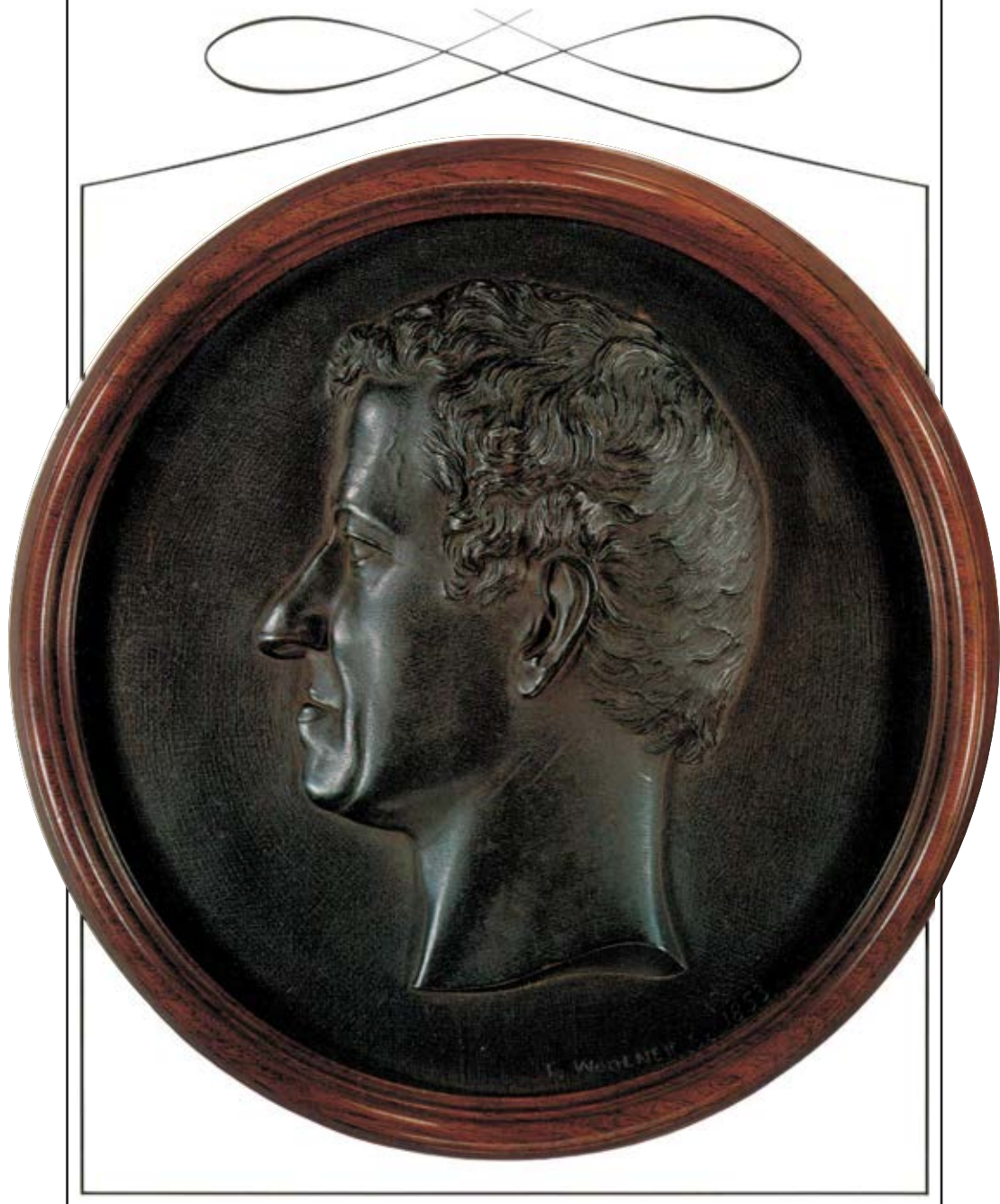


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 19, No 2, July 2020**

ISSN 1447-4026

## ***La Trobeana***

**Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc**  
**Vol 19, No 2, July 2020**

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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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With the advent of Coronavirus, our lives have certainly been challenged. We look forward to the time when we can regain something of what was our day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, the program of cultural events and lectures which your committee had drawn up for 2020 has had to be abandoned until we can safely gather together again. We are still hoping for our usual festive Christmas celebration, and that circumstances will allow us to hold the Annual General Meeting. We will advise about these in due course.

However, a constant feature of membership of the La Trobe Society and one of its major strengths is our excellent journal, *La Trobeana*. This issue features Dr Walter Heale's topical article 'Epidemics in Immigrant Ships arriving in Melbourne in the La Trobe Era'. It will evoke our sympathies for those early immigrants seeking a new life, only to be struck down on board ship by some deadly disease before reaching Port Phillip's safe haven.

Dr Rosemary Richards has given us an edited version of her 2018 talk, 'Georgiana McCrae and her "Favorite" Music', which highlights the significance of manuscript music collections to individuals and groups in the nineteenth century.

Loreen Chambers has continued her research on the early clergy in Gippsland in her article, 'The Parson's Wife: in search of Harriet Bean, daughter of Empire', telling of the Reverend Willoughby Bean's strongest ally.

Historian Paul de Serville's paper vividly recreates the early years of the Melbourne Club and the lives of its members, La Trobe being one, in his presentation to members at our last Christmas celebration. 'La Trobe's other Club', the Athenaeum in London's Pall Mall, is then described for us by Loreen Chambers.

In his paper 'Captain William Hobson: the man who would be Governor', Daryl Ross introduces us to a relatively unknown but striking

character in our history. Captain William Hobson was a naval officer who twice visited Port Phillip on the *Rattlesnake*, with Captain Lonsdale in 1836 and Governor Bourke in 1837. He went on to be Governor of New Zealand and represented the British Crown at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, on 6 February 1840.

The research of Tim Gatehouse has taken us in many fascinating directions over the years, including a number of studies of various branches of the La Trobe family, one to which he belongs himself. In this issue, he treats us to a study of *La Rose*, a beautiful house built in 1842 by Georgiana McCrae's brother-in-law Farquhar McCrae.

It is with sadness that I advise you that two foundation members have recently died. John Bedggood was a family member of Bedggood & Co., Shoe Manufacturers, the company which preserved La Trobe's Cottage in Agnes Street, Jolimont from 1899 until it was acquired by the National Trust in the 1950s. A greatly valued long-time staff member of Geelong Grammar School and, with his wife Robby, a very supportive member of the Society, John will be greatly missed.

Marjorie Morgan OAM, an indefatigable history researcher, was the author of several books, including *Poor Souls They Perished: The Cataraqui, Australia's worst shipwreck* (with Dr Andrew Lemon). She supported many historical organisations, including the Friends of State Library Victoria, and the Genealogical Society of Victoria, and regularly attended La Trobe Society events. Our deepest sympathy goes out to their families.

Until we meet again, stay safe!

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



W K McMinn, engraver  
Emigration Depot at Birkenhead, 1852

Wood engraving  
National Library of Australia, NK4182/89  
Published in *The Illustrated London News*, 10 July 1852

# *Epidemics in Immigrant Ships arriving in Melbourne in the La Trobe Era*

By Dr Walter Heale

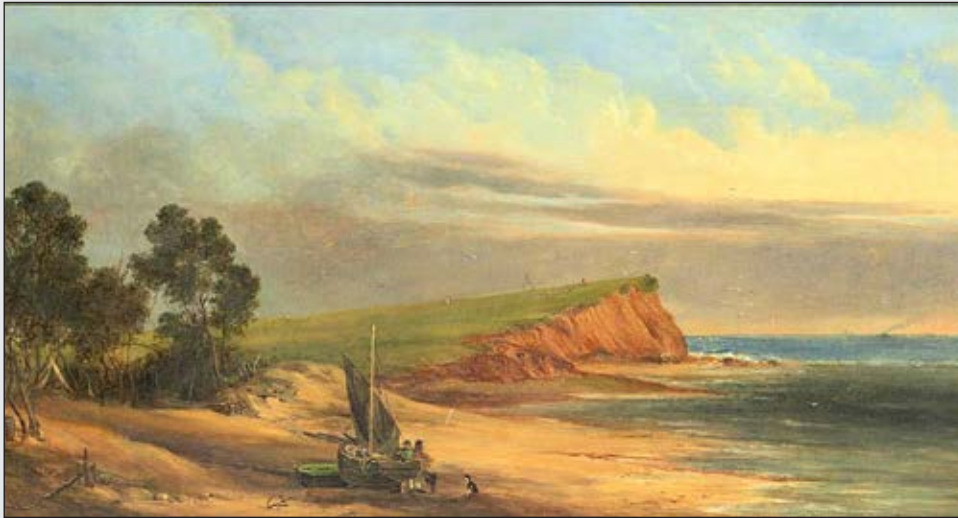
Walter Heale is a retired renal physician with a long-term interest in history. Over recent years he has been involved in the transcription of the minutes of the Port Phillip Medical Association, the Victorian Medical Association and currently the Victorian Medical Society covering the period 1846-1856. He participated in the digitisation of the Inward Correspondence to Superintendent Charles La Trobe at Public Record Office Victoria, and is currently completing a study of a sample of the correspondence leading up to Separation.

By the mid-nineteenth century population growth in Britain exceeded the economy's capacity to sustain them, with 200,000 people per year emigrating to America. In England a Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was established to promote assisted migration, with departure depots being formed in Plymouth, Southampton, Deptford in London, and Birkenhead across the Mersey River from Liverpool. A similar body, the Highland and Island Emigration Society, was established in

Scotland against a background of clearance of crofters. A particular example was the Island of Mull which had seen a drop in population from 10,000 to 3,000, aggravated by the decline in the burning of kelp to produce potash, a method replaced by chemical production techniques. In contrast, Australia in 1852 offered wool, agricultural, mining and domestic or trade jobs.

Emigrants from Britain in the 1840s to the 1850s seeking better economic opportunities





**Thomas Clark, 1814?-1883, artist**  
**Red Bluff, Elwood, c.1860**

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, 2016.118

In the 1890s the unstable Red Bluff was used as landfill in the reclamation of the Elwood swamplands

in Australia faced two perils on the three to four-month journey by sea: shipwreck and epidemic illness. Apart from the clinical patterns observed by doctors, the miasmas of epidemics were a mystery in the era before Pasteur identified specific bacterial species in the late 1850s. Cowpox vaccination to prevent smallpox described by Jenner in 1798 was the only known therapeutic technique but was not universally applied.

This article has been informed by two books: firstly, *Flying the Yellow Flag* by Grace Moore (the wife of a descendant) published in 1990,<sup>1</sup> which marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the immigrant ship *Glen Huntly*, and secondly, *Hell Ship* published in 2018 by Michael Veitch, a descendant of a ship's surgeon on the *Ticonderoga*.<sup>2</sup> Moore's 92-page book contains personal, family and Government accounts of the voyage of 170 emigrants beset with infections that prompted Port Phillip's original quarantine facility at Red Bluff (also known as Little Red Bluff, now Point Ormond). Veitch's book recounts the calamitous voyage of a clipper ship bearing 800 or so passengers which entered Port Phillip, also flying a yellow flag, in November 1852 coming to anchor at the inlet on Point Nepean, now called Ticonderoga Bay. Other references were the *Historical Records of Victoria Foundation Series* published by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) covering the period up to the end of 1839, and the Inward Correspondence to La Trobe, VPRS 19 at PROV.

### ***Dr John Patterson RN, Port Phillip's first Acting Emigration Agent***

In April 1839, Dr John Patterson arrived in Sydney as Surgeon Superintendent on the *Argyle*, and succeeded in gaining a similar appointment on the *John Barry* bound for Melbourne, remunerated by free passage for his wife, four children and sister-in-law.<sup>3</sup> Patterson, from Strabane County Tyrone, entered the Royal Navy medical program at seventeen, his ship fighting a successful battle and capturing a French vessel during the Napoleonic Wars. His ship was later wrecked off the coast of Brest. He was captured and paroled by the French, becoming a respected local doctor for seven years. After the Battle of Waterloo he reached Paris.

On return to England he was promoted to Surgeon, retrospectively paid his salary and the bounty price for capturing the French vessel. He retired in 1821, married and moved to Ireland, establishing a medical practice and two dispensaries. He returned to the navy in 1829, but later retired on half-pay for health reasons, and went back to Strabane where an 1835 epidemic led to his appointment in charge of a cholera hospital. On arrival in Melbourne he placed a notice in the *Port Phillip Gazette*, emphasising the importance of vaccination:

Doctor Patterson, Surgeon, Royal Navy, begs to intimate to the Inhabitants of Melbourne and its Vicinity, that he has arrived in town with his family, for the purpose of practising the several branches of his



Hedley Potts and Tony Hutchinson, artists  
**Quarantine camp and fever ship 'Glen Huntly', 1999**  
 'Guarded by land and water at Little Red Bluff (later  
 named Point Ormond) 1840.'  
 Mosaic on Elwood Pier, Head Street, Brighton, south of  
 Point Ormond

profession as Physician, Surgeon, and Accoucher [*sic*] and hopes from his long experience, steadiness, and attention, to merit a due share of public confidence. He has brought a large variety of the best Medicines, carefully selected for his own private use, and a few packages of Vaccine Lymph, which Dr. Patterson is most anxious to propagate and perpetuate in this new Colony, impressed as he is, that such an object is of the first importance to the community at large.<sup>4</sup>

Two months later, in July 1839, Patterson together with Dr Samuel McCurdy became the first Port Phillip practitioners registered by the newly-formed New South Wales Medical Board. His naval pension was also augmented by government appointments supervising the disembarkation of emigrant ships, as required. The position was initially 'emigration clerk' for the government-sponsored *David Clark* which arrived from Greenock, west of Glasgow, on 27 October; the position afterwards became 'acting emigration agent'.

This is recorded in Superintendent La Trobe's diary of meetings during the weeks following his own landing on 1 October 1839.

After the arrival of the *David Clark* he noted: 'Appointed Immigration Board to meet me at ½ p.11 [half past eleven] to go on bd. D.C. Went on board. Mustered & survey. Ch[airman] Dr Patterson assisted by Sec. and Mr Le Soeuf, Dr Cussen, Cap. Lonsdale, & self board. Everything in good order'.<sup>5</sup>

The journey had been a health success with just one death balanced by a birth among the 229 immigrants. Patterson met with La Trobe on a number of occasions to report on the successful landing and employment of the immigrants, and was paid fifteen shillings per diem following correspondence with the Colonial Secretary in Sydney. That exchange also indicated that La Trobe could pay for 'local persons engaged in the superintendence and examination of emigrants at Port Phillip, or not, according to his own discretion, in future cases'.<sup>6</sup> With subsequent arrivals Patterson was paid ten shillings and six pence per day.

### ***The Glen Huntly incident April 1840***

On 16 April 1840 the New South Wales government sponsored *Glen Huntly* from Greenock arrived in Port Phillip flying a yellow fever flag indicating a physically distressed load of passengers, and moored at Red Bluff, a

good distance from the customary anchorage. The ship, 111 feet (33.8 metres) in length, had left Greenock in October 1839 to pick up 170 emigrants in Oban, where fevers had been prevalent. With those coming on board was the New South Wales Colonial Emigration Agent for Scotland, Dr Boyter RN, who had been responsible for offering assisted passages, especially to young men and couples with families, from various villages, including those affected by the Highland clearances, and then supervising their embarkation. Having run aground on entering and leaving Oban, the ship had to return to Greenock for repairs, by which time fevers had incubated, including scarletina, measles and small pox.

Over the six weeks taken for repairs there were further cases, with admissions to the local infirmary. However, the Surgeon Superintendent on the vessel, Dr George Brown, advised Dr Boyter he was satisfied with the fitness of the passengers to proceed, based on advice that the patients from the infirmary had all been discharged by the surgeon of that institution as cured, and not in a condition to convey infection to the ship. It was believed that heading for warmer climes would be advantageous. However, the weather remained inclement throughout much of the voyage, which finally commenced on 14 December, and despite a brief respite in the warmer equatorial zone new cases and deaths continued. On their arrival at Port Phillip, Patterson noted that there were fifty-two persons either actually ailing or convalescent when the immigrants first came ashore.

### ***Red Bluff quarantine***

On 17 April, the day after the ship entered Port Phillip, La Trobe instigated measures to quarantine it. Furrows were dug to define well and sick camps in tents on Red Bluff foreshore, and troops were deployed to isolate the site. A proclamation was issued and published repeatedly in the *Port Phillip Gazette*, *Port Phillip Herald* and *Port Phillip Patriot*:

Notice is hereby given that the Glenhuntly Government Emigrant ship from Greenock, is declared under Quarantine and that any infringement of the Quarantine Laws and Regulations, will subject the offending parties to the pains and penalties of the same.

Signed C.J. La Trobe

On the same day he wrote to Dr Patrick Cussen, Assistant Colonial Surgeon:

I am obliged to you for readily acceding to my request to act as Health

Officer and put yourself promptly in communication with the Officer of the Emigrant Ship whose arrival with sickness on board has this evening been announced – there will be no occasion for you to expose yourself to the inconvenience of being included in the quarantine. It will probably be necessary subsequently to appoint a medical officer expressly to take charge either of the sick or the healthy encampment when people are landed.<sup>7</sup>

C.F.H. Smith, Commander Detachment of the 28th Regiment, was also notified:

As the arrival of the *Glen Huntly* Govt Emigrant [ship] from Scotland with sickness on board necessitates me to make some provision for the due observation of Quarantine, I have the honour to state that I probably have to apply to you for a proper guard to be stationed in such a manner as to cut off communication between the place that may be fixed upon for a Quarantine ground.<sup>8</sup>

La Trobe visited the site on a number of occasions issuing further instructions. On 18 April Assistant Protector William Thomas was given the edict that Aboriginal people camped 'in the vicinity of the town' should leave immediately 'in order to prevent the spread of disease – a Quarantine Station having been formed in the neighbourhood.'<sup>9</sup> He would appear to have well understood their custom of harvesting shellfish near the makeshift quarantine ground.<sup>10</sup>

As recorded in *Flying the Yellow Flag*, sick passengers disembarked from the *Glen Huntly* on 24 April, and healthy passengers three days later. Dr Barry Cotter, who was the first doctor to arrive in the District in 1835, was employed to supervise the well camp, with Dr George Brown looking after the sick. Regular reports were sent to Dr Cussen, and in May Dr Brown wrote a report of the voyage. On 1 June healthy passengers were discharged from quarantine, and the remainder on 13 June. The cleansed *Glen Huntly* departed for India on 21 June.

In August Patterson wrote a detailed report of the *Glen Huntly* episode for the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, which included the table, opposite, of cases from 5 November 1839 to 16 April 1840.

Three further deaths occurred after arrival.<sup>11</sup> Patterson concluded his report in the manner of a commission of enquiry:



Name of disease	Total	Recoveries	Deaths
Fever	66	56	10
Scarlatina	19	18	1
Measles	3	2	1
Small pox	10	9	1
Chicken pox	3	3	0
Other complaints	4	2	2
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>15</b>

It is clear from the very outset of her voyage which it may be remarked was unfavourable, the disease increased instead of diminished and assumed according to the circumstances in which the passengers found themselves an alternate virulent or mild character.

It is to be feared that the state of discomfort, disorder and uncleanness into which the Emigrants were evidently thrown at the commencement of the voyage, from the bad weather and the inexperience of the gentlemen in charge was never remedied or ameliorated during the voyage and the state of the bedding at their landing has strongly impressed the authorities that this conjecture is a true one.

The Glenhuntly was a fine vessel, [but] was judged also to be exceedingly defective in her means of ventilation.

It is not intended to cast any imputation upon the character of the Surgeon Supt. beyond that of evident inexperience in the character of the duties which devolved upon him in introducing and maintaining that perfect order, cleanliness and regularity from the very first outset, without which it is scarcely to be expected that the health of so large a body of emigrants can be preserved.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Other incidents of the 1840s***

In January 1841 Patterson and the recently-appointed Coroner, Dr Wilmot, were asked to assess the nature and circumstances of a fever that had broken out in the town. They traced the source to immigrants who had recently disembarked from the *Salsette* from Liverpool, judged the fever to be of moderate severity likely to subside, and arranged to report progress to Cussen every second day. A month later medical practitioners across town reported the *Salsette* fever was subsiding, with continuing medical comforts being provided to the poor.

Public health was affected in other instances. Milder episodes necessitating quarantine occurred with the *Agricola* from London and Cork in October 1841 and the *Manlius* from Greenock in February 1842. Both ships were quarantined at Point Gellibrand (Williamstown), where small burial grounds were created.

John Patterson's role as Acting Emigration Agent continued but Governor Gipps declined to promote him when the number of immigrant ships was stemmed by economic depression in 1843–44, and subsequent budgetary constraints. From 1840 to 1850 there were a regular ten items of correspondence each year from Patterson. Files included mention of the Registration book, Board of Inspection, and the Immigration Board. On 27 June 1851 Patterson submitted a list of Clerks in the Port Phillip Immigration Department eligible for a temporary pay rise, to mark the imminent Separation from New South Wales. He retired shortly afterwards.

### ***The Ticonderoga incident November 1852***

The *Glen Huntly* crisis had occurred near the start of La Trobe's Port Phillip career. Shortly before its conclusion, there was another major health crisis.

The *Ticonderoga* left Birkenhead on 4 August 1852 bound for Melbourne with 811 emigrants on board, as estimated by the Victorian Health Officer on its arrival ninety days later. The clipper had been built in New York in 1849 and was named after a historic fort in New York State. The ship was 169 feet (51.5 metres) long and had two decks below the main deck. Dr James Veitch, aged twenty-seven, was employed as an assistant surgeon superintendent to the experienced and well-regarded Dr Joseph Sanger, aged forty-eight, who over his career was surgeon on twenty voyages. Veitch was employed at £80 for the voyage and Sanger for £200. Veitch's grandfather and father had both pursued careers as naval surgeons, the latter during and after the Napoleonic Wars. James Veitch trained at the London School of Apothecaries, had experience



Unknown photographer  
Quarantine Cemetery and Ticonderoga Monument,  
Point Nepean National Park, Portsea, c.2015  
<https://poi-australia.com.au>

managing a cholera epidemic, and was the great grandfather of the author Michael Veitch (an old Scottish surname). Also on board was Anne Morrison from Tobermory on the Isle of Mull, a twenty-seven-year-old single, educated female emigrant seeking a career. In all, there were 643 Scots on board.

In early September, Sanger informed the captain and part-owner, Thomas Boyd, that there was typhus aboard. Epidemics of typhus had been known for centuries, being caused by a Rickettsia organism finally identified in 1916. It is now a rare disease and can be treated with the antibiotic doxycycline. Typhus was carried by body lice whose itchy bites, or eggs in clothing or fabrics, spread the organism. The resulting illness was characterised by a racking cough, muscle aches and spasms, scarlet rash, burning fever, delirium and a dreadful fetid smell. On the *Ticonderoga*, profound debility followed by fourteen deaths spread equally between adults and children occurred in one week in mid-September. The curve began to rise in early October, with just over 100 deaths over the course of the voyage. After the Cape Otway Light was sighted on 1 November, the clipper anchored initially just inside Port Phillip Heads at Shortland's Bluff (Queenscliff) before being transferred by the Harbour Pilot to Point Nepean.

Author Michael Veitch located a letter in the British Public Record Office, written from 'Ship Ticonderoga... Midnight, November 4,

1852' by Dr Sanger who caught typhus but survived:

I have the honour to announce the arrival of the Ship 'Ticonderoga' from Liverpool with a large number of Government Emigrants on board under my superintendence – I deeply regret to have to inform you of the serious amount of formidable sickness prevalent during the whole voyage especially the latter part, and of the long list of fatal cases resulting therefrom...

There are at present at least 250 patients requiring treatment, and both my coadjutor, Mr Veitch, and myself are almost wearied out by the constant demand for our services, especially as it is impossible to get proper nurses for the sick in sufficient numbers.<sup>13</sup>

Christopher McRae, who was one of the passengers, enlarged that perspective, writing in March 1917: 'I remember the captain accompanying the Dr, going through to see things were in proper order, i.e. as far as possible under the circumstances.'<sup>14</sup>

On 26 January, 1853, nearly three months after the *Ticonderoga* anchored off Point Nepean, La Trobe wrote to Sir John Pakington, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies:



Unknown photographer  
James and Anne Veitch, c.1885  
From *Hell Ship* by Michael Veitch, 2018, facing p.88

My dispatch No.163 of November 9, 1852 apprized you of my having received intelligence of the arrival of the Government Emigrant Ship 'Ticonderoga'... The lamentable loss of life which has been experienced during the passage and the great extent to which sickness of a very serious character still persists could be interpreted as a criticism of an emigration policy in Britain that encouraged the transport of large numbers of people in confined quarters for such a prolonged period of time.<sup>15</sup>

Remaining sick for as many months after the journey as the journey itself, was a matter to which La Trobe appropriately drew attention.

### ***The new quarantine station***

In early 1852 La Trobe instigated an assessment of quarantine alternatives to the old sites at Red Bluff and Point Gellibrand, away from the expanding populace and able to accommodate multiple ships. The Port Health Officer, Dr Thomas Hunt, was given the task and selected Point Nepean, Robert Hoddle assessed the rights of the current leaseholders, and Harbour Master Captain Charles Ferguson was given the administrative powers. In September the 40th Regiment of Foot arrived to take up garrison duties in Melbourne, with one of them thought to have smallpox. They were accommodated

on the *Lysander* (the ship that two years earlier had brought the news of Victoria's Separation from New South Wales) which was at anchor in Hobson's Bay. It was quickly fitted out with fifty beds and stores, but became available for quarantine again when the soldier's diagnosis was changed to syphilis. On 3 November Harbour Master Ferguson in his Williamstown office was informed of the *Ticonderoga's* imminent arrival with its burden of illness and death, by Captain Wylie of the *Champion* who had sailed through the night with the news. A ship with supplies was dispatched down the bay, and so was the *Lysander* as a floating hospital.

The decision was made to establish a rudimentary camp on the Nepean peninsula and transfer the passengers ashore. Many children and adults were interred at the site, and about 250 weak and disabled passengers were ferried ashore two by two. Care was provided by the recovering Sanger and Veitch, with the assistance of passengers Mary Flanagan and Anne Morrison, who were skilled domestic nurses. News of the arrival caused alarm in Melbourne and in the press, and prompted reports to London by La Trobe and Sanger. In the background was the recent arrival in Port Phillip of the emigrant ships *Borneuf*, *Wanata* and *Marco Polo* that could each accommodate 800 emigrants, the ships having a combined total of 175 deaths during similar three-month journeys.

The *Ticonderoga* remained in quarantine for six weeks. The ship was cleaned, sterilised and the lower decks re-painted. Dr Hunt arrived and took up residence on the *Lysander* to supervise the construction of the new quarantine barracks, with some of the immigrants electing to stay as construction workers. La Trobe arrived for an inspection once the doctors declared the clipper free of typhus.<sup>16</sup> It left for Melbourne on 23 December and anchored off Hobson's Bay pier. The immigrants were then serially transferred in a smaller vessel up river to Queen's Wharf, thence to the Immigration Barracks and Labour Exchange on the corner of Collins and Spencer Streets which had replaced temporary migrant accommodation in 1848.<sup>17</sup>

\*\*\*

Epidemics then and at present could be viewed as an equation: Dose and virulence of pathogens multiplied by Susceptibility and crowding, equals Outcome. If smallpox, tuberculosis, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, HIV, SARS, or COVID-19 with different characteristics are substituted, different preventive strategies emerge. In the case of the *Glen Huntly*, the various infections prevalent in Oban were incubating when the ship returned

to Greenock where the decision was made to proceed. With the *Ticonderoga*, a virulent organism with two methods of transmission (bites and eggs) met with an overcrowded population of emigrants, who at the end of their journey became immigrants in the new colony of Victoria, although fewer than originally intended.

Superintendent, later Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe's role in managing these public health crises, and in developing port services, indicates the multiplicity of duties that fell to his lot during his fourteen years in the colony.

---

### Postscript

James Veitch and Anne Morrison of the *Ticonderoga* married and moved to central Victoria. He practised as a country doctor, was a farmer and storekeeper, and became the District Health Officer for the Shire of Strathfieldsaye, near Bendigo. He never went to sea again. Their youngest child died aged ninety-two in 1962, the year Michael Veitch was born.

### Endnotes

- 1 Olive Moore, *Flying the Yellow Flag, the first voyage of the "Glen Huntley" [sic], 1839-40*, Ringwood East, Vic.: O. Moore, 1990.
- 2 Michael Veitch, *Hell Ship: the true story of the plague ship Ticonderoga, one of the most calamitous voyages in Australian history*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2018.
- 3 *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.4, *Communications, Trade and Transport*, ed. by Michael Cannon, associate editor Ian MacFarlane, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office 1985, pp.297-298.
- 4 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 8 May 1839, p.1.
- 5 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854. Yarra Glen, Vic.*: Tarcoola Press, in association with the State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.83, (Entry for 28 October 1839).
- 6 PROV Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 19/P Inward Registered Correspondence, unit 2, item 39/345, Colonial Secretary Sydney, 6 December 1839.
- 7 PROV Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 16 Outward Registered Correspondence, item 40/176.
- 8 Ibid, item 40/177.
- 9 *Australian Notes*, p.239.
- 10 Meyer Eidelson, *Yalukit Willam: the river people of Port Phillip*, St. Kilda, Vic.: City of Port Phillip 2014, p.42; Greg Gerrard, 'Quarantine and the Little Red Bluff', weblog State Library Victoria, entry posted 27 April 2020, <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/quarantine-and-the-little-red-bluff> (accessed 7 May 2020).
- 11 A burial ground in a timber enclosure was created at the Quarantine ground for the Glen Huntly victims. (State Library Victoria drawing H2348). The remains were reburied at the St Kilda Cemetery in 1899, marked by a publicly-subscribed memorial in Malmsbury bluestone surmounted by a scroll in white marble that cost £48. (*Prahran Telegraph*, 2 April 1899, p.5).
- 12 PROV VPRS 19, unit 5, item 40/479. (Report dated 27 August, 1840; filed with Brown's report of May.)
- 13 Veitch, pp.133-134. Copy of letter at PROV VPRS 1189, item 1112/82/52.
- 14 Christopher McRae to Mr Kendall, Officer in Charge, Quarantine Station Point Nepean, March 1917, Point Nepean Historical Society, see <http://www.mylor.net/files/Download/Letter%20recollections%201917.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2020).
- 15 Public Record Office, England, Colonial Office, Inwards correspondence of the Secretary of State from Victoria, CO 309/13, quoted Veitch, p.133.
- 16 *Australian Notes*, p.214, (Entry for 19 December 1852).
- 17 See Lorraine Finlay, 'The Reynolds Family: Cornish bounty emigrants of 1849', *La Trobeana*, vol.19, no.1, March 2020, pp.35-36.



# Georgiana McCrae and Her 'Favorite' Music

By Dr Rosemary Richards

Rosemary Richards teaches Humanities and History and is a private vocal coach. Rosemary completed her PhD thesis, *Georgiana McCrae's Manuscript Music Collections: A Life in Music* (2017), at the University of Melbourne. She has presented academic papers in Australia and internationally, and published aspects of her research.

*This article is a revision of a lecture given in the Members Talk to Members program, 10 June 2018.*

Georgiana McCrae (1804–1890) and her family left a large assortment of memorabilia that is now held in at least twenty institutions and private collections in Australia, Britain and New Zealand. Georgiana's journals and works of art contain evidence about the early days of Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> McCrae artefacts related to music include sheet music, a piano and a rastrum used for drawing music staves. Georgiana's four surviving manuscript music collections, which contain more than 760 items together with dated annotations over more than thirty years from her youth to her middle age, are of particular musical and biographical significance.<sup>2</sup>

In nineteenth-century genteel homes, written music and musical instruments were important resources. Transcribing and collecting handwritten copies of music was related to creating commonplace books and scrapbooks filled with drawings, watercolour paintings, letters, journals, and excerpts from literary works and newspapers. Manuscript music collections, like other commonplace books, could act as forms of life writing, which promoted private contemplation as well as social connection with family, friends and the wider public. Musical repertoire in such collections often included fashionable genres such as operatic arias, parlour ballads and instrumental music. Music-lovers in Victoria who owned manuscript and printed music collections included Annie Baxter Dawbin, Sophia Letitia Davis, Marian Sargood and Robert Wrede. Study of their collections



Georgiana McCrae, 1804–1890, artist  
Self-portrait, 1829  
Watercolour and pencil  
National Gallery of Victoria, 2009.387

may be enhanced by investigating related evidence about colonial music-making found in advertisements, reviews, cartoons, paintings and account books, as well as in writings by authors including Emily Childers, Henrietta Dugdale, Louisa Anne Meredith and Ada Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

Born in London, Georgiana McCrae was the illegitimate daughter of Jane Graham from Northumberland and a Scottish nobleman



**John Claude Nattes, 1765?-1822, artist**  
**James Fittler, 1758-1835, engraver**  
**Gordon Castle, 1804**

Etching

James Fittler and John Claude Nattes,  
*Scotia Depicta*, London, 1804, plate 6

George, Marquis of Huntly, who later became the fifth duke of Gordon. Georgiana received a genteel education which included being able to sing, play the piano and copy musical scores. Her teachers in London, who included Monsieur L'Abbé Huteau, Fanny Holcroft (piano) and Sophia Horn (singing), encouraged Georgiana to develop her skills in music notation as well as performance. Georgiana had a pleasing voice in a medium range and was talented in expression and languages, but she did not pursue her brief visions of a professional operatic career. Nevertheless, she assiduously continued to collect and practise an extensive musical repertoire.<sup>4</sup>

Georgiana's first manuscript music collection, the 'McCrae Homestead Music Book' dates from 1822-1824, when Georgiana was entering her early adult life. The opening page of the book is dated 1823, signed 'Georgiana Gordon' and called 'A Collection of Favorite Songs, Strathspeys,<sup>5</sup> Part 1st'. Part 2 is entitled 'A Collection of favorite Strathspeys and Reels'. It includes dance items with titles referring to members of the aristocratic Gordon family and suggests that Georgiana was in touch with the Gordons in this period.<sup>6</sup>

Georgiana's grandson Hugh McCrae marked his ownership of Georgiana's 'La Trobe Library Music Book' (c.1817-1848) with his signature on the front cover. Like two of Georgiana's other manuscript music collections, the 'McCrae Homestead Music Book' and the 'Chaplin Music Book' (c.1840-1856), the 'La Trobe Library Music Book' is a compilation of music transcribed on different pieces of paper on various dates and occasions.<sup>7</sup> Hugh McCrae also later owned Georgiana's 'Gordon Castle Music Book' (c.1827-1828) which is a preformed book<sup>8</sup> with dated transcriptions in chronological order. Symbols on the front cover may reflect Georgiana's relationships with Gordon family members who retained their Roman Catholic faith.<sup>9</sup> A fifth McCrae manuscript music book containing tunes without accompaniment was transcribed by an unidentified copyist who probably played the flute or violin.<sup>10</sup>

Georgiana McCrae's four identified manuscript music collections contain numerous examples of music for voice and piano derived from opera and music theatre, from fashionable repertoire mainly in English and Italian including works by composers such as Bellini, Bishop, Handel, King and Wallace. One example from

the McCrae Homestead Music Book, Rossini's aria 'Al mio pregar', comes from the opera *Semiramide* which premièred in Venice in 1823 with Rossini's wife Isabella Colbran in the title role. Giuditta Pasta sang the role in the London season in 1824. In 'Al mio pregar', Semiramide the queen of Babylon prays to her murdered husband King Nino to protect their son Arsace from attack. Georgiana may have transcribed the aria from a vocal score published in 1824 in the magazine *The Harmonicon*.<sup>11</sup>

Georgiana's manuscript music collections also contain many pieces of music associated with Georgiana's Scottish heritage. In the 1820s Georgiana moved to live with her grandfather Duke Alexander Gordon at *Gordon Castle* near Fochabers in Scotland. The La Trobe Library Music Book includes two versions of Duke Alexander's song called 'Keith More'. The words of one of Duke Alexander's versions of 'Keith More' tell about parting from a girl called Mary, while the second refers to 'dear Jean'. Mary and Jean were the names of two of the mothers of Duke Alexander's illegitimate children. The song uses the Scots language. Performers may adapt the skeleton musical scores, which Georgiana may have copied from manuscript or printed sources.<sup>12</sup>

In her transcription of 'A Greek Air: as sung by Zebie & Zoé' in the La Trobe Library Music Book, Georgiana noted that she had received the music from 'M<sup>rs</sup> Symonds & M<sup>rs</sup> Alex<sup>r</sup> Gordon'. The next part of the annotation looks like she may have received the copy of the music while at *Gordon Castle*, as it appears to read 'GC 1825'. It would be helpful if Georgiana's biographers could discover more sources about her life in this period to help map her movements between England and Scotland.<sup>13</sup>

Underneath the copy of the song 'Oh bonnie lassie' in the Gordon Castle Music Book is an annotation that shows that Georgiana was at *Gordon Castle* on New Year's Eve in 1827, some months after her grandfather's death in June 1827. 'Oh bonnie lassie' was published in a printed collection called *The Scottish Minstrel*, which contains song texts rendered into polite versions by ladies who did not want to be publicly identified.<sup>14</sup> Georgiana's residence at *Gordon Castle* was resented by her stepmother, the former heiress Elizabeth Brodie, who was wealthy, influential and moralistic. Duchess Elizabeth was praised as a musician by Sir Walter Scott, who modelled a heroine of his play *Hallidon Hill* on her.<sup>15</sup>

Annotations in the Gordon Castle Music Book provide corroborating evidence that from February to June 1828 Georgiana moved



**Ex Libris, Harry F. Chaplin,**  
**Australiana Collection [c.1954]**  
 Chaplin music book, RB1164-9,  
 McCrae papers, Harry F. Chaplin  
 Collection, University of Sydney Library

to stay at the neighbouring *Gordon Hall*, the Scottish home of her relative Perico Gordon.<sup>16</sup> At *Gordon Hall*, Georgiana sang solo songs and duets and played the piano to entertain at family events. She transcribed some of her Scottish song repertoire when requested to do so. Other performers at *Gordon Hall* included Perico, who played the violin, and his aunts Margaret and Fanny Gordon. Georgiana's staunchly Protestant stepmother forbade Georgiana's romance with Perico because he was a Catholic.<sup>17</sup>

An attempt by Georgiana to earn money as a miniature portrait painter in Edinburgh ended in 1830 when she married the Protestant middle-class lawyer Andrew Murison McCrae, a distant relation. They had nine children, seven of whom survived childhood. Five of their children were born in Britain and four more were born after Georgiana followed Andrew to Australia, where she arrived in 1841.

The Chaplin Music Book, Georgiana's fourth manuscript music collection that comprises around 170 separate items in over 240 pages, reveals Georgiana's emotional and musical reactions to her migration. Around half the pieces show details such as the names of composers, arrangers and poets. Items reflect Georgiana's love of languages, with words in languages including English, Scots, Scots

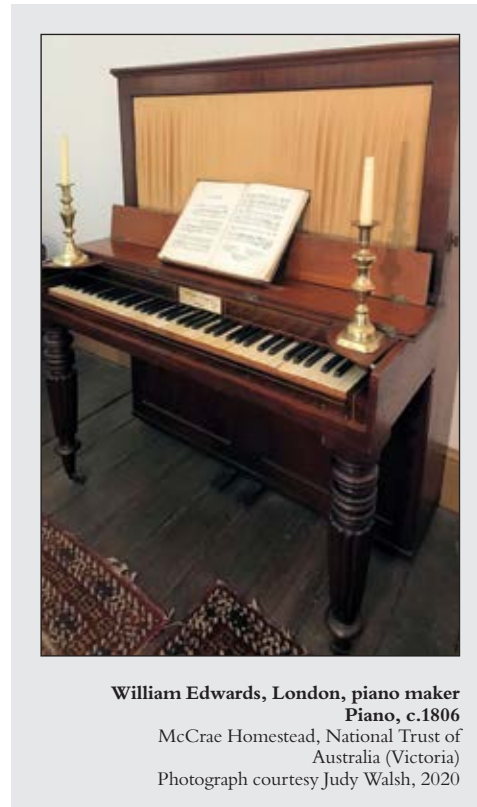
Gaelic, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin and Creole. Supplementary material was added to the book after it was bound in Melbourne in 1856. Inscriptions by Georgiana and her son George show the importance of music and collecting in the lives of Georgiana and her family and friends. A third inscription indicates that the collector Harry Chaplin obtained the book from George's son Hugh McCrae in 1954.

The original title page in the book refers to the song 'Bygone Days', with words by Miss Power and music composed by F.W. Meymott Esq. It is not clear who the poet Miss Power was, or who transcribed the song. However, Georgiana recorded in her journal that she met the composer Frederic William Meymott in London on 23 October 1840, at a musical evening at the home of her friends the Cummins family, just before she sailed to Melbourne.<sup>18</sup> Some of Meymott's songs were published in Britain and others in Sydney, after he migrated there around 1850. The sentiments of the words of the first verse of 'Bygone Days', 'The cherish'd hopes of early days / Have faded slowly one by one', matched Georgiana's regrets in her later years, which may explain why she chose the song to introduce her fourth manuscript music collection in 1856.<sup>19</sup>

The Chaplin Music Book demonstrates Georgiana's friendships with the Bunbury family, who were fellow passengers on board the *Argyle* sailing from Britain to Australia. Richard Hammer Bunbury was also related to Georgiana through the Gordons. After she arrived in Melbourne, Georgiana made other friendships such as that with Superintendent Charles La Trobe and his wife Sophie. In the young town of Melbourne, while the population was relatively small, the Bunbury, La Trobe and McCrae families had children of similar ages and shared interests in art, music and languages, their families' genteel values and their elevated social positions.

On 17 June 1842, Georgiana recorded in her journal that Mrs Bunbury arrived for a lengthy visit to the family's new grand house, *Mayfield*. The first Melbourne annotation in the Chaplin Music Book, 'from M<sup>rs</sup> Bunbury Mayfield July 1842', is written on the transcription of a song by Pepoli and Campana.<sup>20</sup> At the time of Mrs Bunbury's visit, on 5 July 1842, Andrew McCrae acquired a cottage piano manufactured by 'William Edwards Bridge Street Lambeth London'. This piano is now on display at the McCrae Homestead.<sup>21</sup>

On 17 September 1842 Georgiana recorded in her journal that 'M<sup>r</sup> Redmond Barry came to dine with us, had a musical evening – M<sup>r</sup> B sings well'.<sup>22</sup> Georgiana's journal



entry about Barry's visit did not mention any particular pieces of music. Barry (1813–1880) later had a prominent legal and public career in Melbourne, despite his irregular domestic life. Georgiana's grandson Hugh McCrae elaborated on Georgiana's journal entry with the colourful assertion that 'Love's Witchcraft' by Schulz was 'Mr Barry's Favourite Song'.<sup>23</sup> No corroboration for Hugh McCrae's claim about Redmond Barry's musical preferences has yet been found. Hugh McCrae may have transcribed 'Love's Witchcraft' from sheet music previously belonging to Georgiana's grandfather Alexander, fourth duke of Gordon.<sup>24</sup>

Whether entertaining her husband's guests or her own family, Georgiana enjoyed playing the piano. She accompanied herself singing and contributed to the musical education of her children, assisted by her boys' tutor John McLure (1813?–1859), who played the flute and who, like Georgiana and Andrew, wrote poems about events affecting members of the McCrae family. In 1845, Georgiana took her piano with her to the family's Arthur's Seat property on the Mornington Peninsula. Daughter Fanny McCrae, who was born at Arthur's Seat in 1847, later wrote her recollections of the family piano, which were often unclear about dates and may have been based on hearsay. Among her observations, Fanny recorded that Charles La Trobe 'was a frequent visitor, and, often, stretching his long legs under the keyboard,



*49th Hymn.* Composed by the Bishop Latrobe

Through the day Thy love has shored us, Now we lay us down  
to rest. Through the silent watches guard us, Let us  
Pilgrims here on earth and strangers  
Dwelling in the midst of foes  
Us and ours preserve from dangers, In Thine  
Arms may we repose, And when life's brief day is past,  
For our peace mo-lest. Let us, Thou our Guar-dian be,  
Rest with Thee in Heaven at last.  
Sweet it is to trust in Thee.

Richmond 24th Decr 1855.

Christian Ignatius La Trobe, 1758-1836, composer  
49th Hymn, Church of the United Brethren, 1790  
Transcribed by Georgiana McCrae, 1855, extract  
Chaplin music book, page 121, RB 1164.9, McCrae papers,  
Harry F. Chaplin Collection, University of Sydney Library

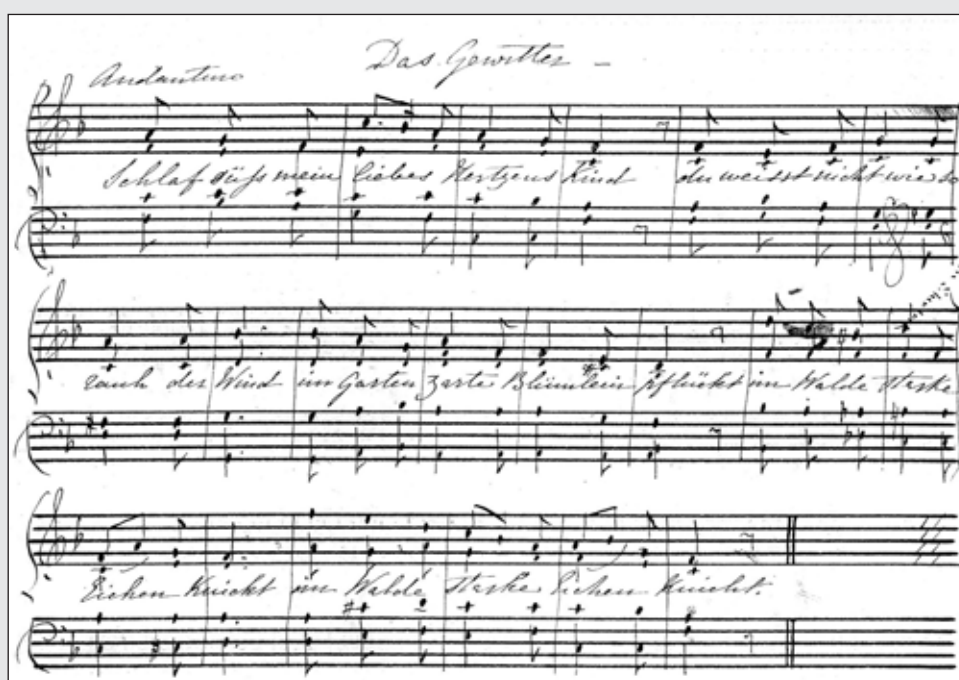
played away in a right masterful fashion, while his wife sang French and Swiss chansonnettes very sweetly'.<sup>25</sup>

By 1850, when the separation of Victoria from New South Wales was announced, Georgiana had given birth to three of her Australian daughters and was pregnant with her fourth. She visited the La Trobes at Jolimont, their house in Melbourne, and filled in for Sophie La Trobe in some official activities. This visit is recorded in the Chaplin Music Book with an annotation of 'Jolimont Nov<sup>r</sup> 1850' added to a German lullaby 'Das Gewitter' ('The Thunderstorm', see next page). With the same music repeated for all eight verses and a simple keyboard part, the song allows for improvisation. The first verse begins 'Schlaf süß mein liebes Hertzens Kind / Du weisst nicht wie so rauch des Wind' ('Sleep sweetly my dear heart's child / You don't know how smoky the wind is'). 'Das Gewitter' is part of a series of six German children's songs in the Chaplin Music Book that

Georgiana may have copied from music owned by the La Trobes. We might imagine Georgiana singing the lullaby to the young children from the McCrae and La Trobe families.<sup>26</sup>

Another reference to the La Trobes found in the Chaplin Music Book is the '49th Hymn, composed by the Bishop Latrobe [sic]'. Charles La Trobe's father, Christian Ignatius La Trobe, who first published the music for the hymn in 1790, was a Moravian (Church of the United Brethren) clergyman as well as a respected composer and musician. The annotation on the '49th Hymn' with the date of 24 December 1855 places Georgiana in Richmond. The words by the Irish dissenting evangelist and prolific hymn-writer Thomas Kelly end with a plea for safety:

Pilgrims here on earth and strangers  
Dwelling in the midst of foes  
Us and ours preserve from dangers,  
In Thine arms may we repose.<sup>27</sup>



**Das Gewitter (The Thunderstorm)**

Transcribed by Georgiana McCrae, 1850, extract  
Chaplin music book, page 102, RB 1164.9, McCrae papers,  
Harry F. Chaplin Collection, University of Sydney Library

Georgiana may have felt a need for religious comfort to help her face the problems in her life. Aged fifty-one, her husband was often away on the goldfields, her youngest daughter had died and her surviving children were growing up. Georgiana had no permanent home of her own and could not afford to return to Britain. Friendship with the La Trobes had not resulted in particularly prestigious employment for Andrew McCrae. The departure of the La Trobes and the huge influx of population and wealth into the colony due to the gold rushes affected the McCrae family's social status.

At the end of Chaplin Music Book, an additional entry shows one of Georgiana's few choices of a poem by a woman, plus an unusually direct reference to a source. 'Woo'd & Married &c by Joanna Baillie' begins with the line 'The bride she was winsome and bonnie'. An annotation reveals that it was copied 'from Book III<sup>d</sup> of Wilson's *Edm of the Songs of Scotland*'. The Scottish poet and playwright Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) rewrote a number of Scots songs in an acceptably polite manner. John Wilson (1800-1849) was a well-known Scottish tenor who capitalised on an operatic career in London by touring Britain and North America with his 'Scottish Entertainments'. Georgiana may have been attracted to the song 'Woo'd & Married' because of its Scottish origins and its caustic comments about marriage.<sup>28</sup>

After Georgiana organised binding the Chaplin Music Book in 1856, her enthusiasm for transcription and collation of manuscript music appears to have lessened. In correspondence with her friend Mrs Bunbury, who had returned to Britain, Georgiana commented that she did not enjoy the songs that her daughters were learning. She continued, 'How I should like to hear you sing again & to spend a quiet week or two with you. If the Drs. would order Lucy to Britain for her health we might manage to pay you a visit – but these are Castles in Spain!'<sup>29</sup>

Her music collections were valuable reminders in Georgiana's nostalgia for earlier years. For example, Georgiana owned a printed book comprising parts of *The Scots Musical Museum*, signed 'G. H. Gordon 1826'.<sup>30</sup> First published as a series of six separate printed volumes from 1787 to 1803 to celebrate Scotland's musical heritage, *The Scots Musical Museum* had considerable input from the Scottish songwriter Robert Burns in volumes two to six. Georgiana's grandfather Duke Alexander Gordon's version of words for 'Cauld Kail in Aberdeen' was included in the work after Burns visited *Gordon Castle* in September 1787. Some of Georgiana's additional notes dated 1860 in her compilation copy correspond with extra annotations in the McCrae Homestead Music Book.

In 1864, her stepmother's will made scanty provision for Georgiana, which exacerbated Georgiana's depressed mood. She subsequently initiated a marriage separation from her husband Andrew, who retired and travelled to Britain in 1867 without Georgiana. While away Andrew wrote song lyrics for 'Johnnie Miller', which is based on the traditional Scots-Irish song 'I know where I'm going'. 'Johnnie Miller' was published in England in 1873 with an art song setting by a German composer, Professor Stark of Stuttgart. Andrew hoped that sales of his song would provide funds for their daughter Fanny, who also was having marriage difficulties. Perhaps Andrew had Georgiana and Fanny in mind when he adopted the voice of a wife longing for her husband's safe return:

Send him to me safe  
What care I for siller  
He's life and a' to me  
Kind Johnnie Miller.<sup>31</sup>

Andrew returned to Georgiana in Melbourne in 1874, but died shortly afterwards, without leaving many assets. Georgiana spent her remaining years in Melbourne living with her children. She occasionally annotated her collections and performed music for herself.

Her skills in copying and collecting her 'favorite' music assisted her by contributing to her enjoyment in active musical performance, as well as to her introspective meditation and social bonding, for most of her life.

Georgiana's musical performance skills would have included the ability to improvise. It is unclear, however, if she created any original notated musical compositions. Georgiana's manuscript music collections do not show her interactions with Australian Indigenous people, nor the development of an Australian colonial character. Instead, Georgiana preferred music that connected her with her British homeland. Her manuscript music collections are key sources among the large amount of surviving material by and about her, illuminating aspects of her inner life as well as referring to important people, places and events in her musical biography. The study of music collections such as those owned by Georgiana McCrae contributes to our understanding of the significance of music to individuals and groups in the nineteenth century, in Britain, colonial Australia and elsewhere in the world.

## Endnotes

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- 3 Ibid, pp.53-68; see also Richards, "'To Display Her Chief Accomplishment': domestic manuscript music collections in colonial Australia", in Nancy November (ed.), *Performing History: approaches to history across musicology*, Brookline, Mass., Academic Studies Press, 2020 (forthcoming).
- 4 Georgiana McCrae, Recollections of an octogenarian: manuscript ca.1885, MS MSM 548, MS Box 4264/2, MS 14833, State Library Victoria.
- 5 A 'strathspey' is a slow Scottish dance.
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- 7 La Trobe Library music book, c.1817-1848, MS 12018 2519/4, State Library Victoria, named after its former La Trobe Library (Australiana collections); Chaplin music book, c.1840-1856, RB 1164.9, McCrae papers, Harry F. Chaplin Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Sydney Library.
- 8 A 'preformed' manuscript music book is like an exercise book, which may be compared to loose-leaf pieces of paper that are collated and bound at a later date.
- 9 Gordon Castle music book, c.1827-1828, MS 12018 2516/3, State Library Victoria; thanks to Professor Jeanice Brooks.
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- 24 Inscription ‘AG’, song ‘Love’s Witchcraft’ by Schulz, in *The German Songster*, [ed. Benjamin Beresford], Berlin: G. C. Nauk, 1798, p.18. MS 12831, 3596/6, State Library Victoria; see also Johann Schulz, ‘Liebeszauber’ (1782), in *Humoristische Lieder*, ed. Max Friedlaender, Leipzig: Edition Peters, n.d., p.38, [https://imslp.org/wiki/Liebeszauber\\_\(Schulz%2C\\_Johann\\_Abraham\\_Peter\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Liebeszauber_(Schulz%2C_Johann_Abraham_Peter)) (accessed 2 February 2020); thanks to Dr Jennifer Hill.
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- 27 Chaplin music book, p.121(B).
- 28 Ibid, reverse of p.245; John Wilson, arr., *Wilson’s Edition of the Songs of Scotland*, 8 books from 1842; see Rosemary Richards, ‘John Wilson and Scottish Song’, in *Re-Visions: proceedings of the New Zealand Musicological Society and the Musicological Society of Australia Joint Conference... December 2010*, edited by Marian Poole, Dunedin: New Zealand Music Industry Centre, 2013, pp.171–185.
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Unknown artist  
St Mary's, Portsea Island, Hampshire, c.1800  
(Ron Brewer, *All about St Mary's: a short history of the Church of St Mary, Parish of Portsea*, p.5.)

## *The Parson's Wife: in search of Harriet Bean, daughter of Empire*

By Loreen Chambers

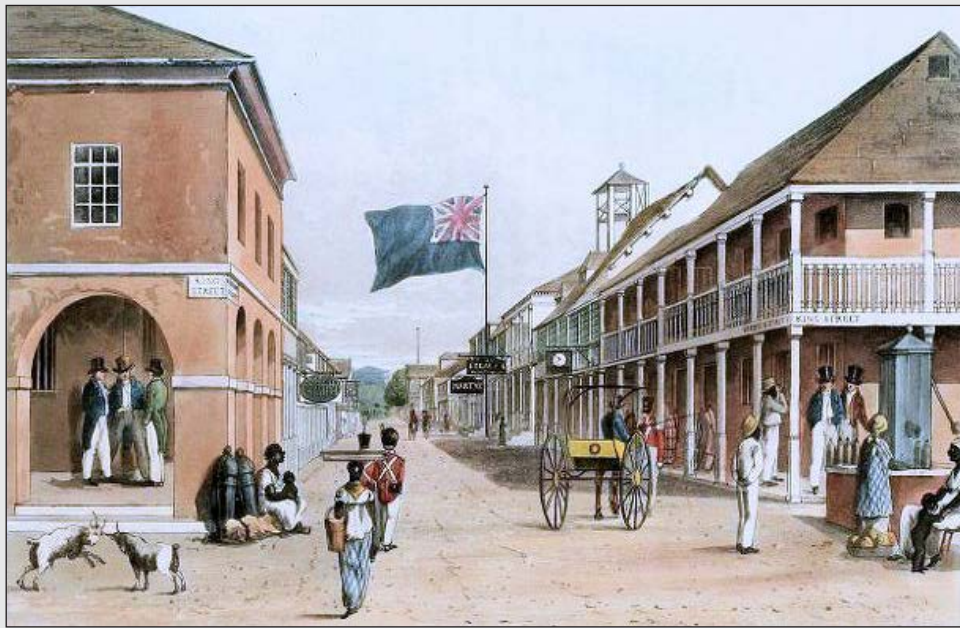
Loreen is a retired History Teacher and is currently Vice-President of the C J La Trobe Society and a member of the editorial committee of *La Trobeana*. Loreen is also a lecturer at various Local History societies and at U3A Deepdene. Her main interests are British and Australian History, with particular focus on the 18th and 19th century period, as well as local and family history.

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This is Part 2 of the story of the Bean family. Part 1 was about Willoughby Bean who, in 1824, borrowed on his inheritance and became a settler in New South Wales and later a pioneering parson in Victoria.<sup>1</sup>

Harriet Battley was married to Willoughby Bean for nearly forty years and while we can trace fragments of her life through the prism of his life, we know nothing about her childhood. Defined only by her status as daughter, wife and mother

she might have been forgotten by history. Apart from a death notice in the Melbourne *Argus*, one other newspaper reported that she had been: 'most helpful to her husband in his different ministries acting as she did as his organist at Williamstown, Port Albert and Inverleigh, and not unfrequently [*sic*] at the Yarra Bend. Her work as a clergyman's wife was beyond praise and won for her the admiration and respect of all who knew her. She leaves Willoughby [*jnr*] and Henry Bean and Mrs T.B. Wilson'.<sup>2</sup>



James Hakewill, 1778-1843, artist  
Thomas Sutherland, engraver  
Harbour Street, Kingston, 1820-21  
Hand-coloured aquatint

From *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica* (London: Hurst and Robinson, 1825, plate 4)

If Willoughby Bean's childhood at Amboise in France was an unusual start to life, Harriet's was even more so. Harriet's mother Hannah Mitchell came from the market town of Alton in rural Hampshire. Hannah met William Battley, a young officer, probably an Ensign,<sup>3</sup> whose regiment the 60th Rifles was stationed on Guernsey and they were married on 24 December 1799 at St Mary's Church, Portsea Island, near Portsmouth, then the most heavily fortified naval dockyard in England and home of the Royal Navy. In November that year Napoleon had overthrown the Directory and, on 12 December, he had been elected First Consul. The date suggests that this may have been a rushed marriage as the regiment was on the move.

William Battley had been born into the Anglo-Irish gentry in County Clare, Ireland in 1774. The Battleys, originally from Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, had been awarded lands by Cromwell in the early seventeenth century, lands confiscated from the Irish Catholic gentry, a group for whom Cromwell held an almost pathological hatred.<sup>4</sup> As a second son, William was able to buy a commission in the army. By 1798, a year before he married, he was called up to join his regiment, the 60th Rifles.<sup>5</sup>

Soon, William was serving in Jamaica in the West Indies, a British colony since 1670. Here, too, Hannah went to live and give birth

to at least four children: Arabella,<sup>6</sup> Thomas,<sup>7</sup> Harriet,<sup>8</sup> and Caroline.<sup>9</sup> Slaves had been brought into the West Indies in 1626. Sugar and coffee, and to a lesser extent tobacco and cotton, were the mainstay of the plantation economy; slavery provided its free labour.<sup>10</sup> Many English gentry and aristocrats, as well as local landowners, hoped to make sufficient money to ensure their future wealth. However, life in the West Indies for Hannah, the wife of a military man, was not idyllic, and fear of a slave rebellion was ever-present.

In 1810, William moved to Cowes on the Isle of Wight, which was in close proximity to Portsmouth, and in 1812 he was transferred to the Cape Colony (South Africa) where he was promoted to the rank of Major that year. By 1815 he had become Commandant with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel of the 60th Rifles.<sup>11</sup> British military forces were involved in the Fourth Xhosa War (Cape War) and used to maintain control not only of frontier violence between settlers and indigenous tribes, but also of inter-tribal conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of Harriet's childhood, now aged five, she was to experience the death of her little sister Matilda Rosa on 6 December 1812, aged two. But worse was to come when Hannah, still in her thirties,<sup>13</sup> also died on 4 December 1813 soon after the birth of her youngest child.<sup>14</sup> All the children, now under eleven years of age,



**Chas C Stadden, 1919–2002, artist**  
**Officer and riflemen, 5th Battalion,**  
**60th Regiment 1812**  
 Watercolour 1969  
 Private collection

Riflemen were readily distinguishable by  
 their unusual dark green uniforms  
 William Battley served in the 1st Battalion,  
 60th Regiment from 1798 to 1817

were probably sent back to their relatives in Hampshire, although it is likely that Tom was already at boarding school or learning from a tutor. Just three years later, in 1817, their father William was ‘accidentally killed’ at Gibraltar aged 43.<sup>15</sup>

After that tragedy, we lose sight of the four Battley children until they are in their twenties, by which time it is clear that their brother Tom had inherited family money and was now head of the family. We can surmise that Arabella, Harriet and Caroline had received a conventional lady’s education; Harriet, for example, was proficient in music and drawing.

In 1831 Tom Battley, now twenty-seven years old, received an interesting letter from his friend Willoughby Bean who (together with a cousin, Henry Gunsley Watson) had migrated to New South Wales in the 1820s. Willoughby was living at Brisbane Water in the Gosford area. He had much to say on the state of colonial agriculture and pastoral activities. And then on a more personal note, it is clear that Willoughby, a bachelor aged thirty-one, was ‘in need of a wife’ when he wrote to Tom Battley in the same letter:<sup>16</sup>

A Lady of your choosing would be  
 suitable – beauty with me is nothing! a  
 good and amiable disposition, pleasing  
 manners, a taste for music, drawing

and a country life – domestic habits and affectionate and modest demeanour are what I require in [a] woman. Better to perform one’s pilgrimage alone than be bothered with any of your beautiful and fanciful coquettes... Can you find me such a one?<sup>17</sup>

Tom Battley, the head of the family with three unmarried sisters, was considering migrating to New South Wales to become a landholder. His sisters would either housekeep for him or, better still, marry well, preferably to other landowners and re-create the lifestyle of the gentry in the colonies.

Four years later the *Sydney Herald* reported their arrival in Port Jackson:

From Portsmouth, on Monday last, having sailed from thence the 22nd March, the barque<sup>18</sup> *Hercules*, Captain T.B. Daniels, with merchandise. Passengers... Miss [Arabella] Battley, Miss Harriet Battley, Miss Caroline Battley, T.C. Battley, Esq...<sup>19</sup>

Tom and his three sisters moved to the Brisbane Water area almost immediately. Here the Battley family built and then lived in a colonial cottage for about four years.

Harriet must have acquired the desirable qualities of a lady and Willoughby Bean proposed within a year. Romance had little to do with it – this was a time when women had so little agency in the desperate need for the financial support of a suitable husband. Harriet, now aged twenty-nine, knew she should marry an Anglican and marry someone of her own class; her two sisters ‘married well’ to local settlers, as did their brother. Willoughby Bean was a gentleman and he was an intelligent and articulate man as his letters show, an eldest son. Willoughby was a landholder of 4,020 acres (1,627 hectares) at Erina near Gosford where he had employed nine bond men and seven free men. He had built a cottage, store houses, and huts for his staff. He had grazed about 208 cattle and some sheep – and he owned four horses.<sup>20</sup> Willoughby had much to recommend him; Harriet married the thirty-eight-year-old Willoughby Bean on 11 July 1838.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately Willoughby Bean, like many settlers, had no real knowledge of the land, and particularly of Australian conditions. Bean had borrowed heavily from 1829. Then economic depression in the 1830s forced him off the land and he lost his property *Amboise* some time about the year Harriet and he married. Interestingly, Harriet’s brother Tom was also to



become insolvent a few years later, but recovered eventually. The Battleys and the Beans, it might be remarked, shared an unworldliness in money matters often found in the gentry and military families of their class.<sup>22</sup>

In 1840, they had their first child Harriet Elizabeth (called Lilius).<sup>23</sup> Four years later on 25 April 1844 Harriet gave birth to a son Willoughby John.<sup>24</sup> This was the same month that insolvency proceedings against Willoughby were taken out and thus he made the momentous but unsurprising decision<sup>25</sup> to train as an Anglican minister hoping that a 'living' might be found to support him and his family.

The Beans made the long sea voyage back to the United Kingdom where Willoughby studied theological subjects, then mostly the classics especially Greek and Latin, at St David's College in Lampeter, Wales, which was comparatively new and also cheaper than Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>26</sup> Here in Lampeter Harriet, then aged forty, had her third and last child, Henry Alexander, in May 1847.<sup>27</sup> These large gaps of up to four years between children suggest that there may have been a history of miscarriages.

But Harriet's life was to take another turn shortly after baby Henry was born. Willoughby was invited to return to Australia by the foundation Bishop of Melbourne, Charles Perry.<sup>28</sup> Unlikely to gain a living in England, both he and Harriet, whose family was of course all living in New South Wales, agreed.

Together with Charles Perry and his wife Frances, her sister Dora, and other clergy,<sup>29</sup> the Bean family travelled on board the *Stag*, a three-masted sailing ship to Port Phillip,<sup>30</sup> then a colonial outpost of New South Wales, arriving in Melbourne on 14 January 1848. Seven clergymen and their wives, plus eleven clerical children must have been quite daunting to the other twelve cabin passengers, as well as the various steerage passengers, five of them being servants of the Perrys. Richard Hanmer Bunbury, the harbour master in Williamstown,<sup>31</sup> met Perry's entourage and spoke well of Willoughby Bean. He also wrote in a letter to his father that, 'Mrs Bean we have not as yet seen but Mrs Perry speaks very highly of her and her children, and as she is very fond of music and drawing, both Susan [wife] and the children will have very pleasant companions.'<sup>32</sup>

We know from Frances Perry, the energetic and irrepressible diarist, as well as charity worker and devoted bishop's wife, that Bishop Perry read prayers to all the cabin passengers every day, his somewhat forbidding style brooking



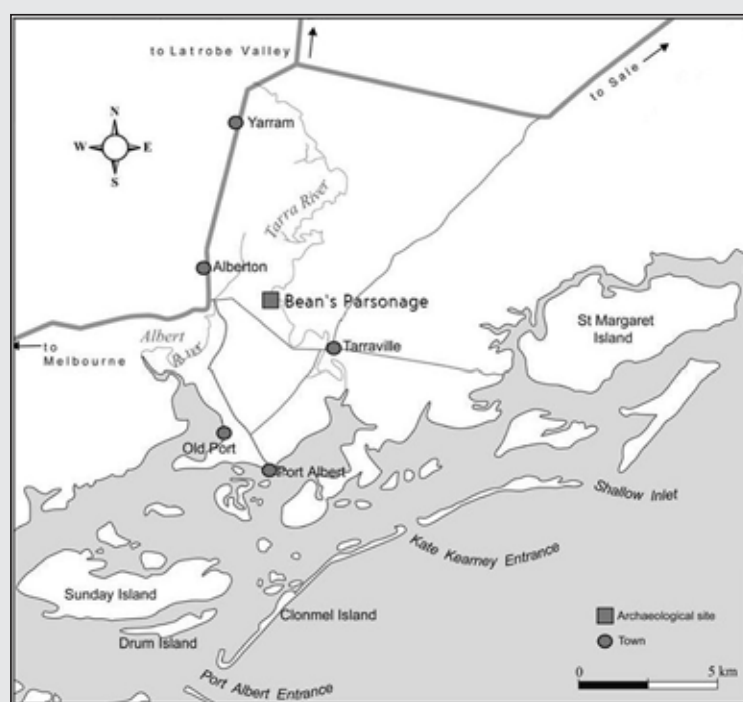
no objection. Three of his clergymen were delegated to read prayers with the crew and the steerage passengers. The bishop gave his clergy regular classes on the Greek testament and no doubt quizzed them on the Scriptures.<sup>33</sup>

Frances Perry took on the role of tutor to the wives. Harriet would have been in no doubt as to her future duties, such as assisting with an infant school, visiting the poor and playing hymns at church services. It must have been a sedate trip for everybody else on board. Even the seas were sedate; the only excitement during the three-month voyage was when another ship and the *Stag* drew too close to each other in order to exchange greetings and news, and their yardarms and rigging became dangerously entangled.<sup>34</sup> An even more dramatic event was when a distressed and probably depressed steerage passenger jumped overboard after a marital quarrel.<sup>35</sup> He was hauled out of the water and next day paraded on the ship before all, including the children most likely, and given a lecture on the iniquity of suicide.

In Melbourne, three months after their arrival in early 1848 and now Reader in charge, Willoughby Bean was briefly responsible for holding prayers in the back of a store in Nelson Place, Williamstown, the family living we know not where. By the end of the year he was an ordained minister.

Willoughby Bean was almost immediately appointed as the first resident minister to Gippsland. Rev. Francis Hales, aged twenty-six,





Helene Athanasiadis, illustrator  
Major settlements in the Port Albert District

Map, adapted from Brooks et al, 'Ploughzone Archaeology' Australian Archaeology, June 2009, p.37.

had just returned from his visit there, refusing to return and worried as to how his young wife Ann, then expecting her first child, would manage in the bush. Ann was to go on to have at least nine children; like many colonial women who had multiple births she pre-deceased her husband.

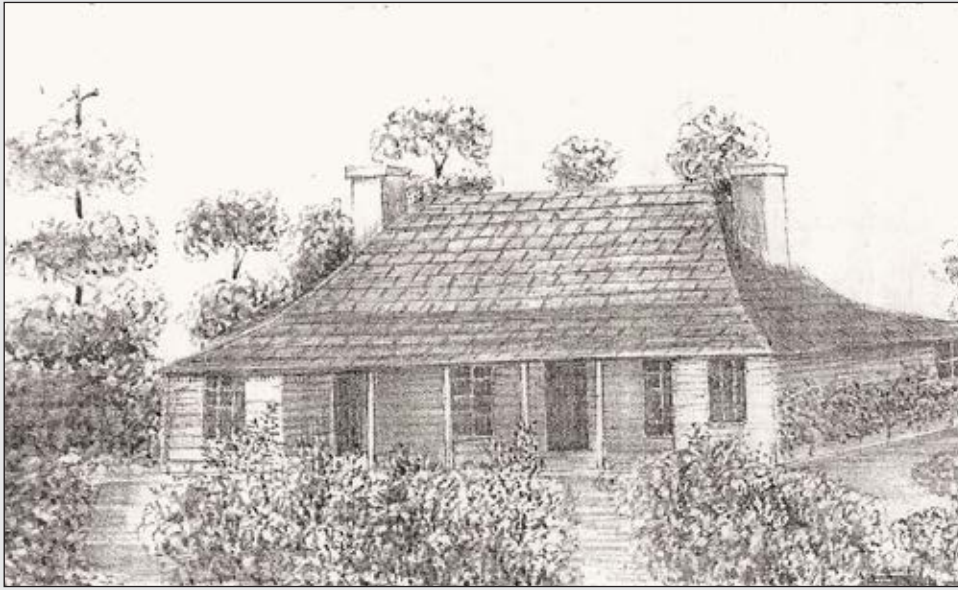
Gippsland was at that time a mysterious and remote area of the colony of New South Wales virtually unknown to European settlers. Swamp and tea tree scrub covered its coastal areas and Mountain and Alpine Ash, messmate, stringy bark, peppermint and box grew in the Great Dividing Range. It was easier to go to Gippsland via sea, despite the dangers of travel in Bass Strait.

Willoughby Bean went on ahead of his family and must have realised the strains he was about to impose on them when he wrote: 'Swam our horses across the Glengarry or Latrobe [*sic*] River and reached Fitchett's Woolpack Inn [in Sale, then called Flooding Creek]... How I shall bring my family over safely I know not'.<sup>36</sup> This remark was written on 13 December 1848 only one month after he had endured a perilous voyage from Williamstown to Port Albert; and one from which Bean was still recovering. He had come on the newly-built schooner the *Colina*, having left 'those dearest to me in this life' in the care of others. He was crowded into

one cabin on the *Colina* with eleven adults and ten children in a space less than that of the two cabins he had occupied on the *Stag*. During a stormy night of fitful sleep he awoke to a driving gale. Soon the small ship's anchors broke loose. Blown off course they were swept beyond their destination up the New South Wales coast. Bean's diary says 'sat up reading out of my Bible and Prayer Book' to the terrified passengers, mostly women and children.<sup>37</sup> Thankfully, the Beans were to be safely carried to Port Albert a few months later on the same ship.

When he had arrived at Port Albert, his family in mind and without waiting for his bishop's approval, Willoughby Bean, an experienced settler used to making his own decisions, quickly bought *Coal Hole*, the best house in the Alberton region at Tarraville six kilometres inland from Port Albert. Within a year of her arrival at Tarraville, Harriet was settled into her bush parsonage with a large garden, two housemaids and a man called Peter Johnstone who cut wood, tended the animals and provided security.<sup>38</sup>

In a folio belonging to Mrs Perry a sketch labelled 'Parsonage, South Gippsland' tells us that the building was a typical colonial timber house with wooden or bark shingles and with brick chimneys. Beginning life as a shelter for the stockmen of Angus McMillan<sup>39</sup> driving



**Frances Perry, 1815–1892, artist**  
**Parsonage, South Gippsland, 1857**  
 Pencil sketch  
 Anglican Diocese Archives, Melbourne

their herds to the port on the *Coal Hole* run, it had been transformed by James Wentworth Davis into a comfortable home.<sup>40</sup> By 1859 the property was described as consisting of ‘forty acres of land... the whole of which is fenced in with a most substantial bush fence; eight acres being cleared ready for the plough, and enclosed with a four-rail fence; there being thereon a Cottage, of eight rooms... and a garden of one acre or more manured and dug for an early crop of potatoes’.<sup>41</sup> The property consisted of a very comfortable weatherboarded cottage complete with verandah, out houses, kitchens, servants’ quarters and workshops, as well as a pond in the front.

An archaeological dig carried out on the site recovered remnants of kitchen ceramics and glassware, writing slates and pencils and nine clay pipes, and a lot of oyster shells. There were also fragments of china from a rather fine Wedgwood setting called Eton College, perhaps brought out to New South Wales by Harriet in 1835. As well as fragments of lead crystal stemware there were also many whisky and brandy bottles, not an uncommon item of consumption of both sexes before wine and beer were available to distant settlers, although gin was preferred as a cheaper drink by some.<sup>42</sup>

For Harriet the parsonage would have been a refuge, but it was a refuge in a hostile and remote environment. The men who came to Harriet’s door when Parson Bean was away taking services throughout Gippsland were often

escaped bond servants, their chains, still attached, clinking in the night.<sup>43</sup> Such desperados settled at Tarraville and were notorious cattle duffers, stealing from the herds which came down the cattle trails on their way to Port Albert for transport to Van Diemen’s Land. They would steal anything they could get their hands on, including boots and grog. So notorious was the Tarraville area that it came to be known as St Giles, after the most violent area in London.<sup>44</sup> Loneliness, fear and privation for most women and girls was their lot on the frontier.

A church was built at Tarraville in June 1856 and here we know ‘a sweet-toned harmonium, presided over by Mrs Bean, greatly adds to the choral part of the service’.<sup>45</sup> Church was able to offer women spiritual and social consolation for many on the frontier.

Harriet came in for some chiding from the Bishop when he complained to Bean about the slowness of the setting up of a Sunday school.<sup>46</sup> He said: ‘I hope also that Mrs Bean will be able to spare some portion of time from her little family, for these things, at least so far as to shew that her heart is with you in your work, and that she is anxious to do as much as she can.’<sup>47</sup> There is also no evidence that Harriet visited the young mothers who were scattered across the Alberton region.

By 1853 the Bean family also included Emily Battley, Harriet’s fourteen-year-old niece. Possibly Emily had come to be a companion to



her cousin thirteen-year-old Lilius. Emily was the daughter of Thomas and Ann Battley in Gosford who had experienced the death of two of their young sons; Harriet's ties to her brother Tom were obviously still close.

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Bishop Perry thought the Beans should be living much more frugally in a manner befitting an evangelical parson and his wife in a poor parish and decided to recall Bean to Melbourne in September 1859: hence the auction of so much of the household contents, that sad list of broken dreams. The auction of the parsonage contents in September 1859 clearly reveal 'the material culture' of the home of a genteel and literate, middle-class establishment. The Beans' household furniture consisted of chairs, tables, sofas, clock and bedsteads. There were also iron stretchers, toilet glasses, wash stands, a bronze fender, ewers and basins, and kettle, cupboards, mattresses, a book case and stand, some books, 'a fine tuned piano by Broadwood' and a music stool. From the kitchen there were meat safes, kitchen tables, kettles, filters, crockery, chairs, candlesticks, etc.<sup>48</sup> Together with the aforementioned china and stemware, such items reflect the 'style' Harriet and Willoughby Bean thought fitting to their family and class and to Bean's occupation – as that of a clergyman of the 'largest established church of the governing colonial power'.<sup>49</sup>

The *Gippsland Guardian* reported that Rev. Bean and Mrs Bean and two Masters Bean left Port Albert for Melbourne on the *Storm*

*Bird*, on 22 October.<sup>50</sup> The Beans had clearly already sent Lilius to Melbourne when she was about fourteen, and perhaps Emily went also. Lilius probably went to live with a clerical family to acquire an education. There was a sequel to the story of the parsonage. In May 1861 a fire destroyed the Bean's home when the tenant's children were left alone with an unguarded fire; a reminder of the huge responsibility of women rearing children in the bush.<sup>51</sup>

Fortuitously Bean inherited some money when his father died in Bath in 1862,<sup>52</sup> and this would have enabled Harriet to set up a new household at Inverleigh between 1860 and 1866, Willoughby's next posting, where the parishioners eventually took pity on their ageing minister and wife and gave them a buggy. After 1866 Harriet and Willoughby returned to Melbourne and lived in rented accommodation in Victoria Terrace, Victoria Street, Richmond where they were to see Lilius, now aged twenty-six, marry Thomas Wilson only son of Richard Wilson Esq. of South Yarra at St Stephen's Richmond in July 1866. Bishop Perry officiated as was the custom for members of the clergy. After this Willoughby Bean took on a very lowly position as Chaplain to the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum until 1877, the year he died. After Willoughby's death, Harriet lived for the remaining fifteen years of her life at her daughter's home in Millswyn Street, South Yarra. Without this support her old age would have been one of poverty, as both her sons never married (and are buried in paupers' graves). She herself is buried with Willoughby in Boroondara Cemetery at Kew.



Unknown artist  
[Bean's Parsonage, c.1860]  
Gippsland Regional Maritime Museum  
Photograph of a picture thought to be of Bean's Parsonage

Frequently, colonial women are ghostly and elusive presences in the stories of frontier life, mere companions to their better-known husbands, bearers of their children or matriarchs of extended families.

She was more than a clergyman's wife. Harriet Bean's life saw her travel great distances around the Empire and within Australia. Like

many other pioneers she endured much, but she also experienced life through the prism of the child of a military man, as a colonist of early Gosford, as a country parson's wife of gold-rush Victoria, and finally as a widow in suburban Melbourne during the years of Marvellous Melbourne.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Loreen Chambers, 'Not the Usual Pioneer: 'Parson Bean', his little Gothic Church and Gippsland 1849-1859', *La Trobeana*, vol.18, no.2, July 2019, pp.24-34.
- 2 *Church of England Messenger*, Melbourne, 14 October 1892, p.169.
- 3 Ensign is a junior rank of a commissioned officer. He became a lieutenant on 13 February 1813.
- 4 Noel M. Griffin, 'How many died during Cromwell's campaign in Ireland?' August 1649-May 1650. <https://www.historyireland.com/cromwell/how-many-died-during-cromwells-campaign> (accessed 1 May 2019).
- 5 A regiment which combined the characteristics of a colonial corps with those of a foreign legion.
- 6 Arabella Battley, 1803-1875.
- 7 Thomas Cade Battley, 1804-1892.
- 8 Harriet Battley, 1807-1892.
- 9 Caroline Ann Battley, c.1808/09-1878.
- 10 'Jamaica: history', <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/jamaica/history> (accessed 1 February 2020).
- 11 Lt. Col., 60th Foot, served in Cape Colony 1812-1817, arrived in Colony in 1812 with wife and five children. Source: Peter Philip, *British Residents at the Cape, 1795-1819: biographical records of 4,800 pioneers*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1981, p.20.
- 12 Fourth War (1811-1812) was the first war that featured professional British soldiers who could pursue an enemy with single-minded intensity, and in the fourth Xhosa War they drove the Xhosa back to the east of the Fish River, <http://originalpeople.org/xhosa-wars-cape-frontier-wars-africas-100-years-war> (accessed 1 February 2020).
- 13 Hannah's birth date is uncertain. The date on her marriage certificate is not reliable.
- 14 Philip. Hannah's age is given as thirty-two.
- 15 Phillip, p.20; Bernard Burke, *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland*, London: Harrison & Sons, 1912, p.35.
- 16 Brisbane Water, May 20th, 1831, transcribed C.E.W. Bean, 'Willoughby Bean, a settler of the 1820s', *Journal and Proceedings, Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 31, 1945, pp. 371-374. Note: Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean (1879-1968), historian and journalist, was descended from a different branch of the Bean family.



- 17 Ibid, p.374.
- 18 Barque, barc or bark is a type of small sailing vessel. (The *Hercules* was 481 tons, *Sydney Monitor*, 29 July 1835, p.2.)
- 19 *Sydney Herald*, 30 July 1835, p.2. In this Shipping Intelligence report the name 'Battley' was incorrectly spelt 'Batley'.
- 20 1829 Census Brisbane Water.
- 21 *Sydney Gazette*, 11 July 1838: 'Willoughby Bean Esq.'s marriage to Harriet the second daughter of the late Lieutenant Colonel Battley of the 60th Rifles by special licence at Green Point, Brisbane Water'.
- 22 It is also possible that Harriet's father, William Battley b.1774, and Willoughby Bean's father b.1772 knew each other from their Hampshire days. At least two of Major Bean's children, including Willoughby Bean, were born in Southwell, Hampshire, fifteen kilometres distance from Alton where Hannah Battley was born.
- 23 Harriet Elizabeth (Lilias) Wilson, née Bean, 1840-1931 She had two sons and a daughter.
- 24 Willoughby John Bean, 1844-1912, never married.
- 25 Chambers, p.25.
- 26 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.24.
- 27 Alexander Henry Bean, 1847-1916, never married.
- 28 Bishop Charles Perry, 1807-1891.
- 29 A total of three clergy and four other men who were later ordained in Melbourne, source: Tim Gatehouse, *On Board with the Bishop: Charles Perry's voyage to Port Phillip on 'the Stag'*, Melbourne: Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, 2017, pp.6-10.
- 30 Left London 2 October 1847 and sailed to Portsmouth for supplies and preparation for sea voyage.
- 31 Then called Williams Town.
- 32 Richard Hanmer Bunbury letter dated 15 February 1848, quoted in Gatehouse, p.31.
- 33 Perry journal 2 October 1847, quoted in Gatehouse, p.14.
- 34 Alexander Weynton journal 22 November-12 December 1847 quoted in Gatehouse, p.16.
- 35 Frances Perry's journal, quoted in Gatehouse, p.16.
- 36 13 December 1848, extract from the Journal of Rev. Willoughby Bean's first visit to his Parish.
- 37 Bean, Rough journal, in Clark, *The Church of our Fathers*, pp.25-29.
- 38 Alasdair Brooks, Han-Dieter, Susan Lawrence and Jane Lennon, 'Ploughzone Archaeology on an Australian Historic Site: a case study for South Gippsland, Victoria', *Australian Archaeology*, No.68, June 2009, p.38.
- 39 Angus McMillan 1810-1860. Explorer and pastoralist.
- 40 Sandra Pullman, 'James Wentworth Davis, pioneer of Alberton, Gippsland: a research report', *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.3, November, 2015, p.33.
- 41 *Gippsland Guardian*, 9 September 1859, p.1.
- 42 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.7-8. See also Alasdair Brooks, Han-Dieter, Susan Lawrence and Jane Lennon (2009).
- 43 A story that has persisted in local memory.
- 44 Patrick Morgan, *The Settling of Gippsland: a regional history*, [Leongatha, Vic.]: Gippsland Municipalities Association, 1997, p.38.
- 45 *Church of England Record*, April 1858, pp.40-41, Report on Gipps Land – Lower District.
- 46 Bean had calculated that there were 40 children in Tarraville and 183 in the region.
- 47 Perry to Bean, 15 July 1850, Letter book No.2, December 1849-January 1852, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Archives and Record Centre.
- 48 Susan Lawrence, Alasdair Brooks and Jane Lennon, *Archaeological Evidence of Pre-Gold Rush Settlement in South Gippsland, Victoria: results of field investigation*, Melbourne: [Department of] Archaeology, La Trobe University, 2015, p.56. See also their 'Ceramics and Status in Regional Australia', *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, No.27, 2009, pp.67-78.
- 49 Alasdair Brooks, Susan Lawrence and Jane Lennon (2011), p.13.
- 50 *Gippsland Guardian*, 28 October 1859, p.2.
- 51 Ibid, 17 May 1861, p.2.
- 52 Rev. Bean's father Captain Willoughby Bean died in Bath 18 May 1862. Bean received £1,249/10/0 at settlement, June 1862. Documents held at Somerset Archives, Bath, catalogue reference 0261/2/34.



Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818-1880, artist  
Arthur Willmore, 1814-1888, engraver  
The Melbourne Club, 1862

Steel engraving, coloured  
Private collection

Built in 1859 to designs by Leonard Terry for 36-50 Collins Street.

# *The Melbourne Club: its early years*

By Paul de Serville

Educated at the University of Melbourne, Paul de Serville is one of Australia's best-known and respected historians. All researchers into Victoria's colonial past have relied enormously on his two indispensable works of social history: *Port Phillip Gentlemen and Good Society in Melbourne before the Gold Rushes* (1980), and its sequel *Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria, 1850-80* (1991). His most recent book, the first of two volumes, is his *Melbourne Club: A Social History, 1838-1918* (2017).

*This is an edited version of an address given to the C J La Trobe Society members at the Melbourne Club on 29 November 2019.*

The club is a particularly English institution, adopted later by other countries. It began in London, spread to Scotland and Ireland and throughout the British colonies. Wherever the British gathered in sufficient numbers, a club was sure to emerge. The first London clubs started as coffee or chocolate houses. They flourished in a country which had a vigorous parliament,

a limited monarchy, a bill of rights, habeas corpus and, for those with a stake in the country, freedom of association. The grandest clubs were limited to gentlemen, a notoriously slippery term to define in the context of English society where, compared with European countries, the gentry was easier for an outsider to enter. In fact, the origins of the gentry and the aristocracy were often quite humble, even obscure. The origins



Unknown artist  
Joseph Hawdon, c.1836  
Photograph of portrait  
Pictorial Collection, State Library  
of South Australia, B7389

of the premier duke, the Howards of Norfolk, are still a matter of debate. Before we leave the old world, a word should be said about a basic difference between London and Paris society. London had its clubs, run by and for men. Paris had its salons, run by women where, as the eighteenth century progressed, ideas were discussed which intellectually undermined every established French authority.

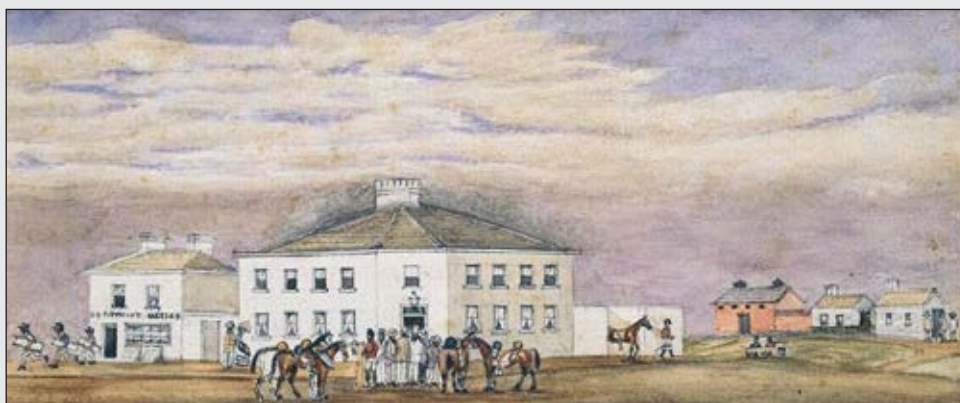
The earliest known club in the Australian colonies was the Union Club in Hobart, established in 1834. It collapsed in the 1842 depression. Two of its members later joined the Melbourne Club and became presidents.<sup>1</sup> In mid-1838 the Australian Club was founded in Sydney. It is now the senior club in the country. It is remarkable that it took fifty years for a club to emerge in Sydney. Perhaps in a convict colony, the officers' mess was sufficient. In Port Phillip things were different. Squatters<sup>2</sup> had already settled beyond the occupied counties of New South Wales, and drought drove them further south in the wake of exploration. In Van Diemen's Land at least three parties prepared to cross the strait. Edward Henty, later a Club member, landed at what became Portland in late 1834 and took up land in the interior. The Port Phillip Association, with John Batman as its scout, settled in what became Melbourne during 1835. It was a conservative association and some of its members or relations later joined

the Club. John Pascoe Fawkner's party arrived about the same time in dribs and drabs. Fawkner was something of a radical, an embittered man, and was later to become a vocal critic of the Club and all it stood for.

In 1836 the Crown reluctantly recognised the new District and appointed Captain Lonsdale as Police Magistrate of Port Phillip. His association with the Club will be noted. By 1838 there were numerous colonists from titled or landed families; retired army or navy officers; professional men. Society was forming, as societies all over the world emerge – the classes and the masses. Relations between them were already fraught. Deference did not survive immigration, forced or voluntary. The most unlikely colonists celebrated the freedom of their new country, unhindered by many of the formal traditions from which they had come. But more traditions survived than men such as Fawkner cared for: the idea of a gentleman, his manners and behaviour, his tastes in literature, art and music, the natural tendency of people with similar tastes to form friendships and associations, which flowered into early classes in the district. John Cotton, squatter and naturalist, comes to mind; squatter and collector Samuel Pratt Winter another. Fawkner loathed anything smacking of tradition and he particularly despised the self-created upper class, which had no official standing.

In late 1838 the idea of founding a club was discussed and reported in the *Port Phillip Gazette*.<sup>3</sup> A prospectus was issued and found its way into the paper: at the head of the twenty-three men listed was Lonsdale. The rest were a small group of civil officers and a large group of squatters, young and old, a few of them fathers and sons.<sup>4</sup> The club was to be founded 'on London principles', shorthand for an institution confined to gentlemen and having the blackball as a means of excluding unsuitable candidates. Lonsdale withdrew from the first twenty-three, because he thought it might lead to the growth of a faction. Perhaps – although General McNicoll, the second club historian doubted this<sup>5</sup> – Lonsdale foresaw the future battles between the squatters and the Crown. He did not join the Club until 1851.

Few of the founding twenty-two were still members in 1851, when Victoria became a colony. At the fiftieth anniversary in 1888, three were still alive but had not been members since before 1851: Captain Baxter, Robert Russell, the surveyor, and William Wedge Darke. The club was popular among visiting squatters because it provided clean beds and washing facilities; so its early popularity was as much utilitarian as social. Among the young bachelor squatters,



**Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn Liardet, 1799–1878, artist**  
**The Port Phillip Patriot office and the Melbourne Club, c.1840 [1875]**

Watercolour with pen and ink and pencil  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H28250/7  
 John Pascoe Fawkner's buildings located on south-east corner  
 of Collins and Markets Streets. His hotel on the right was  
 leased to the Melbourne Club from 1839 to 1844.

whether members or not, there was much wild behaviour and damaging of property when visiting Melbourne, reminding one of Hilaire Belloc's famous lines, 'Like many of the upper class, he liked the sound of broken glass'.<sup>6</sup> Their behaviour gave ammunition to radical critics such as Fawkner.

The first meeting was on New Year's Day 1839, followed by a dinner. Only one name is mentioned: Joseph Hawdon, who had overlanded and then made journeys to South Australia.<sup>7</sup> As early as January 1839 there was the first unofficial mention by an outsider of blackballing. The first duel, also between members, involved George Arden, editor of the *Gazette*, and Dr Barry Cotter in May 1839. It is unclear what the matter was upon which they fought, but as a result, Arden was expelled from the Club. How his newspaper rival, Fawkner and his editor of *The Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, crowed. Arden was a tragic figure. Daryl Wight has done extensive research on Arden's short life which expands upon the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry written by P.L. Brown. Born in India in December 1818, he was a younger son of the oldest proven Anglo-Saxon family in England. Shakespeare's mother was probably a family member. He was young, outspoken, impetuous and unfortunately an alcoholic. He died, abandoned, in Ballarat in 1854. Arden may stand for all the young men who came out to Port Phillip in the early years and who failed. Few failed as tragically as he did. It must not be thought that all club members were younger sons; the English term 'gentlemen' is elastic in meaning and every kind of gentleman was represented in the club. There was at least one whose parentage is unknown. It should also be

noted that many educated, civilised men, such as John Cotton and, pre-eminently, the Howitt family did not join the Club. I have for some years called them 'quiet Melbourne'.

In May 1839 the Club appointed three trustees: Joseph Hawdon, Patricius Welsh and Richard Henry Browne. Hawdon left the colony to settle in New Zealand; Welsh was ruined in the 1842 depression, but one of his grandsons, Robert Sherard, inherited as 12th and last Lord Sherard. R.H. Browne, known as Continental Brown, had withdrawn from the club before 1845 and eventually died in Scotland. Such were the ups and downs of the fortunes of Port Phillip pioneers.

In September 1839 Charles Joseph La Trobe and his family arrived. He had been appointed Superintendent of the District. It is an odd term, superintendent, as though the head of an asylum, which, with the behaviour of the first resident judge, was not far off the mark. La Trobe was an odd appointment: he was neither a member of the armed services nor of the civil service. He had no powerful patron. He was not even a conventional Englishman. Of Huguenot origin, his family had converted to the Moravian Brethren. They proved to be a clever family but not, as we were told, part of the minor nobility of France. There are certain parallels with the claims of my own family, which I and friends have since disproved. As his biographer John Barnes has explained, La Trobe was a civilised man, a traveller and an author, but above all a pious, humble, domestic man, very conservative and obedient to authority. This meant that he disappointed both fellow conservatives and enraged left liberals, who treated him brutally.





**Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn Liardet, 1799–1878, artist**

**The Port Phillip Bank, c.1842 [1875]**

Watercolour with pen and ink and pencil

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H28250/25

After the collapse of the bank it reopened as the Clarence Hotel, south-east corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets. The Melbourne Club leased the building in 1844 and purchased it in 1849

He made it clear that on his small salary he would live as a private gentleman. He had no court, he rarely made a formal public appearance. He had visions for Melbourne, its parks and gardens, its library and museum, its learned societies, but alas he was not the man for an energetic Melbourne. By default he left the leadership of society to a group of Melbourne Club men. He was received at the club house when he arrived, and a sort of levee was held. We do not know whether he was invited to join the club, but if he were, it would not be surprising that at first he refused, given his decision to live as a private gentleman. What is more surprising is that he did in the end accept; even more surprising, the year in which he accepted, a matter which I will discuss later.

In 1840 the first president of the club was appointed: William Verner, Anglo-Irish, nephew of a baronet and freemason, and unusually, a man of means who for some reason settled in the District where, as in Sydney, he was at once appointed a magistrate. He has been the only president to serve two consecutive terms. Verner was one of many early colonists who returned home or to England.

This early period was the last age of the duel. The most aggressive of duellists was Peter Snodgrass, the father of the formidable Janet, Lady Clarke. I am glad that both Ronald McNicoll and I took a dislike to him.<sup>8</sup> Among

the duellists, members of the club, were the young Redmond Barry, William Ryrie ('fiery Ryrie'), Frederick Powlett, Arthur Hogue and Robert Dean Chamberlain. In the same period were held courts of honour where men in society sat in judgement on a member's behaviour.

Verner was succeeded as president of the club by James Simpson in 1842. Simpson was one of the few early colonists widely respected in the district. He had been chosen as arbitrator in disputes before Lonsdale was appointed as the first Police Magistrate. Simpson had been a member of the Union Club in Hobart. It was during his presidency that the full force of the 1840s depression broke upon the district. It swept away many recently formed institutions, including the new Port Phillip Club, and it ruined many colonists. It was unfortunate that it coincided with the rule of the first resident judge, the irascible John Walpole Willis, who had been moved from post to post throughout the empire, inspiring enmity wherever he went. Port Phillip was his last appointment. He succeeded in dividing the District and was removed from office. One of his many victims was the quiet superintendent, La Trobe. Another victim of the depression was Captain George Brunswick Smyth, a founding member of the Club. He was in financial dispute with the quarrelsome Peter Snodgrass. Smyth cut him in a Melbourne street. Snodgrass promptly challenged him to a

duel which Smyth refused to accept. The Club held a court of honour on the matter and in a vote divided itself, a majority finding against Smyth who was effectively expelled. The president, Simpson, was so disgusted that he not only resigned his office but resigned from the club. Verner moved that the club be dissolved, although he had voted against the unfortunate Smyth. His motion did not succeed, but Smyth and his family left the district and he died in England not long after. It was an unhappy affair.

Frederick Powlett, a descendant in the illegitimate line of the last Dukes of Bolton, succeeded Simpson as president. During the presidency of his successor, Redmond Barry, the only president elected three times, La Trobe

was invited to join the club without enduring an election and possible blackballs. That was in 1844. As noted, in 1851 Captain Lonsdale finally joined the Club. In 1852 Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe was invited to become the club's patron and to pay no fees. Whether he used the club much is not on record, but he held a final levee there before he left the colony, a subdued affair because he had learnt of his wife's death in Switzerland. On this subdued note I will end this sketch of the oldest secular institution in Victoria and the link between early pioneer days and the turbulent present.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 James Simpson, Police Magistrate and the Club's second President in 1842; and William Henry Fancourt Mitchell, squatter, politician, and the Club's President in 1868.
- 2 A 'squatter' was a pastoralist who occupied vacant Crown land without authority. However, by the mid-1830s the term was applied to those who occupied Crown land under license or lease, prior to eventually purchasing it. David Denholm, 'Squatting', *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, rev. ed., Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.605.
- 3 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 27 October 1838, p.3.
- 4 Ibid, 10 November 1838, p.1. The list comprised William Lonsdale, George Brunswick Smyth, Dr Patrick Edward Cussen, Colonel Henry White and his son, Edward White, Captain William Henry Bacchus and his son, William Henry Bacchus jnr., Alfred Miller Mundy, Frederick Armand Powlett, William Henry Yaldwyn, Robert Murdoch, William Meek, Duncan McFarlane, William Wedge Darke, George Arden, Benjamin Baxter, Robert Russell, Edward Bate Scott, George Hamilton, Henry Wilson Hutchinson Smythe, and the three Ryrie brothers, William, Donald and Stewart.
- 5 Ronald McNicoll, *The Early Years of the Melbourne Club*, Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1976, p.6; and his *Number 36 Collins Street: Melbourne Club, 1838-1988*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin/Haynes in conjunction with the Melbourne Club, 1988, pp.4-5.
- 6 Hilaire Belloc, 'About John' (1907), *New Cautionary Tales: verses*, London: Duckworth, 1930.
- 7 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 5 January, 1939, p.3. 'The list showed nearly fifty names... About twenty of the members subsequently sat down to dinner at the Lamb Inn.'
- 8 McNicoll, pp.26-29; pp.22-24.

# *La Trobe's Other Club:* *a research note*

**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*. She has a particular interest in La Trobe's last twenty years of his life in England after the hardship years of colonial administration.**

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Upon his arrival in Melbourne in 1839 La Trobe had been welcomed at a reception held at the first clubhouse of the Melbourne Club on the corner of Market and Collins Street by many of the sixty or so of its members,<sup>1</sup> but he did not join the Club until 1844 when it began renting its second club house, a former hotel<sup>2</sup> and bank, further up Collins Street between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets. It was a simple but handsome Georgian two-storey timber building,<sup>3</sup> with nine rooms, cellars and seven indoor servants,<sup>4</sup> and stabling for its lively young squatters and professional men. By 1845, the year after La Trobe was invited to join, there were 100 members on the active list.<sup>5</sup> Though a small establishment, it was one of the largest households in the District, and certainly it would have eclipsed La Trobe's *Jolimont*. It is not known how often La Trobe visited this second Melbourne Club but he was to remain a member for almost ten years.

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La Trobe's 'Other Club', the Athenaeum Club of London, had been founded in 1824. It was and still is an imposing neo-classical building constructed in 1830 of two storeys (nowadays it

has an inconspicuous third floor) with a splendid and expensive frieze executed in Bath stone, which was a copy of the famous Elgin Marbles around the outside, a sculpture that a persuasive early founder, John Wilson Croker, had forced on a reluctant committee at the enormous cost of £2,000. This represented about five per cent of the total cost of the building, the price of a new ice-house which many of the committee members would have much preferred. However, it ensured that the building's appearance was not eclipsed by that of United Services Club emerging directly opposite.

Its main attraction for La Trobe in 1853 as he planned his departure from Port Phillip was its membership of distinguished and cultured men and its impressive library, as well as nearby the many cultural and significant institutions such as the Geographical Society. Perhaps, more importantly, the club's proximity to the Colonial Office in Westminster was immediately important to La Trobe who hoped to secure a further commission.

La Trobe was admitted under the rule that allowed the committee to accept nine new members annually who were 'eminent persons in arts, science or literature or for public services'.<sup>6</sup>



Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, artist  
James Tingle, engraver  
**The Athenaeum Club, Waterloo Place, c.1830**

Steel engraving  
The British Library  
The Club currently carries the address 107 Pall Mall,  
London. It is located on the corner of Waterloo Place.

His proposers were William Brockedon, the painter, travel writer and inventor and John Murray III, the publisher in that esteemed company of John Murray founded in London in 1777. La Trobe had asked Murray in his usual somewhat diffident style to put him up for a London club so that he could 'associate, when the occasion offers, with clever men, however stupid I may feel my self'.<sup>7</sup>

La Trobe was clearly acceptable to the membership committee despite this modesty and was admitted 27 March 1855.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, La Trobe was in good company at the Athenaeum: men such as William Makepeace Thackeray, author and illustrator of works such as *Vanity Fair*, Sir Francis Grant who painted La Trobe, Thomas Woolner the sculptor whose profile of La Trobe appears on the front cover of *La Trobeana*, Matthew Arnold the educator, Sir Charles Barry the architect responsible for the rebuilding of the British Houses of Parliament, Robert Browning the poet, William Butterfield whose design for St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne was sent to Melbourne, Edward Burne-Jones the pre-Raphaelite artist, John Gould, zoologist and publisher of *Australian Birds*, Charles Darwin, naturalist, geologist and biologist, and William Wilberforce politician, philanthropist and leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade. Other men were Thomas Carlyle, historian and essayist, Sir Humphry Davy, the inventor and President of the Royal

Society, and Charles Dickens, writer and social critic. The membership also included a number of prime ministers, such as Melbourne and Palmerston, and two archbishops of Canterbury, to name but a few.<sup>9</sup>

At the Melbourne Club, La Trobe would have been accorded the respect of the members by virtue of his office as the titular head of society. At the Athenaeum La Trobe would have been accepted as a former colonial governor, a travel writer of some note, a gentleman, and as a man whose personal attributes placed him on a par with many such distinguished men.

For his part La Trobe hoped through membership of the club that he might make contact with men of power and influence who would assist him to gain access to the Colonial Office, or an introduction to the Queen's levee which was to be held in March 1855. However, without 'old boy' connections,<sup>10</sup> and with little income and a prolonged absence from England this might have been too much to ask.<sup>11</sup>

On 6 May 1854 La Trobe sailed from Port Phillip, for a time lived in London at Hanover Square,<sup>12</sup> and on 14 March 1855 was presented to Queen Victoria by Sir George Grey, late Secretary of State for the Colonies, at a St James's Palace levee. He was to be presented on three further occasions,<sup>13</sup> the last when he received his Order of the Bath, awarded to civil servants



for service of the highest calibre. But after some fourteen years of exile, no new career prospects were forthcoming.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to consider that *Jolimont* would have been dwarfed by the four grander houses La Trobe leased on his return to England: *Ightham Mote* and *Addington Vale* in Kent, *Whitbourne Court* in Herefordshire, and *Clapham House* in Sussex. With his expanded family these country houses served both a practical purpose and an opportunity to emulate the lifestyle of a private gentleman.

Likewise, the Athenaeum served a practical purpose of providing access to the Colonial Office and to the scientific and cultural institutions that were central to La Trobe's intellectual interests – the very ones he had so manifestly desired to re-create in the Port Phillip District. The clubhouse has a Doric portico, above which is a statue of the classical goddess of wisdom, Athena, from whom the club derives its name. Charles Joseph La Trobe might here at last walk among that distinguished and cultured membership of the Athenaeum Club at 107 Pall Mall, London.

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### Postscript

John Goodall, 'A Rendezvous for the Arts: The Athenaeum, Waterloo Place, London SW1', *Country Life*, vol.214, no.6, 5 February, 2020, pp.72-77, features stunning photographs by Will Pryce. The author remarks that the United Services Club closed in 1978 and their building was taken over by the Institute of Directors, while the Athenaeum (which admitted women as full members in 2002 and introduced changes to its subscription system) continues to adapt to serve the twenty-first century needs of its membership.

### Endnotes

- 1 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.4; Paul de Serville, *Melbourne Club: a social history 1838-1918*, Melbourne: Melbourne Club, 1917, p.66. Some three-quarters of the original members had resigned by 1844, casualties of the 1842 depression.
- 2 De Serville p.73.
- 3 Ibid, p.74.
- 4 Ibid, pp.80-81.
- 5 Ronald McNicoll, *Number 36 Collins Street: Melbourne Club 1838-1988*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin/Haynes in conjunction with the Melbourne Club, 1988, p.34.
- 6 John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, Melbourne: Halstead Press in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, p.328.
- 7 La Trobe to John Murray III, 4 August 1854, National Library of Scotland MS 4067fs (quoted in Barnes, p.327).
- 8 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, p.254.
- 9 Prominent Victorian [Era] Members of The Athenæum Club, <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/athenaeum/members.html> (accessed 26 February 2020).
- 10 Barnes, p.13.
- 11 Ibid, p.328.
- 12 See letters written from 14 Hanover Street, Hanover Square, 16 February and 3 April 1855, <http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/LaTrobe'sLettersEngland.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2020).
- 13 27 June 1855 (*Morning Post*, 28 June 1855, p.5), 7 May 1856 (*Morning Post*, 8 May 1856, p.6) and 2 March 1859 (*Morning Post*, 3 March 1859, p.5).
- 14 Barnes, p.328.

# Captain William Hobson: the man who would be Governor

By Daryl Ross

Daryl Ross is a retired business executive and former export consultant. His Swiss great-grandfather, Louis Ernest Leuba, was one of a number of enterprising young Swiss encouraged by C J La Trobe and his Neuchâtel Swiss wife, Sophie, née Montmollin, to settle in Victoria. Daryl's interest in the family associations with Neuchâtel, which he has visited many times, triggered his interest in the La Trobe Society of which he is a former Vice-President.

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**T**he recent article, 'A Beautiful Site for a Town: Governor Sir Richard Bourke and the establishment of the Port Phillip settlement 1835-1837' by Dr Max Waugh, is one of many examining the background leading up to the establishment of the Port Phillip District and the naming of Melbourne by New South Wales Governor Sir Richard Bourke. Waugh traces the sequence of events through to the first land sales in 1837.<sup>1</sup> The roles played by Bourke, William Lonsdale, Robert Russell and Robert Hoddle have frequently been discussed by historians. This article aims to shed light on the life of Captain William Hobson, after whom Hobson's Bay was named, and explores his role in the events. To date, three biographies of Hobson have been published,<sup>2</sup> as well as excellent articles

in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. The more recent historical novel, *Hobsons' Chance* by New Zealand author Jenny Haworth, adds insight into his character and his story.<sup>3</sup> All have provided aspects of information for the following outline of his career that includes his little known role in the establishment of early Melbourne.

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William Hobson may be considered the classic British career naval officer destined for high office. Born 26 September 1793, Hobson was the third son of Samuel, a barrister, and Martha (née Jones) Hobson. Through the patronage of Captain (later Baronet and Lord of the Admiralty) John Poo Beresford (1766-1844),



**Mary Ann Musgrave,**  
active 1821–1847, artist  
**Lieutenant-Governor**  
**William Hobson of**  
**New Zealand, c.1839**

Watercolour  
Rex Nan Kivell Collection,  
National Library of  
Australia, NK5277



Hobson joined the Royal Navy before the age of ten, as a second-class volunteer at Deptford Dockyard in London.<sup>4</sup> The Deptford Dockyard was established during the reign of Henry VIII and was particularly significant during the Napoleonic wars. It also served as a naval training facility similar to the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth. In the eighteenth century it was not unusual for children as young as ten to begin their naval career.<sup>5</sup> As a volunteer, William would have served a minimum of three years, his time at sea increasing each year. He achieved the junior commissioned rank of midshipman in 1806 and as such he was considered to have the social rank of ‘gentleman’ on the first rung of the ladder of commissioned naval officers.<sup>6</sup>

Hobson’s first service was on the *La Virginie* under Captain Beresford on convoy and blockade duty in the North Sea. Here he saw action against the French and later, having achieved the rank of Lieutenant on the *Peruvian*, he saw action against the United States in blockades during the 1812–14 second War of Independence. In 1815 the *Peruvian* was part of the squadron that took Napoleon into exile on Saint Helena. After such active service and now in his early twenties he was stood down for eighteen months before being posted to

the Caribbean Station. He subsequently took command of the sloop *Whim* with the rank of Captain in 1821; this ship was part of a British operation to identify and suppress slave-trading and piracy in the West Indies.

Life at sea, particularly in the Caribbean, could be harsh and dangerous. Ships could be fired upon, boarded by cutlass-wielding desperados, and burnt or sunk by ruthless pirate action. Not only did captains go down with their ships, so too their crew, cargo and slaves if they were on board, usually manacled below decks. Officers’ quarters often became hospital wards following these nautical conflicts. Kingston in Jamaica was the British safe haven and the hub of Caribbean trade. In 1821 Captain Hobson and his crew were captured by pirates but negotiated their release after one week of ill-treatment. He was captured again in 1823, escaped and later routed the pirates who had captured him earlier, causing the death of their chief.<sup>7</sup> While surviving these ordeals, Hobson contracted yellow fever during his time in the West Indies, causing repeated bouts of fever and headache that plagued him throughout the rest of his life, possibly contributing to his premature death in 1842.



Oswald Walters Brierly, 1817–1894, artist  
HMS Rattlesnake, 1853

Watercolour  
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, PAF 5620

Hobson's exploits in the Caribbean saw him hailed as a hero at home in Ireland. In 1824 he was promoted to commander on the recommendation of Admiral Sir Edward Owen (1771–1849). The commander-in-chief of the West Indies Fleet considered him 'an officer of great merit and intelligence'. Owen's patronage at that stage of Hobson's career would have given him enviable status. Owen subsequently became a member of the Lord High Admiral's Council in 1828, commander-in-chief of the East Indies Station in 1829 and later an MP in Kent.

Hobson then returned to the West Indies to captain the sloop *Ferret* in actions against both pirate and slave ships. He is credited with the capture of the Spanish ship *Diana*. When stationed at Nassau in the Bahamas, he met sixteen-year-old Eliza Elliott, the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Scottish origin. They married on 17 December 1827 and the couple returned to England when his ship *Scylla* was paid off in 1828.<sup>8</sup>

At this point let us consider the parallel careers of Charles La Trobe and Hobson. La Trobe's first commission from the Colonial Office early in 1837 was to travel to the West Indies after the abolition of slavery. Whilst William Wilberforce's *Slave Trade Act 1807* nominally abolished the slave trade in the British Empire, it was not until the *Slavery Abolition Act 1833* that slavery itself was finally abolished. On 1 August 1834, 750,000 slaves in the British West Indies

were formally freed. An apprenticeship system of slave rehabilitation had been recommended but was unpopular among former slaves and their owners. Under pressure from Westminster, the legislative assemblies in the colonies abolished this system and full freedom was granted to all former slaves on 1 August 1838 which ended the apprenticeship scheme.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the British Government recognised the importance of education to enable the former slaves to become productive plantation labourers, and they provided funding to societies willing to establish schools for this purpose. La Trobe arrived in Jamaica in April 1837 with instructions to investigate and report to the Colonial Office on the progress of the grants program since its inception. He travelled extensively through all of the British-controlled islands of the West Indies and wrote three reports before returning to England to present his final, third report in August 1838.<sup>10</sup>

Both Hobson and La Trobe experienced the effects of the emancipation on the settlers and the indigenous populations of the West Indies during this period of transition. We can only speculate on the extent to which this experience influenced their attitude toward the indigenous populations in their future respective jurisdictions. We know that consideration of relationships between settlers and the indigenous populations was very high on their priority lists as set out by the Whig-led Colonial administration





**Australia, South Coast, Port Phillip, 1836 (extract)**  
**London: Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty, 1838.**

National Library of Australia, MAP RM 947

'Surveyed by Lieutenants T. M. Symonds and H. R. Henry and Mr F. Shortland  
of H.M.S Rattlesnake, Captain W. Hobson... J. & C. Walker sculpt.'

Previously published Sydney: J. Carmichael, 1836, with title,  
*A Chart of Port Phillip*, engraver J. Carmichael.

Extract includes Melbourne in the north and Red Cliffs (Red Bluff) in the east.  
Point Cooke [sic] and vicinity of River Ex (Werribee River) in the west.

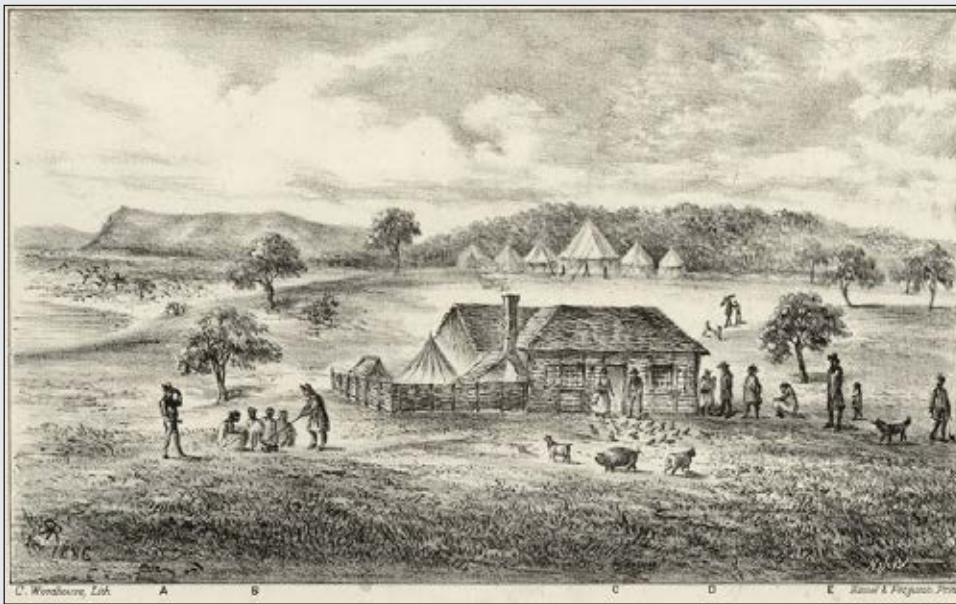
of the period. During his investigations La Trobe, like Hobson, contracted a fever and was incapacitated for two weeks soon after he arrived in the West Indies.<sup>11</sup>

For the next six years, after being paid off in 1828, Hobson returned home to Plymouth on half pay, impatiently awaiting a new command. When George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland (1784-1849) became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1834 in Lord Melbourne's Whig government, Hobson was given command of HMS *Rattlesnake* and posted to the East Indies Station, then under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Capel (1776-1853). Eliza remained in Plymouth with their three children. Their first daughter, also named Eliza, had been born in March 1830.<sup>12</sup>

The East Indies Station based in Ceylon was the centre for British Naval operations for India, China, the Cape Colony of South Africa, the islands we now know as Indonesia, the Australian colonies and the Pacific Islands including New Zealand. During one early commission Hobson travelled from Madeira on 10 April 1835 to Bombay and Colombo, then returned to Bombay before sailing to Madras and Mauritius. It was after these commissions

in 1836 that Hobson was ordered to take HMS *Rattlesnake* to Australia, reporting to Governor Sir Richard Bourke.<sup>13</sup> A fellow Irishman from Dublin, Bourke was fifteen years Hobson's senior. Although educated at Westminster and Oxford, he was Army-trained and rose in rank during the Napoleonic wars. He was said to nostalgically appreciate the soft lilt of his fellow Irishmen and appears to have seen Hobson as a kindred spirit.<sup>14</sup>

The American connotations of *Rattlesnake* make it seem an odd name for a British man-o-war in the early 1800s, given that Britain and America had been intermittently at war since 1776. Notwithstanding, ten different Royal Navy vessels have carried the *Rattlesnake* name, including a twenty-two-gun American brig captured by the British off Nova Scotia in June 1814 during the second War of Independence. The HMS *Rattlesnake* discussed here was an Atholl-class twenty-eight-gun sixth-rate corvette built for the Royal Navy at the Chatham Dockyards in Kent and launched in 1822. She saw service in the Mediterranean off the coast of Greece during the Greek War of Independence, before being despatched to join the Far East Fleet where Hobson took command of the ship.<sup>15</sup>



**Robert Russell, 1808–1900, artist**  
**Phillip Parker King, 1791–1856, artist**  
**Clarence Woodhouse, 1852–1931, lithographer**  
**Commendants House Melbourne, 1837 [1888]**  
 Chalk lithograph on buff paper  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H94.147

'From the original sketch by Capn (afterwards Admiral) P.P. King, R.N., dated March 1837.' Original drawing in King's notebook, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 963, carries the annotation 'Hobson making rice pudding', middle left.

Legend supplied by Russell:

- A** Batman (Mount Macedon in the distance)
- B** Capn Hobson, H.M.S. *Rattlesnake*, feeding natives
- C** Mrs Lonsdale feeding poultry
- D** Capn Lonsdale & child
- E** Buckley.

The Governor is seen approaching with his private secretary, his camp is in the distance.

The *Rattlesnake* arrived in Sydney via Hobart on 23 August 1836. It was considered the finest warship to have sailed into Sydney. Hobson was introduced to the elite of the colony and her crew were lavishly entertained. This experience may have influenced his regard for colonial life.<sup>16</sup> However, having left Eliza in poor financial circumstances two years before, he wrote to her from Sydney complaining that 'There is one drawback to my new station – there is not one shilling to be made by freights.'<sup>17</sup> As a ship's captain, however, he would have been able to engage in trading on his own account which could be quite lucrative.

Almost immediately after the *Rattlesnake*'s arrival in Sydney, she was commissioned to undertake two important tasks. The first was to transport Captain Lonsdale, his wife Martha and their infant child to the Port Phillip Settlement. Lonsdale had been appointed as the first Police Magistrate to establish civil and administrative order in the nascent settlement, with other officials, tradesmen, labourers, livestock, food and building equipment being transported from Sydney in the brig *Stirlingshire*.<sup>18</sup> The second of Hobson's commissions was to conduct a detailed nautical survey of Port Phillip to

provide safe sailing instructions for the onrush of ships coming mostly from Van Diemen's Land. Hobson chose Lieutenants T.M. Symonds and H.R. Henry and Mr Frederick Shortland<sup>19</sup> from the ship's company to lead the work which was done in stages over about ten weeks.<sup>20</sup> Their names were among those attached to permanent points of reference on official maps of the Bay. An update was also required of the general survey of the perimeter of the Bay that had been provided by the 1802–03 excursion led by the assistant Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, in the schooner *Cumberland*. Grimes had also recommended possible sites for settlement, including the Sullivan's Bay site occupied by the David Collins party and the 'freshwater' river afterwards named the Yarra.<sup>21</sup> In 1836, detailed surveys of land in preparation for the eagerly anticipated land sales were begun by the three surveyors who arrived in the *Stirlingshire*.

On 26 September 1836 (Hobson's birthday) the *Rattlesnake* anchored with the Lonsdale party at the mouth of the river at a point known today as Point Gellibrand.<sup>22</sup> They were welcomed warmly by the population of the settlement, estimated to number 224. Hobson

and his survey team charted the shores of the bay, the navigable channels and the smaller harbours or anchorages near Geelong and at the head of the bay, particularly that from Port Gellibrand to the eastern shore at Point Ormond, which was named Hobson's Bay by Governor Bourke six months later.<sup>23</sup> Bourke also adopted Hobson's names for the two high points on the eastern shore of the bay, Mount Eliza in honour of his wife and Mount Martha in honour of his mother.<sup>24</sup> During his stay in the Port Phillip District, Hobson made several excursions inland, sometimes hunting with the Aboriginal people whom he considered 'an inoffensive and rather intelligent race of people'.<sup>25</sup>

The *Rattlesnake* returned to Sydney, arriving on 13 December 1836. Hobson soon commenced a lengthy letter to Eliza; on 16 December he wrote acknowledging her letters and their wedding anniversary the following day. In the course of describing their activities during the Port Phillip visit, he expressed his interest in seeking a colonial appointment, possibly that of Governor of a future Port Phillip colony; hence the title of this article is a parody of Kipling's famous novel *The Man who would be King*. He wrote:

Port Phillip will soon become a place of great importance and will no doubt be the seat of a new Government that will include the beautiful country lately discovered by Major Mitchell, which is situated all round it, & bears some distinctive character. Should this happen the recommendation of Sir Robt. Grant which will go before Ministers, may impress Lord Glenelg, Sir Robt's brother, with a favourable impression towards me, and maybe induce *His Lordship to appoint me Governor*. Four of my brother officers have similar appointments in this part of the Globe.

Although the salary will not in the first instance exceed 500£ a year, I am not quite sure that it will not present advantages superior to the 2,000£ a year at Bombay. The climate is better – it affords a better chance of providing for children – and there can be no doubt of increasing my income very considerably by the acquisition of land. These are fine castles dear – but don't be alarmed, I will not stir an inch without your full concurrence.<sup>26</sup>

This letter, written over a number of weeks, continues on 1 January 1837 with 'Happy New Year' greetings. In the interim,

Hobson had visited colonial settler contacts in the Hunter region to make a judgement of that area compared with the land he saw at Port Phillip, which he considered better in quality and beauty. He is obviously considering his next career move as a colonial settler. He proudly concludes the letter stating: 'Rattlesnake is the handsomest Man-of-War they ever saw in Sydney. So much for fine feathers'.

In January 1837 Bourke sent his resignation to the Colonial Office in London. He had found himself embroiled in local politics and his authority was questioned. Whilst awaiting news of his replacement, he continued his visits of inspection around New South Wales and started for Port Phillip on 21 February 1837, on the *Rattlesnake* under Captain Hobson, anchoring at the entrance to the Bay on 1 March. The entourage included Captain Phillip Parker King (the surveyor son of the former governor Philip Gidley King), Captain Hunter (military secretary) and H.C. Holden (private secretary). Lieutenants Richards, Henry and Symonds were among the ship's company.<sup>27</sup>

On this visit Bourke not only named the principal town of the settlement after Lord Melbourne, the current Whig Prime Minister of Great Britain, he also named the settlement at Port Gellibrand after King William IV, Williamstown. Based on surveyor Robert Russell's layout of a city grid and finalised by Robert Hoddle, who had been appointed to take charge of the Port Phillip Survey Office, Bourke approved the layout for 100 blocks of land at Melbourne and Williamstown to be sold at the first land sales which were held on 1 June and 1 November 1837.<sup>28</sup> Bourke also undertook journeys to places of interest around the district including Geelong, accompanied by Hobson and Phillip Parker King. Bourke was keen to view the outlook from Mount Macedon from which Major Mitchell had identified what he referred to as 'Australia Felix'.<sup>29</sup>

Hobson, a distant but dedicated husband and father, wrote frequently to his wife Eliza in Plymouth. He was enthusiastic about the calibre of the colonists and his prospects for a career in the colonies. Privately, he was frequently unwell with recurrences of the yellow fever,<sup>30</sup> which he had contracted in the West Indies. Thus, at the age of forty-two, having found patronage and direction in his naval career, he was now seriously contemplating the prospect of a settled family life ashore as he foreshadowed earlier to Eliza. He now intimated that he would accept a naval administrator role in India.<sup>31</sup>

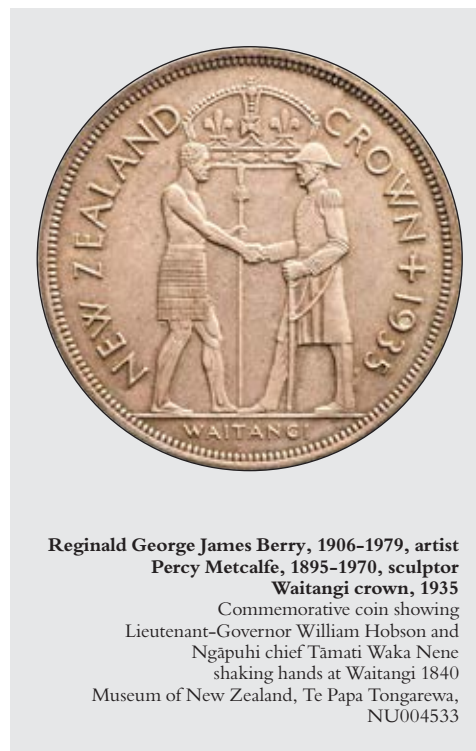
By way of comparison, we may recall that in 1835, La Trobe, the young, well-educated

Englishman of good family, was on the verge of marriage to Sophie de Montmollin, whose family was part of the Swiss aristocracy. He, like Hobson, was similarly financially stressed and frustrated while awaiting a suitable career opportunity. La Trobe's opportunity presented itself in 1837 at the time Hobson was musing over the possibility of colonial life ashore in Port Phillip. As previously noted, La Trobe was offered a commission from the Colonial Office reporting on the educational facilities in the West Indies for the recently freed slaves. His reports were well received at the Colonial Office, resulting directly in his appointment as Superintendent of the Port Phillip settlement in 1839.<sup>32</sup> After twelve difficult years, in 1851 La Trobe was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the independent colony of Victoria.

Meanwhile, on returning from Port Phillip, Governor Bourke received word from the British Resident in New Zealand, James Busby, that tribal wars were threatening British subjects. Bourke, on the verge of his departure from Sydney, called on the services of Hobson to visit and evaluate the situation and protect the British subjects involved. On 26 May 1837, Hobson, although now constantly suffering from the effects of his earlier illness, sailed the *Rattlesnake* into the Bay of Islands on New Zealand's north island to meet Busby. Here, during a two-month stay, he and Busby interviewed settlers, missionaries and Maori tribal chiefs on both islands. With the missionary Samuel Marsden as interpreter, they met the leaders of the warring factions, but were unable to resolve their differences.<sup>33</sup>

Hobson returned to Sydney, awaiting the arrival of the new Governor, Sir George Gipps, and recommended the establishment of British enclaves through negotiated treaties with individual Maori chiefs. He wrote again to his wife, confiding to her the possibility of a civil posting in New Zealand. In August 1837 Hobson and the *Rattlesnake* were recalled to India, then sent on to England arriving early in 1838. Hobson returned to Eliza and his family in Plymouth after submitting his report on the situation in New Zealand. He recommended establishing immediate British sovereignty over New Zealand and establishing regional enclaves as trading 'factories' similar to the godowns (a form of warehouse) in India. The land for these settlements would be secured by treaty with the local Maori chiefs.<sup>34</sup>

Further dispatches to the Colonial Office from Busby and Governor Gipps, who had arrived in Sydney in February 1838, highlighted the problem in New Zealand. In due course Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the



Colonies, recommended the appointment of a Consul for New Zealand and proposed Hobson for the post. His appointment was ratified early in 1839. His instructions for the establishment of a British colony in New Zealand were issued by Glenelg's successor Lord Normanby in August 1839, based on retaining the sovereignty of the Maori people by means of a treaty. Hobson was instructed to purchase land from them by contract, for resale to settlers at a profit to fund future operations.

Hobson, whose title had become Lieutenant-Governor by the Queen's Commission, sailed from Plymouth on 25 August 1839 with his wife and family on HMS *Druid* under the command of Captain Henry John Spencer Churchill. The *Druid* was a 1,170-ton wooden hull vessel of forty-six guns.<sup>35</sup> Had they left on an earlier sailing they may well have crossed paths with La Trobe who, having spent six weeks with Governor Gipps learning to be an administrator, left Sydney on 17 September to take up the new post as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District.

Arriving in Sydney on 24 December 1839, Hobson, like La Trobe, reported directly to Gipps and met with local merchants, prospective settlers and speculators. Leaving Eliza and the children safely in Sydney, he sailed for New Zealand on HMS *Herald* (another Atholl-class corvette, captained by Joseph Nias) with a detachment of troops and a small group of officials to form an Executive Council.



They arrived at the Bay of Islands on 29 January 1840 with appropriate powers of government to negotiate with Maori chiefs for the acquisition of land. On 30 January 1840 in a mission church building at Kororareka (now Russell) he read his Queen's Commission extending the territory of New South Wales and appointing him as Lieutenant-Governor. He issued invitations to local Maori leaders to a meeting to be held on 5 February at Waitangi near Busby's residence. In the interval Hobson, Busby and church leaders drafted a treaty document to be put to the meeting for ratification. On the day, the terms of the treaty were read in English and Maori and its purpose was explained to the assembled chiefs. The following day the treaty, known as the Treaty of Waitangi, was signed by all and the country was ceded to the Queen.<sup>36</sup> Thereafter, 6 February is commemorated as the founding day in New Zealand.

Hobson proceeded to extend the signatories to other centres in the North and South Islands. On 1 March, whilst considering the location of a future capital for the country at Waitemata Harbour which Hobson named Auckland after the then First Lord of the Admiralty, he suffered a paralytic stroke that affected his right side and his speech. He returned to the Bay of Islands settlement for care and treatment.<sup>37</sup> His condition was reported to Governor Gipps by the surgeon on the *Herald* on its return to Sydney. Gipps sent Major Thomas Bunbury with a detachment of eighty troops on the *Herald* to assist Hobson and take over if necessary. Hobson had recovered by mid-April when Bunbury arrived. As Commissioner, Bunbury undertook the collection of treaty signatures in the South Island. Hobson's wife and family accompanied Bunbury on the *Herald* to New Zealand and may have hastened Hobson's immediate recovery.

Major Bunbury, born in Gibraltar and the son of a serving officer, was another military veteran of the Peninsula War. In Australia he was, for a period, Commandant of the Norfolk Island colony for hardened convicts. He was known as a disciplinarian and not well respected by his troops, once having precipitated a soldier's mutiny. In New Zealand he was appointed a Magistrate in 1841 and acted as Deputy Governor. He later saw service in India before retirement in 1849.<sup>38</sup>

Administrative problems beset the fledgling administration, possibly due to inexperience amongst the personnel available, as much as dissention from the original settlers. For example, the pre-treaty settlers at Port Nicholson (now Wellington) had established their own administration as a form of self-government.

This could be likened to Batman's purchase agreement with Aboriginal chiefs around Port Phillip in 1835. Hobson reacted impulsively by sending in the troops. With Hobson's choice of Auckland as the capital, the Cook Strait region became a further centre of contention, given Port Nicholson (later Wellington) on the North Island was rejected as a capital and likewise Nelson, across the Strait rejected as a centre for the South Island.<sup>39</sup>

His growing unpopularity was further challenged when on 3 May 1841 Hobson was sworn in as Governor of New Zealand, now a Crown Colony, independent of New South Wales following the Royal Charter. Hobson travelled extensively; he appointed magistrates to settle regional disputes, including Akaroa to pre-empt French claims for settlement there.

Not unlike La Trobe's situation during his goldrush period ten years later, Hobson and his government were frequently ridiculed or criticised by the media of the day and even faced a group of radical merchants who initiated a petition to the Foreign Secretary for his recall. The high cost of establishing his administration and diminishing income from land sales, compounded by the long delay in official communications, forced him to issue unauthorised bills on the British Treasury. No doubt these pressures weighed on his health and he suffered a fatal stroke on 10 September 1842.<sup>40</sup>

Captain William Hobson benefited from his sound education, natural intelligence and family background. His private conduct was irreproachable, a good husband, father, friend, an entertaining speaker and gracious host. In his official capacity at sea or ashore he was both conscientious and just, given the authoritarian code of the day. His Christian ethic is reflected in his understanding of the indigenous populations he encountered in the West Indies, India, Port Phillip and New Zealand.<sup>41</sup> His enduring legacy is as the initiator and co-author of the Waitangi Treaty, described as the Maori Magna Carta which has endured to the benefit of the Maori people and settlers alike for 180 years.<sup>42</sup> His grave in the Symonds Street Cemetery, Auckland – the city he founded – has been a focal point over the years for commemorative events.<sup>43</sup>

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Unknown photographer  
**Headstone of William Hobson, Symonds Street Cemetery, Auckland**  
 'William Hobson, Captain in the Royal Navy, First Governor of New Zealand, who died at  
 Auckland 10th September 1842, aged 49 years.'

### Postscript

Although Hobson's untimely death left others to continue his work, the same was not the case for his ship HMS *Rattlesnake*, which he had taken back to England in 1838 for refit. The *Rattlesnake* returned to the Far East in 1841 and saw action off Canton in the First Anglo-Chinese War (Opium War). Records show she took part in the capture of Chinhai on 10 October 1841. Under the captaincy of Owen Stanley, she returned to Australian waters in 1845 as a survey ship undertaking surveys and scientific exploration in north Queensland and New Guinea. In 1849 she was the rescue ship for thirteen-year-old Barbara Crawford Thompson, the lone shipwreck survivor in 1844 who spent five years living with Kaurareg people on Prince of Wales Island, north Queensland. In 1860 HMS *Rattlesnake* returned to her birthplace, Chatham Dockyards, to end thirty-eight years of dutiful service in the Royal Navy.

### Endnotes

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- 3 Jenny Haworth, *Hobsons' Chance*, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 2003.
- 4 K.A. Simpson, 'Hobson, William', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, 1990, republished at <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h29/hobson-william> (accessed 21 September 2019).
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- 6 Simpson.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press in association State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, pp.133-136.
- 10 Barnes, p.138. (La Trobe's West Indian reports may be accessed via the La Trobe Society website. Ed.)
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Alexander Hare McLintock, 'Hobson, William (1793-1842)', *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, 1966, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/hobson-william> (accessed 21 September 2019).
- 13 Hobson, personal letter to his wife Eliza, en route late 1836. In this letter, probably posted from Sydney late in January 1837, he indicated he was sending £200 home to meet her expenses, i.e. roughly the equivalent to the annual salary of a government clerk. (Letters written by Captain William Hobson, 1835-1839, principally from H.M.S. *Rattlesnake*, NZMS 1086 [transcript], Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries; original MS 0046 held Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand.)
- 14 Haworth, pp.105-106, 148.
- 15 'HMS *Rattlesnake* (1822)', *Wikipedia* (accessed 30 September 2019).
- 16 E.J. Tapp, 'Hobson, William (1793-1842)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, p.545.

- 17 Moon, p.18, Scholefield, p.48.
- 18 Summary in *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.1, *Beginnings of Permanent Government* [hereafter HRV1], edited by Pauline Jones, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1981, pp.44–63.
- 19 Peter Frederick Shortland (1815–1888), described by Governor Bourke as ‘a mate of some standing and much respected by this Commander’ (HRV1, p.100), was promoted to Lieutenant in 1842 and Commander in 1848. (William Arthur Spray, ‘Shortland, Peter Frederick’, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/shortland\\_peter\\_frederick\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/shortland_peter_frederick_11E.html), accessed 30 September 2019)
- 20 HRV1, pp.66–76.
- 21 James Flemming, *Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes*, Melbourne: Queensberry Hill Press 1984, (Journal accessible via <http://www.livingmuseum.org.au/FlemingsJournal.pdf>.)
- 22 Point Gellibrand was named in memory of Joseph Tice Gellibrand. An English qualified attorney, he was appointed Attorney-General of Van Diemen’s Land in 1824. He moved to Port Phillip with the Port Phillip Association, obviously the legal brains behind the Treaty negotiated with local Aboriginal tribes in 1835. He and a colleague mysteriously disappeared in the Otway Forest area while on an exploratory trip west of Geelong in 1837. P.C. James, ‘Gellibrand, Joseph Tice 1786–1837’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.437–438.
- 23 HRV1, pp.117–118.
- 24 Susan Priestley, ‘Charting Some Port Phillip Myths’, *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol. 87, 2016, p.170. (The myths are that Mount Eliza was named after John Batman’s wife Eliza and Mount Martha after William Lonsdale’s wife Martha.)
- 25 Scholefield, p.50, referring to a letter to Eliza.
- 26 Hobson letter no.33 from Sydney to Eliza, 16 December 1836.
- 27 HRV1, pp.107, 110, 122.
- 28 A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*. Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1996, pp.71–72.
- 29 Priestley, p.166.
- 30 For instance, Hobson returned from a journey with the Governor looking ‘bilious & as yellow as a Kite’s foot’, Diary of John Henry 1835–1837, MS 5896, National Library of Australia, entry 12 March 1837, HRV1, p.95.
- 31 Hobson letter no.35 from Sydney to Eliza, 31 January 1837.
- 32 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006, p.125.
- 33 Simpson.
- 34 Ibid. Britain had recognised the sovereignty of the Maori people through a Declaration of Independence in 1835.
- 35 Simpson.
- 36 McLintock.
- 37 Extracts from Hobson’s sickbed diary are reproduced in Scholefield, pp.218–221. (Diary kept while recovering from paralytic stroke, 15 March 1840–3 April 1840, MS 097, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand.)
- 38 Bernard John Foster, ‘Bunbury, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas, C.B. (1791–1862)’, *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, 1966, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/bunbury-lieutenant-colonel-thomas-cb> (accessed 21 September 2019).
- 39 Simpson.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Tapp, p.546.
- 43 Reviving Hobson’s commemoration, <https://www.nzcp.com/governor-william-hobson-new-zealands-forgotten-hero> (accessed 14 September 2019). At least until 1965 the anniversary of Hobson’s death was officially commemorated. In 2019 Auckland City Early Heritage Group sought to revive this tradition by convening at his grave and undertaking a guided walk through the surrounding cemetery.



Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Rear kitchen wing view of 'La Rose' (before restoration) 2014

# *La Rose Estate, Pascoe Vale South: a research report*

**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. He has also published the titles *Samuel Lazarus: Foreman of the Jury at Ned Kelly's Trial* (2016), and *On Board with the Bishop: Charles Perry's Voyage to Port Phillip on the 'Stag'* (2017).**

**O**n a hillside overlooking the valley of the Moonee Ponds Creek and the Tullamarine Freeway stands one of Melbourne's oldest houses, closely connected with the earliest years of settlement at Port Phillip. The original section of *La Rose*, in Le Cateau Street Pascoe Vale South, was built by Dr Farquhar McCrae (1807-1850) in 1842.<sup>1</sup>

McCrae completed his medical studies at Edinburgh University in 1827, and after further study in Paris was commissioned as a surgeon in the Sixth Dragoons. Poor health and the lure of brighter prospects in the colonies led him to emigrate. Farquhar, his wife (and cousin) Agnes Morison, their child, his widowed mother and sisters Margaret, Thomas Anne and Mary sailed on the *Midlothian*, arriving in Melbourne in mid-1839. Farquhar's brothers Alexander and Andrew also emigrated to Port Phillip. His sisters married after arriving in Melbourne: Margaret to Dr David John Thomas, who from 1840 was Farquhar's partner in his medical practice,

Thomas Anne to Captain George Ward Cole and Mary to Francis Cobham.

The McCraes settled in Bourke Street where Farquhar established his medical practice, and where his family was later joined by his brother Andrew, his wife Georgiana, whose diary records so much of early Melbourne life,<sup>2</sup> and their children in 1841. Farquhar was appointed a magistrate and participated in many of the philanthropic and business enterprises that were established soon after Melbourne was settled. He was one of the founders of the Melbourne Hospital, Vice-President of the Pastoral and Agricultural Society and of the Mechanics' Institution, and a director of the Port Phillip Bank and the Melbourne Auction Company.<sup>3</sup>

Farquhar also acquired substantial landholdings in Melbourne and its surroundings. In 1839 he purchased Crown Portion 133 comprising 323 acres (131 hectares), and Crown Portion 126 comprising 316 acres (128 hectares) in the Parish of Jika Jika, between the Moonee





Tim Gatehouse, photographer  
Front view of 'La Rose' (before restoration) 2014

Ponds Creek and Sydney Road, which he named *Moreland*.<sup>4</sup> In 1841 he purchased Crown Portion 141 comprising 270 acres (109 hectares) in the same parish. This was elevated land with views towards Melbourne and was well suited as the site for a house. This was named *La Rose*. Although there is no ascertainable family connection with the name *La Rose*, the choice possibly being whimsical, *Moreland* was named after the sugar plantation in Jamaica owned by his grandfather and was perhaps a reflection of Farquhar's ambitions of land ownership in the colony.<sup>5</sup> Whereas his brothers Alexander and Andrew wished to distance themselves from the family's slave-owning past, Farquhar had no qualms. In 1842 he built a house on the *La Rose* estate, picturesquely sited above the Moonee Ponds Creek. Constructed of roughly squared basalt, it comprised only a hall, with two rooms on one side and one on the other.<sup>6</sup> At the rear was a small detached kitchen. Its small size and asymmetrical shape suggest an intention to extend the house at a later date.

However, shortly after the completion of this section of the house, Farquhar McCrae's hopes of a prosperous future as a colonial landowner were dashed by the depression which ruined many colonists who had purchased land at inflated values. By January 1843 *La Rose* was occupied by bailiffs in enforcement of judgement debts that had been steadily accumulating. Family quarrels broke out over financial arrangements between the brothers as the economic situation worsened.

As early as November 1841 Farquhar's public reputation had been tarnished when he and his brother-in-law and partner in the medical practice, Dr Thomas, were reported to have been brawling in the street,<sup>7</sup> but in December 1843 he was involved in an incident which became notorious throughout the colony. In 1839 Farquhar had sold the *Eumemerring* Station near Dandenong to John Fitzgerald Leslie Foster (1818-1900), one of the influential Irish Protestant colonists known as the Irish cousinage, who later became the Colonial Secretary (not to be confused with William Henry Foster, the Police Magistrate, to whom he was not related).<sup>8</sup> Foster alleged that Farquhar had been less than honest in the transaction, and after Farquhar refused him a duel, and Foster refused to have the dispute mediated, Foster horse whipped Farquhar in Queen Street.<sup>9</sup> Although he won a claim for damages for assault, Farquhar's reputation was irreparably damaged, given his prominence in the community and exacerbated by the fact that both he and Foster were magistrates. A few days after the assault Farquhar and his family left for Sydney where he established a medical practice. He died there in April 1850. After Farquhar's departure for Sydney, *La Rose* was occupied by his sister Mary and her husband Frank Cobham, with the consent of Farquhar's creditors. It was subsequently leased by Collier Robertson and purchased by him in 1852 from Farquhar's deceased estate. Robertson farmed *La Rose* and another property named *Essendon Park*. He was also in partnership with his son-in-law Peter McCracken in a brewery in Little Collins Street.

Tim Gatehouse, illustrator  
'La Rose', phases of construction



After being purchased by Robertson *La Rose* was extended. A three-room bluestone wing was built to the west, the main room having a bay window facing south. A small room was built on the east, connecting the detached kitchen to the original house of 1842. To the north a large new kitchen wing was constructed, also of bluestone, forming the fourth side of the courtyard. A verandah was built along the south and west sides of the house, accessed by French windows. Behind the house stood a bluestone stable and coach house under the one roof and a double earth closet. In the 1870s a brick wing with a cellar beneath was built on to the east side of the original house.<sup>10</sup>

Collier Robertson died at *Essendon Park* in July 1860, a few days after appearing in the Insolvency Court. His son James, who was at that date leasing *La Rose* from his father, purchased the property from his estate in November 1860.

In 1887 James Robertson died and the *La Rose* estate was sold to one of the many companies which speculated in land purchases during the boom. It became the subject of highly questionable transactions which were revealed when the boom collapsed.<sup>11</sup> *La Rose* retained its original size of 270 acres until an 1899 subdivision and was further subdivided in 1920 after being purchased by the War Service Homes Commission. Renamed *Wentworth House* between 1908 and 1911, sufficient land remained for the property to be operated as a dairy until World War II.

In recent years the grounds were reduced to less than an acre, but the house which has now been restored still enjoys the spacious outlook it had when built, albeit over a dramatically changed landscape. It is one of the few remaining buildings from pre-goldrush Melbourne, and a link with one of its most prominent families.

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- 3 Anne Marsden, 'Dr Farquhar McCrae M.D. 1807-1850', August 2011, [http://www.mahistory.org.au/images/Website/pdf/earlyyears/firstcommittee\\_mccrae.pdf](http://www.mahistory.org.au/images/Website/pdf/earlyyears/firstcommittee_mccrae.pdf) (accessed 1 March 2020).
- 4 Ibid, pp. 2-3.
- 5 Brenda Niall, *Georgiana: a biography of Georgiana McCrae, painter, diarist, pioneer*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994, p.131.
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- 8 Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen: and good society in Melbourne before the gold rushes*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp.114-115.
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Unknown artist  
Governor Latrobe's house at Jolimont, c.1887  
Hand coloured engraving  
Private collection

Front view of the prefabricated dwelling erected 1839, with the Library of 1848 visible to the left.

## *La Trobe's Cottage report*

**L**a Trobe's Cottage, like all National Trust properties, was closed due to the Corona virus. Sunday openings were suspended in mid-March and booked tours cancelled. Until the closure, bookings for combined tours with Government House had been on the increase, possibly in response to a publicity drive by the Cottage Management Team with Probus groups. Unfortunately, these tours were all cancelled. We had been concerned about low numbers of Sunday visitors during the season and, as a result, will be trialling new Sunday opening times for the 2020-21 season. The Cottage will be open the first and third Sundays of the month, with the increased hours of from 11am to 4pm, and the season will be extended to include May.

The third of our themed Sundays, *La Trobe's Art*, was held on 1 March. A large number of prints of La Trobe's pictures were exhibited in the Cottage and original art works not usually on display were loaned for exhibition in the reception area. The hang of twenty-two items generated much interest among the public and also members of the La Trobe Society who gathered at the end of the day to celebrate La Trobe's Birthday.

The Cottage Improvement Project, funded by donations from members of the

La Trobe Society, has seen major electrical work carried out after some delay with getting approval from Heritage Victoria. The last item in Phase One of this project, the removal of the security alarm box from the front entrance to the servants' block, will not now take place. Other than the alarm, all the proposed works have been carried out and we thank the La Trobe Society members who donated to this project. Those funds have now been spent and thoughts of Phase Two of the project have been put on hold for the foreseeable future.

John Botham has stepped down from the role of Curatorial Coordinator. He made a significant contribution to the Cottage, particularly in managing the Cottage Improvement Project. His presence will be sorely missed and we thank him for the passion and commitment he has shown for the property. Sheetal Deshpande, a qualified heritage architect and volunteer guide at the Cottage, has agreed to join the Management Team as Curatorial Coordinator. Helen Botham has taken on the role of Garden Coordinator, in addition to her other roles on the Team.

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

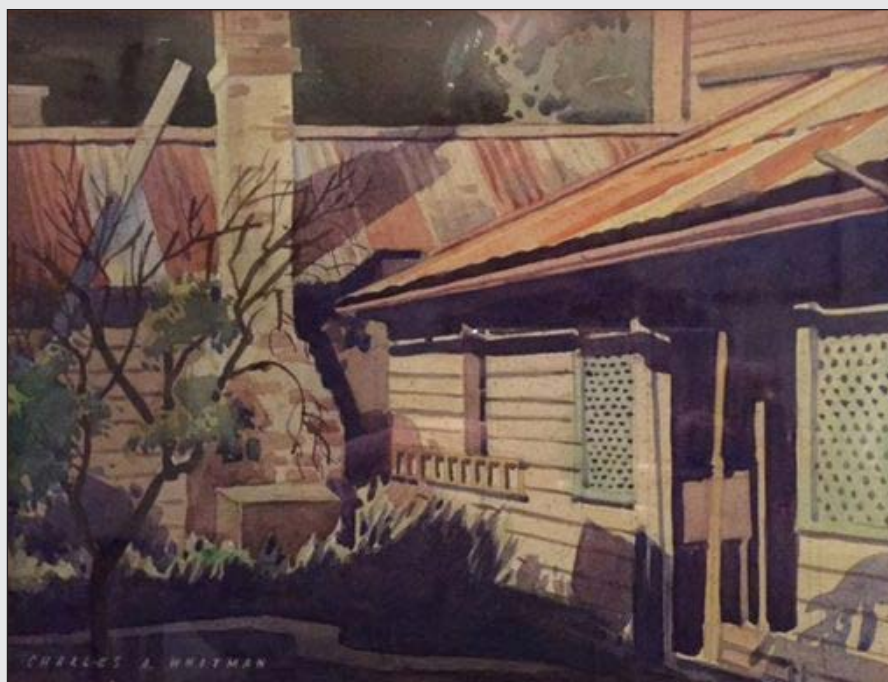
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Dora Lyell Wilson, 1883–1946, artist  
**La Trobe's House, Jolimont, 1934**  
 Oil on board  
 Private collection  
 View of the Butler's pantry and Dining room built in 1839

Charles A. Whitman, artist  
**Back verandah La Trobe's Cottage, c.1914**  
 Watercolour  
 Private collection





## *Forthcoming events*

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These events will be confirmed nearer the time, health and safety regulations permitting

**2020**

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### **AUGUST**

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**Wednesday 5**

**La Trobe Society**  
**Annual General Meeting and Dinner**  
**Time:** 6.30 pm  
**Venue:** Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place, Melbourne  
**Guest Speaker:** Michael Veitch, Author, actor, broadcaster  
**Topic:** Hell Ship 'Ticonderoga'  
**Invitations will be sent to members**

### **SEPTEMBER**

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**Sunday 13**

**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:** Greg Hill, Collector of Australian pottery  
**Topic:** Victoria's Earliest Potteries  
**Refreshments**  
**Admission:** \$10 per person  
**Bookings essential \***

### **OCTOBER**

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**Date to be confirmed**

**La Trobe Society History Month Lecture**  
**Presentation by the La Trobe Society and the Anglican Historical Society**  
**Speaker:** Dr Liz Rushen  
**Topic:** The Governor and the Bishop  
**Venue:** Holy Trinity Church, 193 Hotham Street, East Melbourne  
**Further details to be advised**

### **NOVEMBER**

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**Friday 27**

**Christmas Cocktails**  
**Time:** 6.30-8.30  
**Venue:** Alexandra Club, 81 Collins Street, Melbourne  
**Speaker:** tba  
**Invitations will be sent to members**

**Sunday 29**

**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

**Bookings and enquiries**  
**secretary@latrobsociety.org.au,**  
**or phone 9646 2112 (please leave a message)**

## Back Issues

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

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

They may be searched by keyword.

## Contributions welcome

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

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

**For copies of guidelines for contributors and  
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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



