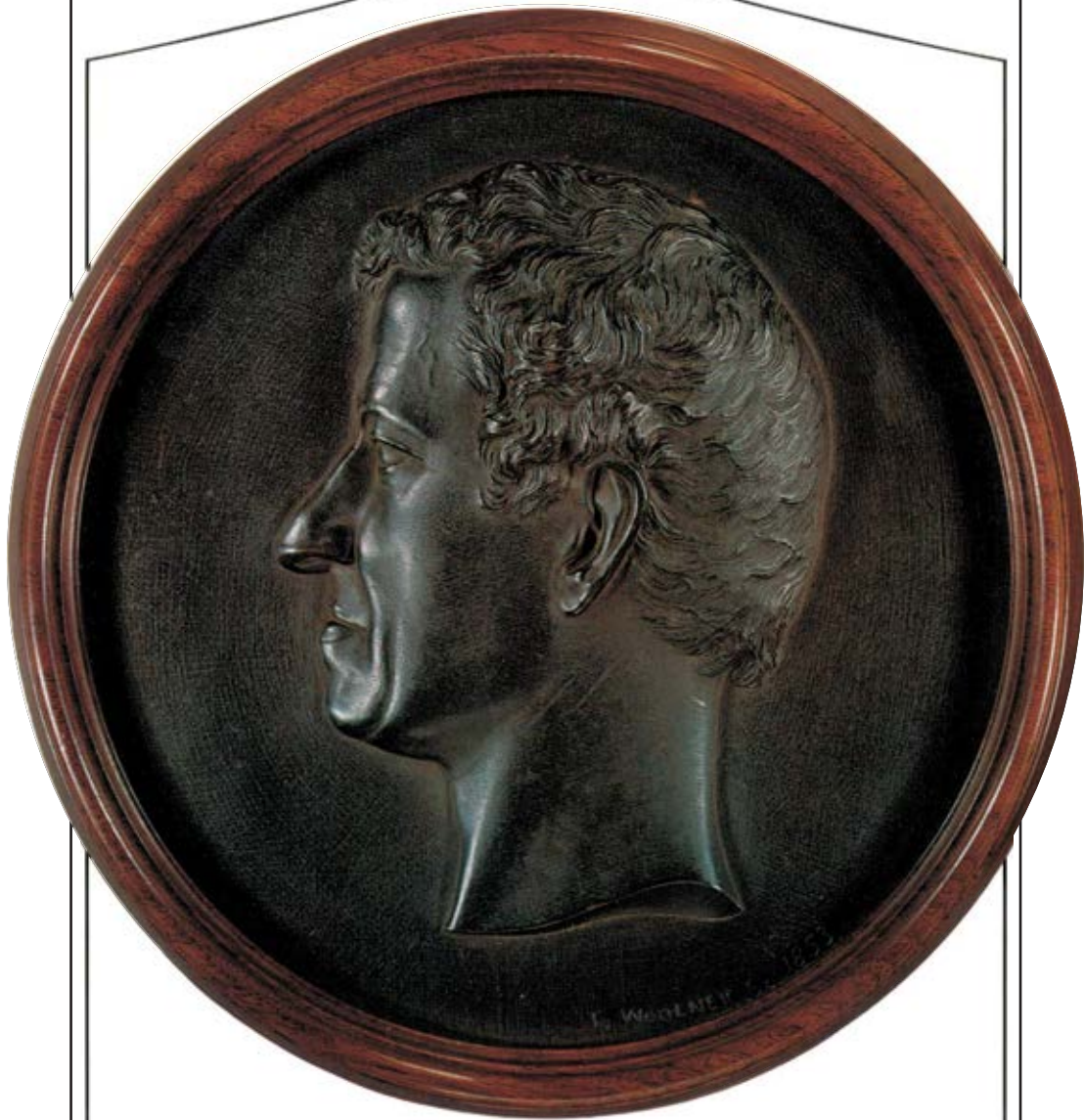


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 17, No 3, November 2018**

ISSN 1447-4026

## *La Trobeana*

Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc  
Vol 17, No 3, November 2018

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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.



La Trobeana  
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### **FRONT COVER**

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

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# A Word from the President

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It never ceases to amaze me that each edition of *La Trobeana* appears with new and varied articles on the colonial period of our history, all related in one way or another to Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe. In this issue, all of them have been contributed by La Trobe Society members, the first two being revised versions of papers given in the Members Talk to Members program.

Peter Hiscock, a keen and experienced horseman himself, has written very descriptively in his article 'La Trobe and his Horses — Testing Times' about the reliance on horses of La Trobe and others in the early days of Victorian settlement to explore the hinterland, and simply to move about. La Trobe made ninety-four major journeys during his years in the colony over difficult terrain and in dangerous conditions, demonstrating his high level of expertise in the saddle.

Walter Heale brings his deep professional understanding and knowledge of the Public Record Office Victoria collection to his paper 'District Surgeon to Chief Medical Officer: pioneer public health practitioners in Port Phillip District', describing the emergence of a public health service. The work of early medical officers, including Alexander Thomson, Barry Cotter, Patrick Cussen and William Wilmot, and the involvement of La Trobe, eventually led to the opening of the Melbourne Hospital in 1848.

Lorraine Finlay's Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Annual Lecture, 'Eliza Nelson and Dr John Singleton: incidents in the lives of two remarkable colonial memorialists', describes the fascinating story of the remarkable Eliza Nelson, a gold rush immigrant, pioneer, midwife, entrepreneur, and temperance advocate, who was a friend and assistant to Dr John Singleton, an early provider of social welfare and medical care, establishing his free medical dispensary in Collingwood in 1869.

In 'Kentish Ramblings: La Trobe rediscovers the English Countryside', Dianne Reilly with the assistance of John Prance, a voluntary guide at *Ightham Mote* in Kent, has

looked further into the history of the picturesque villages, many reflected in La Trobe's own sketches, located in the vicinity of the houses which accommodated him and his family after he returned to England from the Colony of Victoria.

Loreen Chambers, with the assistance of historian Patricia Richardson of Addington, has painted a picture of the life of the La Trobe family at *Addington Vale*, a house into which they moved after their brief sojourn at *Ightham Mote*. Between 1856 and 1857 La Trobe was hoping that he would soon receive the official recognition he deserved for his work over nearly fifteen years in an often difficult colony in far-off Victoria.

In total, this is another edition of *La Trobeana* which, I am sure, you will find full of interest.

It is with great sadness that I record the recent deaths of two of our members: Willys Keeble, conservation architect and wife of sculptor Peter Corlett, and engineer Ron Whitmore, husband of Sylvia. Both were tremendously supportive members of the La Trobe Society, and on your behalf, I extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

Congratulations must go to our members who achieved recognition for their entries in this year's Victorian Community History Awards. The Judges' Special Prize went to Jennifer Bantow and Ros Lewis for *Barro-abil, our beautiful Barrabool Stone: history and use of Barrabool Sandstone*. Anne Marsden received a Commendation for her book *And the Women came too: the families and founders of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution*. Congratulations!

I look forward to seeing many of you at the La Trobe Society's Christmas cocktail party to be held this year at the Australian Club on Thursday 29 November.

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



Edward La Trobe Bateman, 1816-1897, artist  
La Trobe on horseback at Jolimont, 1853  
Detail from: *Stables & hay house at Jolimont*  
Pencil and Chinese white on brown paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H98.135/16

## *La Trobe and his Horses – testing times*

By Peter McL. Hiscock AM

Peter Hiscock spent twenty-two years in the manufacturing sector in corporate finance, followed by twenty-two years as CEO of the Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Ballarat. A long-held interest in both bush walking and local history, particularly the exploration of Gippsland by A.W. Howitt, took him many times to the Crooked River, the Wannangatta and its tributaries, and the Victorian Alps. A keen horseman, he has always kept horses at his Buninyong property (c.1857) and had the luxury of being able to ride to work regularly. He was on the Museum Board/Museums Victoria, the Heritage Council and the Board of Tourism Victoria. His AM was for services to museums, tourism and conservation.

*This is an edited version of an address given in the Members Talk to Members program, 12 August 2018.*

Australia's celebration of horse and rider is more often fixed on the literary and visual images produced during the second half of the nineteenth century. The works of S.T. Gill, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Rolf Bolderwood and Banjo Patterson speak to this. La Trobe was before all this romanticism. Not from him the making of equestrian folk-law; indeed he treats his rides as incidental. Yet today they seem remarkable.

In this address I look at the likely bloodlines of the horses available in Port Phillip in 1839-40 and reflect on the way both horse and rider were tested in the infant colony. From La Trobe's notes<sup>1</sup> we can select a number of rides where his bushmanship or navigational skills would have been tested and so would the stamina and directional sense of his horse. Horses have a good memory for a track once travelled. La Trobe's horses needed that. And by today's standards they were not well treated.



**La Trobe on horseback**

Justin Smith as La Trobe seated on Leon, a Waler owned by barefoot farrier Martin Godwin, pictured at La Trobe's Cottage. The Waler's stocky physique was well suited to travel through rough country

Later I shall make a comparison with a modern day equivalent in the sport of endurance riding. I will select a number of La Trobe's journeys which reveal a very competent, self-reliant and assuredly fit equestrian, and the physical difficulties faced.

Visual images of Melbourne in its infancy suggest that very few of the dwellings had what might be discerned as stables. Most horses were corralled behind post and rail fences or tethered on road-side verges (see p.18). Yet horses were valuable and for the incoming Superintendent, an indispensable part of the job. Charles La Trobe had not only to bring his house but give thought to the horses he would need and how they would be quartered and fed. In Sydney during his briefing period with Governor Gipps he may have purchased horses although his notes are ambiguous. Sydney had horse markets; Melbourne in 1839 did not. On the journey to Melbourne he mentions three valuable horses being lost at sea without making it clear if any were his. Livestock were kept in crates on deck on smaller vessels or held in the crates but winched below. In either state, they were vulnerable in heavy seas.

Horses were not easily procured. In February 1839 Andrew Scott, a recent arrival from Scotland with his sons, walked from Melbourne to Geelong carrying saddle and

bridle to purchase a horse which he had heard was for sale through a countryman, George Russell.<sup>2</sup> Russell and Henry Anderson were in partnership on a run on the Moorabool. Scott purchased the mare for forty-eight pounds (half a year's pay for many). It was a propitious purchase enabling him to range over the west and northern districts looking for pastoral land. Later that year he was able to secure a run he called *Mount Boninyong* [sic].

Horses were being bred in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land by the time La Trobe arrived. They were of predominantly Arab lineage but with perhaps some Andalusian or thoroughbred blood-lines. As the need for stock horses increased, some of the heavier 'dales' were included in the mix. Early days in Port Phillip saw some over-landed from Sydney and others shipped from Van Diemen's Land, but the remoteness of many squatting leaseholds in the Port Phillip District led to local breeding. It is unlikely that their progeny would have been around in 1839 but by 1846 Gideon Scott Lang who held the lease of *Narmbool* near Ballarat, as well as a lease in the vicinity of present-day Flemington, was said to have been exporting horses to India. English thoroughbreds, destined for the race track, had neither the staying power of the Arab nor its surefootedness in rough country. The Australian Waler<sup>3</sup> proceeded from the same Arab origins but with some Percheron



**William Strutt, 1825-1915, artist**  
**Aboriginal black troopers**  
**— Melbourne police with**  
**English corporal, 1851**  
 Pencil and wash  
 Parliamentary Library  
 Victoria  
 From the album *Victoria the Golden: scenes, sketches and jottings from nature.*  
 Shows rider with swag and saddle-pouch

Clydesdale and thoroughbred strains. Walers performed so nobly in the Boer War and World War I but are neglected heroes.

In February 1840 La Trobe records a very testing ride. In company with Nicholas Fenwick and Henry Smythe in very hot weather he notes this: 'heavy wandering for several hours in wooded country after passing Cowies Creek.'<sup>4</sup> The country from Little River into the Anakie Hills was timbered and with Station Peak behind them there was no land-mark. It suggests they got a bit 'bushed'. Smythe was a surveyor, perhaps with some instruments in his pack; I am sure an adventurous traveller like La Trobe would have also carried a pocket compass. Clearly, they found their way out in country devoid of land-marks and he notes their eventual arrival at Mercer's huts and tents. So often the early tracks were made by stock or a bullock dray being driven over virgin soil, which could sometimes be misleading. Later on this journey they saw a forest fire: a new experience but one to recur.

I am very respectful of La Trobe's bushcraft which becomes increasingly evident in his journeys over the next fourteen years. In timbered country, the angle of a rising spur, the need to examine an unexpected feature, the twists and turns in a creek crossing, all test the ability to maintain orientation. La Trobe had also to become accustomed to the southern hemisphere; the northern sun is not where one instinctively looks, the night sky is different. In the bush, the rider must dodge low-hanging limbs in the understorey, adjust to stumbles in a rough gully or when his horse shies at unexpected movement, be that of a kangaroo, echidna or snake. On sharp descents to a stream,

the horse could slip, even stumble heavily - a test for the rider.

Of his many subsequent rides to Geelong and Shortland's Bluff (Queenscliff) over the next decade, many of them solitary, La Trobe, looking back, says: 'My ordinary way of going to Geelong was to send a relay [relief horse] to Greeves Inn on the Werribee, 20 miles, & go there to breakfast the following morning, reaching Geelong without difficulty by 11am - about 45 miles [altogether]'.<sup>5</sup> The hard ride of some 25 miles (40 km) across the plains would have meant that both horse and rider would work up a sweat and test the fitness of them both.

His horse Blackey was purchased in 1840 through Donald Ryrie, whom La Trobe had visited at the Ryrie brothers' *Yering* run. Ryrie lent him a horse for three months and offered to buy La Trobe horses in Sydney. Blackey came at this time,<sup>6</sup> and was destined to give sterling service. Unlike the gallop over the plains to Geelong, the track to *Yering* presented many hills. The Yarra had to be crossed and the historian Andrew Lemon suggests that the track east followed roughly the route of present-day Barkers Road and Canterbury Road, through Elgars Special Survey and then aligning with present-day Maroondah Highway east of Box Hill.<sup>7</sup> Lilydale was then nothing more than a Ryrie outstation. Beyond this, the track skirted the higher ground above the river flats.<sup>8</sup> The Ryries in 1837 had taken up 43,000 acres (17,400 hectares) of some of the most fertile country in the Colony. La Trobe was to become a fairly frequent visitor as the run and the accommodation improved.<sup>9</sup> By 1850 *Yering* comprised a seven-room house prefabricated in England,<sup>10</sup> but in 1840 things were fairly primitive. He most likely carried his



**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801–1875, artist**  
**Map of Gippsland, c.1845–1847**

Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, H7567  
 Shows a track through South Gippsland to Merriman Creek and a proposed route into eastern Victoria from Dandenong Creek to the La Trobe River approximately to the present-day Princes Highway. (May be viewed online, [www.latrobesociety.org.au/images/LaTrobeMapOfGippsland.jpg](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/images/LaTrobeMapOfGippsland.jpg))

own swag forward of the pommel. A lone rider could attach two small saddle-pouches behind him, in one a set of hobbles, perhaps a hoof-pick and hammer, in the other perhaps ‘tucker’ in a small tin box and a water bottle. In addition, a rope tether was needed.

In her book, *Life in the Bush*, Katherine Kirkland gives an account of the many neighbours and visitors arriving at their hut near Beaufort, later Trawalla, with their swag:

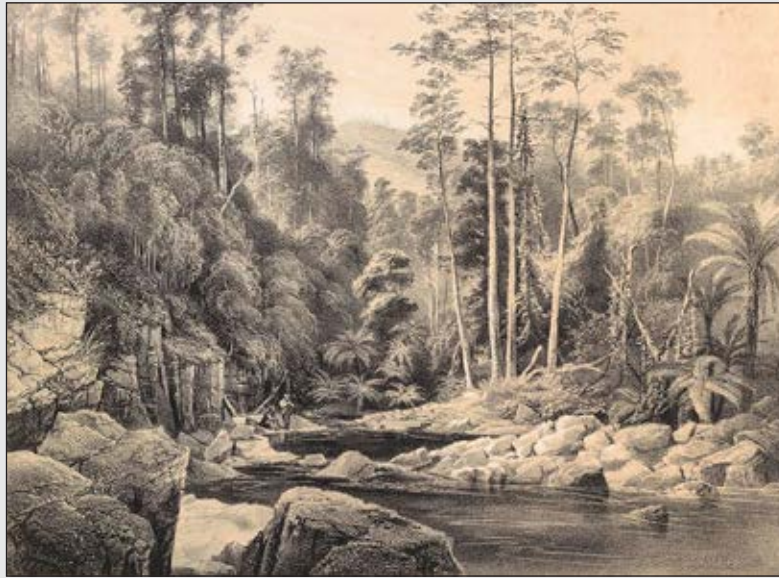
Every settler, when riding through the bush, carries either a kangaroo rug or a blanket fastened before him on his horse, so that wherever he goes he is provided with his bed; and as it is not an uncommon circumstance for one to lose himself in the bush, and be obliged to sleep at the root of a tree, he then finds his rug or blanket very useful.<sup>11</sup>

On the longer rides in Western Victoria and in South Gippsland La Trobe was accompanied by Captain Dana (Commandant, Native Police Corps) or surveyor Smythe as well as Native Police, with the party leading both pack horses and relief horses. Leading a pack horse can be tiring. A good horse will follow and in some country the tether may have been left to trail. La Trobe sustained an injury with a kick from a led horse,<sup>12</sup> so their management was not always easy.

His ride into South Gippsland in March 1845 would have been exhilarating because it was exploratory, but taxing because of the terrain. He was accompanied by Henry Dana and Frederick Powlett (Commissioner for Crown Lands, Western Port). Lightly timbered open country south of Nerre Nerre Warren [*sic*] would eventually yield to the magnificent eucalypt forest of the Strzeleckis which Ferdinand Mueller was to describe as park-like. Starting from the Police Paddocks to Manton’s Station, their trek on a south-westerly course skirted first, the swamp country (present-day Koo Wee Rup) and the deep forest spurs and took them roughly towards present-day Wonthaggi. There were many creek crossings and the difficult country around the Tarwin would have challenged navigation. As they rode on towards Cape Liptrap and Wilsons Promontory, swinging then towards Port Albert, a change in to grassy plains country would have been welcome. It was country most likely managed by fire-stick burning by Aboriginal people prior to settlement: something which perhaps only their Native Police companions could comprehend.<sup>13</sup> This excursion took them to Eagle Point near present-day Paynesville and Lake King (which he named). On the return they endured a miserable night (12 March) camping without water in a burnt forest—think of the horses.<sup>14</sup>

The duration of the excursion in March 1845 (15 days) with over 750 miles (1,200 km)





**Nicholas Chevalier, 1828–1902, artist**  
**Charles Troedel, 1836–1906, lithographer**  
**Agnes River, Corner Inlet, Gipps Land, 1865**  
 Tinted lithograph  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H9366

covered, necessitated camping equipment. It is not described. Contemporaneous drawings suggest both British army-style bell tents and the more common rectangular ridge tent were in use. The Native Police were equipped with the former. There were some major crossings. La Trobe's account is brief but to the point in describing 'difficult terrain'. At Andersons Inlet they 'swam over 7 horses & got over the baggage'.<sup>15</sup> That would have taken some time and heavy labour. Perhaps the baggage was rafted to keep it dry.

Later in this excursion, he talks again of difficult crossings including a major river he was to name the Franklin, near present-day Toora, and then another steep-banked crossing of a river he was to name the Agnes.<sup>16</sup> The party had nine horses including pack horses and more than four hours was spent getting them over.<sup>17</sup> The reader should not assume that when confronted with a deep river, a horse happily plunges in. Difficulties can arise particularly if the horse is suddenly out of its depth. Its natural reaction is to swing face about. One suspects everyone got wet; they probably stripped off but Victorian reserve makes this unmentionable.

Many hazards are mentioned by other riders: Ernest Leuba provides a harrowing account of his horse being snagged in deep mud and eventually drowning and nearly losing his own life.<sup>18</sup> Capt. Hepburn was also to write of an incident:

I was stripped... with my shirt and all my underclothes with [Joseph] Hawdon's watch and my own all stuffed into my boots and slung round

my neck, so in I go. This horse had been in the habit of crossing at low tide, and as soon as he found that he would have to swim he began to plunge up and down, reaching the ground at each plunge, first with his fore and then with his hind feet, and dipped me up to the neck. However, I kept my seat and landed safe. We then set about drying our clothes.<sup>19</sup>

On this excursion in March 1845 to South Gippsland La Trobe had a close call, later recounted in a letter to his brother:

My horse having fallen and turned completely over upon me in attempting to scramble over a deep narrow water course completely hidden in the scrub, keeping me pinned down under him, half in half out of the rut for three or four minutes whilst he was struggling and kicking over me. Fortunately I kept my head out of the way of his heels, and was able to take advantage of his becoming quiet through exhaustion to worm my way quietly from under him with only a few bruises.<sup>20</sup>

This rather understates what is every rider's greatest fear: going down under a horse. He was lucky. Four days later, having completed a traverse of south Gippsland the return journey from Eagle Point began.

In his long rides as the Crown's principal representative, La Trobe had a precedent. Governor Lachlan Macquarie between 1810 and 1822 made many tours of inspection 'of



**Eugene von Guérard, 1822-1901, artist**  
**Forest, Cape Otway Ranges, 1865**  
 Chalk lithograph, tint stones on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H25818

newly discovered country' in company with his wife (who was reputed to be an excellent horsewoman) as well as ten officials and companions, plus those handling the equipage. In 1815 on one journey, he meticulously records that they rode 277 miles in nine days including two days of thirty-eight miles.<sup>21</sup> Macquarie was criticised for having spent 500 pounds on camping equipment imported from India. That is a huge sum. It will be noted that La Trobe recorded a similar daily average mileage through virtually unexplored country and with vastly less baggage.

Later in this same year (1845) La Trobe made his three attempts to reach Cape Otway. These have been covered in other articles in *La Trobeana*.<sup>22</sup> Suffice to say that the Otways offered their own tests of fortitude and navigation. We can glimpse the terrain in the art works of Guérard and Chevalier, or for that matter in a drive along Turtons Track. In such a high rainfall area the going would have been heavy for the horses, the descent down the long spur into Wild Dog Creek very testing. The eastern route was abandoned in the attempt, so they swung westwards in what was a long hard-ridden detour towards Warrnambool. Maintaining sustenance was not easy and occasionally in the *Notes*, we get a glimpse of the privations.

Let us now consider the difficulties of navigation. In 1849 between Cape Otway and

Moonlight Head, La Trobe and Dana became completely lost and they: ...'had a day of the most severe exertion ever encountered... heat, hunger, thirst & doubt'.<sup>23</sup> An experienced and fit adventurer like La Trobe would have carried a pocket compass and maybe a small telescope. One can deduce that he was often taking a fix on a peak or land-mark and then following a rough bearing. In the timbered but undulating country to the north and west of the Cape Otway there are few stand-out features. At different times he uses terms like 'steered for' and sometimes 'seriously missed' or 'difficult to hit', indicating dead reckoning. He obviously had an innate sense of direction. The prismatic compass was invented in 1812 and was most likely in his travel kit. It comes into its own when a topographical map is oriented beneath it, a bearing read off and the prism then used to define a forward course in the hair line. However, they had no topographical maps. It would be a further thirty years before Skene as Surveyor General had completed the Colony's detailed topographical survey. Those maps are elegant and still in use even in this era of GPS.

The long rides in the Western District to the Grampians or north to Pyramid Hill or east to Gippsland are impressive.<sup>24</sup> One such completed only two months after the aforementioned South Gippsland excursion took in Geelong, Colac, Warrnambool, then on to Belfast (Port Fairy), followed by a huge northern sweep taking in Trawalla (near Beaufort) then Decameron



**Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn  
Liardet, 1799-1878, artist  
Joseph William Lowry,  
1803-1879, engraver  
View of Melbourne  
Port Phillip, 1845 (detail)**

Engraving, proof on brown paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library  
Victoria, H18113  
Superintendent La Trobe centre,  
Major St John police magistrate  
left, Mayor Henry Condell right,  
depicted on the south bank  
of the Yarra River, opposite  
Collins Street hill

(Navarre) and homeward via Learmonth's *Buninyong* station. It tallied nearly 600 miles or 960 kilometres spread over fifteen days.<sup>25</sup> Given time spent at the settlements or stations, it meant at least forty miles (or 65km) on successive days. On many of his journeys he expresses disappointment at a lack of relief horses or hard feed. In the *Notes* we read often of their horses being 'knocked up'. In May 1845 for instance, after the long ride from Colac he and Dana had made it to Synnot's (Little River). There was no feed and Dana's horse was exhausted. La Trobe though, after a rest pressed on, arriving home at midnight. He adds 'brave horse'. Hopefully someone was woken to wash down 'the brave' and give him some feed.

La Trobe's disappointment at lack of feed is understandable. A horse replenishes its energy much more quickly on hard feed (grain). Hubert de Castella wrote that at the outstations each hand was allotted several horses, two of which were kept yarded for his immediate use, with the others foraging for feed in the bush.<sup>26</sup> It was found to be cheaper to supply the stockman with at least two horses even in the 1840s than to supply hard feed to maintain one horse in fit condition for continuous use. This also shows why sometimes La Trobe could borrow horses for circuits or return rides.

Several journeys in 1847 tell of different trials. In June La Trobe had left Corio mid-afternoon on his own. Darkness closed in by 6pm. It was a very dark, overcast, moonless night. He spent twelve hours in the saddle on a ride of forty miles. A taxing journey as horse and rider picked their way along. Not for him the reassurance of a sighting of the Southern Cross, nor for Blackey the scent of a stable mate close

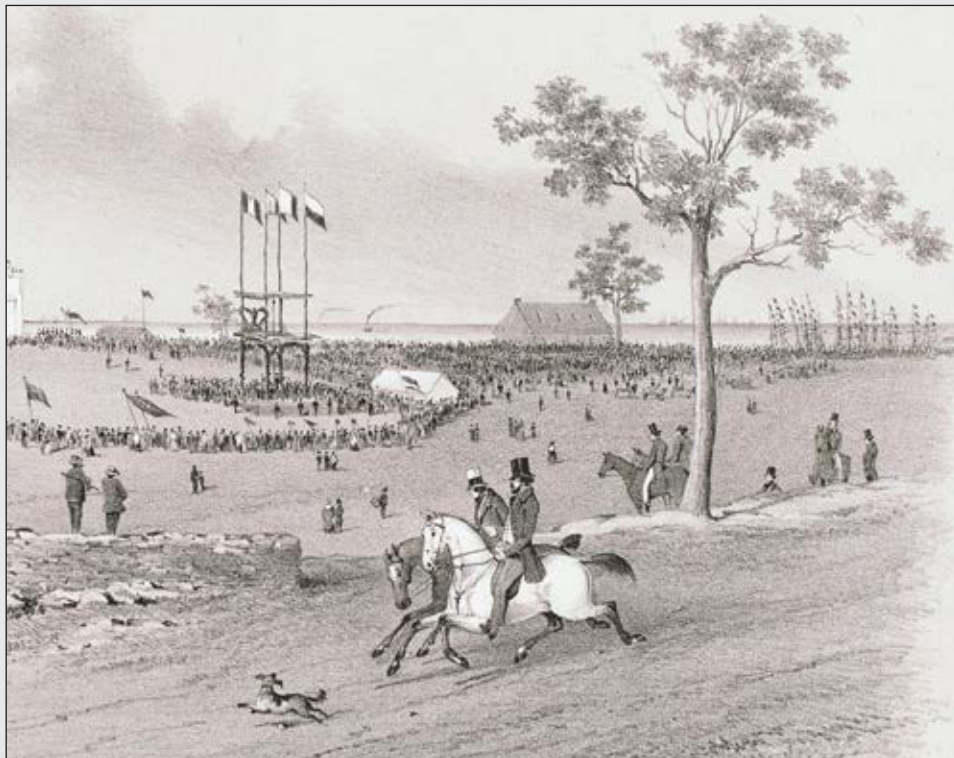
by. Arriving home after 2am a footnote, 'poor Blackey'.<sup>27</sup> I would say noble Blackey – so much of the way-finding relied on him.

In July he made another long sweep through the South West in what he describes as dreadful weather, taking both Blackey and Bluebeard, but at his lodging there was neither shelter nor food for the horses.<sup>28</sup> Then a third journey in September of that year brought this little tragedy:

I rode over the Plains accompanied by Marley, he riding Blackey. Long on the road... Blackey just in from grass, & overfed by a bad groom, gets poorly cared for by Fyans, all evening & night & dies of inflammation the following day, in spite of all we could do.<sup>29</sup>

La Trobe allowed himself a passing regret: 'A good horse & companion, I had ridden him for 8 years. Very much grieved. Buried him by the river side' (the Leigh). The fact that he was buried, itself no easy task, says something of his affection for the horse. Blackey most likely suffered an intestinal blockage which can follow a sudden change in diet. It is possible though, that he may have suffered a series of heart attacks. On his ride back La Trobe climbed Station Peak. Perhaps from there, a wistful look back towards the Leigh.

Two months later, in November eight days spent in Gippsland in company with Dana, Edward Grimes and a trooper would test any rider. After leaving Bun-Bunyep [*sic*] on their second day out, and traversing what he describes as a cleared road with rough bridges over four creek crossings, they entered very wet



Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818–1880, artist  
 Laying the foundation stone of the Geelong & Melbourne Railway, 1853 (detail)  
 Chalk lithograph

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H18108  
 There is no known picture showing La Trobe as a fast rider, but Gill's portrayal of the Lieutenant-Governor arriving for the ceremony on 'a day of bustle' in Geelong depicts him navigating the dog hazard

forested country. In heavy rain they made camp. La Trobe slept in a tree which says much for conditions on the ground.<sup>30</sup> We can picture the scene: poor smoky fire, wet clothes, miserable, hungry, hobbled horses and most probably, leeches. Next day, further east of Moe Moe [*sic*] they were joined by Charles Tyers and Alfred Brodribb, and headed for Hobson's arriving hungry and wet. They may have gained relief horses. Their next camp was at *Snake Ridge* run near Rosedale on their fifth day out. From there they began the return. It was an excursion of close to 300 miles (480 km). As usual he pushed hard. La Trobe records a brief glimpse of the Baw Baws doubtless with the clouds lifting.

We can gain a better view of this country through the eyes of Bishop and Mrs Perry who in February 1849 took an extensive trip into Gippsland.<sup>31</sup> They had driven out to the Police Paddocks (present-day Rowville) where Dana had obviously been detailed by La Trobe to look after them. This he assuredly did, escorting them with five Native Police troopers. The Perrys recorded each of their escorts' names and had discourse with them throughout the journey. They were driving with a horse

in the shafts and another as outrigger,<sup>32</sup> and behind them a trooper leading Mrs Perry's pony Blossom with side saddle loosely buckled. After twenty miles driving through forests they arrived at the *La Trobe Inn*. There they lunched, left the carriage and continued on for another twenty miles riding their horses and stopped overnight at the *Burna Burnip*, an inn of rough slabs. They describe the deep gullies, five in all, with tree ferns twenty feet (over six metres) high encountered on the next day as surpassing the best in a conservatory. On the following day, still in bush country we can share Mrs Perry's elation that she had ridden forty-five miles in a day. Remember that she was riding side-saddle and cantering the flat stretches but still entranced by the magnificent forest country. East of the Morwell they rested for a few days at a station (not identified) and then began their swing south to Alberton where the Bishop took services in a store and chose a site for a parsonage.<sup>33</sup>

La Trobe and contemporaries like Dana, Mueller, Guérard, or Howitt thought their rides unremarkable. To us they seem extraordinary. On many of his journeys he rode over sixty-five kilometres on successive days. In this age, the

sport of endurance riding provides a comparison. Competitors ride courses of sixty, eighty or 120 kilometres through varied topography in a day on very well prepared horses. It is not a race. The horse has a pre-start veterinary check giving full metabolic profile. The course is usually split into forty-kilometre legs and a half-hour after each leg is completed, there is another full veterinary check reading pulse, temperature, blood pressure and the horse is trotted to confirm free movement. If the horse fails, the rider withdraws. At the conclusion there is another check. Annually there is the Tom Quilty ride, 160 kilometres in a day. The latter aside, the distances per day are similar, the times are shorter but the emphasis is on the fitness of the horse. What endurance riders term a marathon (240km) ours might have deemed just something incidental to a normal week's work.

Horses were worked much harder in the nineteenth century, some until they dropped. La Trobe was no exception but did spell his horses regularly at the Police Paddocks, sending them out with a groom from *Jolimont*. Mostly from his letters to daughter Agnes<sup>34</sup> we learn a little of his stable: Bluebeard, Billie, Caverley, Hassan, Marie, Noggnogery, Prince (a fine strong grey), Roger, Tasman and Tommy; then there was Mamma's pony Vic and his favourite Blackey. La Trobe encountered similar hazards to Major Mitchell in 1835. The virgin soils were soft and subject to small depressions. He calls them 'crab holes'.<sup>35</sup> Then in forested country wombat holes could give way, bringing the rider down and risking a leg break.

There are other journeys which look challenging and which involved some climbing and exploration on foot, with horses either hobbled or tethered awaiting the return. Those in the Grampians, Macedon, or Tallarook would have tested the navigational skills – not so much to find the peak but to find their mounts afterwards.

As the pressures of goldfields administration mounted La Trobe's journeys to *Yering* would have been a relief. His visit in early 1852 driving the family in a drag (a wagon with two transverse seats and storage space behind) gave him obvious pleasure,<sup>36</sup> but one ride two years later took my eye. He covered the thirty-six miles (58 km) in an afternoon.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps his friend Paul de Castella was impressed with this sprint but probably not. His last ride, not long before his final departure, was from Yan Yean along the bush track ascending Mount Disappointment. La Trobe certainly would not have walked his horse. Perhaps though, from the top, a wistful look back over Yan Yean towards the distant town, which he was soon to leave.

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From the scant *Notes* a picture emerges of a very fit, resilient man imbued with a sound sense of direction and the ability to ride long and hard. Unlike near contemporaries, Mueller or Howitt, both of whom also spent weeks in the saddle, La Trobe seems driven by a sense of urgency. Was it a conflict between his natural desire for adventure on one hand and his conscientious devotion to the paper-work on the other? Was he hard on his horses? Given that so often he rode them to complete exhaustion, even by the standards of the day, I think he was.<sup>38</sup> He was often accompanied by Native Police, yet they remain largely unacknowledged. Their horsemanship, so recently acquired, their contribution to finding the way, their bit-part in taking forward relief horses or tracking those hobbled, we have to glean from Dana's writing if at all. La Trobe covered vast swathes of the Colony in conditions that none of his successors would face and always at some personal risk.<sup>39</sup> Folk-law aside, I think he could ride with the best of them.

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#### Endnotes

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  - 2 Glenice Wood Lake, *The Land they Learnt to Love: ten years in the life of a squatting family in the Port Phillip District, 1839-1849*, Ballarat: Glenice Wood Lake, 2018, p.27.
  - 3 Waler was a term coined by the British in India for horses bred in the colony of New South Wales. Waler Horse Society of Australia Inc, <https://www.walershorse.com/sample-page> (accessed 2 August 2018).
  - 4 *Australian Notes*, p.93.
  - 5 *Ibid*, p.110.
  - 6 *Ibid*, pp.93-94.
  - 7 Andrew Lemon, *Box Hill*, Melbourne: Box Hill City Council in conjunction with Lothian, 1978, p.6.
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- 13 Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2011, pp.161, 168-169.
- 14 *Australian Notes*, pp.128-133. See also Fay Woodhouse, 'La Trobe in South Gippsland', *La Trobeana*, vol.4, no.1, April 2006, pp.3-7.
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- 16 Named after his eldest daughter who was to leave for Switzerland for her education.
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- 19 Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc., addressed by the Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq.*, Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library, 1898, p.50.
- 20 Letter to Peter La Trobe, 6 April 1845, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, H6976, cited John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University 2017, p.192.
- 21 Lachlan Macquarie. *Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales: Journals of his Tours of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1810-1822*, Sydney: Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1956, pp.111-127.
- 22 Tim Gatehouse, 'Our First Class Light': the role of Charles Joseph La Trobe in building the Cape Otway Lighthouse', *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.3, November 2017, pp.15-27; Dianne Reilly, 'La Trobe's Discovery of Cape Otway', *La Trobeana*, vol.4, no.1, April, 2006, pp.10-12.
- 23 *Australian Notes*, p.176.
- 24 For a chronology of journeys see Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp.263-266.
- 25 *Australian Notes*, p.133-136.
- 26 de Castella, p.66.
- 27 *Australian Notes*, p.158.
- 28 *Ibid*, p.160.
- 29 *Ibid*, p.161.
- 30 *Ibid*, p.162. The eucalypts in parts of Gippsland were so big and the burnt hollows of such size, that some early settlers dwelt in them whilst building their home.
- 31 Frances Perry, *Australian Sketches: the journals & letters of Frances Perry*, edited by A de Q. Robin, Melbourne: Queensberry Hill Press, 1983, pp.106-119.
- 32 The term 'outrigger' today applies to a horse in training in a special brake. In this instance though it was a means of ferrying a relief horse. It was firmly attached to one shaft, so bore no load.
- 33 The Bishop was soon to find that the Rev. Willoughby Bean had already purchased a parsonage. (Loreen Chambers, article forthcoming in *La Trobeana*, 2019.)
- 34 La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/27, Charles La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 29 January 1848 and 28 February 1852 (extracts accessible via the La Trobe Society website).
- 35 *Australian Notes*, p.93. The scientific name for these naturally occurring depressions is 'gilgai'.
- 36 *Ibid*, p.210.
- 37 *Ibid*, p.222.
- 38 For a contemporary's view, see Annie Baxter Dawbin. *A Face in the Glass* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1992) describing La Trobe's party arriving at Yambuck 13 May 1845: 'Presently up rode the Squadron - composed of Messrs La Trobe, Henty, Blair, Dana and Ritchie - and after remaining some time, rode to Belfast. Mr Learmonth accompanied them... Mr La Trobe has an intelligent eye & is gentlemanly in his manner. I'm told he is an amusing companion; but he is cruel to his horses I think in riding so terribly fast'. (p.72)
- 39 The *Notes* record several falls whilst riding, and sprains, bruises and other injuries of varying severity that La Trobe sustained in the bush.

# District Surgeon to Chief Medical Officer: pioneer public health practitioners Port Phillip District

By Dr Walter Heale

**Walter Heale is a retired renal physician with an interest in medical history. He participated in the transcription and publication of the Port Phillip Medical Association Minute Book 1846-1851, the first minute book of the now Australian Medical Association. As a member of the La Trobe Society, he was involved in the transcription and digitisation of the Inward Correspondence to Superintendent Charles La Trobe at the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV, VPRS 19). Professionally, he was involved in establishing chronic dialysis and kidney transplantation in Victoria and New Zealand.**

*This is a revised version of a paper given in the Members Talk to Members program, 9 July 2017*

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The 1835 squatter settlement that was officially named Melbourne in 1837 began as a commercial venture initiated by Vandemonians, most notably the fifteen members of the Port Phillip Association. The aim was to secure new pastoral country against a background of scarcity in Van Diemen's Land following a generation of land grants. John Batman conducted a preliminary expedition of Port Phillip in May and June 1835, and reported to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur in Hobart that he had signed a treaty to acquire swathes of land from the Aboriginal population.<sup>1</sup>

Before the treaty was repudiated by Governor Bourke of New South Wales in September, other intending settlers, including the Fawkner party, had crossed the strait from Launceston.<sup>2</sup> In October Bourke wrote to the Colonial Office in London, recommending official occupation of the Port Phillip District.<sup>3</sup> Batman simultaneously wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur: 'In the report (of June) the Association communicated their intention of engaging a surgeon and catechist; this pledge has been realized, and Doctor Thomson proceeds with me to execute these duties'.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1836 Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, replied to Bourke that private settlement in the Port Phillip District would be allowed under the Crown. This was

formalized with the arrival from Sydney in October of Captain William Lonsdale as Police Magistrate and Commandant with a set of instructions for military and civil administration, a detachment of troops, and an assignment of convict workers.<sup>5</sup> Over his first twelve months Lonsdale made three official medical appointments that laid the basis for a public health service, which together with the arrival of private practitioners, formed a medical presence in the District by the time Superintendent La Trobe arrived in October 1839.

## Sources

The *Historical Records of Victoria Foundation Series*,<sup>6</sup> produced by Public Records Office Victoria and covering the period from 1836 to 1839/40, together with the digital record of Inward Registered Correspondence to Superintendent Charles La Trobe 1839-1851 (VPRS 19/P), provide a continuous record of early developments in the Port Phillip District. The aim of this study in the field of public health was to identify individuals and events that led to the establishment of a public Medical (Health) Department, and the appointment of a Chief Medical Officer in 1854.

The inward correspondence to La Trobe contains almost 27,000 files. Searching a digital copy provided by PROV of the spreadsheets



Unknown photographer  
Alexander Thomson, c.1860  
Heritage Centre, Geelong Regional Libraries  
Thomson settled at *Kardinia* Geelong in 1836

summarising the correspondence identified letters of interest, the actions taken on their receipt and the formation of cumulative files. The details in individual files were accessed by digital search at [www.prov.vic.gov.au](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au), using either a file number (e.g. 42/1408, describing the formation of the Medical Board) or subject name (e.g. Acting Immigration Agent). Files of particular interest were then inspected directly at PROV.

### ***Dr Alexander Thomson, Pioneer Medical Officer***

Thomson received his medical training in Aberdeen and London, arriving in Hobart in 1831 and becoming a businessman and pastoralist. He supported but did not join the Port Phillip Association, sending a consignment of cattle with Batman in November 1835. He arrived in March 1836 on a salary of £200 per year paid by the Association, pitched a tent and conducted Sunday services on the current site of St Paul's Cathedral.

Medical responsibilities under Government were consolidated in September with a military instruction to the incoming Lonsdale: 'The District Surgeon at Port Phillip will be required to attend the detachment. A small quantity of medicine and medical comforts will be sent to be used if wanted'.<sup>7</sup> Marking the end of the Port Phillip Association's role, the accompanying civil instruction stated:

A gentleman having being appointed Surgeon and Catechist by the residents now at Port Phillip, you are authorized to place the name of this individual,

if you think him qualified, on the Abstract of the District, at his present rate of pay from the date of your landing, and to inform him that he is thenceforward to consider himself in the employment of this Government and placed under your orders.<sup>8</sup>

However, it became evident that Thomson's burgeoning pastoral interests in the Geelong area had become paramount, and he relinquished the medical post after ten weeks.<sup>9</sup> Along with Dr Jonathan Clerke, he participated in establishing the Geelong Presbyterian Church, and in 1850 became the first Mayor of Geelong.

### ***Dr Barry Cotter, Assistant Colonial Surgeon 1837***

Cotter as a twenty-three year old Irish graduate emigrated to Van Diemen's Land in 1830 and was the Assistant Colonial Surgeon at Campbell Town until 1835. He arrived in Port Phillip with Batman in November 1835, as agent for John Gellibrand and pastoral manager for Batman. In November 1836 he applied for Thomson's position. Lonsdale had reservations, but since he was the only other doctor in the settlement he was appointed on a temporary basis. Notably he diagnosed an epidemic of scurvy (vitamin C deficiency) amongst the convicts, recommending the provision of fresh vegetables. A mercurial personality, he attended a meeting to decide the location of the first church and fought the first pistol duel in Melbourne.<sup>10</sup>

After nine months he was succeeded by Patrick Cussen. Cotter went on to open a medical and apothecary practice on the north-east corner of Queen and Collins Streets. He formed a partnership with Dr Samuel McCurdy, then with Dr Arthur O'Mullane, to whom in 1840 he sold his interest in the practice. The apothecary business became Wilson and Co. located on the south-west corner of Swanston and Bourke Streets, on land purchased by Cotter at the second land sale in November 1837.

Cotter briefly returned to government service from April to June 1840, as part of the quarantine and management of the fever ship *Glen Huntly*. He then journeyed to Britain, and on returning to Melbourne found his business affairs in disarray. Thereafter he pursued a peripatetic career in South Australia and New South Wales, dying at Swan Hill in 1877. The Australian Medical Association archives record a plaque that was unveiled there in 1936, in the presence of descendants and members of the then British Medical Association, to commemorate his arrival as the first practitioner in 1835.





Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn Liardet, 1799-1878, artist  
**Dr Cussen's House [1875]**  
 Watercolour with pen, ink, gouache and pencil  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H28230/30  
 A view of the house in 1843

***Dr Patrick Cussen,  
 Assistant Colonial Surgeon 1837-1848***

Cussen, an Irishman, graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from Edinburgh University in 1820, and arrived in Melbourne as the Assistant Colonial Surgeon in September 1837, aged forty-five. He first lived in Market Street, moving to a house on the south side of Lonsdale Street between William and Queen Streets.

His salary was the standard amount for his rank, and he was provided with a budget to run a small hospital:

Dr Patrick Cussen	
Assistant Colonial	
Surgeon Melbourne . . . . .	7s 6d per day
Housing allowance . . . . .	£50 p.a.
Hospital	
Provisions and	
medical comforts . . . . .	£120 p.a.
Utensils and	
hospital furniture . . . . .	£100 p.a.
Incidental expenses . . . . .	£10 p.a.
Dispenser . . . . .	8d per day <sup>11</sup>

The hospital was a small wattle and daub building near the north-west corner of what became King Street and Flinders Lane. Cussen kept a daily record of patients treated, managing six inpatients and ten outpatients daily by the end of December.<sup>12</sup> He also reported that the medicine chest was in disarray and Cussen was later allowed to employ a dispenser and purchase medical supplies locally. Military barracks were widespread from Mount Macedon to Geelong. To reduce travel for Cussen and provide a local service, Dr Clerke was appointed an Assistant Colonial Surgeon in Geelong in 1838 on an annual stipend of £50. Cussen's outpatient

work later increased with a decree in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* of 7 August 1839 that: 'In order to avert the calamities which must necessarily follow if Small Pox be introduced into the colony... children will receive Vaccination gratis if taken to any Public Hospitals or Colonial Surgeons.' In 1839 he was the first doctor to perform an operation (an amputation), some years before the availability of ether anaesthesia in the District.

In May 1838 eight months after his arrival Cussen wrote to Lonsdale: 'The miserable state of our temporary hospital here... renders it imperative on me to request you will represent to Government the immediate necessity of providing some suitable house for reception of the sick'.<sup>13</sup> The authorities in Sydney agreed to the proposal, and a new hospital was established at the north-west corner of William and Collins Streets. The new facility measuring 22 feet by 16 feet (6.7 metres by 4.9 metres) could accommodate seven beds with more sleeping on the floor as required; cooking was done in the room. The convict population provided the majority of patients, Cussen treating the military and the mounted police and families in their barracks.

Cussen met Charles La Trobe shortly after his arrival to discuss a number of issues. La Trobe asked for a report which Cussen submitted in January 1840, highlighting an increasing demand for hospital admissions:

I do myself the honor respectively to represent to you the very miserable state and total inadequacy of the small fragile building (of one apartment) used here for the reception of the



**Robert Hodde, 1794-1881, artist**  
**Melbourne, Port Phillip, from Surveyor-General's Yard, 1840**  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H258  
 Shows the Government Hospital on Collins Street above the horse,  
 the Barracks on the left and Gaol on the right

sick. Independent of the prisoners in the service of the Government... a great increase has taken place in the number of the assigned servants in the district. Our beds... do not afford accommodation for half the applications under the head of convicts alone.<sup>14</sup>

This report became part of a debate on how to provide appropriate hospital facilities, which later included a private facility in a house provided by John Fawkner, and a charitable hospice run by the St James Church Visiting Society. The hospice was subsumed by the Melbourne Hospital when it opened in 1848.

### ***Dr John Patterson RN, Acting Immigration Agent***

Patterson from Strabane, County Tyrone entered the Royal Navy medical program at seventeen, participating in the Napoleonic Wars. On return to Britain he was promoted to Surgeon, later retiring on half pay for health reasons. Returning to Strabane, an 1835 epidemic led to his appointment in charge of a cholera hospital.<sup>15</sup> In 1839 Patterson emigrated to Sydney as Surgeon Superintendent on the *Argyle*, and then successfully negotiated with Governor Gipps a similar role on the *John Barry* bound for Melbourne, notice of his imminent arrival being conveyed to Lonsdale.<sup>16</sup> In July 1839 Patterson, along with Drs John Holland and Samuel McCurdy in October, became the first Port Phillip practitioners registered by the newly-formed New South Wales Medical Board.

La Trobe landed on the 1 October 1839, and kept a diary of meetings over the succeeding weeks. Following the arrival of the Government-sponsored immigrant ship the *David Clark* from Greenock, Scotland on the 27 October, La Trobe wrote: 'Appointed Immigration Board to meet me at half past eleven to go on board *David Clarke* [sic]. Went on board. Mustered and survey. Chairman Dr Patterson assisted by Secretary and Mr Le Soeuf, Dr Cussen, Captain Lonsdale and self, board. Everything in good order'.<sup>17</sup>

The voyage had been a success with 229 immigrants arriving, with a birth and only one death en route. Patterson met with La Trobe on a number of occasions to report on the successful landing and employment of the immigrants. Following correspondence with Sydney, Patterson was paid a fee for his initial efforts and a lesser amount thereafter.<sup>18</sup> The Colonial Secretary also indicated that La Trobe could pay for: 'local persons engaged in the superintendence and examination of emigrants at Port Phillip, or not, according to his own discretion, in future cases'.

### ***The 'Glen Huntly' and 'Salsette' incidents***

On the 16 April 1840 the government-sponsored *Glen Huntly* arrived in Melbourne flying a yellow quarantine flag, and moored at Red Bluff (Point Ormond) with a load of physically distressed passengers. The ship had left Greenock in October to pick up emigrants in Oban, a town with prevalent fevers. The ship

Name & designation of ship	Date of arrival	Number of days being	Remuneration per diem		Total amt	
			£	s	£	s
David Clarke } Government Emigration Ship	1839 October 27 <sup>th</sup>	19 days	15	14	5	0
The William Metcalfe } W. John Marshall Inspector	November 19 <sup>th</sup>	9 days	10	6	4	14
The Ship Palmyra with } Bounty Immigrants	November 24 <sup>th</sup>	5 days	16	6	2	13
Sum total			21		12	

Record of payment to Dr John Patterson as acting Emigration Agent, October–November 1839

had run aground leaving Oban, and returned to Greenock for repairs, by which time various fevers had incubated including scarletina, measles and small pox. Over the month required for repairs there were further cases. The ship's surgeon superintendent, Dr George Brown, believed heading for warmer climes would be advantageous, but the weather remained inclement throughout most of the voyage and new cases continued.

On 17 April La Trobe deployed troops on the foreshore to quarantine the ship, and furrows were dug to define 'well' and 'sick' camps. Barry Cotter was employed to supervise the well camp, with the ship's surgeon superintendent looking after the sick. Disembarkation began ten days after arrival; release of the immigrants began in early June and was completed by July. Of 168 passengers, there were 105 cases of fever and 15 deaths including three at Red Bluff. In August Patterson wrote a detailed report for the Colonial Secretary, based on a review written by Brown in May.<sup>19</sup> Patterson was of the view that leaving Greenock reflected a degree of the surgeon's inexperience. He also wrote a detailed report of the 721 immigrants arriving in Melbourne from January to June, on the *Glen Huntly* and on three bounty immigrant ships.<sup>20</sup>

In January 1841 there was a similar though milder episode of illness.<sup>21</sup> Patterson and the recently appointed Coroner Dr Wilmot<sup>22</sup> were asked by La Trobe to assess the nature of a fever that had broken out in the town. They traced the source to immigrants who had recently disembarked from the *Salsette* from Liverpool, judged the fever to be of moderate severity likely to subside, and arranged to report progress to Cussen every second day.<sup>23</sup> The episode coincided with two letters from the Colonial Secretary regarding public health. In the first letter Governor Gipps declined to appoint an

Immigration Officer in Melbourne on the basis of declining emigration to the Australian colony, and a want of sufficient documentation concerning Patterson's activities.<sup>24</sup> A second letter written on the same day stated: 'His Excellency cannot consider that the appointment of a health officer in addition to a Colonial Surgeon would be consistent with that degree of economy he is bound to exercise. I am further to observe that there was no health officer in Sydney prior to 1839.'<sup>25</sup> A month later medical practitioners across town reported the epidemic was subsiding, with continuing medical comforts being provided to the poor.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the 1840s Patterson continued as Acting Immigration Agent. He pursued other interests including local government and the 1842 election of the first Mayor of Melbourne. That year he also became the inaugural president of the St Patrick's Society. On 27 June 1851 he submitted a list of clerks in the Immigration Department eligible for a temporary pay rise celebrating the imminent Separation from New South Wales.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence of Separation, the Inward Series of Correspondence to Superintendent La Trobe ceased on 30 June.

### ***Dr William Wilmot, Coroner and the establishment of a local Medical Board***

In January 1840 Lonsdale wrote to La Trobe recommending the appointment of a coroner: 'which I think is now necessary from the number of sudden deaths which occur... as I am certain the public would be better satisfied if these enquiries were made in the accustomed manner before a Coroner and Jury than before a Magistrate only'.<sup>28</sup> Funds were made available in the following year's budget, with William Wilmot being appointed Coroner for the County of Bourke including Melbourne in February 1841.<sup>29</sup> Wilmot had trained in

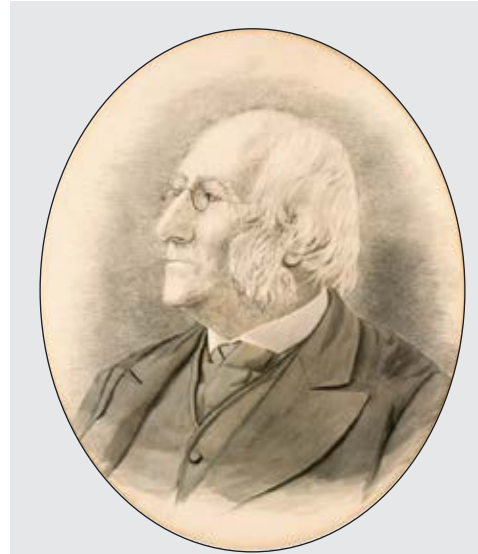
Edinburgh and London, and was subsequently a physician at the South London Dispensary and the Royal Infirmary for Children.

An issue for Wilmot was the qualification of doctors called upon to give evidence at coronial inquests. In 1842 he proposed formation of local medical board to La Trobe to scrutinise and verify diplomas, noting the reluctance of practitioners to send their documents to a distant Sydney and adding some 'unpleasant and inconvenient results have come to my knowledge'. A recommendation was forwarded to Governor Gipps who declined, commenting: 'nothing can be done without an act of Council, the introduction of which at present would be inconvenient'.<sup>30</sup>

Wilmot became a member of the Temperance Society and a trustee of the State Bank. In 1844 he was made a Magistrate, and two months later he and a fellow Magistrate James Smith proposed the banning of the sale of spirits in tap rooms attached to public houses: 'Assessing the various causes tending to demoralise the lower classes of the inhabitants of Melbourne, we are persuaded that the existence of public house taps may be reckoned as the most extensively mischievous'.<sup>31</sup> The proposal was forwarded to Sydney, and within a month Gipps issued a proclamation extending an existing statute to Melbourne, banning the sale of spirits in tap rooms, confirmation arriving in Melbourne on 27 July 1844.<sup>32</sup>

On the same day a second proposal to establish a local Medical Board was sent to Sydney. On this occasion the request was accompanied by a petition of fifteen practitioners including Cussen, Patterson and Wilmot. The relevant legislation was signed by Gipps in early September, and in October Drs Cussen (President), Hobson, Howitt and Wilmot accepted invitations to sit on the Board. George Alexander Gilbert as Secretary to the Board called for practitioners to submit their diplomas, and asked for a supply of stationary including registration certificates.<sup>33</sup> The names of the first twenty-one registered practitioners were published in the *Port Phillip Government Gazette* in January 1845. The number of registered doctors rose rapidly over the gold-rush era, from 53 practitioners in 1850 to 369 in 1855, as recorded in the Medical Board old registry.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1848 the Melbourne Hospital was opened with Drs Hobson, Howitt and O'Mullane as physicians, Hobson dying prematurely aged thirty-four of tuberculosis and replaced by Wilmot who was the first appointee elected by a vote of subscribers.<sup>35</sup> Wilmot continued in his professional roles until 1854,



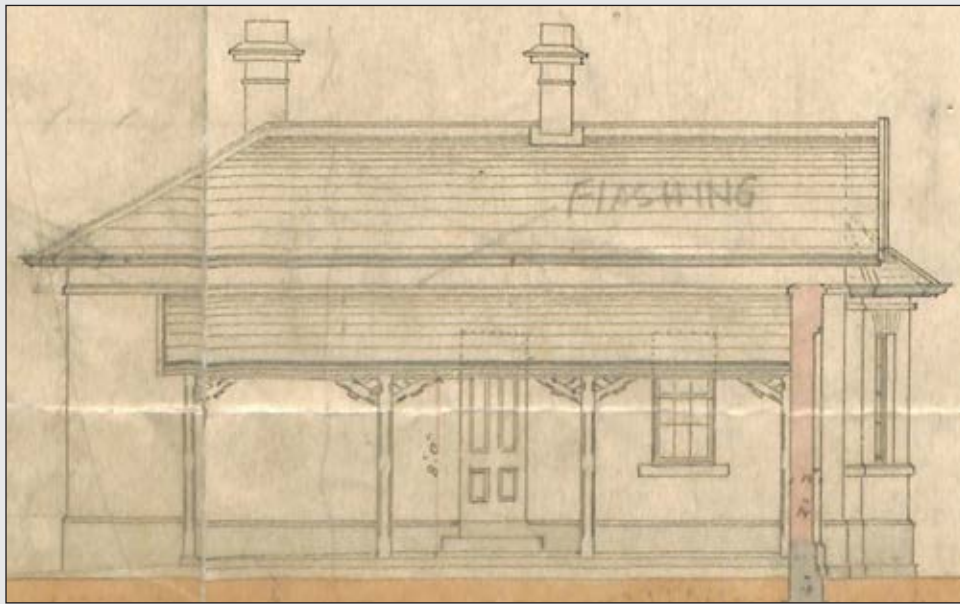
Unknown artist  
Dr William Byam Wilmot, c.1858  
Watercolour in grey tones  
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H28379

when he was granted leave of absence following the death of his wife. At the time the number of inquests had increased from 63 in 1847 to 262 in 1853, with more coroners employed to handle the caseload.<sup>36</sup> On his return from England he resumed his coronial duties and published a paper titled 'The Principles of Pathology' in the inaugural edition of the *Australian Medical Journal*. In 1857 he resigned and left permanently to live in England.

### ***Dr Patrick Cussen Colonial Surgeon and the Yarra Bend Asylum***

In May 1846 Cussen was elected as the inaugural President of the Port Phillip Medical Association, an early meeting reporting the first use of ether anaesthetic in the District. A library was established, with annual orders for new books sent to London - Cussen's particular interest being a contemporary psychiatric text. People with severe mental instability were cared for by Cussen in the gaol and if their condition proved to be intractable they were transferred to the Tarwan Creek Asylum in Sydney.<sup>37</sup>

By 1847 Tarwan Creek could no longer accept Port Phillip patients and in October La Trobe received permission to build a local asylum and to pay Cussen as the attending medical officer.<sup>38</sup> Cussen, recently promoted to the position of Colonial Surgeon, forwarded on behalf of the selection board a list of potential appointees to the asylum who were approved by Gipps.<sup>39</sup> James Smith as Visiting Justice at the gaol, drew up the directions needed to obtain warrants to move patients from the goal, Gipps issuing writs 'for the removal of 10 Lunatics



**Plan of entrance gate lodge, Yarra Bend Asylum, 1860**  
(PROV VPRS 3686/P0017, Unit 1225)

to the Asylum'.<sup>40</sup> A month later the Colonial Secretary asked whether there was room for the fourteen Port Phillip patients at Tarwan Creek; Cussen in a memo felt it would be difficult to immediately accommodate both local and the Sydney patients in the new facility.<sup>41</sup> The process of establishing the asylum had taken a year, with Cussen on occasions using his own carriage to transport inmates from the gaol to the asylum.

Within six months Cussen's health began to fail and he was looked after by Dr Arthur O'Mullane until his death in May 1849. O'Mullane then acted as the temporary visiting Physician to the Asylum, later becoming a member of the Asylum Board. Cussen's successor as Colonial Surgeon and President of the Medical Board was Dr John Sullivan.

### ***Colony of Victoria and the Public Health Acts of 1854***

Following Sullivan's death in 1853 La Trobe recommended to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that Dr William McCrea RN MRCS be appointed Colonial Surgeon. McCrea had recently been an Assistant Colonial Surgeon on the Castlemaine goldfields, as well as acting as a Coroner and Magistrate since his arrival in Victoria in 1852. La Trobe stated:

In selecting a successor, I have had special regard to the various qualifications which are required in the conduct of what has become gradually,

since the discovery of gold, a very large branch of the Public Service, and I have now the honor to request that Your Grace will have the goodness to sanction the appointment of William McCrea M.B., Surgeon to the Royal Navy who has been appointed by me to take control of the Medical Department, pending the significance of Her Majesty's pleasure.<sup>42</sup>

In 1854 two significant Acts were passed by the Victorian Parliament. The first made vaccination of children compulsory, to be performed and certified by a registered doctor.<sup>43</sup> The second was *An Act for promoting the Public Health in the populous places in the Colony of Victoria*.<sup>44</sup> McCrea was named Chief Medical Officer, and the Assistant Colonial Surgeons became District Surgeons. McCrea was to serve in the position for twenty-six years.

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This study describes the role of five pioneer practitioners in the development of public health practices in the Port Phillip District, commencing with a Government hospital service through to the building of a mental asylum. Registration of medical practitioners, coronial inquests, management of epidemics, vaccination, and limitation of alcohol consumption are all part of contemporary public policy. Current research involving the minute book of the Victorian Medical Association 1852-1855 reveals an increasing involvement of

the medical profession in issues of public health, with a number of practitioners becoming long-serving Victorian parliamentarians.

Compulsory vaccination against small pox was an important measure in protecting children against a virulent disease. The 1854 requirement that practitioners report successful immunisation to the local District Surgeon developed an important link between practitioners and the Medical (Health) Department, and is the forerunner of current collaborative programs to ameliorate influenza and thunderstorm asthma epidemics.<sup>45</sup>

Transcribing serial adjacent letters in the La Trobe Correspondence spreadsheets creates a sense of contemporary participation in a range of social and administrative issues of the era. An account of a working week outlined in the letters to La Trobe would be of interest.

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### Acknowledgements

The following staff at PROV contributed to both the La Trobe project and this investigation:

Jack Martin, Co-ordinator Collection Management, Public Record Office Victoria

Kathy McNamara, Collection Management Project Officer

Leigh Kinrade, Former Team Leader Volunteers

PROV Reading Room staff.

### Endnotes

- 1 *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.1, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, (hereafter *HRV1*), ed. by Pauline Jones, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1981, pp.5-10, John Batman to Sir George Arthur, 25 June 1835.
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- 13 *Ibid*, p.458, P.E. Cussen to William Lonsdale, 19 May 1838.
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- 29 Ibid, unit 3 item 40/171, Colonial Secretary Sydney, 17 February 1840; and Unit 12 item 41/368, Colonial Secretary Sydney, 2 February 1841.
- 30 Ibid, unit 33, item 42/1408 at unit 65 item 44/2052, Colonial Secretary Sydney, 21 July 1842.
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- 44 *An Act for promoting the Public Health in populous places in the Colony of Victoria* (19 December 1854), 18 Vic. No.13.
- 45 Steven J. Lindstrom *et al*, 'Thunderstorm asthma outbreak of November 2016: a natural disaster requiring planning', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol.207, 2017, pp.235-237; Charles Guest, 'Epidemic thunderstorm asthma: challenges to public health and clinical medicine', *Vicdoc*, Australian Medical Association, April-May 2018, pp.14-15.

# *Eliza Nelson and Dr John Singleton: incidents in the lives of two remarkable colonial memorialists*

**By Lorraine Finlay**

Lorraine Finlay is the former Volunteer Property Manager of La Trobe's Cottage and a graduate of Monash University in Visual Arts and History, with an MA in Australian Studies. After graduating she was a personal assistant to the curators and educational services at the National Gallery of Victoria, then the owner/manager of a Melbourne commercial art gallery, and a part time front-of-house manager of the Old Treasury Building Museum.

*This is an edited version of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage annual lecture presented 18 September 2018. In this address Lorraine spoke about the work of her great, great, great-grandmother Eliza Nelson and also of Dr John Singleton.*

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**S**ocial welfare and medical assistance were in a primitive state in nineteenth century Victoria. Dr John Singleton is well known to many of those who study this period and deservedly has an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, but Eliza Nelson should be better remembered for her extraordinary efforts as a midwife and entrepreneur. Whilst Eliza Nelson seems of necessity to have been the main bread winner of her family, Isabella Singleton often accompanied her husband in his work among those who were destitute or in goal. More remarkable still is that Eliza was to have thirteen children and Isabella had ten children. Both women brought up their families in the context of the harsh conditions of colonial Victoria.

The memoirs of Eliza Nelson and John Singleton provide an insight into the poverty

and hardship experienced by so many women and their families on the goldfields and in Melbourne, and also into the deep faith of these two remarkable reformers.

## ***Eliza Nelson***

Eliza Nelson was a gold rush immigrant, pioneer, midwife and entrepreneur. She also became a temperance advocate and a friend and assistant to the social reformer and philanthropist Dr John Singleton MD.

Eliza Nelson wrote her memoir in Melbourne between 1904 and 1906 in three exercise books.<sup>1</sup> Eliza (née Iggulden) was born in Kent in 1821. Her early life was conventional; she married James Nelson in 1838 in London, aged seventeen, and subsequently became a mother to seven children. Lured by the prospect of wealth



to be found on the goldfields of Central Victoria, Eliza and James and five of their children set sail from London as 'unassisted' passengers on the barque *Orestes* on 11 August 1852 bound for Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> Two of their children were left in the care of Eliza's sister to complete their education. She wrote that although they planned to return to England once they had made their fortune, regrettably, this was not to be. She never saw the two girls left behind again.

Eliza was eighty-three in 1904 and writing of events that had occurred over fifty years before, so there is at times a vagueness about dates. Unfortunately the first thirty pages of the 1904 memoir are missing. The missing section may have described their five months voyage out to Australia and her impressions upon arrival and life in Melbourne from 5 December 1852 to early 1855. A daughter Helen was born in Emerald Hill (later named South Melbourne) in 1855, but Eliza and the children could possibly have been living in temporary accommodation such as 'Canvas Town' in the first few years whilst James tried his luck on the goldfields.<sup>3</sup>

William Kelly wrote of Emerald Hill where Eliza had been living in 1855 prior to her departure from Melbourne:

Emerald Hill, May 1853, was a pleasing green, undulating eminence, without a single stone or brick edifice, and scarcely a dozen constructed of weather boards. There were some few framed tenements covered with canvas, and a few common tents set up here and there on the great ground map of the future town, the lineaments of which were cut out in the sod, stretching away north and south, east and west... The tents there differed widely from those in Canvas Town, being neater and newer looking, and the people inhabiting them were evidently a better and more orderly class. There was, comparatively little squalor about them, and where there was a signboard it was properly spelled.<sup>4</sup>

The Memoir begins on page thirty when she described leaving Melbourne to join James at the diggings:

We started for Creswick. We had many things in the way of luggage. We had to walk much of the way & I had a baby in arms... A few days after our tent was picked, it was a large & we were able to make divisions & make it very comfortable.



Unknown photographer  
Eliza Nelson, c.1885  
Family archive

Eliza then wrote of her life coping with an itinerant and economically precarious existence living in tents, and at one time a slab hut, at various sites on the goldfields (near Creswick, Ballarat, Buninyong, Blanket Flat and Bullarook). She gave birth to a further five children: four of them without assistance in primitive conditions. Eliza quaintly calls her pregnancies as 'expecting an increase'. She wrote that: 'I had no female to tend me, only my children'. It is remarkable that all of her children survived into adulthood. Her experiences of childbirth on the goldfields is in contrast to that of Sophie La Trobe who gave birth in relative comfort to her fourth child, a son, at *Jolimont* on 25 December 1845. Charles La Trobe wrote to their daughter Agnes in Switzerland, who had returned home for her education, that 'Mamma' (Sophie) had the assistance in the delivery from Dr Howitt and the care of a nurse a Mrs Hayward.<sup>5</sup> Child mortality rates on the goldfields were very high. By January 1854 there were 6,650 women, 2,150 children and 10,700 men on the Ballarat goldfields.<sup>6</sup> Seven hundred and fifty-six (756) births were registered in 1855, but by 1856 1,242 births were recorded.<sup>7</sup> However, statistics for the period December 1853 to December 1855 show that half of burials were attributable to children five years and under.<sup>8</sup>

Eliza was resourceful and found various means of providing food for her large family. At times she sold bread and eggs and kept goats and sold their milk. She established a school for her children and her neighbours' children on



**Edmund Thomas, 1827-1867, artist**  
**Canvass [sic] town, 1853**  
 Engraving with hand colouring  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H15520  
 In the foreground, a family of new immigrants

the goldfields. She was paid for this work but expressed concern for some of her pupils whose parents sold beer, 'having a horror of anything to do with drink'. She also wrote of the death of three children from scarlet fever whilst visiting her eldest daughter on the goldfields in Ballarat. The children were in a nearby tent. Eliza wrote that after assisting the family: 'I did my best to fumigate my clothes & then returned home'. However she became full of despair at having to struggle on her own when she and the whole family became ill with the same disease.

They survived bush fires: 'we had to walk about the chief of the night fastening blankets about us & we escaped being caught on fire', and dangerous encounters with snakes and on one occasion the theft of all of the family's clothes. Although she does not dwell on all of the difficulties, readers today can imagine the conditions particularly during the winters: the cold, mud, lack of running water and poor sanitary arrangements. Eliza constantly mentioned her love and concern for the welfare of her children and was convinced that her faith in the Christian religion helped to sustain them. Eliza's peripatetic existence on the goldfields following her husband James from claim to claim was a dramatic change from her previous life in suburban mid-Victorian London. Not long after arriving on the goldfields she wrote that her husband and his partner: 'do poorly on the diggings as usual'. She recalled some time later that: 'on the diggings our hopes ran very high,

my husband was in a claim that was expected to turn out remarkably well... however... the run of gold turned sharp off, right outside the claim so those hopes were blighted'.

When living in Blanket Flat she met a doctor who she said gave her: 'all the information desired in midwifery' and she then attended many cases; she said there was much distress on the goldfields and that she was happy to help out. Eliza was not unusual in becoming a midwife. Midwives and women who chose to attend births on the goldfields were usually older married females who had borne children themselves.<sup>9</sup> The standard call-out fee for a doctor attending a birth could be between one and five pounds at that time.<sup>10</sup>

James had worked as a miner, then splitting timber for a saw mill and finally was employed by 1865 at a brewery in Daylesford. She wrote: 'Then we took up a Diggers Licence,<sup>11</sup> so that we could put up a home with a large piece of ground. I made a large garden & Mr Nelson left the Diggings & got a place at a brewery'. Considering that Eliza abhorred alcohol it may have been difficult for her to have to reconcile her distaste in exchange for the economic benefits of a regular income and a more permanent residence. Her last and thirteenth child was born in Daylesford when she was forty-eight. Eliza continued with her occupation as a midwife in and around Daylesford and wrote that she earned nearly four hundred pounds



**Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818-1880, artist**  
**Zealous diggers, Castlemaine 1852 [1872]**  
 Watercolour and pencil on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H141536  
 A mother holds a baby while rocking the miners' cradle

over a number of years. Family anecdotes tell of her riding on horseback around the district delivering many babies.

In about 1875 Eliza decided to take out a patent for her home made remedy, which was an eye ointment. She wrote that she travelled down to Melbourne and went to the Patent Office. She undertook all 'necessary requirements for her application' and was eventually successful. It would seem that this enterprise was the catalyst for moving the family to Melbourne. Two flyers she later produced in the 1890s extol her eye ointment as the 'Wonder of the Age' with numerous testimonials and as being patronised by the Countess of Hopetoun and Lady Bowen.<sup>12</sup> The eye ointment was sold from a number of chemist shops. She also took out a patent for an all-purpose ointment again under vice-regal patronage. This ointment claimed some amazing cures for everything from pneumonia to ulcers to eruptions of the skin and stinging of insects and piles.

When the family first moved to Melbourne they lived in Simpson Road, Collingwood (now Simpson Street, East Melbourne). She mentions that Mr Nelson was now unable to provide for the family. However, with the financial success of her ointments and from establishing a fur business with her daughters making boas, muffs, travelling rugs and other items, by 1885 Eliza had bought up land and moved to Brunswick. She 'put up houses to let & a good sized shop with rooms,

good stabling & a storeroom'. It would appear from her acquisition of land and the erection of a number of properties that she had become a very successful business woman. From the mid to late 1870s onwards Eliza also took up a number of social causes and began her charitable work, including prison visits and assisting 'fallen women'. She became a member of The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

The Women's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1887 when twelve existing local branches in Melbourne and regional Victoria joined together to form a Colonial Union. It was primarily dedicated to promoting total abstinence from alcohol and other harmful drugs, and all members signed a pledge. They pursued a wide-ranging reform agenda mostly relating to the welfare of women and children.<sup>13</sup> The Women's Christian Temperance Union erected a drinking fountain in 1901 which stands today opposite the Queen Victoria Market in Elizabeth Street. It has Victorian Heritage Registration and the citation comments that it is of historical significance because the fountain is a physical manifestation of the temperance union's concern to provide an alternative to alcoholic drinks. The hopeful intention was that men would stop and have a drink of water at the fountain on their way home instead of going to the local hotel.

During the period that Eliza and family were living in Collingwood she became

involved with the work of Dr John Singleton.<sup>14</sup> Eliza wrote in the 1906 Memoir that: 'At this time I lived in Simpson Road Collingwood and from talking to Dr Singleton I found he visited the gaol in Melbourne once a week. I saw I could be of some use, so I offered my services. He seemed pleased to accept my offer.' She recalled visiting women at the prison with Dr Singleton and became concerned that the women were, as Dr Singleton explained, directly or indirectly imprisoned for 'imbibing intoxicating drink'. Eliza described where they held the meetings in the prison as being 'in a very large room with seats all along the centre. Like a church & with cells on either side, and the warders with a bunch of keys unlocking the doors to let the prisoners out. Some wept bitterly, it was a dreadful sight.' She mentions one particular case when Dr Singleton had interceded to have a woman released, whom they believed had been unjustly imprisoned, and the doctor put her into Eliza's care. However, Eliza despairingly relates that the woman later returned to her husband, 'a drunkard', and committed suicide by plunging a knife down her throat. She told Dr Singleton and she said 'the poor gentleman turned deadly pale & his lips quivered. He was one of the best men who ever lived in the world'. In her capacity as a member of the WCTU later in her memoir she recorded assisting drunken women in the Fitzroy Gardens and many other instances of helping destitute families 'ruined by the curse of intoxicating drink'. In general, Eliza's attitude in relating many stories of her involvement with families with a history of alcoholism and domestic problems is always compassionate rather than condemning them for their inebriate habits and misfortunes.

### **Dr John Singleton**

John Singleton published his memoir in 1891.<sup>15</sup> He was born in Dublin in 1808 and trained with a general medical practitioner, then set up a practice in Dublin in the early 1830s. He received his Doctorate of Medicine in 1838 from the University of Glasgow. He became an Anglican at age sixteen and a total abstainer at nineteen and after experiencing an evangelistic conversion began visiting goals and giving medical aid to the poor.<sup>16</sup> Dr Singleton applied to the British Government for a position as a surgeon on an immigrant ship. With his wife Isabella and children they left Ireland and took up a passage in late 1850 on the *Hartley* arriving in Melbourne on 30 January 1851. Not long after their arrival he went to see Bishop Perry and 'showed him my letters of recommendation, and told him that my wife and I wished to visit the prisons on Sundays, as I had done in Dublin for twenty years. He procured for us from the Governor, free access to them all.'<sup>17</sup>

**Flyer for Mrs E J Nelson's all-purpose ointment**  
 'Also an invaluable EYE OINTMENT. What has been pronounced incurable by doctors perfectly cured under a fortnight.'

John Singleton also met Charles La Trobe not long after his arrival in Melbourne. He mentions in his memoir that he kept a copy of a weekly newspaper of a 'humourous character' produced whilst they were on board ship and that he 'had the honour of presenting a copy to the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria soon after while visiting him.'<sup>18</sup> The Singletons also became acquainted with Sophie La Trobe, for he wrote that his wife Isabella Singleton whilst visiting female prisoners read the scriptures and furnished the prisoners with needlework and that: 'In teaching them habits of industry, she was aided by Mrs Latrobe [*sic*], the Governor's lady, and by Mrs Perry, the wife of our excellent bishop, and many at that time were thus brought to Jesus.'<sup>19</sup>

Between 1851 and 1856 Dr Singleton practised medicine in Collins Street and was also promoting temperance. The Port Phillip Auxiliary Temperance Society was formed in Melbourne in 1837 but by 1842 was renamed the Melbourne Total Abstinence Society. Dr Singleton wrote that he became president of the society in about 1852 and that Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe was patron and other distinguished gentlemen were on the committee.<sup>20</sup> Singleton was concerned that: 'vice and immorality abounded at the diggings'. He was also concerned about the squandering of thousands of pounds in the consumption of intoxicating liquor and so: 'waited on the Governor to request him to withhold licences from public houses then being erected on the diggings for its sale'.<sup>21</sup> He said that the 'Governor acceded to his request'. Dr Singleton said that



**Lorraine Finlay, photographer  
Women's Christian Temperance Union  
drinking fountain, 2018**

Donated to the City of Melbourne in 1901 to commemorate Federation and to coincide with the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary)

spirits were then being sent clandestinely to the diggings and in the end the attempt to control the number of licences failed.<sup>22</sup>

Charles La Trobe mentioned having been the patron of the Melbourne Total Abstinence Society in a personal letter to his agent in Melbourne, James Graham, in February 1866 when he referred to: 'those confounded ten hogsheads of brandy which were consigned to me in the *London!* in 1840, and which old Willis made such *good use* of to damage my character as patron of the Temperance Society'.<sup>23</sup> John Walpole Willis was appointed as resident judge in the Port Phillip District in 1841 but was soon in conflict with the Bar and influential citizens.<sup>24</sup> Petitions were sent to Governor Gipps and endorsed by La Trobe requesting his removal. Gipps recalled Willis in June, 1843. He considered his temperament unfit for the administration of justice. The hogshead of brandy referred to by La Trobe was a consignment sent to him from London by a firm that supplied him with claret. It would appear that he had not ordered the brandy, but the firm had asked that he recommend them to a respectable house of business in Melbourne.<sup>25</sup>

La Trobe continued his patronage throughout the years of his superintendency and

governorship. However, the La Trobes were not total abstainers, as per the reference to ordering claret from London and other instances of the family drinking alcohol. Georgiana McCrae recorded in her diary in 1841: 'With the boys to Jolimont to sit awhile with Mrs La Trobe who gave us cakes, and claret and water.'<sup>26</sup> La Trobe himself wrote in a letter to his daughter Agnes in 1846 after her return to Switzerland: 'We all miss your bright eyes & speak of you continuously. Whenever Nelly or Cecile can slyly get hold of papa's or mamma's wine glass after dinner, with a chance of finding one tiny drop at the bottom, it is always to drink Agnes' health'.<sup>27</sup>

Dr Singleton was opposed to capital punishment and he cites in his memoir a number of cases where he personally interceded and petitioned La Trobe to mitigate the sentence on behalf of some condemned prisoners: 'I wrote some letters on the subject and sent petitions, numerous signed, to the Governor on behalf of various men condemned to die for robbery under arms, rape, and attempted violation of young children'.<sup>28</sup> He mentions going to La Trobe's office and then to *Jolimont* with the Reverend Mr Ramsey to intercede in the case of a man called Smith. However, they left a note as 'his Excellency' was not at home. He later that day received a letter from La Trobe



**Thomas J J Wyatt, fl.1857-1865, photographer  
John Singleton, 1864**  
Carte de visite  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,  
H93/23.92

stating that the Executive had decided (in favour of the death penalty) and that he could not alter the decision.<sup>29</sup>

The case that Dr Singleton referred to was the trial by jury and execution of John Smith in August 1853, for being an accessory to rape under aggravated circumstance on the Goulburn diggings. The victim was Mary Ann Brown. The case was heard in the Supreme Court before Mr Justice Williams.<sup>30</sup> Dr Singleton went with the Reverend Mr Ramsey a second time, on this occasion with an opinion of Judge Wrixon, to draw La Trobe's attention to the fact that the death penalty for some crimes had been removed from the Imperial Statute Books in Great Britain and also consequently repealed in New South Wales. He recorded that: 'La Trobe's aid-de-camp, Captain C[arey] said that the Governor was at dinner, but that he would convey to him a letter'.<sup>31</sup> However, he had reason to think it was not opened until the following morning, by which time the victim had suffered the extreme penalty.

A second case was a Russian-born man John Goldman. The jury found him guilty and he was to become the first man to hang in

Geelong. The execution was set for Monday 15 August 1853. The doctor approached La Trobe, was received 'cordially in his garden' and then when seated in the house requested a minor punishment for the condemned Russian man involved in an unpremeditated accidental shooting in Geelong. In this instance, he said, the Governor was deeply distressed. La Trobe commuted the sentence and a young coachman Richard Illidge rode through the night to deliver the reprieve, arriving in Geelong just in time.<sup>32</sup> Goldman's sentence was commuted to imprisonment with fifteen years hard labour (of which he served ten).<sup>33</sup> There were twenty executions between 1851 and mid 1854; a further nine convictions were commuted from death to hard labour.<sup>34</sup> There were executions in Melbourne during the 1840s, however any appeals for clemency prior to Separation in July 1851 would have been sent to the Governor in Sydney for his consideration.

Dr Singleton and his family spent some years living in regional Victoria and South Australia. During this period he took an interest in Aboriginal welfare and is credited with helping to establish the Framlingham Reserve near Warrnambool. He returned to Melbourne in 1867 and continued practising medicine and his Christian philanthropic work. He was associated with many charitable organisations, including the Children's Hospital and the City Mission. He raised funds to purchase land and built cottages in Collingwood for widows and children, and a night shelter for destitute and 'fallen women'. In 1869 he established the Collingwood Free Medical Dispensary in Wellington Street, Collingwood.<sup>35</sup> The obituary at the time of his death in 1891 reported that, up to 1888, 145,000 people had received free medical care from his dispensary.<sup>36</sup>

In 1880 Dr Singleton in his role as medical practitioner and prison visitor attended to the infamous bushranger Ned Kelly who had been wounded during his capture, and was then in the Melbourne Gaol hospital. He wrote at length of conversations with Kelly whilst treating his wounds and he said he gave him the New Testament and 'found means to send him every week, while he continued in the hospital, half a dozen or so of choice tracts, and among them 'John Ashworth's Strange Tales,' with my Christian love, and my wishes for his salvation'.<sup>37</sup>

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Eliza Nelson and Dr Singleton were in constant contact during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Eliza not only went with the doctor on prison visits but also sought out his advice and assistance with a number of victims, as they



**J Macfarlane,**  
fl. c.1890-1898, artist  
**Seeking admission to  
the night shelter for  
women, 1891**  
Engraving  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria,  
IAN1/06/91/1  
Published in the  
Illustrated Australian  
News

saw it, of poverty and domestic violence bought on by intemperance. Perhaps John Singleton spoke to Eliza of his early life in Melbourne and of his personal and official dealings with Charles La Trobe as patron of the Abstinence Society, and of his appeals to the Lieutenant-Governor for clemency for convicted prisoners. Eliza certainly would have known of Charles La Trobe and his vice-regal role prior to his departure from Victoria in May, 1854. Her husband James took up claims on the goldfields near Ballarat from late 1852 onwards and she would have been aware of the unrest on the goldfields and the diggers' anger directed

towards La Trobe over the imposition and cost of the miner's licence. Despite any public controversy over of La Trobe's administration of the goldfields during that period, it is reasonable to assume that Eliza would have seen him in a very favourable light in his role as Patron of the Melbourne Total Abstinence Society.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 The two surviving exercise books are in private hands. They have not been published. I possess photocopies of the original surviving two books. Eliza Nelson died in 1907.
  - 2 The *Orestes* on this journey was carrying 144 passengers. The ship arrived on 5 December 1852, and there were three deaths at sea. The Nelson family were fee-paying passengers. See *Report of the Health Officer, 1 May 1852-30 June 1853*, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1853-54, No.A42, p.6.
  - 3 In 1851 an immigration depot was established on the western side of St. Kilda Road (near the present-day Arts Precinct) but it was inadequate to cope with the thousands arriving during the gold rush. The government then allocated further land westwards that developed into the settlement of tents called Canvas Town. Immigrants were charged five shillings a week. Thousands were housed there until 1854, *City of Port Phillip*, Port Phillip Heritage Review, version 21, 2017, Vol. 1, p.280 ([http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Volume\\_1\\_Section\\_6\\_Part\\_3.pdf](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Volume_1_Section_6_Part_3.pdf), accessed 1 August 2017)
  - 4 William Kelly, *Life in Victoria; or, Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1858: showing the march of improvement made by the colony within those periods, in town and country, cities and the diggings*, Kilmore, Vic.: Lowden, 1977 [1860], p.68.
  - 5 La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/27, Charles La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 25 December 1845 (extracts accessible via the La Trobe Society website).
  - 6 Claire Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013, p.130.
  - 7 *Ibid.*, p.162.
  - 8 Dorothy Wickham, *Women of the Diggings Ballarat 1854*, Ballarat: BHS Publishing, 2009, p.55.
  - 9 *Ibid.*, p.59.
  - 10 Wright, p.171.
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- 11 *Victorian Government Gazette*, no.51 Tuesday, May 16, 1865 (Section 42), Amending Land Act 1865. The 'diggers licence' that Eliza referred to was the Land Act of 1865 which allowed 'shallow alluvial', smaller miner, operators to lease land adjacent to and on the goldfields that would not disadvantage or interfere with operation of miners so that farming and mining could be combined, Register of Licensees, Camperdown, Section 42 Amending Lands Act 1865 and Section 19 Lands Act 1869, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/225563219>.
- 12 Lady Bowen and Countess of Hopetoun, both wives of the Governors of Victoria. Vice-regal positions were held by the Sir George Bowen 1873-1879 and the Earl of Hopetoun 1889-1895.
- 13 Australian Women's Register, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/464917?q=wctu&c=people> (accessed 1 August, 2017)
- 14 John Singleton was a witness at the wedding of Helen Nelson (the baby born in Emerald Hill in 1855) on 18 April, 1882 St Saviour's (Mission) Church, Collingwood (BDM Schedule D No. 57). This would indicate that Eliza and John not only had a working but also a close family relationship. Eliza and family lived a short walking distance from John Singleton, who lived at 179 Grey Street, East Melbourne from 1877.
- 15 John Singleton, *A Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful Life of a Physician*, Melbourne: M.L. Hutchinson, 1891 (accessible via the State Library Victoria website).
- 16 Sylvia Morrissey, 'Singleton, John (1808-1891)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976, Vol. 6, p.129.
- 17 Singleton, p.104.
- 18 *Ibid*, p.99. Note that Charles La Trobe was Superintendent in early 1851 (not Lieutenant-Governor until official Separation from New South Wales in July 1851).
- 19 Singleton, p.140.
- 20 *Ibid*, p.121. See also 'Garryowen'. *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne, 1835 to 1852: historical anecdotal and personal*, Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1888, Vol.2, pp.530-533.
- 21 Singleton, p.108.
- 22 *Ibid*, p.109.
- 23 L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975, p.70.
- 24 John V. Barry, 'Willis, John Walpole (1793-1877)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967, Vol. 2, pp.602-604.
- 25 John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller Writer Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017 p.176.
- 26 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae [with a note on the text by Marguerite Hancock], Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, p.77, entry for 9 September, 1841.
- 27 La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/27, Charles La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 23 June 1846 (extracts accessible via the La Trobe Society website).
- 28 Singleton, pp.125-126.
- 29 *Ibid*, p.126.
- 30 PROV, VPRS 7583 Unit 1, Register of Decisions on Capital Sentences 1851-1889, Decisions of Governor in Council; see also *Argus* 16 November, 1853, p.5.
- 31 Singleton, pp.126-127.
- 32 Mex Cooper, 'Amazing Stories: saved from Geelong Gaol's gallows by the bell'. *Geelong Advertiser*, 10 April, 2014, <http://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/crime-court/amazing-stories-saved-from-geelong-gaols-gallows-by-the-bell/news-story/07e16b88f9c413217974986159228> (accessed 3 October 2017)
- 33 Goldman's sentence was commuted to ten years' hard labour, PROV VPRS 7583 Register of Decisions on Capital Sentences, 1851-1889; see also, *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 16 August, 1853, p.2.
- 34 Register of Decisions on Capital Sentences.
- 35 The Free Medical Dispensary was first established in Perry Street Collingwood, in 1869. A later building was erected in 1887 at 162 Wellington Street, Collingwood. The 1887 building has Victorian Heritage Registration (VHR) No. HO497. At some stage the institution Singleton founded was renamed North Yarra Community Health and is now called Cohealth located at 365 Hoddle Street, Collingwood.
- 36 *Argus*, 2 October, 1891, p.6. NOTE: In 1897 there was a public subscription for a stained glass window to be erected in Dr Singleton's memory. The window, created by the firm Ferguson & Urie and installed in the Free Medical Dispensary, was later donated to the City of Collingwood (1979) and subsequently installed on the staircase of the Collingwood Town Hall (<https://fergusonandurie.wordpress.com/tag/dr-john-singleton>, accessed 3 October 2017)
- 37 Singleton, p.303.



# Kentish Ramblings: La Trobe rediscovers the picturesque English countryside

By Dr Dianne Reilly AM

Dianne Reilly is an historian who was La Trobe Librarian at State Library Victoria from 1982 to 2008. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and an Honorary Fellow of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, her doctoral thesis was titled 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: the Making of a Governor'. Dianne has published extensively on La Trobe, including three books: *La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches* (1999), *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor* (2006), and *La Trobe: Australian Notes, 1839-1854* (2006) and she is working on a second volume of his biography. Dianne is a co-founder of the La Trobe Society, and is currently its Secretary.

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A wonderfully creative exhibition 'Nature and Art: reflections of two Victorian gentleman artists', opened at the National Trust (UK) property *Ightham Mote* on 29 February 2016, running until the end of October that year. This exhibition,<sup>1</sup> expertly curated by National Trust staff and volunteers, attracted crowds of visitors from home and abroad, and highlighted the lives of one of *The Mote's* owners, Prideaux John Selby, and his tenant, Charles Joseph La Trobe, both artists and both having resided in this remarkable house for short periods during the nineteenth century.

It was on our visit to view the exhibition that La Trobe Society Manager, John Drury, and I had the good fortune to meet voluntary guide John France. He wrote:

I first heard of La Trobe in 2013 whilst on holiday in Australia. My wife and I visited Melbourne and a few yards from our hotel was a main thoroughfare running from the east to the west of the city — La Trobe Street. Later in our stay, we came across other city landmarks bearing the same name — a Trobe University and La Trobe's Cottage. The name struck me as unusual for a former English colony, but it was not until our return to Kent that I found out who La Trobe was, and that he had a distinct connection to *Ightham Mote*.<sup>2</sup>

## *Ightham Mote*

*Ightham Mote* is today a Grade I listed fourteenth-century property, one of the few remaining medieval moated manor houses in Britain, which is situated closer to the hamlet of Ivy Hatch than to the village of the same name, Ightham, and not far from the town of Sevenoaks. It is an interesting aside that according to Edward Hasted, an English antiquarian and author of *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1778–99): 'IGHTHAM [was] so corruptly called for Eightham, which name it had from the eight boroughs or hams lying within the bounds of it, viz. Eightham, Redwell, Ivybatch [*sic*], Borough-green, St. Cleres, the Moat, Beaulies, and Oldborough'.<sup>3</sup> This derivation of the name Ightham is now generally disputed.<sup>4</sup>

*Ightham Mote* was constructed between 1320 (moat) and 1342 (old chapel) for the earliest part of the building,<sup>5</sup> but a number of alterations, additions and restorations have been made to it over the centuries. Surrounded by formal gardens and woodlands, the house has more than seventy rooms, including a great hall, crypt, old chapel, drawing room and billiards room, arranged around a central courtyard.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the building work was by Richard Haute (first cousin to Queen Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV) and his son, the new chapel being constructed c.1521–1527.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to know a little more about the owner of *Ightham Mote*, Prideaux John Selby (1788–1867), who was to become



**John Botham,  
photographer**  
The setting  
for a La Trobe  
painting of The  
Mote (1856),  
entrance tower  
in west front,  
2016

La Trobe's landlord. He was descended from a family of Northumberland landowners and law enforcement officers on the borders between England and Scotland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He had inherited *Ightham Mote* in 1845, together with a number of estates elsewhere. One of the foremost ornithologists of the nineteenth century and a fine artist, he compiled a set of illustrations of every bird found in the British Isles: 280 species drawn life-size, and published in 1833 as *Illustrations of British Ornithology*.<sup>8</sup>

The Selbys owned *Ightham Mote* for nearly 300 years from 1591 to 1889. In late 1855, Prideaux John Selby had leased the property for six months to Charles Joseph La Trobe. The recently-widowed La Trobe had returned the previous year to England from Australia where he had administered the new colony of Victoria for nearly fifteen years, through numerous vicissitudes from its pioneering days as the Port Phillip District of New South Wales to a self-governing colony. After reclaiming his children who were being cared for by their aunt and grandmother in Neuchâtel in Switzerland, he married Rose de Meuron, their widowed aunt on 3 October 1855.

La Trobe and his wife obviously had the desire to return to England for, in April 1855, he had written to Charlotte Pellet, his former housekeeper in Melbourne, that: 'I hope in the process of time to have a home to receive my children in'.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-1850s when La Trobe was searching for a family home, there were

many superior houses available for lease which appealed to civil servants returning home from the colonies. La Trobe focused his search on the county of Kent which, as one of the Home Counties bordering on greater London, he doubtless considered had much to offer. Proximity to London would have been a great attraction, especially since he had recently become a member of the Athenaeum Club,<sup>10</sup> while the expansion of the South Eastern Railway network over much of the county by the 1850s offered rapid transport to London and elsewhere. Kent has long been known as 'The Garden of England' because of its market gardens, fruit-growing and hop production. Added to this cornucopia, it has always been a particularly scenic county with much to appeal to the artist in La Trobe; the Kent Downs were classified more than fifty years ago as one of England's 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.<sup>11</sup>

In selecting Kent as the location for his renewed family life, La Trobe would have reflected on his enjoyable walking tour in Kent twenty-six years earlier with his older brother Peter. It was on this occasion that Peter noted in his diary, 'Ramble in Kent with C.J. La Trobe in August 1829', that:

...we both agreed that were we Kentishmen, we should be proud of our county: in the possession of varied and romantic scenery, abundance of natural produce, and independent and substantial yeomanry, and a handsome race both of men and women, it is



John Botham, illustrator  
Map of Kent: Ightham and surrounds, 2018

inferior to none, and as far as we could judge, exceeds most.<sup>12</sup>

La Trobe leased for his family the manor house *Ightham Mote* in Kent from December 1855 to mid-1856.<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that the house was then only partially habitable, the antiquity of the building (see p.38) and the beauty of its Kentish surroundings charmed La Trobe. Inspired by the house and its gardens, La Trobe was not there long before he again took up his paintbrush to illustrate his scenic location. Of his numerous sketches and watercolours of *The Mote* and its surroundings, only thirty-six are known to still exist.<sup>14</sup> (p.36) Undoubtedly, Prideaux John Selby's love of natural history greatly influenced the structure and character of the magnificent gardens surrounding the manor house, 'mainly planting around the North Lake',<sup>15</sup> which were there for the La Trobe family to enjoy. In the recent exhibition, they provided the perfect setting for showing copies of La Trobe's sketches of the *Mote* buildings and landscape, which were displayed on easels in the exact locations where he had drawn them.<sup>16</sup>

The charming villages in the vicinity and within walking distance of *Ightham Mote* were no doubt great attractions for La Trobe, sketchbook in hand and once again engaging with the natural world in the picturesque English countryside. John Barnes in his recent biography of La Trobe wrote:

As for an increasing number of Charles Joseph's contemporaries, the experience of engaging with the natural

world was deeply fulfilling. By the early 19th century, the 'walk' had become more popular than ever before. This reflected a changing sensibility towards 'Nature', and a very marked reversal of attitudes towards wild and untamed landscapes.<sup>17</sup>

While on walks later in life, his drawings of architectural features and the landscape reveal the beauties of Kentish villages which still retain at least an echo of the beauty spots sketched by La Trobe. Contemporary photographs of the sites allow modern-day comparison.

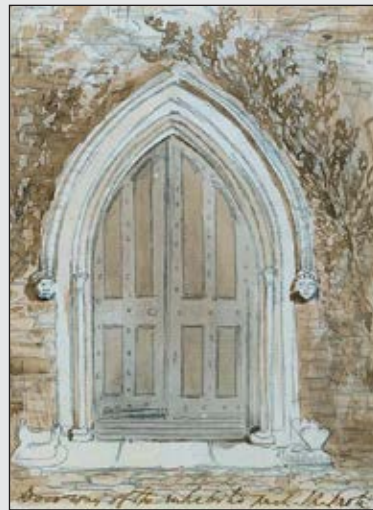
### *Fairlawne, Shipbourne*

An extensive landholding just a stroll from *The Mote* attracted the artist in La Trobe. This was *Fairlawne*, a 1,000 acre estate<sup>18</sup> adjoining *Ightham Mote* land. It lies to the east of the main Tonbridge to Ightham road, next to the village of Plaxtol (near Shipbourne), and *Ightham Mote* lies to the west. The house was rebuilt on the site of a previous one by Sir Henry Vane in the first half of the 17th century and, after additions by Lord Barnard in 1680, was completed in 1723 by Lord Vane.<sup>19</sup>

La Trobe depicted *Fairlawne* (sketch inscribed *Fairlawn*), now a Grade I Listed building, in a preliminary sketch in the spring of 1856. Regrettably, this drawing (p.39) does not show the decoration of the exterior, constructed largely of dressed and coursed Kentish ragstone on a ragstone plinth.<sup>20</sup> The property was bought by the Cazalet family in the nineteenth century.



**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist**  
**The Gateway, The Mote — interior, 1856**  
 Watercolour and pencil on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,  
 H92.360/141



**Charles Joseph La Trobe,**  
**1801-1875, artist**  
**Doorway of the inhabited**  
**part, The Mote, 1856**  
 Watercolour and pencil on paper  
 Pictures Collection, State  
 Library Victoria, H92.360/131

In 1880, Edward Cazalet rebuilt the church dedicated to St Giles on the fragmentary remains of a fourteenth century chapel in the nearby village of Shipbourne.<sup>21</sup> Major Peter Cazalet, sportsman and noted racehorse owner, trained many successful horses for the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, at *Fairlawne*. The property is currently owned by the Saudi Arabian horse-breeder, Prince Khalid Abdullah.<sup>22</sup>

### **Teston**

A near-by village, Teston (pronounced 'Teeson'), approximately eight miles from *Ightham Mote* as the crow flies, is the location of *Barham Court*, a grand house originally owned by Reginald FitzUrse, one of the knights who murdered Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170.

Over the centuries, various branches of the de Berham or Barham family maintained the house, and after the reign of Elizabeth I, it passed to the de Boteler family who, afterwards, changed their name to Butler. In 1772 the house was bequeathed to a cousin, Elizabeth Bouverie. Towards the end of the century, she engaged trained architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe,<sup>23</sup> Charles Joseph La Trobe's uncle, to undertake major improvements to the house. The historian Edward Hasted wrote of *Barham Court*: 'by her improvements [it] has become a most elegant residence, and an ornament to the adjacent country'.<sup>24</sup> (p.40)

Benjamin Henry Latrobe subsequently undertook a wide range of commissions in England, but only two domestic houses designed and constructed by him survive. *Hammerwood Park* (1792) near East Grinstead in West Sussex, designed in the Greek Revival style, fell into disrepair during the years 1973 to 1982 when owned by the rock group Led Zeppelin. Since then it has been restored by physicist David Pinnegar as his family home, but it is regularly opened to the public.<sup>25</sup> *Ashdown House* (1793), situated at Forest Row on the edge of the beautiful Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, was originally built as a country house, and has been a preparatory school since 1886.<sup>26</sup>

Benjamin Henry Latrobe migrated to the United States in 1796, where he built an impressive portfolio in Philadelphia and Washington. He was also responsible for the remarkable Baltimore Basilica, built between 1806 and 1821, the first great metropolitan cathedral constructed in the United States after the adoption of the Constitution.<sup>27</sup> In Washington he added the much-admired portico to the White House, and rebuilt the Capitol after the War of 1812. Latrobe is known as 'the father of American architecture'.<sup>28</sup>

After ownership by the Bouverie family, *Barham Court* passed to Charles Middleton, 1st Baron Barham, First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805-06.<sup>29</sup> He played a pivotal role in the abolition of slavery in the British Empire by

introducing William Wilberforce, the Member of Parliament and evangelical anti-slavery campaigner, to Rev. James Ramsay, a former naval surgeon who had spent time in the West Indies observing the depravity of the slave trade. With the full support and encouragement of Lord and Lady Barham, *Barham Court* became the centre of a considerable part of the work to effect the abolition of slavery undertaken by Wilberforce and his colleagues, among them the writer and social reformer Hannah More, and Rev. James Ramsay who had become vicar of Teston and Nettlestead. Slavery historian David Turley has summed up the importance of the work of these campaigners: ‘The Teston evangelicals foreshadowed the more famous Clapham Sect in advancing the antislavery cause. More than that, however, in bringing together the propaganda, public opinion and parliamentary elements, they foreshadowed the whole history of the movement’.<sup>30</sup>

As the British historian John Mason has recorded, Charles Joseph’s grandfather, Benjamin La Trobe, had:

connections with the great and good — with, for example, Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, and with Captain Sir Charles Middleton, later Lord Barham, the great naval reformer... and his lady [who] were at the centre of an evangelical circle which later included William Wilberforce. In the summer of 1786 Benjamin was taken mortally ill while on a visit to Middleton in the country, but it was not until November that he could be moved to his house adjoining the Moravian chapel in the city of London. Later that month he died, aged 57.<sup>31</sup>

Benjamin’s son and Charles Joseph’s father, the gregarious Christian Ignatius, mixed in London’s musical and social circles and, like his father before him, he knew many influential people in the various evangelical groups and those working for social reform, including Lord and Lady Barham of *Barham Court* at Teston. It was at their home that he encountered Wilberforce, probably not for the first time. Christian Ignatius had, like his father, a philosophical opposition to the slave trade. As noted by John Mason: ‘William Wilberforce called upon Ignatius to discuss abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce considered abolition a “noble Cause”, but Ignatius left him in no doubt that Moravians would not associate themselves with it... a rule against members meddling in politics meant that Ignatius could not under any circumstances ally himself with the cause of abolition’.<sup>32</sup> However, during the British government’s enquiry into the

slave trade in 1788, the Moravians and their broad experience with missions in the West Indies came to public attention: ‘Although Ignatius was obliged to prepare an authoritative paper for the enquiry on the missions, no Moravian was called before the committee’.<sup>33</sup>

It was largely due to Wilberforce that Parliament abolished the slave trade in British colonies, following the passing of his bill in the House of Commons in 1807,<sup>34</sup> but it was not until 26 July 1833, three days before the death of Wilberforce, that the Slavery Abolition Act was passed, to receive Royal Assent on 28 August of that year,<sup>35</sup> abolishing slavery itself.

On their ramble through Kent in 1829, Charles Joseph and Peter La Trobe had walked towards Teston ‘through a district whose truly English features not even a drizzly murky evening could obscure’.<sup>36</sup> The La Trobe brothers were ‘admiring the extended views of the broad vale of Maidstone... to the house and domain of Barham Court — the village of Teston with its spire, and the antique bridge over the river immediately below’.<sup>37</sup> Peter went on to describe:

The house at Barham Court occupies a very pleasant site, on a gentle slope which rises gradually from the West bank of the river. It is a plain substantial building with equally plain wings, but as our father has often testified, possesses every comfort of internal arrangement... close adjoining to it are the churchyard and vicarage of Teston — the former is a small, originally gothic, but sadly mutilated edifice, the latter a commodious-looking house — peculiarly interesting to us, from the circumstance of excellent grandfather [Benjamin] having been there seized with his last illness — and detained for 15 weeks till it was found practicable to remove him to London’.<sup>38</sup>

In referring to the vicarage, Peter was reminiscing about the summer of 1786 when his grandfather had spent so long in the home of Rev. James Ramsay during his final illness.

The saga of *Barham Court* continued with various owners and tenants. In the early twentieth century Kent suffered severe storms and flooding and *Barham Court*, although on high ground, was one of the casualties. During the First World War, it was used as a military hospital, and it was greatly damaged by a fire in 1932. It has since been expertly restored and parts of the house were rebuilt (p.39), but the exterior remains faithful to Benjamin Henry Latrobe’s architecture.



Unknown photographer  
 Family group, probably members of the Selby family, owners of Ightham Mote, c.1860  
 Private collection

The village of Teston is home to two other striking architectural features: the church of St Peter and St Paul, and Teston Bridge over the River Medway. The parish church was rebuilt on the remains of a fifteenth-century chapel in 1736 for Sir Philip Boteler, one of the owners of *Barham Court*, and alterations were made to the structure in 1848. The picturesque fourteenth-century Teston Bridge of six arches is, like the church, constructed of Kentish ragstone, and set in extensive parklands along the river.<sup>39</sup>

No sketches of the Teston church or the bridge by Charles Joseph La Trobe are known to exist. However, the late Dr John Henry de La Trobe of Hamburg,<sup>40</sup> owned two watercolours of these features in the landscape (p.40). In the light of recent research, it would appear that these images were painted by Christian Ignatius La Trobe, Charles Joseph's father, whose handwriting on the mounts identifies the scenes. The detail in these inscriptions indicates that the places held a special significance for him, both for his association with William Wilberforce and a reminder of the La Trobe family's philosophical commitment to the abolition of slavery. *Barham Court* may be seen to the right in the *View of Teston Bridge over the Medway*, and the buildings shown in *View of the church and parsonage at Teston* have a direct link to the residents of the great house, whose parish church it was. These pictures were at one time in Charles Joseph La Trobe's possession,<sup>41</sup> perhaps mementoes given to him by his father.

### Addington

As we learn from Loreen Chambers' article in this edition of *La Trobeana*, the La Trobe family's next home, only a few miles from *The Mote*, was *Addington Vale*, a substantial house on the northern outskirts of the village of Addington, to which they moved in mid-1856. It was there that La Trobe's daughter Margaret, his fifth child, was born in September of that year. Unfortunately, there are no sketches by La Trobe of the house, where the family lived for eleven months, nor the adjacent village of Addington eight miles from *Ightham Mote*. However, he did record in fine detail a local ancient tomb in pencil and ink wash. Addington is at the foot of the North Downs, and is notable for the Neolithic long barrow, or chamber tombs, lying a few miles outside the village to the west. Many of these antiquities are now in a ruined state.<sup>42</sup>

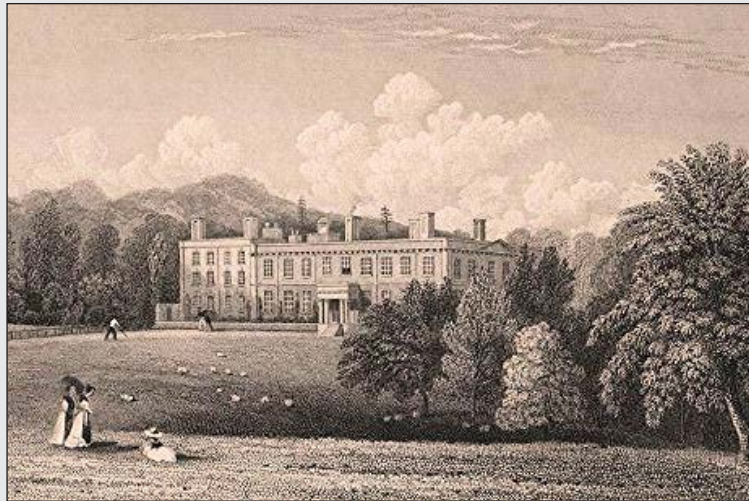
### Ryarsh

La Trobe was obviously very interested in the ancient twelfth-century church of St Martin at Ryarsh in the valley of the River Medway where his fourth daughter Margaret Rose (Daisy) was baptised on 28 October 1856, since he produced two sketches of this striking edifice in 1857 after he and his family had moved to *Addington Vale*. With its solid crenellated tower and adjacent turret, the church looms over the hamlet, believed to have origins as a Saxon village dating from about 1050; earliest records show it as 'being held for' King Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042 to 1066.<sup>43</sup> This connection



**Charles Joseph  
La Trobe, 1801-1875,  
artist  
Fairlawn, 1856**  
Ink wash and pencil on  
buff paper (unfinished)  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria,  
H92.360/151

**John Preston Neale,  
1780-1847, artist  
John Rogers,  
c.1808-1888,  
engraver  
Fair Lawn [sic],  
Kent, seat of Yates  
Esqr, 1829**  
Steel engraving  
Source: William Henry  
Ireland, *New and  
Complete History County  
of Kent*, volume 3,  
London, Virtue, 1829



**John Prance, photographer  
Barham Court, Teston, 2016**

The house was remodelled in 1791-92 by Benjamin Henry Latrobe and largely rebuilt in 1932-33



**Samuel Ireland, 1744–1800, artist and engraver**  
**Teston bridge, 1793**  
 Sepia tinted aquatint  
 Source: Samuel Ireland, *Picturesque Views on the River Medway*, London, Egerton, 1793



▲ **Christian Ignatius La Trobe, 1758–1836, artist**  
**View of Teston Bridge over the Medway, c.1793**  
 Watercolour  
 Collection: Late Dr John Henry de La Trobe, Hamburg  
 'With Mrs Bouverie's house, and part of the village containing the church and parsonage house with part of the large farm'

▼ **Christian Ignatius La Trobe, 1758–1836, artist**  
**View of the church and parsonage house at Teston, c.1793**  
 Watercolour  
 Collection: Late Dr John Henry de La Trobe, Hamburg







**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist**  
**Ryarsh Church, Kent, 1857**  
 Watercolour, ink wash, pen and pencil on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H92.360/154



**John Prance, photographer**  
**St Martin's Church, Ryarsh, 2016**

would presuppose that a chapel or church was constructed there, 'and it would be normal for the Normans to have built their church on the site of the Saxon one, not necessarily in a village, but more centrally in an area of farmsteads and hamlets — serving a dispersed community'.<sup>44</sup>

John Prance explained that Ryarsh is about nine miles from *The Mote* and a short distance from Addington, but the church which La Trobe painted, St Martin's, is outside the village. Of his photograph of St Martin's, John has noted that: 'I have tried to take photographs [of the church] from a similar position to La Trobe's two paintings of 1857, although that was not entirely possible because of subsequent buildings and vegetation growth'.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, La Trobe's sketch of St Martin's at Ryarsh, seen side by side with the modern photograph, enables the viewer to conclude that the church remains much as it was in La Trobe's time.

Modern-day Ryarsh is mainly relatively modern housing, except for the public house which was built in the sixteenth century on the site of a twelfth-century chapel and Benedictine refectory. It was renamed after the Battle of Waterloo when the sign of the 'Duke of Wellington' was hung in honour of Wellington's victory at Waterloo in June 1815.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Birling***

Another village visited by Charles Joseph in easy walking distance of *Addington Vale* was Birling. As far as is known, La Trobe made only one pen, ink and watercolour sketch of All Saints Church in Birling (p.42), located east of Ryarsh. La Trobe's picture is titled 'Birling' whereas the current spelling of the village is 'Birling', just a mile further on from Ryarsh. His painting seems to show a ramp up to the church, but now it is a flight of steps.



**Charles Joseph La Trobe,**  
1801-1875, artist  
**Berling [sic] Church,**  
**Kent, 1857**  
Pen, indian ink, watercolour  
on buff paper  
Pictures Collection, State  
Library Victoria, H92.360/153



**John Prance, photographer**  
**All Saints Church, Birling, 2016**

Although there is no mention of this village pre-Norman Conquest, it features in the Domesday Book (1086)<sup>47</sup> as having thirty households, twelve acres of meadow and pasture for fifty cattle. All Saints church is mentioned, but major developments on the building were made around 400 years later,<sup>48</sup> much of its structure dating from the fourteenth century. Members of the noble Nevill/Neville family, of Norman descent, feature prominently on the memorials inside the church, the family being owners of the extensive *Birling Estate* since 1435. The village centre around the church includes the inn, formerly known as ‘The Bull’, acknowledging the Nevill family crest which features a bull’s head and two chained silver bulls for supporters. In 1953, its name was changed to the ‘Nevill Bull’ in memory of Michael Nevill who died on 28 April 1943 while serving in Africa with the

1st Battalion Scots Guards.<sup>49</sup> Of recent times, Birling has become another ‘dormitory village’ for those who work in larger centres elsewhere.

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With their growing family, the La Trobes lived in various leased residences in English villages over a period of twenty years from 1855. The most notable was the picturesque *Ightham Mote* near the hamlet of Ivy Hatch in Kent, where they lived for six months from late 1855 to mid-1856. It was depicted in great detail by La Trobe in twenty-four fine sketches. The family spent the next eleven months in a more comfortable house, *Addington Vale*, eight miles from *The Mote* and adjacent to the village of Addington, where La Trobe continued his ‘rambling’ and sketching in the locality.



**Julian Lovegrove, 1950- artist**  
**Neville Bull Pub at Birling, 2013**  
 Ink and watercolour  
 Private collection, England. Copyright, the artist

*Whitbourne Court* in Herefordshire, not far from Worcester, a commodious and notable manor which has its origins in the eighteenth century when it belonged to the Bishop of Hereford, was the La Trobes' home from September 1858 to the end of 1866. A comfortable and enjoyable 'life of a country squire'<sup>50</sup> awaited him in this beautiful part of Herefordshire, but his rapidly failing eyesight prevented the enjoyment his art gave him.

The La Trobes' last family home was *Clapham House* in the village of Litlington, Sussex, where Charles Joseph, Rose, their children and their household staff moved in September 1867. Standing in spacious and beautifully kept grounds, *Clapham House* 'has a simple and sufficiently aristocratic dignity, and seems to know its place as the manor house of the village'.<sup>51</sup> It was in this lovely and peaceful location that Charles Joseph La Trobe died on 4 December 1875.

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#### Endnotes

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  - 4 John Prance to Dianne Reilly, 20 October 2018.
  - 5 John Prance, *ibid*: 'National Trust (UK) consultant archaeologist, the late Peter Leach, stated that dendrochronology is only accurate to plus / minus 10 years and the technique is mainly applied to roof timbers. Masonry at ground floor level might therefore have commenced some years earlier and he gives dates between 1320 (moat) and 1342 (old chapel) for the earliest part of the building'.
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- 14 Dianne Reilly, ed., *Charles Joseph La Trobe: landscapes and sketches*, Melbourne: State Library of Victoria in association with Tarcoola Press and National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1999.
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- 42 'Addington Long Barrow', The Megalithic Portal, [www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=4762](http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=4762) (accessed 20 September 2018).
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# Charles Joseph La Trobe at Addington Vale, 1856-57: a year of hope?

By Loreen Chambers

Loreen Chambers is a retired secondary teacher who taught History, English and Geography during a career of over thirty years. She taught at Scotch College and Camberwell Girls Grammar, but chiefly at Lauriston Girls School where she was Head of History, amongst other senior roles. Her main interests are British and Australian History, with particular focus on the 18th and 19th century period, as well as local and family history. Loreen is currently Vice President of the C J La Trobe Society and serves on the editorial committee of *La Trobeana*.

*Loreen is particularly indebted to Patricia Richardson who welcomed her and her husband John to her home 'St Vincents' at Addington and who took them to visit the location of 'Addington Vale' and to see St Martin's Church at Ryarsh, as well as St Margaret's at Addington. Patricia and her family have lived in the village since 1976. She is a member of the Kent Archaeological Society and author of Addington: The Life Story of a Kentish Village (2012), as well as the history of her home, St Vincents: An Admiral's Kentish Home (2016).*

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## The Kentish Years

When the newly widowed Charles Joseph La Trobe returned from Melbourne he took two short-term leases in Kent. The first was at *Ightham Mote*, an ancient moated building (pages 36 and 38) where late in 1855 La Trobe gathered all of his children for the first time since his return to England a year earlier. At the heart of this newly re-created family life was Rose aged thirty-four, his new wife whom he had married on 3 October 1855.<sup>1</sup> Here he was to reside in the splendour of a medieval building, for all its decayed glory. In his recently published biography of La Trobe, John Barnes in describing La Trobe's time at *Ightham Mote* as a period of domestic contentment,<sup>2</sup> may well have been thinking of his time also at *Addington Vale*, his next home in Kent.<sup>3</sup> Here we have the picture of a former governor enjoying what he hoped would be a sabbatical, much as his hard-

working friend Deas Thomson, the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales had done a little earlier in 1852. We see La Trobe following relaxing pursuits of some rambling and painting. The lease at the romantic *Ightham Mote* having expired, he clearly desired a more modern house and certainly one less damp as Rose was expecting their first child in the autumn of 1856, but it seems to have been intended as a short-term lease. He was to find one at the village of Addington eight miles from *Ightham Mote*.

Addington was already old before the Norman Conquest as evidenced by two of the most ancient monuments in Kent known as the Chestnuts and Addington Long Barrow close to the centre of the village.<sup>4</sup> Later, the Saxons were to establish a sophisticated system of land tenure, and evidence suggests a Christian church existed on the site of present day St Margaret's.<sup>5</sup> Manorial life after 1066 was harsh and the land



**Map of Kent: Addington and Ryarsh, 1870**  
**Ordnance Survey, County of Kent, sheet 030, 1870, detail**  
 Source: British History Online  
[www.british-history.ac.uk/os-1-to-10560/kent/030](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/os-1-to-10560/kent/030)  
 Addington Vale centre right, St Martin's right,  
 St Vincent's left, St Margaret's centre left

poor, although the climate made for better fed peasants than in the north of England. Later, animal husbandry and cereals crops were part of a three-field system.<sup>6</sup> By the early nineteenth century hops, cereal crops, nuts and cherries, pasture and timber were important agricultural activities.<sup>7</sup> An impressive Jacobean manor house and its park had existed for some three hundred years, with the lord of the manor still owning various farm houses, manor lands and the village.

An Ordnance Survey map of 1870 shows two substantial houses, *Addington Vale* and *St Vincent's*, together with the rambling manor house *Addington Place*<sup>8</sup> standing in its park near the parish church of St Margaret. From 1851 the new squire at *Addington Park*, John Winfield-Stratford Esquire began a period of engrossment during which he added substantially to the acreage of his estate as various tenant farmers died. The handsome Georgian house, *St Vincent's* had been built in 1775 on land bought by an Admiral Parry and for the next thirty years was tenanted by a number of naval men, including Lieutenant William Hunter who was the elder brother of Vice-Admiral John Hunter, the second governor of New South Wales.<sup>9</sup> Various other tenants followed, but by the time La Trobe was leasing *Addington Vale* a Captain Montresor, RN (of Huguenot ancestry like La Trobe) was living at *St Vincent's*.

### ***Addington Vale***

The rural surroundings and proximity to London of *Addington Vale*, like that of *Ightham Mote*, must have been attractive features for La Trobe. From Addington, La Trobe made day trips to

London by train (the Great Eastern Railway had reached Tonbridge in 1842); he had quickly adapted to the Age of Railway when he returned to England. In London La Trobe made use of his new membership of the Athenaeum Club ideally situated on Pall Mall.<sup>10</sup> He also attended meetings of the Geographical Society, visited the Colonial Office with a view to securing a further commission, and worked on papers entitled 'Australia: Memoranda of Journeys, Excursions and Absences 1839-1854', in preparation for his proposed history. He most probably took time to read the fifty or so letters from early settlers that he had carried back from Melbourne which were to be the basis later of *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*. And, so, as John Barnes says of this early period in Kent, La Trobe 'was contemplating the future with confidence'.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst at *Addington Vale* La Trobe made two sketches of St Martin's church at nearby Ryarsh where his and Rose's daughter Margaret Rose (Daisy) was baptised on 28 October 1856, and one of All Saints church, in the adjacent parish of Birling (see p.42). Interestingly, while he painted many aspects of *Ightham Mote* and a fine architectural study of the mansion *Fairlawn* at Shipbourne (see p.39), a few miles from Ightham, he painted nothing of *The Vale* (as *Addington Vale* was known locally) where he stayed for a year. Although the original building was medieval, it had been enlarged and greatly altered in the early nineteenth century and now presented a Georgian face. Perhaps, as such, *The Vale* could not engage his dormant love of architecture, in a way that *The Mote* could (and in a way that *Whitbourne Court*, a former fortified manor house of the Bishops of Hereford, would



Unknown photographer  
Addington Vale, 1923

From Knight Frank LLP auction catalogue  
courtesy of Patricia Richardson

later do). However, he must have spent time strolling around the nearby village of Addington as he made an intriguing pen and ink sketch of a Neolithic 'cairn'<sup>12</sup> with its exposed chambers reminiscent of his interest in ancient landscape.

La Trobe had always been an active correspondent but he appears to have written few letters during his year at Addington (or perhaps they did not survive). One was addressed to his daughter Agnes, dated 29 April 1857 just as he was leaving Addington, which says, 'your mother<sup>13</sup> is... busy with her preparations for tomorrow morning when we propose starting for Brighton, spending Friday there and reaching Oxford on Saturday to be with you' and then 'on to Wallingford'.<sup>14</sup> Here the family was to stay at Braziers<sup>15</sup> for the Saturday and Sunday and then start for Alderley. Once again, the La Trobe family was on the move. These places were serviced by the railways which enabled them to traverse such a large area.

In 1856 when Charles Joseph La Trobe took up his short tenancy it had recently been leased from the squire John Wingfield-Stratford to Mrs Anna Pickering in 1853,<sup>16</sup> who had then sub-leased it to La Trobe. Anna's husband, the Rev. Edward Pickering,<sup>17</sup> had been a master at Eton, a fine amateur cricketer, destined to be Eton's next Headmaster, but he died in 1852 at the age of forty-five, leaving six children. Anna Pickering's father-in-law, a wealthy solicitor, supported her and her family.<sup>18</sup>

After La Trobe left, Anna Pickering renovated and extended the house with a mid-Victorian wing featuring a bay window that disrupted the symmetry of the elegant Georgian façade. Here she lived until her death in 1872 at the age of fifty-nine. Even in 1871 when she had

only one unmarried daughter still living with her, Mrs Pickering had three servants living in the house.<sup>19</sup>

The wealthy fireworks and ammunition manufacturer Capel Hanbury from Pontypool in Wales,<sup>20</sup> then leased *Addington Vale* for five years before John Spooner Hardy, a London merchant whose Irish forebears had interests in the Barbados sugar trade, assumed the tenancy for the next forty five years. Such short and long-term leases were not uncommon during the nineteenth century, especially in houses closer to London. With changing times and new owners, however, the *Addington Park* estate was disposed of by auction in 1923, together with its numerous rented houses such as *The Vale*, farms and the village. This enabled Hardy's widow to purchase *The Vale*.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the Hardy family were parishioners of St Margaret's at Addington and held village fetes in the grounds of *The Vale*.

After the death of the last member of the family Miss Norah Hardy in 1963 *The Vale* was put to auction. By this time the M20 motorway was planned, and the house was now in a decayed condition. No buyer could be found and *The Vale* was eventually demolished in 1970, with new homes built on the site.<sup>22</sup>

### ***La Trobe households***

The La Trobe households were no exception to the way many of the rising middle class were to live when they took on a gentrified life style. At Addington there were at least ten people to accommodate: Charles Joseph and Rose, and five children, although not all of them lived at home (for example Agnes was at school at Southwell, near Newark in Nottinghamshire),



**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist**  
**Cairn, Addington, 1857**  
Ink wash and pencil on buff paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,  
H92.360/148

as well as several servants.<sup>23</sup> Based on the 1861 and 1871 English censuses, we know quite a lot about the composition of the La Trobe household at Whitbourne and Litlington. There were probably about three live-in servants while there would have been two gardeners for the large kitchen garden, and a groom or stable boy.

Later on, at *Whitbourne Court*, apart from family, the 1861 census shows that the household consisted of a total of fourteen people, three of them live-in servants from Wurttemberg: head nurse/housekeeper, the cook and nurse all in their twenties, and also a housemaid from Southwell in Nottinghamshire. Outside servants included a groom and a local Whitbourne lad. Even at *Clapham House*, his last house where he moved to be closer to London and which was less expensive, had a household of ten, which still included six house servants. House work was labour-intensive yet cheap in 1871. The size and grandeur of the four houses in the nineteen years of his retirement suggest that La Trobe had expectations that his status as a former colonial governor (and that of his new wife a Swiss aristocrat) should be reflected in such households.<sup>24</sup>

Information about La Trobe's household was not available in the 1851 Census as La Trobe was still living in Victoria and *The Vale* itself was unoccupied on the night of Sunday 30 March. However, it was clearly a substantial and desirable house before the later extensions built by Mrs Pickering. On the evidence of the photograph of *The Vale* and the details provided

in the 1923 auction catalogue we know a number of things about it.

On the ground floor were an entrance lobby, hall, dining room about 19ft 6in by 16ft 6in (5.9m by 5m) with painted panelling and stone fireplace, drawing room about 18ft 9in by 16ft (5.7m by 4.9m) with quaint recess; WC, servants' hall, kitchen, scullery, larder, butler's pantry. There was also a study about 18ft by 13ft (5.5m by 4m) with arched recess and bay window. The study and a couple bedrooms referred to were most certainly added during the later Victorian extension, as were a couple of upstairs bedrooms.

On the first floor — approached by two staircases — were eight bedrooms, dressing room, and a bathroom fitted in Victorian times; also, cupboards, linen cupboard. On the second floor under the dormer windows, clearly visible in the 1923 sale catalogue, were the maids' three bedrooms.

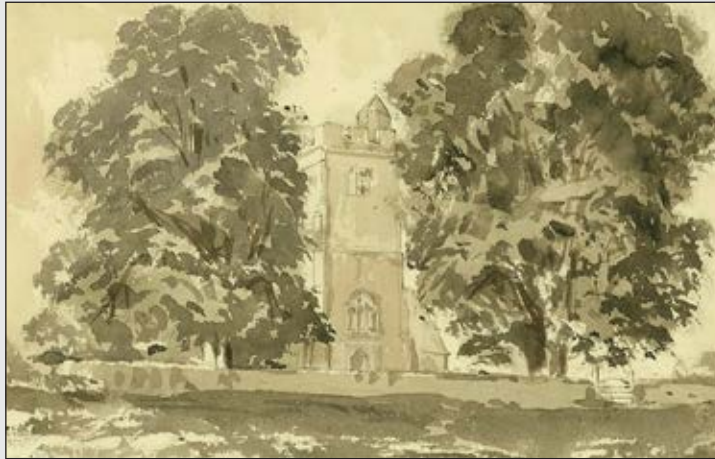
The outbuildings included stables, two garages, a coal house, tool shed, boot hole, harness room, storeroom and a garden shed. The pleasure grounds included spreading lawns with specimen trees, featuring a fine cedar and an acacia. There was also a kitchen garden, orchard and poultry lands. In 1923 the property's area covered four and a half acres (18,500 square metres).<sup>25</sup>

### ***The Rev. Lambert Blackwell Larking (1797-1868) St Martin's, Ryarsh***

St Martin's at Ryarsh is a solid parish church of Norman origin with an interesting tower built in the fifteenth century that clearly intrigued La Trobe because he painted it twice from different angles. In 1851 it had a seating capacity for 165 people with a morning attendance of 99 people and 105 in the evening.<sup>26</sup> La Trobe would probably have appreciated the simpler style of the building which had not suffered at the hands of Victorian 'improvers'.

Although St Margaret's is the Addington parish church, the La Trobes worshipped at St Martin's at Ryarsh. Did they take a coach, or walk through fields to reach it? Why didn't they worship at Addington's St Margaret's? One possible reason is that the Vicar of Ryarsh at the time was Rev. Lambert Blackwell Larking, a distinguished scholar, both writer and antiquarian, from a wealthy local family. He had been educated at Eton and Brasenose College, Oxford, and despite ill health, was a founding member of the Kent Archaeological Society in 1857, serving as its honorary secretary before he was elected vice-president.<sup>27</sup> He was only





**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist**  
**Ryarsh Church, Kent, 1857**  
 Ink wash and pencil on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H92.360/155  
 Another view by La Trobe may be seen on p.41.



**John Prance, photographer**  
**St Martin's Church, Ryarsh, 2016**

four years older than La Trobe and one might imagine that he and La Trobe had much to discuss in this rural community of farmers and agricultural workers.<sup>28</sup> When Rose and Charles Joseph's first daughter, Margaret Rose (Daisy) was born 3 September 1856,<sup>29</sup> she was baptised at St Martin's by Rev. Larking who lived in the rectory nearby.

Another possible reason for the decision to worship at Ryarsh, is that the long-serving rector at St Margaret's Addington, the Rev. George Paulson,<sup>30</sup> may have held strong views about a man who had married his deceased wife's sister.

### ***The long wait for recognition*** **1854-1864**

*Addington Vale*, like *Ightham Mote*, was not intended to be a retreat but a temporary family home while La Trobe's fate was being left hanging in the balance. Domestic contentment notwithstanding, by the time he moved to *The Vale* in mid-1856, his wife's pregnancy must have lent urgency to his need to have some resolution to financial matters.

As it turned out, La Trobe was right to be concerned about the financial support of his many daughters. Agnes the eldest was only nineteen in 1856 and was not to marry until 1874 when she was thirty-seven years old. Cécile did not marry until she was forty and Eleanora never married, living through to her nineties on various annuities. La Trobe's two daughters by Rose were even younger and neither of them was ever to marry.<sup>31</sup> Charlie seemed to have always had an adventurous streak (and the freedom unlike his sisters) and early made his way in the world.

So, while La Trobe waited for some other means of financial security, he had begun selling off his *Jolimont* estate in Melbourne (the first sale was in March 1857), he had been presented at Court three times, firstly on 14 March 1855,<sup>32</sup> on 27 June 1855<sup>33</sup> (a little over three months before he married Rose) and the next year on 7 May 1856,<sup>34</sup> and still there was no offer of further work nor even recognition of past service. It took until 1858 before he would be awarded the C.B.<sup>35</sup> And so, by the time La Trobe departed *The Vale* his expectations were faltering. When

October 28 <sup>th</sup> No. 597.	Margaret Rose daughter of	Charles Joseph La Trobe of Rose Isabelle	La Trobe	Addington	Edg.	Lambert & Locking Vicars
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**Baptism record, Margaret Rose La Trobe**  
28 October 1856 St Martin's, Ryarsh  
Ryarsh Parish Records



**Johann Friedrich Dietler, 1804–1874, artist**  
Margaret Rose La Trobe aged 1 year with her  
mother Rose de Meuron La Trobe, 1857  
Watercolour and gouache on paper with highlights  
La Trobe University Art Collection

he took up his tenancy at *Whitbourne Court* in September 1858, seventeen months after he departed Addington, he had resigned himself to an 'early retirement'.<sup>36</sup>

Worse still, it was not until 1864, that lobbying by friends enabled him to obtain a small pension of £333-6s-8d per annum and when he was to write: 'and here I am drifting into old age... & not neglectful of the propriety of following an odd penny thro' the hole in my breeches pocket & tracing it to the depth to which it may have descended'. Written in London away from family, it is a troubling image of despair which he allowed himself to express in a letter to an old and intimate friend in Tasmania.<sup>37</sup> As John Barnes says, he became 'almost incoherent as he struggled with his feelings while describing his treatment' by the Colonial Office. Only a deep faith and a happy home life could ameliorate his private despair. The discussion by John Barnes of this period of La Trobe's life makes compelling reading for those unfamiliar with La Trobe after he returned home.<sup>38</sup>

Why was La Trobe treated in this tardy and miserly way? Dianne Reilly argues that, during his tenure as Lieutenant-Governor of the colony of Victoria, his personal style 'combined with a natural aloofness or inbuilt shyness, gave him an aura of unsociability and lack of sympathy or warmth which did not endear him to many of the local population'.<sup>39</sup>

He was certainly criticised by colonists for being too dilatory when not pressing fast enough on matters close to their interests. John Barnes points out that adverse comments in the colonial press which were reproduced in England, in particular in *The Times*, 'worked against him'.<sup>40</sup> His management of the turmoil on the goldfields alarmed the Colonial Office at a time of turbulence in England, and his extraordinary efforts to establish cultural institutions and sound administration in the Port Phillip District were all too soon forgotten. Above all, the civil servants stuck to the letter of the law regarding the awarding of pensions.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Edward Deas Thomson (1800–1879)*** ***Colonial Secretary of*** ***New South Wales***

Sir Edward Deas Thomson<sup>42</sup> was a man whose career and temperament in some ways paralleled that of La Trobe's.<sup>43</sup> La Trobe was to meet Deas Thomson in Sydney when he arrived there in 1839. They had frequent and extensive contact since all correspondence to the Governor of New South Wales passed through Thomson's hands. They were soon to regard each other as friends.<sup>44</sup> One suspects that Thomson, an extremely capable and diligent civil servant, shared similar values with those of La Trobe.

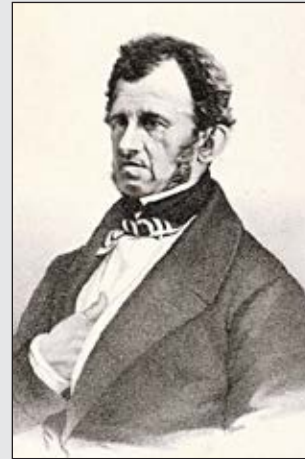
Thomson, born in Edinburgh, was fluent in French<sup>45</sup> (having studied in France for two years), and he had travelled in the United States



**Herbert Luther Smith,**  
1809-1870, artist  
**M & N Hanhart, fl.1839-1882,**  
lithographers  
**Lambert Blackwell Larking, 1857**  
Lithograph  
National Portrait Gallery, London,  
D37174



**William Nicholas,**  
1807-1854, artist  
**William Kellett Baker,**  
1806-1857, lithographer  
**Edward Deas Thomson, the**  
**Colonial Secretary, 1847**  
Lithograph  
Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National  
Library of Australia, NK720/42



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

as a young man (his mother Rebecca Freer was born in South Carolina). Thomson had been educated at Edinburgh High School and at Harrow, and for two years at a college at Caen, Normandy. Thomson was the son of Sir John Deas Thomson sometime accountant-general of the navy who played an influential part in his son's future. Thomson had arrived in Sydney when he was twenty-eight and had quickly secured work as clerk to the Executive and Legislative Councils at £600 a year. In 1833 he had married Anne Maria the daughter of Governor Richard Bourke. Appointed Colonial Secretary in 1837, Thomson was to retain the confidence of every Governor he was to serve. Thomson's retirement was to be crowned with many rewarding interests as well as the Chancellorship of the University of Sydney. He remained a member of the Legislative Council until his death. In 1874 he was appointed KCMG in recognition of his long period of public service. Here, then, is the picture of a man who had the advantages of connections, affability and social ease, and a man who engaged enthusiastically in a large range of intellectual and cultural activities. Among other things, he was a Fellow of the Linnaean Society at the early age thirty-six.

La Trobe and Thomson were both worn out by the hardships of their posts (goldfields administration was extremely demanding on both men). La Trobe sought relief by relinquishing his post in December 1852, Thomson by returning to England on stress leave about the time that La Trobe departed Melbourne, but Thomson

did not return to Sydney until 1856 whereupon he resigned on a particularly attractive pension of £2,000 per annum from the New South Wales government.

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1856 was the year in which La Trobe might well have held high hopes for recognition; indeed, Deas Thomson had received his CB that year; La Trobe not until 1858. Thomson was to receive his generous pension in 1856, but La Trobe received no news that year; indeed, he had to wait until 1864 for any sort of pension and, by the time he left Addington, he could have had little doubt that he may well have become 'the forgotten governor'.<sup>46</sup>

La Trobe may well have observed Deas Thomson's rewards at the end of his career and wondered how with his own greater responsibilities and achievements as both Superintendent and then Lieutenant-Governor that he was so meanly treated. Whether Thomson had greater advantages through family connections, personality and education it is difficult to say. Certainly, Thomson had arrived in New South Wales in 1828 and died there an old man — still in office — in 1878, during which time he had built up local influence and patronage. La Trobe saw himself as an Englishman abroad; Thomson as an Australian (although at one time he had briefly considered returning Home). La Trobe, as early as 1840, had written 'I have called our present

position as Exile<sup>47</sup> and twenty years later, cut off as he had been from the opportunity to cultivate patronage, he had no one to press his case in the inner circle of the Secretary of State. More importantly, as John Barnes has argued, La Trobe ‘throughout his life... showed none of the determined self interest of the calculating office seeker.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps, that is what La Trobe meant when he wrote, ‘I had been a little spoiled and was of too independent & merry a temper for all this—& soon made up my mind to let them alone...’<sup>49</sup>

Here we sense that La Trobe had come to understand after Addington some of those personal characteristics that may have held him back from acquiring the wealth and status that he now desired in old age for the sake of his family. Although he was never able to understand the judgment of men, in the end he had come to know that he had served God faithfully and must content himself with that.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Rose Isabelle de Meuron, née Montmollin (b. 24 July 1821 at Neuchâtel, eleven years younger than her sister Sophie, La Trobe’s first wife. Rose had married Louis de Meuron and had had a child by him which had died as an infant, <https://online.heredis.com>). Louis de Meuron died in 1843. For discussion on the difficulties arising from La Trobe’s second marriage to Rose, see Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp.245–246, and John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller Writer, Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, pp.330–331.
- 2 Barnes, p.332.
- 3 La Trobe took up his lease between 27 May 1856 and departed 30 April 1857.
- 4 Patricia Richardson, *Addington: the life story of a Kentish village*, Addington: Patricia Richardson, 2012, pp.1–2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp.9–11, 53.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.20–21
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.99.
- 8 Demolished by 1950.
- 9 Patricia Richardson, *St Vincents: an admiral’s Kentish home*, Addington: Patricia Richardson, 2016, pp.19–32.
- 10 La Trobe was elected by the Athenaeum Club committee 27 March 1855.
- 11 Barnes, p.332.
- 12 Information on the two Neolithic chamber tombs at Addington, which date from 3,750 BC, may be found in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, the journal of the Kent Archeological Society, vols 111, 112, 116, and 120, accessible at [www.kentarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk).
- 13 La Trobe referred to Rose as the mother of all his children. Agnes had lived with Rose, her aunt, from the age of eight.
- 14 La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/25, Charles La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 29 April 1857.
- 15 *Braziers Park House* at Ipsden, near Wallingford, South Oxfordshire, where their good friends the Stevens (John Whitehall Stevens family) had settled on returning from Victoria, letter 29 April 1857.
- 16 In 1853, Anna Pickering had paid the church tithes on the property.
- 17 Rev. Edward Hayes Pickering MA (1807–52).
- 18 Richardson, *Addington*, p.129.
- 19 1871 Census.
- 20 ‘The Hanburys’, [pontypoolmuseum.org.uk/thi/the-hanburys](http://pontypoolmuseum.org.uk/thi/the-hanburys).
- 21 Richardson, pp.164–167; 131.
- 22 *Ibid.* p.150.
- 23 As seems to be the case with all of the La Trobe family, they were sent away to be schooled, even the two youngest. In the case of Rose’s children they were educated in Switzerland.
- 24 At *Jolimont* La Trobe seems to have had a household of about eight people, which included the beloved housekeeper Charlotte Pellet, despite shortages of servants.
- 25 Details from the sale at auction of *Addington Park* and its estate by Knight Frank LLP, 14 June 1923.
- 26 From the Church of England census of 1851.
- 27 ‘Rev. Lambert Blackwell Larking (Biographical details)’, [www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/term\\_details.aspx?bioId=118036](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=118036) (accessed 15 June 2018).
- 28 1851 Census. It identified most heads of households as farmers and agricultural workers, which covered a wide range of rural occupations. The population then was 272.
- 29 Margaret Rose (Daisy) La Trobe born at *Addington Vale* on 3 September 1856. She never married and died aged 76 at Neuchâtel.
- 30 Richardson, p.112.
- 31 A second daughter was born: Isabelle–Castellane Helen La Trobe, 1858–1874.
- 32 *Morning Post*, 15 March 1855, p.5. He was presented to Queen Victoria by Sir George Grey, later Secretary of State for the Colonies at a St James’s Palace levee.
- 33 *Ibid.* 28 June, 1855, p.5.

- 34 Ibid. 8 May, 1856, p.6.
- 35 Companion of the Order of the Bath for civil service of the highest calibre. (He was subsequently presented to Queen Victoria by Edward Bulwer Lytton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, at a St James's Palace levee on 2 March 1859, *Morning Post*, 3 March 1859, p.5.)
- 36 Dianne Reilly, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: an appreciation', *La Trobe Journal*, no.71, autumn 2003, p.12. She has suggested that La Trobe may have accepted that any further government postings were unlikely when he received the award Companion of the Bath in 1858, thus 'resigning himself to enforced early retirement'.
- 37 La Trobe to Ronald Campbell Gunn, 19 January 1864, in L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975, pp.57-59.
- 38 Barnes, pp.335-339.
- 39 Reilly, p.12.
- 40 Barnes, p.13.
- 41 For a more detailed account of the granting of La Trobe's pension in 1865, see Reilly Drury, pp.250-251.
- 42 Biographical details from M. E. Osborne, 'Thomson, Sir Edward Deas (1800-1879)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, Vol 2, 1967, pp.523-527.
- 43 The Thomson River and the La Trobe River were named at the same time by Governor Gipps. Both are in Gippsland.
- 44 For example, La Trobe to Thomson, 20 January 1848 in *Historical Records of Australia*, vol. 26, p.172, quoted in Reilly Drury, p.188.
- 45 La Trobe was a fluent French speaker.
- 46 Dianne Reilly, 'Charles La Trobe: The Forgotten Governor', title of the Joint La Trobe Society/RHSV AGL Shaw lecture, Melbourne, 22 June, 2006.
- 47 La Trobe to John Murray, 15 December 1840.
- 48 Barnes, p.13
- 49 La Trobe to Gunn, Blake, p.58.

# Forthcoming events

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## NOVEMBER

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Thursday 29

**Christmas Cocktails**

**Time:** 6.30–8.30 pm

**Venue:** The Australian Club,  
110 William Street, Melbourne

**Guest Speaker:** Dr Robert La Nauze

**Topic:** Sober habits and quiet pursuits:

Charles La Trobe and cabinet maker

George Thwaites

**Cost:** \$85

**Refreshments**

**Bookings essential**

**Invitations have been sent to members**

## DECEMBER

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Sunday 2

**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 Charge**

2019

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## JANUARY

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Saturday 26

**Family Day:** tours and activities

**Time:** 1pm–4pm

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

**Admission:** Gold coin donation

## MARCH

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Sunday 24

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30–6 pm

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

## APRIL/MAY

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**Friends of La Trobe's Cottage**

**Annual Lecture**

**Venue:** tba

**Speaker:** tba

## JUNE

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Tuesday 18

**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:** tba

Friday 28

**Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture**

**Time:** 6.30–8.30 pm

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

**Guest Speaker:** tba

## AUGUST

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Wednesday 7

**La Trobe Society Annual General**

**Meeting and Dinner**

**Time:** 6.30 pm

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

**Guest Speaker:** tba

**Invitations will be sent to members**

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

## *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.**

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BACK COVER  
La Trobe Family coat of arms

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

