

# LA TROBEANA



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

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## ***La Trobeana***

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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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This second edition of *La Trobeana* for 2019 is full of interest.

Lorraine Finlay's article 'The Randolph: a harbinger of evil' is a skilful analysis of La Trobe's role and the circumstances surrounding the cessation of transportation of convicts to the Port Phillip District. In 1849 the ship *Randolph*, referred to by the journalist and historian Garryowen as 'a harbinger of evil', arrived in Port Phillip with 298 convicts. La Trobe, having 'become too well aware of the evils, moral and social, of taking in ex-convicts', refused permission to land, and sent the vessel on to Sydney. This action accelerated public demand for an end to transportation to Port Phillip.

Irene Kearsey, in her article 'John Dickson: a possessor of numerous flocks in La Trobe's Port Phillip District', has contributed valuable research about the Yarra Valley and its pioneering settlers. Sometimes, with few facts at her disposal, she has brought the district's history to life by presenting both the known facts and suppositions of probabilities. Researcher *par excellence*, her vast experience at Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) has stood her in good stead. There is such interest in *Gulf Station* and other properties in the Yarra Valley that this paper will certainly be relied upon by future researchers.

Loreen Chambers takes us to Gippsland with the Reverend Willoughby Bean where, in the late 1840s, he established a huge parish extending from Tarwin River to Cape Howe, and from Omeo to Port Albert across creeks and swamps, forest and scrub. 'Not the Usual Pioneer: "Parson Bean", his little Gothic Church and Gippsland 1849-1859' describes the stress his arduous duties caused him as he made Tarraville, the fastest growing town in the Gippsland region in the 1850s, his parish centre. There he had built Christ Church, the first church to be built in Gippsland in June 1856.

The detailed research of Tim Gatehouse on the 'The Foster Family and its La Trobe Connections', reveals the antecedents of Charles Joseph La Trobe's cousin, William Henry Foster, exiled to the Port Phillip District in 1852, after a

misdemeanour — trivial by today's standards — thought grave enough to bring serious disgrace to his highly-placed family. Tim enhances his article with a fascinating description of the Foster family's wealth gained in the West Indies at the height of the slave trade.

'A Journey through Garden History' is a synopsis of garden historian Dr Anne Vale's presentation to celebrate La Trobe's 218th birthday at his Cottage in March. Fifteen gardens feature in her recent book *Gardens of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)*. She described with fascinating detail her selection of gardens according to their historical importance. As Anne noted, La Trobe's Cottage with the very first settler garden recently recreated by garden historian Sandi Pullman, looks like it is planted in a garden.

In the Queen's Birthday 2019 Honours List, La Trobe Society member Dr Andrew Lemon received the award of Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 'For significant service to community history, and to the racing industry'. I know that you will join me in congratulating him on this honour.

At mid-year, we can now look forward to enjoyable and informative functions planned for the second half of the year. Foremost among these will be the La Trobe Oration, an occasional lecture from an eminent Victorian, to be delivered by Her Excellency the Governor Linda Dessau AC on Tuesday 22 October, at Old Treasury Building. The Governor's chosen topic will focus on the role of Governor. The date for this important address, to be given in the 180th year since La Trobe's arrival, should find pride of place in your diaries.

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

# The *Randolph*: 'a harbinger of evil'

By Lorraine Finlay

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

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On the 8 August 1849 the transport ship *Randolph*, referred to by Garryowen as 'a harbinger of evil',<sup>1</sup> arrived in Port Phillip with 298 convicts. Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe wrote a succinct official note on 10 August, regarding the arrival of the ship in Hobson's Bay, reporting that he had 'sent the vessel on to Sydney under a fresh contract'.<sup>2</sup> Some months before, in March 1849, La Trobe noted that during a recent stay in Melbourne his Excellency (Governor FitzRoy) had agreed to 'sending on any vessel arriving with such on board... to Sydney'.<sup>3</sup> Considerable agitation over a decade or more by anti-transportation groups in Sydney, the Port Phillip District and in Van Diemen's Land had preceded this dramatic and unprecedented event.

Following public protests in Sydney, the Colonial Office in London had agreed by late 1840 to end the transportation of convicts to New South Wales. Nevertheless, the British government continued to transport large numbers of serving convicts to Van Diemen's Land (renamed Tasmania in 1856).<sup>4</sup> The 1840 decision was also in response to the findings of a British parliamentary committee, chaired by William Molesworth MP which was established in 1837 to look into transportation to the colonies.<sup>5</sup> Molesworth believed transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land to be nothing more than a variation of slavery, the abolition of which he had long supported. George Arthur, former Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (1824-1837), said in evidence to the Molesworth Committee: 'assigned convicts were slaves, except that their slavery was terminable'.<sup>6</sup> The long campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire placed

much weight on how slavery corrupted not only the slave, but also the master and the whole society in which the practice occurred. During the 1830s the same argument came to be applied to the convict system in New South Wales.<sup>7</sup> The Molesworth Committee had recommended that transportation should cease as soon as was practicable, that a punishment of hard labour be substituted for transportation and that any gaols established abroad should be built far away from free settlements. Governor Gipps, who took up his appointment as Governor of New South Wales in 1838, reacted quickly to the Molesworth report and prohibited the assignment of convicts for domestic service in towns, sending them to work instead in remote areas.<sup>8</sup>

Government attitudes, however, changed in Britain and in 1844 Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Stanley announced a scheme to transport exiles with conditional pardons to the colonies. The shipment of exiles commenced to both Van Diemen's Land and the Port Phillip District. In 1846 Gladstone, the Colonial Secretary, partly in response to a shortage of labour, further suggested that 'a modified and carefully regulated introduction of convict labourers into New South Wales or some part of it' would be desirable.<sup>9</sup> In 1848 Earl Grey, Gladstone's successor, announced that serving convicts would again be sent to New South Wales, while the exiles would now come with a ticket of leave. The first ships chartered for the task would be the *Randolph*,<sup>10</sup> and the *Hashemy*: the *Randolph* to sail for Port Phillip and the *Hashemy* directly to Sydney. Earl Grey's despatch to Governor FitzRoy, sent from Downing Street on 19 March 1849 and forwarded to La Trobe, stated: 'I have to acquaint you that the ship 'Randolph' has been chartered for the transportation of 300





**Ticket of leave with envelope,  
John Haddick,  
22 July 1850**

State Library and Archive Service of  
Tasmania, CON77/2/45,  
held by Queen Victoria Museum and  
Art Gallery, Launceston.  
Convicted at Somerset, Wells Quarter  
Sessions for a term of 10 years,  
for breaking an out building,  
married, aged 30.  
(Certificate may be viewed at  
<https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON77-2-45>.  
Dimensions of envelope 109 x 61 mm)

CERTIFICATE	
For well-conducted Men embarking with TICKETS OF LEAVE.	
John Haddick	
Born at	Bedminster
Age	30
Whether married or single	Married
Sentence	10 Years
Crime	Robbery and Out Building
Period passed	In Separate Confinement
	On Public Works
Original Trade or Occupation	Labourer
Prison Trade	Labourer
These are to certify, that his Conduct under probationary discipline has been	
Very good	
Given without erasure.	
London,	22 July 1850
Asst. Commr. Gen. Gaol	
Embarked for	By Quana... ..
On board the	... ..
Conduct during the Voyage	... ..
Surgeon Superintendent	... ..
21st Aug 1850	

male convicts from this country to Port Phillip with Tickets of Leave'.<sup>11</sup> La Trobe acknowledged the receipt of the despatch on 3 August.

Exiles (sometimes referred to as Pentonvillians) were generally young convicts who had served two years of their sentence, during which they had supposedly learnt useful trades. They were then given the option of serving out the rest of their sentence in a British prison or being sent to Australia where they would be given a conditional pardon (later a ticket of leave) with the proviso that they could not return to Britain until the term of their original sentence had expired.<sup>12</sup> The first exiles were transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1844. Between 1844 and 1849 Britain sent nine transports to Melbourne and Geelong carrying 1,727 men and boys from Pentonville, Millbank and Parkhurst prisons.<sup>13</sup> The first ship to arrive was the *Royal George* in November 1844 and the last was the *Eden* in February 1849.<sup>14</sup> The second ship, the *Sir George Seymour*, was originally sent to Van Diemen's Land with 345 men. However, of this group 175 exiles were then sent on to Geelong. They landed in March 1845 and many were employed as labourers on properties in the Western District.<sup>15</sup>

Charles La Trobe who initially favoured receiving the convicts had modified his opinion by 1849, noting of the exiles sent to Port Phillip:

... the first, importations were on the whole carefully selected, and therefore well received. But subsequent importations did not come up to standard. In the years 1847-8 no fewer than 36 'exiles' were convicted of grave crimes in the Supreme Court alone —As a class they fell into general disrepute. —The great number of free emigrants did away with the necessity which made the employment of Exile labour desirable. —Even at Portland and throughout the Western District, although the greatest demand for labour exists, every obstacle is raised against their introduction. In short, the time has gone by for rendering the importation of Exiles into Port Phillip expedient.<sup>16</sup>

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One of the earliest organised expressions of opposition to transportation was in Van Diemen's Land. A meeting held in Hobart in February 1835 called for the system to end.<sup>17</sup> Much of the Van Diemen's Land agitation eventually centred on Launceston. In 1841 the Committee of Anglican Churchmen who were responsible for the construction of Holy Trinity church had inserted in the builder's contract the clause: 'that only free labour and materials



**W. Howard, artist**  
**The ship Sir George Seymour, 1844**  
 Oil on canvas

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, BHC 3640

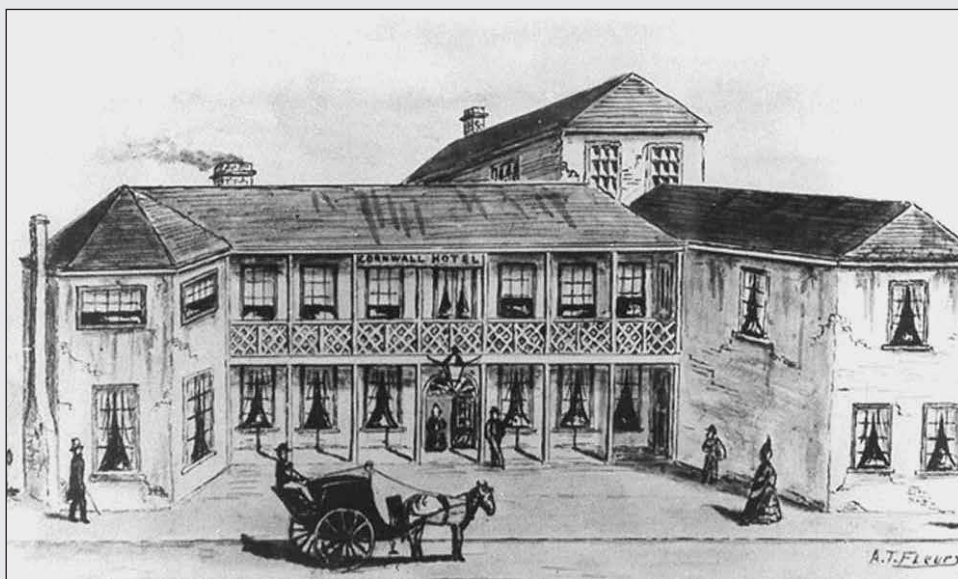
were to be used. No convict made material or handling by convicts would be permitted'.<sup>18</sup>

Richard Dry (later Sir Richard Dry and a premier of Tasmania) and five other members of the Legislative Council known as the 'Patriotic Six' had demanded in 1845 that a committee be set up to inquire into the Convict Department. The intent was to prove to the British Government that the colony's economic decline was due to the burden and expense of the convict system which had caused free labour to leave the colony. Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Eardley-Wilmot resented this attempt to override his governance and to question the Colonial Office's instructions.<sup>19</sup>

In December 1845 at a public demonstration of support for the Patriotic Six held in Launceston, Richard Dry spoke to the crowd from the balcony of the Cornwall Hotel. In part of his speech he said: 'If they wanted to see the country, as it was designed by nature to be prosperous in circumstances, free from moral pollution, free from concentrated crime of the Empire, and the future home for their children, they must represent their wrongs firmly but respectfully, but with increasing importunity to a country where the voice of the people would not be disregarded.'<sup>20</sup>

Gladstone dismissed Lieutenant-Governor Eardley-Wilmot, as the Colonial Office had lost faith in his administration, and appointed Charles La Trobe as temporary Administrator in Van Diemen's Land in May 1846. His instructions were to keep the colony operating until a new governor arrived, and to prepare a report on the state of the convict system. Charles La Trobe and family arrived in October 1846 and returned to Melbourne in February 1847. La Trobe's report on the merits of the newly implemented probation scheme as opposed to the original system of assignment was completed for despatch to London in May 1847. Marita Hargraves' article of 2007 in *La Trobeana* gave a comprehensive overview of La Trobe's work over that four month period and of his report on the convict system as it then operated in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst touring the northern regions of the island, La Trobe spent the night of 5 November 1846 at Richard Dry's property *Quamby* just outside Launceston and part of the next day in Launceston itself.<sup>22</sup> By then he would have been thoroughly familiar with the political turmoil preceding Wilmot's recall and the Launceston community's opposition to transportation. Tradespeople in Launceston were expressing frustration at the British Government's disregard



**Andrew Thomas Fleury, 1861–1947, artist**  
**Cornwall Hotel, Launceston (1835), c.1934**  
 Libraries Tasmania, PH30.1.9175

Built in 1824 by its first licensee John Pascoe Fawkner. Used for the Anti-Transportation League's formation in 1849, and the Launceston Municipal Council's first meetings from 1853

of their petitions and entreaties, and called another public meeting in early February in 1849. They felt that the only course left for them was to refuse to employ either male or female convicts except those who had received a ticket of leave prior to 1 January 1849. A resolution was passed to call themselves the Launceston Anti-Transportation League, and a committee was formed to pursue their objectives.<sup>23</sup>

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The Launceston agitation for the cessation of transportation during the 1840s was mirrored across Bass Strait in Melbourne. It was reported that following the arrival of exiles on the *Royal George* in November 1844, the Melbourne Town Council had appointed a committee to prepare a petition to be sent to Her Majesty against the 'voluntary exile' system.<sup>24</sup> A further protest meeting was held at the Queen's Theatre in March 1847 presided over by the Mayor, Henry Moor, and a petition was then sent to La Trobe.<sup>25</sup> Two years later, during a visit to Melbourne in March 1849, Governor FitzRoy received a deputation from the Town Council. In reply he said that he was aware of public meetings and he reassured the delegates that La Trobe had already given him a despatch he had written on the subject in which his Honor had very forcibly remonstrated against the proposal for sending convicts to Port Phillip and it would be immediately forwarded to the Secretary of State.<sup>26</sup>

When the *Hashemy* arrived in Sydney with convicts and exiles aboard on 9 June 1849, the ship received a hostile reception, with between 4,000 and 5,000 people attending a rally close to Circular Quay. Speakers expressed 'the outrage which had been insulting and offensively perpetrated upon them by the resumption of transportation and that their city with the beautiful waters of their harbour were to be again polluted with the floating hell – a convict ship'.<sup>27</sup> Two months later the outrage had spread south to Melbourne. Upon receiving news of the arrival of the *Randolph* on 8 August with a cargo of convicts guarded by the 11th and 58th Regiments, and its swift despatch to Sydney, the headline of the *Argus* read 'No Pollution', followed by pronouncing proud gratification that the 'moral plague which threatened us had been averted'.<sup>28</sup> Garryowen's memoirs declare that Melbourne had been 'frightened from its propriety' when the *Randolph* arrived.<sup>29</sup> Thomas McCombie's recollections were that when the *Randolph's* captain William Bale approached Port Phillip Heads and received instructions not to enter the Heads but proceed to Sydney, he disregarded the order, alleging that he was 'chartered for Hobson's Bay, to that part only was he insured, and there he was determined to go'.<sup>30</sup>

La Trobe's quick response to the challenge was greeted with measured approval by the press. The *Argus* referred to the noble conduct of his Honor the Superintendent which entitled



him to the full confidence of the colonists. However, the paper also warned: 'whatever our confidence in the promise of the Governor, we must still be upon our guard, and watch jealously for her departure'.<sup>31</sup> La Trobe had been criticised previously for his attitude to the introduction of exiles in a bid to lessen the shortage of labour, but in the *Randolph* incident he responded not only to local opinion, but also to what he had seen as Administrator in Van Diemen's Land. As he wrote to Governor FitzRoy in 1847: 'I have become too well aware of the evils, moral and social, of taking in ex-convicts'.<sup>32</sup>

La Trobe's despatch notifying Governor FitzRoy of the arrival of the *Randolph* had a response from the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, Deas Thomson, on behalf of the Governor. Arrangements to send on the ship were approved and a report requested of the expense involved, adding that Deputy Assistant Commissary-General James Erskine had been given instructions to defray the extra charge for sending on the vessel.<sup>33</sup> La Trobe acted immediately once the *Randolph* arrived. On 9 August he had accepted a tender from the merchant firm of Westgarth Ross and Co., the agents representing the English owners of the chartered ship. They claimed on behalf of the captain £500 to cover the cost of insuring the ship's passage from Melbourne to Sydney and in addition £8 passage money for each of the officers, the surgeon, a religious instructor and his wife. They stipulated the charter money must be paid in the colony, and 'a Certificate of the Charter for the owners of the ship in England to receive the balance of the freight — in case of any casualty arriving between this port and Sydney'.<sup>34</sup> An article in the *Hobart Courier* of 18 August 1849 mistakenly reported that £500 had been 'subscribed' to defray the cost of conveying the exiles to Sydney.<sup>35</sup> Governor FitzRoy sent a despatch to Earl Grey on 1 September 1849 emphasising that had he 'persisted in forcing the convicts on the Port Phillip District, measures of passive resistance to their reception and employment would have been adopted'.<sup>36</sup> Earl Grey, obviously persuaded by this explanation and after reading petitions forwarded to London, wrote to Governor FitzRoy that his actions concerning the *Randolph* were judicious and instructions had been given to the Secretary of State for the Home Department to sanction the extra expenditure of £500 to convey the ship to Sydney.<sup>37</sup>

Public meetings were becoming increasingly imbued with resentment, not only with the moral issues of transportation but also its political implications. An impassioned meeting following the departure of the *Randolph* was held at Queen's Theatre on 21 August 1849



and a committee formed by prominent citizens to prepare and forward a petition once again to Queen Victoria and the Houses of Parliament. Among the resolutions were those expressing discontent at the British Government taxing the colony for imperialistic purposes whilst still sending out convicts; and that 'Australia Felix, a free colony is now prepared to undergo any extremity, rather than submit to the degradation of both the name and the reality of a penal settlement'. There was even a call from Lauchlan Mackinnon, joint owner of the *Argus*, to resist to the death the landing of any convicts, and that it was 'high time to separate from England', a call followed by loud cheers.<sup>38</sup> Amongst issues of concern to the people of Port Phillip was the desire for separation from the 'penal colony' of New South Wales, so that the arrival of nine exile ships in the 1840s, together with the *Randolph*, represented a potential threat to the independence movement. Separation would eventually be achieved by an act of the British Parliament, given Royal Assent on 5 August 1850.

Of an eleventh ship Garryowen recorded:

On the 14th December 1849, another harbinger of evil appeared in the arrival of the ship 'Adelaide' from Hobart Town, with 281 convicts for Port Phillip, but against this visitation the Superintendent was prepared. He dispatched a messenger express to



**J. Sargent, engraver**  
**Queen's Theatre, Melbourne (1845)**  
 Wood engraving  
*Victoria and its Metropolis: past and present*  
 (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co.,  
 1888, Vol.1, p.198)  
 Building designed by architect Charles  
 Laing and located corner Queen and  
 Little Bourke Streets.  
 Used for anti-transportation meetings  
 1847 to 1851

the Heads, with positive instructions that the ship was to come no further. She remained off Queenscliff for four days, and then followed in the wake of the 'Randolph'. Thus again was the dire shadow of the impending evil driven off.<sup>39</sup>

The *Argus* commended La Trobe for his actions over the arrival of the *Adelaide* and wrote: 'it is but fit that the committee of the colonists should express to his Honor the Superintendent the gratitude of the whole body of the people, for the straightforward determination he has manifested in this matter, which has left them only the agreeable task of strengthening his hands'.<sup>40</sup>

In 1850 Reverend John West took up the cause in Van Diemen's Land, concerned that local organisations had little influence with the British Government. On 9 August 1850 at a large protest movement in Launceston he proposed to seek the cooperation of all abolitionists throughout Australia.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, a public meeting was arranged for 1 February 1851 at the Queen's Theatre in Melbourne. Reverend West and W.P. Weston were the delegates from Hobart and Launceston; William Westgarth and W.M. Bell were to represent Victoria. All agreed on the formation of a League which eventually became known as the Australasian Anti-Transportation League (New South Wales

and South Australia did not attend). Their signed pledges included not employing people who arrived under sentence of transportation for a crime committed in Europe, and using their official, electoral and legislative powers to prevent the establishment of English prisons or penal settlements. The delegates then unfurled a banner which had been brought over from Launceston.<sup>42</sup> West went on missions to New South Wales and South Australia, persuading their colonists to join the League. New South Wales joined in May 1851 and South Australia in September. Transportation was finally abolished in the eastern colonies in 1853. However, Western Australia by choice continued to receive convicts until 1868.<sup>43</sup>

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In retrospect, Garryowen's 'harbinger of evil' could be seen as a catalyst for positive change, since the arrival of the *Randolph* accelerated the public demand for an end to transportation. It also enhanced Charles La Trobe's local reputation, if only temporarily, for acting (although with Governor FitzRoy's agreement) in defiance of the British Government's policy of reintroducing transportation. Four days before the arrival of the *Randolph* La Trobe had recorded an official note that he was 'forwarding copy of a despatch from the Secretary of State, in reply to the Address to the Queen praying for

the removal of Mr La Trobe from the Office of Superintendent of the Port Phillip District'.<sup>44</sup> The despatch referred to a petition for his recall as Superintendent that was sent following a public meeting a year earlier on 3 July 1848.<sup>45</sup> Yet the *Argus*, chief promoter of that petition, was now praising him for his 'noble conduct' over the prompt despatch of the *Randolph*. Later, in a letter from Jolimont in 1853 to his brother in London, he wrote with some feeling about the abolitionists' cause in the dying days of transportation to the eastern Australian colonies:

Tho' Transportation is proclaimed at an end, the proposed removal of the Norfolk Island prisoners to V.D.L. will raise a storm in both Colonies—and viewing the evils which we have to encounter from the presence of the prisoner class amongst us, I do not wonder that the people here have their backs up.<sup>46</sup>

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### Postscript

Among the committee members of the 1849 Launceston Anti-Transportation League was John Tevelein. Of French Huguenot descent, he was born in 1804 in Canterbury, England. His ancestors fled France in 1685, spent six months in Holland and then crossed the Channel to settle in Canterbury with other French emigrants. John Tevelein and his second wife Prudence Garth were my great great-grandparents. They migrated to Adelaide in 1836, but finding it unsuitable sailed on the *Tam O' Shanter* bound for Sydney. However, the ship was wrecked off the north-east coast of Van Diemen's Land. All on board survived and the Teveleins settled in Launceston in 1837. John became a successful businessman and one of his many achievements was to lead the Launceston anti-transportation movement. He was reported in his obituaries to have organised the public rally in support of Richard Dry and company at the Cornwall Hotel in 1845. He carried out philanthropic work for the poor with the Benevolent Society of Launceston. He was the founder of the Teetotal Society, a lay member of Trinity Church, Superintendent of the Ragged Sunday School, and a founding member of the Launceston Workmen's Club. His portrait by Robert Dowling was displayed for some years in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. Over 2,000 people attended his funeral and the people of Launceston raised funds to erect a memorial to his memory. (Shayne Breen, 'Outdoor Poor Relief in Launceston 1860–1880', *Papers and Proceedings, Tasmania Historical Research Association*, vol.38, no.1, March, 1991; extensive obituaries in the *Launceston Examiner*, 11, 12, 17 September and 18 October 1879.)

### Endnotes

- 1 Garryowen (Edmund Finn), *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne: historical, anecdotal and personal, 1835-1852*, Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1888, p.524.
- 2 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, in association with State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.338.
- 3 Ibid, p.335, 23 March, 1849.
- 4 Between 1803 and 1853 approximately 76,000 convicts were sent to Van Diemen's Land.
- 5 Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Select Committee on Transportation. *Report from the Select Committee on Transportation*, London, 1838, Chairman: Sir William Molesworth (U.K. Parliamentary Papers Online)
- 6 A.G.L. Shaw, 'Arthur, Sir George (1784–1854)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, Vol.1, 1966, pp.32–38.
- 7 Babette Smith, *Australia's Birth Stain: the startling legacy of the convict era*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2008, p.202. Babette Smith argues most persuasively that one of the main reasons behind the impetus for the anti-transportation movement was homophobia and the moral corruption of society.
- 8 Lucy Hughes Turnbull, 'The end of transportation', 2008, *Dictionary of Sydney*, [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/the\\_end\\_of\\_transportation](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/the_end_of_transportation) (accessed 2 January 2019)
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 The *Randolph* was a 664-ton ship-rigged merchant vessel constructed in early 1849 in Sunderland, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne (*Lloyds Register of British and Foreign Shipping*, 1851). There is no suitable picture to illustrate this article (Ed.)
- 11 PROV, Superintendent, Port Phillip District, VPRS 19/1, Inward Registered Correspondence, item no.49/1751, Requiring report of expense contracted for in conveying convicts per 'Randolph' to Sydney, Note that only 84 of the original shipment of 300 convicts on the *Randolph* had tickets of leave. Of the original 300 convicts, two had died on the voyage and three on the onward voyage from Melbourne to Sydney.
- 12 Douglas Wilkie, 'The Convict Ship *Hashemy* at Port Phillip: a case study in historical error', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol.85, no.1 p.32. Wilkie's thoroughly researched article is the story of the *Hashemy* (as with the *Randolph* chartered in England in 1849 to bring exiles to New South Wales); however as he proves, the accounts by many historians of the ship being destined for Port Phillip are incorrect.
- 13 Colleen Ruth Wood, 'Great Britain's Exiles sent to Port Phillip in Australia: Lord Stanley's experiment 1844', Thesis (PhD), University of Melbourne, 2015, Introduction p.iii: five ships arrived in Melbourne and four sailed to Geelong. (Thesis accessible at <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/51010>)
- 14 Wood, Appendix 1, pp.411–427. See the tables with names of the ships, list of convicts and dates of arrival. Also p.160, ships, date of arrival and place of disembarkation. Exile ships were *Royal George*, *Sir George Seymour*, *Stratheden*, *Maitland*, *Thomas Arbuthnot*, *Joseph Somes*, *Marion*, *Anna Maria* and *Eden*.
- 15 *Geelong Advertiser*, p.2; 'Convicts and exiles on the transport ship Sir George Seymour, 1845', <http://www.historyaustralia.org.au/twconvic/Sir+George+Seymour+1845> (accessed 20 February 2019).
- 16 *Australian Notes*, p.335, memorandum 19 March 1849. See also the Ledger at PROV, VPRS 19, item no. 49/1501, Register of Convicts 1842–1854. It records details of convicts in the Port Phillip District during that period.
- 17 John Reynolds, *Launceston: history of an Australian city*, Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia [for] Adult Education Board Tasmania, 1969, p.76.

- 18 Ibid, pp.87–88.
- 19 John Reynolds, 'Dry, Sir Richard (1815–1869)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, Vol.1, pp.329–330.
- 20 *Hobart Courier*, 13 December 1845, p.4 (quoting Launceston Examiner of 6 December, 1845).
- 21 Marita Hargraves, 'C. J. La Trobe's Season in Van Diemen's Land', *La Trobeana*, vol. 6, no.2, July 2007, pp.16–30. She concluded that 'despite the magnitude of the difficulties which faced him during his four months administration of VDL, La Trobe acquitted himself satisfactorily both in the eyes of the Colonial Office and his own account'. She quoted, firstly, Rev. John West: 'During his short stay as Administrator he was employed in a careful scrutiny of the probation department. In performing this difficult duty he displayed exemplary activity and decision'; and, secondly, Governor Sir William Denison: '[He had] done an immense deal which would have fallen on my shoulders. He is a most invaluable public servant, and has done his duty here well and manfully. I only hope I may be able to follow in his steps'. (p.30). Note: La Trobe's report presented to Parliament, *Report on the Present State and Prospects of the Convicts in Van Diemen's Land*, may be accessed via <http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/works-by-latrobe.html>.
- 22 Ibid. p.20.
- 23 *Colonial Times*, Hobart, 6 February 1849, p.1, 'Another Anti-Transportation meeting'.
- 24 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 December 1844, p.1.
- 25 *Argus*, 2 March 1847, p.2, 'The Anti-Transportation meeting'.
- 26 *Argus*, 20 March 1849, p.2, 'The Governor's visit'.
- 27 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 June 1849, p.2, 'The Great protest meeting'.
- 28 *Argus*, 10 August 1849, p.2, 'No pollution'.
- 29 Garryowen, p.523.
- 30 Thomas McCombie, *The History of the Colony of Victoria: from its settlement to the death of Sir Charles Hotham*. Melbourne: Sands and Kenny, 1858, p.174.
- 31 *Argus*, 9 August 1849. p.2, 'Colonists of Port Phillip'.
- 32 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996, p.208.
- 33 PROV Inward Correspondence VPRS 19, item no. 49/1751.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 *Hobart Courier*, 18 August 1849, p.2, 'Refusal to accept exiles'.
- 36 *Further Correspondence on the subject of Convict Discipline and Transportation*. 31st January 1850, London. 1850, p.41. 'Copy of a despatch from Governor FitzRoy to Earl Grey', 1 September 1849 (U.K. Parliamentary Papers Online)
- 37 Ibid, p.59, 'Copy of a despatch from Earl Grey to Governor Sir C. FitzRoy', 29 January 1850. The despatch was reproduced in various Australian newspapers, e.g. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August, 1850, p.3, *Maitland Mercury*, 21 August 1850. p.4, *Port Phillip Gazette*, 24 August 1850, p.2.
- 38 *Port Phillip Gazette*, Supplement, 21 August 1849, p.1, 'The Anti-Transportation Meeting'. Lauchlan Mackinnon, one of the main speakers at the meeting, was by this time joint owner with Edward Wilson of the *Argus*.
- 39 Garryowen, p.524.
- 40 *Argus*, 15 December, 1849, p.2, 'Pollution'.
- 41 John Reynolds, 'West, John (1809–1873)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967, Vol.2, pp.590–593.
- 42 *Argus*, 3 February 1851, p.2. The banner was described as deep blue with the Union Jack in the corner with four stars representing the Southern Cross. Around the borders were the words in gold, 'Australian Anti-Transportation League' and 'Established 1851'. (It is now believed to be the precursor of the Australian flag.)
- 43 The Swan River settlement in Western Australia was established by free settlers in 1829. Failing to attract migrants, the authorities applied to the British Government in 1850 to introduce transportation. The last shipload of convicts arrived in January 1868.
- 44 *Australian Notes*, p.364, memorandum 4 August 1849 to Mayor of Melbourne.
- 45 *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 July 1848, p.1, 'Recal [*sic*] of Mr La Trobe from Office'. Report of a meeting on Monday 3 July in Melbourne, The petitioners made many accusations against La Trobe's administration. They declared him unfit for office and amongst a number of grievances claimed he had written to the Governor of New South Wales that the Port Phillip District was not ripe for separation. They also claimed that he had not undertaken necessary public works and that any surplus revenue had been sent to the Treasury in Sydney.
- 46 L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975, p.43, Letter to [Peter] La Trobe, 24 September 1853.



# John Dickson:

*'a possessor of numerous flocks' in  
La Trobe's Port Phillip District*

By Irene Kearsey

Irene Kearsey is a La Trobe's Cottage guide and an integral member of the volunteer team at Gulf Station, the historic farm at Yarra Glen managed by the National Trust. One of her other roles includes preparing research reports for the National Trust on public art to be registered by the Trust. As a member of the La Trobe Society, she participated in the project at Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) indexing the Inward Correspondence to La Trobe, 1839-1851. Irene is a long-term volunteer at PROV and continues to work on projects to preserve and digitise records of state significance.

*This is a revised version of a paper given in the Members Talk to Members program, 9 September 2018.*

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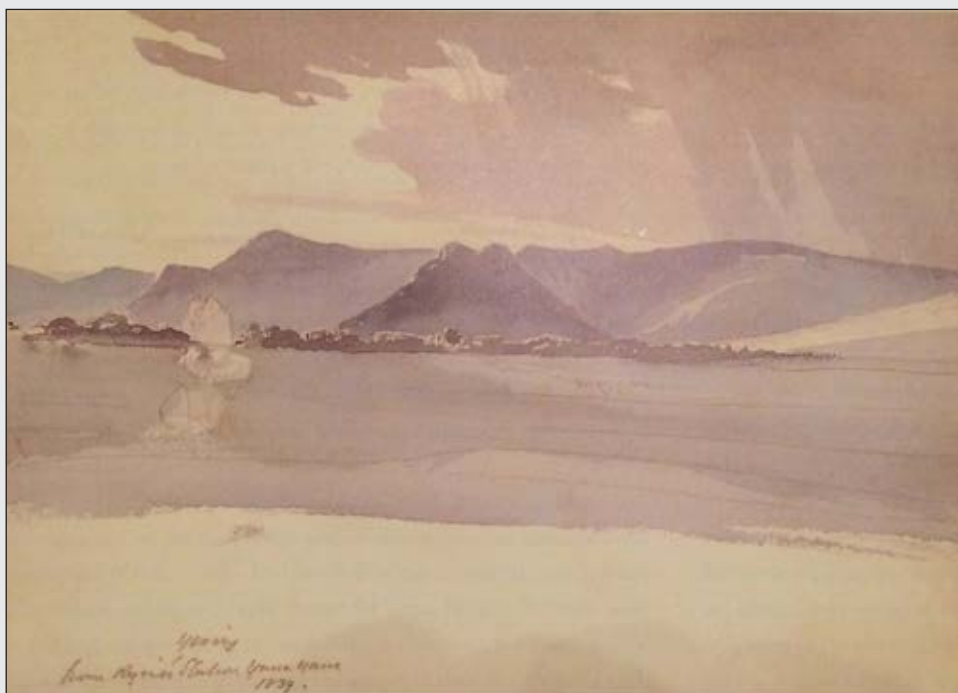
Today the farm of *Gulf Station* at Yarra Glen incorporates only the heritage buildings and a few paddocks of the original holding. It is now managed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) but was previously owned by two generations of the Bell family until 1951. The property comprises only sixty acres (24 ha), with the historic homestead and slab-constructed farm buildings built by the Bells. This is but a tiny remnant of what began some time in the early 1840s, during La Trobe's period as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. Originally it was a parcel of 25,000 acres (10,100 ha) in two squatting leases: *Gulf Station No. 1* (the portion inside the Settled District, that is, within the 25 mile [40 km] radius from Melbourne) and *Gulf Station No. 2* (the portion outside that boundary). There was no township of Yarra Glen at that time; the area first came to be called Yarra Flats, being part of the middle section of the Yarra River. All *Gulf Station* land lay north of the Yarra River. This original *Gulf Station* (sometimes spelt 'Gulph') was the domain of John Dickson.

John Dickson, the man who held the early *Gulf Station* leases and a man known to be a 'possessor of numerous flocks',<sup>1</sup> is rather a mystery man, even to his own descendants.<sup>2</sup> Herein lies one of the complexities of researching an individual who left little evidence of his life.

To a great extent my research has had to be broader than imagined and so I have picked up clues from other researchers by cross referencing their findings. It remains a jigsaw puzzle because of the lack of clear evidence and much of my research has occurred by working backwards in time.

Dickson died on 1 June 1878. His death certificate states he was 65 years old.<sup>3</sup> This would indicate a birth year of around 1813. The certificate also states he was 27 years old when he married. As we know that his marriage took place in 1843, his birth year would thus be around 1816. The death certificate names his father as William, and birthplace as Dumfries (Scotland). From records currently available, there is no John Dickson born in 1816 with a father named William and place nominated as Dumfries. However, there is a match for 1813: a baptism on 20 January has been recorded. Moreover, both the transcribed baptism record and Dickson's death certificate omit the mother's name. (It is blank on the baptism record and 'Unknown' is recorded on the death certificate. The informant was John Dickson's son). These early records are testament to a frustrating search.

Not only is it unclear when and where he was born; one further uncertainty is the date John Dickson arrived in Australia. Once again,



**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801–1875, artist**  
**Yering from Ryrie's Station, Yarra Yarra, 1839**

Sepia wash on paper – unfinished

Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria

La Trobe drew another picture *Yarra Range from Yering* in 1853

the death certificate provides a few clues. One question asked on the death registration is 'How long in the Australasian Colonies or States'. In answer to this question, Dickson's certificate states '21 years in Victoria and 17 years in New South Wales'. John Dickson purchased *Caroonboon Station*, near Deniliquin southern New South Wales in September 1861 which attests to his residence in New South Wales for seventeen years.<sup>4</sup> There is evidence that the Dickson family left Victoria in 1855,<sup>5</sup> and returned in November 1860.<sup>6</sup> It is not known where the Dicksons spent their first ten months back in Australia: possibly in Victoria. If this was in fact the case, John's first period in Victoria must have begun some twenty years before 1855, that is, in 1835.<sup>7</sup> When reporting his father's history for the death certificate, Dickson's son may have assumed that his father's early years in Australia were all spent in Victoria. It is likely he did not know that some of his early years were spent north of the Murray in New South Wales, thus confusing facts on the death certificate.

Once again, research has found that the closest match in a search of arrivals with the name Dickson or Dixon around the year 1835 is a 'John Dickson' arriving in Sydney on the *Kilmaurs* on 19 June 1836.<sup>8</sup> If this was indeed our John Dickson, he would have been twenty-

three years old when he arrived in Australia. The *Kilmaurs* was a 'fine, fast sailing barque'<sup>9</sup> of only 226 tons; its master was Captain Andrew Thompson. By way of comparison, the National Trust's *Polly Woodside* is 678 tons. The *Kilmaurs* sailed from Liverpool in January 1836, via Hobart before arriving in Sydney. The journey was apparently uneventful. However, it is possible, and it seems likely, that Dickson only boarded the ship in Hobart, having arrived in Tasmania prior to 1836.<sup>10</sup>

If this John Dickson is our John Dickson, no record has been found of what he did in Sydney; did he stay in the town or move to the country? The year Dickson moved south to the Port Phillip District has not been discovered either, but graziers had started to move south across the Murray by 1836.<sup>11</sup> William Ryrie, who was the first to take land in the middle Yarra Valley, arrived in 1838 and called his station *Yering*.<sup>12</sup>

More research may reveal something of Dickson's family in Scotland. However, it appears he arrived with adequate resources to take on a large area of grazing land within, at most, only a few years of arriving in this new country. It has been calculated that, before fencing, to be financial, a squatter would need



**John Cross, 1819–1861, artist  
Donald Horne Ryrie, 1853**

Oil on canvas  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,  
H2005.80/1

to run at least 2,000 sheep — such flocks needed at least six shepherds as well as other workers.<sup>13</sup> At the end of 1843 the Western Port District (which included the middle Yarra) had 710,000 sheep and 35,000 head of cattle.<sup>14</sup>

By 1848 when land-holdings were better documented, Dickson had applied for 25,000 acres of the Western Port District.<sup>15</sup> In the *Port Phillip Gazette* of 20 July 1840, William Lonsdale published a list ‘of those persons Licensed to Depasture Stock in the Districts of Melbourne and Geelong’, but John Dickson’s land is not listed,<sup>16</sup> nor is it listed the following year.<sup>17</sup> However, a map dates his grazing enterprise as early as 1842,<sup>18</sup> and historians Billis and Kenyon dated his occupation of *Gulf Station No. 2* from July 1844.<sup>19</sup> From 1844, when the pastoral system was formalised, Dickson would have paid £10 for a License to Depasture Stock on Crown Lands.<sup>20</sup>

We must guess that Dickson created an abode for himself on his land. It was probably similar to that assembled by a Western District pioneer at Ballan, Robert William von Stieglitz, who moved from Van Diemen’s Land to Port Phillip in 1836, bringing two ex-convict servants. Robert described setting up his first abode:

I put up a sort of tent. I could not stand straight even in the centre, and it was just my length when stretched on the ground. I thatched it with reeds

from the creek close by, and put some coarse grass at one end with a row of pegs in the ground to keep it from moving, for my bed, and this, covered with a blanket, I lay on for months... There was no fireplace, but a good wood fire was kept burning outside the open shed.<sup>21</sup>

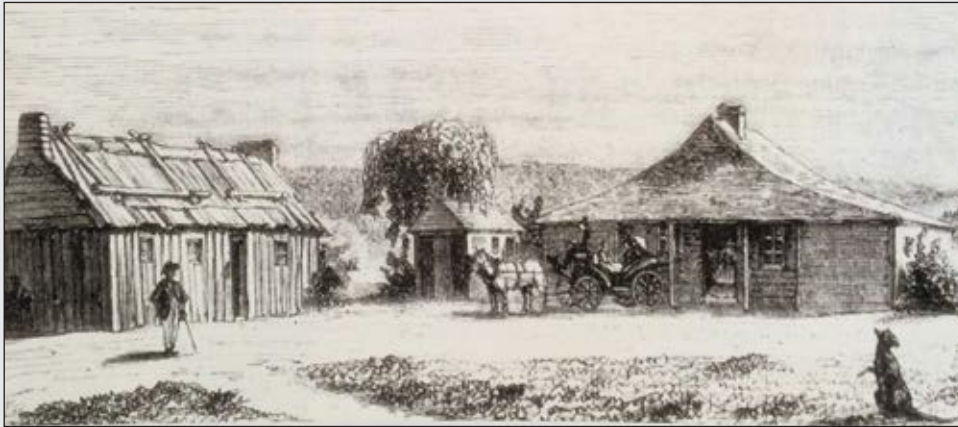
Then, like von Stieglitz, Dickson may have improved his home, or employed a carpenter to do so:

I soon set to and built a better house, four posts in the ground, eight feet by 10 apart, filling up the openings with sods, the roof being thatched with reeds from the creek. I forgot a window; the loss was small as the door was open all day. I made a bed and really felt myself very comfortable in this little hut.<sup>22</sup>

There seems to be nothing remaining of the site of Dickson’s abode which is marked on early maps.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to reconcile these early maps with modern features, not helped by relevant creeks having since been renamed: what is marked Steels Creek on old maps is now Dixons Creek and the new Steels Creek is to the west. The site of the homestead is probably just north east of the intersection of the current Melba Highway and Bottings Lane. (For map, see p.18). It is interesting to note that among the buildings which now comprise *Gulf Station* (the Bells’ *Gulf Station* further south), there is a possibility that part of the kitchen wing was adapted from an 1840s structure originally erected as a combined hut and animal shelter.<sup>24</sup>

No image of Dickson seems to have survived — not even in his descendants’ hands — or at least it has not yet been located. We can assume that, like the majority of pastoralists, he dressed in the typical squatter garb described by Michael Cannon: ‘duck or moleskin trousers, blue serge shirt, scarf knotted around the neck, Hessian riding boots and spurs, a loose jacket... a wide-brimmed hat plaited from leaves of the cabbage tree’.<sup>25</sup>

After some years in Australia, John Dickson married Alice Dalrymple. Alice arrived in Melbourne on 17 August 1843, less than a week before she married on 22 August. This could not have been a whirlwind romance. It is much more likely that the marriage was the result of an engagement contracted in Scotland before Dickson left his home. If we assume their families had not moved since John and Alice’s respective births, they lived quite close: from Dumfries (the Dicksons) to Glencaple (the



**Karl Girardet, 1813-1871, artist**  
**Charles Maurand, 1824-1904, engraver**  
**Station d'Yering (1852) 1861**

After a photograph of the La Trobes at Yering Station, February 1852  
 Published in Hubert de Castella, 'Souvenirs d'un squatter français en Australie (colonie de Victoria)', *Le Tour du Monde: nouveau journal des voyages*, vol.3, 1861, p.88

Dalrymples) is now five miles (8.5 km) by road. Alice, born 1821, would have been about fifteen when John left Scotland (assuming 1836 is correct), old enough for an agreement to marry once John was established in his new country.

Alice had sailed on the *Frances*, a ship of only 333 tons. It was an eventful voyage for the young woman with some particularly interesting companions. One of her fellow passengers was John Wroe, founder of the sect Christian Israelites. Born in West Yorkshire in 1782, Wroe 'wandered' as widely as he preached, even to America and Europe. In 1830, he claimed he had 'had a command from heaven to take seven virgins to cherish and comfort him' as he travelled (and with predictable consequences). This was not the only scandal he was embroiled in. The 1843 voyage was Wroe's first visit to Australia. He came five times in all, dying in Melbourne in 1863. He built a grand house in North Wakefield, West Yorkshire, that he called *Melbourne House* to acknowledge the source of the donations which funded it. The house, which still stands, is based on the design of the first Melbourne Town Hall (1854-1867).<sup>26</sup> Given Wroe's reputation, it is reassuring to note that a Mrs Gilbert was also a passenger on the *Frances* — at least young Alice had a married woman as chaperone.

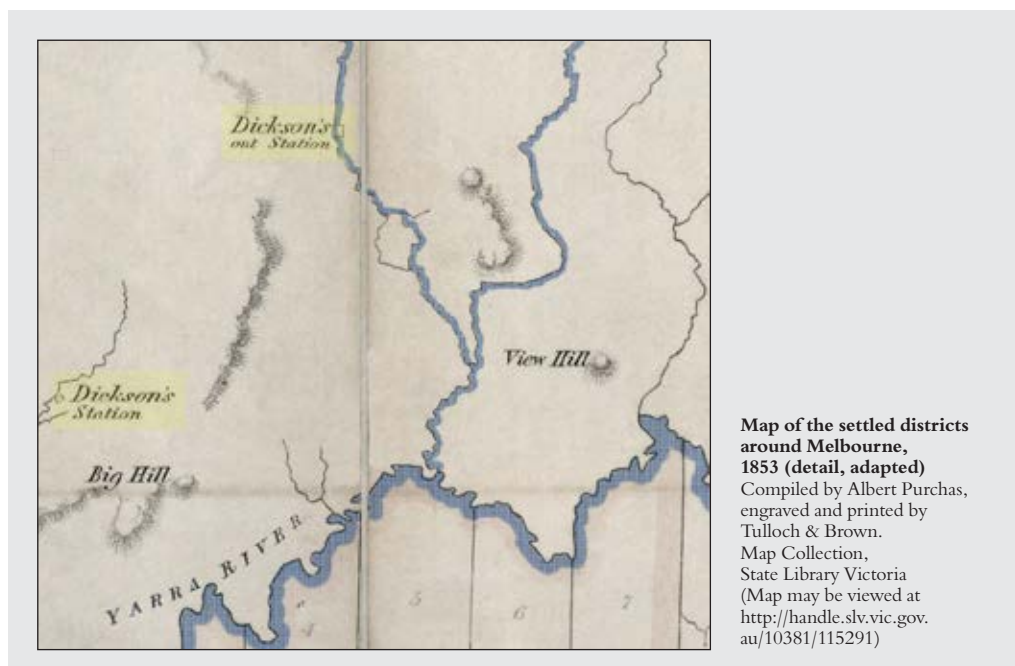
John Dickson and Alice Dalrymple were married by Rev. James Forbes in the Presbyterian Church in Melbourne. This church had been built only two years before.<sup>27</sup> Their witnesses were Archibald Wright and Thomas Kissock. An Archibald Wright is also listed as a passenger on the *Frances*; perhaps he was already known to Alice before they left Scotland, or a friendship

had formed during the voyage. Alternatively, the witness may have been a completely different Archibald Wright. A man of that name had, by 1848, taken land with James and Thomas Crighton in the County of Bourke,<sup>28</sup> and in 1852 was an active member of a group forming a Presbyterian Church in the area.<sup>29</sup> (Co-incidentally at least three other men in that group had arrived in 1839 on the *David Clark* with several families that had by then settled in Kangaroo Ground, a village on the way from Melbourne to Yarra Flats.)

The other witness, Thomas Kissock, a Scot, had arrived in Melbourne in 1841, and was by 1845 advertising as a livestock dealer. Dickson may have met Kissock through business if Kissock began as a dealer earlier than 1845. He lived to the great age of ninety-four and is listed in *The Story of Australia — its discoverers and founders*.<sup>30</sup>

Although the marriage certificate does not record a 'place of abode' other than 'Melbourne,' it is likely that John took Alice back to Yarra Flats after the wedding. By the time their first child arrived in 1844 their address was noted as 'Upper Yarra Yarra'.<sup>31</sup> Presumably in those days of sparse population, the Dicksons would have been in contact with their neighbours. Few white people would have been living in the area when Dickson established *Gulf Station*. The brothers William and Donald Ryrie and their cousin Alexander Ryrie had already established *Yering Station*. This 30,000 acre property (12,150 ha) on the south bank of the Yarra River was capable of carrying 16,000 cattle and 34,000 sheep (although the Ryries concentrated on cattle there as the land was found too damp for sheep). These Scottish





men came from New South Wales in 1838 and brought cattle with them.<sup>32</sup> By 1845, they had also established *View Hill*, north of the Yarra, an area better suited to sheep. This was in partnership with James Graham (although it seems unlikely that Graham ever lived on the property). Later, in his capacity as an agent, Graham's management of *Jolimont* enabled Charles Joseph La Trobe to survive on the rents and sales from his Melbourne property after he returned to England.<sup>33</sup>

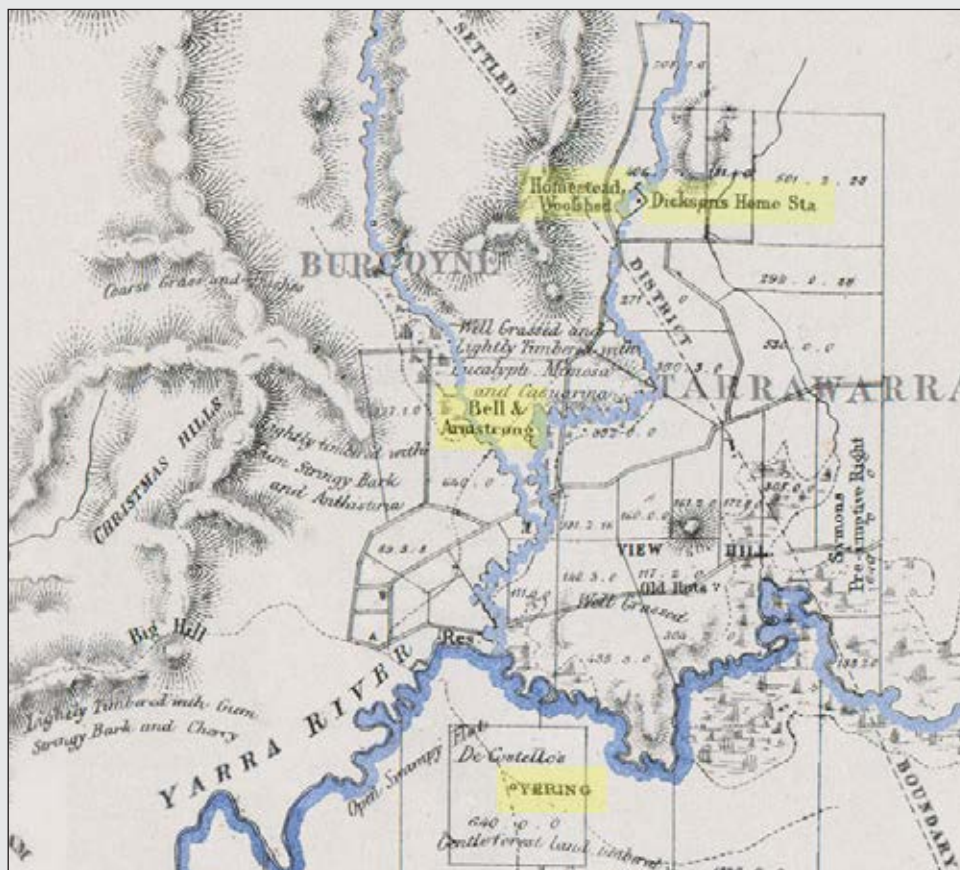
During Dickson's time in the area, the Ryries sold *Yering* to Paul de Castella and Adolphe de Meuron, nephew of Sophie La Trobe.<sup>34</sup> *Yering* was to the south of Dickson's *Gulf Station*, *View Hill* to the east. Superintendent La Trobe visited his friend Donald Ryrie in December 1839,<sup>35</sup> and again in March 1840,<sup>36</sup> but Dickson may not have been in the area that early. However, he had certainly established *Gulf Station* by 1851 when La Trobe visited Paul de Castella.<sup>37</sup> La Trobe visited again in 1852, when he also paid a visit to the Ryries at *View Hill*.<sup>38</sup> News of these visits would have reached the Dicksons even if they did not meet the, by then, Lieutenant-Governor.

Another neighbour, to the west, was Joseph Stevenson who had settled in the area in 1842. Stevenson, who arrived from Scotland in 1832, was originally a builder; he is reputed to have built the first punt on the Yarra River for William Watt in 1839 and Kirk's Horse Bazaar in 1840.<sup>39</sup> In 1841, a 'J. Stevenson' (perhaps Joseph Stevenson) donated two volumes of *The Practical Builder* to the library of the fledgling Melbourne Mechanics' Institution.<sup>40</sup> Stevenson's 9,600 acres (3,880 ha) was able to carry 3,000 sheep and was located to the west of *Gulf Station*.<sup>41</sup>

Dickson would have heard the news of an event that eventually gave the run its name, *Christmas Hills*, and later became the name of the district. The story was the adventure of a shepherd, David Christmas, whom Stevenson had appointed in Melbourne in October 1842. David had to walk to his new employment, following a certain route, but became hopelessly lost a few miles short of his destination. He wandered for days, surviving only by eating his dog; then he heard bells and traced the sound to a herd of oxen and stayed by the cattle until rescued.<sup>42</sup> Christmas was a pardoned Van Diemen's Land convict,<sup>43</sup> and an unreliable employee.<sup>44</sup> There is evidence that he also tended to drink and this may have contributed to his getting lost.<sup>45</sup> The name 'Christmas Hills' for the area appears in newspapers as early as 1846.<sup>46</sup> In 1850 Stevenson transferred the *Christmas Hills* lease to Andrew Linton, who quickly transferred it to Henry Dendy.<sup>47</sup> David Christmas is buried in the area that bears his name.<sup>48</sup>

The Dicksons' first child, William, was born 12 September 1844 at Upper Yarra Yarra.<sup>49</sup> There appears to have been only one white child born in the area before him; that was Joseph Furphy, born 26 September 1843, whose father Samuel was then employed by William Ryrie as overseer.<sup>50</sup> As an adult, Joseph Furphy used the pseudonym Tom Collins and became well known for his novel *Such is Life*.<sup>51</sup>

On 17 May 1846, the Dicksons' second child Agnes was born.<sup>52</sup> Both William and Agnes were baptised by Rev. Forbes in the Presbyterian Church in Melbourne. Records for baptism of the later three children have not yet been found.



**County of Bourke 1855 (detail, adapted)**

Compiled by Thomas Bibbs, 1855; lithographed by William Collis, 1856,  
Melbourne: Surveyor General's Department, 1857  
Map Collection, State Library Victoria

(Map may be viewed also at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231553329/view>)

Note 'Homestead, Woodshed' marked on former Steels Creek, now Dixons Creek

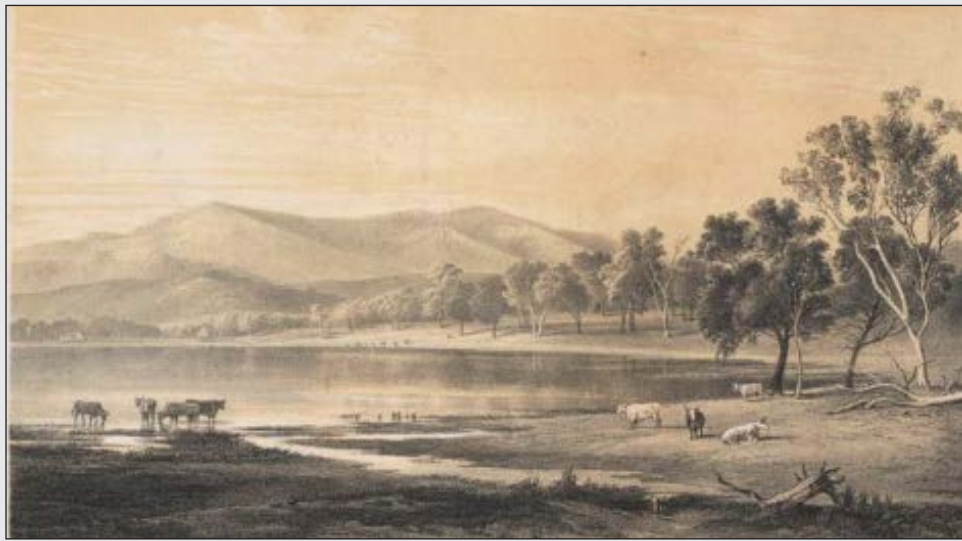
Thomas was born around 1849 (estimated from the age of five years given for him on his brother James' birth certificate). James was born on 23 July 1853 at Upper Yarra Yarra.<sup>53</sup> In between Thomas and James, John was born 22 February 1851 at Upper Yarra Yarra.<sup>54</sup>

As previously noted, it has not been possible to identify when Dickson first took up the *Gulf Station* run. However, in 1845 a John Dickson is listed as holding a Depasturing License in the Western Port District, which is likely to be the Dickson of *Gulf Station*,<sup>55</sup> and this was granted again in 1846, 1847 and 1848.<sup>56</sup> In 1848 a new Order in Council came into effect.<sup>57</sup> It meant that a licensed occupant of Crown Lands beyond the Settled Districts had six months to demand a lease of their run. This Dickson did, and was granted a lease allowing him to run 6,000 sheep.<sup>58</sup> This license was later converted into a Pre-emptive Right.<sup>59</sup> By 1848, it appears Dickson was exporting wool to London. Indeed, on 4 March 1848, J. Dickson sent fifty-one bales to London via the barque

*Hoogley*.<sup>60</sup> This may not have brought him a great return because it was reported that 'wool continues dull of sale'.<sup>61</sup>

Ship's surgeon Thomas Bryan Hayton appears to have visited *Gulf Station* in 1851, as he had letters waiting for him at the Melbourne GPO addressed as c/o J. Dickson, *Gulf Station* in December.<sup>62</sup> He could have entertained his hosts with the tale of his ship's rescue of William Valentine, sole survivor of the whaler *Mary* in New Guinea.<sup>63</sup>

Andrew Ross, schoolmaster of Kangaroo Ground, visited the Yarra Flats area for three days in January 1852. His description gives some clue as to the location of the Dicksons' homestead but the physical landmark he describes is unnamed. From the foot of the 'Big Hill' (the steep descent from the Christmas Hills), he walked to a shepherd's hut 'near the river bank' and was hospitably received.<sup>64</sup> From there, Ross noted that he walked three miles, where, 'on rising ground, a small collection of



**Nicholas Chevalier, 1828–1902, lithographer**  
**Mt Munda from St Hubert, Yering, 1865**

Tinted lithograph  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H9367  
 Mount Monda [sic] is located north-east of Gulf Station

bark huts guarded by a ring of burnt grass and charred timber wisely rendered in order to prevent the spread of bush-fire,' he reached the homestead. Ross observed John Dickson 'seated outside of his dwelling'. After introductions, Ross was 'immediately ushered into the neat abode which was covered with passion flowers in great luxuriance'. The Dickson family, he noted, had made him 'a welcome visitor' although he was 'expected to make a longer stay than was convenient to myself'. Ross observed Mrs Dickson holding 'her usual lessons for the children' and noted 'it was pleasing to see that they had made fair progress under her tuition, although they were young'. (William would have been about 7, Agnes 5, Thomas 3, John 1, James not yet born). After dinner he noted: 'we took a stroll into the bush, visiting an out-station up Steel's Creek'.<sup>65</sup>

To enable men to survive in out-stations, the squatter would ride around each week, to check on men and stock, and bring rations: 10–12 lbs (about 5 kg) of flour and of meat, 2 lbs of sugar, ¼ lb of tea, and a few ounces of soap and tobacco.<sup>66</sup> The shepherd whom Ross met on his way to the Dicksons may have been tending *Gulf Station* sheep. When assisted and bounty immigrant shipping lists were indexed, the employers' names were not included in the indexes. However, two people who worked for John Dickson are known: Henry Scarce and Rebecca Weller. Henry, a farm labourer, came from Suffolk to Geelong in October 1848, aged eighteen. Scarce's intended employer did not meet him at the wharf, but shortly afterwards

Dickson employed him, having landed a mob of sheep from Van Diemen's Land. Scarce stayed at *Gulf Station* for only four months, moving to Kangaroo Ground and working for John Bell (brother of William Bell junior, later the owner of *Gulf Station*). Rebecca Weller had arrived in February 1849 with her parents and siblings from Buckinghamshire. Listed as a 'house servant', she was immediately employed at *Gulf Station*. Their periods of employment by the Dicksons overlapped sufficiently for Scarce and Weller to marry in 1851.<sup>67</sup> They and other members of the Weller family became significant residents of Kangaroo Ground.

John Dickson does not appear to have been active in civil life, unlike some of his Kangaroo Ground neighbours. However, in 1846 he did contribute two guineas to a testimonial for Frederick Armand Powlett, Commissioner for Western Port District,<sup>68</sup> and in 1850, two pounds towards the Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne.<sup>69</sup> La Trobe laid the foundation stone for the Benevolent Asylum that year.<sup>70</sup> After Dickson moved to Kangaroo Ground, he contributed £3 10 shillings towards road improvements and a bridge near the school.<sup>71</sup>

Andrew Ross visited the Dicksons again in early 1854. On 19 and 20 January he noted in his diary, 'Dr Jamieson there.'<sup>72</sup> This was possibly Dr William Kerr Jamieson, who held I.Y.U. Station [sic] at Pakenham between 1838 and 1848; by 1853 he had moved to Gippsland.<sup>73</sup> By late 1853, the Dicksons were planning



to leave. Ross noted 'Flocks of sheep... seen passing some belonging to the Gulf Station, so we predicted that Mr Dickson was... about to depart.'<sup>74</sup> Soon after (6 to 8 January 1854), Ross took his wife Mary to visit the Dicksons and on 26 January he wrote: 'Mr Dickson comes [to Kangaroo Ground] & brings his three children.' The plan was that the three eldest children would board to attend Ross's school. However, by April 1854 Dickson had sold *Gulf Station* to William Bell senior and his son-in-law Thomas Armstrong. All the Dickson family moved into Armstrong's Kangaroo Ground house *Green Hills*, while Armstrong and his wife moved to *Gulf Station*, and the Dickson children became day students.<sup>75</sup> Ross notes on 29 March 1855, 'Dickson & family left for Scotland', and on 4 April: 'Presents received from Dicksons & \$10'.<sup>76</sup>

Before John Dickson left, he wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands asking for the lease to be transferred to William Bell and Thomas Armstrong, which was recommended for approval.<sup>77</sup>

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The Dickson family's departure from Victoria is yet another mystery. The Public Record Office Victoria's collection of departure lists is incomplete but searching those held, and also newspapers for any ship sailing after that date, there is only one set of Dicksons listed. This group sailed on 11 April 1855 for Liverpool on the *Gipsy Bride*: a male W. and a male J. Dickson with Mrs Dickson and four children (perhaps W. being the eldest son William, J. being John, with Mrs Dickson and the other four children).<sup>78</sup> PROV does hold the list for this sailing, but the ages of the listed Dicksons do not match the *Gulf Station* family, nor do the names of the younger children. In the list W. is 28, J. is 27, Mrs Dickson is 24, John is 4, Jane and Mary are both 3, and there is an infant.<sup>79</sup>

There seems to be no record of where the Dicksons went, nor what they did during their absence; presumably they went to Scotland to visit their families. The children would have gone to school: an obituary of son William says he 'completed his education in Scotland'.<sup>80</sup> Their return to Australia is more easily pinned down: they travelled on the *Lord Raglan*. Although the clerk used a thumbnail dipped in tar to compile the passenger list, it is possible to make out the names even though the given ages do not match exactly.<sup>81</sup> The *Lord Raglan*, a White Star clipper of 1,905 tons under the master Joseph Roper, sailed from Liverpool on 23 August 1860 and arrived in Hobson's Bay on 24 November. The saloon accommodation was limited to 'a

small number of passengers' and included 'two large and commodious stern cabins suitable for families.'<sup>82</sup>

In 1861 John Dickson bought *Caroonboon Station* on the Billabong Creek near Deniliquin for £11,500 without stock; the area comprised 132 square miles (34,200 ha).<sup>83</sup> Once again it seems the family built a log cabin and lived 'hand to mouth' until their first woolclip of forty bales, sold in England, produced some cash in 1865.<sup>84</sup> However, as early as 1863, stock sales were reported from Dickson's *Caroonboon* (2,200 fat sheep).<sup>85</sup> Dickson with his sons created a flourishing sheep station, with newspapers regularly reporting large sales of sheep. In a random period June to December 1873 newspapers record that 11,637 head were sold from *Caroonboon*.

It is possible John Dickson maintained contact with his acquaintances in Victoria as he sold sheep in that state. On 6 and 7 August 1861, Andrew Ross recorded: 'In M. Eltham nomns at Kirks meeting with Dickson.'<sup>86</sup> This could be interpreted as 'In Melbourne as Eltham nominees at Kirk's meeting with Dickson', as George Kirk advertised two meetings to be held in Heidelberg on 6 August.<sup>87</sup> Later that month, Kirk was elected MLA for East Bourke. Ross did not explain in his diary who 'Dickson' was, presumably because he was the only Dickson mentioned anywhere else in the diary. For 24 April 1862, Ross reported: 'Mr Dickson calls.'<sup>88</sup> On that date, Dickson's stock agents, Delmahoy Campbell and Company, held a sheep sale; perhaps Dickson was in Melbourne at that time and called on his friends at Kangaroo Ground.<sup>89</sup> Sales of *Caroonboon* stock through the years were usually in Victoria.

John Dickson died at *Caroonboon* on 1 June 1878, of 'syncope with disease of heart',<sup>90</sup> although he was reported to have fallen from a horse some time before and not recovered.<sup>91</sup> Alice died on 27 December 1899 after some months of 'indifferent health'.<sup>92</sup> Agnes, their only daughter, married Francis Meagher Harrick, physician and surgeon, on 16 June 1876, her husband later being active in the move for Federation.<sup>93</sup> The Dickson sons, William and Thomas, struck out on their own in 1872 to become sheep farmers; they purchased *Yarrawin* in 1874.<sup>94</sup> John junior and James retained *Caroonboon* until John drowned in the Billabong Creek on 1 January 1914;<sup>95</sup> James died on 18 August 1917.<sup>96</sup> The property was not sold out of Dickson ownership until 2014.<sup>97</sup>

As this article reveals, there are many gaps in the story of John Dickson of *Gulf Station* and *Caroonboon*. From the scant information



available, it has been possible to piece together some of the most obvious facts, but it has also meant that by reading between the lines of other historians' research and interpreting their work, a fuller picture of the man and his family has come to light. However, from what little has been found, one thing remains clear. Although

he was 'a possessor of numerous flocks', he and his family pursued a pioneering lifestyle of which Charles Joseph La Trobe would have been proud.

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## Endnotes

- 1 A paraphrase of La Trobe's 'numerous flocks and herds' in his address to the citizens of Melbourne on arrival as the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, 3 October 1839, *Port Phillip Patriot*, 7 October 1839, p.2. (Quoted in Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, p.146.)
  - 2 In the same era of the Port Phillip District there was another John Dickson, who has sometimes been assumed to be the *Gulf Station* Dickson. This other man was Dr John Dickson, who became an Elective Member for the District in the New South Wales Legislative Council 1848–1851. After Separation, he served some more years in the New South Wales Legislative Council and held land in the Murrumbidgee District, not far distant from Dickson's Deniliquin property. Both men had daughters named Agnes. Both men had local geographical features named after them but, in both cases, the spelling morphed into 'Dixon' (Dixons Creek near *Gulf Station*, and Dixons Swamp, *Woomargama Station*, Dr John Dickson's property). <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/member-details.aspx?pk=149> (accessed 22 December 2018).
  - 3 New South Wales Death Certificate registration number 5477/1878.
  - 4 *Age*, 6 September 1861, p.4.
  - 5 Mick Woiwod (ed.), *The Diary of Andrew Ross 1828-1895 & The Reminiscences of Andrew Ross 1851-1864*, Kangaroo Ground, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, in association with the Andrew Ross Museum, 2011. Diary, p.80.
  - 6 PROV Passenger list for *Lord Raglan*, arriving 24 November 1860.
  - 7 I assume, when 'years in Victoria' were reported, people counted the Port Phillip District as Victoria, even before Separation.
  - 8 *Australian*, Sydney, 21 June 1836, p.2.
  - 9 *Colonial Times*, 24 June 1836, p.3.
  - 10 *Bent's News and Tasmanian Three-Penny Register*, Hobart, 21 May 1836, p.4. This lists *Kilmaurs'* passengers as 'Mr and Mr Stevenson, Mrs Fulton, Mrs and Miss Fairweather', but these may be only those departing from the ship in Hobart.
  - 11 Geoffrey Blainey, *A History of Victoria*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.27.
  - 12 Yarra Ranges Council, Yarra Ranges database, 'Chateau Yering', [http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/yarraranges/result\\_details/115210](http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/yarraranges/result_details/115210) (accessed 21 December 2018). As there are no known pictures of *Gulf Station* during the Dickson years, pictures of nearby *Yering* feature in this article (Ed.)
  - 13 Michel Cannon, *Life in the Country*, Melbourne: Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1973, pp.15–16.
  - 14 *Ibid*, p.16.
  - 15 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 17 March 1848, p.117 (Surname spelled Dixon).
  - 16 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 20 July 1840, p.4.
  - 17 *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 September 1841, p.2.
  - 18 William Wedge Darke, *Yarra Yarra. LODDON 73A, Gracedale, Gruyere, Woori Yallock*, 1842 (Historical maps and plans collection, Roll plans, State Library Victoria, microfiche.). The map, which has Dickson's and Ryrie's runs marked, is published in Raymond Henderson, *From Jolimont to Yering — and along our Yarra Valleys with Neuchatel's bachelor vigneron*, Kilsyth, Vic.: Roundabout Publishing, 2006, p.151.
  - 19 Ralph Vincent Billis and Alfred Stephen Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Melbourne: Macmillan, 1932, p.46.
  - 20 'The pastoral system', <http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history/land-exploration/pastoral-practices/pastoral-system> (accessed 21 December 2018).
  - 21 *Geelong Advertiser*, 29 December 1900, p.5, 'Western District Pioneers'.
  - 22 *Ibid*.
  - 23 See *County of Bourke*, compiled by Thomas Bibbs, 1855; lithographed by William Collis, 1856, Melbourne: Surveyor General's Department, 1857 (extract on p.18).
  - 24 *Gulf Station*, Victorian Heritage Register H0384, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/1252/download-report> (accessed 22 April 2019).
  - 25 Cannon, p.22.
  - 26 For more on John Wroe, see Edward Green, *Prophet John Wroe: virgins, scandals and visions*, Stroud, England: Sutton, 2005 (accessible online). There is also a novel by Jane Roger, *Mr Wroe's Virgins*, London: Faber, 1991, and a 1993 mini-series, *Mr Wroe's Virgins* accessible via the internet. State Library Victoria holds books recording Wroe's teachings. The Christian Israelite Sanctuary where Wroe died still stands in Fitzroy (corner Fitzroy and Napier Streets).
  - 27 Presbyterian marriage in the Port Phillip District, 22 August 1843, registration number 347 (number in Sydney register 797 1620).
  - 28 Extract from Government Gazette, *Melbourne Argus*, 2 May 1848, p.1.
  - 29 *Argus*, 1 July 1852, p.4.
  - 30 Alfred Stephen Kenyon, *The Story of Australia: its discoverers and founders*, Geelong: Corio Press, [1937?], p.42.
  - 31 Baptismal registration, William Dickson, born 12 September 1844.
  - 32 Rolf Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories*, London: Macmillan, 1899, p.205.
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- 33 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.36.
- 34 The sale took place in July 1850, Henderson, p.118. See also Hubert de Castella, *Australian Squatters*, translation with introduction and notes by C.B. Thornton-Smith. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1987, p.165, and Daryl Ross 'Adolphe de Meuron, Swiss Pioneer: a research report', *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.1, March 2015, pp.39-41.
- 35 *Australian Notes*, p.7.
- 36 *Ibid*, p.93.
- 37 *Ibid*, p.198.
- 38 *Ibid*, p.210.
- 39 *Cobden Times and Heytesbury Advertiser*, 6 April 1918, p.2, 'Early Victorian history recalled'
- 40 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 16 December 1841, p.2, The Mechanics' Institution.
- 41 *Melbourne Daily News*, 18 January 1850, p.4, Transfer of runs.
- 42 *Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record*, 6 December 1912, p.2, 'Early days of Christmas Hills'.
- 43 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 May 1826, p.3, Government notice. (David Christmas came over to the Port Phillip District with William von Stieglitz in 1836.)
- 44 *Ibid*, 19 August 1826, p.3, Advertising.
- 45 *Geelong Advertiser*, 29 December 1900, p.5; *Colonial Times*, Hobart, 10 September 1830, p.3, Police reports; and 1 September 1835, p.8, Hobart Town police report,
- 46 *Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser*, 22 June 1846, p.2.
- 47 *Melbourne Daily News*, 18 January 1850, p.4, Transfer of runs, License 167.
- 48 Mick Woiwod, *Kangaroo Ground: the highland taken*, Kangaroo Ground, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, 1994, p.105.
- 49 Registration number missing from image of the damaged page.
- 50 Manning Clark, 'Furphy, Joseph (1843-1912)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; 'Joseph Furphy' Monument Australia. <http://monumentaustalia.org.au/themes/people/arts/display/34080-joseph-furphy> (both accessed online 21 December 2018)
- 51 Furphy's other works included *Buln-buln and the Brolga*, *A Boy of the Old Brigade*, *Rigby's Romance*, and poetry.
- 52 Registration number 8041 (place of birth not recorded).
- 53 Registration number 229 (place of birth recorded as *Gulf Station*).
- 54 Date recorded on his tombstone in Deniliquin cemetery.
- 55 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 7 October 1845, p.1,088.
- 56 *Ibid*, 8 December 1846, p.1,541, 14 January 1848, p.55, and 17 November 1848, p.1,692.
- 57 Order in Council, 9 March 1847, chapter 11, section 11.
- 58 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 4 October 1848, pp.406-407.
- 59 Defined on the Public Record Office website: 'Pre-emptive Rights (1852-1873): Pre-emptive rights were the homestead blocks purchased by squatters under regulations gazetted in 1848. Holders of pastoral runs were able to purchase up to 640 acres of their run before any land in their locality was made available to the general public. This privilege was given in recognition of their pioneering efforts; it could only be exercised once for any particular run.' [http://wiki.prov.vic.gov.au/index.php/VPRES\\_8168\\_Historic\\_Plan\\_Collection#PR\\_PRE-EMPTIVE\\_RIGHTS\\_281852\\_-1873.29](http://wiki.prov.vic.gov.au/index.php/VPRES_8168_Historic_Plan_Collection#PR_PRE-EMPTIVE_RIGHTS_281852_-1873.29) (accessed 29 March 2019).
- 60 *Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser*, 6 March 1848, p.2.
- 61 *Ibid*, 26 September 1848, p.2.
- 62 *Melbourne Daily News*, 12 December 1851, p.1.
- 63 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1845, p.2 and 25 March 1845, p.2; Mark Howard, 'The Strange Ordeal of William Valentine', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol.15, no.2, 1993, pp.156-166.
- 64 Woiwod, *The Reminiscences of Andrew Ross*, p.33.
- 65 *Ibid*, p.34.
- 66 Cannon, p.31.
- 67 Norma Lawler, 'Henry and Rebecca Scarce,' in *Pioneer Profiles*, Vol.2, Port Phillip Pioneers Group Inc., 1990, p.107.
- 68 *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*, 28 November 1846, p.3, Powlett testimonial.
- 69 *Argus*, 8 October 1850, p.1.
- 70 *Ibid*, 24 June 1850, p.2.
- 71 *Ibid*, 14 May 1855, p.8.
- 72 Woiwod, *The Diary of Andrew Ross*, p.73.
- 73 'Pakenham', *eMelbourne: the city past & present* (accessed online 6 August 2018).
- 74 Woiwod, *The Reminiscences of Andrew Ross*, p.49.
- 75 Woiwod, *The Diary of Andrew Ross*, pp.76-77.
- 76 *Ibid*, p.80.
- 77 Letter dated 6 March 1855, annotated 'recommended' 13 September 1858; copy of this (and previous letters 27 January 1848 and 23 December 1852) held in National Trust of Australia (Victoria) archives, B3517.
- 78 *Argus*, 4 April 1855, p.4.
- 79 The Dickson family ages were approximately John 42, Alice 34, William 11, Agnes 9, Thomas 6, John 4 and James 2.

- 80 'Dickson, William (1844-1927)', *Obituaries Australia*, <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/dickson-william-1419> (accessed 19 October 2018).
- 81 PROV VPRS 947 passenger list, *Lord Raglan* 1860.
- 82 *Age*, 27 November 1860, p.1.
- 83 John E.P. Bushby, *Saltbush Country: history of the Deniliquin district*, Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1980, p.188.
- 84 Peter Austin, 'Time's up at Caroonboon', quoting local historian Brad Chalmers, *The Land*, 9 August 2014,
- 85 *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 14 April 1863, p.3.
- 86 Woivod, *The Diary of Andrew Ross*, p.107.
- 87 *Argus*, 6 August 1861, p.8.
- 88 Woivod, *The Diary of Andrew Ross*, p.109.
- 89 *Argus*, 28 April 1862, p.7.
- 90 Death certificate, New South Wales, registration no.5477/1878.
- 91 *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 8 June 1878, p.2.
- 92 *Riverine Grazier*, 1 January 1901, p.2.
- 93 *Table Talk*, 6 October 1904, p.13.
- 94 'Dickson, William (1844-1927)', *Obituaries Australia*.
- 95 *Argus*, 8 January 1914, p.1.
- 96 *Herald*, 18 August 1917, p.20.
- 97 Peter Austin, *The Land*, 9 August 2014.



Unknown photographer  
Reverend Willoughby Bean, c.1848  
Port Albert Maritime Museum

## *Not the Usual Pioneer: 'Parson Bean', his little Gothic Church and Gippsland 1849-1859*

**By Loreen Chambers**

Loreen is a retired History Teacher and is currently Vice-President of the C J La Trobe Society and a member of the editorial committee of *La Trobeana*. Loreen is also a lecturer at various Local History societies and at U3A Deepdene. Loreen and her husband John live in Canterbury and at Upper Maffra West in Gippsland where they raise beef cattle. In 2016 Loreen began researching the history of the little timber Gothic Church at Tarraville when she became interested by a local story that the church was supposedly prefabricated like La Trobe's Cottage. The life of its first resident minister with the intriguing name of Willoughby Bean also proved to be a rich field for research into the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe.

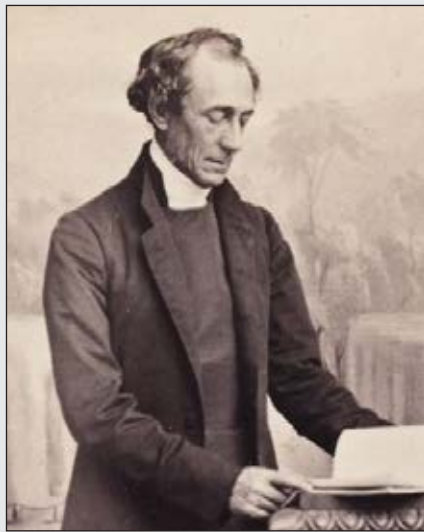
When the forty-nine year old, and recently ordained Anglican minister, Willoughby Bean boarded the schooner *Colina* for Port Albert on 13 November 1848 to commence a three months' itinerating mission he knew that a huge parish awaited him which extended from the Tarwin River to Cape Howe, and from Omeo to Port Albert across a region of creeks and swamps, forest & scrub. Bean knew that if he were to take up a permanent ministry in Gippsland there would also be neither a church for him nor a parsonage for his family.<sup>1</sup>

Bean soon decided that he would make Tarraville the centre for his Gippsland parish, six kilometres further inland from Port Albert. Though Port Albert was maligned by the press, much was expected of Tarraville which was in the 1850s the fastest growing town in the Gippsland region. When Bean returned some

months later with his wife Harriet and their three young children<sup>2</sup> he rented for about a year, then bought a cottage for a parsonage on the road between Tarraville and Alberton; but a church was not to be built for another five years. Until then, Bean took services, including christenings and burials for all denominations before the arrival of Presbyterian and Roman Catholic clergy, and marriages for Protestants,<sup>3</sup> or held Bible readings.

Despite a seemingly privileged position in society as a member of the established state church, the Rev. Willoughby Bean, the first permanent Church of England minister in Gippsland, was to face many challenges, some familiar to any pioneer in terms of making a living for his family, but others peculiar to that of a clergyman in fulfilling his obligations to his profession and, not least, to his bishop.





Batchelder & O'Neill, photographer  
Bishop Charles Perry, c.1857-1863 (detail)  
Carte de visite  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H81.11/41

### *Willoughby Bean: early life*

A few years earlier, between 1843 and 1846, Willoughby Bean had been studying theology in Wales at St David's College Lampeter,<sup>4</sup> with the intention of taking up a living as his youngest brother Alexander Louis Wellington Bean MA (1816-1895) was to do. Alexander had secured a living at St Peter's Sowerby in what is now North Yorkshire staying there for forty-three years. A fine memorial still exists commemorating his service. The stone church had been built in 1766 and a parsonage set among cultivated fields had been secured for him and his large family. By contrast, financial insecurity was to be Willoughby Bean's lot in life. Bean never completed his studies,<sup>5</sup> partly because of costs and also because in September 1847 Bishop Charles Perry was persuasive in promising ordination to Bean in Melbourne after he had assessed Bean's theological soundness and personal characteristics. Possibly, Bean considered that a secure living in a new diocese would provide for his needs.

Willoughby Bean was an interesting ordinand: he had spent most of his childhood in France while his father, Captain Willoughby Bean (1772-1862) of the Coldstream Guards was a prisoner of war at Amboise in the Loire Valley for many years.<sup>6</sup> Willoughby (1801-1877), the eldest son of a very large family, had been in receipt of £500<sup>7</sup> from his father and had migrated to New South Wales in 1824. He had been granted 2,000 acres (810 hectares) in the Brisbane Water area near Gosford which he called *Amboise*. Here he had hired men,

including convicts, had run cattle and sheep and grown crops, but drought and inexperience had eventually bankrupted him by April 1844, some two days after his second child, John Willoughby Bean was born. Of a religious disposition (as had apparently been his father) Bean had been a founding trustee of St Paul's church at Kincumber and regularly mustered his servants to prayer,<sup>8</sup> and so it was unsurprising that Bean was to return to England in order to study for the church. Unworldly, one might say, and naïve as a free settler, but adventurous and intrepid, hardship had taught Willoughby Bean a stoicism that may also have come down with his Scottish ancestry.<sup>9</sup>

There was also another dimension to Bean which suggests an evangelistic streak, at least in a political sense, that would accord with the evangelical form of Anglicanism he was later to espouse. This was revealed in a letter written in 1831 from New South Wales to a friend Tom Battley<sup>10</sup> when he wrote: 'we are not blessed with poor laws, tithes, taxes and rents, which have rendered Great Britain an enslaved and miserable country. We have no pampered Noblemen to ride, like a pestilence, over their native land, snatching the very crust from the starving widows and orphans!'<sup>11</sup> It is a voice we do not hear in his muted and earnest journal entries to his bishop some twenty years later. Additionally, this rather startling letter reflects a new democratic voice we find quite often in a later generation of men and women at the goldfields.

### *Bishop Charles Perry*

Arriving on 24 January 1848, Charles Perry<sup>12</sup> the newly appointed Bishop of Melbourne had brought with him on the sailing ship the *Stag*<sup>13</sup> seven carefully selected clergymen for his new diocese, as well as their families.<sup>14</sup> Perry himself knew little about colonial life but he was a highly intelligent and educated man, evangelical, unsparing of others (and himself) and brutally honest in his criticisms. He was to write:

My purpose is, with the help of God, to take out none with me but such men as are, so far as I can judge, perfectly sound in the faith, zealous, active, intelligent, humble, gentlemanly, willing to endure hardness, forbearing towards those who differ from them in non-essentials but ready to contend earnestly for the faith against every assailant of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.<sup>15</sup>

Time and time again he was to reiterate these expectations of his clergy, saying that he had no time for what he called a second-rate, 'feeble'



**Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist**  
**First settlement at Port Albert, Gippsland (1843) c.1860**  
 Watercolour and ink on cream paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H27751  
 A copy of an earlier work May 1843.

man who would be 'no use in the colony'; such a man, he declared, 'had better stay in England. He may do some good there, but he is likely to be only in the way here.'<sup>16</sup> However, Willoughby Bean was to find Perry a hard task master, but not without care for his clergy.<sup>17</sup>

Bishop Perry was installed on 28 January 1848 at St James' Church (it was not consecrated as a cathedral until 1853) with its newly built cedar-panelled box pews and two fine pulpits.<sup>18</sup> Its medieval font<sup>19</sup> had been donated by Charles Joseph La Trobe in 1845, and installed just in time for the christening of his own son. La Trobe had just returned to Melbourne from his second visit to Gippsland on 3 December 1847.<sup>20</sup> Bishop Perry and Superintendent La Trobe, a devout Moravian, were to remain neighbours for the next six years and friends for life.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Gippsland and the Tarraville Parish***

Bishop Charles Perry was convinced that it was imperative that the Church of England should have a permanent representative in the new province of Gippsland although its population represented only two per cent of the Victorian population and of which only a small number were probably Anglicans.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, he decided that Bean might be suited to a hardship posting. However, even Bean was to find Gippsland a mysterious and remote area of New South Wales which had been unknown to European settlers and traders as late as 1840.

Blocking the route from Melbourne, dense stringy bark forests and tea tree scrub, and swamps such as that at Koo Wee Rup and

at Sale, made the region inaccessible. A track existed from Melbourne but it also included the wet ground around Longwarry, Yarragon and Trafalgar. These areas became known as the 'Glue Pots' due to the never-ending sticky mud that sucked at the feet of both man and beast. To the north, the Great Dividing mountain range formed another barrier adding to this isolation of Gippsland. Mountain and alpine ash, messmate, stringy bark, peppermint and box covered the ranges and the lower slopes.

The other natural boundary was, of course, Bass Strait. Some of the five clans of the Gunaikurnai of Gippsland must certainly have come across Europeans or sighted their ships as long ago as 1798 (such as those of George Bass and Matthew Flinders) and then increasingly there were 'straitsmen', as they came to be known, such as sealers, whalers, wattle-bark gatherers (tanning), escaped convicts, even shipwrecked sailors and passengers, who eked out livings on the islands and the coast – but none dared to enter the unknown beyond the shore line.<sup>23</sup> The traditional owners, the Gunaikurnai were isolated even from other Aboriginal peoples who called them Warrigals (the wild blacks).

### ***Cattle trails***

Between 1837 and 1842 a terrible drought on the great treeless grasslands of the Monaro district on the other side of the Great Dividing Range saw cattle die in their hundreds. Some settlers faced bankruptcy, but Angus McMillan, the first to arrive, was the manager for Captain Lachlan Macalister at Currawang. McMillan decided to seek a route to Port Albert for his

cattle and after two attempts broke through to the coast where they camped on the banks of the Tarra River not far from Yarram on 14 February 1841 before riding to the sea at the Old Port near the mouth of the Albert River. This moment generally marks the beginning of European expansion into Gippsland.

Within a few months came the first wave of squatters and their stockmen. They were the 'overlanders', most of them Gaelic-speaking Highland Scots. Initially, sheep were preferred to cattle because of the demand for wool for English mills, but depressed prices, dingo attack, fencing and labour demands made beef cattle for export to Van Diemen's Land a more attractive proposition.<sup>24</sup> At the port, stock would be loaded onto ships such as the *Water Witch* (cattle in the hold and also sheep in the pens on deck) which would take them to Hobart, Port Arthur and Launceston. Why? By 1847 there would be 24,188 convicts in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>25</sup> Convict labour was needed to build roads, bridges, wharves, customs houses, courthouses and settlers also needed convict labour.<sup>26</sup> A little more than three kilos of meat a week was deemed a suitable ration for a convict, together with five and a half kilos of wheat. Government contracts to feed convicts made this cattle trade lucrative for Gippslanders. This was the compelling reason for the livestock trade, at least until the end of transportation in 1853.

By the late 1840s Port Albert was a thriving port, with settlements nearby at Alberton, Victoria and Tarraville which were laid out to accommodate what most thought would be the nucleus of government and commercial activity for the whole of Gippsland. Cattle runs spread across the grassland plains between the Great Dividing Range and the sea, the land appropriated from the local Gunaikurnai people. The main runs were taken up by Highland Scots, such as McMillan at *Bushy Park*, Macalister at *Boisdale*, MacFarlane at *Heyfield*, and McDonald and Thompson at *Glenfalloch*. Later runs were to be taken up by Lowland Scots and also English coming in from the sea at Port Albert who took up land around what became 'the Heart' squatting district in the Sale area.<sup>27</sup>

By as early as 1845 most of the best land had been occupied and the number of runs had doubled from twenty to forty. In 1848 there were perhaps between seventy to eighty stations,<sup>28</sup> spreading out from the central plains as far as Rosedale to the west and Bairnsdale to the east. Some 20,000 cattle and 60,000 sheep were at pasture. By then the average stocking capacity of a run was 500 cattle, 1,500 sheep, and ten horses. Some runs were huge: Patrick Coady

Buckley, one of the few squatters who was not a Scot, settled on his run called *Coady Vale* near present-day Seaspray; it was 22,000 hectares. And the next year he took up land on the Tarra River of just over 9,300 hectares.

### *Aboriginal people and dispossession*

Much has been said about Angus McMillan's extraordinary achievements, in terms of his exploration and pastoral enterprise, and also his humanitarian attitudes towards his convict workers; but more recently they have been overshadowed by his and other men's treatment of the Aboriginal people. The Land Rush meant a terrible dispossession of the Gunaikurnai people of Gippsland. The Scots and English and Irish settlers have varied levels of responsibility for the collapse of the Indigenous populations where frontier wars occurred.<sup>29</sup> But the truth is that many of the Scots, who outnumbered other British in the early days, were clearly responsible for many killings.<sup>30</sup>

The historian Don Watson, himself a descendant of Scottish selectors, has proposed an interesting thesis about why the Scottish pastoralists were so land-hungry and what it was that drove them so ruthlessly in their dispossession of the Gunaikurnai. Speaking of Angus McMillan he said: 'The man who had come from a society in which half a dozen cows constituted a herd now had 2,400 head of cattle. Where a flock might have meant 50 sheep in his youth, he now owned 9,000. He had five runs, the biggest and the best of them, *Bushy Park*, nearly 6,500 hectares'.<sup>31</sup> The ownership of horses was also a measure of wealth and prestige and McMillan owned fifty horses.

The Clearances in the Highlands and age-old clan warfare were also still in living memory for many Scots. In Gippsland they saw the Gunaikurnai as enemies. Whilst the Aboriginal people fought back they were never any match for the guns of the squatters and managers (who had more deadly weapons than stockmen and shepherds) which Gardner claims were the main cause of the decline in the population. According to some historians, diseases such as influenza and measles had less of an impact (and small pox not at all). There were possibly 2,700 Gunaikurnai people in Gippsland in 1835.<sup>32</sup> However, it is almost impossible to estimate their numbers killed in frontier violence. In a letter home, Henry Meyrick estimated that 450 had been killed by 30 April 1846.<sup>33</sup> Gardner has estimated a possible total of around 600 deaths for the period 1800-1860, although others such as Watson, Broome and Morgan have come to different conclusions.<sup>34</sup>





Whether, as some such as the Presbyterian minister the Rev. T. McAnlis at Tarraville, thought, they had been treated no better than commodities in a slave market when they first landed, most of the single women had married and settled into life in the country within a short while.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Reverend Willoughby Bean***

Bean held his first service in Tarraville on 26 November 1848 in 'Mr Duncan's square room to a respectable congregation of 30 or 40 people.' This was followed by an evening service in nearby Port Albert. Bean baptised eight children the following Thursday.<sup>39</sup> Bishop Perry had instructed Bean he was 'to spend the alternative months, when the state of the roads do not render it impossible, in making circuits throughout his district', an area as far away as Bairnsdale. Over the next three months, he held

Sunday services and bible readings in barns, wool sheds and large living or dining rooms. Services for christenings, marriages and burials were important and filled an aching need for those who had come from traditional village and town life to have key life events observed.

### ***Journals for the Bishop, 1848-1849***

Bishop Perry, who visited Gippsland with his wife Frances, also instructed Bean to keep a journal during these three months. This extract covers a two-week period, 13-24 December 1848. It reveals much about the hardship of travel in a frontier society, the isolation of settlers, many of the people he encountered, and the state of religious observance. This extract begins just as Bean was recovering from the illness and fatigue of a traumatic sea voyage he had taken on the *Colina* from Melbourne:

#### ***Dec. 13th Wednesday***

After leaving the Scotts [near Woodside], and riding 12 or 13 miles, we reached Mrs Campbell's on the morass [Glencoe]. Held a short service with her, her son and three daughters and Mr McLeod. We had to cross the natural boundary of Upper and Lower Gippsland, a large morass, under water, perhaps only a mile and a half broad in a straight line, but fully three miles the way one had to travel in getting across it. Mr Campbell was our guide, yet I managed to get my horse into a hole and had to get off and wade some two or three hundred yards. Swam our horses across the Glengarry or Latrobe [*sic*] River and reached Fitchett's Woolpack Inn [in Sale, then called Flooding Creek].

Found many gentlemen there it having been a court day. Wrote to Mrs B [his wife] and afterwards rode to the 'Heart' station with Mr Montgomery and Messrs. Lovell and Mason. Mr Montgomery was brought up for the Presbyterian Church and managing for Mr Foster of Van Diemen's Land, brother of the barrister in Sydney. His sister Mrs McClure, lives with him; having lost her husband from the great fatigue of travelling overland from Melbourne. How I shall bring my family over safely I know not. Mr Montgomery is said to have studied for the church.

#### ***Dec. 14th Thursday***

On our way to Mr McMillan's, called and took some refreshment at Mr Robt Cunningham's house at 'Clydesdale' [Clydebank, 7 miles from Flooding Creek], my friend Mr McLeod having business there. Mr C. came in as we were starting. This day and yesterday oppressively sultry. Called also at 'Stratford on Avon' [13 miles from Flooding Creek] to see Mr W O Raymond. Agreed to ride over on Saturday to baptise some children and hold a short service, having fixed for Sunday at Flooding Creek and 'Boisdale'.

Reached Mr Angus McMillan's 'Bushy Park', 18 miles from Flooding Creek quite knocked up by the heat; found my friend Mr Macalister's station called 'Boisdale' on the opposite bank of the Avon River, up which we had travelled since leaving 'Clydesdale', a beautiful stream of clear water, said to be always running, and over a pebbly bottom like an English brook or Scotch burn.

#### ***Dec. 16th Saturday***

[Stratford] Held a service here, and baptised four children. Charged nothing and received nothing. Gave them certificates.

### ***Dec. 17th Sunday***

Mr Macalister drove me down in his gig to Flooding Creek for the morning service. Had a respectable devout congregation of about 40 adults, some of whom, male and female had waded across the Morass above their knees for the purpose of attending. Indeed nothing could be more encouraging than the general conduct of all present. After we had partaken of an early dinner prepared for us by the landlord of the Woolpack Inn, Mr Macalister drove me back to 'Boisdale', where I had an afternoon service for the purpose of baptising some children. They were not ready, and I had but a small congregation of about 20, mostly women and children.

### ***Dec. 18th Monday***

We had purposed [*sic*] proceeding onwards today towards the Mitchell River, but were prevented by our horses having strayed, and exceedingly wet weather, principally caused by a thick mist, like small rain, blowing from the sea and lake over the whole country around, soaking to the very skin.

### ***Dec. 19th Tuesday***

Endeavoured to start, but in vain, from the same causes. Tried to visit a sick man, a Roman Catholic, at one of Mr Macalister's sheep stations, but could not find him. Missed him and the conveyance sent for him, all I could do.

### ***Dec. 20th Wednesday***

Reached Mr McLeod's station 'Bairnsdale' after a ride of 35 miles.

### ***Dec. 24th Sunday***

Performed the service this morning in Mr Taylor's new woolshed (fine spacious building) to a respectable, attentive and devout congregation of between fifty and sixty persons, Mr and Miss Tyers [Commissioner of Crown Lands] being of the number, as also Messrs. A. B. Sparke and Maurice Meyrick. Baptised the children (2 infants) of Messrs Massey and Mein, two respectable men in a humble sphere of life, though well-born and well-connected. All parties appeared mutually gratified at this meeting of humble adoration to their Maker, although mostly Presbyterians and unacquainted with the service of the Church of England. It is here due to the Presbyterians to remark that wherever I have gone in Gippsland I have remarked a more devotional feeling amongst the Presbyterians than those of my own church, although the standing up at prayer astonished me.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Saddle bag registers***

Bean's hand-sewn, hand-ruled births, marriages and burial registers for the years 1849-1855 still exist and are a testament to the assiduousness of Bean who carried them in a saddle bag around Gippsland.<sup>41</sup> The Baptisms register is of special interest as it is a crowded ledger and reflects a variety of occupations of the fathers which range from the largest group, labourers, carters, dairymen, stockmen and shepherds, to graziers and overseers. Then there are storekeepers and publicans (both large groups), and skilled occupations such as sawyers, blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights and master mariners. More infrequently mentioned are police, school masters, accountants and surgeons. Regarding the women who produced these babies, one can often find a burial or death that speaks its own sad story. Their occupations outside child rearing would vary, but skills acquired in village life were likely to have been highly sought after, such as poultry raising, dairying and vegetable preserving.

### ***The little timber church at Tarraville***

Christ Church Tarraville, the first church to be built in Gippsland,<sup>42</sup> was opened on Sunday, 8 June 1856 with a packed service beginning at 11.30 a.m. The cost (£456) of the building of the church was raised from local people, from the Diocesan authorities of Melbourne from a Government Grant and even from English donations some of it raised by Rev. Bean.

A design for a stone or brick church had been considered but because of the cost and because the stonemasons had gone to the goldrushes the plans were dropped in favour of a timber church. Built in a simple cruciform it was meant to accommodate 180 people.<sup>43</sup> The walls were made of local yellow stringy bark which is even in colour with minimum shrinkage and very durable, and would have been milled at Yarram or nearby mills.<sup>44</sup> Christ Church was built over a period of six months to the design of a remarkable London-trained architect, J.H.W. Pettit, who decided to use a Victorian



Loreen Chambers, photographer  
Christ Church, Tarraville, with  
side window highlighted, 2016



Unknown photographer  
Christ Church, Tarraville,  
c.1916

Gothic form then popular.<sup>45</sup> Timber was used with upright beams which were slotted, and therefore did not need to use nails (often scarce and expensive), testimony to the carpenter's skills probably learnt in ship building. The original wooden shingles were of mountain ash which soon deteriorated and were replaced with corrugated iron.<sup>46</sup>

The most striking feature of the church is the decorative fretwork gable barge which sets it apart from almost all other Victorian country churches. The doors have a three-point arch and had been sent down from Sydney many years earlier. Their frame, external vertical boards and battens are of Australian cedar and the doors were both fitted with long strap hinges and still survive.

The survival of much of the early furniture and fittings add considerably to the historical and architectural significance of the church. These include timber items such as the pews, the bench in the choir, the pulpit, lectern (which is combined with the reading desk), the chancel choir and the communion rail. The stone font

and two oil lamps and two wall bracket lamps are also original.<sup>47</sup>

### *'My dear Mr Bean...'*

Building the mother church in 1856 was only the first step in establishing the new parish. More than Bean's colonial experience was necessary and he was almost immediately challenged by the small number of Anglicans in a largely Presbyterian population. Furthermore, Bean was reporting prior to the bishop's first visit in February 1849 that: 'the circumstances of the district are just now unfavourable to matters involving expense, for the market for their surplus live stock having completely failed...'.<sup>48</sup> Bean was never likely to be able to support himself even with the utmost frugality, and he was soon in debt himself. Perry's frustration with Bean's lack of accountability in business matters both personally,<sup>49</sup> and in terms of church matters, is a constant theme.<sup>50</sup>

More significantly, Perry felt that Bean was not living up to his pastoral duties, even in Port Albert where local Anglicans began demanding



**Thomas Henry Armstrong, 1857-1930, photographer**  
**Tarra River – Tarraville, c.1895**

Photograph, albumen silver

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H40967

In his travels 'Parson Bean' and his mount faced the challenge of numerous river crossings

a church and a minister.<sup>51</sup> Perry also counselled Bean that he 'must labour in the Lord's work by visiting "up country" more often.'<sup>52</sup> Perry often admonished Bean (as he did other clergy during his long tenure of office) saying that Bean's letters were 'well written and interesting, [but] I cannot obtain from them such a clear and distinct conception of what has been done, what is contemplated... I do not say this in the way of censure; for I believe that your position is one of great difficulty'.<sup>53</sup>

Now approaching sixty years of age Bean was probably struggling to keep up with services in the rest of his Gippsland parish. Bishop Perry recalled Bean to Melbourne, the contents of the parsonage were sold at auction in September and October 1859 and the Bean family departed Port Albert on the *Storm Bird*.<sup>54</sup> Perry had recommended Bean return to England, 'the expenses of living there is [sic] so much less'.<sup>55</sup>

Bean, however, persisted in seeking another parish and Perry appointed him to Inverleigh near Geelong from 1861 to 1866. In 1865 his parishioners bought him a buggy 'with the view of saving you from the fatigue you now endure in the performance of your clerical duties, and as a token of our esteem'.<sup>56</sup>

After Inverleigh Willoughby and Harriet returned to Melbourne in the hope of another

parish, finally accepting a post as Chaplain of the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum close by Dights Falls, a lowly position he held until the last year of his life in June 1877. There was no pension to support him and his wife was to live until 1892.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Rev. George Cox, Rector at Yarram between 1910 and 1915, summed up Willoughby Bean in these words:

In appearance Bean was a man of regular features, strongly built, rather below average height, but of good physique, well able to stand the strain which his arduous duties put upon him, of careful and methodical habits, a devoted Christian worker, in his own estimation not gifted with pulpit oratorical powers. He was however a man of culture, and his manuscript sermons were impressive and above the average. He was considered by Bishop Perry to be one of the best Greek scholars in the diocese, and he was an accomplished linguist, conducting the whole service, including the sermon in French for the benefit of the French vineyard workers in his later parish of Inverleigh.<sup>57</sup>



Willoughby Bean seems to have been a respected, genial, popular and conscientious minister if the assessment by the Rev. George Cox is true. Cox, who was one of the earliest members of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, claims Bean left of his own free will and not just because his bishop had recalled him. Cox referred to an injury sustained by Bean at the time of Perry's visit in 1857,<sup>58</sup> when he was dragged off his horse for some distance. This and long hours in the saddle in all weathers took their toll of Bean by the time he was in his fifties.<sup>59</sup>

Bean has been forgotten until recent times. While modern historians have been less sympathetic to and less knowledgeable about the church (one account describing him as a failed settler and a failed minister),<sup>60</sup> it could be argued that Willoughby Bean was like many of the British landless gentry who followed in their fathers' steps and went into the army or the church; or like Bean were hopeful pioneers who took their chances in the colonies. Bean

was remarkable for his courage, patience and resilience and seems to have quickly adapted to frontier life. He had a genuine and steadfast commitment to his faith that was evident not only at Christ Church but for the remainder of his life.

There is no memorial for Parson Bean, not even a wall plaque in Tarraville Church. He is buried in the Boroondara Cemetery, with his wife and his two unmarried pauper sons, but even the head stone — a rather impressive one — is hard to find as it fell down many years ago and lies in the grass unnoticed. However, his grandson Rev. Thomas Herbert Willoughby Hely-Wilson (1871-1949), after leaving Melbourne Grammar, served throughout New South Wales and Queensland, and in his forties joined up as an Army Chaplain in World War I.<sup>61</sup> And so family history does repeat itself sometimes.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 The only church when Bishop Perry arrived was St James, built of sandstone, begun in 1839 (later to become known as St James' Old Cathedral. The Presbyterians had begun Scots Church in 1841, as had St Francis Catholic Church begun in 1841). The housing of clergy was also problematic. The bishop, himself, was to rent a cottage on La Trobe's *Jolimont* estate until *Bishops Court* (Blackburn wing) was built in 1853.
  - 2 Harriet Elizabeth (Lilias) 1840-1930, Brisbane Water NSW; Willoughby John 1844-1912, Newcastle NSW; Henry Alexander 1847-1916 Lampeter Cardigan Wales.
  - 3 In the days before the government took over the registration of births, marriages and deaths, in mid-1853, the churches performed this function.
  - 4 Cable Clergy Index, <http://anglicanhistory.org/aus/ccl> (accessed 6 April 2017).
  - 5 In any case degrees were not awarded till 1852 at St David's College. St David's had only been opened in 1831.
  - 6 C.E.W. Bean, 'Willoughby Bean: a settler of the 1820s', *Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 31, 1945, pp.369-375.
  - 7 Records of the Bean and Harries Families of Bath, 1799-1895, repository B&NES Record Office, Bath, Somerset Archive catalogue, reference 0261/2/34.
  - 8 Free settler or Felon? <https://www.jenwillets.com/Convict%20Ships.htm> (accessed 1 March 2019)
  - 9 The Bean family had lived in Cullen in Banffshire on the North Sea coast of Scotland. In fact, Bean is an ancient Pictish name.
  - 10 Later to become his brother-in-law.
  - 11 Quoted in C.E.W. Bean, p.372.
  - 12 A. de Q. Robin, 'Perry, Charles (1807-1891)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 6 April 2017).
  - 13 Tim Gatehouse, *On Board with the Bishop: Charles Perry's voyage to Port Phillip on 'The Stag'*. Melbourne: Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, 2017.
  - 14 Hussey Burgh B. Macartney, DD, Francis. Hales BA, Daniel Newman MA, Willoughby Bean, Henry Hewett Paulett Handfield, Samuel Edward Blomefield and Edward Tanner — see Gatehouse.
  - 15 Perry to Vernon, 17 August 1847. SPG. Letter Book, vol. 1, 3617/47 (London). Quoted in A. de Quincy Robin, *Charles Perry Bishop of Melbourne: the challenges of a colonial episcopate, 1844-76*, Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1967, p.36.
  - 16 Robin, p.53, unsourced letter.
  - 17 Robin, pp.168-150.154-155.
  - 18 Hilary Lewis, *A History of St James Old Cathedral Melbourne*. West Melbourne: Rowprint, 1993 [c.1982], pp.11-12, 15-16.
  - 19 It had been in use at the Collegiate Church of St Katharine London. Demolished in 1821.
  - 20 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes, 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic.: Tarcoola Press, State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.162.
  - 21 James Grant, 'Mutual Society, Help and Comfort': Charles Joseph La Trobe and Charles Perry 1848-1854. *La Trobeana*, vol.7, no.2, August 2008, pp.7-16.
  - 22 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996, p.198.
  - 23 Patrick Morgan, *The Settling of Gippsland: a regional history*, [Leongatha, Vic.]: Gippsland Municipalities Association, 1997, pp.23-30; this covers pre-McMillan contact.
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- 24 Morgan, pp.41, 47.
- 25 There would be a total 75,000.
- 26 Wayne Caldwell, 'The Early Livestock Trade between Gippsland and Van Diemen's Land: insights from Patrick Coady Buckley's journal of 1844', *The La Trobe Journal*, No.86, December 2010, pp.19-36.
- 27 Don Watson, *Caledonia Australia: Scottish Highlanders on the frontier of Australia*, Sydney: Random House, 1997 [c.1984], pp.201-209.
- 28 George Goodman, *The Church in Victoria during the Episcopate of the Right Reverend Charles Perry*, Melbourne: Melville, Mullen and Slade, 1891, p.69.
- 29 Some historians have argued that a more accurate term is 'genocide'. See for example Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: a world history of genocide and extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008, Chapter 7: 'Genocidal violence in nineteenth century Australia', pp.249-309.
- 30 Peter Gardner, 'George Dunderdale and the Kurnai', 2014, <http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/George-Dunderdale-and-the-Kurnai.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2019).
- 31 Don Watson, p.201.
- 32 According to settler Archibald McLeod, as recorded in John Dunmore Lang, *Phillipsland; or, The country hitherto designated Port Phillip: its present condition and prospects, as a highly eligible field for emigration*, London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1847, p.226, 'The present population is about 900 souls—I mean Europeans—and about three times that number of Aborigines'.
- 33 *The Letters of Henry Howard Meyrick, May 1840-November 1841 and January 1845-April 1847*; transcribed and introduced by Jeremy Hales and Marion Le Cheminant, Maffra, Vic.: JJB Publishing, 1997, p.35. (Letters written from Westernport and Gippsland to Meyrick's mother, brother and sister in England detailing his life as an aspiring squatter.)
- 34 For a fuller account of these differences, see Peter Gardner, 'Some Random Notes on the Massacres 2000-2015', <http://petergardner.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Notes-on-Massacres-rev.ed..pdf> (accessed 1 March 2019).
- 35 Albert E. Clark, Early history of C. of E., scrapbook gifted to The Rt Rev. G.H. Cranswick DD of Bishops court, 1929, Diocesan Archives, Sale.
- 36 Sandy McCrae to Georgiana McCrae, quoted Brenda Niall, *Georgiana: a biography of Georgiana McCrae, painter, diarist, pioneer*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994, p.202.
- 37 Morgan, p.75.
- 38 Linda Barraclough, 'Welcome Settlers or White Slaves? The Medway immigrants of 1856', *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, No.15, 1993, pp.18-25.
- 39 Ibid, pp.32-33.
- 40 The Presbyterians were not to get a permanent minister until January 1854 when Rev. William Spence Login made Sale his base.
- 41 Diocesan Archives, Sale.
- 42 It is also the oldest surviving church in Victoria.
- 43 The internal planning comprises a rectangular nave whose width (6 metres) is twice its length. The vestry and the choir serve to create a cruciform shape at the crossing.
- 44 As late as 1996 it was thought that the church was a portable one constructed in Van Diemen's Land of Tasmanian hardwoods but CSIRO samples taken by the conservation architects of the timber in the slab and framing timbers showed that Christ Church had been built locally. See *Christ Church Tarraville, Gippsland's First Church: conservation plan*, prepared for the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland, Eaglemont, Vic.: Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, 1996.
- 45 In the United States it is often called Carpenter Gothic.
- 46 Willem Snoek, 'Christ Church Tarraville, Conservation/Restoration for the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland, June 2002', Diocesan Archives, Sale.
- 47 Tarraville Church is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Also, Australian Heritage Commission. On the register of the National Estate.
- 48 Bean to Perry. Quoted in Albert E. Clark, *The Church of our Fathers: being the history of the Church of England in Gippsland, 1847-1947*, Sale: The Diocese of Gippsland, 1947, p.49.
- 49 Perry to Bean, 15 July 1850. Letter book No.2, December 1849-January 1852, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Archives and Records Centre.
- 50 Ibid, 6 December 1850.
- 51 Ibid, 17 May 1856.
- 52 Ibid, 15 July 1850.
- 53 Ibid, 6 December 1850.
- 54 *Gippsland Gazette*, 28 October 1859.
- 55 Perry to Bean, 10 August 1859, Letter book No.7, 2 June 1858-2 January 1860.
- 56 *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 September 1865, p.3.
- 57 George Cox, *The Beginnings of Church and School in Gippsland*, edited by John D. Adams, Port Albert: Port Albert Maritime Museum, 1997, p.39. (From 'Notes on Gippsland History', published in the *Gippsland Standard*, 1911-1939.)
- 58 Bishop Perry and his wife Frances visited Tarraville in January 1857; they had previously visited in February 1849.
- 59 Cox, p.39 ff.
- 60 Alasdair Brooks, Susan Lawrence and Jane Lennon, 'The Parsonage of the Reverend Willoughby Bean: church, state and the frontier settlement in nineteenth-century colonial Australia', *Historical Archaeology*, v.45, 2011, pp.11, 13.
- 61 As did Captain Charles Edwin Woodrow (C.E.W.) Bean, 1879-1969, the war correspondent and historian, and a cousin.

# The Foster Family and its La Trobe Connections

By Tim Gatehouse

**Tim Gatehouse is a retired solicitor with interests in the history of pre-goldrush Victoria, architecture, gardening and libraries. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals. His interest in Charles Joseph La Trobe stems from the American ancestors his family shares with the La Trobes.**

*This paper is derived from the Sunday Talks for Members program, 16 June 2019.*

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This is the first part of a two-part article on William Henry Foster (1832-1894). A cousin once removed of Charles La Trobe, Foster held important official positions in Victoria between his arrival in the colony in 1852 and his death in 1894. He is often confused with two other officials occupying prominent positions in Victoria during La Trobe's period of office. These are Henry Foster (1819-1884), Assistant Goldfields Commissioner and later Inspector of Police at Ballarat during the 1850s, and John Leslie Fitzgerald Vesey Foster (1818-1890), known as 'alphabetical Foster', Colonial Secretary to La Trobe 1853-1854, and later Administrator of Victoria during the period between the departure of La Trobe and the arrival of Governor Hotham.<sup>1</sup> As far as is known, none of the three Fosters was related to either of the others, except perhaps through connections in the remote past. This article is an account of Foster's ancestors and family relationships (for a skeleton family tree, see p.42), and the reasons for his emigration to Victoria. Foster's life in Victoria is examined in the second article.

The earliest records of the Foster family (or Forster as it is sometimes spelt) place them in Northumberland in the fourteenth century. As substantial landowners at Adderstone, Etherstone and Bamburgh they played a prominent part in defending the north of England from Scottish raiders. Amongst them were Sir Thomas Forster of Adderstone who was High Sheriff of the county in 1572 and his son who was Warden

of the coastal stronghold, *Bamburgh Castle*.<sup>2</sup> The branch of the family from which William Henry Foster was descended was reputedly founded by Roger Foster, one of the nineteen sons of Thomas Forster III (1418-1503) of Etherstone, Northumberland. Roger and two of his brothers, Thomas and Nicholas, became involved in a fight with members of another family with whom the Fosters were feuding, in the course of which Roger killed one of their opponents. To escape the legal consequences he fled to the south of England. Although there is an unrecorded gap of two or three generations, it is believed that one of Roger's direct descendants was Sir Thomas Foster (1548-1612), Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in the reign of James I. His son, Sir Robert Foster (1589-1663) followed in his father's footsteps.<sup>3</sup> He was appointed a Justice of the Common Pleas and knighted in 1640. Due to his royalist sympathies he lived in retirement during the Commonwealth period, but upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 was re-appointed to the bench as Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.<sup>4</sup>

Of Sir Robert's four children, the oldest, Thomas (1631-1687), chose a military career, and despite his father's support of the monarchy, served in Cromwell's army during the Commonwealth. Part of Cromwell's strategy for containing Spain in Europe was to harass its colonies and shipping in the Caribbean. In 1655 he ordered the capture of the Spanish island Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). It was attacked by a naval force under



James Hakewill, 1778–1843, artist  
Thomas Sutherland, engraver  
Spring Garden Estate, St George, 1820–21  
Hand-coloured aquatint

From *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica* (London: Hurst and Robinson, 1825, plate 8)

the command of Admiral William Penn (1621–1670),<sup>5</sup> and land forces under the command of General Robert Venables (c.1613–1687). The combined forces totalled approximately 7,000 men. Colonel Thomas Foster served as one of Venables' subordinate commanders.

The attack on Hispaniola was easily beaten off by the Spanish defenders, but rather than return to England empty-handed to face Cromwell's wrath, Penn and Venables sought an alternative target, Jamaica. Having been colonised by Spain since 1509, by 1655 the Spanish population of the island still only numbered about 3,000. Spain's interest in Jamaica had never extended beyond the possibility of gold discoveries, but finding none, had failed to appreciate its agricultural potential. The outnumbered Spanish garrison was soon overrun by the English forces. Unfortunately for Penn and Venables, Cromwell shared the Spanish contempt for Jamaica, and on their return they were briefly imprisoned in the Tower for failing to capture the original object of the expedition. Cromwell's displeasure was not however visited upon the junior officers, who were rewarded for their part in the conquest with grants of extensive tracts of land. Thomas Foster's grant was situated in the south-west of the island, in what later became the parish of St Elizabeth. On it he established *Elim Plantation*. In succeeding years he and his descendants established or acquired the neighbouring plantations of *Bogue*,

*Dawkins* and *Two Mile Wood*, and *Lancaster* in the parish of St George in the north-east.

Although Spain made attempts to recapture Jamaica, in 1670 it recognised English sovereignty under the terms of the Treaty of Madrid.<sup>6</sup> This gave the English colonists the necessary security to commence developing the island's economic potential, chiefly by the production of sugar cane. This had been introduced into the West Indies from Brazil in the mid-seventeenth century, and gradually replaced cotton and tobacco as the staple crop in the face of competition from Britain's North American colonies. The development of sugar cane as the basis of Jamaica's economy coincided with the increase in the consumption of sugar in England.<sup>7</sup> Sugar cane was a labour intensive crop. Initial attempts to establish a labour force by the transportation of convicts and indentured labour were not successful, so by the end of the seventeenth century the labour shortage was increasingly met by the importation of slaves from Africa. In the early 1700s the enslaved population of Jamaica was approximately 45,000. By 1800 it exceeded 300,000. The slave-operated plantations in the Caribbean grew to form a major component of the British economy and were the source of the fortunes of many well-known families including those of Prime Minister Robert Gladstone (1809–1898), Edward Moulton-Barrett (1785–1851), the father of Elizabeth





**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist**  
**Works at Spring Garden Plantation, 1837**

Pen, indian ink and wash on blue paper

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H92.360/59

Spring Garden was a seaside sugar plantation on the Jamaican north-east coast

Barrett Browning, and the Earls of Harewood. The owners of West Indian plantations formed a large and respectable component of British society, and no opprobrium was attached to the source of their wealth.

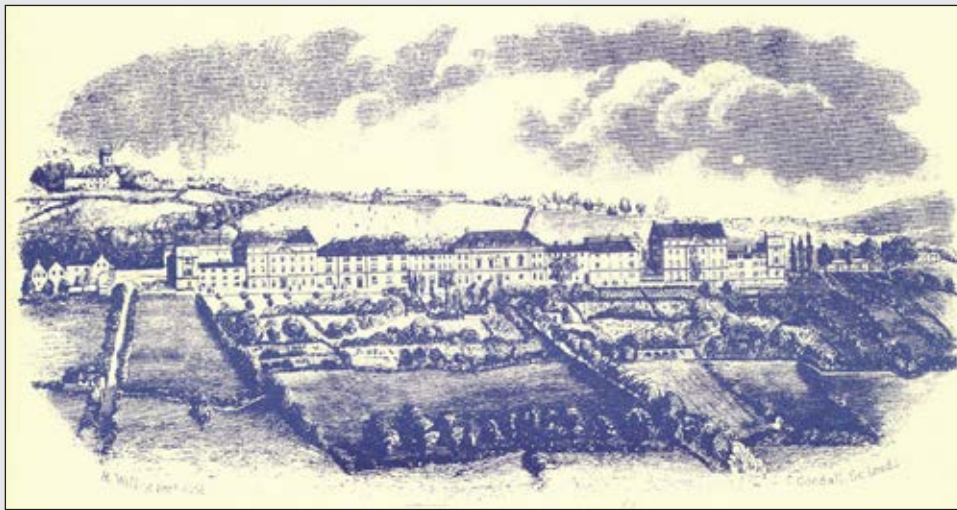
Thomas Foster died in Jamaica in 1687, and his wife Mary in Barbados in 1717. They had six children. Thomas's estates passed on his death to their second son John, the elder son Thomas having predeceased him. John Foster was born at *Elim Plantation* in July 1681. He served in the British forces stationed in Jamaica and was a member of the House of Assembly from 1722 to 1731. In c.1710 John Foster married Elizabeth Smith, whose family owned plantations in Barbados. Of the nine children of their marriage, three are relevant to this account of the life of William Henry Foster: Thomas (b.1720), William (b.1722) and Joseph (b.1729).<sup>8</sup>

John Foster died in 1731 and soon afterwards his widow Elizabeth married John Ayscough, also a planter and a member of the Governor's Council. He died in 1735, after which Elizabeth again remarried, this time to Henry Barham (1695-1746), the owner of the neighbouring *Mesopotamia Plantation*. Henry Barham's father, also named Henry (c.1670-1726), was a surgeon attached to the British military forces in Jamaica. He studied and wrote extensively on the natural history of Jamaica and on the cultivation of silk worms in England, for which he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He also had an interest in a silver mine in Jamaica. The Barhams were descendants of the family who had once owned *Barham Court* in Kent, a house with which members of the La Trobe family became familiar in the late

eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries when it was owned by Sir Charles Middleton (later Lord Barham), a prominent member of the anti-slavery movement. *Mesopotamia Plantation* had been established by a planter named Ephraim Stevenson in the early 1700s. It was one of the larger plantations in Jamaica, with a slave population which varied from 236 in 1744 to 421 in 1820. By the time the slaves were emancipated in 1834 it held 316. On Stevenson's death in 1726 his widow Mary married a Mr. Heith. He died soon after their marriage and in 1728 Mary married Henry Barham. When Mary died in 1735, Henry Barham married the recently widowed Elizabeth Ayscough (formerly Foster,<sup>9</sup> née Smith).<sup>10</sup>

After their marriage, Henry and Elizabeth and her children left Jamaica and settled in England at *Duncroft House*, a sixteenth century manor house at Staines, a village on the Thames near London. Here Henry died in 1746 at the age of 51 and Elizabeth in 1756 at the age of 55. Henry Barham had no children from his first marriage to Mary (formerly Heith, née Stevenson), nor from his marriage to Elizabeth. His desire for an heir was met by his adoption of Joseph Foster (1729-1789), the youngest son of Elizabeth and John Foster, by a private Act of Parliament in 1748.<sup>11</sup> Joseph was authorised to change his surname to Foster-Barham, his eight siblings retaining the surname of Foster. On Henry Barham's death Joseph Foster-Barham inherited *Mesopotamia Plantation*.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Foster-Barham, now the heir of Henry Barham, was educated at Eton and went on the Grand Tour. He briefly visited *Mesopotamia Plantation* but returned to live permanently in



R. Willey, artist  
C. Goodall, engraver  
Fulneck, near Leeds, 1861

Engraving  
Fulneck Moravian Museum, Pudsey, Leeds

England in 1751. In 1754 he married Dorothy Vaughan, daughter of John Vaughan, a landowner of Trecwn, Pembrokeshire. They purchased an estate in Bedfordshire.<sup>13</sup> Of their six children, only one is relevant to this account of the family, Joseph Foster-Barham II (1759-1832).

At a date between Joseph-Foster Barham I's return to England in 1751 and 1754, and in circumstances now unknown, he and his brother William Foster heard the preaching of the influential Moravian cleric John Cennick (1718-1755).<sup>14</sup> So impressed were they that they both joined the Moravian Congregation, and then made the highly unusual and controversial decision to request the Moravian Brethren to send missionaries to Jamaica to convert the slaves on their plantations to Christianity. Their request was eagerly accepted by the Moravians and by the end of 1754 three missionaries were established on the Fosters' *Bogue Plantation*.<sup>15</sup> However they made little headway, due to the indifference of the slaves and the hostility of the overseers and other plantation owners who regarded the missionaries as a threat to their control. The missionaries' use of slaves to work the land given to them by the Fosters for their maintenance added nothing to their credibility and was a decision they later deeply regretted. Despite these setbacks, there are still several Moravian congregations on Jamaica to this day.<sup>16</sup> In 1854 the Moravian Church presented a plaque to the Foster family to commemorate the centenary of the arrival of the Moravian missionaries in Jamaica. In subsequent years it was displayed at the Chatham Hotel at Montego Bay, when it was owned by the Fosters.

As anomalous as the attitude of the Fosters and the Moravian Church towards the institution of slavery appears to the modern mind, it was not so in the moral climate which prevailed in European countries until the rise of the anti-slavery movement towards the end of the eighteenth century. It had for centuries been regarded as a fact of life, biblical justification being provided by most Christian denominations. The Moravians believed that their primary mission was the spiritual welfare of individuals, which could best be achieved by the maintenance of an orderly society. Accordingly they did not participate in political movements, and supported the status quo. Some Moravians like Benjamin and Christian Ignatius La Trobe (Charles Joseph's grand-father and father) were opponents of slavery, but could only voice their opposition on a personal basis, not on behalf of the Moravian Church.

Joseph Foster-Barham's wife Dorothy died in 1781 and in 1785 he married Lady Mary Hill, the widow of Sir Rowland Hill, moving to her home *Hardwicke Hall* in Shropshire (not to be confused with *Hardwick Hall* in Derbyshire owned by the Dukes of Devonshire).<sup>17</sup> Although under his wife's influence Joseph Foster-Barham left the Moravian congregation and rejoined the Church of England, his son Joseph Foster-Barham II continued to support the Moravian missionaries on his plantations. His managers were instructed to treat the slaves humanely and to send him regular reports as to their welfare. In 1792 he married Lady Caroline Tufton, the daughter of the eighth Earl of Thanet and the following year was elected to Parliament as the



Unknown artist  
Judge John Frederick Foster, c.1855  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Andrew Foster

member for Stockbridge. With his Jamaican and English estates, a town house in Stratford Place, London, and a seat in Parliament, Joseph Foster-Barham completed the transformation from a West Indian planter to a member of the English landed gentry. Except for the enlightened few, the origins of his wealth and position were irrelevant. He remained in Parliament until 1822, and over that period gradually shifted his position on the abolition of slavery. In 1794 he advocated the postponement of abolition, later supporting proposals for the amelioration of the conditions of transport. By 1804 he had become a supporter of Wilberforce, who referred to Foster-Barham as being 'actuated by a warm spirit of patriotism and philanthropy'.<sup>18</sup> However, his support for abolition was conditional upon payment of compensation to the slave-owners. This was ultimately incorporated in the abolition legislation, and resulted in large compensation payments being made to his family.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Foster-Barham I's brother William Foster (1722-1768) also remained a committed Moravian and, as with his brother and nephew, saw no contradiction between his religious views and the ownership of slave-operated plantations. In 1754 he was listed as the owner of 2,458 acres in the Parish of St Elizabeth and 300 acres in the Parish of Westmoreland. When his estate in Jamaica was assessed for probate in 1770 it was valued at £26,559, of which the sum of £18,300 was deemed to be the value of the 367 slaves who worked the plantations. Small plots of land on his plantations were left to the Moravians

for the construction of chapels. William's wife Dorothy (confusingly the same name as the wife of his brother Joseph Foster-Barham) was left an annuity of £400, and his daughters small bequests. Because William's son Thomas had already been well provided for by his uncle Thomas (that is, another of William's brothers), William left the bulk of his estate to his other sons, John and Frederick William Foster.

Frederick William Foster (1760-1835) was William Foster's second son. He was born in Jamaica and was educated at the Moravian community of Fulneck near Leeds in Yorkshire. At this period Benjamin La Trobe was the minister of the community and headmaster of the school. Benjamin's son Christian Ignatius La Trobe was only two years older than Frederick William Foster, and for several years the two were fellow students at Fulneck. After leaving Fulneck Frederick William trained for the Moravian ministry at Barby in Saxony, later being appointed pastor to the Moravian community at Wyke in Yorkshire. In 1818 he was consecrated as a Bishop of the Moravian Church. He died at the Moravian community at Ockbrook in Derbyshire in 1835. He is remembered today as a writer of hymns.<sup>20</sup>

Given the close association of Frederick William Foster with the La Trobes through his early education at Fulneck, it is not surprising that in 1791 he married a daughter of the family. She was Anna Louisa Eleanora La Trobe (1761-1824), the second child and eldest daughter of Rev. Benjamin La Trobe (1728-1786), the head of all the Moravian congregations in England, and Anna Margareta Antes (1728-1794), the daughter of Johann Heinrich Antes (1701-1756), a prominent Moravian layman in Pennsylvania.

As with all Moravian marriages of that period, it would have been arranged by the church. Although on the face of it a marriage uniting these two prominent Moravian families would have seemed quite appropriate, it was anomalous on two grounds. The first was their differing attitudes to the question of slavery, the second their relative social positions. Although Benjamin La Trobe was dead by the date of the marriage, he and his son Christian Ignatius supported the anti-slavery movement and were friends of some of its prominent members. On the other hand, although Frederick William Foster would have had to conform to the non-political stance of the Moravians in his clerical capacity, there is no record of him supporting the anti-slavery movement in his personal capacity. His family owed their wealth and social position to slavery and he received a share of the compensation paid to slave owners by the British government when the slaves were emancipated.





Unknown photographer  
Longleat House, Warminster, Wiltshire, 2013  
<https://www.historichouses.org>

In his reports to the Colonial Office on his investigation of the missionary schools in the British West Indies that had received parliamentary grants<sup>21</sup> Charles La Trobe indicated that he regarded slavery as an evil system, maintained to satisfy the greed of the planters and wealthy Britons whose comforts depended on it. He believed that despite the current theory that the black races were inherently inferior due to slower evolution, they could be elevated by discipline and education.<sup>22</sup> The attitude of the Foster family is summed up by the statement of the absentee Jamaican plantation owner Joseph Foster-Barham II, who at one time referred to the slaves as ‘dreadful idlers... so averse to labour that without force we have hardly anywhere been able to obtain it, even from those who had been trained to work’.<sup>23</sup>

The two families’ social positions also differed markedly. Although Benjamin and Christian Ignatius La Trobe were respected as leaders of the Moravian Church, it was still a small Protestant denomination without the prestige of the established church. Their intellectual powers and shared interests brought them in contact with the governing elite, but only for the purpose of furthering the interests of the church or philanthropic activities, not for their personal gain.<sup>24</sup> However, such contacts may have given rise to a consciousness of the relatively humble position of the La Trobe forbears engaged in the linen trade in Ireland and in trade earlier still in France. A wish to enhance their social standing and future prospects may have been responsible for various legends about the origins of the family which placed them in a more romantic light.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the Foster family was well ensconced in the governing class, as

Jamaican plantation owners and English gentry. Frederick William’s cousin, Joseph Foster-Barham II, was married to the daughter of a peer, and was shortly to enter Parliament. The marriage would have been seen as advantageous to the La Trobes.

Amongst the six children of Frederick William Foster and Anna Louisa Eleanora La Trobe was John Frederick Foster (1795–1858, for portrait see previous page). He was born at the Moravian community at Wyke where his father was pastor. He was educated at Moravian schools in England and entered Queen’s College Cambridge in 1813. In 1817 he was awarded his Bachelor of Arts degree, and Master’s degree in 1821, the year in which he was called to the Bar. Appointed a Stipendiary Magistrate and Recorder of Manchester in 1825, by 1838 John Frederick was Chairman of the Quarter Sessions of Salford, an appointment he held until his death in 1858. His estate was valued for probate at £25,000, of which almost £18,000 was his share of the compensation for the emancipation of the slaves on the Fosters’ plantations.<sup>26</sup>

In 1817 John Frederick Foster married Caroline Bagshawe (1795–1874).<sup>27</sup> She was the daughter of Sir William Chambers Bagshawe of *The Oaks*, an estate in Derbyshire. The Bagshawes were a landed family with roots that could be traced to the Middle Ages. By the nineteenth century the family’s fortunes were based on lead mines discovered on the estate. *The Oaks* remained in the family until 1987.<sup>28</sup> John Frederick and Caroline Foster made their home at *Sale Priory*, Trafford, on the outskirts of Manchester. Originally a monastic foundation, a later dwelling occupied the site by the time it was purchased by the Fosters. In 1932 the property





Unknown photographer  
Great Hall, Longleat House, Wiltshire, c.2012  
<https://clairerendell.com>

was bought by the local municipality, the house demolished, and the grounds transformed into a public park.

Eight children were born to the Fosters, of whom the sixth child and fourth son was William Henry Bagshawe Foster (almost invariably referred to as William Henry Foster), born on 25 April 1832. Destined to follow in the professional footsteps of his family, in September 1851 the nineteen-year-old William Henry was a student at Brasenose College, Oxford. His father, as a member of the judiciary, had been invited to a reception by the Marquess of Bath at his seat, *Longleat*, in Wiltshire. In what was probably an excess of high spirits, Foster and a college friend whose father was also attending the reception attempted to gain entry too. Having been refused admission to the Great Hall they found their way to the musicians' gallery from where they could observe the proceedings below.<sup>29</sup> According to Foster's reminiscences many years later, they decided to amuse themselves by sprinkling water onto the guests below, using a chamber pot as a receptacle.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately they were recognised by many of the guests, including William Henry's father, whose response was immediate and severe. Evidently feeling that William Henry's prank had shamed the family, who could in his opinion 'no longer hold up its head', his father ordered him to leave England at the earliest opportunity for the distant colony of Victoria. Of all British possessions this was probably chosen not only for its distance from the scene of his disgrace, but because of his

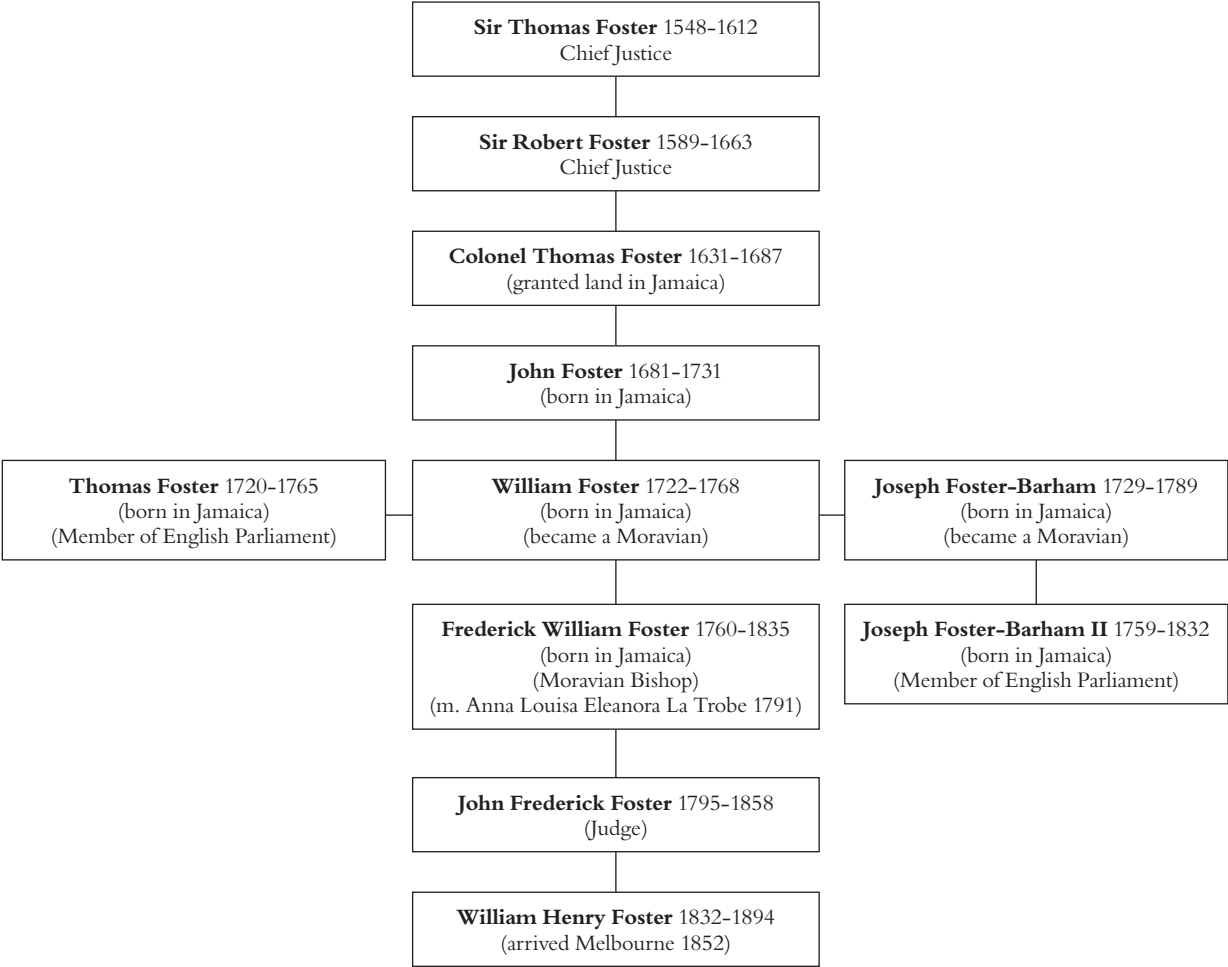
family's relationship with Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe (1801-1875), William Henry's cousin once removed. When still a child, William Henry had met Charles La Trobe at the home of Charles's brother Rev. Peter La Trobe (1795-1863), who was married to Mary Louisa Foster (1793-1839), William Henry's aunt. Although being sent to the ends of the earth, William Henry could hopefully still benefit from the close family ties. To maximise his chances, his father gave him a letter of introduction to Charles La Trobe. He also paid for a berth in the cabin (first class) of the ship *Medway*, thus providing a degree of comfort and privacy on the long voyage.

One cannot help wondering whether Foster's memories with regard to the reasons for his enforced departure to Victoria were entirely accurate, or whether for the sake of his reputation in the colony and later in the eyes of his children there had been a revision of the facts. In the mid-nineteenth century very few of even the grandest houses were equipped with plumbed water closets, and those that did exist were in the owner's private quarters. For large scale entertaining the only facilities available were chamber pots located in cloakrooms (as remained the case even at *Buckingham Palace* as late as the 1920s) or in closets in reception rooms.<sup>31</sup> Given his father's extreme response, the question arises as to whether William Henry had merely used the chamber pot to sprinkle water, or did he empty one containing its usual contents onto the guests below? As with the founding of

William Henry Foster’s branch of the family in the late fifteenth century when Roger Forster had to flee to the south of England after killing an adversary, the antipodean branch of the Foster family was also founded as the result of a misdeed,

albeit much less serious. The Foster family in Victoria subsequently became involved in events as tumultuous as those of the older branch of the family in England and the West Indies.

*The Foster Family*



## Endnotes

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- 20 John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology*, London: John Murray, 1907, Appendix, Part II.
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# A Journey through Garden History

By Dr Anne Vale

Anne Vale is a writer, garden historian, garden photographer and a public speaker. She is a past chair of the Australian Garden History Society's Victorian branch, and a retired university lecturer. She is the author of *Gardens of the National Trust of Australia* (Victoria, 2018), *Influential Australian Garden People: their stories* (2016), and the award-winning *Exceptional Australian Garden Makers* (2013).

*This is an address given at the La Trobe Birthday Celebration in the La Trobe's Cottage garden on 24 March 2019.*

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When Charles, with his wife Sophie and little Agnes, first came to Melbourne in 1839, he brought with him a simple prefabricated two-room structure. As we know, over time he added to the house and he developed the garden. Thanks to the dedication of the La Trobe Society, Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and their volunteers we have this living breathing example to remind us of one of our most significant founding fathers and the simple house and garden in which Charles and Sophie raised their family.

We are very fortunate to have some superb images that demonstrate how the house and garden evolved over the years. There is the George Alexander Gilbert painting, *A View of Jolimont, Melbourne, Port Phillip 1843-44*, in which the very young garden has a background of majestic eucalypts, and the garden itself is laid out in star and moon crescent-shaped beds full of hollyhocks and other flowering annuals and perennials; it is all very neat and tidy, a style popular in England and Europe at that time. The simple cottage has trimmed vines that have reached the eaves of the house, and there is a pretty trellis fence to one side, also planted with climbers.

La Trobe regularly drew and painted his home and garden, especially when he was

illustrating his letters to Agnes after she was sent back to Switzerland for her education. And then there are the later images by Edward La Trobe Bateman which show us how the very neat and tidy garden had become a little wild with plants much better suited to our climate. We also have many written descriptions of the garden. Georgiana McCrae called on Mrs La Trobe very soon after she arrived in 1841. She noted in her journal: 'Called at Jolimont Cottage, everything peaceful inside but the room's dark, on account of the trellised veranda. Whilst waiting for Madame I smelt flowers in the garden'.<sup>1</sup>

Georgiana's son George wrote about the same room on another visit: 'I noticed a map pasted between pictures against the wall, and, underneath it, on a desk, manuscripts, with saucers of seeds. There were, also, butterflies in glass cases, dimmed by humidity, at different parts of the room, the whole creating a meditative atmosphere'.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Howitt arrived at Port Phillip in 1840. His lively *Impressions of Australia Felix* recall *Jolimont* in 1845; he wrote:

The Cottage-of-Gentility of the sub-governor, Mr. La Trobe, is Swiss looking—a very tasteful abode—and I do not doubt, a very happy one, for the spirit of the man may be supposed to be the presiding atmosphere of





George Alexander Gilbert, 1815–1877, artist  
View from 'Jolimont', the residence of C.J. Trobe, 1843–44  
Copy glass negative (c.1900) of a pastel drawing  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H92.334/7

the place, and he is a scholar and a gentleman. This residence, of course, stands solitary in the Government ground: with the Yarra rather distantly in front.<sup>3</sup>

The newly consecrated Bishop of Melbourne, Charles Perry and his wife Frances, arrived in January 1848. When they visited the La Trobes, Frances Perry was most impressed with *Jolimont* and its environs: 'I want to describe Mr \_'s [La Trobe's] place and neighbourhood, but scarcely know where to begin. It stands in a very pretty garden – is surrounded by trees on every side; when you come out of his gates, you would imagine yourself in a gentleman's park'.<sup>4</sup> She particularly liked the variety of climbers used to increase shade: 'We have only seen two creepers in flower yet, and they were both at Mr \_'s the one was my pet, the purple *mirandia barcliana* (*Maurandya barclayana*), which used to hang so gracefully from the baskets in our garden at Cambridge, and the other beautiful, scarlet trumpet-shaped *bignonia*'.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1848 Charles wrote to Agnes:

Jolimont has not had any alterations made to it since I wrote to you last and told you about our new room and verandah. This spring the garden was

most beautiful – full of flowers, & the verandah so full of fine geraniums & cactus of various kinds in full flower that everybody said it worth coming to see. But since the hot weather set in all has disappeared.

I think the only important addition I have made to my garden is a pretty rockery – for the sake of various rock plants which I got from Sydney & cacti. This has succeeded very well & is ornamental. I can hardly describe to you where it is exactly – but it is not far from your first little garden, do you remember when you were a very little girl you planted it with pea – there are a few shady trees & bushes & I have put a seat under them.<sup>6</sup>

It was La Trobe's habit to offer assistance to anyone establishing a garden. In June 1844, Georgiana McCrae noted in her diary: 'Mr. La Trobe walked across from Jolimont. He brought flower-roots for Willie and Sandy... He also advised me to encourage Australian flora in our garden'.<sup>7</sup> In 1848 Frances Perry wrote in her journal: 'Mr \_ [La Trobe] says, as soon as we get a garden, he will set to work to get it into order for us. He is going to take our seeds, (if our garden is not forthcoming before sowing time)



Anne Vale, photographer  
 Outside the Dining Room window, 2017  
 'La Trobe's Cottage looks like it is planted in its garden.'

and appropriate a bed in his garden to them, to be called Mrs \_'s [Perry's] bed, is it not kind?'<sup>8</sup>

Just as frequently as La Trobe gave plant material away, he was the recipient of contributions from friends and neighbours. Georgiana McCrae noted in her diary: 'A London Fog! Boys walked through it to Jolimont with jonquil bulbs for Mr La Trobe'.<sup>9</sup> So, Charles was a very passionate gardener and, like gardeners today, liked nothing better than helping someone establish a garden.

One wonders how Charles would view this reconstruction of his home and garden more than a century and a half after he left it. I expect he would be very pleased to see so many plants named in his honour. He would certainly recognise many of the plants as ones he had grown himself. And as a practical statesman he would understand that this is a public garden and needs to be planted out and managed accordingly.

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*La Trobe's Cottage* is one of fifteen gardens featured in *Gardens of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)*. We selected gardens according to historical importance, even though some no longer existed. They are presented in chronological order which means we can look at some aspects of Australian Garden History

through the lens of this selection of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) gardens:

- The first garden, *Endeavour Fern Gully* is a remnant 17½ hectares of the once dense forest on the high-rainfall Red Hill Ridge.
- The very first settler garden in the book is of course *La Trobe's Cottage*.
- Georgiana McCrae sketched the property now known as *The Briars* in 1844. She was visiting friends and neighbours Captain James Reid and his family, who had settled on the land in 1840. Georgiana knew the property as *Tichingorourke*, later owned by the Balcombe family. They and their descendants lived at *The Briars* for over 130 years.
- The Scottish-born McCrae family were one of the first six pioneer families to establish properties on the Mornington Peninsula. Today the simple whitewashed dwellings of *McCrae Homestead* are set in a modest area of mown grass. The boundaries of the property are concealed with a variety of Australian plants. The placement of the buildings, their restored interiors and the adjacent gallery provide ample inspiration to imagine the garden and surrounding utilities created by one of our most important early colonial settlers.

- *Mott's Cottage*, Port Fairy is one of the earliest colonial cottages to have been built in what was then called Belfast. In 2002 the Trust developed a landscape planting plan; the brief was to create a low-maintenance cottage-style garden in keeping with others in this historic district of Port Fairy.
- And the last of the pioneers' properties is *Gulf Station* two kilometres north of the town of Yarra Glen. Most of the original areas given over to productive and ornamental horticulture still exist. There is an orchard below the house, an area for vegetable growing, a flower garden and a small kitchen garden with a little picket fence outside the bakery at the back of the kitchen wing.
- *The Heights* in Aphrasia Street, Newtown, is one of the oldest private gardens in Geelong. The garden illustrates Victorian Gardenesque styles overlaid with a softer planting style dating from the 1930s.
- In the mid-1850s the land beside the Barwon River at Newtown in Geelong was a most desirable location. Jonathan Porter O'Brien and his wife Ann bought a block of land stretching down to the river. They built a substantial brick Gothic Revival villa of six rooms with an attic. They called their property *Barwon Grange*. The house was set back from the river on a rise and was designed in the Picturesque style.
- *Como*, *Rippon Lea* and *Labassa* are of course the significant Melbourne properties that we are all familiar with, and *Glenfern* is known for its connection with the distinguished Victorian Boyd family.
- *Barwon Park* is a magnificent mansion, built between 1869 and 1871 for prominent Western District squatter Thomas Austin and his wife Elizabeth. Architects Davidson and Henderson of Geelong designed the square and utilitarian two-storey building; it survives as perhaps the most notable homestead designed by this prolific practice. It is surrounded by a simple landscape of trees and shrubs, plus a contemporary parterre designed by landscape architect Andrew Laidlaw.
- The two more recent properties are *Mulberry Hill*, a very lovely example of a 'between the wars' twentieth-century country home in Langwarrin South on the Mornington Peninsula. It was created by Joan and Daryl Lindsay.
- And *Mooramong*, a Western District story of affluence, romance and glamour, located in Skipton, best known today as the home of Scobie Mackinnon and his glamorous American film star wife Claire Adams, with connections to architect Marcus Martin and landscape designer Edna Walling.

This selection of gardens gives you some idea of the complexity of properties owned and managed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

And here we are back at the beginning at *La Trobe's Cottage*. The cottage has been moved several times, but now it appears to be well settled. It looks like it is planted in a garden. And as Mrs Perry said in 1848: 'It stands in a very pretty garden – is surrounded by trees on every side; when you come out of his gates, you would imagine yourself in a gentleman's park'.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae, new edition [with A Note on the text by Marguerite Hancock], Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, p.60, 18 March, 1841.
  - 2 George Gordon McCrae, *Georgiana's Journal*, p.60.
  - 3 Richard Howitt, *Impressions of Australia Felix, during four years' residence in that colony*, London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845, p.119.
  - 4 Frances Perry, in A. de Q. Robin (ed), *Australian Sketches: the journals and letters of Frances Perry*, Carlton, Vic: : Queensberry Hill Press, 1984, p.70, 10 March 1848.
  - 5 Ibid.
  - 6 Charles La Trobe, 29 January 1848, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354/27; original archive held in the Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat Neuchâtel, Switzerland. See <http://www.folc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/LettersToAgnesJolimont.pdf>.
  - 7 Georgiana McCrae, pp.189-190. 12 June 1844.
  - 8 Frances Perry, p.72, 10 March 1848.
  - 9 Georgiana McCrae, p.183, 23 April, 1844.
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La Trobe's Cottage Volunteers, November 2018



Helen Botham, centre, with Simon Ambrose and Alison Pearson

## La Trobe's Cottage report

La Trobe's Cottage continues to be managed successfully, on behalf of the National Trust, by the Volunteer Cottage Management Team. The team was thanked for its work by National Trust CEO Simon Ambrose on a visit to the Cottage last November, when Volunteers Coordinator Helen Botham was presented with an award for outstanding leadership and commitment to the best interests of the Cottage.

A short scene of the movie *The True History of the Kelly Gang* was filmed at the Cottage last August. The set designers made many changes to the interior, some of which have been retained after approval by the National Trust. The modern fitted red carpet has been removed and replaced with carpet runners; some pieces of furniture have been rearranged. Further improvements and urgent repairs are planned, and the Chair of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, John Botham, announced a fund-raising project at La Trobe's Birthday celebration in the Cottage garden on Sunday 24 March.

We have a steady trickle of new volunteers helping with guiding, gardening and reception. Garden Coordinator, Judy Rigg, leads a keen team of volunteers in regular working bees, and their good work is on display now in the well-tended, pretty garden.

While a successful season of Sunday openings has ended, the Cottage is still available for group tours, booked through the National Trust booking office. These tours can include a tour of Government House, and members who belong to community groups may wish to encourage their contacts to arrange a combined tour. We look forward to welcoming them, as we do individuals interested in visiting these two significant properties.

**Alison Pearson**  
**Liaison Coordinator**



# Forthcoming events

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## JULY

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### 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 \***

### Sunday 28

#### 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:** Loreen Chambers

**Topic:** 'The Parson's Wife': In search of Harriet Bean, daughter of Empire

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$10

**Bookings essential \***

## AUGUST

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### Wednesday 7

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

**Time:** 6.30 pm

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

**Guest Speaker:**

Dr Andrew Lemon AM, Historian

**Topic:** Early Racing in the Port Phillip District

**Invitations will be sent to members**

## SEPTEMBER

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### Sunday 15

#### 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

**Guest speaker:** Carolyn Brown, President, Black Rock House Inc

**Topic:** Charles Hotson Ebdon, of 'I fear I have become disgustingly rich' fame

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$10

**Bookings essential \***

## OCTOBER

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### Tuesday 22

#### La Trobe Oration: an occasional address

To be delivered by  
Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria

**Time:** 6.00 for 6.30–8.30 pm

**Venue:** Old Treasury Building,  
20 Spring Street, Melbourne

**Topic:** The Role of Governor

**Invitations will be sent to members**

## NOVEMBER

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### Friday 29

#### Christmas Function

**Time:** 6.30–8.30 pm

**Venue:** The Melbourne Club,  
36 Collins Street, Melbourne

**Guest Speaker:** Paul de Serville,  
Historian

**Topic:** The Early History of the  
Melbourne Club

**Invitations will be sent to members**

## DECEMBER

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### Sunday 1

#### Anniversary of the Death of C J La Trobe

#### Sunday Service

**Time:** 11.00 am

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

**Refreshments**

**No bookings required. All welcome**

#### \* Bookings

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



