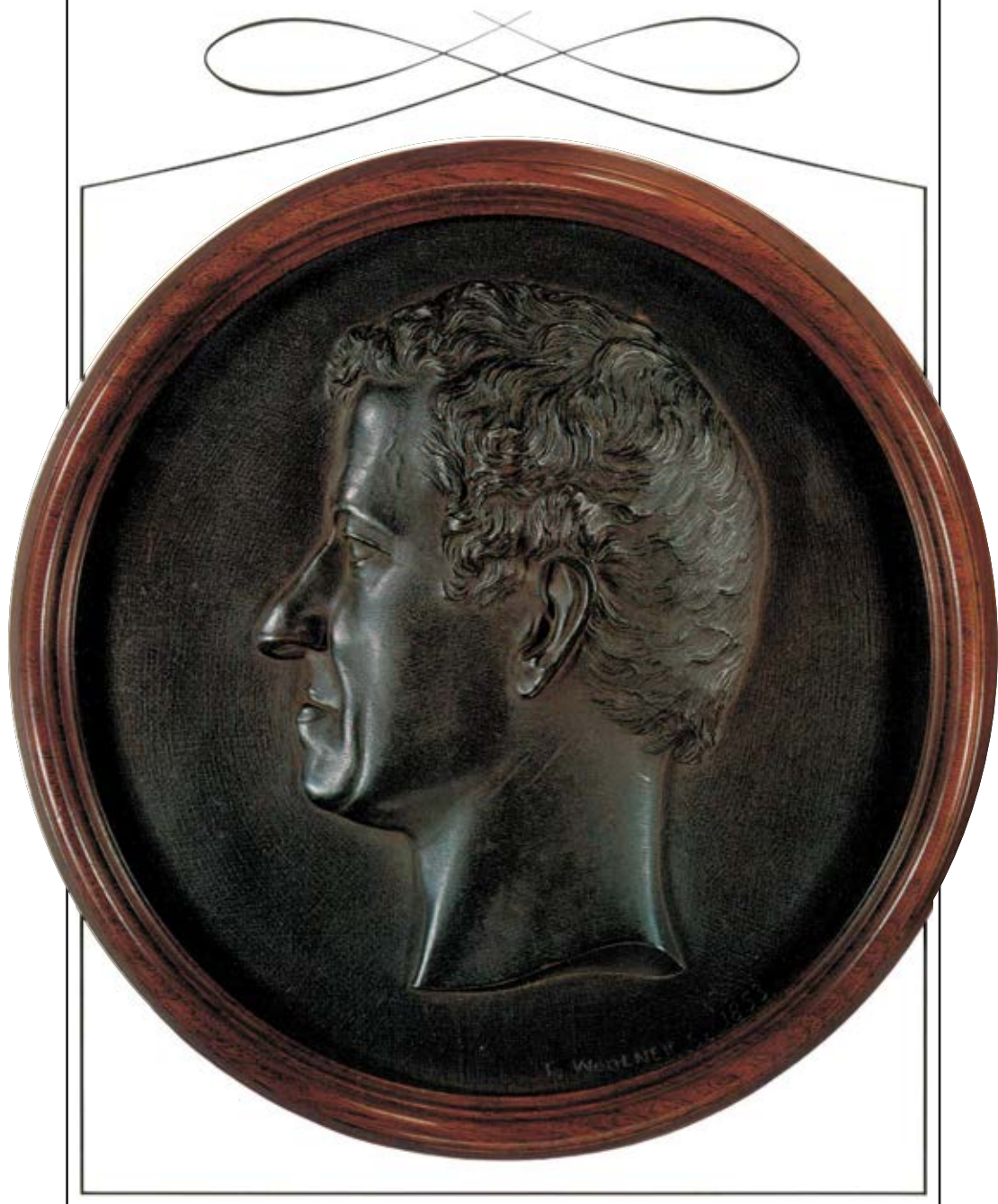


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 18, No 1, March 2019**

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## ***La Trobeana***

**Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc**  
**Vol 18, No 1, March 2019**

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

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



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### **FRONT COVER**

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

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# A Word from the President

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**B**est New Year's wishes to all our members. I hope that 2019 will be a successful and healthy year for us all. As a delightful way to start the year, I know you will all join me in congratulating two La Trobe Society members who received accolades in the 2019 Australia Day Honours. Ian Watts received the award of Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) 'For service to the museums and galleries sector'. Dr Jacqueline Watts received the award of Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) 'For service to local government, and to the community of Melbourne'.

This first edition of *La Trobeana* for 2019 is full of interest. Father Hugh Kempster's sermon 'Remembering Charles Joseph La Trobe', delivered on the occasion of the annual commemoration of La Trobe last year at St Peter's Eastern Hill, is a splendid evocation of La Trobe's great vision for the future of the colony he had been sent to administer as a way forward 'to enduring prosperity and happiness... by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great'.

Dr Monique Webber, 2017/18 La Trobe Society Fellow at State Library Victoria, encapsulates in her paper 'La Trobe's Garden City and the Lost Sculptures of Fitzroy Gardens' her lively presentation at the 2018 Annual General Meeting on her research to discover more about La Trobe's plan for a garden city for the developing metropolis, and the superb statuary which once adorned the Fitzroy Gardens.

Anne Marsden, Honorary Creative Fellow at State Library Victoria in 2012/13 has, in her article 'In Search of Sophie La Trobe and her Contemporary Women Settlers in pre-goldrush Port Phillip', extended her previous research on the men who were the founders in 1839 of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution, to embrace their wives, so often overlooked or unknown but influential individuals in their own right, to reveal the invaluable role women played in the early Port Phillip settlement.

Major-General Michael O'Brien has given us a summation of his outstanding AGL Shaw Lecture for 2018, 'Charles La Trobe

and Hugh Childers: the ladder of success in Victoria', which describes the little-known relationship between the two men, and outlines Childers' distinguished career in Australia as inspector of denominational schools, politician and first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, before returning to even greater success in Britain.

Historian Shane Carmody, in an edited version of his 2018 Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture, has shone light on a hitherto little-known facet of the social history of La Trobe's Melbourne and beyond. He describes 'The Remarkable Library of Bishop Goold: its creation, loss and rediscovery', a choice collection gathered together over his tenure as Melbourne's first Catholic bishop from 1848 to 1886.

In an edited version of his Members' talk last year, Davydd Shaw describes the life of 'Edward Byam Wight: enterprising pioneer in the Port Phillip District'. He and his wife Catherine were friends and supporters of the La Trobes. Wight, 'a man of substance in the colony', was hard-working and resourceful, and his contribution to Victoria was significant as a businessman, company director and philanthropist, continuing to his death in 1900.

We have been tremendously grateful for the generous sponsorship of *La Trobeana* for nearly sixteen years by La Trobe Society member Peter Lovell, Director and Founding Principal of Lovell Chen, Architects and Heritage Consultants based in Melbourne. Almost solely because of Peter's generosity, the high standard of production of our journal has been maintained, and such substantial support has enabled it to reach peer-reviewed status and high regard in history circles. The company has recently taken different philanthropic avenues, and I express our heartfelt thanks to Peter for backing the work of the Society over such a long period.

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



Charles Norton, 1826–1872, artist  
 St. Peter's, 1850  
 Watercolour on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H88.21/63

# Remembering Charles Joseph La Trobe

By Rev'd Dr Hugh Kempster

**Father Hugh Kempster has been Vicar since 2012 of the historic St Peter's church, Eastern Hill, in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. Prior to this appointment, he was Senior Chaplain at Geelong Grammar School for four years. In his role at St Peter's, he oversees an inclusive and welcoming Church, committed to social justice and diversity, and to involvement with the wider community.**

*This is an edited version of the sermon delivered at St Peter's, Eastern Hill, on Sunday, 2 December 2018.*

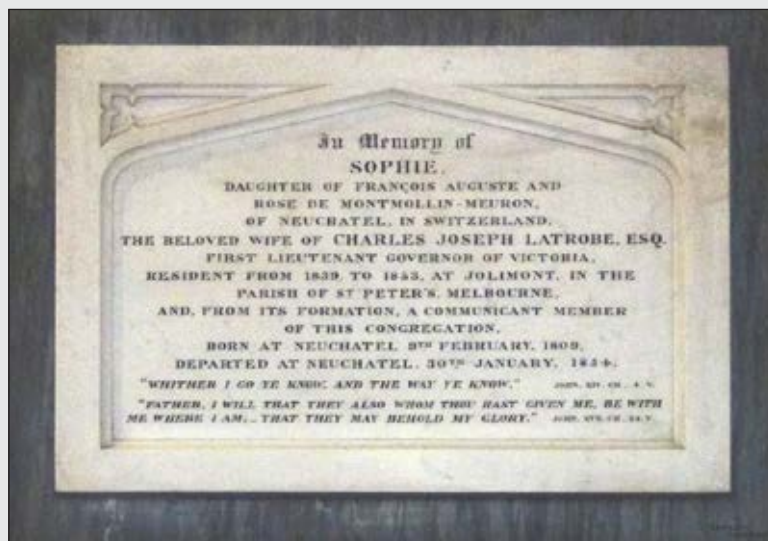
**T**his year, as most years, we are blessed with a dual celebration on Advent Sunday. At this beginning of our preparations for the great feast of the Incarnation, we also give thanks for the life of the most well-known founder of St Peter's Eastern Hill, Charles Joseph La Trobe, who died on the 4 December 1875.

Charles La Trobe was born in 1801 in London, into a Moravian family. The Moravian Church is one of the oldest Protestant denominations, with its heritage dating back to the German Bohemian Reformation in the

fifteenth century. One of Charles' forebears, his grandfather Benjamin, was a Moravian bishop, his father Christian Ignatius (a friend of Haydn) was a cleric and secretary of the London Moravian Association, as was his brother Peter. Charles himself was educated at the Fulneck Moravian School in Yorkshire, with perhaps the hope that he too would become a cleric, but his life ended up taking a somewhat different course.

On arrival in Melbourne, after being appointed the first Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in 1839, La Trobe's religious formation shone through in his opening speech,





**Tablet in memory of Sophie La Trobe, 1855**

'Resident from 1839 to 1853 at Jolimont, in the Parish of St Peter's Melbourne, and, from its formation, a communicant member of this congregation.'  
Marble, sent by La Trobe from England 1855

purportedly to the bemusement of many of his listeners. He was well aware of the high expectations of the early Melbourne colonists, and their perception that all the Port Phillip revenue was being syphoned off by Sydney, and he noted: 'I... fear that the wishes of the inhabitants of the district may have led them to over-rate both my official and my personal powers.' He then went on to deliver something of a sermon to the gathered crowd:

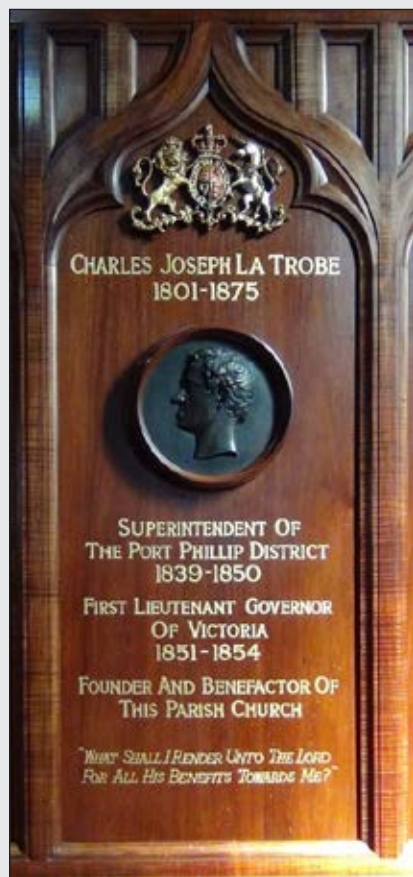
I pray to God, to whom I look for strength and power, that whether my stay among you as chief organ of the Government be long or short, I may be enabled, through His Grace, to know my duty, and to do my duty, diligently, temperately and fearlessly... It will not be by individual aggrandizement, by the possession of numerous flocks and herds, or of costly acres, that we shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness; but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great.<sup>1</sup>

A key component of putting these homiletic words into action was the establishment of what was to become something of a religious quarter of the early city, up on Eastern Hill. Land was set-aside for the Church of England, the Catholic Church, the German Lutheran Church and even a Synagogue. The Anglicans

were first off the mark, and on 18 June 1846 then Superintendent La Trobe laid the foundation stone of our church.

For Charles and his wife Sophie, this was in a very real sense their local parish, living in the relatively humble Superintendent's prefabricated cottage that they erected at *Jolimont* from 1839 to 1854. Subsequent Governors lived in much grander surrounds at *Toorak House*, then for a short time at *Bishopscourt*, and finally in the present Government House that was completed in 1876. The La Trobes rented a pew at St Peter's, as did a number of the then Lieutenant-Governor's staff. After Sophie tragically died on 30 January 1854, and Charles' term of office concluded soon after, he sent over from Europe two gifts for St Peter's church: a marble baptismal font and a large marble memorial tablet in memory of his beloved wife. Powerful symbols of life and death, to be placed in this church that clearly held a very significant place in his heart.

So, today, on this first Sunday of Advent, we join in prayer with the Vicar and congregation of St Michael the Archangel, in Litlington, England, where Charles is buried. We are blessed again to share this day with the President and members of the La Trobe Society, and also for the first time this year, members of the East Melbourne Historical Society. We give thanks for one of the foremost founders of St Peter's Eastern Hill, Charles La Trobe, and his wife Sophie. May they rest in peace... and rise in glory!



#### Honour board to Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1975

A commemorative service of the centenary of La Trobe's death was held at St Peter's on 4 December 1975. The honour board contains a Thomas Woolner portrait medallion of La Trobe (1853). The baptismal font that La Trobe sent from England in 1854 stands nearby

And now, the work is over to us. The foundations of this church were laid with such hope and promise in 1846, and built on through the eras of Fathers Handfield, Hughes, Maynard, Taylor, Bayton, Farrar, and most recently Fr John Davis who we are blessed to have with us today. But the work is now ours to do. Last night's *Messiah* was one of the most recent beautiful layers of ministry to be added. Our Lay Minister, Alae Taule'alo, has been working away all year at RMIT University, building on student-ministry foundations that Fr Rob Whalley, also here today, laid more than a decade ago. You will have seen in the pew sheet that we have reached our fundraising goal of \$400,000 for the completion of the Corner Plaza development and Wayside Cross renovation. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to this ambitious project, which started with a very simple desire to start up a coffee cart social enterprise to assist the homeless, and has turned into a magnificent project that will well and truly put our church back on the East Melbourne street frontage. So, thank you to everyone who supports, ministers and worships at this little old church on 'The Hill'. The Lord be with you!

#### References

- Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006.
- Jill Eastwood, 'La Trobe, Charles Joseph (1801–1875)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967, vol.2, pp. 89–93.
- Colin Holden, *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at Mass: St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne, 1846-1990*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996.

#### Endnote

- 1 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.3, quoted Reilly Drury, p.146.



N J Caire, 1837-1918,  
photographer  
Fitzroy Gardens, central  
roundel, c.1880  
Albumen silver  
photograph  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria,  
H87.269/21  
Borghese Gladiator  
(Roman copy of a Greek  
original, now in the  
Musée du Louvre)

# La Trobe's Garden City and the Lost Sculptures of Fitzroy Gardens

By Dr Monique Webber

Monique Webber is an Honorary Fellow, Classics and Archaeology, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne. She held the C J La Trobe Society Fellowship for 2017/2018 at State Library Victoria. Her doctorate focused on visual culture and the analysis of Roman art and architecture. She teaches and writes about history, design, and visual culture; and is also active in art journalism, and academic community engagement.

*This is an edited version of an address given at the C J La Trobe Society Annual General Meeting, 1 August 2018 at the Lyceum Club, Melbourne. The presenter acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which she lives and works; and pays respect to the Elders past, present and to the future. In the context of this presentation, which discusses a post-settlement history of Melbourne and its physical environment, the term 'Melbourne' refers to the post-1836 city.*

When La Trobe arrived in the Port Philip District in 1839, he declared the nascent colonial settlement to be '16,000 miles from civilization'.<sup>1</sup> He did not intend for it to remain that way. One of his earliest projects was to define parklands, including FitzRoy Square (now Fitzroy Gardens) in 1848. Although La Trobe's governorship concluded before the gardens' completion, the abundant classical statuary that ornamented its walks retained his ideals.

My project, as the 2017/2018 State Library Victoria La Trobe Society Fellow, was to uncover the history of these 'lost' sculptures. Installed in the mid-1860s as a collective emblem of cultural aspirations, and removed in an overnight manoeuvre by a disapproving government in the 1930s, practically all trace of the near-hundred classical casts has now disappeared from the Fitzroy Gardens. All that remain are two incomplete and often-forgotten urns buried in the shrubbery. However, the rich collection of State Library Victoria holds a



**Unknown photographer  
Scene in the Fitzroy  
Gardens, 1906**

Postcard, coloured  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria,  
H90.160/993  
Shirley Jones collection of  
Victorian postcards.  
John Bell's Dorothea  
(1839, now in the Royal  
Collection Trust) adjacent to  
the *Temple of the Winds* (1873)



**Monique Webber, photographer  
Temple of the Winds, 2017**

wealth of previously undiscussed photographs of the gardens as they were in La Trobe's century. Uncovering their story reveals the lasting legacy of La Trobe's hopes for Melbourne as the city grew; and in turn how they continue to define our urban identity today.

The sculptures were part of a broader scheme of the Fitzroy Gardens as a typically nineteenth century European urban garden. Their original plan and function, like the sculptures, has largely disappeared. The gardens as we enjoy them now are the result of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century partial redesign of the original plan into a loosely picturesque style with rolling lawns and curved paths. When La Trobe reserved 'Fitzroy Square' in 1848 as part of Melbourne's 'green necklace'<sup>2</sup> of parklands around the city centre, however, he envisioned a very different space.

The nineteenth-century urban garden was, ironically, a child principally of the Industrial Revolution. Rapidly encroaching factories and workers' slums across England prompted a Parliamentary inquiry into how cities could become – and remain – physically and emotionally healthy environments for drastically increasing urban societies.<sup>3</sup> The answer was public squares (hence the originally named 'FitzRoy Square') and gardens that would provide space for the urban population. The same discussion was happening concurrently in France, which had long been enjoying grand royal gardens turned over to the public enjoyment. The result was the urban garden: a decidedly formal space not for escaping the city, but for continuing its activity in a more salubrious environment. This emphasis on 'decorum' and

'civility' manifested in fenced straight paths; infrastructure such as lamps and benches; and most importantly for Melbourne, sculptures that signified collective connoisseurship and 'culture'. This idea was borrowed from the Renaissance sculpture garden, in which private art collections would publicly display their sculptures in garden settings.

As mentioned earlier, this concept of the urban garden is no longer evident in Melbourne. Our Gardens are a refuge from the city centre. The traditional European concept of a sculpture garden is also found very infrequently here. Yet they remain, largely unchanged, in Europe. With the generous support of the La Trobe Society and the State Library Victoria, as well as The University of Melbourne French Trust Fund, I travelled to Europe to discover what sort of space La Trobe imagined for Melbourne and how his successors carried out his aims. Experiencing spaces such as the Jardin des Tuileries and the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris, and the Giardini di Villa Borghese in Rome, allowed me to understand how these spaces act as extensions of the urban network. Within their gridded paths, sculptures are participants in city life. Through a performative ritual of seeing and being seen, participating in the city's rhythms alongside these casts of classic icons demonstrates your awareness of and inclusion in a collective cultural heritage.

But where did Melbourne find these sculptures little more than thirty years into its history as a European settlement? In the 1850s, La Trobe's colleague Redmond Barry ordered an impressive collection of classical casts from Domenico Brucciani of London, cast-maker to



**Unknown photographer**  
**Statue of Diana, Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne, c.1908**

Postcard, coloured  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H96.200/624  
 Diana of Versailles (trad. Diane à la Biche; Roman copy of a Greek original,  
 now in the Musée du Louvre), at the centre of the Fitzroy Gardens.  
 Victorian postcards, Melbourne parks and gardens (Valentine's series, 53452)

the British Museum. This was at a time when all of the Western world's great museums were building plaster cast collections that allowed their visitors to enjoy the best of classical and contemporary art no matter their location in the world. Again, this is something that Melbourne no longer maintains. When the casts arrived after a long sea journey, many were broken. It fell to the celebrated sculptor of Melbourne's *Burke and Wills* monument, Charles Summers, to repair them before their display in what is now State Library Victoria's Palmer Hall. While they were being repaired, they were seen by Clement Hodgkinson. Hodgkinson had recently assumed responsibility for Melbourne's gardens and realised La Trobe's vision for a formal Fitzroy Gardens by emphasising its geometric paths. He requested permission to have further casts made in concrete for the Gardens that he had taken on as a special project. At the same time, Charles Coppin's Cremorne Gardens closed, and the contents were auctioned. Amongst the lions, monkeys, and pleasure boats up for sale were casts – also from Brucciani's – that Hodgkinson snapped up. And with that, the Fitzroy Gardens sculptures were born.

It is one thing to uncover the narrative of the sculptures. It is quite another to discover what sculptures were included and where. While there is an incredible volume of images in State Library Victoria's collections, the majority of these are untitled and single images without identifiable locations. There is one map that tells

us there were sixty-five cast statues and urns in the gardens in the mid-1860s. The majority of these are included simply as 'statue' or 'vase'; or indicated merely by a dot. Other works, such as the two *Diana* and a *Borghese Gladiator*, are mentioned by name. Eventually, of fifty-one sculptures I identified about forty-five from either their name on Hodgkinson's map, or via research through the hundreds of untitled and loosely dated photographs in the library's collection. And of these, I located thirty-nine on Hodgkinson's map. But there were many red herrings along the way.

The greatest puzzle was an often-cited comment that the gardens included a 'Diana, goddess of mood and contemplation, from the Vatican Museums' that inspired Leslie Bowles' *Moderne Diana and the Hounds* now found outside the Conservatory. There were at least two statues of Diana in the gardens. At the centre of the gardens was a *Diana of Versailles* (trad. *Diane à la Biche*) from which all paths emanated; and nearby was a cast of Giovanni Maria Benzoni's *Diana Hunting*. It is likely that there was also a *Diana of Gabii*. None of the originals of these casts are in the Vatican Museums; and all of them show Diana hunting rather than as a 'goddess of mood and contemplation'. In fact, the often-vengeful goddess of the hunt is not frequently contemplative. While in Rome, I contacted the Vatican Museums. After an exhaustive – but very enjoyable – hunt through the museum halls, tracking down every Diana



**Leslie Bowles, 1885–1954, sculptor**  
**Diana and the Hounds, 1940**

Bronze, granite, concrete  
 City of Melbourne Art and Heritage  
 Collection, 1086739  
 Located in front of the Conservatory,  
 Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne.  
 Photograph (2015) courtesy MaryAnn Adair  
[maryannadair.com/2015/04/16/the-hounds-  
 of-love-are-calling-for-diana](http://maryannadair.com/2015/04/16/the-hounds-of-love-are-calling-for-diana)

in their collection, I concluded that there is no ‘Diana, goddess of mood and contemplation, from the Vatican Museums’ that could have been cast for Melbourne. Like much of Melbourne, she is a myth created by an enthusiastic community retelling and elaborating its history. I did, however, uncover a complex sculptural program that made young Melbourne’s cultural aspirations part of its physical landscape. This is detailed in my Fellowship outcome that will be published later in 2019.

But what happened to the sculptures? With time, they fell into disrepair, and opinions were divided between their being romantically ruined or embarrassingly decrepit. The debate raged through Melbourne’s newspapers and governmental chambers; and all the while the sculptures deteriorated further. At the same time, attitudes were changing. Melbourne did not want a prescriptive extension of the city. It wanted a fashionably picturesque landscape, free of restrictive fences and prescriptive culture. Surprisingly, the different opinions did not reflect the patrician old-guard versus the progressive new wave, as might be expected. Contemporary artists were as divided as the wider public, with Arthur Streeton arguing for the

casts’ removal as Paul Montford tried to restore them. Essentially, changing tastes meant that many could not recognise La Trobe’s vision of a classical and formal landscape as an emphatically contemporary statement. Chief amongst these was the Melbourne City Council. In an eerie foreshadowing of Ron Robertson Swann’s *Vault* being relocated from the City Square in the early hours of the morning in 1981, the Council ordered an overnight removal, and in turn, destruction, of the Fitzroy Gardens sculptures in the 1930s.

The sculptures may be gone. But their legacy – and that of La Trobe’s envisioned ‘garden city’ – remains. When Bowles unveiled his *Diana and the Hounds*, he cited the gardens’ original *Diana of Versailles* (trad. *Diane à la Biche*) as his inspiration. This magnificent sculpture still welcomes visitors and Melbournians alike to the gardens in much the same way as the original *Diana* centred its space. Melbourne remains a city physically defined by its gardens and its art, both within and without the museum walls – as well as a community ever-ready to debate its own culture. And with the generous support of the La Trobe Society, we have uncovered another chapter of the story.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Charles Joseph La Trobe to John Murray, 15 December 1840, John Murray Archives, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (quoted in Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, p.144).
- 2 ‘Melbourne’s Emerald Necklace’, *Vic News*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), May 2014, pp.6–7.
- 3 Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Select Committee on Public Walks. *Report [of the] Select Committee Appointed to consider the best means of securing Open Spaces in the Vicinity of populous Towns as Public Walks and Places of Exercise, calculated to promote the Health and Comfort of the Inhabitants*, London, 1833, Chairman: Robert Aglionby Slaney (U.K. Parliamentary Papers Online).

# *In search of Sophie La Trobe and her contemporary women settlers in pre-goldrush Port Phillip*

**By Anne Marsden**

Anne Marsden, a former science teacher, and administrative officer at the University of Melbourne, is a volunteer researcher at the Athenaeum Library archives. Anne held an Honorary Creative Fellowship at State Library Victoria in 2012-13, researching the founders in 1839 of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution. This resulted in papers in *The La Trobe Journal*, and the *Victorian Historical Journal*. Further research resulted in the publication of *The Making of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution: the 'movers and shakers' of pre-goldrush Melbourne* (2016) and its companion volume *And the Women Came Too* (2018).

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When Sophie La Trobe arrived in Melbourne with her husband Charles La Trobe in late 1839, it was early in Port Phillip's history of European settlement. But other women had arrived even earlier, from the time John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner set up camp on the banks of the River Yarra in 1835. Through the experiences of these earlier women, let us see how the community had evolved by the time the La Trobe family arrived.

By sifting through personal diaries and letters, family papers and memoirs, contemporary newspapers, and more recent family websites, all of which focus on the early men, we get glimpses of the women behind the scenes. We need at times to read between the lines to find their voices; sometimes just a fragment of a letter, or an indirect comment throws light on a hidden figure.

As the women left the familiarity of their home to follow their menfolk on the long journey south, we can only imagine the shock

and bewilderment of the families left behind, knowing they would probably never see their loved ones again. Hubert de Castella recalls: 'our awe and astonishment as children when told how Mrs La Trobe would be six months on the ocean... The departure for the Antipodes of a lady belonging to one of the oldest and richest families of the town created a sensation'.<sup>1</sup>

Since most of the women had rarely ventured beyond their own homes and communities we wonder what went through their minds as they arrived at the little settlement clinging to the banks of the Yarra River. With the long and hazardous voyage behind them, the relief of anchoring would have been quickly tempered by the difficulty of getting from the ship to the settlement, the ordeal continuing as they were ferried in small open boats up the river.

Imagine them stepping ashore, wading across the mud of the riverbank, through the thick tea tree scrub, clutching their young children, and hitching their skirts out of the detritus and





**John Adamson, d.1841, artist**  
**John Carmichael, 1803-1857, lithographer**  
**Melbourne (Port Phillip) 1841**

Lithograph, hand coloured

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H6262/2

Echoes an 1839 engraving by the artists

From the south side of the Yarra (features, centre to right):

W.W. Darke surveyor's, Turning basin, Queen Street, William Le Souef JP, Surveyors' tents

rubbish. What were their feelings as they lifted their eyes from the riverbank and caught their first glimpse of a group of turf-covered huts, tents and tarpaulins, scattered along muddy cart tracks, realising as they struggled forward that that they would be making a home in this place? We gain an inkling from the first-hand account of Captain Philip Parker King, who accompanied Governor Bourke on his visit early in 1837: 'After pulling for eight miles through a tea-tree scrub, which impenetrably clothes the low banks of the river, the settlement suddenly burst upon our view. It is scattered, of course, at present but consists of perhaps 30 or 40 huts'.<sup>2</sup>

Past historians have walked Melbourne's streets and laneways, conjuring up that early landscape and listening for the voices of its inhabitants, so we too might pause, indulge in a little time travel, and armed with fragments of information, try to people the streetscapes of Melbourne with Sophie La Trobe and her women contemporaries.

Let us begin our quest by stepping from a tram at Flinders Street and imagining a little riverbank hut where Barbara Thomson camped with her family in 1836. My mind's eye tries to visualise that early campsite. As I look towards St Paul's Cathedral, I mentally clear away the present-day hustle and bustle of Federation Square, the buildings, the people, the joggers, the cars, and the noise of a low-flying aircraft, and I picture myself walking up from the riverbank, across the swathe of native grasses, past a group of kangaroos. I smell the smoke from camp fires as I push through tea tree scrub to a simple

dwelling near the present site of St Paul's where I sit and enjoy some tea and damper with the Thomsons. Let us linger for a few minutes and hear how several weeks previously, Barbara, with her husband Dr Alexander Thomson and young daughter Jane, had come up the river, and set up camp next to John Batman's family.

The Thomsons' first landfall, in 1831, had been Hobart, where Alexander established a ferry service, and later a pastoral property. In early 1836 the family set off for Port Phillip, bringing with them basic supplies, and even their daughter Jane's pony. The settlers rallied round and in a few weeks had built the Thomsons a little hut not far from which stood a eucalypt where meat was hung to keep it out of range of the many roaming dogs.

The settlement is described in a report by Police Magistrate George Stewart (June 1836 to the Colonial Secretary) who noted that: 'The town "Bearbrass" [one of the early names for the settlement] is on the left hand of the Yarra, about seven miles from its mouth which at present consists of thirteen buildings, *viz* three weatherboarded, two slab and eight turf huts.' He recorded a white population in the wider Port Phillip District of 142 males and 35 females, the stock including 26,500 sheep, 100 cattle, and 57 horses, with about 60 acres of land under cultivation. 'The Europeans occupy an extent of about 100 miles of country'.<sup>3</sup>

How much easier this reimagining of early Melbourne landscapes has become by the excavation for the metro stations; we can now



peer through a porthole next to Young and Jackson Hotel on the corner of Flinders and Swanston Streets and watch as the archaeologists carefully strip away the layers to expose the land purchased in 1837 by John Batman where he built a home.

In September 1836, just a few months after the Thomsons, Martha Lonsdale arrived on the *Rattlesnake* with her husband Captain William Lonsdale, the District's first official administrator. They were housed temporarily in a hut pending the arrival from Sydney of their prefabricated house, some of the timber for which, lashed to the ship's deck, was lost overboard in wild weather. It would be another year before their home was ready to be occupied.

In his Journal, the *Rattlesnake's* First Mate John Norcock gives us intimate glimpses of the Lonsdale family and their hospitable natures, also of his affection for their baby Agnes whom he loved to nurse. This homesick young man wrote of missing his sweetheart, Jane, back in England, having been twenty-four months on this voyage at close quarters with fellow shipmates and Captain Hobson.<sup>4</sup>

On one occasion Norcock and a fellow shipmate lunched with Martha whilst William was at business with Governor Bourke. The two sailors acquired horses and with Martha enjoyed a fifteen-mile gallop on the banks of the salt branch of the Yarra (the Maribyrnong River). We see here a lively young woman, in her early twenties, enjoying the exhilarating ride – a rare release from the cramped quarters of the small hut and her everyday responsibilities as a young mother and wife of the administrator. We catch a glimpse of Martha in William's report to the Governor on 9 December 1836: 'We are now established in the subaltern's house, and it has been a source of amusement to Mrs Lonsdale to contrive places for such things as are immediately required'.<sup>5</sup>

Lonsdale issued rations to civilians of one pound of meat and one pound of bread. He had ovens erected to provide fresh bread, and handed out rations of tea and sugar. The early arrivals found that fish were plentiful, and also on the menu were smoked kangaroo meat and soup made from the tails of kangaroos. The numerous black swans also made very good eating. The settlers wasted no time setting up their own vegetable patches.

A welcome supplement to the community's frugal diet was supplied by the arrival a few days before Christmas 1836 of the first 'overlanders' who had driven their cattle from Yass, southwest of Sydney. They sacrificed one of their cattle



to provide the settlers with a: 'fine Christmas dinner'.<sup>6</sup> Services that first Christmas may have been held in a small wooden church built by the settlers, at which Lonsdale read the prayers. The first resident clergyman, George Langhorne, arrived in January 1837 to hold services and establish a school.<sup>7</sup>

In March 1837 Governor Bourke and his party: 'called upon the ladies of the place, and found them enduring great discomfort, some living in mud hovels, others in tents, and others just entering their new abodes formed of 'wattle-and-dab' [sic].<sup>8</sup> Living conditions seemed unendurable – and yet had to be endured. None would have imagined as they left their comfortable homes behind that they would be reduced to living in hovels, subject to the environment's capricious and unfamiliar weather patterns that brought floods, dust storms and even occasional earth tremors.

It became necessary to lay out a street grid for the tent encampments which had sprung up, not only to counteract haphazard development, but also to encourage settlers who wanted to buy land on which to build. Governor Bourke, with Surveyor Robert Hoddle (using a contour plan by Robert Russell),<sup>9</sup> traced the general outline of the township. He named the settlement 'Melbourne' after the British Prime Minister, 'Williams Town' after King William IV, and 'Hobson's Bay' after the Captain of the *Rattlesnake*.



Unknown artist  
Martha Lonsdale, c.1850  
Portrait miniature, watercolour on ivory  
Collection Cecilia Newman  
Photograph courtesy Sotheby's Australia

Let us move on now to Christmas Day 1837 and make our way up Swanston Street to Little Lonsdale Street where we will pause on the corner near the site of the present-day State Library Victoria. The street is deserted – are the settlers attending a Christmas service in the little church on the hill? It is hard to picture Swanston Street as the muddy, fetid, refuse-strewn track, lined with tree stumps that it was that day as Margaret Clow, with her husband James and family, struggled along it to their plot of land. Suddenly they emerge from a cloud of dust walking towards us, looking weary and bedraggled, with their eight children, and a young servant, carrying the two infant members of the family.

Rev. James Clow wrote to a friend, Rev. J.D. Lang: 'The whole little pilgrim band... landed safely at Melbourne, and I often think I see it, walking along, without anyone to greet our arrival or to show us an act of kindness, to our destined abode'.<sup>10</sup> 'Our accommodation consists of a couple of tents and a large building which I intend for a stable and other offices, after the erection of a wooden house which I brought with me from Hobart Town. We are literally living in the bush.'<sup>11</sup>

The pre-purchased land was on the west side of Swanston Street, between present-day Little Bourke and Lonsdale Streets. A small patch of the thick bush lining Swanston Street had been cleared, making room for their temporary shelter. Amongst their stores were buckets, as all their water had to be carried up from the Yarra.

The town's sanitation system consisted of rough channels dug out along the sides of the streets, running waste down to the river which quickly became polluted.

We are given a glimpse into the conditions – and the spirits – of the Clow family as life began to take on some sense of normality. A garden was started and James put up a swing on a tree branch. He tried to find time to teach the older children for four hours each morning. The Clow children explored the adjacent bush where they sometimes saw brolgas, and where they would have enjoyed helping to round up the family's small herd of cattle from the fenceless property every night.<sup>12</sup> Later Margaret Clow wrote to a friend:

I did not know then what was before me – our troubles here were but beginning... Were I to give you a recital of all the miseries and privations we endured till we got into our own house you would not wonder that I had not found time to write... We moved into our new house sometime in July [1838]... We have now the happy prospect of something like peace and quietness before us and that ere long we shall forget all our sufferings'.<sup>13</sup>

Margaret might be pardoned for complaining, after her many years of travelling and caring for her family in far corners of the earth. Her gentle husband, had been born with just one hand, and would have relied on the older children to help with the work.

Let us now, in June 1838, greet some new arrivals. We find a vantage spot above the beach at Sandridge (Port Melbourne), and peer through the sea mist, scanning the distant thickly-vegetated coastline. We are waiting for the *Edward* to arrive from Sydney carrying the Yaldwyn family: William Yaldwyn, his wife, Henrietta, and their two infant children, and Henrietta's younger sister Caroline Bowles.<sup>14</sup> Caroline wrote of the violent weather on the *Edward's* journey south:

We... tried three times to pass a headland called "Wilson's Promontory" but each time we were driven back damaged... At last we got... into Port Phillip Bay. When [the] Port Officer came on board, we asked at once for any sort of food as we were nearly starved. He said he would send some and at once went onshore but all he sent was half a loaf of bread... for a crew of about nineteen, besides family.<sup>15</sup>

From our perch above the beach, sheltering from a brisk southerly, we soon see the *Edward* in full sail in the distance, slowly moving up the Bay. We watch it drop anchor and lower boats onto which some bulky items are loaded with difficulty and much shouting. Eventually the boats are rowed towards the beach and we are amazed to see a wagon being ferried to shore. Crew and passengers disembark in the shallows and start the difficult task of unloading the goods. The terrified family horses have to be calmed before they are swum ashore. Many of the crew and passengers are soaked by now, and the women and children are carried over the shallow breakers to the shore. Dusk is approaching and our arrivals are in for a cold and miserable night as beds are made up for the women and children in the wagon, the horses tethered, and finally the men crawl under the wagon to find a little rest.

They face the prospect of negotiating their way through the scrub to the settlement. A rough track exists which had been cut by William Wedge Darke, surveyor, who had camped his wooden caravan near this place as he went about his survey work. The caravan, dubbed 'Darke's Ark', with two rooms and a piano, was drawn by bullocks to his surveying locations. Having carved a track through the tea tree scrub from the beach he: 'hoisted a barrel on a pole, on high ground to point the way to the Melbourne settlement.'<sup>16</sup>

This is the track along which our weary group, hungry and cold, will need to travel with their cart the next morning, eventually reaching the settlement fifty days after sailing from Sydney.<sup>17</sup> But we must leave them to their travels, as they will soon be on the move again for the station that William has purchased on the Campaspe River, seventy miles from Melbourne.

Meanwhile, Melbourne was evolving rapidly, with the establishment of basic services. An early concern was looking after the health of the inhabitants. In September 1837 Governor Bourke appointed Dr P.E. Cussen as Assistant Colonial Surgeon for Port Phillip. He was assisted by a 'dispenser' who distributed medicines to the sick, initially from Dr Cussen's house.

'Hospital' facilities were woeful, Dr Cussen appealing to Lonsdale, and later to La Trobe about the appalling conditions. Other early doctors included Barbara Thomson's husband Alexander Thomson, Farquhar McCrae, and David Wilkie, all of whom had extensive medical training and experience, but both Dr Thomson and Dr McCrae engaged in pastoral



Unknown artist  
Margaret Clow aged 29, c.1824  
Photograph from an oil painting  
Royal Historical Society of Victoria, P-19.004-C

pursuits at the expense of their medical practices. Disease was rife in the settlement. The *Port Phillip Gazette* in late 1838 reported the spread of influenza with the deaths of many children, and the continuing influx of settlers which helped to spread diseases such as tuberculosis. The lack of sanitation and pollution of the Yarra water supply exacerbated these problems.

Negotiating the thoroughfares was still a hazardous affair. Bonwick, an early historian, wrote: 'The streets were in a fearful state in winter. Elizabeth Street was the worst; the rut in it, the water course of the town, being sufficient to entomb a wagon and horses. No wonder that an advertisement appeared for 1000 pairs of stilts.'<sup>18</sup> On 18 January 1840 the *Port Phillip Gazette* reported a carriage upset in which Mrs Lonsdale received cuts: 'while crossing Swanston-street from Bourke-street... It is certainly full time that the improvement of the streets was seriously set about... We would recommend the construction of proper conduits to convey the superfluous water'. In March 1841, eighteen months after the arrival of the La Trobes, Georgiana McCrae wrote that she: 'went up the north side of Collins Street, without any sign of a pavement; only a rough road, with crooked gutters – the shops, built of wood, and raised on stumps'.<sup>19</sup>

Life for the fortunate was not all isolation and hardship and the community's amenities were growing. A fortnightly overland mail service between Melbourne and Sydney, which had started on 30 December 1837, had been well patronised and in April 1839 it was increased



**Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn Liardet, 1799–1878, artist**  
**Surveyor Darke's camp, Sandridge (Port Melbourne), 1875**  
 Watercolour with pen, ink, gouache and pencil  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H28250/32  
 A view of the camp 1838–40

from fortnightly to weekly. Nevertheless, it could take a month for a letter even between the two thriving regional centres to be received and a reply delivered.

Leisure pursuits were not neglected by those who were able to participate. Artist/surveyor Robert Russell noted that shortly after he came to Melbourne in 1836 he spent an evening with others playing cards and singing songs.<sup>20</sup> By the late 1830s sporting and social occasions were being organised as the residents strived to replicate British upper class social mores.

In late 1839 Melbourne Town celebrated the arrival of the La Trobe family with a gunfire salute, and at night the settlement was partially illuminated: 'and looked pretty and the firing of guns etc. continued till a late hour'.<sup>21</sup> By this time the settlement, although still primitive, had changed out of recognition from that greeting the Thomsons and the Lonsdales in 1836. The *Port Phillip Gazette* of 9 October 1839, reporting on Port Phillip's welcome to the new Superintendent, carried a letter signed by a number of gentlemen who were proud of progress in their professions and associated organisations:

Already Melbourne, which eighteen months ago possessed only three brick houses, is a flourishing town, with a population of between two and three thousand souls, and

containing most of the appendages of an advanced civilization. It has five places of worship of different denominations of Christians, a Court of Justice, two Schools, two Banks, one Club with sixty members, a Fire and Marine Assurance Company, and two Newspapers... there are six Clergymen, twelve Medical Men and five Lawyers.<sup>22</sup>

In the same issue of the *Gazette* the tradesmen of the recently formed Union Benefit Society, not to be outdone by the gentlemen, highlighted their own achievements in building the fabric of the town. They described the number of houses of different building materials, and also: 'two Printing offices, three Breweries, one Tannery, two Fellmongers, one Tinware Manufactory, one Gunmaker, two Boat-Builders and Shipwrights Yards, besides a great number of Blacksmiths, Whitesmiths, Saddlers'.<sup>23</sup>

This then was the township that greeted Sophie – a little more welcoming than the primitive riverbank settlement that had greeted the earlier arrivals, but a far cry from the centuries-old city of Neuchâtel, Switzerland where Sophie had grown up. Martha Lonsdale and Sophie La Trobe were Victoria's first and second 'First Ladies', but compared with Martha who was from her teenage years a seasoned traveller, Sophie, who was of delicate health, faced a far greater upheaval in her new



environment. The French-speaking Sophie found herself in Melbourne struggling to come to terms with her life as the wife of the foremost citizen, in a community which at times was hostile to her husband.

These women were true pioneers, forging a pathway for those who followed. Without their support of the aspirations of the menfolk, the early history of the Port Phillip District would have been very different. Under the most challenging of conditions, the women provided a home base and the stability of family and community networks, enabling the men to focus on their own endeavours.

I hope through their stories we have brought these women back to life for a few minutes to visit us in the comfort of our twenty-first century lives. What would they have thought to see the Melbourne of today?



**Johann Friedrich Dietler, 1804–1874, artist**  
**Sophie de Montmollin (La Trobe), 1834**  
 Photograph of watercolour (detail)  
 Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel

#### Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Athenaeum Library Board and Archives, also to express gratitude to State Library Victoria for resources and assistance during the tenure of an Honorary Creative Fellowship.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Hubert de Castella, *John Bull's Vineyard: Australian sketches*, Melbourne: Sands & McDougall, 1886, pp.11–13, referring to Sophie La Trobe leaving Neuchâtel, Switzerland.
- 2 *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.1, *Beginnings of Permanent Government*, (hereafter *HRV1*), ed. by Pauline Jones, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1981, p.108.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Journal of John Henry Norcock, *HRV1*, p.66.
- 5 *HRV1*, p.86.
- 6 John Hepburn, writing on 10 August 1853, describes the overland journey, in Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc.*, Melbourne: Trustees of the Public Library, 1898, p.49.
- 7 Lonsdale to Sir Richard Bourke, 1 February 1837, *HRV1*, p.87.
- 8 *HRV1*, p.108.
- 9 Fay Woodhouse, 'Surveying the Landscape: Robert Russell, Robert Hoddle and the first plan of Melbourne', *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.3, November 2017, p.13.
- 10 Letter from James Clow to Rev. J.D. Lang, 30 July 1838, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 9570, Box 334/1 (b).
- 11 *Ibid.*, 31 December 1837.
- 12 Anne Hamilton, *James Clow: a memoir*, Melbourne: Ramsay Publishing, 1937, p.66.
- 13 Letter from Margaret Clow to William Hamilton, Melbourne, 5 October 1838, in Hamilton, pp. 62–65.
- 14 John Ormond Randell, *Yaldwyn of the Golden Spurs: the life of William Henry Yaldwyn 1801–1866*, Melbourne: Mast Gully Press, 1980. Much of Randell's material relating to the Yaldwyn family is based on descriptions by Henrietta Yaldwyn's sister, Caroline Bowles.
- 15 Randell, p.42.
- 16 *Argus*, 13 September 1913, p.7. As related by Wilbraham Liardet, early settler and artist in Port Melbourne.
- 17 Randell, pp.42–43.
- 18 James Bonwick, *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip: being a history of the country now called Victoria up to the arrival of Mr Superintendent La Trobe, in October, 1839*, Melbourne: George Robertson, 1856, p.118.
- 19 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne 1841–1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae [new edition with A Note on the Text by Marguerite Hancock], Melbourne: Halstead Press, 2013, entry for 3 December, 1841.
- 20 Inscribed on verso of Robert Russell, *Sketch of Part of Settlement Port Phillip*, 1836, Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H571.
- 21 Rev. William Waterfield Journal, 1837–1864, State Library of New South Wales, A 137. Entry for 1 October 1839.
- 22 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 9 October 1839, p.3.
- 23 *Ibid.*



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

By Michael O'Brien

Major General Michael O'Brien CSC (Rtd), a long-time member of the La Trobe Society, had a long and notable career in the Australian Army, serving as an infantry officer in Vietnam before taking up instructional, staff and project management roles. He has been heavily involved in military history studies and management of military museums, and his book 'Conscripts and Regulars with the Seventh Battalion in Vietnam' (1995) documented his own experience and understanding of strategies. On retirement from the Army he owned for 17 years the iconic Melbourne antiquarian bookstore, Bradstreet's Books in Hawthorn, and is currently President of the Royal United Services Institute of Victoria. He pursues broad interests in history and lectures widely.

*This is a shortened version of the annual AGL Shaw Lecture, jointly hosted by the La Trobe Society and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, on 19 June 2018.*

An important task for Superintendent and later Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe was to guide the choice of the colony's key administrators. There is a fascinating account of part of this process in Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Childers' biography of his father, the Right Honourable Hugh C.E. Childers.<sup>1</sup> Hugh Culling Eardley Childers was born in London on 25 June 1827. He was educated at Cheam School and went up to Wadham College, Oxford and later to Trinity College, Cambridge. He received a BA in 1850 which was converted to an MA in 1857. There is a good account of his life in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.<sup>2</sup>

Spencer Childers biography of his father includes a part-completed journal by Hugh about his early life. In it he states, 'I felt confident that if I went to a colony I should get on'. His distant relationship to Lord Grey, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1847-1852), also helped, not least a letter of introduction to La Trobe, since Lord Grey was La Trobe's ultimate superior at the time.



Unknown lithographer  
Albert Eugene Fradelle, d.1884, photographer  
The Right Hon. Hugh Culling E. Childers MP,  
1883  
Chromolithograph  
National Portrait Gallery, London, D33185

Childers's choice between career and marriage was aided by his future mother-in-law's advice: he would do best to marry and go to Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> So he married Emily Walker in May 1850 and they set sail for Australia in July, arriving late in October. Emily did not necessarily warm to the city of Melbourne, later recording in her diary during the turmoil of the goldrush that she walked into town 'and returned infinitely disgusted with the state of things there. Felt quite humiliated by it, the lower classes rampant'.<sup>4</sup>

A selection of Hugh Childers's letters in the biography traces his colonial progress. He delivered his papers to the Superintendent (referred to as 'Mr Latrobe'), who said he would do all he could for him. The sole vacancy at the time was the Inspectorship of (Denominational) Schools, worth £250 a year. Childers felt that he had little or no chance of securing the appointment, though it would provide a great insight into colonial matters. This self-judgement is at odds with his reputation as an 'educationist'.<sup>5</sup> However, it is clear that 'university men' were in very short supply in the colony.

While the Denominational Board of Education was considering his appointment, Childers met and befriended Bishop Perry, who promised to assist. He also dined with the La Trobes, perhaps providing the opportunity for his social skills to be judged alongside his educational ones. As his son wrote, 'a young and energetic University man was not often to be found as a candidate for a small appointment those days'. Childers got the appointment: the founding chairman of the Denominational Board. Bankruptcy judge Robert Williams Pohlman, who was a neighbour, confided that it was a unanimous choice.

What part had the Superintendent played in this appointment? Is it fair to conclude that he sought men of education, breeding and talent to administer the colony? Were these talents in short supply? Was Lord Grey's introduction sufficient or was La Trobe himself the primary proponent of government appointments? Let us judge from subsequent events.

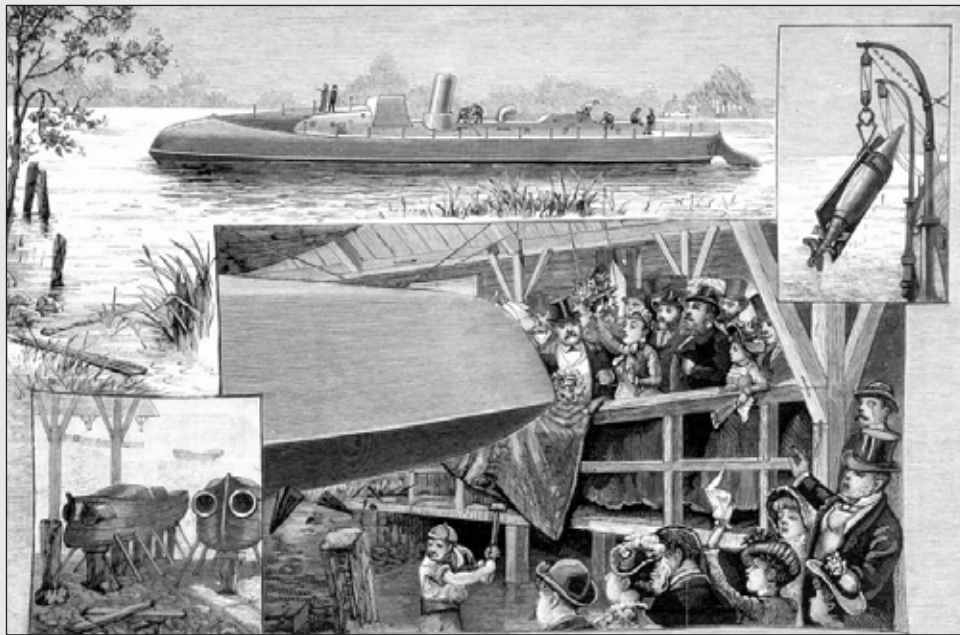
In late August 1851 the now Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe sent for Childers and complimented him on the performance of his duties. He added that he wished to give him something better. By mid-October that year Childers held the offices of Immigration Agent, Secretary to the Denominational School Board and a position on the Cemetery Board. By December, he was commissioner for National schools, the growing non-denominational



sector. Childers was also admitted as a member of the Melbourne Club in that year.

In October 1852, La Trobe appointed him to the position of Auditor-General in place of Charles Ebdon who had held the original position for fifteen months. His annual salary now became £1,200. One of his first acts in that position was to obtain leave from La Trobe to propose to the Legislative Council the establishment of a University. In January 1853 he brought in a Bill to form the University of Melbourne. He was its first Vice-Chancellor, a largely ceremonial position at the time. In later life he recalled that he was the joint drafter of the Bill, though he conceded that Judge Redmond Barry had been the chief proponent of the institution.

Childers had no experience of financial affairs and found auditing 'uninteresting', but he nevertheless attempted to impose considerable reforms on the colony's methods of financing, which La Trobe did not resist. However, as historian Peter Yule points out, the result of Childers' imprest system and a plan for the Audit Office to take over many of the functions of the Treasury meant that control on expenditure was lax. It led to a financial crisis for the government, which the succeeding governor, Charles Hotham, was unable to resolve before Victoria's self-government came into full effect in 1856.<sup>6</sup>



**Unknown engraver**  
**The launch of the Victorian torpedo boat Childers, 1883**

Wood engraving  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, IAN10/11/83/173  
 Published in *The Illustrated Australian News*, 10 November 1883

Boat launched by Mrs Katherine Childers at the Thornycroft shipyard, Chiswick, London, 18 August 1883

In the meantime, by July 1853, La Trobe had sought Colonial Office permission to add Childers to his Executive Council. In December 1853 he achieved this advancement by being appointed Collector of Customs (salary £1,500, allowances £600). The Collector stood eighth in the order of precedence in the Colony.

What are we able to deduce from these facts? We might first be cautious because his son's biography of Childers is, like all biographies, selective. Further evidence would be worth examining. Childers' papers would help: there are copies in the State Library (on microfilm) that could provide more information and reward further research.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, it appears to be fair to draw a preliminary conclusion that La Trobe monitored Childers' performance, judged it to be very effective and facilitated his advancement at every stage. Childers' gentlemanly manner made him quite congenial to the Lieutenant-Governor, as is confirmed by the fact that the Childers family lived for a time in La Trobe's larger house at *Jolimont* after Bishop Perry moved to *Bishopscourt*.<sup>8</sup>

La Trobe's replacement by Sir Charles Hotham on 6 December 1853 signalled change; indeed, the relationship between Hotham and Childers was described by the latter as one of

'incessant storms'.<sup>9</sup> That relationship is not explored further here. Childers was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Portland in 1856 and held the seat until 1857, during which time he sat on a select committee on federal union of the Australian colonies.

The Childers family (by this time there were four sons)<sup>10</sup> returned to England in 1857, with Hugh as Victoria's Agent-General in London, an appointment that was cancelled because of a change of government. Interestingly, in 1858 he was in Melbourne again for two months as the representative of Baring Brothers who were hoping to float a large railways loan. He continued to act for Victoria, cooperating in Redmond Barry's efforts to obtain books, casts of sculptures and paintings for the newly founded cultural institutions of the Library and Gallery.

He entered the House of Commons in 1860 and in his later political career he held the positions of First Lord of the Admiralty (1868–1870), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Secretary of State for War, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary in the ministries of W.E. Gladstone.

During this latter career, Childers maintained an active interest in Victoria and Australia. One example of this, perhaps telling

about his personality, was his discussion of military status in the Colony: did the Minister of Defence rank above the Colonial Commandant?<sup>11</sup> He was always fond of discussing the finer aspects of status.

He died in London in 1896, aged 68. He had laboured for the benefit of his country continuously from the age of twenty-three. It was generally agreed that he served without desire for reward; indeed, he had refused a GCB (Knight Grand Cross) in 1882.<sup>12</sup>

How was he remembered? Colonists subscribed to a marble sculptured bust of Childers that was displayed in the old Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne. It was consumed in the fire that destroyed the hall in 1952. The Victorian Navy first-class torpedo boat *HMVS Childers* delivered to the Colony in 1884 bore his name (he was Chancellor of the

Exchequer at the time) and it is probable that the naming of the Victorian township of Childers in Gippsland is a further legacy. The hospital at *HMAS Cerberus* was also named Childers. The current Royal Australian Navy patrol boat *HMAS Childers* is named after the town and thus also Hugh Childers. Another enduring memory is echoed in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. As Childers became more rotund in his later career his initials 'HCE' led to the nickname 'Here Comes Everybody', a motif used in Joyce's famous book.<sup>13</sup> The author of *Riddle of the Sands*, the ill-fated Robert Erskine Childers,<sup>14</sup> was his cousin and was also the father of the fourth President of Ireland.

While there is little doubt that Childers' British political career greatly outshone his Australian one, he is a figure who deserves to be better known.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Spencer Childers, *The Life and Correspondence of the Rt Hon Hugh C.E. Childers*, London: John Murray, 1901, (2 volumes).
- 2 Henry Lindsay Hall, 'Childers, Hugh Culling Eardley (1827–1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 3, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.390–391.
- 3 They were both twenty-three years old and a further wait for Childers to establish his career would have probably been undesirable.
- 4 Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: the upper class in Victoria 1850–1880*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.17, from Emily Childers' diary, 25 August 1852.
- 5 L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975, p.80, Notes on the letters. (The volume contains a short confidential letter to La Trobe's agent, James Graham, 21 April 1854, accessible at: <http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/LaTrobe'sLettersAustralia.pdf>)
- 6 Peter Yule, *In the Public Interest: 150 Years of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office*, Melbourne: Auditor General's Office, 2002, pp.23–31. For an assessment of Childers' parliamentary career, see Ray Wright, *A Blended House: the Legislative Council of Victoria 1851–56*, Melbourne: Department of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria, 2001, pp.65–66, 76, 88, 102, 111–112.
- 7 The microfilmed papers (of the originals in Royal Commonwealth Society Library now held at the University of Cambridge) comprise the diary of his voyage to Australia in 1850, four diaries of his wife Emily Childers in Melbourne in 1852–1856, and correspondence concerning their disreputable son Rowland, who was exiled to Australia in 1878. (Australian Joint Copying Project, Miscellaneous series, reel M1687.)
- 8 This was *Upper Jolimont*, the larger of two prefabricated houses that La Trobe erected on his Jolimont estate. The Childers family lived there from 1853 to about mid-1854 (previously at St Kilda and Collingwood [Fitzroy], and later at Hawthorn and St Heliers, Abbotsford), Jean Uhl, *A Woman of Importance: Emily Childers in Melbourne 1850–1856*, Melbourne: Jean Uhl, 1992, pp.4, 59, 138.
- 9 Childers, pp.56–61.
- 10 Another four children were to be born after their return to England. Emily died in 1875. In 1879 he married Katherine Ann, née Gilbert, widow of Colonel Gilbert Elliott and daughter of the Bishop of Chichester; she died in 1895.
- 11 Childers, pp.260–261.
- 12 William Carr, 'Childers, Hugh Culling Eardley (1827–1896)', *Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement*, Volume 1, London, Smith, Elder & Company, 1901, pp.423–426.
- 13 See Grace Eckley, *The Encryptions of Finnegan's Wake: W.T. Stead*, Lanham, Maryland: Hamilton Books, 2018, p.81.
- 14 Robert Erskine Childers (1870–1922), writer and Irish nationalist, was executed for his actions in support of the Republican cause in the Irish civil war.

# *The Remarkable Library of Bishop Goold: its creation, loss and rediscovery*

**By Shane Carmody**

**Shane Carmody is a historian with a great love of libraries and archives. He has worked for the National Archives, State Library Victoria where he held the posts of Director Collections and Access and Director Development, and currently the University of Melbourne as Senior Development Manager, Advancement Office. At State Library Victoria he managed major international exhibitions, including *The Medieval Imagination: Illuminated Manuscripts from Cambridge, Australia and New Zealand* (2008) and *Love and Devotion: From Persia and Beyond* (2012).**

*This essay is an edited version of the Melbourne Rare Book Week lecture, presented on 29 June 2018.*

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**M**y interest in James Alipius Goold (1812-1886), the first Catholic Bishop of Melbourne, began in working with the late Father John Rogan on an exhibition.<sup>1</sup> It was the fourth and final of a series held in 1998 to commemorate both the completion of restoration works and the centenary of the consecration of St Patrick's Cathedral. The subject of the exhibition was Archbishop Goold, entirely appropriate given that it was he who commissioned William Wilkinson Wardell in 1858 to design the Cathedral, a building that stands to this day as a monument to both the architect and his patron and as one of the finest neo-gothic buildings in the world. Many members of the La Trobe Society will remember John Rogan, who before becoming a priest had a career as a lawyer and was for a time a director of Kozminsky's. It was in this second role that he developed his eye for fine antiques, and it was he who recognised in the vestments, ecclesiastical objects, paintings

and books that survived from Goold's episcopate a collection, and more importantly Goold as a collector. He was not just furnishing and decorating his cathedral and the many churches he was building, he was collecting, and that implies discrimination and taste, and at its most elevated levels, connoisseurship. How much we can describe Goold as a connoisseur in his acquisition of books is an open question which I will endeavour to answer at the end of this essay.

John Rogan's re-evaluation of Goold was sadly cut short by his untimely death not long after the exhibition. It was not until some thirteen years later that my interest in Goold was reignited. The late Dr Colin Holden held the Redmond Barry Fellowship at State Library Victoria in 2010. His subject was research into the holdings of prints by the great Venetian artist Giambattista Piranesi at the Baillieu (University of Melbourne) and State Libraries. I well



remember Colin coming to my office to tell me that he had discovered through an interview with the late Tom Hazell<sup>2</sup> that the near complete set of the first Paris edition of Piranesi had originally belonged to Goold. Tom had sold the set to the University representing them as from a family collection and explaining to Colin that he was in fact acting on the instructions of the then Director of the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission, the late Father John Kearney, who wanted a discreet sale to raise money for the Commission.

Colin Holden's research resulted in an exhibition at the State Library and one at the Ian Potter Museum of Art of the University of Melbourne, expertly curated by Professor Jaynie Anderson, an international conference, a monograph and a book of conference papers.<sup>3</sup> The festival of Piranesi (as it became known to a few) coincided with my move from the State Library to the University, and with the indulgence of the then University Librarian, Philip Kent I prepared a paper for the conference on Bishop Goold. With Colin I made some research trips to the Diocesan Archives where we discovered an inventory of Goold's library that was made no later than 1866, so only eighteen years into his thirty-eight year episcopate. The inventory revealed a very large library of 889 titles and because many were multiple volumes that amounted to over 2,300 books. My paper, which included references to Goold's paintings and the commissioning of St Patrick's, sparked Jaynie Anderson's interest and has led to our Australian Research Council project which includes Professor Max Vodola from the Catholic Theological College at the University of Divinity.<sup>4</sup> The project has three foci: Goold's picture collection, his library and his relationship with William Wilkinson Wardell, the last being the subject of a PhD scholarship awarded to Paola Colleoni.<sup>5</sup>

Before considering the library let me give you a brief biography of James Goold. He was born in Cork in November 1812. His family were long established merchants, although his own branch was quite poor. He was educated by the Augustinian Friars at a school called the Classical Academy which had been founded in 1783 after the first Relief Act. In 1830 aged eighteen, he entered the Augustinian noviciate and in 1832 after taking vows and his religious name Alipius, he was sent to the Irish Augustinian seminary in Rome to complete his studies. He was ordained a priest in 1835 and seemed destined to work for a time in the seminary. In 1837 he met the English Benedictine William Ullathorne, who was in Rome from Sydney where he worked in search of priests for the Australian mission. They met on the steps of Santa Maria del Popolo



in the Piazza del Popolo, the mother church of the Augustinian friars. Goold, only twenty-five, volunteered for the mission and arrived in Sydney in February 1838. He was set to work in the western districts of the settlement, around Campbelltown, and for the next ten years he demonstrated a remarkable energy and zeal in establishing the church.

This enthusiasm won him the honour of being nominated by Archbishop Polding to be the first Bishop of Melbourne. The motivation for appointing a bishop was two-fold. The still small settlement was growing and despite the heroic efforts of Patrick Geoghegan and a few priests it needed more structure and a bishop to lead it. And then there were the Anglicans. Polding was aware of the intention to appoint an Anglican Bishop to Melbourne and anxious not to lose any of his flock needed a strong counterpoint. As it happened Bishop Charles Perry and Bishop James Goold both arrived in 1848, Perry in January and Goold in October, sparking a 'battle of the Bishops' where Perry objected to his Catholic counterpart calling himself the Bishop of Melbourne. Seeing this (I think correctly) as a sideways attempt to claim official establishment status, Goold fought back with Polding's support and won legal recognition, although for the sake of harmony the words 'Roman Catholic' often preceded Bishop. Goold only took harmony so far and had his calling cards printed 'Bishop of Melbourne'.

Charles Joseph La Trobe had only a small part to play in this delicate matter of protocol,

as it preceded Separation and the decisions were made in Sydney. His friendship with Perry, and his own Moravian faith that was largely expressed in the Anglican church of St Peter's Eastern Hill, meant that there was some distance between him and Goold. As Lieutenant-Governor (from July 1851) he did resolve the matter of Goold's salary that had dragged on for four years. The Colonial Office permitted government payment of recognised clergy as agents of social order, but there was no provision for superior salaries in newly-formed dioceses. After much lobbying in London the matter was referred for local resolution in 1852 and La Trobe acted in Goold's favour;<sup>6</sup> sadly there is not much on the record to show gratitude in return. La Trobe was also responsible in 1850 for the grant of land on Eastern Hill for a school and episcopal residence, and it was of course to become the site of St Patrick's Cathedral.

La Trobe appointed Goold to the Council of the new University where he formed an uneasy alliance with Bishop Perry to oppose Chairs in Moral Philosophy, Hebrew and Metaphysics. Goold's entry in his diary gives his reason as being: 'on the grounds of their being likely to be abused to the injury of religion by Professors of loose morals and skeptical minds'.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Goold and Perry perhaps unwittingly worked in this way to reinforce the secular basis of the University, carefully balanced by Redmond Barry with a council representing all the main Christian denominations. Goold had no interest in promoting the secular and in an entry in his diary for 1 June 1853 he notes the following encounter with La Trobe:

I called on the Governor a little before two in order to request that the clergymen may be permitted to draw their salaries - as allowed by the New Church Act - without any further delay. I also expressed to him my surprise at the appointment of a Protestant to the Council of the University in the place of Dr Roe, a Catholic, who resigned, thus depriving the Catholic body of their share of influence in the management of that establishment. I also stated that the appointment was calculated to raise suspicions in the minds of the Catholics concerning his disposition to preserve the equality of rights.

He assured me that he was most desirous to act fairly and impartially towards all denominations. He requested me to furnish him with the names of the parties thought qualified to act as Councillors to the University,

and he would on the first vacancy to select from them. This I promised to do at an early day. During the conversation he was courteous and disposed to grant every reasonable request. However, notwithstanding his professions of liberality I think he is at heart Protestant and anti-Catholic.<sup>8</sup>

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So what of Goold's Library? We know that within eighteen years of his arrival in Melbourne it was quite large; we have the inventory for evidence. We also know it was housed in a wing of the Palace he had built in 1857 on Eastern Hill. This replaced the simpler house on Nicholson Street that he used as an inducement to the Mercy Sisters under the redoubtable Ursula Frayne to move from Perth to Melbourne. When they arrived, they found their new convent was complete with a mortgage for which they were responsible with the proceeds used by Goold to build his new Palace.

The inventory gives a shelf mark for each book which allows us to reconstruct the physical arrangement of the library. Through this emerges a conventional design. The shelving runs from A to H, suggesting eight shelving units forming three bays on either side of the room, each lit by tall windows. The number of shelves assigned to each letter is not consistent, but the basic layout of the library was secular volumes in Ranges A to D and religious works in Ranges E to H. Standing at the northern end of the room in their own custom designed shelves were the Piranesi: a dramatic focal point and clearly the great prize of the collection. In the centre of the room was a library table and from the inventory we know that on this lay the *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan*, by Commodore Perry and published in 1857, and another American volume, the illustrated Webster's *An American Dictionary of English Language* in the 1859 edition.

Goold's interests as evidenced by the library were wide ranging. One feature noticed early by our colleague Paola Colleoni was the collection of dictionaries and lexicons. Goold was fluent in Italian from his five years in Rome, a great advantage in his dealings with the Curia, and had many volumes in Italian. His copies of *Dictionary of the English and Italian Languages which is prefixed an Italian and English Grammar* (London, 1839) and *Vocabolario italiano-latino, ad uso delle regie scuole di Torino* (Bassano, 1844) supported this skill. The French language was also very evident in his library and he had copies of *Nuovo metodo sulla grammatica francese* published in Rome in 1826 and *Dictionnaire*

**Charles Nettleton,  
1826-1902, photographer  
Bishop's Palace, Eastern  
Hill, East Melbourne,  
c.1866**

Photograph, albumen silver  
Pictures Collection, State  
Library Victoria, H2119 (detail)  
From a photograph of  
St Patrick's Cathedral  
under construction.  
On the left, the single-  
storey Library which later  
became two-storeyed when  
a loggia and verandah were  
added to the Palace



*général français-anglais* published in Paris in 1771. Latin and Greek dictionaries were also present and Goold had many books on the English language. Two in particular are instructive: *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language...* (London, 1833) was presented to Goold as a gift in Perugia soon after his ordination, and contains instruction concerning pronunciation, information about the influence of Greek and Latin accent on English, and 'rules to be observed by the natives of Scotland, Ireland and London, for avoiding their respective peculiarities'; the second is a copy of *The Oldest English Texts* published in London in 1885, a year before Goold's death and thus a late purchase. Placed together they act like bookends showing Goold's enduring interest in language and its use.

Architecture features as a real strength in the collection. Goold owned a copy of Pugin's *Contrasts: or A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day* (1841 edition), and gave to Wardell his copy of Pugin's *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* (1846 edition). Continuing in this theme, he also had a copy of John Hawkins' *A History of the Origins and Establishment of Gothic Architecture* published in 1813, as well as a copy of *The Chapel of St Anthony the Eremite: at Murthly, Perthshire, the seat of Sir William Drummond Stewart of Grandtully* privately published in 1850. This book fits Goold's taste and purpose as the chapel was designed by Pugin and was the first Catholic church to be consecrated in Scotland after the Reformation; it is also lavishly illustrated in full colour. His range was not limited to the Gothic. He owned copies of *Prolusiones Architectonicae: or Essays on the subject of Grecian and Roman Architecture* published in 1837 by William

Wilkins, neo-classical architect and member of the Society of Dilettante; a copy of Pain's *British Palladio: or the Builder's General Assistant*; a copy of *Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England* by T. Hudson Turner; and *Illustrations of Public Buildings of London* by Augustus Pugin and John Britton, as well as a copy of *A Treatise on Civil Architecture* by the architect for George III, William Chambers. Goold was responsible for commissioning eighty-six churches including thirteen designed by Wardell, so volumes like *Ornamental Designs for Windows* published by Chance Brothers and Company in 1855, or J.B. Waring's *Arts Connected with Architecture illustrated by Examples in Central Italy* published in London in 1858 probably had a very practical purpose. This interest in architecture endured through his life: his copy of *Modern Building and Architecture: a series of working drawings and practical designs, including numerous examples from the Paris and Havre international exhibitions* was published between 1870 and 1879 and thus purchased perhaps only a few years before his death in 1886.

As a Bishop, Goold had one great advantage in building his collections. He was required to visit Rome at regular intervals to meet with the Cardinal Prefect for Propaganda Fide<sup>9</sup> and the Pope. In the thirty-eight years of Goold's episcopacy he made five such trips, totalling almost five years in travel. His routes to and from Rome took him through the Americas, India, and across Europe, with return visits to Paris and London as well as Ireland. Travel and an interest in contemporary international affairs is a feature of his library. These included *A Picturesque Tour of Italy from drawings made in 1816-1817* by the architect James Hakewill and the artist Joseph Mallord William Turner; and no fewer than three works by Laborde, his





**François-Nicholas-Barthelemy Dequerauviller (Dutailly), 1745-1807, artist**  
**Adrien Pierre François Godefroy, 1777-1865, engraver**  
**François Godefroy, 1743-1819, engraver**  
**Vista del paseo nuevo de Barcelona, View of the new mall at Barcelona, 1806**  
 Etching and engraving  
 In Alexandre Louis Joseph de Laborde, *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne*, Tome 1, part 1, Paris, Pierre Didot l'aîné, 1806

*Voyage...de l'Espagne, Voyages...dans l'ancienne France* and *Description d'un pavé en mosaïque... Italica*. Rome is a clear favourite with copies of the two-volume set of Fontana's *Raccolta delle Migliori Chiese di Roma e Suburbane* published in 1853; Filippo Gerardi's *La Patriacale Basilica Lateranese*; and two Royal folios of the illustrated *Istoria della Sacrosanto Patriacale Basilica Vaticana* by Filippo Maria Mignanti. His inventory reveals three atlases: *The Geographical and Astronomical Atlas* published in London in 1825; a copy of *Atlas géographique: dressé pour l'Histoire universelle de l'église catholique* by the French church historian René François Rohrbacher; and a curious *Ancient and Scriptural Atlas* devoid of any imprint. Of possibly more practical use his inventory records a copy of Fellows' *Map of Victoria*, a copy of Whitehead's 1851 *Map of London* and Allen's 1859 *Catholic Map of Ireland*. As with all his areas of interest Goold collected voyages and contemporary books about the world to the very end. In a small ledger kept between 1870 and the year of his death 1886 of his personal expenses there is an entry in March 1879 for payment to Robertsons of £2/15/- in cash for an illustrated folio *The War in the East: an illustrated history of the conflict between Russia and Turkey* by A. J. Schem and published in New York the previous year.

Goold clearly had a love of lavishly illustrated books, and many of these, especially those printed in colour, would have been expensive. His literary interests were served with simpler volumes and included two sets of the Waverley novels. In poetry Longfellow, Byron, Wordsworth, Dante were some of the authors; and while Shakespeare is unsurprising, Jean Racine in an 1844 French edition, and Molière in a 1768 Paris edition attest to his wider interests. Classics like Boccaccio's *Decameron* and La Fontaine's *Fables* were in company with Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, better known as the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in a Belgian edition of 1840. Goold had two volumes of Dicken's *Household Words*, formerly owned by the first priest in the Port Philip District, Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan. One curiosity is his copy of *New Lights: or Life in Galway* by the prolific and populist Irish American author Mary Anne Sadlier published in New York in 1853. This is a novel dealing with the Irish famine and immigration, themes of obvious interest to Goold, but it cannot be classed as high literature. He also had a copy of James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Spy: a tale of the neutral ground* in an 1852 London edition. Classics include Lucian's *The Satyrs of Perius* in Sheridan's

translation, as well as Euripides *Medea* and the plays of Sophocles, Homer, Cicero, Xenophon and Thucydides all found space on his shelves, supported by Chambers' *Ancient History* of 1852 and Smith's 1858 *History of Greece*.

History and Science are also strongly represented. English and Irish history predominate, but other titles like *The Heimskringla; or Chronides of the Kings of Norway* in three volumes attests to Goold's curiosity. Although the book is signed by Goold and dated 21 May 1854, it does not appear in the inventory. Goold was in Melbourne at the time meaning that this was a local purchase and its exotic subject suggests that he bought it to read; however, only the first few sections are cut so it clearly did not hold his interest. His set of Rudolf Ackerman's deluxe histories of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and the English public schools were possibly of more interest to him for their fine illustrations rather than their text. In Science books on physics, chemistry, botany, astronomy, trigonometry, calculus, hydrostatics, mechanics and optics are found in range A. He owned eight volumes of the *Stereoscopic Magazine* with its photographs presenting a three-dimensional illusion. Of more local interest are his copies of Ferdinand von Mueller's *Eucalyptographia: a descriptive atlas of the eucalypts of Australia and the adjoining islands*, in all ten volumes published between 1879 and 1884. Goold had a close relationship with Von Mueller and on his advice introduced *Eucalyptus globulus* or blue gum to Rome in an effort to drain malarial swamps; their descendants plague the eternal city as weeds to this day. Goold also had a copy of Brough Smyth's *Aborigines of Victoria* published in 1878, and copies of James Bonwick's *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip* (1855) and *Geography of Australia and New Zealand* (1856).

Half of his library was devoted to works on theology, scripture, church history and canon law. Many were standard or conventional works, and expected in a working bishop's library. Some like the magnum opus by Jacques-Paul Migne *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* in 232 volumes and his 66-volume work *Orateurs Sacrés*, a vast collection of sermons in French published between 1853 and 1855, suggest a desire to develop a deeper collection in this area. A further example of a scholarly ambition, if not interest, is his collecting of books published by the great scholar and expert on palimpsests, Cardinal Angelo Mai. Goold presented a set of these as a very early donation to the University Library (very quickly followed by a gift of Protestant texts by Bishop Perry), and had eleven titles by Mai by the time of his 1865 inventory. He purchased Mai's Greek *New Testament* in Rome in 1874 and it was during this visit that he was made



Archbishop, proudly noted in the inscription. Other religious and theological books seem to have been collected because they were beautiful examples of letterpress. Huw Sandaver at the Mannix Library, Catholic Theological College, has identified three such books all published in Paris. They are a commentary on the *Summa Theologica* published in 1680 by the widow of Georges Josse, Denise de Heuqueville who worked in partnership with their daughter Marguerite; a commentary on the *Pentateuch* published in 1638 by Élisabeth Macé, widow of the printer André Chevalier; and *The Works of St Ambrose* published in 1549 by Charlotte Guillard. Each is distinguished by the fact that they were printed by women, although this was probably not Goold's interest.

The copy of the commentary on the *Summa Theologica* has John Fitzpatrick's signature and Maynooth, the national seminary of Ireland, with the date 1837. The fact that it is clearly marked as Goold's book and in his inventory, gives a further clue as to how he built his collection. Several books that survive from Goold's library have signatures of other priests in the diocese with subsequent marks of Goold's ownership and many of these are recorded in the inventory. Goold was either given or claimed the books of other priests, notably Patrick Geoghegan and John Fitzpatrick; both worked closely with him as first and second Vicars General of the Diocese. One book Fléchier's *Panegyriques et autres sermons* from 1696 has an inscription 'Presented to the Rev. P.B. Geoghegan by his faithful friend C. Nicholson 1845', indicating a gift to Geoghegan





Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Guercino), 1591–1666, artist  
 Francesco Bartolozzi, 1728–1815, engraver  
**Holy Family with angel who offers fruit to the Christ child, 1837**  
 Etching with red and black ink  
 In Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *I migliori disegni del Barbieri da Cento detto il Guercino*,  
 2nd edition, volume 21, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1837

from Sir Charles Nicholson, the great book collector and member for the Port Philip District of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, with a later signature from Goold. We know that Goold's set of Bower's seven-volume *A History of the Popes* of 1759 once belonged to Nicholson as it has his bookplate, probably purchased from the great sale of Nicholson's books in 1861, a hypothesis supported by the fact that it appears in Goold's inventory which is not later than 1865.

We know that Goold purchased locally from booksellers, his copy of the *Ancient and Scriptural Atlas*, was bought from the Melbourne bookseller and publisher, James Blundell, who advertised copies of the volume in 1855 and 1856. It appears to have been a compilation from loose sheets acquired by Blundell, as a second variant edition is in State Library Victoria and acquired at the same time. His copy of Perry's *Narrative of an Expedition* was purchased from Benjamin Mortimer, who traded as Mortimer and Son in Melbourne from 1853 to 1860 and promoted himself as a specialist bookseller in American titles. Some Australian purchases were from further afield. His copy of *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*, compiled from original monuments and authentic records by Rev. Alban Butler, was published by James Duffy of 15 Wellington Quay, Dublin and 22 Paternoster Row, London, but sold to Goold by W.C. Rigby, bookseller, stationer and news agent, 34 King William Street in Adelaide.

Goold collected some of his greatest books on his overseas trips and entries in his diary for his visit to Rome in 1867 give some clues. On 20 June he attends celebrations on the anniversary of the Pope's coronation and notes that afterwards he 'went shopping for a time'. The following day he visits the Typografico, the Vatican bookshop, but unimpressed by the quality of the stock bought only one book. On 7 July he notes he looked over some journals, and on the 10th he buys a sculpture. After a visit to Paris and the Great Exhibition where he probably bought his elaborate copy of the *Bible* illustrated by Gustave Doré, a book surely recommended by its beauty rather than the originality of its text, he arrives in London on 19 August and immediately takes a cab to Paternoster Row, then the great centre of the London book trade.<sup>10</sup>

Sadly, the same diaries do not tell us much about what he was buying, nor what he was reading. Goold's diaries, which commence with his epic overland carriage ride from Sydney to Melbourne at the start of his episcopate, are incomplete and his entries are often more *aide-mémoire* that detailed accounts of his day and never self-reflective. He mentions reading often, usually for an hour or so each day but often only an 'interesting' or 'pious' book. Goold did not annotate his books beyond the occasional pencil line in a margin so we do not really have a sense of what held his interest. We know that several books remained with leaves uncut, so at least we know he did not read those.

It is surprising that a collection so large and so rich was unremarked by contemporaries. There are no accounts discovered to date of visits to this collection or its use by presumably anyone other than the Bishop and priests in the Palace. It appears to have been a private sanctum and while the Piranesi volumes held pride of place their presence was known only to a few. This spectacular set of volumes makes sense in the context of the library if we think of it as a kind of keystone with the pillars of the arch made by the collections of secular and religious texts either side. Piranesi combines Goold's love of Rome, of architecture, of building and of lavish books. The illustrations of ancient monuments and Christian churches, of great art as well as great engineering all chime with other books in his library and with his collection of paintings as well as his great program of construction.

We are getting closer, I think, to an answer as to how and when Goold acquired the Piranesi. Its presence in the inventory of 1865 means that Goold must have purchased it on either his first or second visit to Europe as Bishop: in 1851–53 or 1858–59. We know he was buying art at this time through newspaper reports of the arrival of collections of paintings in 1853 and the arrival of a number of portraits in 1859. Rome is a likely place, but so is Milan. The inventory lists 27 volumes, an unlikely number since the first Paris edition<sup>11</sup> is usually bound in 24 or 26 volumes. The Baillieu Library holds 23 volumes and is missing volume 18 *Choix des meilleures statues antiques*; and volume 21 *I migliori disegni del Barbieri da Cento detto il Guercino* being prints made from plates engraved by Giambattista Piranesi and Francesco Bartolozzi, as well as the last volume consisting of views of Rome and other ancient monuments by Giambattista's son Francesco Piranesi. Volumes 18 and 21 were both recently rediscovered at the Mannix Library by Paola Colleoni and are definitely part of the Baillieu set as they are bound by the firm Pietro and Guiseppi Vallardi from Milan who were also book and print sellers. The Vallardi repaired the earlier volumes and their tickets also appear in many of these. The two volumes are not from the first Paris edition, but from the 1835–1839 second edition printed by Firmin-Didot. In one of his last emails to me Colin Holden, having inspected the volumes, speculated that they had only been bound once and I think they may well have been in the Vallardi stockroom in their original limp covers. I think this shows that the volumes were added to an incomplete first Paris edition to make up a set and sold by Vallardi, perhaps to an intermediate owner, perhaps directly to Goold. The final missing volume is in many places around Melbourne. Colin was aware of prints from this volume appearing for sale over the years, and Tom Hazell often told

the inquisitive that some of the books from Goold's collection had been given to him by Father Kearney in lieu of payment for his good works, so I think that is both the source of the prints and the fate of the volume.

In his will Goold left his books to the Diocesan Library. His successor Archbishop Carr probably enjoyed them but established a different and more populist library for public use. Carr's successor, Mannix, never lived in the Palace and had his own grand library at *Raheen* as well as establishing the Central Catholic Library under Father William Hackett SJ in 1924. When the Corpus Christi Seminary was established at *Werribee* mansion in 1923 under the Jesuits, Father George O'Neill SJ and Father Edward de la Peza SJ selected volumes from Goold's library for the seminary and what survives of this selection is at the Mannix Library. The rest remained in place until the Palace was demolished in 1971, lovingly recorded in a memorandum and a short article by Tom Hazell. Many books he identified have since disappeared, surfacing occasionally in the better rare book shops of Melbourne or the occasional second-hand shop. According to Tom Hazell he owned a first edition of Erasmus' Greek *New Testament* now missing — that would be a book worth finding.

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I posed a question near the start of this essay about whether Goold can be described as a connoisseur. If we accept that he chose some of his books more for their form than their content, and that his eye was drawn to the beautiful as much as the practical, I think the answer is a qualified yes. What is absent is the kind of systematic collecting that would mark him as a collector of note. There is perhaps something in his collecting that reveals his character. It was Jaynie Anderson who recognised in Goold's Piranesi and his paintings a distinctive taste for the late Baroque, and if we use the word baroque in its metaphorical sense of grandeur and excess we see Goold as he was. You can tell a lot about a person by the books on their shelves.

## Endnotes

- 1 John P. Rogan, *Melbourne's First Catholic Bishop: James Alipius Goold, pioneer bishop and pastor, the man and his vision 1848-1886*. Catalogue prepared by John P. Rogan with the assistance of Shane Carmody for an exhibition at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, 23 September to 11 October 1998, East Melbourne: Archdiocese of Melbourne, 1998.
- 2 Thomas Hazell AO (1939-2017), former protocol officer University of Melbourne and subsequently assistant Official Secretary, Office of the Governor of Victoria; honorary secretary of the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.
- 3 See Colin Holden, *Piranesi's Grandest Tour from Europe to Australia*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing [and] State Library of Victoria, 2014; Kerriane Stone and Gerard Vaughan (eds), *The Piranesi Effect*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015.
- 4 The University of Divinity is made up of eleven theological colleges located in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney; it was founded in 1910 as the Melbourne College of Divinity.
- 5 'A Baroque Archbishop in Colonial Australia: James Goold (1812-1886)', ARC Discovery Project DP 170100426. For more information see <http://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/goold-arc>.
- 6 Frances O'Kane, *A Path is Set: the Catholic Church in the Port Philip District and Victoria 1839- 1862*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.39-40.
- 7 Brian Condon and Ian Waters (eds), *The Diary of James Alipius Goold OSA: first Catholic Bishop and Archbishop of Melbourne 1848-1886*, [East Melbourne]: Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission, Archdiocese of Melbourne 2009, p.45, entry for 30 May 1853. The diary is accessible via the web.
- 8 Ibid, entry for 1 June 1853.
- 9 Congregation of the Roman Curia responsible for missionary work and related activities. Formerly called the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (or simply the Propaganda Fide); currently known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.
- 10 *Diary*, entries for 20 June, 21 June, 7 July, 10 July, 19 August 1867.
- 11 The first Paris edition of Piranesi was published in 1800-1807, the works having been earlier published in Rome in 1764. A complete set of a slightly later Paris edition (1835-1839) was transferred to State Library Victoria from the Parliamentary Library in 1997.



Désiré Delaplace-Gérardin, c.1817–c.1890, artist  
Old Mill, Brimscombe, Gloucestershire

Oil on board

Museum in the Park (Cowle Museum), Stroud

Depicts a mill south of Sheepscombe in the mid-19th century, possibly similar to that of the Wights

# Edward Byam Wight: enterprising pioneer in the Port Phillip District

By Davydd Shaw

Davydd Shaw worked for the Port of Melbourne Authority as the Executive Officer of the State Standing Committee dealing with ship-sourced oil pollution. He also served for three years as a lay member of the Health Sciences Human Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne. Now in semi-retirement, he works part time in the front-of-house team at The Arts Centre, Melbourne. Davydd has always had a strong interest in family and local history.

*This is an edited version of a presentation given in the Members Talk to Members program, 8 July 2018.*

I grew up in Kyabram, northern Victoria, and my great friend was Margaret (Peg) Billings, the grand-daughter of Edward Byam Wight (1815–1900). She lived her long life in a large house which in my childhood still enjoyed its four acres of surrounding garden.

It is believed that this garden had been designed by the renowned Guilfoyle. Her father, Dr John Cam Wight, had the house built in 1905–1907 to a design by his brother, Gerard Wight, and it was truly an oasis in this country town and a wonderful place to visit.





**Johnstone, O'Shannessy & Co., photographer**  
**Edward Byam Wight, 1892**  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H2998/11  
 In collection: City of Melbourne Jubilee of the  
 Incorporation of the City 1842-1892, showing for  
 Wight the year of 1841

### *Early immigrants*

This presentation will give an outline of the lives of Margaret's grandparents, Edward and Catherine Wight who had each embarked on emigration from England a decade prior to the goldrushes and were to make the settlement of Melbourne their home. According to Wight family tradition, they were friends of the La Trobes which was probably not surprising given the type of people they were in the then small community of Melbourne. The subsequent generations of the Wight family were pleased to recall this association, especially their grand-daughter Margaret Billings.

The wider family story is the subject of a large volume researched and written in recent years by the late Pam Simmons,<sup>1</sup> who was also a Wight descendent. She was assisted with UK research by another family member. It was fortunate that a good deal of documentation, personal correspondence and public records were available to flesh out the lives of the Wight family.<sup>2</sup>

We know that Charles Joseph La Trobe had a huge task as the representative of the Crown in the fledgling outpost of New South Wales. He was keen to build social capital and keen to foster and encourage a civilising influence. It was not surprising that he would welcome new arrivals with financial resources, enterprise, and a strong Christian foundation — people like the Wights.

It might be helpful to give some background to what prompted young Edward Byam Wight, then twenty-five years old, to emigrate in 1840. He was born in 1815 to John and Sarah Wight, née Byam, of Sheepscombe in the Stroud Valley, Gloucestershire. They had five children and the family was involved in woollen cloth manufacture. They ran their own water mill and employed many local weavers to produce felted woollen cloth. They were the principal employer in that district. Reliable records indicate the Wight family had an association with Sheepscombe and nearby villages dating back to the 1500s. Certainly, by the late eighteen and early nineteenth centuries they seem to have had the benefit of a good education, several even attending university.

### *New technology brings change*

In Edward's birth year, 1815, the Napoleonic Wars ended. This resulted in a great reduction in the need for felted woollen cloth, the military having large stockpiles of the material. In the following years the new steam-powered mills around Yorkshire were more efficient and were producing a more popular worsted cloth. Despite Edward's father John borrowing money to install two steam engines in his mill, the viability of the enterprise could not last in the longer term. During the 1830s many other water-powered mills in the Stroud Valley were forced to close. This naturally had a dire effect on the economy of the region with a resulting loss of population, and of course it provided a great incentive to emigrate. By 1838 the Wights' workforce had reduced to eight men and five women, but by 1840 it had ceased operations.

### *Seeking a new life*

It was agreed that young Edward would emigrate to Australia. His younger brother Frederick would follow, while an older brother would stay and continue his farming pursuits. Their father John would remain to relinquish his property assets. John's wife Sarah had died at an early age in 1821 leaving him with five children under twelve. John had depended on a young servant girl and his two young daughters to run the household. John Wight enjoyed a high reputation in the district for his religious devotion and his quiet help to many in need. These characteristics would become apparent in young Edward also.

Edward Byam Wight sailed in October 1840 on the *York*, a fully-rigged sailing ship of 1,015 tons, arriving at the Williamstown anchorage on 5 February 1841. He was an unassisted cabin passenger with a good deal of personal furniture and effects. One such piece is



Davydd Shaw, photographer (2018)  
**Campaign chest and travelling crate, c.1840**  
 Estate of Mrs Margaret Billings, née Wight

a magnificent campaign chest of drawers made from Honduras mahogany. There is another example of this type of furniture made from cedar in La Trobe's Cottage. Campaign furniture was designed for use by commissioned military officers who were required to furnish their own accommodation in the field. Edward used this furniture in his cabin which had the advantage of him being able to lock the opening doors of the travelling crate. It is now extremely rare for these crates to survive, but this one was always kept by the Wight family. Edward's ticket for passage to Australia was £70. By comparison a year or so later a steerage class ticket was £19, so it would seem that Edward would have enjoyed a fairly comfortable journey. The later well-known wealthy founder of Brighton, Henry Dendy, was also on this ship.<sup>3</sup>

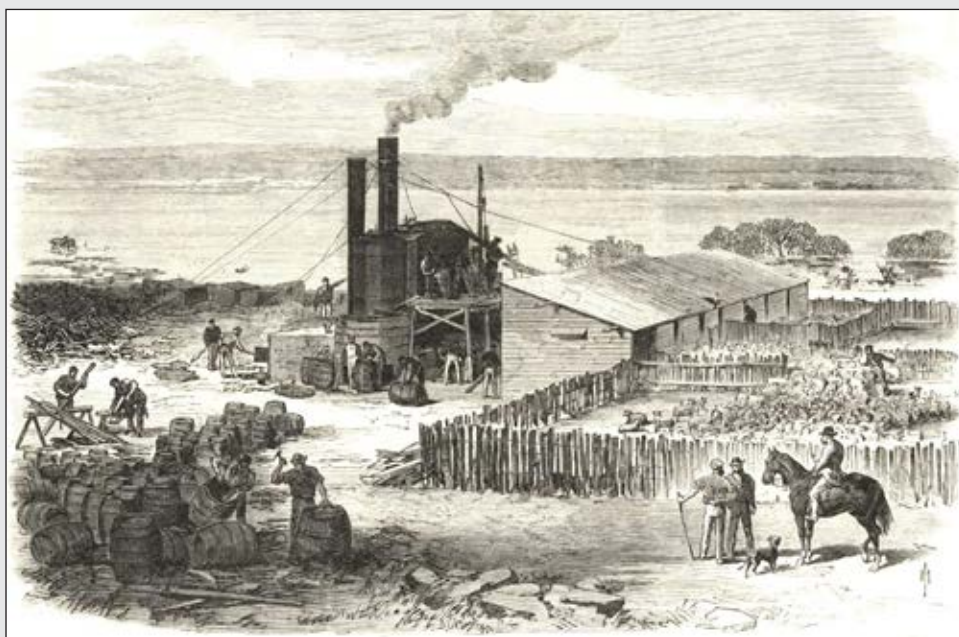
It is worth digressing a little at this point to mention other passengers: Mr Isaac Nathan and his wife and daughter. Nathan was already a musician and author of some note with influential literary and royal connections in England. Despite hopes that the Nathans would settle in Melbourne, they continued their journey, arriving in Sydney in April 1841. Nathan was an ancestor of the later illustrious Mackerras family of which the conductor Sir Charles Mackerras, his great-great-great grandson, is best known. Nathan's composition *Don John of Austria* was the first opera to be written and performed in Australia. He's been referred to as the father of Australian music.

These were indeed early days. The population of Melbourne at that time was approaching 5,000;<sup>4</sup> that is, around twice the capacity of Hamer Hall, Melbourne's concert hall today.

### *Opportunities in a new land*

Edward initially boarded in Collins Street and then Little Collins Street and commenced a very successful business partnership with a John Watson who had also emigrated in 1841. The shipping notice in the *Argus* newspaper listed the cabin passengers arriving on the *York* on 5 February 1841. Mr and Mrs Watson are listed and it is most likely he was the John Watson who joined Edward in the business partnership. On the long voyage from England they would each have had ample time to establish a relationship and discuss potential opportunities that lay ahead in their new land. There were twenty intermediate and thirty-four steerage passengers, but only the twenty or so cabin-class passengers were named in this notice; however, we should not overlook the contribution the other immigrants would have made to the growing community of Melbourne.

Both Edward Wight and John Watson had some capital and quickly established themselves as general merchants and shipping agents. They built their offices and large warehouse at 27 Market Street, then known as Market Square. By July 1841 they took



James Mahoney, engraver (attrib.)  
Boiling down sheep in Australia, 1840s

Wood engraving

Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia, NK4182/229

Published in *The Illustrated London News*, 10 October 1868.

Boiling down works were well established along the Saltwater River by the mid-1840s

over the pastoral lease of *Bailleston*, a 41,000 acre (16,600 ha) grazing run on the Goulburn River near present-day Nagambie. In a letter to family in England, Edward noted that wages of £50 per annum were very high for experienced shepherds and stockmen. Edward's brother Frederick duly arrived from England and in conjunction with Dr James Bailey improved that property then sold it in 1848. Frederick then moved to run the 16,000 acre (6,475 ha) station *Mount Ararat* between present-day Nar Nar Goon and Pakenham that Wight and Watson had taken over in 1844. Wight and Watson were very similar men and their business partnership and their private friendship proved very successful.

In 1844 they built and ran a sheep melting-down works on the Saltwater (now Maribyrnong) River and in 1845 also built a tannery there. The wool market had crashed and boiling down stock for tallow to be sold in the English market began as a desperate attempt to stabilise sheep and cattle prices.<sup>5</sup> These industries flourished and, together with their pastoral pursuits, made Wight and Watson wealthy men. The Melbourne Melting Establishment occupied a sixty-eight acre (28 ha) site with a frontage at the horseshow bend in the Saltwater. Historian John Lack went on to say that: 'Watson & Wight's was a marvel of enterprise'.<sup>6</sup> John Barnes' recent biography

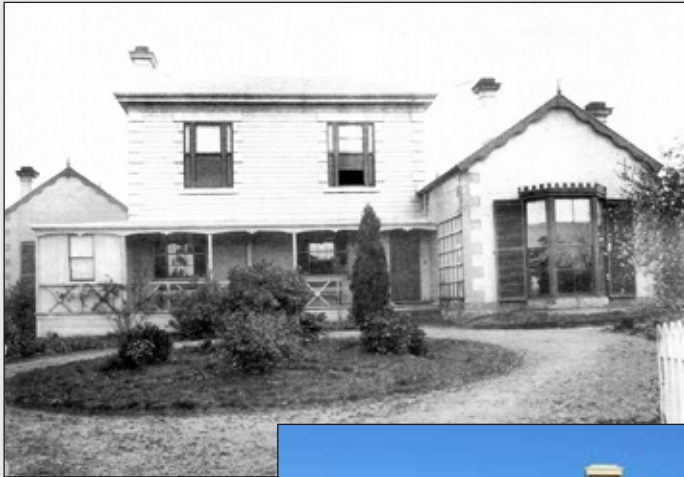
of La Trobe included an 1844 satirical poem about him that contained a reference to Watson & Wight's boiling down works by the river.<sup>7</sup> This would indicate that their establishment was already a well-known industry in the colony. Watson and Wight promptly wrote to La Trobe from their offices in Market Square disavowing any participation in the 'venomous attack'.<sup>8</sup>

### *Establishment of a family*

In 1845 Edward Byam Wight married Catherine Philpott at St James Church. La Trobe had laid the foundation stone there in 1839. It is now known as St James Old Cathedral. The Wights initially resided in Great Brunswick Street, Collingwood. Catherine had been born in 1824 into a wealthy Kentish family; she emigrated (by default) in 1841, aged only seventeen, with an older brother and sister, arriving on 31 December 1841. She seems to have been a rather spirited young person, as she stowed away on their privately chartered ship, revealing herself four days out to sea. Subsequent letters back to the family from Rio de Janeiro support this.

While waiting at Rio for their ship the *Sarah* to be repaired, the Philpotts were taken aboard a nearby vessel *The Crescent* where 500 slaves, who had been captured from a Brazilian slave trader in appalling conditions, were aboard. The Philpotts were aware that the British were





Unknown photographer  
The Ridge,  
Kensington, 1860  
Wight Family archive



Davydd Shaw,  
photographer  
The Ridge, Queenscliff,  
2018

The house was inspired by the original design of the family home in Kensington

unpopular due to their efforts to suppress the slave trade and, although impressed by the spectacular setting of Rio, they did not much care for the population. In a letter home Catherine's brother wrote that 'assassinations are very frequent and they think nothing of sticking a knife into one.'

In 1847 Edward bought sixty acres (24 ha) of land at Kensington for £170 overlooking the Saltwater River and later in 1857 this would be the new location for their family home. However, in 1849-50 the Wights and the Watsons had each built for themselves a two-storey bluestone residence adjacent to each other at 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. Around 1853 these properties were purchased by the Catholic Church and became the Convent of Mercy. These two buildings can still be seen from across Nicholson Street, but are mostly obscured behind a later arched facade. The Convent was the first congregation of women in Victoria and eventually on that site the first Catholic secondary school for girls in Victoria.

Another surviving example of a nearby industry once owned by Edward Byam Wight in the latter part of the nineteenth century is the former York Brewery, just off Wellington Street,

Collingwood. For many years this complex was a well-known landmark and survives today as part of a commercial and apartment redevelopment off Brewery Lane.

The Watson family moved to Van Diemen's Land in 1853, Edward looking after their Melbourne business interests. Watson at the time of his accidental death in 1858, amongst other things, was a director of the Bank of Tasmania. His family subsequently returned to Melbourne, where Edward continued support to his widow, organising sale of land to ensure that she could continue to live comfortably.

In 1852 Edward was the co-founder and later Governor of the Bank of Victoria and at that time was also a Director of the Victorian Insurance Company. He had a long-time connection with the Melbourne Savings Bank as a trustee from 1843 until 1883. As we know, La Trobe returned to England in 1854. There is no further evidence or surviving correspondence to suggest the Wights continued their friendship with La Trobe from such a distance. However, it is worth recognising the ongoing contribution that Edward made to the growing State of Victoria.



Edward and Catherine's family was growing, eventually to nine children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. In 1857 they moved to their newly constructed home at Kensington on part of the land acquired a decade earlier. The site is now that land on the corner of Kensington and Epsom Roads at the intersection of Macaulay Road. The house was located on a high point with views towards the You Yangs and back over the growing settlement of Melbourne. The house eventually comprised sixteen rooms, with beautiful landscaped gardens, stabling for horses and associated infrastructure. It was called *The Ridge* after the ridge near Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire, where the Wight family had lived back in the 1500s.

### ***Contributing to a civil community***

In 1854 Edward commissioned the artist William Strutt to illustrate the views from their land.<sup>10</sup> Today the local streets, Ridgeway and Wight Street in that area, mark the family connection. In 1861 Edward also gave land in McCracken Street, Kensington, on which the Anglican and Wesleyan communities erected a church for worship until a falling out, after which the Anglicans continued. In 1884 he again gave land worth £250 for the building of the second Anglican Holy Trinity Church on the corner of McCracken and Wight Streets. This time his architect son Gerard was asked to design the new structure pro bono.

In 1858 Edward was the co-founder and principal shareholder with Peter McCracken of the Melbourne to Essendon Railway, one of the early private railways in Victoria. In 1861 they added a spur line to serve the Flemington Racecourse. However, in 1867 this system was sold to the State Government for £22,500.

In 1861 Edward, Catherine and their family were able to enjoy their newly constructed beachside holiday home at 68 Mercer Street, Queenscliff. This house was also named *The Ridge* after their house in Kensington, and has been beautifully restored and maintained by the current owners. The La Trobes previously had a cottage at Queenscliff, which in time was relocated to become the guest cottage at *Jolimont*. Their elevated site became the location for St George's Church, Queenscliff.

### ***Civic life***

During the 1860s, Edward was an active Councillor for the Borough of Essendon and Flemington, serving as Mayor from 1870-71 to 1877. One minute in the Council records shows that Edward moved that property owners be compelled to fence dangerous gullies and that £5

be voted to remove tree stumps from Pascoe Vale Road. This would indicate that even in the 1870s urban infrastructure could still be fairly basic in many parts of Melbourne. On his retirement in 1877 the illuminated address (valedictory) given to him refers to the respect in which he was held and 'the energy, influence and experience he brought to bear on all matters beneficial to the Borough'.<sup>11</sup> Edward was honoured in 1892 when in the presence of the Governor his photographic portrait was hung with other pioneers in the Melbourne Town Hall.

In 1872 Edward, together with merchants Frederick Dalgety and Isaac Younghusband, was part of the committee to form the Essendon Football Club. The next year saw him pledging £300 towards the new St Paul's Cathedral. In 1881 he increased the pledge to £5,000 and by 1891 Edward and Catherine could attend the consecration of the new cathedral. The year 1891 also marked fifty years since their arrival in Victoria.

### ***A family well established***

Edward and Catherine lived through times of great change: from the early days of settlement, Victoria as a separate Colony, the goldrushes, economic recessions and recovery, through to Federation and Melbourne becoming the temporary capital of the new Commonwealth. Although Edward died in 1900, Catherine lived on until 1910. They demonstrated great character, kindness, religious faith and enterprise and were generous philanthropists. Despite the demands of business and a great number of real estate holdings, both rural and urban, Edward took his civic responsibilities seriously. They were interested in literature, Edward belonging to a book society even before emigrating.

They lived a fairly quiet private life centred around their family, good friends and their church community. A letter home from their son, Dr John Cam Wight, whilst undertaking specialist medical studies in Europe in the late 1880s gives an insightful account of concerts he attended and the music-making by such people as Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, and Richard Strauss. At Bayreuth he attended Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, this being just over a decade after its premiere. This would indicate the cultural interests of the family.

As a quietly living man Edward would have been horrified by the publicity from the newspaper headlines in 1865, following a shooting incident on 15 March outside Government House in Toorak, when a drunk and deranged guard randomly fired on three members of the public. Edward survived the



**Fritz Kricheldorf, 1865-1933, photographer**  
**Miss Wight and her dog on the drive in the garden, The Ridge, c.1898**  
 Photograph, gelatin silver  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H97.271/2  
 Holy Trinity Church, designed by Gerald Wight, may be seen in the background



**Fritz Kricheldorf, 1865-1933, photographer**  
**Interior of dining room, with Mrs Catherine Wight and her daughters Catherine Marianne and Grace, c.1898**  
 Photograph, gelatin silver  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H97.271/10



**Fritz Kricheldorf, 1865-1933, photographer**  
**Interior of the sitting room at The Ridge, c.1898**  
 Photograph, gelatin silver  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H97.271/8  
 The antique rug is now at La Trobe's Cottage

encounter, the papers announcing next day: 'Edward Byam Wight a man of substance in the colony, safe'.<sup>12</sup>

In July 1900 Edward succumbed to bronchitis. His very large estate was left to his children, with Catherine enjoying the use of both properties and a substantial income for life. After her death in 1910 the remaining land at *The Ridge*, Kensington, was broken up into fifty-four house lots. The Church of England also bought a corner part of the property.

Of Edward and Catherine's seven surviving children one daughter remained single and cared for her aging parents, another married a pastoralist, while the third daughter married a company director, Gower Williams. A further connection to Queenscliff is that Gower's father, Dr David Williams, was at one time Mayor of Queenscliff,<sup>13</sup> but in his earlier life had been ship's surgeon to the Czar of Russia, and Ballarat medico at the Eureka uprising. Edward and Catherine's sons were a pastoralist, doctor, architect and a solicitor.<sup>14</sup>

A footnote to this story is that Edward's grand-daughter, Margaret Billings of Kyabram, presented an antique rug once belonging to Edward to the National Trust in 1991 for the



furnishing of La Trobe's Cottage. Brought to Melbourne in 1841, it remains today in the cottage drawing room with the likely prospect that the La Trobes would have walked over this on a visit to the Wights' home.

## Endnotes

- 1 Pamela Byam (Wight) Simmons, *Roots and Branches: the story of the Byams, the Wights and associated families for 500 years, from 1500s to 2005*, [Nunawading, Vic.: P. Simmons, 2006]. Pamela Simmons (née Wight) was a great-great granddaughter of Edward Byam Wight.
- 2 A collection of ten photographs of the house and garden at *The Ridge*, the family home in Kensington, was a valuable pictorial source, held State Library Victoria H97.271.
- 3 Weston Bate, 'Dendy, Henry (1800-1881)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography: Supplement 1580-1980*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp.99-100. Dendy was declared insolvent in April 1845.
- 4 Census of March 1841 gave a total settler population in Melbourne of 4,479: males 2,676, females 1,803; these figures were considered to be an undercounting, *Port Phillip Gazette*, 29 September, 1841.
- 5 John Lack, *A History of Footscray*, North Melbourne: Hargreen, in conjunction with the City of Footscray, 1991, p.33.
- 6 *Ibid*, p.34.
- 7 *Port Phillip Patriot*, 13 June 1844, p.4, 'To the Editor' from 'Jack in the Box'; quoted in John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press in association with La Trobe University, 2017, p.182.
- 8 PROV VPRS 19/P1, Inward registered correspondence, Superintendent Port Phillip District, item 1844/1020, 15 June 1844.
- 9 Simmons, p.147.
- 10 Two sketches *The Saltwater River and Melbourne, from the West* were reproduced in *The Australasian*, 2 September 1911, p.37, with the description: One view to the west shows the present site of Footscray, the You Yangs in the distance; near, in the foreground, the roof of Richard Philpott's melting-down works, afterwards McComas's soap and candle works; further on, the Saltwater River, with Watson and Wight's works... The other picture, looking east, shows the present site of North Melbourne, with the first part erected of the Benevolent Asylum; the flagstaff on Flagstaff Hill, the Exhibition opened 1854; ...to the left the University grounds just fenced'. Simmons, who reproduced the oval-shaped pictures in colour, remarked 'The two pictures... were beautifully executed, with exquisite pencil drawings over a wash of light terracotta for the land and blue for the sky with white wispy clouds over-painted', p.156. (The originals were not accessible for copies to be reproduced here. Ed.)
- 11 Simmons, p.138.
- 12 Simmons, p.150. See also, *Herald*, 16 March 1865, p.2, 'Murderous outrage', and *Age* 17 March 1865, p.[5].
- 13 The Borough is spelled Queenscliff. The town of Queenscliff was gazetted in June 1853. The Borough of Queenscliff was formed in May 1863.
- 14 The second generation of the Wight family were: Catherine Marianne (Brown), 1845-1906; Alice, 1847-1851; Edward Byam, 1849-1925; Theodore Frederick, b.& d. 1851; John Cam, 1857-1928; Gerard, 1860-1915; Mary Constance, 1861-1922; Neville, 1863-1943; and Grace (Williams), 1865-1945.

## Forthcoming events

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### MARCH

Sunday 24

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30–6.00 pm

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

**Speakers:** John Botham, Chair, Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, who will update members on progress at the Cottage. Dr Anne Vale who will speak about her beautiful new book *Gardens of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)*, which features La Trobe's Cottage

**Refreshments:** Birthday cake and sparkling wine will be served

**Admission:** \$10 per person

**Bookings essential \***

### APRIL

Tuesday 16

**Joint La Trobe Society/ RHSV**

**AGL Shaw Lecture**

**Time:** 6.30–8.00 pm

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

**Speaker:** Dr Liz Rushen, historian

**Topic:** Garryowen: The Voice of Early Melbourne

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$35

**Bookings essential \***

### MAY

Thursday 23

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

**Time:** 6.30–8.00 pm

**Venue:** Mueller Hall, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Susan Priestley, historian

**Topic:** La Trobe's Gold and Silver Testimonial Pieces

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$25

**Bookings essential \*\***

Thursday 30

**Viewing of La Trobe Testimonial  
Candelabrum Centrepiece –**

**Members only**

**Time:** 10.30–11.30 am

**Venue:** National Gallery of Victoria International, 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Amanda Dunsmore, Senior Curator, International Decorative Arts & Antiquities

**No charge. Bookings essential \*\***

**Numbers strictly limited**



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## JUNE

Sunday 16

**Sunday Talk for Members  
and Friends**

**Time:** 2.30–4.00 pm

(doors open 2.00 pm)

**Venue:** Mueller Hall, Royal Botanic  
Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Tim Gatehouse

**Topic:** William Henry Foster, his family  
and life in Victoria

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$10

**Bookings essential \*\***

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## JULY

Friday 5

**Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture**

**Time:** 6.30–8.30 pm

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

**Speaker:** Professor Wallace Kirsop

**Topic:** Books and Readers in La Trobe's  
Melbourne

**No charge. Bookings essential \*\***

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## JULY

Sunday 28

**Sunday Talk for Members  
and Friends**

**Details will be advised**

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## AUGUST

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**

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## SEPTEMBER

Sunday 15

**Sunday Talk for Members  
and Friends**

**Details will be advised.**

**\* General Bookings**

secretary@latrobesociety.org.au, or  
phone 9646 2112 (please leave a message)

**\*\* Bookings as Denoted**

talks@latrobesociety.org.au, or  
phone 9592 5616 (please leave a message)

**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.**

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

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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



