – Lieutenant, *HMS James Watt*

SMITH, Edwin A (Clerk) – Paymaster

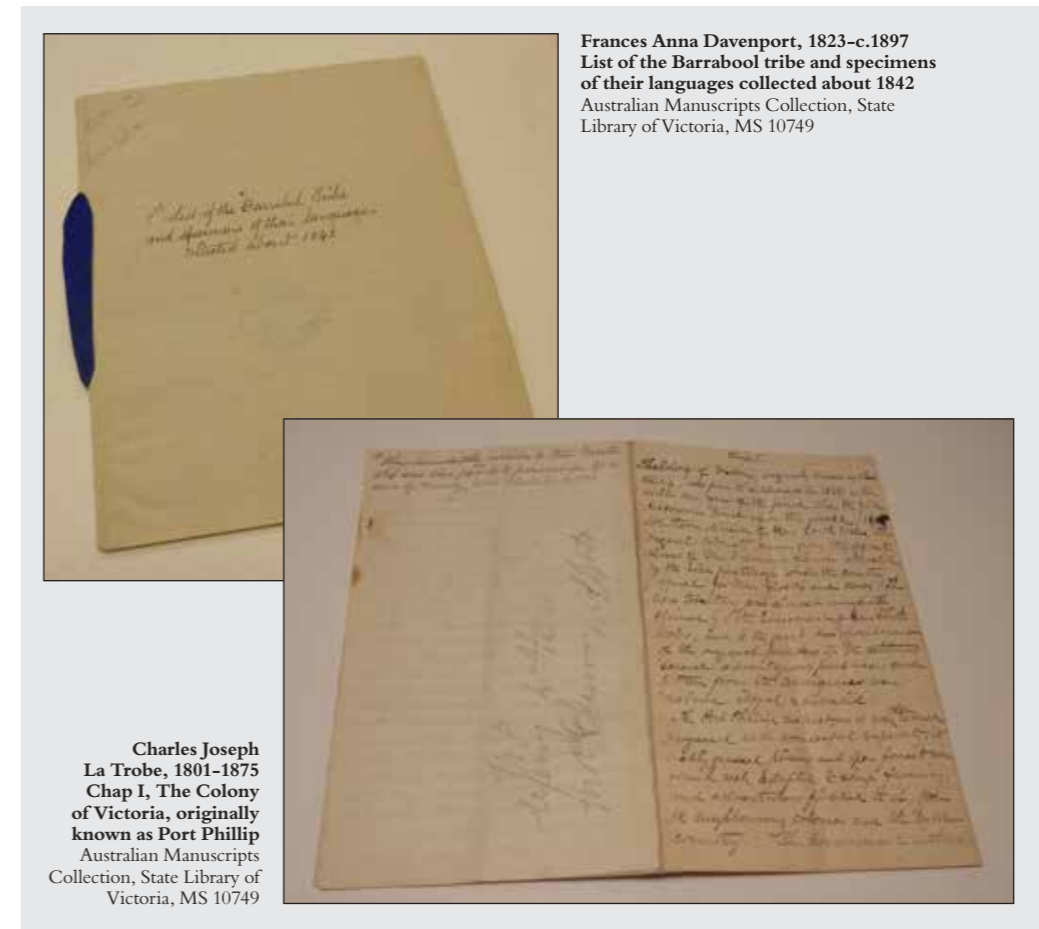
BOONE, John (Assistant Clerk) – Dead

However La Trobe's eyesight began to fail and by about 1866 he was blind. His source material and manuscript stayed with him until 1872 when, in planning to move house, he decided to send them back to Melbourne where they could be accessed by others. He parcelled them up and addressed them to his agent in Melbourne, James Graham, with a covering letter dated 19 March 1872.¹ The documents arrived on the *Norfolk* in early August, and on 21 August Graham donated them to the Melbourne Public Library. On 22 August 1872 James Graham wrote formally to the Librarian, Augustus Tulk, Esq., about the donation including an extract from La Trobe's covering letter to him.

The Library collection holds a number of items in addition to replies to La Trobe's circular. Hugh Jamieson's letter from Mildura Station on the River Murray dated 10 October 1853 is addressed to the Lord Bishop of Melbourne, but this appears to have been an error on Jamieson's part, mistaking the sender of the circular for Bishop Charles Perry. Other items are a memorandum of a trip to Port Phillip in January-February 1836 by Joseph Tice Gellibrand; a brief timeline of events at Port Phillip for 1840-1841; a letter from La Trobe to Sir John Pakington, Bart., dated 22 January 1853 containing a eulogy of Captain Henry Pultney Dana; and several others.

There is some confusion about the chapters that La Trobe prepared. In his covering letter in 1872 he says that:

It will be seen that I had contemplated writing out the story of the early settlement of our Colony myself, but do not recollect that I got much beyond the draft of the first chapter, containing the record of Collins' first settlement in Capel Sound; the signs of which were still perfectly traceable, when I first visited that coast in 1840.²



This draft is titled 'Chapter 2.' In 1877 Colin Campbell, apparently one of the settlers who wrote to La Trobe in 1853, sought and gained permission to access La Trobe's papers at the Melbourne Public Library. After an initial viewing he made enquiries about the existence of a Chapter 1 which he thought may have been lost in transit. He also speculated whether this earlier chapter may have contained details of the Survey of Port Phillip by Charles Grimes in 1802. However, there is amongst La Trobe's papers a document headed 'Chap[ter] 1' which describes the discovery of gold in Victoria in the 1850s. This appears to have been written in the 1850s which may have slipped La Trobe's memory in 1872. It seems reasonable that the opening chapter would have described conditions in Victoria at the time of writing, followed by chapters about historical events in chronological order or a listing of locality by locality.

The letters are now located in the Australian Manuscripts Collection of the State Library of Victoria.³ Each letter is housed in an individual transparent archival quality sleeve with a cardboard backing sheet. The handwriting on the letters is generally good and readable. Several have a small symbol embossed on the top left hand corner of the first page.

A number of them were originally folded to form their own envelope and some have holes where the postage stamp has been removed, but the post office cancellation stamps remain. One or two contain the remains of sealing wax. Some of the letters have been repaired with tape and some have had tape applied to the left-hand side of the pages to bind the sheets into a small booklet. A few are threaded with a small ribbon to hold the pages together.

This collection of letters provides an interesting sample of the types of paper in private use in Victoria in 1853. Nearly all are either cream or light blue in colour. Their size varies from small notepaper to large folded double foolscap. Their watermarks, or lack thereof, show they came from a wide variety of sources. Most of those without watermarks were probably imported from China and nearly all of those with watermarks were made in the British Isles in the late 1840s or early 1850s. Most British watermarks of the period included the maker's name, the year of manufacture and a symbol such as a circular picture of Britannia with a crown on top. The papers in this collection include watermarks of well-known firms, such as A. Cowan & Sons, T.H. Saunders & Co. and J. Whatman. These were probably purchased

from local stationers, while those with rarer watermarks may have been brought to Australia by individual settlers.

After La Trobe's death in England on 4 December 1875, the Library made a number of attempts to publish this material. Tulk's successor, Dr Thomas Francis Bride, prepared the letters for the Government Printer but it was not until 1898 that the book was eventually published as *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*.⁴ A note dated 7 December 1897 was placed with the papers indicating that there appeared to be a letter missing and that Dr Bride thought this might have been from a settler stating that he was unable to supply any information. In this first edition each piece of correspondence was given an individual, consecutive number. Over the years copies of the book became scarce. A new edition was therefore published in 1969 containing biographical details about the author of each letter provided by Charles Edward Sayers.⁵ Another edition was published in 1983 which included the notes by C.E. Sayers together with a foreword by Helen Vellacott.⁶ These later editions grouped the letters under the subject headings of First Seekers; Portland Bay, Western District; North East and Gippsland; Central Plains, Wimmera; The Mallee and the Murray and Aborigines. The letters of John Carfrae, Charles Wale Sherard, Henry Dwyer and Edward Grimes were omitted, as was a list of names and specimens of the language of the Barrabool Aborigines prepared by Mrs Frances Anna Davenport, a daughter of Charles Wightman Sievwright.

This last item is unusual because it would never have been seen by La Trobe. It was not received at the Public Library until 21 May 1884, though it was probably compiled from notes made in 1842. The Melbourne *Argus* of 27 May 1884 recorded:

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT.

The library reported the receipt of a donation from Mrs Davenport, of Hobart, of a manuscript containing 130 words, 50 sentences, and 117 names of men, women, and children of the Barrabool tribe. The donor was a daughter of Captain Sievwright, protector of aborigines in the Geelong district, and is now the wife of Archdeacon Davenport, of Hobart.

La Trobe's history of Victoria never came to fruition but his effort in collecting private sources provided initial groundwork for future generations of researchers.

Adolphe de Meuron, Swiss pioneer and his circle: a research report

By Daryl Ross

Daryl Ross is a retired business executive and former export consultant. His Swiss great-grandfather, Louis Ernest Leuba, was one of a number of Neuchâtel Swiss vigneron encouraged by C J La Trobe and his Neuchâtel Swiss wife, Sophie, née Montmollin, to settle in Victoria. Louis Leuba arrived in Melbourne in March 1854, accompanied by Hubert de Castella and Adolphe de Meuron. Daryl's interest in the family associations with Neuchâtel, which he has visited many times, triggered his interest in the La Trobe Society when it was first formed. Daryl is currently Vice-President of the C J La Trobe Society.

After Charles Joseph La Trobe completed his formal education at the Moravian school at Fulneck in Yorkshire, followed by teaching there until 1823, he travelled in Europe, twice making extended stays in the Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel where there was a Moravian Seminary at Montmirail. During this time he met several influential Swiss families which ultimately led to his marriage with Sophie de Montmollin. During these visits, he noted the dedicated work ethic of the Neuchâtel Swiss and following his appointment as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales in 1839, he and Sophie 'encouraged' the migration of Neuchâtel free settlers to the District. One of the earliest of these Swiss pioneers was one notable, Adolphe de Meuron.¹

Adolphe de Meuron (1827-1869) was the younger son of another distinguished and inter-related Neuchâtel bourgeois family, represented in Swiss politics, foreign affairs, military service, medicine and commerce, with banking and trading interests extending throughout Europe and into the Americas during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. Adolphe was also a nephew of Sophie La Trobe and these family connections would have alerted him to the commercial opportunities that existed in Australia.

Thus, after spending a short time in England to learn the language and customs, Adolphe and his friend from school days, Paul de Castella (1827-1903), embarked on the *Royal George* in April 1849 bound for New South Wales.² On 28 November they arrived in the recently proclaimed City of Melbourne, the bustling heart of the Port Phillip District. With their seed capital, the two friends set about finding a property on which to fatten cattle to feed Melbourne's growing population. Fortunate in having La Trobe's backing, they travelled on horseback with the Government Surveyor Piper to evaluate opportunities in the colony.

In a letter home to Sophie dated 18 January 1850, La Trobe recorded during one of his travels: 'We reached Powlett's at ½ p 10 and starting at 4pm we got to Jefferies at 6. – Saw Meuron and Castella & left this morning at 6'.³ Frederick Powlett was then Commissioner

¹ Blake, L. J. editor, *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, p.77.

² Ibid, p.78.

³ Papers of Charles Joseph La Trobe, MS 10749, Boxes 60/1-13, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria,

⁴ *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the aborigines, etc.*, Addressed by Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., edited by Thomas Francis Bride. Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library, 1898. (See also Daryl Ross, 'Letters from Victorian Pioneers: book review', *La Trobeana*, vol.9, no.3, November 2010, pp.40-42.)

⁵ *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* ... edited with an introduction and notes by C. E. Sayers, Melbourne: Heinemann, 1969.

⁶ *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* ... edited with an introduction and notes by C. E. Sayers, forward by Helen Vellacott, Melbourne: Lloyd O'Neil, 1983. Illustrated with 70 plates.

Editor Note: La Trobe also compiled as historical source material 'Australian Notes: Memoranda of journeys, excursions and absences, 1839-1854', and 'Memoranda of official correspondence, Port Phillip, 1839-1851', which were published in *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, introduction and notes by Dianne Reilly, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, in association with the State Library and Boz Publishing, 2006 (available for sale from the C J La Trobe Society).



Unknown photographer
Mount Meuron and Cape Patten, 1901
Pictures Collection, State Library of
Victoria, H41158



H. L. (Henricus Leonardus) Houten,
1801-1879, artist
Scene at Yering – gathering grapes, 1875
Oil on canvas
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria,
H29754

of Crown Lands in Bacchus Marsh and the Jeffries brothers held Trio station, a pastoral lease north of Mount Macedon where La Trobe had recently chosen the site for a town we know today as Kyneton.

Bush bashing along the Bass Strait coast

During their travels beyond the Geelong area, de Meuron and de Castella were well received by other Neuchâtel pioneers including David Pettavel, who had established his vineyard in the Barrabool Hills near Geelong, and another vigneron, James Henri Dardel at nearby Batesford. Following in La Trobe's earlier footsteps, they travelled the largely unexplored coastline, now the Great Ocean Road, west of Lorne towards Cape Otway, impressed with the rugged scenery so unlike their homeland. Adolphe left his mark on one prominent point overlooking Bass Strait which is now known as Mount Meuron near Grey River on Addis Bay towards Cape Patton (formerly Cape Patten).

We hear of Adolphe in another letter La Trobe wrote to Sophie from the Western District on 11 March 1850 where he refers to de Meuron as having completely neglected a Miss Béguine.⁴ The lady in question was the La Trobe children's Swiss governess. Then, later that year at the official opening of the new Prince's Bridge, it was noted that the carriage driven by La Trobe contained not only Georgiana McCrae pretending to be Mrs La Trobe, but also Adolphe accompanying the La Trobe children

and their governess Miss Béguine.⁵ However, the La Trobes' attempt at matchmaking was clearly unsuccessful as Adolphe never married (and Miss Béguine accompanied Sophie and the children on their journey back to Switzerland).

Attracted by its beauty and proximity to Melbourne, de Castella and de Meuron ultimately chose a 2,900 acre site in the Yarra Valley, which they purchased from William Ryrie, on which they intended to fatten cattle. It was known as *Yering* near modern day Yarra Glen, and is now known as *Chateau Yering*.

Shortly after acquiring *Yering*, the partners leased another property of 1,500 acres, known as *Olinda Vale*, on the Mooroolbark run near Mount Evelyn, just in time to capitalise on the population explosion resulting from the recent gold discoveries.

Entrepreneur Adolphe's good fortune

By 1853, the sale price of cattle had trebled and the partners prospered accordingly. Adolphe, however, saw the opportunity to capitalise on the gold boom in other ways, as a property investor and merchant. He sold his interest in the *Yering* partnership to Paul de Castella for a handsome profit,⁶ purchased a number of small houses in the growing inner suburbs of the city, and then boarded ship to return to Switzerland with a view to importing hardware items so necessary to the miners and builders in the now booming colony.

With the merchandise, he arranged his return passage to Melbourne accompanying two Neuchâtel compatriots on the *Marlborough*, arriving at Port Phillip on 22 March 1854. The colleagues were Paul de Castella's elder brother Hubert, recently retired as an officer of the French Army, and a school friend Ernest Leuba, the step-son of Adolphe's aunt, Pauline d'Ostervald. It is assumed that Adolphe immediately sold his goods to local merchants as the three friends proceeded to Castella's *Yering* where they worked with him until 1856.

At the same time, Adolphe took up a lease on *Mulberry Hill*, a property on what is now the Maroondah Highway, and another lease of *Fern Hill* on Hill Road, at what became known as de Meuron Bend.⁷ While he never married, de Meuron lived comfortably at *Mulberry Hill*, now *Yarra Grange*, cared for by his housekeeper, Mary Lalor, whose family still live in the Lilydale area.

The wider circle

It should be remembered that these were gentleman farmers, pastoralists of adequate means who ran their properties 'hands on' while still appreciating a social life amongst their fellow countrymen. Being related to the Lieutenant-Governor's family, Adolphe was welcomed into the homes of the leading citizens in the now independent Colony of Victoria.

His neighbour, friend and former partner, Paul de Castella, married Elizabeth Ann Anderson, daughter of one of Melbourne's leading citizens, Colonel Joseph Anderson, 'squatter' and MLC (1852-1856), veteran of the Napoleonic wars and former commandant of the Norfolk Island penal settlement, then resident at *Fairlie* in Anderson Street, South Yarra, now part of Melbourne Girls Grammar School.

Hubert de Castella relished the success his brother had achieved at *Yering*, and took the opportunity to purchase an almost adjoining property which he renamed *St Hubert's*, now famous for world-class wines. Hubert de Castella returned to Switzerland for family reasons where he documented his travels in the publication *Le Tour du Monde*, published in Paris in 1861 by Hachette as *Les Squatters Australiens*.⁸ He returned to Australia in 1862 and established St Hubert's vineyard.

The tragic death in Neuchâtel of Sophie La Trobe shortly before La Trobe's own return to Europe in 1854 necessitated arrangements for the care of their children. This surrogate role fell to Sophie's widowed sister Rose, following the death of her husband Louis-Auguste de Meuron, a cousin of Adolphe's. The subsequent marriage of La Trobe to Rose which produced two daughters further linked La Trobe to the Montmollin and Meuron families.

And what of Adolphe de Meuron? Comfortable as a cattle grazer at *Mulberry Hill* but entrepreneurial by nature, Adolphe planted an acre of vines to experiment in techniques of viticulture and winemaking, thus becoming one of the very first vignerons in the *Yering* district. Later he tried, unsuccessfully, to produce silk from silk worms fed on his mulberry trees.

Returning from a late afternoon visit to Lilydale in January 1869, he was thrown from his horse and tragically died the following day.⁹ He was buried on 29 January 1869 in a now neglected grave in the Lilydale cemetery,¹⁰ a sad and unfitting end to one of Melbourne's early pioneers.¹¹

1 See also David Dunstan, 'Charles and Sophie La Trobe and the Vignerons: the birth of an industry in nineteenth century Victoria', *La Trobeana*, vol.10, no.2, June 2011, pp.7-18.

2 Ibid, p.13.

3 L. J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, p.36.

4 Blake, p.38-9. (Although dated '11 Feb' from Muston's Creek, this letter was written 11 March 1850.)

5 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae, new edition with a note on the text by Marguerite Hancock, Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, p.10 and p.261.

6 Dunstan, p.15.

7 The Louis Buvelot painting *At Lilydale* 1870 depicts Meuron Bend. It may be viewed on the website of the Art Gallery of New South Wales at <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/244.1990> (accessed 6 March 2015)

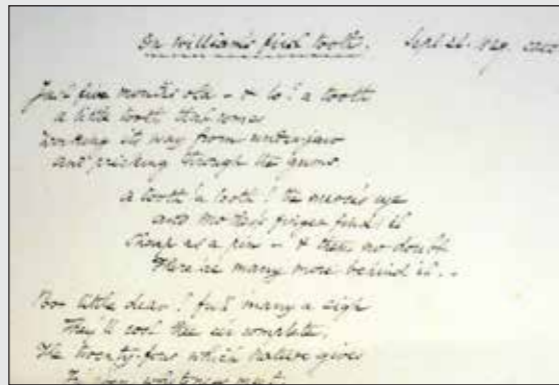
8 Hubert de Castella, *Australian Squatters*, translation with introduction and notes by C.B. Thornton-Smith. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1987. See also D. Ross 'Les Squatters australiens: book review', *La Trobeana* vol.12, no.2, July 2013, pp.29-31.

9 Inquest No. 85, 1869, Dr R. Goal.

10 The Lilydale Cemetery Trust, Church of England 1, L63.

11 Singular amongst Adolphe's many successful Swiss cousins was Auguste-Frederic de Meuron, a tobacco planter and trader in Brazil, who was to devote his energy and his fortune to establishing a mental hospital overlooking the beautiful Lake Neuchâtel; this institution functions today as a leading European research institution in mental health.

Charles Joseph La Trobe
On William's first tooth (detail)
Mrs Leonard Seeley, Commonplace
book, c.1825-1854
Australian Manuscripts Collection,
State Library of Victoria, MS 13174



On William's First Tooth: a poem by Charles Joseph La Trobe

By Helen Armstrong

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

As Dr Madonna Grehan noted in the last issue of *La Trobeana*,¹ Charles Joseph La Trobe wrote a whimsical poem in Mrs Leonard Seeley's Commonplace book on 26 September 1829 about the pain and suffering that her young son William's first tooth was causing.² Lucy Ann Seeley (née Cooper) was the wife of Leonard Seeley, La Trobe's publisher, and they lived at Weston Green in Surrey. La Trobe was 28 years of age at this time, sociable like his father,³ and 'waiting a tardy fulfilment of a promise of patronage by... the prime minister'.⁴ It appears that he wrote the poem on a visit to the Seeley family home, which he had previously visited some months earlier in 1829, the year his first travel book, *The Alpenstock*, was published.⁵

On William's first tooth Sept 26 1829 C J L T

Just five months old – & lo! a tooth
a little tooth that comes
Working its way from under-jaw
and pricking through the gums.

a tooth! a tooth! the nurse's eye
and mother's finger finds it
Sharp as a pin – & then no doubt
There're many more behind it.

Poor little dear! full many a sigh
They'll cost thee ere complete
The twenty-four which nature gives
In even whiteness meet.

To champ thy food, to form thy words
To aid thee in thy prattle –
To crack thy nuts, & be of use
Perchance in bloody battle. –

Obtained with many a woful [sic] twitch
of feverish pain they say, –
Maintain'd with many a scrub & scratch
From brushes day by day. –

Then toothache comes, a stinging pain
(There's nothing half so cruel)
Keeping you hourly on the rack
Fed low on rusks & gruel.



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



'The Elms', Weston Green, Thames Ditton, Surrey
Early eighteenth century, English Heritage Grade II
building, home of Leonard Seeley
(Accessed via google street view, 9 December 2014)

You chafe, you writhe, you change your place, –
Perhaps sigh & groan & weep
and others try ten thousand ways
of lulling pain to sleep.

But no! no case, till with a jerk
That turns your head awry,
and makes you gape with a sudden wrench
You bid your tooth good bye.

O wicked teeth – of all the stock
of implements we use,
The worst to gain, – the worst to keep, –
almost the worst to lose. –

La Trobe also penned another, untitled, poem and made two sketches in Mrs Seeley's Commonplace book. The poem, attributed to Anon, is in fact John Wesley's *Humility*, verses 1-2 and 5-8, and was penned on 28 February at W.G. [Weston Green, 1829]. The two sketches are titled: *Rural Shrine, Canton Schwyz, Switzerland*, Weston Green, 19 February 1829; and *Chateau de Katzenellenbogen*, 23 February 1829 Weston Green.

In view of the strong link between the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, and the Moravian Church in which members of the La Trobe family played a significant role, it seems odd at first that the other poem is untitled and attributed to Anon. However, many of the Wesleys' poetical works were originally published anonymously.

The two drawings presumably derived from a sketch-book that La Trobe carried with him during his initial travels in Europe. The *Rural Shrine, Canton Schwyz, Switzerland* is a fine miniature exhibiting his strong interest in both architecture and the natural world. An enlargement is published in *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches*.⁶

Mrs Seeley's small commonplace book proves to be a valuable source of information on the young Charles Joseph La Trobe. It was acquired by the State Library of Victoria in 1996 from Melbourne antiquarian bookseller Peter Arnold.

- 1 Madonna Grehan, 'Safely thro' her Confinement: bearing and rearing babies in nineteenth century Victoria', *La Trobeana*, vol.13, no.3, November 2014, pp.10-18.
- 2 Mrs Leonard Seeley, Commonplace book, c.1825-1854, MS 13174, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria. A commonplace book was a personal journal in which noteworthy quotations, poems, comments, etc., were written.
- 3 John Barnes, 'La Trobe: a prologue to his Melbourne years', *La Trobeana*, vol.13, no2, July 2014, p.9.
- 4 La Trobe to Madame de Pourtales, 8/11 August 1834, MS 13354/43, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria (quoted Barnes, p.11. When there was no patronage forthcoming La Trobe set off soon afterwards for Switzerland for a second extended period).
- 5 This book states: Published by R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside and sold by L. B. Seeley and Sons, Fleet Street, London. (It was Leonard Benton Seeley, father of Robert Benton Seeley and Leonard Seeley, who established as a bookseller c.1795 in London's Paternoster Row. William Burnside came into the publishing side of the business in 1826. Exeter Working Papers in Book History, <http://bookhistory.blogspot.com.au>, accessed 9 December 2014.)
- 6 *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches*, introduced by Dianne Reilly, notes by Victoria Hammond, Melbourne: State Library of Victoria, in association with Tarcoola Press and National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1999, p.7.

Pioneer Service, St James' Old Cathedral, 9 November 2014

The annual Pioneer Service was held in the presence of The Honourable Alex Chernov AC QC, Governor of Victoria and The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne and the Anglican Primate of Australia, on the occasion of the 175th Anniversary of the laying of St James' Foundation Stone by Charles Joseph La Trobe on 9 November 1839. La Trobe had arrived in Melbourne only a few weeks beforehand.

St James' Anglican Church was originally built on a crown grant site on the corner of William and Little Collins Streets. The new church replaced an original interdenominational timber church, and some years later, in 1845, La Trobe presented the baptismal font from the demolished St Katharine's by the Tower, London, on the occasion of the baptism of his only son, Charles Albert La Trobe.¹

Robert Russell, a London architect and surveyor, designed the building in Colonial Georgian style, inspired by Francis Greenway's work at St James', King Street in Sydney. The foundations are of bluestone, and the main walls of a sandstone found in various local quarries. The unfinished building was opened for worship on the 2 October 1842 and completed in 1847. It was moved to its present site on the corner of Batman and King Streets, opposite the Flagstaff Gardens stone by stone and was reopened on the 19 April 1914.²

This is an edited version of the sermon given by Archbishop Philip Freier.

It is a pleasure to be here at my third Pioneer Service at St James' Old Cathedral. On my earlier visits in 2007 and 2010 we had the anticipation of forthcoming anniversaries but there is nothing like the real thing and here we are at the 175th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone and only one year away from the Centenary of the even more remarkable relocation of this church onto our present Batman Street site. I am also very appreciative that His Excellency the Governor has graced us with his presence. We are both successors in office of two men who were good Christian friends, they were: Governor Charles La Trobe and Bishop Charles Perry. It is easy in this holy place of remembrance to imagine them both present in this church when it was back in its William Street original site.

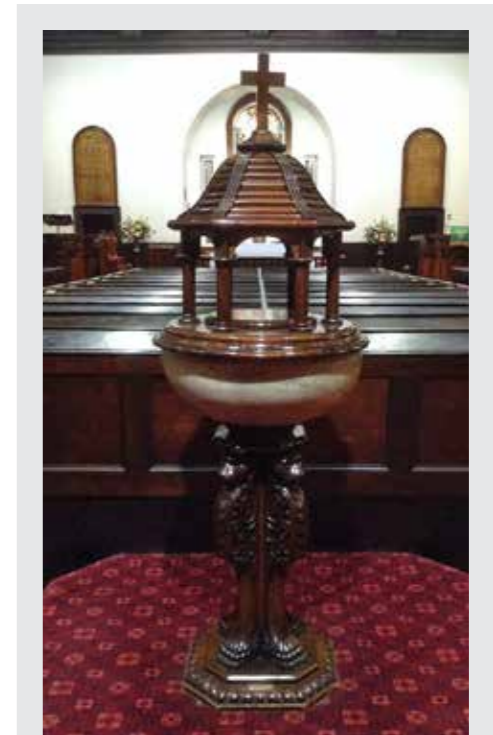
In any case we are gathered into a holy remembrance of those who were the pioneers of faith and the civic founders of our city, the pioneers of Melbourne whose vision we benefit from in our present day. Our reading from 1 Peter³ is one that they may well have reflected on as they shaped the city and society that we have inherited today. In that reading the apostle exhorts the followers of Christ to rid themselves of 'all malice, all guile, all insincerity, envy and slander'. These are indeed the corrosive aspects of human nature that work against the building up of a society that best reflects the Christian qualities of love and peace. Our predecessors in this city in its infant years were clearly interested to lay a strong foundation for the generations who would follow. Spacious public gardens, an ordered city grid and the expectation that



Charles Samuel Bennett, 1869-1930, artist
St James' Cathedral, 1881
Pencil, ink and watercolour drawing on cream paper
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H9257
Shows St James' Cathedral on its original site near the corner of William and Little Collins Streets

every citizen might aspire to prosperity and participation were all civic values that arose out of the Christian convictions of those founders of this church and of our city. They knew that freedom from the old prescriptive order of Europe was a central value amongst Melbourne's citizens. They were certainly not out to impose monastic Christian discipline on Melbourne's citizenry or create the kind of Christian communitarian society that the English pilgrims had attempted in New England in the American Colonies. Even with a recognition of the limits of coercive social control it would be wrong to dismiss the powerful influence of Christian faith in shaping our city from its earliest years.

Despite anything else we think people continue to discover in themselves a hunger to be more serious, a hunger to find a reference point in the uncertainties of life. They long for the eternal, the true and the good instead of the sterile, addictive appetite for more and more possessions and entertainments. This western part of our CBD in Melbourne has many people with such a yearning, our task is to carry the news to them that their longing can find its satisfaction in Christ.⁴



John Botham, photographer
Baptismal font St James' Old Cathedral, 2014
Presented by La Trobe in 1845 to St James' Church

¹ Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal, Melbourne 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae, with a note on the text by Marguerite Hancock, Canberra, Halstead Press, 2013, entry for 9 March 1844 note, p.175.

² <http://www.sjoc.org.au/history>, accessed 6 February 2015.

³ 1 Peter 2:1-10 (New Standard Revised Version of the Bible)

⁴ The full text of this sermon can be supplied by the Editor, editor@latrobesociety.org.au



Loreen Chambers, photographer
The Rev'd Daniel Merceron and John Chambers at St Michael the Archangel, Litlington church, 2014
Shown with La Trobe's headstone and the floral wreath

Memorial Services for Charles Joseph La Trobe

By Loreen Chambers

The Anniversary of the death of Charles Joseph La Trobe on 4 December 1875 was remembered at St Peter's Eastern Hill in the Diocese of Melbourne in a service conducted by Fr Hugh Kempster and coincided with a memorial service at St Michael the Archangel, Litlington, in the Diocese of Chichester, East Sussex, where he is buried. The Rev. Daniel John Merceron was taking his first service at Litlington which is part of the Benefice of Alfriston with Lullington, Litlington and West Dean.

This year, members of the La Trobe Society were present at both services. At St Peter's, seventeen members were present, including John Drury and Dianne Reilly, and at St Michael's Loreen and John Chambers attended. At St Michael's, members of the La Trobe family attended as they do each year, all descendants of Charlotte Louisa La Trobe (1870-1962). Brenda Smith was brought up in the Moravian faith and her grandmother, Charlotte married the Rev. Gilbert La Stooke a Moravian preacher in Bristol. Charlotte's father was Samuel Hazard La Trobe a clockmaker and cousin of Charles Joseph La Trobe.¹

Father Hugh delivered an excellent sermon in which he reflected on Charles Joseph

La Trobe's faith and his vision, and quoted from La Trobe's Address to those who greeted him upon his arrival in Melbourne in 1839, all of which is quoted below. John Chambers also read this address at Litlington:

I pray to God, to whom I look for strength and power, that whether my stay among you as chief organ of the Government be long or short, I may be enabled, through His Grace, to know my duty, and to do my duty, diligently, temperately and fearlessly ... It will not be by individual aggrandisement, by the possession of numerous flocks and herds, or of costly acres, that we shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness, but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great. Let us remember that religion is the only great preventive of crime, and contributes more, in a far more endurable manner, to the peace and good order



Charles Norton, 1826-1872, artist
St Peter's, 1850
Watercolour on cream paper
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H88.21/46



Eric Trayler Cook, 1893-1978, artist
Litlington Church, East Sussex, 1937
Oil on card
Lewes Castle and Museum

of society than the Judge and the Sheriff – the gaol and the gibbet united.²

Father Hugh continued: 'It was with this vision in mind that La Trobe laid the foundation stone of our little church on Eastern Hill in 1846 out in the bush, before even a bishop had been appointed'.

Rev. Daniel Merceron also gave a fine early morning service but generously gave Loreen Chambers the opportunity to present a fifteen minute address in lieu of a sermon, in which she described the life and achievements of Charles Joseph La Trobe, concluding with the words:

'Today, the name of Charles Joseph La Trobe is honoured as it was once criticised by the impatient colonists. A major university is named after him, as are rivers, streams, streets, bridges, townships and an electorate; and a fine statute stands in front of that august

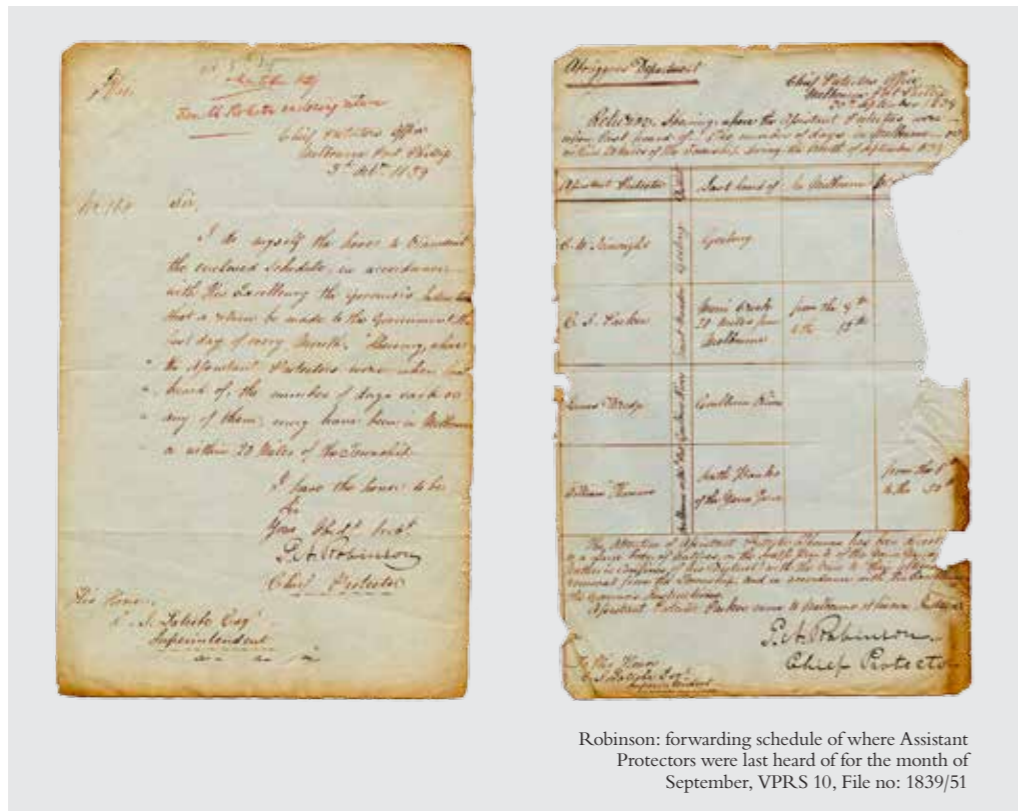
institution, the State Library of Victoria. The La Trobe Society, which my husband and I are proud to represent, honours the memory of this remarkable man, a Renaissance man, and above all a virtuous and vigorous Christian.'

The account of La Trobe's life, although well-known to our members, was greeted with considerable interest by the congregation of the tiny parish. They, and indeed family members, knew little of the story of the man buried in their church yard who had lived for the last decade of his life in the fine manor house nearby called *Clapham House*.

La Trobe Society members continue to support the relationship between the two churches by attending this annual memorial service and we are particularly indebted to Helen Botham who, as well as attending the Eastern Hill service with John her husband, arranges Australian flowers each year to be delivered to St Michael's.

¹ Dianne Reilly, 'The La Trobe Clock: a research report', *La Trobeana*, vol 13, no 1, March 2014, p.37.

² *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.4.



Robinson: forwarding schedule of where Assistant Protectors were last heard of for the month of September, VPRS 10, File no: 1839/51

The La Trobe Digitisation Project

It is a great pleasure to report on the near-completion of a major indexing and digitising project, the results of which will bring joy to all researchers of Victoria's colonial period.

A collaboration between the La Trobe Society and the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), the La Trobe Digitisation Project began in 2010 with the generous support of the R E Ross Trust. Over the four years' life of the project, seven members of the La Trobe Society – Greta Diskin, Shirley Goldsworthy, Walter Heale, Irene Kearsey, John Waugh, John Drury and Dianne Reilly – and ten other PROV volunteers worked consistently on the material, to deliver high-quality catalogue information and digital images of the contents of the enormous correspondence to Charles Joseph La Trobe from 1839 to 1851. Contained in 151 boxes, the approximately 26,000 items were digitally imaged and matched to the descriptive

data, always with the aim of making this original material accessible online to researchers.

About 75% of the records has been published already on the PROV website, and it is expected that the remainder will be accessible online from the middle of 2015.

The partnership between the Public Record Office Victoria and the La Trobe Society to achieve the indexing of the *La Trobe Inward Registered Correspondence, 1839-1851*, and digitising of it for future research has been a major project in anyone's language, and all the volunteers involved found it a most satisfying and rewarding experience.

Dianne Reilly



Johann Friedrich Dietler, 1804-1874, artist
Sophie de Montmollin, 1834
Watercolour
Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel
Sophie de Montmollin married Charles Joseph La Trobe in Berne on 16 September, 1835

Johann Friedrich Dietler, 1804-1874, artist
Agnes Louisa La Trobe, 1850
Watercolour
Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel
Agnes is aged thirteen years

The Letters of Sophie La Trobe 1845-1853

The latest addition to our fine website now features excerpts of letters that Sophie La Trobe wrote to her young daughter Agnes after she had been sent back to Switzerland for her education. These letters, written over an eight-year period, give us a very good understanding of Sophie's personality and of family life at *Jolimont*. The poignancy of this record of the relationship between a loving mother and an absent child is, at times, almost palpable.

Other letters Sophie La Trobe wrote to former governesses in the La Trobe household, Susan Meade (Norton) and Anne Russell Ker, are also included in this collection.

This is an important, easily accessible resource to the public, as well as to teachers and their students of all ages. The letters are easy to

find via the drop-down menus under 'Sophie La Trobe'. The original letters to Agnes are held at the Archives de l'Etat in Neuchâtel and copies are in the Australian Manuscripts Collection of the State Library of Victoria.

Note: A parallel set of letters that Charles Joseph La Trobe wrote to Agnes may also be found on the website. They can be equally poignant, in particular after Sophie and the family left Victoria for Switzerland and after La Trobe learned of Sophie's untimely death in 1854.

Loreen Chambers

Forthcoming events

MAY

Tuesday 5

Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Lecture

Time: 6.00–8.00pm

Venue: Mueller Hall, National Herbarium of Victoria, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne (opposite La Trobe's Cottage)

Guest Speaker: Professor Tim Entwisle, Director and Chief Executive, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Topic: Passion for Plants

Refreshments

Admission: \$15.00 member, \$20.00 non-member

JUNE

Tuesday 16

Joint La Trobe Society/ RHSV AGL Shaw Lecture

Time: 6.30–8.00 pm

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

Guest Speaker: Dr Madonna Grehan, Historian, La Trobe Society member and 2014 La Trobe Society Fellow at the State Library of Victoria

Topic: Charles Joseph La Trobe and the Regulation of Everyday Life: implementing the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act

Refreshments

Admission: \$30.00 per person

JULY

Friday 17

Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture

Time: 6.30–8.30 pm

Venue: 401 Collins Street, Melbourne

Guest Speaker: Dr Jonathan Burdon AM, MD, FRACP, FCCP, FACLM, FAICD, Consultant Respiratory Physician, Co-Convenor Melbourne Rare Book Week, and La Trobe Society member

Topic: Medicine in Melbourne in the time of La Trobe

Refreshments

Admission: No charge

Bookings essential: secretary@latrobesociety.org.au or 9646 2112 (please leave a message)

AUGUST

Wednesday 5

La Trobe Society Annual General Meeting and Dinner

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place, Melbourne

Guest Speaker: Dr Sylvia Whitmore, Historian & La Trobe Society member

Topic: tbc

NOVEMBER

Wednesday 25 (tbc)

Christmas Cocktails

Venue and Speaker: tbc

DECEMBER

Sunday 6

Anniversary of the Death of C J La Trobe

Time: 11.00 am

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

Refreshments

Back Issues

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

The back issues may be accessed at www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html

They may be searched by keyword.

Contributions welcome

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

Further information about the Journal may be found at www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html.

For contributions and subscriptions enquiries contact:
The Honorary Secretary: Dr Dianne Reilly AM
The C J La Trobe Society
401 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Phone: 9646 2112
Email: secretary@latrobesociety.org.au



BACK COVER
La Trobe Family coat of arms

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

