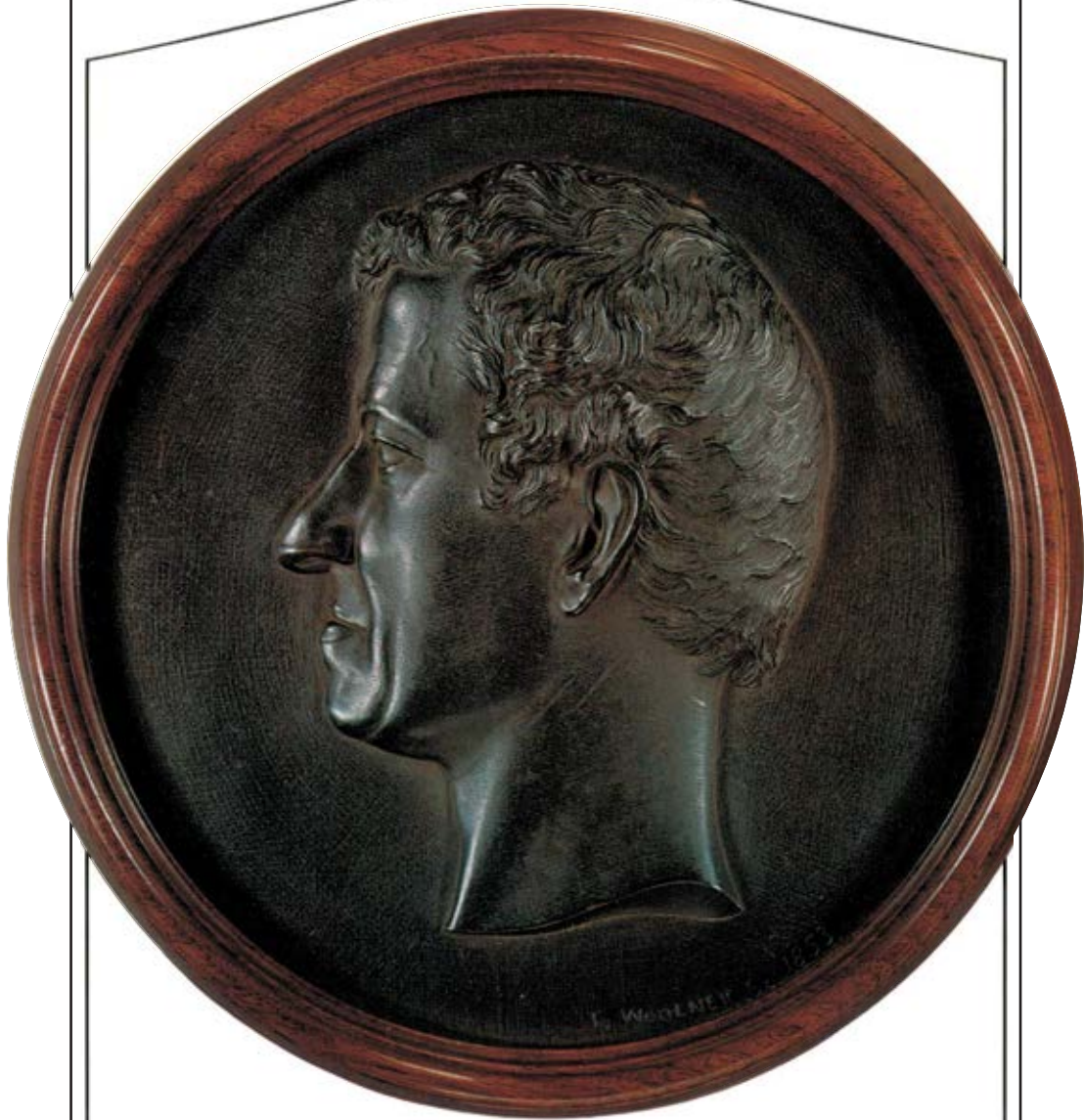


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 16, No 3, November 2017**

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## *La Trobeana*

Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc  
Vol 16, No 3, November 2017

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

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



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### **FRONT COVER**

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

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# A Word from the President

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It is with great pleasure that we offer our congratulations to member Professor John Barnes on the success achieved by his recent biography *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*. In the Victorian Community History Awards for 2017, he received the History Publication award recognizing 'the most outstanding non-fiction publication on Victorian history'. This handsome publication, featuring many of La Trobe's sketches and water-colours, will ensure that La Trobe's legacy is appropriately acknowledged and appreciated in the community.

The La Trobe Society is once again in 2017-2018 sponsoring a Fellowship under the umbrella of the State Library Victoria Creative Fellowships Program. Dr Monique Webber was the successful applicant. Her project, titled *La Trobe's garden city and the lost sculptures of Fitzroy Gardens*, will explore La Trobe's vision of creating formalised spaces in Melbourne as a means to appreciate European heritage. Monique will meet members when she speaks at the Annual General Meeting next year, if not before.

Three of the lectures given during the year as part of the Members Talk to Members program are published in this edition of *La Trobeana*.

Dr Fay Woodhouse, further to her editing and publication earlier in the year of Patricia Hawkins' biographical sketch of Robert Russell, Melbourne's first surveyor, has revealed in her research that there was little collaboration between Russell and Robert Hoddle, the man who replaced him as Surveyor-General. Hoddle, generally considered the creator of Melbourne's grid system, had in fact used Russell's contour plan, drawing up the allotments to form the central business district as we know it today.

Tim Gatehouse, in his paper 'Our First Class Light: La Trobe and the Cape Otway Lighthouse', illuminates in fascinating detail the leading role of La Trobe to blaze a trail to Cape Otway in search of a site for the necessary

lighthouse, following enormous loss of life as ships foundered due to lack of a beacon as they entered Bass Strait near their Port Phillip destination.

John Botham has shed new light in his research on the remarkable career of merchant George Ward Cole in his paper 'Captain "Old King" Cole: Port Phillip pioneer to Victorian patriarch.' Beginning his career as an adventurous seaman, Cole was to go on to make a name for himself as one of the leading businessmen in Melbourne with interests in shipping, banking and squatting, holding seats at various times in the Legislative Council.

Dr Sylvia Whitmore's paper 'La Trobe, Lord Kingsborough and *The Antiquities of Mexico*' was a highlight as the La Trobe Society Lecture in the 2017 Rare Book Week. Her meticulous research has revealed hitherto unknown facts about one of the treasures held in few libraries in the world, one copy being held in the State Library Victoria collection.

Amazing as it seems, 2017 is rapidly drawing to a close. I draw your attention to the Society's Christmas Cocktails which will be held this year at the Royal Society of Victoria, the State's oldest learned society, located in a heritage-listed building at 8 La Trobe Street, Melbourne. A part of Australia's intellectual life promoting science since 1854, and formerly named the Philosophical Society of Victoria, Charles Joseph La Trobe was its inaugural Patron before his departure from Melbourne later that year. We are fortunate to have Dr Tom Darragh, Curator Emeritus at Museum Victoria, and Former Councillor and Honorary Librarian of the Royal Society, as our guest speaker. I hope to see many of you there.

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



N J Caire, 1837-1918, photographer  
 Fitzroy Gardens — central roundel, c.1880  
 Albumen silver photograph  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H87.269/21

## La Trobe Society Fellowship 2017

The La Trobe Society offers a biennial Fellowship under the umbrella of State Library Victoria's Creative Fellowships Program. Australian historians, scholars and writers who wish to research Victoria's colonial history during Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe's administration, or the effects of his tenure after his departure from Victoria may apply for this prestigious award.



This year, the La Trobe Society Fellowship was awarded to **Dr Monique Webber** who has a BA (Hons) in Art History and Classics, a Diploma of Modern Languages and a PhD which focused on visual culture and the analysis of Roman art and architecture.

Her project is titled *La Trobe's garden city and the lost sculptures of Fitzroy Gardens*. Monique will explore, using State Library Victoria resources, La Trobe's vision of creating

formalised spaces in Melbourne as a means to appreciate European heritage.

Fitzroy Square (now Fitzroy Gardens) was reserved in 1848, and although La Trobe's governorship came to an end before the gardens were completed, the influence of his ideals is evident in their design and in the abundant classical statuary that ornamented its walks. These statues, now lost, were not only a defining feature of the early gardens, but they also revealed how the lifestyle of leisure and education that La Trobe envisioned for a settlement where 'the arts and sciences [were] unborn' was made a part of Melbourne's fabric.

Recovering this sculptural ornament through the Library's archives, Monique's project will reveal both a lost chapter in Melbourne's garden history, and will demonstrate how La Trobe's vision informed the city's cultural and physical landscape.

Monique will produce a work suitable for publication as a special issue of *La Trobeana*, and we can look forward to a presentation from her about her intriguing project in 2018.

# Surveying the Landscape: Robert Russell, Robert Hoddle and the first plan of Melbourne

By Dr Fay Woodhouse

Fay Woodhouse is a professional historian who has written histories for the university, public, community and private sectors. She has recently edited and published *Robert Russell: Artist of Early Melbourne*, by Patricia Hawkins. Her latest biography, *The Enterprising Mr MacGregor: Stockbreeder & Pioneer Pastoralist* was published in 2016 and reprinted in 2017. Fay is a Fellow of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, and is the Victorian researcher for the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

*This is a revised version of a paper given in the Members Talk to Members program, 11 June 2017.*

In my last article, ‘Power, Politics and Passion: Port Phillip before the Gold Rush’,<sup>1</sup> I sketched the early days of the settlement on the banks of the Yarra River, the careers of both William Lonsdale and Robert Russell, and the arrival in the Port Phillip District of Robert Hoddle.

As we know, the Port Phillip District was illegally settled in 1834 by escaped convicts and whalers before the Henty family arrived from Tasmania and settled in the Portland area. In 1835, ‘a little band of pioneers from Tasmania’, John Batman, John Fawkner and members of the Port Phillip Association, settled on the banks of the Yarra River.<sup>2</sup> John Batman’s so-called ‘treaty’ with the Aboriginal occupiers of the land was declared by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, to be a ‘pretence’, and he declared the settlement illegal.

However, it was clear that an incursion by pastoralists was inevitable. With the growing demand for Australian wool, Bourke advised Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that there were powerful reasons to allow the wool industry to expand into the southern portion of New South Wales. The official limits of settlement were extended southwards to Twofold Bay and Port Phillip. Bourke knew that

illegal settlement had already taken place and wrote frankly to Glenelg that the Government was unable to prevent it.<sup>3</sup> So, ‘bowing to the inevitable’, on 13 April 1836 Glenelg authorised Bourke ‘to unleash “the spirit of adventure and speculation” while maintaining the Crown’s basic authority over the land, the law and the inhabitants’.<sup>4</sup> Bourke quickly issued a proclamation opening the District for lawful settlement and formally announced the appointment of Captain William Lonsdale as Chief Agent of Government, Police Magistrate and Commandant for the Port Phillip region.<sup>5</sup>

## *William Lonsdale and Robert Russell*

In opening up the Port Phillip District, the Governor aimed to stop illegal settlement and to encourage pastoralists to purchase Crown Land. Lonsdale was directed to ‘select the spot which you may find most convenient in every respect for erecting a temporary residence for yourself... barracks, commissariat store and huts for constables’.<sup>6</sup> More explicitly, the instruction continued:

In choosing your first position it is not necessary you should consider which may be the most suitable site for a future township. Present convenience



**J.W. Lindt (John William) 1845–1926, photographer**  
**Robert Russell, surveyor and artist in later life, c.1876**  
Albumen silver cabinet photograph  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H13838

and a ready communication with shipping are the points to be at first attended to.<sup>7</sup>

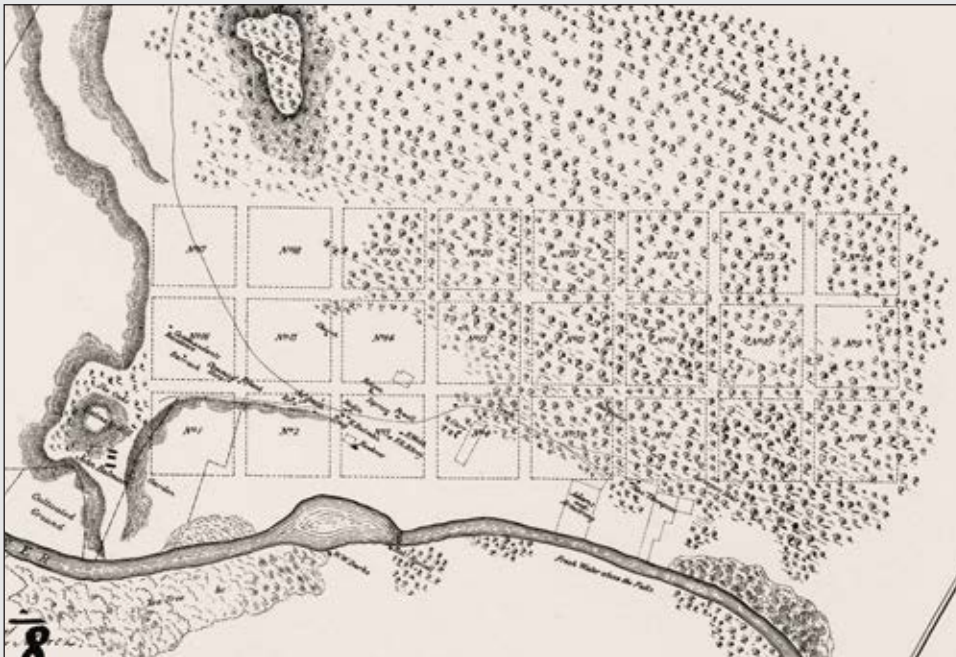
The wording is quite clear: deciding the location of a township was not part of Lonsdale's brief. The interpretation by historians of this sentence appears to have been and, it seems, remains, a contentious one.<sup>8</sup> This sentence is also fundamental to the question of who drew the first plan of Melbourne, as we shall see.

The instructions were very similar to those later issued to Charles La Trobe when he became the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. Lonsdale, his wife, children and servants sailed from Sydney on the *HMS Rattlesnake*. His party also consisted of a subaltern, two sergeants and thirty rank and file troops. The Colonial Office wanted to open the land to legal title. Lonsdale was sent to administer and keep order in the small settlement of 224 people occupying the land adjacent to the Yarra River. But to open up the land, it had to be surveyed first.

Lonsdale's arrival was closely followed by that of the twenty-eight year old architect, surveyor and painter, Robert Russell.<sup>9</sup> He had been appointed as surveyor in the same week Governor Bourke appointed Lonsdale; he was the second most senior and the second most highly paid public servant in Port Phillip,

initially on £200 per annum.<sup>10</sup> Russell and his two assistants — draughtsman Frederick D'Arcy and chain-man, William Darke — were employed to undertake preliminary work surveying the Port Phillip District. The lengthy letter of instruction from the Assistant Surveyor-General, Samuel Perry, sets out his duties and responsibilities. Russell was appointed to:

1. Find the existing 'tracings' which outlined the basin of Port Phillip to give him an idea of the general character of the country — and to find out more about it;
2. Survey the shores of the harbour once he found 'points of intersection' that could be easily 'described and recognised';
3. Once the surveys and tracings had been completed, he had to 'trace the banks of the river which empties itself on the northern side of the harbour'; trace the river; note its breadth and depth at its mouth and above; the extent to which it was navigable; how it was affected by the tide; the nature of the banks and the bed; the rapidity of the current; the height at which permanent water flowed and the level it rose to in a flood;
4. Observe which lands were occupied and give the Police Magistrate (Lonsdale) the



**Robert Russell, 1808-1900, cartographer**  
**Map shewing the site of Melbourne and the position of the huts & building previous to**  
**the foundation of the township by Sir Richard Bourke in 1837 (detail)**  
 Photo-lithograph of 1911 edition, reprinted 1986  
 Map Collection, State Library Victoria

- names of the occupants and the length of their occupation to ensure that licences were granted to them;
5. Trace the rivers and creeks on the west side of the harbour;
  6. When all the rivers and water courses had been traced, commence making a series of section lines. As these lines were to form the foundation of an extended survey, utmost care was required in running his parallels, verifying the ground measurements by trigonometrical observations, and taking longitudes and latitudes from the meridian of such points for future reference;
  7. Commence describing the features of the ground by tracing the principal ranges. In laying down his plan, he must show 'as accurately as possible' the different degrees of inclination and every peculiarity which the face of the country suggests;
  8. Every plan had to be accompanied by a written report. He was instructed to be 'as copious as possible' giving the approximate height and inclination of the principal mountains, the nature of the soil and the species of vegetation. He was also to report on the chains of mountains, trace roads and rivers for the establishment of

bridges or ferries, and report on what parts would be best adapted for sheep and cattle grazing and what for agriculture. He was to 'observe the disposition of the natives, whether ferocious and hostile to strangers', the number in each tribe and how they were armed.

9. Finally, he was to use the scale of two inches to the mile on all his drawings.<sup>11</sup>

This was an enormous task and, you will notice that there is no timeframe included in his instructions. In 1937, the Victorian Surveyor, H.S. McComb, summarised these instructions simply to: 'Russell [was] to carry out a feature survey of the country around Port Phillip Bay'.

Governor Bourke had made it clear that no land would be disposed of until it had first been surveyed.<sup>12</sup> The Colonial Secretary's Office clarified the situation in a notice stating that 'no advantage will be obtained by the occupation of any land at that place previously to its conveyance... as without such title the land will be the subject of competition at a public sale and sold to the best bidder'.<sup>13</sup>

Further instructions issued to Russell by Perry on 15 September included the statement that Russell would 'attend to such orders as you shall receive from Captain Lonsdale' and 'you





**Hyman's Portrait Rooms, Melbourne, photographers  
Robert Hoddle in later life, c.1865**  
Albumen silver carte-de-visite with hand colouring  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H29537  
Hoddle is holding a telescope

will apply to him for advice and assistance in any case of doubt or difficulty.<sup>14</sup> Well, that did not happen.

### ***Russell and his men arrive in Port Phillip***

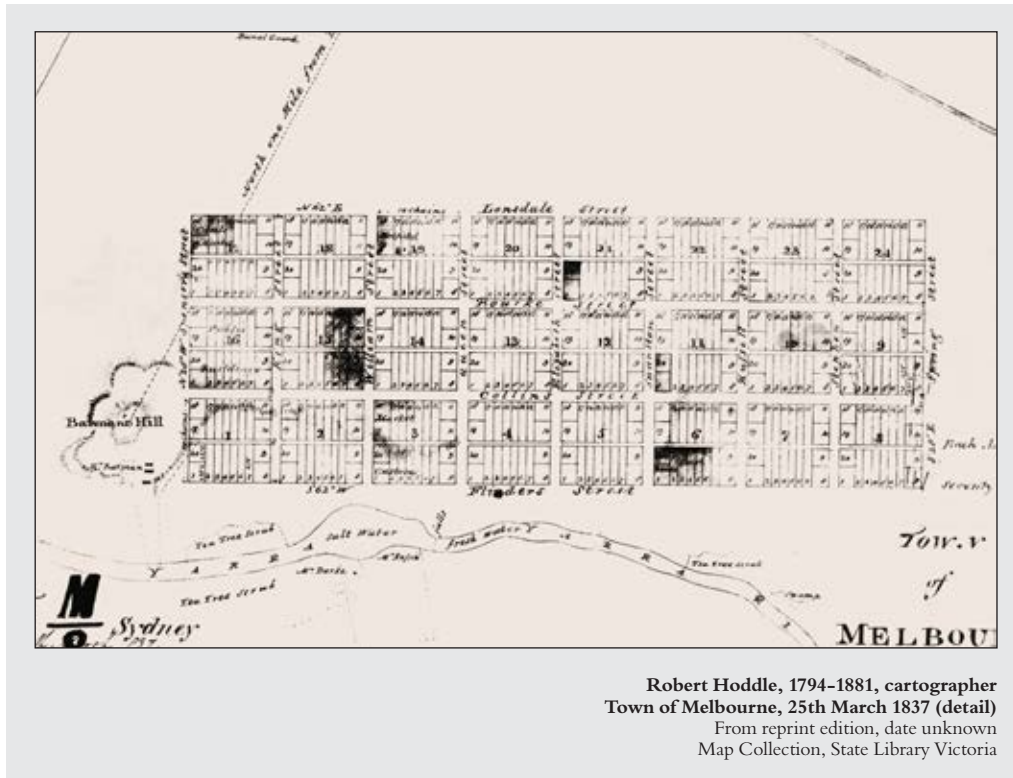
Russell and his team sailed on the *SS Stirlingshire* and arrived in Port Phillip on 9 October 1836. It was a lengthy and rough trip and took much longer than expected by the Colonial Office in Sydney. When they arrived in Port Phillip, the first thing the men had to do was to construct their own accommodation. They also found that after the rough voyage the horses were in a poor state of health. In addition, some of them had not been broken in for the harness and it took some weeks before the horses were ready to begin work. This was the first delay in the survey. After some weeks, Russell wrote in his diary that on 25 October he had proceeded to Geelong to measure the base for Mr Shortland.<sup>15</sup> Their first task was to survey the shores and the harbour, but this required the use of horses which were still unfit for work.

Continued delays in surveying were noticed by the settlers who were anxious to establish ownership over the land they were effectively squatting on. Because of the delays the surveyors quickly gained a reputation for 'idling away their time instead of attending to their

professional duties'.<sup>16</sup> What were they doing? As we saw from Perry's letter of instruction, a survey of the township was not part of Russell's duties. Yet, because he and his men were unable to leave the township and travel to the surrounding country to trace the rivers, creeks and mountain ranges as required, Russell chose to survey the site of Melbourne instead. As he later wrote: 'with the exception of a few who were endeavouring to teach the horses to draw so that we might go to work and by way of keeping them out of mischief I made a survey of the site of Melbourne without official instructions'.<sup>17</sup>

With the delays caused by the horses not drawing and the settlers impatient to see some results, it is possible that, to placate the settlers, Lonsdale himself suggested to Russell that — until the horses could be used — he survey and lay out some township blocks. Surveying work began. In his report to the Governor dated 26 November 1836, Lonsdale stated that 'the Surveyors have commenced today the Survey, they have been obliged to begin in the neighbourhood of the Settlement'.<sup>18</sup> For Russell it was a week's work.

But after that week of work, progress appears to have slowed down. By early 1837 Governor Bourke began expressing his dissatisfaction with the delays in surveying the Port Phillip District. In February the Colonial



Secretary wrote to the Surveyor-General, Major Mitchell, informing him that His Excellency the Governor proposed going to Port Phillip and ‘wishes that you should accompany him to mark out sites for towns and villages both on the coast and in the interior’.<sup>19</sup> But the Surveyor-General was about to leave the colony and sail to England. Senior Surveyor Robert Hoddle was chosen to accompany Governor Bourke instead.<sup>20</sup>

Before he left Sydney, Robert Hoddle acquired copies of all previous instructions issued to Russell as well as everything he needed for measuring and surveying the land. When Bourke and Hoddle arrived in Port Phillip they were presented with an address of welcome by the assembled settlers. Part of the presentation expressed their views on the state of the survey: ‘It is very important that the sites of towns and other preliminary arrangements should be speedily and efficiently determined, and we congratulate ourselves that these will be effected under your Excellency’s personal superintendence.’<sup>21</sup> Bourke found that the location of the township was well chosen and, as A.G.L. Shaw writes: he ‘officially selected the site, proclaimed the town of Melbourne and announced a land sale’.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Robert Hoddle appointed chief surveyor***

Robert Hoddle’s name is, of course, well known to Melburnians because of Hoddle Street. He is also known as the first Surveyor-General of

Melbourne and the man who planned the layout of the streets of Melbourne.

Robert Hoddle was born in April 1794 in Westminster, London, the son of a clerk of the Bank of England. In 1812 he became a cadet-surveyor in the Army and for nearly ten years in the Ordnance Department, took part in the trigonometrical survey of Great Britain. He then left for the Cape Colony where he worked as assistant engineer on military surveys. He sailed on the *William Penn* in April 1823 and arrived in New South Wales in July where he was appointed assistant surveyor under the Surveyor-General, John Oxley. In 1824 Hoddle accompanied Oxley on an expedition to Moreton Bay and assisted with the initial survey of the site of Brisbane. He spent the next twelve years surveying country districts of New South Wales. Governor Sir Ralph Darling called him ‘one of the most competent men in the department’, but Oxley’s successor, Thomas Mitchell, was scathing about his abilities. When he was recommended as deputy surveyor general, Mitchell spoke disparagingly about him and Samuel Augustus Perry was appointed deputy surveyor general.<sup>23</sup> When Hoddle was passed over for Russell to lead the 1836 survey party to Port Phillip it is easy to believe that future tensions between the two men could arise.

So, in March 1837 we have Governor Bourke unhappy with the survey, arriving in Port Phillip, selecting the site, naming it

Melbourne and announcing that the first land sales would take place on 1 June 1837. We have Robert Hoddle, arriving with Bourke, taking over the survey work and later being appointed Assistant Surveyor over Russell. And we have Russell, who had been sacked from his position as Assistant Surveyor, but not from the Department, continuing to assist Hoddle in his survey work.

### ***Surveying Port Phillip: what did Hoddle do?***

We know what Russell's instructions were: he was to make a feature survey of the country around Port Phillip Bay and we know that his duties fell short of the requirements. His correspondence makes it clear he began a survey of the town in late November. In early February he was at Little River but records cannot confirm exactly what he was doing there. Shortly afterwards, as of March, Russell was no longer the Chief Surveyor. But what do we know about Robert Hoddle's role in surveying the site of Melbourne?

As instructed, before he left Sydney, Hoddle found all previous details of instructions and survey work carried out both before and after Russell's arrival. Hoddle's Field Book and Journal contains records of the feature survey of Port Phillip made by Charles Grimes in January 1803.

Let us turn now to Hoddle's Field Books which, by the way, include a couple of pages of notes detailing his job offer and his rather gruelling experience sailing to Melbourne. Robert Hoddle's notebooks are called 'No. 1 Survey of Town of Melbourne — Williams Town — Port Phillip 1837' and 'No. 2 Port Phillip 1837'. They contain his survey notes. In the first book under the heading 'February-March 1837', Hoddle lists various bearings from Batman's Hill; latitudes, longitude and compass variations as well as memos and remarks. He also notes Unwin's Special Survey of 5,120 acres, Elgar's Special Survey of 5,120 which presumably he had carried out; Koonung Koonung Creek and Yarra Yarra Creek, etc.<sup>24</sup> These notes are signed with his initials RH 1837.<sup>25</sup> This note is duplicated at the other end of the Field Book; it seems he made notes from both the beginning and the end of the book which is quite confusing.

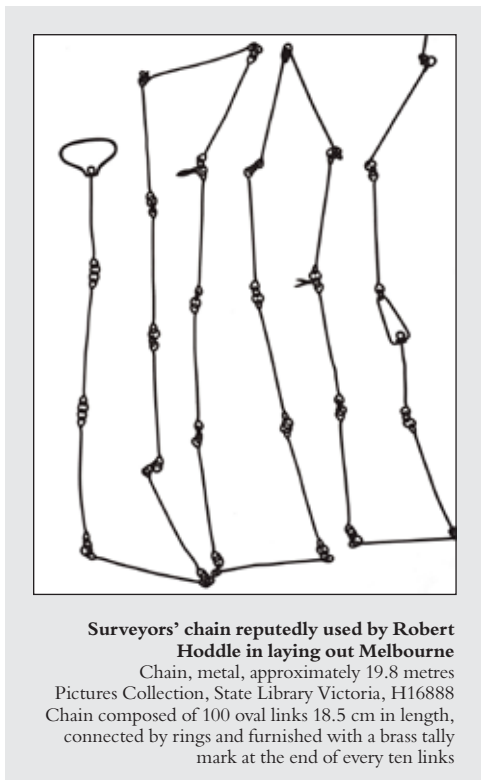
On 4 March, Bourke and Hoddle officially arrived in Port Phillip, although they had anchored at Port Phillip on 2 March. Hoddle notes in his journal: 'Left the Ship and encamped at the Settlement of Port Phillip. Received orders from the Governor to take charge of the Department there. Accompanied the Governor

around the Settlement'.<sup>26</sup> His entry continues: 'From ford East side of Batman's fence N.332° — to commence 50 yards to the East of Batman's fence — to continue so as to pass nearer the Burial Ground, than [perhaps it should be 'then'] the line walked over by His Excellency.'<sup>27</sup> We learn that the bearing N.332° is the bearing of our current Spencer Street. His next entry contains information detailing the longitude and latitude of various places such as Mount Macedon, Indented Head and Point Gellibrand.

Governor Bourke also kept a diary of his voyage to Port Phillip. On 7 March the Governor wrote that he had: 'Directed the Town to be laid out'. While Hoddle's entry for 7 March contains the statement that: 'Mr Russell to complete the angles necessary to fix the running survey... A copy of the plan of the Town to be left with the Commandant Capt. Lonsdale'.<sup>28</sup>

On 8 March Hoddle writes: 'Mr Russell to return to his duties at Geelong, Mr Darke to assist in the Survey of the Town'. Hoddle was to 'fix the stations necessary to verify the surveying done. The Streets in the town to be 1½ chains in width<sup>29</sup> — the line to be as pointed out by the Governor. The Boards to be painted black, the names of the streets to be chalked for the present. Boards 2 feet long by 6 inches'.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to see this detail here, because later we learn that Hoddle had to convince Bourke to allow the width of the streets and lanes. Also interesting is the fact that in Bourke's own diary, he uses the name 'Melbourne' for the first time on 8 March 1837 while noting at the same time that two more vessels with around 2,700 sheep had arrived that week. The Governor left Melbourne the next day to visit the interior — they rode to Geelong over a 'very pretty country having the appearance of an English park'.<sup>31</sup> The Governor visited Geelong harbour, Corio Bay, Point Henry then went to the Barwon and to Fisher's Station. By 20 March he had reached Macedon, found the head of the Salt River (now the Maribyrnong) and Campaspe; connected to Major Mitchell's survey and stayed at Aitken's station,<sup>32</sup> which was located in the uplands between present-day Sunbury and Gisborne.<sup>33</sup>

Hoddle's notebooks reveal that he was asked to advise on the land immediately outside the town just five days after he arrived. He suggested to Bourke that it would be desirable to 'commence marking the Sections from the West of Melbourne Reserve on both sides of the Yarra River'.<sup>34</sup> Between 13 and 21 March, Hoddle did not record anything in his journal. However, he did note the shock of an earthquake on Monday 13 March at 11.30 pm. Then on 21 March he noted 'Marking allotments in the Town of



Melbourne. And, 'The Governor returned to Melbourne from the interior'.<sup>35</sup>

In a paper read to the Victorian Historical Society in 1937, H.S. McComb gives a full description of Hoddle's 'Field Notes of the Town of Melbourne'. There were twenty-four sections, bounded by Spencer, Spring, Lonsdale and Flinders Streets. The subdivision of each section was shown with allotment numbers, dimensions and bearings. Street names were shown. The basin of the Yarra and the Falls as well as the title 'Melbourne' are also shown. Specific dimensions in chains and decimals of a chain (or link) are also shown. The field notes are not signed or dated.

On 26 March Hoddle notes that the land sales were scheduled to take place in June. The same entry records that the streets between Flinders and Lonsdale, Spencer and Spring, were named by Sir Richard Bourke. Hoddle and Bourke left Melbourne on 29 March but Hoddle returned to Melbourne on 28 May. At the first land sale in Melbourne and Williamstown held on 1 June 1837, one hundred allotments were sold for a total of £3,842.<sup>36</sup> Hoddle received a commission of around £35 on this amount for his work. The allotments were half-acre sections. The map of the allotments bears the name of S.A. Perry, the Deputy Surveyor-General — the work of the Department and not of one surveyor.

### *The debate begins*

As the late historian Marjorie Tipping wrote: 'Whether Hoddle planned Melbourne or used Russell's ideas has been a subject of controversy'.<sup>37</sup> When he died in 1900, Russell's obituaries referred to him as 'the father of Melbourne' because of his role as Victoria's first chief surveyor. Debate on the subject began more than one hundred years ago. The question of whether Russell or Hoddle designed the layout of Melbourne streets became a subject of heated debate by members of the Victorian Historical Society from the 1910s to the 1930s.

The Historical Society was formed in 1909 by Edward Petherick, W.J. Hughston and Alfred Greig. It began publishing its journal in 1911. Thomas O'Callaghan (Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police 1902-1913) and Alfred Greig (chief clerk and registrar of the University of Melbourne 1913-1939) each read papers on the subject of Russell and Hoddle and the history of early Melbourne. The papers spanned the years 1914, 1916 and 1919. The final debate between Greig and O'Callaghan occurred in 1927. Greig argues that Bourke, already unhappy with Russell, ignored his part in the first survey of Melbourne.<sup>38</sup> O'Callaghan argues that Hoddle drew the block and street layout.

Isaac Selby, a lecturer and historian, is remembered for his history, *The Old Pioneers' Memorial History of Melbourne*. His 1928 paper, 'Robert Hoddle and the Planning of Melbourne', argues Russell's instructions clearly specified his duties and contained no suggestion of town planning. Because Hoddle's map bears the date 25 March 1837 he argued that: 'it would seem beyond dispute that he made the first map of Melbourne'.<sup>39</sup>

McComb, a former president of the Victorian Institute of Surveyors, read two papers in 1935 examining Hoddle's journals and to find the answer. He concludes that Hoddle designed both Melbourne and Williamstown and that Darke assisted him with the layout. He contends that Hoddle drew the first plan on Russell's feature plan of the settlement.

Harley Preston, in his 1955 Honours Thesis, proposes that Russell himself must have been partially involved in the controversy in his own life-time. Preston's argument has merit. In October 1884 Russell was called before a Royal Commission on Land Titles and Surveys. He described Hoddle's work in March 1837, in particular the survey of Melbourne. The Parliamentary Commission examined irregularities in measurements of the original survey of Melbourne. These could have

occurred if Hoddle's chain was not pulled tightly or if it contained fewer links than those of other surveyors. As Russell said 'My boundaries and those of Mr Hoddle would not quite agree.'<sup>40</sup>

Russell refused to be drawn into criticism of Hoddle at the 1884 Royal Commission because, he said 'he is dead' and could not answer for himself. He recorded that 'His Excellency, directed Mr Hoddle... to prepare a plan, which was submitted to and confirmed by him this day, and named by him Melbourne'. That was on 8 March 1837. He also gave evidence that he had not accompanied Hoddle on the chaining work, but knew that it took him 'a couple of hours... [because he] went from the work and lunched with the Governor'.<sup>41</sup> As Russell himself later recalled:

Before Mr Hoddle came down with Sir Richard Bourke... he wrote asking me to send him the plans of my survey and I did so. I rode round with him afterwards, when he made his survey, but took no actual part in it except when there were references to my plans, and these were fairly frequent.<sup>42</sup>

It appears from the evidence — Russell's notes and recollections, and Hoddle's Field Books — that the area had originally been surveyed by

Russell, and onto this map Hoddle drew his plan of the allotments. When Russell was asked by the Royal Commission in 1884 'Who laid out the city of Melbourne, who designed it?' he stated: 'I fancy there was a plan for those towns, cut and dried, and they just made it to fit Melbourne or any other place.' This appears to be the case. And this is interesting in itself. How many country towns and even suburbs of Melbourne follow the same rectilinear plan?

Patricia Hawkins, in her biographical sketch of Russell proposed in 1997 that it was time to follow the lead of Melbourne historian Dr Bernard Barrett. In 1994 he had proposed that Russell had worked 'in collaboration' with Robert Hoddle in the survey and design of Melbourne.<sup>43</sup> While I think 'in collaboration' is far too modern and polite a word to use, as far as I can see there was little collaboration between Russell and Hoddle. Rather, Robert Russell's claim to have drawn the first plan of Melbourne was based on the fact that his contour plan was used by Hoddle, who then drew up the allotments to form the central business district as we know it today.

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- 1 Fay Woodhouse, 'Power, Politics and Passion: Port Phillip before the gold rush'. *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.2, July 2017, pp.12-21. (Contemporary pictures of Hoddle and Russell may be seen in that issue at pp.13-14.)
  - 2 Alfred W. Greig, 'The Official Foundation of Melbourne', *Victorian Historical Magazine* (hereafter *VHM*), vol.7, no.25, 1919, p.35.
  - 3 *Historical Records of Victoria: foundation series* (hereafter *HRV*), Vol.1, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1981, p.3.
  - 4 *Ibid.*
  - 5 *Ibid.*
  - 6 Military Instructions to Lonsdale, Correspondence, William Hunter to William Lonsdale, 12 September 1836, *HRV*, vol.1, pp.46-8; Civil Instructions to Lonsdale, Correspondence, Colonial Secretary to William Lonsdale 14 September 1836, *HRV*, vol.1, pp.49-54.
  - 7 *Ibid.*, p.48.
  - 8 See B.R. Penny, 'Lonsdale, William (1799-1864)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (hereafter *ADB*), Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, vol.2, 1967, pp.124-126; James Rangelov, 'The Port Phillip Magistrates, 1835-1851', Thesis (PhD), Victoria University, 2005, pp.188-192, Harley Preston, Thesis (BA Hons), University of Melbourne, 1955 and Harley Preston, 'Russell, Robert (1808-1900)', *ADB*, vol.2, 1967, pp.409-411; Thomas O'Callaghan, *VHM* 1914, 1919, 1927; Alfred W. Greig, *VHM*, 1919, 1927.
  - 9 For a study of his long life, see Patricia Hawkins, *Robert Russell: artist of early Melbourne*, edited by Fay Woodhouse, Lancefield: Hindsight, 2017.
  - 10 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 21 September 1836, p.1.
  - 11 Greig, 1919, pp.37-40.
  - 12 'Port Phillip', *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 14 September 1836, quoted in *HRV*, vol.1, p.56; H.S. McComb, 'Surveyor Hoddle's Field Books of Melbourne', *VHM*, vol.16, no.3, May 1937, p.78.
  - 13 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 14 September 1836.
  - 14 Greig, 1919, p.43.
  - 15 Russell's Journal, 1836-37.
  - 16 Greig, 1919, p.41.
  - 17 *Argus*, 12 June 1897.
  - 18 McComb, p.79; see also *HRV*, vol. 1 p.86.
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- 19 E. Deas Thomson to Surveyor-General, 2 February 1837, quoted in Greig, pp.44-45.
- 20 Ibid, 16 February 1837, p.45.
- 21 James Bonwick, *Port Phillip Settlement*, London, 1883, p.439, quoted in Greig, p.46.
- 22 A.G.L. Shaw, 'Foundation and Early History', *Encyclopaedia of Melbourne*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.286.
- 23 Marjorie J. Tipping, 'Hoddle, Robert (1794-1881)', *ADB*, vol.1, 1966, pp.547-548.
- 24 H.S. McComb, 'Surveyor Hoddle's Field Books of Melbourne', *VHM*, vol.16, no.3, May 1937, p.85.
- 25 Ibid, p. 81.
- 26 Hoddle Notebook, quoted in McComb, p.87.
- 27 Hoddle Notebook, 4 March 1837, p.89.
- 28 Hoddle Notebook, 7 March 187, p.91.
- 29 One chain: 22 yards or 20.12 metres.
- 30 Hoddle Notebook, 8 March 1837, p.93.
- 31 McComb, p.94.
- 32 Ibid, p.98.
- 33 Mount Aitken Pastoral Station, <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/195376/download-report> (accessed 4 August 2017)
- 34 McComb, p.95.
- 35 Ibid, p.98.
- 36 Isaac Selby, 'Robert Hoddle and the Planning of Melbourne', *VHM*, vol.13, no.2, December 1928, p.56.
- 37 Tipping, p.547.
- 38 Greig, 1919, p.47.
- 39 Selby, p.58.
- 40 Greig, 1919, p.47.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Russell quoted in *Argus*, 26 April 1899, p.5.
- 43 *The Age*, 21 April 1994, p.11.

# ‘Our First Class Light’: the role of Charles Joseph La Trobe in building the Cape Otway Lighthouse

By Tim Gatehouse

**Tim Gatehouse is a retired solicitor with interests in the history of Victoria, particularly the period before the discovery of gold, and in architectural and gardening history. He is a frequent contributor to journals on these subjects. His interest in Charles Joseph La Trobe stems from the American ancestors his family shares with the La Trobes.**

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In an era of easy communication the Cape Otway lighthouse still retains its remote aura. Perched dramatically on a cliff edge above a boiling sea, it marks the western entrance to Bass Strait. The Cape’s precipitous cliffs prevent access from the sea, and even today access by land is along a winding road through the rugged, densely forested Otway Ranges. Difficulty of access was one of the reasons it took so long for the lighthouse to be built, despite the obvious need. The leading role played by Charles La Trobe on the tortuous road to the lighthouse, in fact and metaphor, sheds light on aspects of his character, his role as Superintendent of Port Phillip, both in public perception and his own, and relations between the Australian colonial governments and Britain.

Bass Strait’s existence was unknown for ten years after European settlement in 1788. The First Fleet and ships that followed sailed south of Van Diemen’s Land before turning north to Sydney. Observations of current direction and wave patterns led mariners to speculate that a large body of water lay between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, and this was confirmed by Bass and Flinders’ discovery in 1798 of what transpired to be the southerly

island’s north coast.<sup>1</sup> In 1801 Lieutenant James Grant (1772-1833), commander of the Royal Navy survey ship *Lady Nelson*, sailed through the strait, naming the prominent cape at its western end Cape Otway after Admiral William Albany Otway (1755-1815).<sup>2</sup> Subsequently the strait became the preferred route to Sydney, reducing sailing time from England by almost a week. In order to secure territory north of the strait from French colonisation, settlements were attempted at Sullivan’s Cove (present-day Sorrento) on Port Phillip in 1803, and at Western Port in 1826.<sup>3</sup> Islands in the strait were soon colonised by sealers, and with the Henty settlement at Portland in 1834 and the foundation of Melbourne in 1835, the strait became a major thoroughfare.

The hazards of the strait, especially at its western entrance between Cape Otway and King Island, became better known as the volume of shipping increased. The Admiralty’s hydrographical directory of 1830<sup>4</sup> included a warning of a reef extending south from Cape Otway. From time to time wrecks occurred, but it took the loss of the convict transport *Neva* in 1835, after striking a reef off the north coast of King Island with the loss of 225 lives,



Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Cape Otway Lighthouse, 2017

to bring forward proposals to deal with the dangers.<sup>5</sup> In 1841 Sir John Franklin, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land recommended to Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales, that lighthouses to assist the safe passage of ships be constructed in Bass Strait, including one at Cape Otway.

The Admiralty ordered an accurate survey of the strait, and in 1842 the New South Wales Legislative Council, under pressure from commercial interests in Sydney and Melbourne, instituted an inquiry into dealing with the problem. The consensus was to erect lighthouses at strategic points, but expert witnesses, including Captain Wickham of the *Beagle* who had sailed with Darwin, and masters of ships using the strait, gave conflicting evidence as to the best locations.<sup>6</sup> With the onset of the 1840s depression no government funding for such extensive capital works was available, and despite further wrecks and ongoing concern about the loss of the *Neva*, the project was allowed to lapse.

### ***Revival of the project***

It took public indignation over another catastrophe to revive the lighthouse project. On 4 August 1845 the emigrant ship *Cataraqui*, three months out from Liverpool entered Bass Strait. Foul weather over the preceding days had prevented the captain from establishing his astral bearings. Steering by dead reckoning, he estimated that he was north of his actual position, and in pitch darkness in the early hours of the morning, the ship was driven onto jagged

rocks on the western coast of King Island.<sup>7</sup> There were only nine survivors; 350 passengers and crew were drowned in what was the greatest maritime and civil disaster in Australia's history.<sup>8</sup>

The arrival of the *Cataraqui* with its much needed supply of emigrants had been eagerly anticipated at Melbourne, and La Trobe had alerted Dr John Patterson, the government emigration agent to prepare for their reception. Anxiety mounted when the ship failed to appear.<sup>9</sup>

Co-incidentally, on 9 September a few days before news of the wreck reached Melbourne, the Legislative Council in Sydney appointed a select committee to inquire into the building of lighthouses in Bass Strait. Joseph Phelps Robinson, one of Port Phillip's representatives on the Council from 1842 to 1848 proposed the motion.<sup>10</sup> Banking interests had led him to Melbourne in 1843, the year after he emigrated to Sydney. The construction of lighthouses was consistent with Robinson's interests in civic improvements such as roads, bridges, the Mechanics Institute, and the establishment of a savings bank, earning him the sobriquet 'Humanity Robinson'.<sup>11</sup> The 1845 terms of reference were the same as those of the 1842 inquiry. The seven high ranking committee members included the Colonial Secretary, the Collector of Customs and the Auditor-General with Robinson as chairman. It was an indication of the government's renewed concern over the strait's hazards, which had never completely abated. With the colony's



gradual emergence from economic depression, the desire to take practical steps to lessen the danger re-asserted itself.

Simultaneously, another Legislative Council committee was examining means to ease the shortage of labour by increasing emigration. Quite apart from humanitarian considerations in preventing shipwrecks, it was considered that no reliable supply of labour could be assured until a safe passage to Australia was established.<sup>12</sup>

News of the wreck of the *Cataraqui* reached Melbourne on 13 September 1845, provoking horror and indignation. Government neglect in building lighthouses was held to be the cause. The *Port Phillip Gazette* went so far as to include in the blame the New Zealand government, as well as those of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, since all ships bound for the Australasian colonies used the strait.<sup>13</sup> The New South Wales government was criticised for neglecting Port Phillip, as was La Trobe for failing to act, even though such a major undertaking was out of his hands. At a meeting to raise money for the survivors it was suggested that the most appropriate monument to the dead would be a lighthouse bearing an inscription: 'Erected by the Government of New South Wales to commemorate its neglect which caused the wreck of the ship *Cataraqui* upon this coast occasioning thereby measures to be taken to meet such a calamity when too late by George Gipps and C.J. La Trobe'.<sup>14</sup>

In the meantime La Trobe had to deal with immediate consequences of the wreck. Despite King Island being within Van Diemen's Land jurisdiction, La Trobe realised that decent interment of the dead, whose bodies were washing up on the island, should not have to wait for the news to reach Hobart. He did not formally notify the Governor of Van Diemen's Land until October.<sup>15</sup> Without waiting for authorisation from Gipps, La Trobe agreed to the offer from David Howie, a Bass Strait sealer, to carry out the burial of the bodies for £50, together with the necessary tools. He did so only after making certain through a personal interview that Howie, a sealer and an ex-convict, was the right man for such a sensitive task.<sup>16</sup> La Trobe also requested assistance from the Emigration Office to enable Thomas Guthery, the only officer to survive the wreck, to return home. The attitude of the relief committee formed to assist the surviving passengers seems somewhat harsh in comparison. Survivors were told that if they had not already been given new clothes from private charity, this was all they could expect from the committee, as strong demand for their labour in the colony meant they could

readily support themselves. La Trobe's Moravian principles prevented him attending a fund-raising concert for the benefit of the survivors, but he subscribed £5 to the committee.<sup>17</sup>

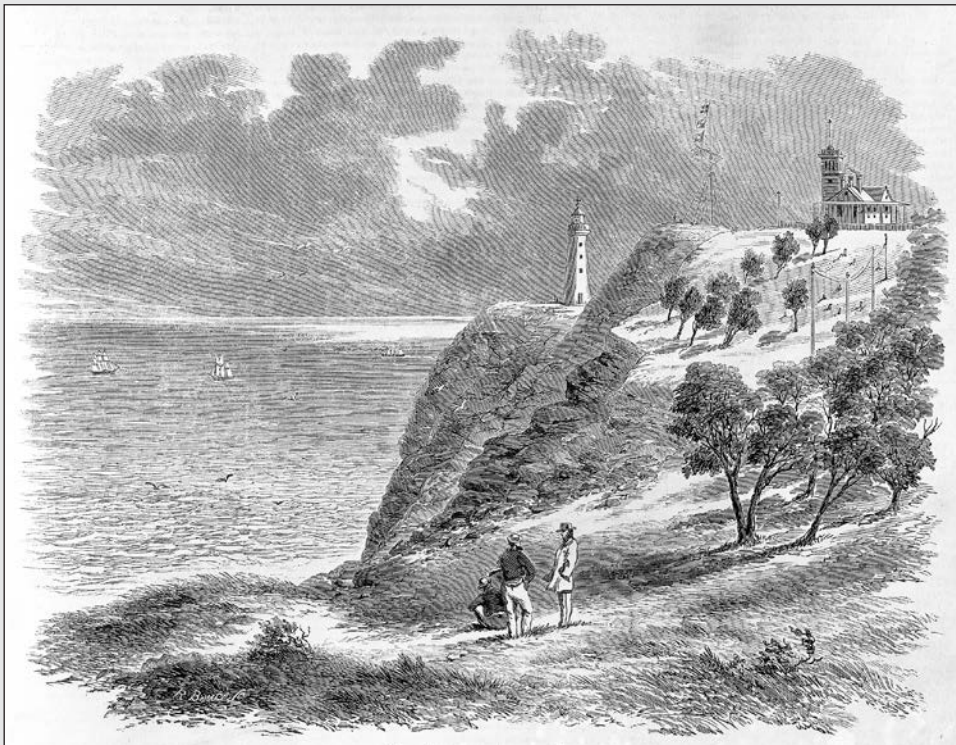
Governor Gipps correctly anticipated the furore in government circles when news of the wreck eventually reached England. Knowing this would take at least three months, he wanted to ward off criticism of himself and his government by being able to report at the earliest opportunity that work on the lighthouses was under way.

In England, Colonial Secretary William Gladstone, the future Prime Minister, bore the brunt of criticism from Parliament and the Admiralty. This was on the grounds that since the strait had been surveyed and charts prepared, there was no excuse for not having the lighthouses built. The Admiralty directed that until this was done the strait be closed to troop and convict transports. Gladstone further advised merchant captains against using the strait, disregarding the fact that the strait was the only access to Port Phillip and Launceston, as a glance at one of the Admiralty's charts would have made clear. It is perhaps an indication of the British Government's lack of knowledge and even real interest in the matter, other than avoiding parliamentary censure.

Meanwhile in Australia, Governor Gipps and Superintendent La Trobe strove to get work under way at the earliest opportunity to allay the expected barrage of criticism from London, not to mention public opinion in Port Phillip. La Trobe urged speedy action, drawing the committee's attention to prefabricated iron structures he had seen in Europe. However, he left the choice of lighthouse sites to the committee and the expert witnesses on whose evidence they relied. Ultimately four sites were chosen: at Cape Otway, on the north coast of King Island, on Deal Island in the Kent Group and on Gabo Island at the eastern end of the strait. The total cost was estimated to be £12,000, utilising free convict labour for those in Van Diemen's Land.

### *The Cape Otway light*

Constructing a lighthouse at Cape Otway presented huge logistical problems, since there was neither an adjacent landing place on the coast, nor an overland route through the densely forested Otway ranges. Without consulting Gipps, La Trobe decided to embark on a personal search for a route to the Cape. Already an experienced traveller throughout Port Phillip, he probably felt that this was too important an undertaking to be left to the judgment of



**Robert Bruce, 1839?-1918, engraver**  
**Cape Otway, 1865**

Wood engraving

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, IMP 25/11/65/173  
 Published in The Illustrated Melbourne Post, 25 November 1865

others, knowing full well that fully qualified surveyors were rare in the District. The fact that he paid the expenses personally is an indication of his sense of the urgency. There were critics who felt such a search was unworthy of Her Majesty's representative; it was facetiously suggested that he should volunteer for the Leichardt expedition.<sup>18</sup>

On 7 October 1845, only three weeks after news of the *Cataraqui* disaster reached Melbourne, La Trobe took the steamer *Aphraisia* to Geelong. The following day, escorted by two native policemen, he rode west, following the approximate line of today's Princes Highway, through Richard Talbot's station at Waurin Ponds, Charles Beal's hotel and station on the Barwon River near Winchelsea, the Dennis brothers' station *Tarndwarncoort* and finally Hugh Murray's *Barangaroo* station near Colac.

On 9 October, they were joined by Sergeant Poynton of the Border Police, and proceeded over bad roads through the Stony Rises to the Manifold brothers' station at Purumbete. After a late breakfast at Murray's Inn, built by Arthur Lloyd on his station *Mederinook* to the north of the future site of Camperdown, they made a short detour to

Dr Adeney's station, *Chocolyn*, where La Trobe, the ever observant naturalist, recorded the finding of fossil bones. After going south to Lake Bullen Merri, they headed north-west to Niel Black's station, *Glenormiston*, and despite losing their bearings for a time in dense bush, eventually arrived at *Keilambete*, the station of John and James Thomson near Terang.<sup>19</sup> La Trobe's notebook entry that he felt 'chilled and unwell' is hardly surprising considering the distance covered since leaving Colac that morning.<sup>20</sup>

On the following day, 10 October, they crossed Mount Emu Creek and reached Mark Nicholson's station *Falls of Hopkins* not far inland from Warrnambool. They stayed the night there, taking the opportunity to visit the Allan brothers at their station *Allansford* at the mouth of the Hopkins River and explore nearby caves.<sup>21</sup> In the morning, La Trobe's malaise and their experience of bush entanglements caused them to abandon the journey and return to Murray's Inn. But that did not prevent more sightseeing. With Black and his cousin Walter Buchanan, La Trobe climbed Mount Noorat, the volcanic crater overlooking *Glenormiston*, then rode around Lake Gnotuk, the twin to Lake Bullen Merri. The volcanic landscape evidently interested him.



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer**  
**The Settlers' Arms Inn, Shelford, 1976**  
 La Trobe stayed here on journeys to the Western District and Cape Otway  
 Delicensed 1897 and demolished 1977 to make way for a new concrete  
 bridge across the Leigh River.

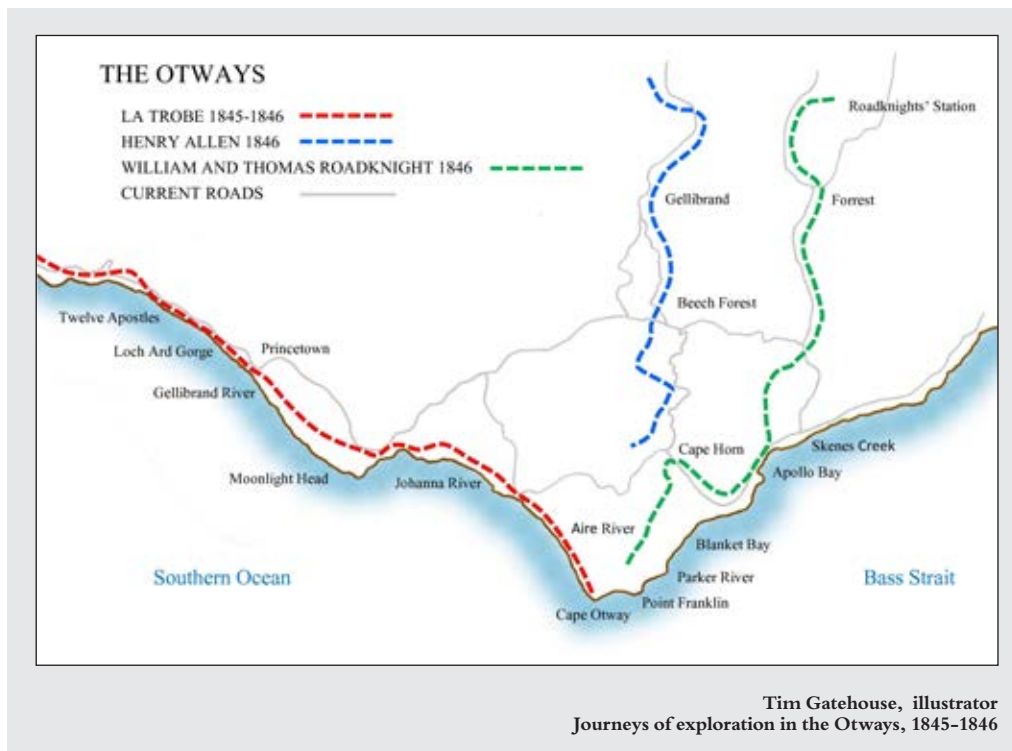
On the 12th they rode north to The Frenchman's, the hotel at the ford over the Woody Yallock Creek, named after its owner Jean Duverney, a native of Crecy in France, from which the later small township of Cressy derived its anglicised name. Duverney had originally tried pastoralism as a neighbour of Niel Black, but with only his wife to assist him, had turned instead to hotel keeping.<sup>22</sup>

Returning from The Frenchman's to Geelong on a route which approximates today's Hamilton Highway, they reached The Leigh, as Shelford was then known, staying at the Settlers' Arms Inn for the night of 12 October. Built in 1843 and usually referred to as Ormond's, it acquired the reputation of being one of the best hotels in the Western District. It had been established by a Scottish sea captain, Frank Ormond, at the instigation of George Russell, who had tired of providing accommodation for travellers at his nearby homestead, *Golf Hill*. Ormond's son, Francis went from this modest start to become a successful sheep breeder, owner of *Borriyallock* station near Skipton, and one of Victoria's most generous philanthropists.<sup>23</sup> From Ormond's La Trobe rode back to Geelong and returned to Melbourne on the *Aphraisa* on 13 October.<sup>24</sup>

Hardly had he returned than he received advice from Sir George Gipps that £9,000 had been allocated for lighthouses at Cape Otway, Cape Howe and Gabo Island.<sup>25</sup> Since no site had been selected at Cape Otway, nor a route to get there, La Trobe felt pressured to make a further attempt.

On 2 December 1845 he left Geelong, accompanied by Captain Henry Dana of the Native Police and two troopers. This time he intended to attempt to reach the Cape from the east, but was dissuaded by one of the native troopers who was familiar with the area. Something of his character is revealed in his philosophical comment on this 'attempt to reach Cape Otway by East coast... tho' clung to till this very evening... finally abandoned on good grounds'.<sup>26</sup> In what must have been a very hard ride on the following day they reached the Allan brothers' station near Warrnambool, again along the approximate line of the Princes Highway.

After a day spent exploring caves and engaging one of the coastal Aboriginal people as a guide, the expedition, reduced to La Trobe, Dana and the guide, set off from Allans' station on 5 December. La Trobe was again unwell, having caught a chill while bathing and suffering



a fever.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless they proceeded eastwards, past Childers Cove, the site of the 1839 wreck of the Hentys' vessel the *Children*, and the site of Peterborough. La Trobe commented on the heavily indented coast and the unusual natural features known today as the twelve apostles. Passing Port Campbell, they camped that night at the Gellibrand River, after waiting for the tide to fall and negotiating quicksands at its mouth.<sup>28</sup>

La Trobe noted that their camp was near the grave of the explorer Gellibrand. Until very recently the fate of the explorers Joseph Gellibrand and George Hesse has been a mystery. Gellibrand had been Attorney-General of Van Diemen's Land and a founder of the Port Phillip Association, and Hesse a Hobart solicitor. They disappeared, fate unknown, in 1837 while exploring the country near Birregurra. However recent research has shown that after becoming lost in the Otways, Hesse died of exposure some distance inland from the coast, while Gellibrand was rescued by a group of coastal Aboriginal people. They cared for him in their camp until they were attacked by a rival group, and Gellibrand was killed in the fight. He was buried near the mouth of the river which bears his name, his bones being later exhumed and returned to his family in Hobart. La Trobe's mention of the grave reinforces the modern research.<sup>29</sup>

After an uncomfortable night with La Trobe ill and the guide nervous at being in alien territory, they set off next morning through the scrub behind Moonlight Head. However

they soon realised that they had miscalculated distance and difficulties, and after glimpsing what appeared from its prominence to be Cape Otway retraced their steps to Warrnambool and thence to Geelong, which they reached on 9 December.<sup>30</sup>

Back in Melbourne the pressure on La Trobe did not ease, with the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, Edward Deas Thomson, requesting details of the lighthouse site, in particular its elevation above the sea, so that plans could be prepared by Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis.<sup>31</sup> On 27 March 1846 La Trobe set out on his third attempt to reach the Cape. Having followed the previous routes to Allan's station, he set off eastward on 30 March, accompanied by the squatter Henry Allan, Corporal Williams and Trooper Bird of the Native Police, and Sergeant McGregor of the Border Police. At the Gellibrand River they were held up by floods; leaving their horses on the western bank, they had to scramble in and out of the water under the precipitous cliffs to the sand spit to once again camp near Gellibrand's grave.

The following day they scrambled through the scrub to reach the mouth of the Joanna River, and then found the trail of the Cape Otway Indigenous people deemed responsible for the recent murder of a shepherd. Finally, reaching the highest sand hill in the area known as the 'cups and saucers', they realised they had reached the Cape, with the coast receding away to east and west. They stayed only an hour



Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Mouth of the Gellibrand River, 2017

before retracing their steps. By 7 April La Trobe was back at Shortland's Bluff with 'my anxious wife and family', as he noted.<sup>32</sup>

Managing to keep just ahead of official demands from Sydney, La Trobe was able to report to the Colonial Secretary on 14 April that the elevation of the cliff was between 150 to 200 feet above sea level and that building stone, lime and fresh water were available.<sup>33</sup> However, a more direct route to the Cape through the Otway Ranges still had to be found, and a landing place on the coast for supplies.

La Trobe engaged Henry Allan to find a practicable overland track to the lighthouse site. He succeeded after two attempts, passing the future sites of the townships of Gellibrand, Beech Forest and Cape Horn, but this track was accessible only in the drier months.<sup>34</sup> Shortly afterwards a track cut by squatters William and Thomas Roadknight of *Gerangamete* station south of Colac provided a much better route. Having heard of the rich grazing land discovered along the Aire Valley during previous searches for a route to the Cape, the Roadknights decided to establish their *Glen Aire* station near Cape Otway with a track connecting it with *Gerangamete* via Apollo Bay.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The landing place and its tragic consequences***

Finding a landing place was more difficult, since it had already been ascertained that there were no landing places to the west. The coast east of the Cape was unexplored, so La Trobe engaged

surveyor George Douglas Smythe to conduct a survey as far east as Louttit Bay, later the site of Lorne. The choice of Smythe was an interesting one, especially in the light of subsequent events. Smythe was a relative by marriage of Captain William Lonsdale, and had been a government contract surveyor at Port Phillip in the early 1840s, but had had no work for three years. Smythe offered his services to La Trobe, who accepted him after obtaining the opinion of Robert Hoddle, who reported that Smythe was, 'competent to perform laborious duties'. This may not have been an understatement, considering that Smythe was reputed to have been almost seven feet (2.1 metres) tall.

Smythe's period of unemployment may have been due to government retrenchment in the depression, or a consequence of his personal conduct. One of the Assistant Protectors of Aborigines, Edward Parker, reported in 1843 that Smythe was living on a station in the Pentland Hills (near present-day Ballan) with a group of Aboriginal women and girls in circumstances which 'outraged public decency'. It is unlikely that La Trobe was unaware of this report, considering his close monitoring of the protectorate system. Perhaps the urgency of the lighthouse project overrode what would have been his low opinion of Smythe's character. William Lonsdale, Smythe's relative, may also have had some influence on his decision.<sup>36</sup>

The coast was so rugged that Smythe could only survey it from the sea, using a whale boat. This may have been responsible for the inaccuracy of some of his observations, including



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer**  
**Moonlight Head, 2017**

that Point Franklin, not Cape Otway, was the most southerly point, and that the Cape was in fact 400 feet high, not 200. Both findings would have affected choice of location and design of the lighthouse. On Smythe's calculations being checked however, it was found that La Trobe was correct.<sup>37</sup> The survey achieved its other aim of locating a landing place at the Parker River Inlet seven miles (eleven kilometres) to the west of the Cape, but also had tragic consequences, which led to the destruction of the remaining Indigenous inhabitants of Cape Otway. There have been many accounts of these events which vary considerably in their details, but there is agreement on certain basic points.

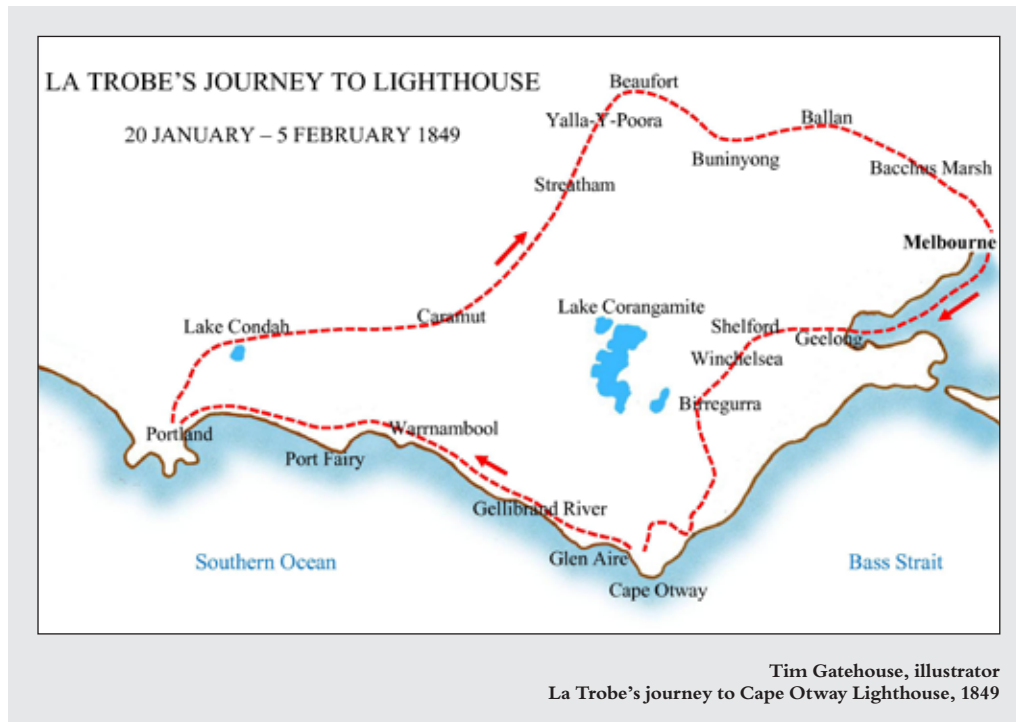
Westerly gales had forced Smythe's survey party to seek shelter at Blanket Bay to the west of the Cape where a base camp was established. From here it was an overland journey to survey the Aire Valley to the east of the Cape. Soon after Smythe's arrival a small group of Aboriginal people had approached the base camp, but the encounter was amicable. On 25 July Smythe left some men to care for the camp, and set off with the others to the Aire River. On the way they met the same Aboriginal group, and engaged two as guides. Once they had reached the Aire, Smythe gave the guides a note, directing his men at the camp to give the people flour in payment for their services.

On 31 July Smythe returned to Blanket Bay to find that one of his men, James Conroy, had been killed by the Indigenous people. Accounts of ensuing events differ, but it would

appear that Smythe then returned to Geelong, and possibly to Melbourne, to organise a force ostensibly to apprehend the perpetrators, but which was in reality a punitive expedition.

According to some accounts, Smythe obtained the consent of Police Magistrate Foster Fyans at Geelong, while other versions suggest it was La Trobe in Melbourne. Some official sanction may have been given out of concern for the safety of the Roadknights' men who were then engaged in cutting their track to the Cape. As well as Conroy's death, there were recent reports of shepherds murdered in the same area. Whatever sanction may have been given, by the end of August Smythe had recruited a number of Aboriginal people from the Barrabool region near Geelong, who were hostile to those at the Cape. The latter were traced to their camp at the mouth of the Aire River, where all but one or two were killed indiscriminately.

In 1960 an archeological excavation of a rock shelter two kilometres from the mouth of the Aire River revealed the dis-articulated skeleton of a young man. The scattered bones indicated that he had not been buried, but had died there, and his body mauled by dingoes. It was surmised that having escaped from the massacre, he had died later of his wounds in the shelter. In 1848 a woman who survived the massacre was interviewed by Richard Osburn, the author of an early history of Warrnambool. She stated that Conroy had been killed in revenge by the husband of a woman he had molested.<sup>38</sup>



### ***Constructing the lighthouse***

With the elevation of Cape Otway ascertained, plans of the tower were completed and forwarded to La Trobe so that tenders could be called for construction. A notable omission from the plans was any form of accommodation for the keepers. This was remedied by La Trobe, who included provision for keepers' quarters in the tender notice. He would have known how it felt to arrive at a new post with nowhere to live, more so at Cape Otway than at Melbourne.<sup>39</sup> La Trobe's earlier suggestion of a prefabricated iron lighthouse was found to be impracticable, since it would have taken eighteen months to import and assemble it.

The tenders also had to be considered by the government in Sydney, a process expedited during La Trobe's visit to meet with Gipps's successor as Governor, Sir Charles FitzRoy. Because none of the tenderers had visited the site all quotes had to include the proviso that the stone said to exist in the locality was suitable for building.

After much prevarication the quote of a Geelong builder, Alexander McGillivray for £1,995, the lowest received, was accepted. The stone at Parker River proved to be suitable, but the site selected for the lighthouse was found to be sand, so had to be moved back from the cliff. The reasons for McGillivray's low quote soon became apparent when the foundations were condemned on inspection by Henry Ginn, Superintendent of the Public

Works Department, while McGillivray's men threatened legal action over the poor food and accommodation provided.

La Trobe dismissed McGillivray, and appointed Ginn's assistant Joseph Burns as overseer.<sup>40</sup> From then onward, living conditions for the men improved considerably, and their wages, slightly higher than the standard, were regularly paid to their families. Apart from the drowning of one man while landing supplies, work proceeded rapidly. La Trobe was so appreciative of Burns's work that he persuaded Governor FitzRoy to pay him a gratuity of £100, once the lighthouse was completed.

While the lighthouse was under construction proposals were made to shorten it as a cost-saving measure, on the grounds that the cliff's elevation made construction of the tower to the full height unnecessary. La Trobe sought the opinion of Captain Owen Stanley of *HMS Rattlesnake*, who was surveying the strait in order to report to the Admiralty on progress being made with the lighthouses. Stanley reported that although the cliff was 250 feet high, the land behind it was even higher. The tower should therefore be built to the full height as planned, so that it was conspicuous against the background in daylight hours. He also noted how awkward a shorter tower would appear, emphasising the point with comparative drawings. Conditioned as we are to ugly utilitarianism, it is interesting to note that elegance was then regarded as significant, even in such a remote location.<sup>41</sup>

The lighthouse lantern arrived in Melbourne on 1 January 1848. It was made by Wilkins Brothers of London, also makers of the lamp for the Eddystone lighthouse in the English Channel. The lantern parts had to be re-packed into small casks for the difficult landing at Parker River.<sup>42</sup> Work on the tower was completed on 26 June 1848, the lamp was tested on 1 July, and the lighthouse commenced operations on 29 August 1848.<sup>43</sup>

### *The lighthouse 'fully in operation'*

The first keeper was retired Royal Navy Lieutenant James Ross Lawrence. He had applied for the post while construction was still under way and had been accepted on the strength of his service during the Napoleonic wars and as chief coast guard officer in Cornwall afterwards. Two assistant keepers, William Weavers and Phillip Monaghan, were also appointed. La Trobe had insisted that Lawrence accompany the mechanics to the lighthouse when the lantern was installed so that he would be familiar with its operation, but after a few weeks he reported that the revolving mechanism on the lantern had broken. An investigation by the Public Works Department revealed that Lawrence had tampered with the mechanism, and this, together with the generally slovenly state of the living quarters, led to his summary dismissal by La Trobe.<sup>44</sup>

La Trobe's concern with the lighthouse did not cease when it commenced operations. Perhaps due to the behaviour of the first keeper, he wanted to be sure that he had made the right choice in Henry Ford as successor, so on 20 January 1849, La Trobe set out on his fourth journey to Cape Otway.

Leaving his wife Sophie and the children at St Kilda in the care of their old friend Mrs Stevens,<sup>45</sup> he travelled to Geelong on the steamer *Vesta*, accompanied by Captain Dana.<sup>46</sup> They spent the first night at Beal's Hotel at Winchelsea, and next day reached the abandoned Buntingdale Mission at Birregurra, where they were joined by George O'Brien,<sup>47</sup> and two Native Police troopers. These were directed to proceed via Colac to the Gellibrand River to await La Trobe and Dana, who then headed south along the recently cut Roadknight track. As La Trobe wrote later to his Launceston friend Ronald Campbell Gunn, they went in 'on foot of course, sending the horses round'.<sup>48</sup> They reached the coast at Wild Dog Creek, turned inland, and arrived at the Cape on the evening of 23 January, noting on the way the location where 'Smythe's man' had been killed. Having camped that night and inspected the lighthouse, La Trobe's relief at finding it operating satisfactorily can be

discerned in his brief notation that he had found 'Ford & all right'.<sup>49</sup>

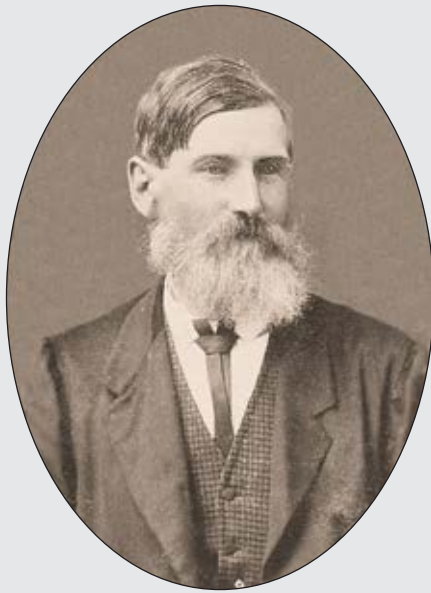
However, relief was short lived, as the next few days turned into one of the most arduous of his Port Phillip journeys. On 24 January they left the lighthouse, a horse having been procured for Captain Dana who had injured his knee. Unfortunately they missed the track and remained lost for the next four days, during which they ran out of food and water, and were caught in a bushfire from which they escaped only by scrambling down the cliffs at Moonlight Head.<sup>50</sup> They were eventually found by the troopers sent to the Gellibrand River, and after a short rest the party proceeded westward.

La Trobe reached Warrnambool on the 29th anxious to send a reassuring note to his wife. Moreover he had to receive a deputation of local citizens still wearing clothes he had not taken off for eight days. Hands-on exploring could not take priority over official duties. From there he rode towards Portland, his journey traced by the names of settlers' holdings along the way: Thomas Manifold's *Grassmere*, William Rutledge's Special Survey near Port Fairy, and John Ritchie's *Urang Aranga* on the coast where he spent the night. The following day, after changing horses at Andrew Baxter's *Yambuk* station,<sup>51</sup> he reached Portland, where he spent the next two days enjoying the luxury of rest, bathing and eating. The hard travelling had chafed his legs so badly that he had to cut his boots down.

La Trobe left Portland on 1 February, escorted as far as the Fitzroy River at Heywood by Portland magistrate James Blair and one of the Henty brothers. That night was spent at William Learmonth's *Ettrick* station. Next morning a day's hard riding took him past Lake Condah, through James Dawson's *Kangatong* Station, and finally, by moonlight to Edward Bell's *Greenhills* station near Caramut. On 3 February, accompanied by Edward Bell, he rode to Adolphus Goldsmith's *Trawalla* station at Beaufort, passing Farrell's Inn, the nucleus of the town of Wickliffe, John and Alexander Dennistoun's station *Hopkin's Hill* at Chatsworth and Alfred Taddy Thomson's *Yalla-Y-Poora* station near Streatham. Thomson accompanied La Trobe and Bell to *Trawalla*, where they spent the day enjoying the company and hospitality of the cosmopolitan Adolphus Goldsmith. On 5 February, La Trobe left *Trawalla* on his own for the long ride back to Melbourne through Buninyong, Ballan, Bacchus Marsh and Keilor.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from matter of fact mentions of what must have been some extremely unpleasant and dangerous incidents, La Trobe took these





William Davies & Co. (Melbourne), photographer  
Henry Bayles Ford, c.1878  
Albumen silver carte-de-visite  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H82, 117/2



Stewart & Co. (Melbourne), photographer  
Mary Ann Ford, c.1878  
Albumen silver carte-de-visite  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H82.117/1

journeys literally in his stride. As strenuous and at times dangerous as these expeditions were, La Trobe revelled in the physical exertion as a welcome relief from his increasingly trying official duties.<sup>53</sup> His own summary sent to his friend Gunn of this 'very amusing excursion to Cape Otway, where our first class light is now fully in operation' reveals his spirit and strength of character: 'However, all this was what I wanted—the roughing and exercise, and half starvation and freedom from official turmoil did me a great deal of good.'<sup>54</sup>

### ***Lighthouse keepers: Henry and Mary Ann Ford***

Lawrence's replacement as lighthouse keeper was Henry Bayles Ford. He was born in London in 1819 and emigrated to Victoria in 1841 on the ship *China*, which was sold on arrival at Port Phillip.<sup>55</sup> Ford became its part-owner and captain, operating in the coastal shipping trade until 1845, when he joined the Customs service. In 1842 he married Mary Ann Fitzgerald, born in 1822 at Wexford, Ireland, where her father was governor of the gaol.<sup>56</sup> Mary Ann had emigrated to Victoria in 1840 and was employed in the La Trobe household. It must have been through that relationship that La Trobe selected Henry Ford as keeper of the lighthouse. Years after she had left them, Mary Ann was still remembered affectionately in the La Trobes' correspondence,<sup>57</sup> and the regard was evidently mutual. Some of the Fords' twelve children, seven of whom were born at the lighthouse,

were named after the La Trobes: Joseph, Agnes, Sophia; while the youngest bore the given name La Trobe.<sup>58</sup>

The Fords remained at the lighthouse for nearly thirty years. During that period the salary increase promised by La Trobe when he visited the Cape in 1849 was not honoured by successive governments, but the living conditions gradually improved. Cottages for the two assistant keepers were built in 1849, a new house for the Fords in 1857, and the house and office of the telegraph station in 1859. Stores were landed at Parker River to the east of the lighthouse, with fresh meat and dairy supplies provided by cattle which grazed on the enormous lighthouse reserve stretching from the Aire River in the west to the Parker River in the east. There were occasional complaints about Ford's sometimes prickly demeanor, and after the telegraph station was established in 1859, relations between its staff and those at the lighthouse were at times less than congenial. These disputes were usually over trivial matters, the real cause being the residents' isolation.<sup>59</sup> The Fords were described by Mrs Thomas Roadknight of *Gerangamete* station after she visited the lighthouse in 1863 as 'kind and hospitable, he with bumptious and dogmatic manner of a sea captain, very conscious of being the head of the Cape community, she a truly kind and sensible woman'.<sup>60</sup>

Ford had to keep the meteorological records of the Cape, and as shipwrecks still occurred, the lighthouse staff assisted in the

rescue of survivors providing food and shelter until they could be transferred to Melbourne. In 1869 the Ford children were terrified while playing on the beach by the sudden appearance of the survivors of the *Marie Gabrielle*, which had been wrecked near Moonlight Head.<sup>61</sup> Reliable assistant keepers in such an isolated post were always difficult to find, especially after the discovery of gold. On many occasions Mary Ann had to take on the assistant role, as well as caring for her family of twelve children. Despite these hardships, the light never once failed during their custodianship.

In 1878 the Fords retired to the Melbourne suburb of Northcote, where Henry died in 1893 and Mary Ann in 1915.<sup>62</sup> In 1985 as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of Victoria, a memorial plaque was placed on their grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery. La Trobe showed sound judgement when he appointed the Fords to care for the Cape Otway lighthouse, which since 1848 was for thousands of migrants the first sight of their new home.

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# Captain ‘Old King’ Cole: Port Phillip pioneer to Victorian patriarch

By John Botham

**John Botham is a committee member and webmaster of the La Trobe Society. He spent a career in the RAF and with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority before developing an interest in the history of early Victoria. He assisted with the production of La Trobe’s Jolimont, A Walk Round My Garden (2006) and worked tirelessly thereafter to develop an understanding amongst government and the public of the heritage importance of the La Trobe’s Cottage. He is currently the Chair of the Friends of La Trobe’s Cottage.**

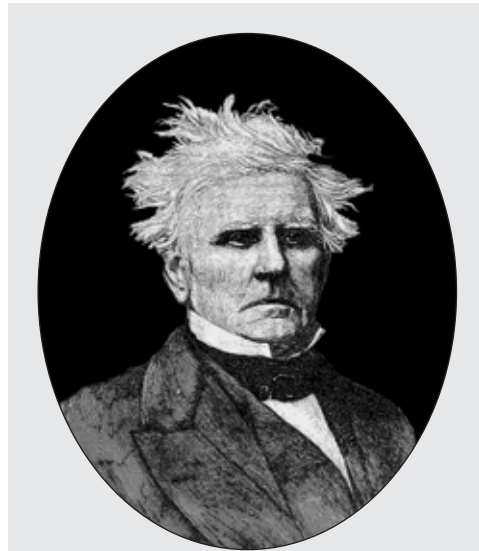
*This is a revised version of a paper given in the Members Talk to Members program, 13 August 2017.*

I first became aware of Captain George Ward Cole when I came across an S. T. Gill picture of Queens Wharf in the State Library Victoria collection. It shows immigrants disembarking from the paddle steamer *Gipsy* in the mid-1850s with a mysterious-looking Cole’s Wharf in the background. But my curiosity was aroused when I read a most remarkable letter written by the then former Lieutenant-Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe, to Captain Cole following the death of Captain Ferguson in 1868.<sup>1</sup> Captain Ferguson was the harbourmaster of the Port of Melbourne, and previously the captain of the barque *Rajah*.<sup>2</sup>

What was the story behind Cole’s Wharf and who was this Captain Cole to whom La Trobe wrote, entrusting him with ensuring that Captain Ferguson’s widow was looked after? It turned out that Captain Cole was a war hero, an entrepreneur, a respected politician, and was a big influence on Port Phillip life, from 1840 for forty years.

## *The story of Cole’s Wharf*

When Captain Cole came to Melbourne in 1840, he, like nearly all people arriving in those days, arrived by sea. There is deep water near the shore where Station Pier is today and so



Unknown artist  
**The Hon. George Ward Cole**  
Wood engraving  
Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present  
(Melbourne, McCarron & Bird, 1888, Vol.2, p.469)

the larger ships anchored there, and cargo and passengers had to come ashore in small boats. They had two choices: to follow the 8½ mile narrow winding Yarra to Melbourne where they had to scramble ashore on a muddy bank, or to



S T Gill, 1818-1880, artist  
**Queens Wharf, Melbourne, west end, in the 'fifties'**  
 Postcard (c.1905) derived from artist's 1854 sketchbook  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H8819

take a shorter journey to the beach in Sandridge (Port Melbourne), where refreshments and rest could be obtained at Liardet's Pier Hotel before taking a carriage to the Yarra punt to Melbourne. Both journeys were expensive.

There were many proposals to improve access to the town centre. Even before La Trobe arrived in 1839, Hoddle proposed a railway from the beach to the town, and in 1854 the first railway in Australia started operating on this route. Others proposed canals to improve ship access to the city: cutting across direct from the deep-water anchorage, or cutting off the long bend of the river. Captain Cole proposed this idea. It was not, however, until 1886 that the Coode Canal opened, following much the course of this proposal.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1840s, Captain Cole saw that a wharf was badly needed to service the developing city. Private enterprise had worked well in Sydney to develop the port infrastructure when government funds were lacking. Legislation allowed private wharves to charge a landing fee to pay for the building and maintenance of the wharf. In 1841, Captain Cole applied to La Trobe to build the first private wharf on the Yarra. He bought just over an acre of land, on the north bank between Spencer and King Streets, for £1,000 per acre at auction. This was quite a contrast from the £20 an acre La Trobe had paid the year before for the land which became his Jolimont estate.

But Cole's site did have river frontage, which he described as 'a tea-tree swamp, at high tides covered with water'.<sup>4</sup>

Cole spent around £60,000 in constructing the wharf. He said: 'I was... encouraged to make a dock... and also formed a wharf... with a good platform, on which goods could be landed in safety; and I also built a wall nine feet high all round, as required by the Government'.<sup>5</sup> Thus, by 1842 he was running a successful operation landing goods from his own ships and those of other shipowners. Although other private wharves were being built, the government's Queens Wharf remained primitive with vessels tied up to stumps and stakes along the bank, and where raised walkways and planks were used to access the settlement through the swamp.<sup>6</sup> Cole also built a bond store north of Flinders Street between King and William Streets for storage of imported goods.

When building the wharf, Captain Cole had not counted on the government moving the goalposts. In 1843, the authorities ordered wharf owners to give a third of their wharfage fees to the government. Then came separation from New South Wales, and Victoria's new colonial government required Cole to buy a twelve-month licence to continue to charge wharfage fees. Nine months into the licence period, however, the government abolished wharfage fees altogether. This was in the middle of the



Sir Oswald Walters Brierly, 1817-1894, artist  
**Man overboard: rescue launch from HMS St Jean d'Acre**  
 Oil on canvas (after 1854)

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, BAC 3619

During his naval career George Cole rescued men overboard on three occasions.

gold rush when Cole could have expected the wharf to do well. Cole appealed to La Trobe for compensation for the loss of earnings from the remaining three months of his licence, and was awarded £3,469.

The final indignity came in 1854 when the government imposed a wharf rate on all goods landed, in order to fund their own wharf building. Private owners were not permitted to keep any of the fee to fund their own wharves, and so Cole had to suffer the injustice of having to pay wharfage fees on his own goods landed on his own wharf to fund the government works. Cole conducted a long campaign for compensation, or for the government to buy the wharf, but it was not until 1868 that the government bought his wharf for £19,000, a fraction of the initial construction costs and the lost income due to governments changing the rules.

### ***Before Melbourne***

But what of Cole before he arrived in Port Phillip? John and Eliza Cole gave birth to their fourth son, George Ward, in November 1793, at Lumley Castle, Durham, where John worked. At the age of fourteen, he joined the Navy.<sup>7</sup> As a midshipman, he took part in the action to retake Santo Domingo from the French. Cole served in ships in the Downs<sup>8</sup> and the Baltic before joining *HMS Tonnant*, the flag ship of Sir Alexander Cochrane and on its way to Bermuda for the 1814 campaign against the United States.

Cochrane planned to attack Washington, and Cole was attached to a launch which helped convey soldiers and marine artillery up the Patuxent River. Although Cole was wounded in the leg, he marched with the guns overnight to join the army at the Battle of Bladenburgh. The British won the battle and continued overnight to Washington where they destroyed the city, setting fire to the White House – in part a pay-back for the American destruction of Port Dover in Canada.

The British retreated and headed north to Baltimore where they attempted to take Fort McHenry. Cole was employed in a bomb vessel that kept up continual fire on the fort. During the action, Cole got too near a thirteen-inch mortar and lost the use of his left ear. However, the defences held and the British were pushed back.

The *Tonnant* sailed to New Orleans, where a British force planned to take the city. Cole was second in command of a launch, with an eighteen pounder on the bow and thirty-two men. As part of a squadron of boats, they pursued five American gun boats, and after rowing for thirty-six hours they captured them. Cole took part in the boarding and was slightly wounded in the shoulder. Cochrane promoted him to Acting-Lieutenant, placing him in command of one of the captured gunboats. However, poor tactics by the superior British force led to their evacuation. Two of the soldiers fell into the sea and Cole leapt overboard and succeeding in saving one of them.



David Michael Hartigan Little, 1884-1963, artist  
 Paddle steamer, 'Aphrasia', 1953  
 Watercolour on board  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H26913

Upon return to England, Cole's promotion to Lieutenant was confirmed and he joined *HMS Primrose*, eighteen guns, and sailed back to Jamaica. On the voyage, he again saved a life by jumping into the sea after a sailor. He was made First Lieutenant and having moved to *HMS Pique*, thirty-two guns, he jumped into the sea for the third time to save a life.

Peace having broken out, ships were decommissioned and men paid off. Cole was placed on half-pay in October 1817 and promoted to Commander in December.<sup>9</sup> Cole had had an outstanding naval career; in just ten years and aged only twenty-four, he had proved himself resourceful in action and was well on the way to Post Captain and then Admiral. But peace had intervened and he did not sail with the navy again.

Like many naval officers at this time, Cole then entered the mercantile marine service. At times he commanded vessels, some of which he owned. He engaged in many types of enterprise, such as fur trading on the north-west coast of America, pearl fishing in the Society Islands, the sandalwood trade in the New Hebrides, and whaling. At times he was based in Sydney, where he also purchased land.

Cole managed to find time during his travels to marry Eliza Cauty in 1824. She had been married twice before and brought two sons and a daughter to the marriage. They had a son, Ward Luke, in 1825. Unfortunately, Eliza died in Singapore two years later.

## Melbourne

After many years of travel and adventure, Captain Cole was probably looking to put down roots. He would have heard that there were opportunities in Melbourne, as it was in the very early stages of settlement. He decided to move there, arriving on 4 July 1840 in his schooner *Waterlilly*, with his son and two step-sons. At forty-seven, he was much older than the others in Melbourne at the time. La Trobe was thirty-nine, Lonsdale forty and Fawcner thirty-seven. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was known as 'Old King Cole', especially in his later years when he kept his grey hair long and unruly.

Captain Cole was in the forefront of a revolution in sea transportation. Although he had grown up with sailing ships, he could see that steam propulsion was the way of the future. As an illustration of the contrast between sail and steam, when William Broughton, the Bishop of Australia, left Melbourne in 1843 to return to Sydney, he booked a passage on the barque *Midlothian*. He spent three days on the ship while it attempted to sail through the Heads. On the third day, the paddle steamer *Shamrock* came into view heading for Sydney via Launceston. Bishop Broughton transferred to the *Shamrock* and by nightfall he was two-thirds of the way to Launceston.<sup>10</sup>

Cole could see that Melbourne needed steamships to move passengers and cargo from Hobsons Bay to the developing town, and across the bay to Geelong. He became a director of the Port Phillip Steam Navigation Company which



**John Irvin, 1805-1888, artist**  
**Mrs G W Cole, 1857**  
**Formally Thomas Anne McCrae**  
 Oil on canvas  
 Bayside City Council Art and Heritage Collection



**John Irvin, 1805-1888, artist**  
**Mr G W Cole, 1857**  
 Oil on canvas  
 Bayside City Council Art and Heritage Collection

operated the paddle steamer *Aphasia* twice a week to Geelong (it was this ship that La Trobe used to visit his house in Shortland's Bluff), also the *Sea Horse* twice a month to Sydney, the *Corsair*, twice a week to Launceston, and the *Governor Arthur* twice daily to Williamstown.<sup>11</sup> In 1851 he built the *City of Melbourne*, the first screw (propeller) steamer built south of the equator, which commenced the first regular steam ferry service across Bass Strait. And, of course, he built Cole's Wharf.

Sailing ships had traditionally arrived at a port and then advertised for cargo and passengers, departing whenever a load was available and the weather favourable. But steamships could run to a schedule, enabling people to book cargo and passage ahead of the ship's arrival. The first ships to be fitted with steam engines used paddlewheels. Their manoeuvrability made them very useful in rivers and harbours, but in open water the rolling of the ship could expose the paddles, and the loading of the ship varied the depth of the paddles in the water, reducing efficiency. A screw, or propeller, always stayed underwater and was not affected by the ship's roll, so they were quickly developed and took over from paddles. Early steam engines were not powerful or reliable enough to be the only means of propulsion; so they were initially used as an auxiliary power source, the sails taking over in open water when the wind was favourable.

### *George and Thomas Anne Cole*

A key part of 'putting down roots' is finding a wife. However, suitable marriage material was in short supply in Melbourne at the time, but he did identify a possible candidate in Thomasina Anne McCrae, quaintly known as Thomas Anne,<sup>12</sup> sister-in-law to Georgiana McCrae. Unmarried at thirty-one, she was unlikely to have many more suitors. He proposed to her in October 1841, causing some consternation in the McCrae family. At seventeen years older and partly deaf, he did not seem a very inspiring suitor. However, Cole was well-to-do and would be able to offer her a handsome establishment and independence from her brother Farquhar. She sought Georgiana's advice, but Georgiana kept her opinion from her diary. Farquhar's views, though, were plain and after a 'deadly quarrel' Thomas Anne left his household and moved to her sister Margaret's house.

Cole went all out to increase his appeal. He bought beach front land in the new township of Brighton. Perhaps as a thank-you for her acceptance of his offer, he gave a picnic party on his Brighton beach property, for 150 guests, including Superintendent and Mrs La Trobe.<sup>13</sup> He quickly built a house, *St Ninian's*, and the Coles spent their honeymoon there after their marriage in March 1842.





Edward La Trobe Bateman, 1816–1897, artist  
 Captain Cole's house, William Street, Melbourne, c.1854  
 Pencil and wash with Chinese white  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H81.193

## Houses

Cole had bought his land in Brighton from Henry Dendy. Dendy had taken up the offer to purchase land under the Colonial Office's 'Special Survey' scheme, devised to promote the development of townships in the colonies. Applicants had to purchase eight square miles for £1 an acre, that is £5,120. Once in the colony they could select their land. The only restriction was that it must be in one block, and be not more than twice as long as broad.

When Dendy arrived in Melbourne in 1841 he caused consternation.<sup>14</sup> The order authorised the holder to monopolise the whole suburban area of Melbourne if he liked. La Trobe refused to honour the Special Survey before he had received advice. After three months of negotiation with La Trobe and Governor Gipps, it was agreed that Dendy could choose land not closer than five miles from an existing town and no more than two miles of bay frontage. The northern boundary of the land he chose was exactly five miles from Melbourne at what is now North Road, Brighton. The land extended two miles down to South Road and four miles east to Boundary Road. It will be clear now how those roads were named. J.B. Were became his partner and a subdivision plan was drawn up by surveyor H.B. Foot, with its elegant crescents, and the beach front villa blocks to the north west, with Cole's land in its centre. Dendy was in a position to make a fortune with his land

potentially worth up to £100,000. However, he did not have a good head for business and when the depression hit in 1843 he was out-manoeuvred by Were and he lost everything.

Cole, also hit by the depression, managed to find the second instalment on his land, but he had to rent out his town house in William Street, and he leased *St Ninian's* to William Brickwood who was to 'receive young gentlemen to board and educate'.<sup>15</sup> The Government taking a third of his wharf fees would not have helped his finances. He had to reach an agreement with some of his creditors to avoid bankruptcy, but in the end he paid them all back in full.

He had built a fine house in William Street on the corner of La Trobe Street, opposite the Flagstaff Gardens. The Flagstaff Railway Station now takes up the site. When Bishop Broughton came to Melbourne in 1843, Georgiana wrote: 'Bishop Broughton stayed at Capt Coles [*sic*] house which he has lent for the Bishop's accommodation with the servants to attend to him'.<sup>16</sup> This was probably while Cole was trying to let the house—having the Bishop staying there would do no harm to its rental prospects.

In the meantime, the Coles moved into apartments at Cole's Wharf. It would have been very convenient for Captain Cole, but Thomas Anne may not have been so pleased. At the time of the flood in Melbourne in October 1844, Georgiana wrote: 'The water in Mrs. Cole's



Unknown photographer  
 Captain Cole and family at St Ninian's, c.1859  
 Collection: Brighton Historical Society

dining room at the wharf was up to the top of the table, while she herself looked for refuge in the upper floor of the house.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Anne must have been relieved when William Brickwood, who had leased *St Ninian's*, was appointed as Headmaster of the Port Phillip Academical Institution when it opened in 1844, freeing up *St Ninian's*.

Cole's beachfront property in Brighton totalled twenty-five acres, with the house built near Point Cole. The first building was a two-storey brick house. This became the servants' wing when a new wing built out of Indian teak with a long verandah was added in the 1850s. In front of the house, stretching away from the low verandah, was a croquet lawn, with fine trees, shrubs and flowers beyond. In 1854, Edward La Trobe Bateman was working on the garden. His friend Alfred Howitt wrote: 'He is now at Brighton at King Cole's, turning His Majesty's garden upside down and back again — shifting trees, raising gullies, building a bower and levelling hills.'<sup>18</sup> In the 1860s *St Ninian's* hosted the celebrated Brighton Flower Show and in 1863 Governor Sir Charles and Lady Darling visited the Brighton Flower Show at *St Ninian's* and ignored convention by lunching with the Coles, which must have delighted Thomas Anne. Captain Cole rounded off the day by winning prizes for a specimen of pelargonium and for a peacock in the poultry section.<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Anne formed a genuine friendship with Governor Sir Henry Manners-Sutton's wife Georgiana, visiting Government House in Toorak regularly for private meals.

The children were of a similar age, visiting each other at Toorak and Brighton. Captain Cole took his daughters down to the ship to see off the family when the Governor left the colony in 1873. Thomas Anne had a private farewell with Lady Manners-Sutton.<sup>20</sup>

There were eight acres of fruit and vegetables, with apples, grapes, peaches, apricots, damsons, plums, almonds, pears, cherries, strawberries, figs and quinces, often given away. The gardeners carted sea-weed to the paddocks and ploughed it in; Cole pioneered the practice in the colony.<sup>21</sup> The house staff in the 1860s consisted of cook, needlewoman, house and parlour maid, and laundress, but it was difficult to keep servants with ten new servants in one four-month period in 1867.<sup>22</sup>

*St Ninian's* survived for many years. After Thomas Anne's death in 1898, the only surviving child, Margaret, could not afford to maintain the house. It was sold to Sir Thomas Bent, who in the early 1900s subdivided the land and in 1933 the brick servants' building was demolished. But *St Ninian's* could not survive the 1970s; the National Trust was unable to prevent its demolition in 1974. There is now a commemorative plaque on what was once Point Cole — no longer a point, the bay having been filled in to its north.

### ***Business activities***

As well as managing his wharf and bonded store, Cole was chairman of the Port Phillip Steamship Navigation Company and owned

Samuel Calvert,  
1828-1913, engraver  
**Opening of Parliament  
— interior of Legislative  
Council chamber, 1864**  
Wood engraving  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria,  
IMP25/02/64/1  
Published in The  
Illustrated Melbourne Post,  
25 February, 1864  
Captain Cole circled



or co-owned many steamers. He imported the latest steam engines and built ships. He salvaged ships in the bay, bought wrecks for scrap, and held frequent auctions at his wharf, mainly of unwanted goods landed from ships. He was connected with several banks, Chair of the Coal Mining Company, auditor of the Corporation of Melbourne for a year, and agent for Lloyds. For a few years he devoted himself to squatting, with interests in *Muckleford* and *Cairn Curran* on the Loddon and a station at Mount Cole near Ararat. Mount Cole was not, as may be assumed, named after Captain Cole, but was named by Major Mitchel in 1836.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Captain Cole bought the land because of the name.

His steamship fleet needed fuel and so he investigated reports of coal at Cape Patterson, and good quality coal was mined there. As a source of firewood, he bought land at Red Cliff on the Bellarine Peninsula. He established a town there, St Leonards, building a pier, and by 1858 there were six houses, a store and a hotel. He had ambitious plans drawn up for a substantial township with streets named after his family. Although his plan was not implemented, there are Cole and Ward streets in St Leonards today. There is a monument to Cole on the foreshore, to commemorate his involvement in the establishment of the town.

He had other property interests. He bought land in Williamstown, Footscray,

Frankston, and Gippsland. He owned land at North Melbourne and at least one house he built still stands at 456 Victoria Street. It was later named *Osbourne House*.

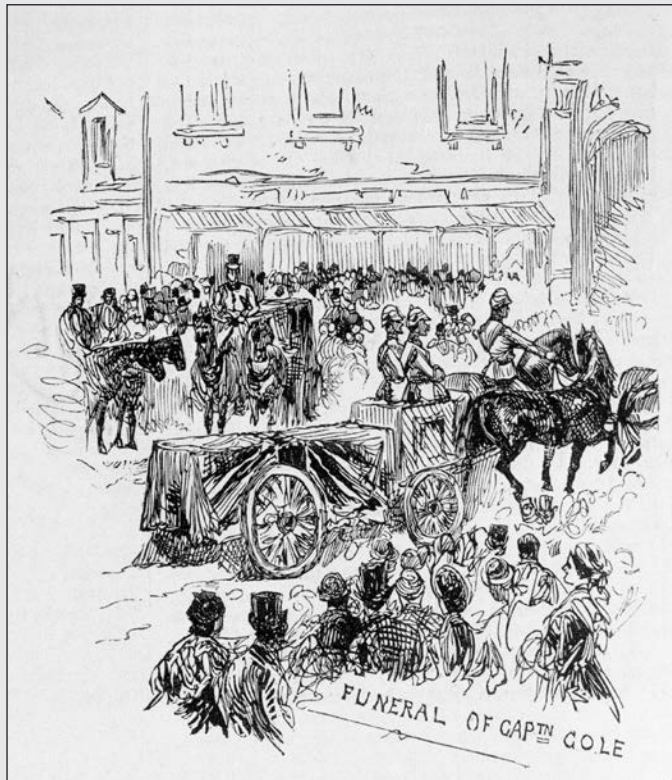
### **Community activities**

Cole threw himself into the local affairs by joining committees and expressing views on the key issues of the day. He joined many committees in diverse fields, including one to plan for Governor Gipps' visit to Port Phillip in 1841, one to determine the best sites for lighthouses, and he was vice-president of the Mechanics Institute. He was an uncompromising opponent of transportation, and subscribed to the Australasian Anti-Transportation League.

He would often offer a solution to issues raised in the district. As mentioned earlier, he advocated cutting a deep canal to shorten the meandering Yarra River to make it accessible to larger ships and to reduce the risk of flooding, which was a frequent occurrence in the town. It was not until just before Cole's death in 1879 that Sir John Coode's report recommended such a canal.

He was a strong advocate of separation from New South Wales and in 1848 he opposed electing people to represent Port Phillip in Sydney and advocated the nomination of the Duke of Wellington and other lords in protest.<sup>24</sup> The next year he was present when Governor

**Unknown artist**  
**Funeral of Captain Cole, 1879**  
 Wood engraving  
 Pictures Collection, State  
 Library Victoria, A/S10/05/79/20  
 Published in *The Australasian*  
 Sketcher, 10 May 1879



FitzRoy was being entertained by fine society of Melbourne. FitzRoy expressed his regret that the prospect of separation would mean he would be officially disconnected from the district,<sup>25</sup> but one cannot help but feel that he would be relieved to be rid of the complaining residents of Port Phillip.

Cole offered to lease and drain the swamp to Melbourne's west.<sup>26</sup> He solved the problem of supplying water for ships in Hobsons Bay by building a floating water tank that could be filled with water from the Falls and towed to the ships.<sup>27</sup> He was a passionate advocate of railways and he put forward a plan for the development of railway lines to the major settlements in Victoria and argued against building roads which were simply washed away each winter.<sup>28</sup>

In 1863 Cole introduced sugar-beet to the colony. He obtained seed from Holland and distributed it freely. He wanted to improve agriculture and advocated the establishment of agricultural training schools. He was appointed as a magistrate for the City of Melbourne and later a territorial magistrate.

### **Parliament**

Once separation from New South Wales was achieved in 1851, Captain Cole was keen to take part in the first Legislative Council of

Victoria. He became a candidate for the city of Melbourne, but he came last of seven candidates having been reluctant to campaign.<sup>29</sup> However, in 1853, the seat for Gippsland became available, and Captain Cole offered himself for the vacancy, and was elected.<sup>30</sup> Soon after his election he was appointed to a select committee to consider the harbour regulations, and he assisted in the framing of the Constitution Act. He remained in the Legislative Council until 1855 when he resigned to make a trip to England.

He made two trips in fact. He sailed firstly on the *Eagle* in May 1855 with his family. They returned at the end of 1856 on the *Royal Charter*. It was this ship that three years later on its return from Australia, was wrecked on the north coast of Anglesea, Wales, with the loss of 450 lives and much gold. A freak storm with hurricane force winds from the north wrecked about 200 ships and it became known as the Royal Charter storm. It was the catalyst for the development of the Meteorological Office under Vice-Admiral Robert FitzRoy, of *Beagle* fame and half-brother of Governor Charles FitzRoy. It introduced the first gale warning service in Britain, to help prevent similar tragedies.

After his return from his second trip to England, Cole was elected to represent the Central Province in the Upper House in 1859. He retained the seat until his death in

1879: 'Age and venerable appearance made him one of the most conspicuous figures of the Council Chamber.'<sup>31</sup>

Captain Cole had his own firmly-held views, and they placed him, as a rule, in opposition to the great majority of his fellow members, but he was undeterred, and struggled gallantly on despite all difficulties.<sup>32</sup> He acted as the representative of the McCulloch Government in the Legislative Council in the 1860s and was made an Executive Councillor in 1867. He was a strong protectionist, arguing that local industry would not grow without a tariff on imported goods, and setting forth his views in a pamphlet.

He took a great interest in the defences of Port Phillip, publishing a pamphlet on the subject. As a naval man, he favoured ships for defence over fixed land batteries. He advocated the purchase of iron-clad gunboats. At this time Captain Cowper Coles was developing his patent design for a revolving gun turret. It was intended to be fitted to iron-clad ships lying low in the water, ideal for coastal defence. *HMVS Cerberus*, equipped with two Coles' turrets was delivered to Victoria in 1871 and served in Port Phillip until 1924, when it was scuttled off Half Moon Bay, Black Rock.

When Captain Cole was re-elected for the Central Province in 1860, *The Age* wrote:

Captain Cole appears to be one of the few wealthy men, desirous of a seat in Parliament, who have large liberal just views as to what is due to the welfare of the people, and as to what is the best and soundest policy for new countries such as ours. He comprehends the wisdom of being liberal to the working classes, in allotting them their share of the natural advantages held out by a new country. He is a lucky exception to his class; and we, are pleased to see him again seated in the Legislature.<sup>33</sup>

## Death

Cole died in his house in Brighton on 26 April 1879 in full possession of his faculties. To the last he continued to manifest a deep interest in the affairs of the Colony. On the day of his death he listened attentively whilst a friend read Sir John Coode's proposals for improvements to the harbour.<sup>34</sup>

His love for his old naval profession never abated, and before death he expressed a wish that he should be buried with the Union Jack around him. He was carried to the grave on a gun carriage drawn by four horses, the coffin draped with Union Jack. The cortège left *St Ninian's* and crossed Princes Bridge at noon, on its way to the Old Melbourne Cemetery where he was buried in the family burying place,<sup>35</sup> next to four of his children and his step-son, all of whom died young.

George Higginbotham, Chief Justice of Victoria, wrote of Captain Cole after his death:

He was always thinking of the public welfare, and was never wearied in advocating measures which he thought calculated to promote it... No politician in recent Australian history appears to present a record of purer and more sincere patriotism, or of more unselfish and benevolent political action than Captain George Ward Cole.<sup>36</sup>

When Cole's daughter, Margaret died in 1926, his memory died out with her. None of his three surviving children married and his grave is unmarked.<sup>37</sup> A few street names and plaques at Point Cole and St Leonards are the only lasting memory of a remarkable man.

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# Charles La Trobe, Lord Kingsborough and the nine magnificent volumes of the *Antiquities of Mexico*

By Dr Sylvia Whitmore

**Sylvia Whitmore had a professional career in software project management and development in the telecommunications and banking sectors. Upon retirement in 2001, Sylvia completed another Arts Degree with Honours majoring in Archaeology at her alma mater La Trobe University. In 2012, she completed a PhD with a thesis on divination in Mesoamerica.**

*This paper is a revised version of the Melbourne Rare Book Week lecture written by Dr Sylvia Whitmore and presented in her absence by Dr Dianne Reilly on 30 June 2017.*

In Melbourne, in the Rare Book Collection of State Library Victoria, we are very fortunate to have a set of the nine magnificent volumes that comprise the *Antiquities of Mexico* (1831-1848).<sup>1</sup> This work was commissioned and annotated by the Irish peer Lord Kingsborough (1795-1837) and has been in the Library's possession for at least 137 years.<sup>2</sup> These volumes have a special significance for me personally as several years ago, I spent many hours studying them for my Honours Degree in Archaeology. Both Charles La Trobe and Sir Redmond Barry, the co-founders of the library, were aware of these superb books and this aspect will be discussed later in the paper. But first a few details about Lord Kingsborough, together with a brief overview of this splendid publication and his motivation for their production.

The reclusive Edward King, who eventually became Lord Kingsborough, was the eldest son of five children born into a wealthy aristocratic Irish dynasty. Unfortunately, there are no known images of him. His father George, was the third Earl of Kingston and his mother was Lady Helena Moore, daughter of the first Earl of

Mountcashell and the Countess of Mountcashell. Lord Kingsborough's family owned extensive estates in various areas of Ireland, particularly in Limerick and County Cork.<sup>3</sup>

They lived in the magnificent Mitchelstown Castle in County Cork, which of itself, also has an interesting history. An older incarnation of the castle was inherited by Caroline King, Lady Kingsborough. During 1777-1778 her husband, Robert King, remodelled it in the Palladian style and improved the estate. Robert died as second Earl of Kingston in 1799, a year after being acquitted in the Irish House of Lords of murdering Henry Fitzgerald, whom he had shot for eloping with his youngest daughter. Caroline then managed Mitchelstown until her death in 1823. In the 1820s Caroline's extravagant son and heir George, third Earl of Kingston (the notoriously brutal commander of the North Cork militia during the 1798 Irish Rebellion) rebuilt the castle in neo-Gothic style with a conspicuous similarity to Windsor Castle in order to impress King George IV. It was burnt down by the Irish Republican rebels in 1922 and any existing images of Lord Kingsborough were likely to have been destroyed at that time.<sup>4</sup>

**John Preston Neale, 1780–1847, artist**  
**Thomas Barber, fl.1818–1846, engraver**  
**Mitchelstown Castle, Cork, 1825**  
 Published in *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland*, Second series, Volume 2 (London: Sherwood, Jones & Co., 1825)



There is little information about Lord Kingsborough's early life prior to his attendance at the Oxford University, although it is believed that he was educated at Eton prior to attending Oxford.<sup>5</sup> Records indicate that he matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford, on 25 June 1814, and in the Michaelmas term gained a second class in the study of classics, although he did not graduate.<sup>6</sup>

It was probably at Oxford that Kingsborough met the great bibliophile, Sir Thomas Phillipps, who was an undergraduate at about the same time. Their friendship continued after they left Oxford, as evidenced by an exchange of letters between the two men that occurred during the period 1826 to 1830. Phillipps was reported to have accumulated about fifty to sixty thousand books during his lifetime, consequently it is possible that his obsession and sheer enthusiasm for books and ancient manuscripts may have influenced the young aristocrat. Phillipps wrote that Kingsborough discussed the development of the *Antiquities of Mexico* with him and that he encouraged him in his endeavours. In addition, Phillipps noted in his own catalogue of manuscripts, that he gave his friend a letter of introduction to Dr Bandinel of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The purpose of this introduction was to enable Kingsborough to view a number of Mexican manuscripts held in the Bodleian Library, including a copy of the *Codex Mendoza*.<sup>7</sup> Some authors consider that it was the viewing of this unique manuscript that initially inspired Kingsborough to later develop and publish the *Antiquities of Mexico*.<sup>8</sup>

### **Contents of the Volumes**

The *Antiquities of Mexico* contain facsimiles of ancient Mexican paintings, codices and hieroglyphs copied from the original manuscripts that were preserved in the Royal libraries of Paris, Berlin and Dresden, the Imperial Library in Vienna, the Vatican Library, the Borgian

Museum at Rome, the Library of the Institute of Bologna and the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is believed that the first three volumes of this splendid publication contain facsimiles of almost all of the known ancient pictorial Mexican manuscripts and paintings that were accessible to Lord Kingsborough at that time.<sup>9</sup> Included in the other volumes are copies of papers and reports from explorers such as the intrepid adventurer and scholar, Baron Alexander Humboldt. There are also writings from the first priests to arrive in Mexico after the Spanish Conquest in 1519 and others who spent time in Mexico and recorded their experiences.

Lord Kingsborough never travelled to Mexico himself, instead he sent emissaries to many parts of the world including Mexico, to locate the documents and manuscripts for his publication.<sup>10</sup> His peerage status was invaluable in enabling his scribes to gain permission to access and copy rare and priceless publications in the various libraries and book collections scattered throughout Europe and the UK. Kingsborough was the Member of Parliament for County Cork from 1818 to 1820 and even gave up his position in parliament to focus on this work.<sup>11</sup>

The *Antiquities of Mexico* is massive in size. Each 'elephant folio' volume is approximately 57 cm. square and weighs about 29.5 kilograms. The set of nine volumes took approximately eighteen years to produce at a cost to Lord Kingsborough of about £40,000. The magnitude of this enormous sum of money can be gauged when it is considered that a family during this period could exist reasonably well on about £500 per year.<sup>12</sup>

The exquisite illustrations included in this monumental work were undertaken by the Italian artist Agostino Aglio (1777–1857). Aglio first produced line drawings from the original manuscripts by tracing them and making lithographic prints of the traced line drawings.





**Page from the Codex Mendoza showing some of the many tributes required for the Aztec Emperor Facsimile, *Antiquities of Mexico*, Volume 1, 1831**

The tributes listed on this page include two large strings of jadeite beads, 2,400 handfuls of vibrant coloured feathers, 80 whole birds, two gold labrets, 40 tiger skins, 200 loads of cacao beans, 800 cups for drinking cacao, and two brick-size pieces of clear amber. (A page like this was included in the Codex for each of the 38 provinces the Aztecs ruled.)

These were then coloured individually either by the artist, or perhaps others under his direction, to make the coloured plates.<sup>13</sup>

Scholar Ian Graham considers that the initial seven volumes of the *Antiquities of Mexico* were probably ready in 1830.<sup>14</sup> About eleven years after Lord Kingsborough's death in 1837, the final two volumes, 8 and 9 were published. The selling price for the finished product was £170 per volume. A tenth volume was planned but was never completed.<sup>15</sup> It is believed that only 200 sets of this work were published in total and it is unknown how many are still in existence today.<sup>16</sup> There are four known copies in Australia and they are highly valued by collectors. Quite by accident some time ago, I discovered that the Victorian Parliamentary Library has a set of the 1830-1848 version in excellent condition, and that they are very aware of its worth.<sup>17</sup> (State Library Victoria has the 1831-1848 edition, as does the State Library of New South Wales. The University of Sydney Library holds the 1830-1848 edition.)

There is an interesting difference between the two sets. Although Aglio's name is prominently cited in the title page of the 1830-1848 edition, as both author and publisher, there is no mention of Lord Kingsborough. This no

doubt caused a disagreement between the artist and his employer, probably over copyright of the *Antiquities of Mexico*. Aglio may have considered he had claim to the volumes, as he had carried out many years of detailed work on the contents. However, this omission was rectified in the 1831-1848 edition as Lord Kingsborough's name not only appears on the title page, volume 5 of this work also contains a copy of a letter from the artist to Lord Kingsborough which can be taken as an apology. In the letter, Aglio professes his gratitude to Kingsborough for the opportunity to copy the various manuscripts for the *Antiquities of Mexico* and indicates that his only intention was to please him. Yet, libraries today such as the British Library and State Library Victoria for example, still incorrectly have Aglio catalogued as the author.

Of the numerous documents and facsimiles in the *Antiquities of Mexico*, the *Codex Mendoza* and the *Dresden Codex* are amongst the most significant. The original seventy-one page *Codex Mendoza* was created by indigenous scribes and artists on European paper shortly after the Spanish conquest of Mexico (circa 1540) at the behest of Viceroy Mendoza of New Spain (as the Spanish called Mexico at that time). The Codex contains the history of the Aztecs, details of their

**The first page of Codex Mendoza Facsimile, Antiquities of Mexico, Volume 1, 1831**

Depicts the founding of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Carries the signature of André Thévet, geographer to Henry II of France



political and military institutions, descriptions of their everyday activities and economic details such as the tributes paid to the Aztec ruler by his imperial provinces.<sup>18</sup>

The manuscript itself has an interesting history as it was originally sent to Spain by Viceroy Mendoza as a gift for Charles V. However, the ship in which it was being transported was unfortunately captured by French pirates and, in due course, the valuable manuscript came into the possession of André Thévet, the geographer to the King of France. After Thévet's death it was sold and eventually acquired by the Bodleian Library at Oxford in 1659, where it still resides today.<sup>19</sup> Lord Kingsborough included a facsimile of the *Codex Mendoza* in volume 1 of the *Antiquities of Mexico*, with a Spanish interpretation of the Codex included in volume 5.

The Italian artist, Aglio copied this manuscript in great detail, and even included Thévet's signature, which is located on the top left-hand side of the first page of the original document. It is not possible in this paper to discuss this fascinating manuscript in depth, however, I would like to point out a few highlights from the first page. Reading anti-

clockwise around the blue margin are dates from 1325 (the foundation of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan) until 1375, when the first Aztec ruler died. Each blue square represents one year. In the centre of the page are the symbols for the city of Tenochtitlan (eagle, cactus fruit and rock). The Aztec capital was built on an island in the centre of an inland lake system. The large blue square denotes the lake, whilst the blue cross represents the causeways leading out from the city. (After the conquest, the Spanish destroyed the Aztec city and built Mexico City on top of its ruins.) On the left-hand side of the page, the first Aztec ruler Tenochtli can be clearly identified because he sits on a palm leaf mat, an Aztec symbol of power. The other figures located on the page represent Aztec nobility.<sup>20</sup> The first, hand-coloured reproduction of the front page of the *Codex Mendoza*, completed for the *Antiquities of Mexico*, was presented to King William IV by Lord Kingsborough and remains in the Royal Collection today.<sup>21</sup>

In volume 3 of the *Antiquities of Mexico* one can find an excellent facsimile of an extremely rare Maya manuscript known as the *Dresden Codex*. This is a very special reproduction as it represents a copy of one of only three remaining, authentic Maya codices. (The Maya primarily

inhabited the south eastern region of Mexico.) These three remarkable books were saved from the destruction carried out by the early Spanish priests, as they were sent back to Spain as booty after the Spanish Conquest. Tragically, the first Catholic priests to arrive in Mexico after the conquest in 1519 burnt all the other Maya books because they viewed them as pagan. The three surviving codices were named after the cities in which they now reside (Dresden, Paris and Madrid).

The original *Dresden Codex* is considered to have been created about AD 1200-1250 and contains almanacs, day counts for worship and prophecies, together with astronomical calculations and tables that are considered to be extremely accurate, particularly in relation to the planet Venus and the eclipses of the moon. There are also scripts concerning sickness and medicine, and references and predictions for time and agriculture. The codex is presented in an interesting format, as the double-sided sheet that makes up the manuscript is 3.9 metres long and is folded in concertina fashion, like a screen (see next page). There are thirty-nine leaves formed by the folding, each about 20.4 cm by 9 cm. Of the seventy-eight pages formed (thirty-nine on each side of the sheet) four are blank.<sup>22</sup>

A photo of the *Dresden Codex* was made in 1892 by Ernst Förstemann, a Dresden librarian, using what was at that time a new chromophotographic technique. A comparison of the Aglio facsimile of the codex, completed circa 1830, with the Förstemann photo of 1892, revealed that a significant amount of deterioration had already occurred in just a little over sixty years. Unfortunately, the original manuscript housed in the Royal Public Library at Dresden, later sustained considerable further damage when the city was bombed during World War II.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the superb facsimile included in *The Antiquities of Mexico* is enormously valued by Mesoamerican scholars, as it contains information that is no longer legible in the original.

### ***Motivation for the production of the Antiquities of Mexico***

The prime motivation for Lord Kingsborough's passion and dedication in relation to the research and production of the *Antiquities of Mexico*, was his sincere belief that the indigenous Mesoamerican population were the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.<sup>24</sup> The Bible relates that the twelve tribes of Israel were divided into two realms after the death of King Solomon. One nation was Judah which represented two tribes and the other was Israel which comprised the remaining ten tribes. The

kingdom of Israel was captured by the Assyrians in 721 BC and the Israelites were expelled from their land. Similarly, Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 587 BC and its inhabitants were enslaved in Babylonia. About fifty years later, the Judeans returned to their homeland, but the ten Israelite tribes were never heard of again.<sup>25</sup>

The issue of the Lost Tribes of Israel certainly generated great interest in the early decades of the nineteenth century because it addressed a theological aspiration to link the New World (the Americas) to the Old (biblical) World, particularly if it could be proven that the indigenous groups from the Americas were their descendants. (America is not mentioned in the Bible.)<sup>26</sup> The quest for the Lost Tribes also became caught up in the millennium fervour that prevailed at this time. The fear and apprehension that had been created by the violent uprooting of European political and social institutions forced many to come to the conclusion that the end of the world was near and that the second coming of Christ was imminent. During Lord Kingsborough's lifetime unsettling events such as the French Revolution (1789-1799), the Irish Rebellion (1798), the Union of England and Ireland (1801), the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), the American War of Independence (1812-1815) and the Mexican Revolution (1821) took place.<sup>27</sup>

Between 1790 and the mid-19th century, pre-millennialism was a popular view among English and Irish Evangelicals and even some within the Anglican Church. This included some members of Lord Kingsborough's extended family who were involved in the evangelical movement in Ireland.<sup>28</sup> According to prophecy, in preparation for the return of Christ and the beginning of the millennium, the Jewish people who had been scattered among many nations, had to return to their own land in a national restoration.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, some people believed this also applied to the Ten Lost Tribes and it can be argued that Lord Kingsborough was of the same view.

He devoted about one hundred and thirty pages of volume 6 of the *Antiquities of Mexico* to his passionate conviction that the ancient Mexicans were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel and quoted biblical passage after biblical passage in order to validate the similarities between the ancient Mexican culture and religion, and that of the Jews. He believed that he had found evidence of Jewish customs and religion in nearly every aspect of ancient Mexican society. For example, he thought that the ancient Mexican temples resembled the architectural style of Jewish temples. He also argued that the fact the Jews and the ancient Mexicans placed fringes



**Facsimile edition of the Dresden Codex**  
 (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck. 1975)  
 The original manuscript was made from flattened bark, covered with a lime paste and folded concertina style. It was written on both sides

on their garments and practiced circumcision were indications of similarities between the two respective cultures. Sir William Penn is quoted by Lord Kingsborough as noticing a resemblance between the features of the Indian and Jewish children.<sup>30</sup> Yet, the examples cited of the parallels between the Jewish and ancient Mexican cultures are extremely generalised or exaggerated.

Charles La Trobe spent three months travelling through Mexico in 1834 with his young companion Count Albert-Alexandre de Pourtalès and wrote a book, *The Rambler in Mexico*, about their adventures. In this publication, La Trobe acknowledged that the origin of the Mexicans had indeed puzzled him. He admitted that initially he was sceptical about the claim advocated by Lord Kingsborough and others, that the Mexicans were descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel, but implied that he could change his mind if more supporting evidence came to light.<sup>31</sup> It is apparent from his comments that he had read or at least knew about the *Antiquities of Mexico*.

We know that La Trobe's interest in this theory continued after he had left Mexico in 1834, as he purchased a copy of Barbara Simon's book, *The Ten Tribes of Israel Historically Identified with the Aborigines of the Western Hemisphere*, which was published in 1836.<sup>32</sup> Mrs Simon was a strong believer that the Mexicans were descended from the Lost Tribes, and praised Lord Kingsborough's work in her book. Prior to his departure from Melbourne, La Trobe

donated his own signed, personal copy of Mrs Simon's publication to the Melbourne Public Library (later State Library Victoria), where it can be found today in the Rare Book Collection. We do not know if La Trobe formed any definite conclusions about the origins of the Mexicans or the reality of the Lost Tribes, but he apparently gave this hypothesis some thought.

Even in our current time the existence of the Lost Tribes of Israel still continues to be the subject of debate. Some followers of the Mormon religion still consider that the Mexicans were descended from the Lost Tribes, although the prevailing theory in archaeological circles is that the Americas were most likely populated by people who had migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait Land Bridge from Siberia to Alaska, during the last Ice Age about 20,000 years ago. The Land Bridge was believed to have existed during this period because of the much lower sea levels.<sup>33</sup>

Preliminary research has revealed that the *Antiquities of Mexico* was also known to Sir Redmond Barry. The *Catalogue of the Public Library of Victoria* (1880), indicates that Sir Redmond Barry, who oversaw purchases for the Library, was Chairman of Trustees when *The Antiquities of Mexico* was added to the collection.<sup>34</sup> Previously, on 18 December 1876 he had requested that these volumes should be purchased by the library, but the other Trustees at that time rejected this proposal due to the high cost. However, it would seem that eventually, Sir Redmond got his way.<sup>35</sup>

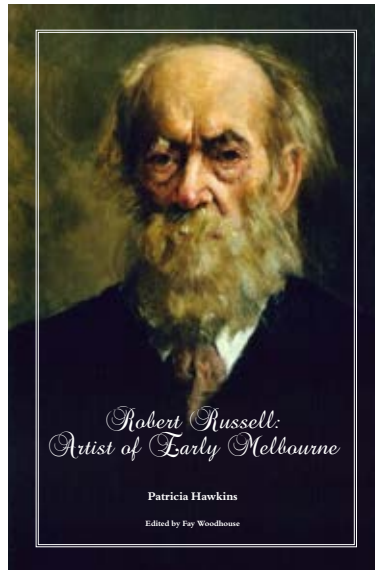
Reading Ann Galbally's biography of Sir Redmond, I was surprised to learn that he had migrated to Melbourne from County Cork in Ireland.<sup>36</sup> Further investigation has revealed that he was not only a contemporary of Lord Kingsborough, but had lived within about forty kilometres from his castle in Mitchelstown. My research also indicated that both their fathers were Anglo-Irish military leaders who fought against the rebels in the 1798 Irish Rebellion and were both Freemasons.<sup>37</sup> It can be speculated that at the very least, Sir Redmond would have been aware of Lord Kingsborough's well-known aristocratic family and that this may have contributed to his interest in the *Antiquities of Mexico*.

Sadly, Lord Kingsborough's obsession with collecting information for his publication was a contributing factor to his death. He died in 1837 after catching typhoid fever in a debtors' prison. Unfortunately, aside from

inheriting his father's large debts (incurred from building Mitchelstown Castle) he also spent a fortune on the research and production of these magnificent, lavish volumes.<sup>38</sup> Although Lord Kingsborough's research did not locate the Lost Tribes of Israel, he did leave a superb legacy, as many of the original Mexican manuscripts that were so meticulously copied for the *Antiquities of Mexico* have over the years suffered significant deterioration. Consequently, there is no doubt that these wonderful books will always remain amongst State Library Victoria's most treasured publications.

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  - 2 *The Antiquities of Mexico* is listed in *The Catalogue of the Public Library of Victoria* (1880), Vol 2: P-Z, Addenda to the Catalogue of Books 1880, p.2027.
  - 3 Bill Power, *White Knights, Dark Earls: the rise and fall of an Anglo-Irish dynasty*, Cork: Collins Press, 2000, pp.10-27.
  - 4 Power, pp.45, 71-85, 244.
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  - 12 Goodkind, p.54; Power, p.96.
  - 13 Graham, p.50.
  - 14 Ibid.
  - 15 Power, p. 96; Graham, p.50.
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  - 19 Ross, p.11.
  - 20 Ross, pp.18-20.
  - 21 Hand-coloured reproduction of the title page of the Codex Mendoza from Lord Kingsborough's facsimile publication, 1831, Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery> (accessed 16/8/2017).
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- 30 Aglio, 1831-1848, vol 6.
- 31 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Rambler in Mexico*, 1834, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1836, pp.209-209. Note: La Trobe has incorrectly spelt Lord Kingsborough's name as he has referred to him as Lord Kingsbury.
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- 37 Galbally, pp.8-10; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 165, 1838, p.213; Janet Todd, *Rebel Daughters: Ireland in conflict 1798*, London: Viking, 2003, pp.218-312.
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# Robert Russell: Artist of Early Melbourne

By Patricia Hawkins

Edited by Fay Woodhouse. Lancefield, Victoria, Hindsight Consulting, 2017  
66 pages, paperback, \$25

Robert Russell was the first government surveyor in Melbourne for a short period from October 1836 until he was replaced in March 1837 by Robert Hoddle. He was, nonetheless, throughout his long life a talented artist who documented the landscape in New South Wales and in the Port Phillip District, his numerous drawings and paintings now being held in State and National collections.

Despite his interesting career as architect, surveyor and artist, a biography of this controversial figure has not appeared until now. *Robert Russell: Artist of Early Melbourne* goes a long way to redress this deficiency. The author, Patricia Hawkins, died in 2007, the manuscript having been originally submitted as an MA thesis at Monash University.

Dr Fay Woodhouse has brought the original work to publication, skilfully editing the manuscript and always taking care to respect the author's intention. It is a tribute to her considerable skills as an historian that this thoughtful and well-designed book has been published.

Patricia Hawkins has documented the main biographical features of Russell's life: he

was educated as an architect in Edinburgh, and spent some time after his arrival in Sydney in 1833 developing his artistic skills with Conrad Martens. After taking up his position as surveyor in Melbourne, his first surveys were in the Geelong and Werribee areas, but these were not considered accurate. The author points out that William Lonsdale, then administrator of the Port Phillip District, was dissatisfied with Russell's work, and Robert Hoddle was soon appointed Surveyor-in-Charge in March 1837 to replace him. Hoddle went on to superimpose his grid plan of Melbourne's streets over the topographic features survey carried out by Russell. The dismissal of Russell in 1837 led to conflict and ill-feeling on both sides, even after Hoddle's death. After his dismissal, Russell continued to draw and paint extensively, particularly the landscape surrounding Melbourne. Russell died in 1900 in Richmond at ninety-two years of age.

This short biography of a long life adds materially to our knowledge and understanding of colonial Melbourne where Robert Russell spent most of his adult life. The result is an attractive, scholarly text on Russell's life and work with special emphasis on his art, much of which is located in the Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria.

# Forthcoming events

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2017

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## NOVEMBER

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Friday 24

**Christmas Cocktails**

**Time:** 6.30-8.30 pm

**Venue:** Royal Society of Victoria  
8 La Trobe Street, Melbourne

**Guest Speaker:** Dr Tom Darragh

**Topic:** The Royal Society and its History

**Admission:** \$80 per person

**Invitations have been sent for this event**

## DECEMBER

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Sunday 3

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

**Time:** 11.00 am

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

**Refreshments**

**No bookings required. All welcome**

2018

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## MARCH

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Sunday 18

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30-6.00 pm

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

**Guest Speaker:** Jo Reitze, artist

**Topic:** Art exhibition featuring  
La Trobe's Cottage

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$5 per person

MAY

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**Details to be advised**

## JUNE

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Sunday 10

**Members Talk to Members  
and Friends\***

**Time:** 2.30-4.00 pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall,  
Royal Botanic Gardens

Tuesday 19

**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

**Speaker:** Major-General Michael  
O'Brien

**Topic:** Charles La Trobe and Hugh  
Childers: the ladder of success in Victoria

**Admission:** tba

Friday 30

**Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture**

**Time:** 6.30-8.30 pm

**Venue:** Tonic House, 386 Flinders Lane,  
Melbourne, tbc

**Guest Speaker:** tba

**No charge**



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## JULY

Sunday 8

**Members Talk to Members  
and Friends\***

**Time:** 2.30-4.00 pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall,  
Royal Botanic Gardens

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## AUGUST

Wednesday 1

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

**Time:** 6.30 pm

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

**Speaker:** Dr Monique Webber

**Topic:** La Trobe and the FitzRoy  
Gardens. tbc

**Invitations will be sent in July**

Sunday 12

**Members Talk to Members and  
Friends \***

**Time:** 2.30-4.00 pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall,  
Royal Botanic Gardens

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## SEPTEMBER

Sunday 9

**Members Talk to Members  
and Friends\***

**Time:** 2.30-4.00 pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall,  
Royal Botanic Gardens

Tuesday 18

**Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Annual  
Lecture**

**Time:** 6.00-8.00pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall,  
Royal Botanic Gardens

**Speaker:** Lorraine Finlay

**Topic:** Eliza Nelson and  
Dr John Singleton: eventful lives in  
colonial Victoria

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** tba

**\* MEMBERS TALK TO  
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS  
– CALL FOR PAPERS  
See next page**

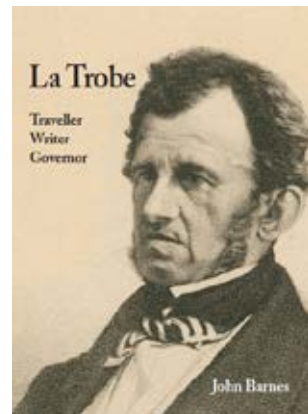
## *Members Talk to Members and friends — call for papers*

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**F**ollowing the success of another year of the Members Talk to Members program, we plan to continue the series during the winter months of 2018. Members who would like to deliver a paper at one of the meetings are invited to submit a synopsis of their paper for consideration to the Talks Committee at [talks@latrobesociety.org.au](mailto:talks@latrobesociety.org.au), by 9 January 2018.

Topics of proposed papers should focus on aspects of the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe and the development of the Port Phillip District and later the Colony of Victoria.

For more information, and a submission form, go to [www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/CallForPapers.doc](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/CallForPapers.doc)



# La Trobe Traveller, Writer, Governor

By John Barnes

Canberra, Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, 384 pages hardback, \$59.95.

The biography was reviewed in the July issue of *La Trobeana*.

Last month at the Arts Centre in Melbourne it was announced as the winner of the prestigious History Publication Award, for the most outstanding non-fiction publication on Victorian history in the 2017 Victorian Community History Awards. These annual awards are presented by Public Record Office Victoria in partnership with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

The Award citation reads:

‘Elegantly written and meticulously researched, this biography carefully considers issues and shows sympathetic insight into character. The book is a handsome publication, featuring many of La Trobe’s sketches and water-colours. Although largely forgotten after his death — in accord with the motto of the university his government founded, *Postera crescunt aude* — La Trobe steadily increases in esteem.’



Peter Corlett, sculptor  
C J La Trobe C B, 2016  
bronze  
Queenscliff Historical Museum  
photograph courtesy John Drury

## Back Issues

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

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

## Contributions welcome

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

**Further information about the Journal may be found on the inside front cover and at [www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html).**

**For copies of guidelines for contributors and subscriptions enquiries contact:**

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



THE LA TROBE SOCIETY  
Patron: The Honourable Linda Dessau, AC Governor of Victoria

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The purpose of the C J LA TROBE SOCIETY INC is to promote understanding and appreciation of the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe, Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor.

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

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