

LA TROBEANA



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

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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

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

Best New Year's wishes for health and happiness in the year ahead to all our members! After the past year which inspired such a mix of fear and confusion in the community, I am sure that we all hope that 2021 will be a very successful one for our Society.

This first edition of *La Trobeana* for this year will give lots of reading pleasure.

Susan Priestley brings her extensive knowledge of Victorian history to bear in the article, 'The Lieutenant-Governor's goldfields tours, 1851-1853'. Using La Trobe's own manuscript notebooks she has traced his far-ranging travels on horseback to the numerous goldfields in Victoria, firstly in Spring 1851 just three months after the initial discoveries of gold, and finally in Autumn 1853. Her biographical research skills provide valuable identification of people he met and the names of places along the routes followed.

Dianne Reilly's article "'The High Ground': Robert Russell, artist, architect and surveyor' is an edited and expanded version of her presentation in February last year at State Library Victoria at a special preview of one of the Library's newest and most valuable acquisitions: a hitherto unknown album of sixty-five drawings by Russell, pioneering surveyor of the Port Phillip District, and an accomplished artist and architect.

Research for Peter Hiscock's study of 'Patricius William Welsh: a man of high hopes and ambition' originated from his deep interest in the early history of Buninyong and his quest for information about the man who built the house where Peter and his family have lived for the past forty years. This article reveals much previously unknown information about the ambitious young man, his many successes and occasional failures, who arrived in Melbourne

from Van Diemen's Land in October 1838.

Tim Gatehouse has pursued his interest in Victorian colonial architecture in the study 'Charterisville: the home of David Charteris McArthur'. The house was built in 1840 by McArthur, and still stands in Burke Road, East Ivanhoe. Tim provides much detail on the life and work of McArthur, Melbourne's first bank manager, who was one of five original trustees of the Public Library of Victoria in 1853, and President of Trustees of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery of Victoria from 1880 to 1883. A prominent figure in the commercial and public life of Victoria, he was a close friend and confidant of Charles Joseph La Trobe, and an executor of his estate.

Helen Armstrong, inspired editor of *La Trobeana*, pursued a personal interest in developing her research report "'Driving S. in my Drag": glimpses of La Trobe's carriage'. This fascinating study analyses the differences between the horse-drawn vehicles used by La Trobe during his tenure in Victoria. The clear and informative images included demonstrate how these vehicles were constructed.

Government health advice permitting, the first date for the La Trobe Society calendar this year will be a gala celebration on Saturday 20 March of two major milestones: the 20th anniversary of the founding of the La Trobe Society, and the 220th birthday of Charles Joseph La Trobe. The charming venue for the function will be the Cowen Gallery at State Library Victoria. Invitations for members and guests to this very special event have already been mailed. I look forward to seeing you at this celebration.

Diane Gardiner AM
Hon. President
C J La Trobe Society

The Lieutenant-Governor's Goldfields Tours, 1851-1853

By Susan Priestley

Susan Priestley MA (Melb), RHSV Fellow and committee member of the La Trobe Society, is a practising historian with an interest in recovering lives and solving enigmas about people. Her eleven published histories embrace aspects of places, people and institutions in Victoria.

An inspiration for this article and a major primary source were La Trobe's two manuscript notebooks 'Memoranda of Journeys, Excursions and Absences', which are reproduced in *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839-1854* (2006).¹ There may well have been a double purpose behind these scrawled notes, a reminder of names and matters needing further attention, and as memoranda for a travel book-cum-history that he planned for his retirement. For today's readers, they afford some glimmers of insight into his persona, his reaction to the country and people of the new 'golden age'. Research

in order to expand the brevities and set them in context has been greatly facilitated by the Trove collection of Australian digitised newspapers and its pointers to biography and local history. Confirmation and clarification of people and place names, and correction of some misread handwriting, was done through reference works, particularly *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *Victorian Government Gazette*, together with cross-referenced personal and run names in Billis and Kenyon's *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*,² digitised sources from Ancestry.com, and monograph and journal studies of Victorian history.

Part 1, Responding to the onset of gold and its consequences

Spring 1851

Three months after the initial gold discoveries, Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe made a rare underlining in his notebook: First visit to the Goldfields. That visit comprised a bare three days at Buninyong and Ballarat, spanning Thursday 2nd to Saturday 4th October 1851. His travelling companions at the start were aide-de-camp Edward Bell, who had been his private secretary since 1849, and Charles John Pitfield Lydiard after whom the Ballarat street was named in 1852, when he was just starting a long colonial career in the Victorian and New South Wales police forces.³ The notes indicate a long day starting early on the Thursday: 'Drove tandem with Bell, Roger [a favourite horse] leading, to

Exford – & breakfast. On to Synnot's, Griffin's (Woolleys), Sharpe's. Magnificent day. Reach Buninyong 9p.m. – 89 miles' (143 km). Their route apparently traversed unfenced pastoral stations in a generally westerly direction. *Exford* was Simon Staunton's run on the River Exe (later the Werribee), Synnot's was *Mowyang* on the Little River, Griffin's (Woolleys) was likely *Anakie* with the Woolley family as partners or managers, and Sharpe's was probably *Moranghurk* on the upper Moorabool; the travellers' destination at Buninyong was then generally northwards. La Trobe may have been sounding out the run-holders for recruitment into an interim goldfields administration.

Since August local administration of the evolving population hubs had been designated



Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818–1880, artist
 Mount Alexander gold escort on road to Melbourne, 1869
 Watercolour
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H86.7/34
 Inscribed 'Victorian Gold Fields 1852–53'

to the charge of goldfields commissioners, some of whom had also been district crown lands commissioners and magistrates, whether for Victoria as a whole or confined to the more densely populated counties of Bourke centred around Melbourne or Grant around Geelong. Continuing tasks for crown lands commissioners included resolving boundary, stock disease and employment disputes among pastoral run holders, as well as smaller licensees like timber cutters and dairymen/women. In similar fashion gold commissioners adjudicated disputes among the burgeoning class of mining claim holders and administered the evolving licensing system until superseded in 1855 by local goldfields courts supervised by a resident warden.

The day after reaching Buninyong where he 'found Sturt', La Trobe noted, 'The Tents – the diggings'. In the late afternoon, with Bell and Sturt he went back to the nearby Learmonth brothers' homestead to dine and sleep. Discussion about goldfields administration was likely to have stayed on the evening's agenda. Evelyn Pitfield Shirley Sturt had a military background before migrating in 1836 following the path of his explorer brother Charles. In 1849 he accepted the position of police magistrate in Melbourne and oversaw initial policing on the

Ballarat field with the town's (now city's) main street named for him.⁴ He and Lydiard shared the given name of Pitfield, which possibly indicates a common ancestor. La Trobe and Bell's return journey took another three days, travelling via A. F. Cunningham's *Mount Mercer* cattle station, the Ormond run *Piggoreet*, and Geelong. It seems that Bell then drove the tandem overland to Melbourne while La Trobe took the bay steamer.

Two weeks later 'at noon [on a] beautiful day', he set off on horseback on another brief visit, this time to the new Mount Alexander field. Bell accompanied him as far as the Greenes' estate, *Woodlands*, near Bulla. About six miles (9.6km) from Frederick Powlett's pastoral run in the Pyalong district,⁵ where he planned to overnight, his horse 'Gold Dust comes down with me & gives me a good shake'. That meant walking, possibly leading an injured or exhausted mount, for about four miles before being overtaken by Henry Dana driving a gig that he had passed earlier at Deep Creek, also bound for Powlett's. Dana was captain of the 'black police', the corps of native troopers that had been re-formed shortly after his arrival at Port Phillip in 1842. The policing role of the corps was extended to the diggings during 1851 and 1852, arousing some local controversy.⁶

On the following day, he rode with Powlett and Dana through the 'deserted' embryo township of Kyneton and 'over the range to Barker's Mt Alexander'. There he made an initial inspection of the 'Forest Creek workings [and] Worley's quarry vein' where he obtained a 'specimen.' John Worley was a bullock driver, one of four men employed by William Barker who were later rewarded as discoverers of Victorian gold.⁷ Another inspection on Friday concluded with 'Business done', a probable reference to arrangements for the government Gold Escort, since he left the diggings in the late afternoon with the Escort and Dana to spend the weekend at magistrate W. H. F. Mitchell's Coliban station *Barfold*. Fourteen months later Mitchell was appointed Victoria's first Chief Commissioner of Police.⁸ After another overnight stay at Powlett's, La Trobe arrived back in Melbourne at 9a.m. Tuesday. Goldfields administration was to be an ongoing source of worry and difficulty, as Sophie La Trobe described in a letter to their daughter Agnes in January 1852.⁹

Autumn 1852

In Melbourne's *Argus* of 8 May 1852, a piece headed 'Scraps from the Ovens' compiled by a newly-appointed local correspondent began with 'Arrival of the Lieutenant-Governor':

Mr La Trobe and *aid* [sic] *de camp* accompanied by Mr Commissioner Smythe, arrived at the Crossing Place in a gig last Friday evening; they immediately crossed the river, and proceeded to the hospitable "hostelrie" of mine host of the Wangaratta. His Excellency "rayther" astonished the natives by perambulating our sweet little town ere the cock crowed on Saturday morning, and was observed contemplating and smiling, as an alien alone can smile, at the desolated state of the National School House – the frames and panes of the windows having been wantonly smashed by some hopeful juvenile, as alluded to in a former communication.¹⁰

The visit came towards the end of La Trobe's three-week tour of the rapidly emerging goldfields, the Ovens being newest of all. Henry Wilson Hutchinson Smythe, known as Long Smythe because of his height, held the double position of Crown Lands and Gold Commissioner for the extensive Murray district until his unfortunate drowning in 1854 when he was not yet forty.¹¹ It was therefore proper for him to accompany or escort the Lieutenant-Governor into Wangaratta.

Such pre-gold era townships owed their origins to earlier government proclamations that aimed at establishing way stations on overland communication routes for the convenience of travellers, official and private. Government was responsible for clearing and fencing the roadway, licensing services such as post offices, hotels, punts and progressively bridges over major waterways, in addition to establishing police stations and police courts that were overseen by a salaried magistrate assisted by local justices of the peace. Wangaratta was a major stopping place on the overland route to Sydney, it and Benalla (originally Benalta) having been proclaimed townships in 1849. The 'hostelrie' chosen by the La Trobe party was James Meldrum's Wangaratta Hotel which was not far north of the Ovens crossing.¹²

The *Argus* correspondent's mocking allusions in May 1852 to the speech ('rayther') and 'alien' smile of the Lieutenant-Governor were in dutiful accord with his editor and employer in Melbourne, Edward Wilson. La Trobe's own insights and reactions during the three weeks of the tour can be better gauged from his memoranda notebook. He started out with two companions, aide-de-camp Edward Bell and 'firm friend' Henry Dana, travelling with a vehicle, occasionally a borrowed one, as well as saddle horses. La Trobe had first met Dana in London before the latter's appointment to the staff at Dublin Castle, Britain's administrative headquarters in Ireland, where he seems to have gained a nickname O'Brien that is bracketed against his name in the notes. 'D's snoring' provoked an early teasing mention; a concluding note on 4 May was more concerning: 'O'Brien's last trip – very ill at Donald Cameron's'. Six months later Dana died of pneumonia brought on by exposure when tracking bushrangers, according to his biographer.¹³

The start of the journey had gone smoothly, the initial destination being the Ballarat field. La Trobe left Melbourne at 1pm on Tuesday 13 April, being driven to Keilor by William Stawell, Victoria's first attorney-general and later chief justice.¹⁴ At Keilor he met up with Bell and Dana and the party went on to Bacchus Marsh, where they slept at Crook's Woolpack Inn and La Trobe paid an early visit to Mrs McLeod. She was the widow of Major J.N. McLeod, who had retired from the Indian army to settle in Van Diemen's Land, before joining the wave of overstraiter pastoralists to Port Phillip, where he served as Magistrate for the Wannon district before his death in 1848. His family gifted some of the land on which Bacchus Marsh's Holy Trinity Church was built.¹⁵ Another call was to 'Mr Pike at his place', probably J.H. Pyke, a prominent breeder of horses and work bullocks

on the upper Werribee;¹⁶ Pyke's Creek reservoir on the present road to Ballan indicates the vicinity. A third call was to Mrs Hall in Ballan itself. She was the widow of the town's first resident Anglican clergyman.¹⁷

At dusk the party reached the main camp at Ballarat, which was sited on the rise above the Yarrowee River in the area of present-day Camp Street, and where A.J. Eyre was the recently-appointed Commissioner. La Trobe noted 'Workings to left and right [and] Brown's hill'. Then, as on his first visit, 'went to Learmonth's to sleep'. Two full days were spent on the Ballarat field including visits in company with Dana to Creswick's Creek and 'across the plains' to *Clunes*. There they called at Donald Cameron's station but found him absent, with just the 'children and Miss McLachlan' mentioned.

On Saturday they set off by way of Captain John Hepburn's on Spring Creek and Edward Stone Parker's Franklindon, with a 'new house' noted at both, aiming for 'the Loddon & Forest Creek', present-day Castlemaine. La Trobe was moved to note: 'Beautiful sight, the vale of the Loddon'; Cairn Curran reservoir now occupies 656 metres of its length. Sunday at the central Forest Creek camp was spent appropriately: 'Quiet day in camp. Service, Rev'd Mr Chain'.

Over the next two days La Trobe criss-crossed the extensive, if still scattered Mount Alexander field comprising Forest, Fryer's and Barker's Creeks, and Specimen Gully, where the first piece of gold-embedded quartz had been picked up. There he encountered the rival to Victoria's Gold Escort provided by the South Australian government. One day ended with a trip into Kyneton, accompanied by Dana, Bell and local Commissioner William Wright.¹⁸ It is probable that the La Trobe party found lodgings at Fentum's new hotel in Piper Street, opened in March 'for the accommodation of Families and Gentlemen',¹⁹ so they and their horses were well sheltered from the 'violent rain' overnight. La Trobe was not deterred from riding to Karlsruhe and back before breakfast the next morning 'to collect letters'. They got 'back to camp in the evening'.

On the following day, an invitation to dine and sleep overnight at William Barker's homestead included a climb up a 'spur of Mt Alexander' before breakfast. Back at camp on Friday 23rd, he met up with Bishop Perry who had arrived on a visit to the Mount Alexander field, leaving his wife to stay at the Orr family's comfortable stone homestead, *Stratford Lodge* on the Coliban, which is now on the Victorian Heritage Register. He afterwards rode to Bald Hill with Wright and spent the whole

of the next day 'in camp', possibly discussing organisational matters. The *Geelong Advertiser* of 1 May was relieved to report that at least 'something' had resulted from the 'flying visit... to the "Diggings"':

...at Mount Alexander the Lieutenant-Governor has authorised the Resident Commissioner to accept a contract from Mr Mathew, for the immediate erection of six outstations at the Mount, each to accommodate an Assistant Commissioner, one inspector, one clerk, one watch-house keeper, three horse and sixteen foot police, and two Police Magistrate stations, and two barracks for pensioners.²⁰

The newspaper item included costings for this range of appointments, all deemed necessary to establish and maintain civil order on the goldfields. It affords some insight into the intense financial and manpower pressures on Victoria's administration that the wonderful discoveries entailed.

Back at Forest Creek two weeks earlier, La Trobe had Sunday breakfast with William Barker before riding to the Bendigo diggings to attend Bishop Perry's service. The day's memoranda ended with the intriguing: 'Camp on Bulla [probably Bullock] Creek — Gilbert, his tent, arrangements, & conversation'. This was the artist-turned-assistant commissioner at Bendigo George Alexander Gilbert, whom he had known for a decade together with his wife. Daughter Agnes La Trobe had attended Mrs Gilbert's ladies academy for a short time before being sent back to her mother's family at Neuchâtel in Switzerland in 1845.²¹ The conversation with Gilbert would have covered several topics of common interest, sketching landscapes among them. Bullock Creek was an early name for what became the township and district of Marong in the hills south of Bendigo. A reliable supply of creek water made it a popular area for gold washing.²²

On Monday morning, after taking leave of the Bishop who went 'to rejoin Mrs P at Orrs', he with Bell, Dana and Wright traversed 'the whole length of the diggings to Wash-pen Creek, Mr Clow — a wonderful scene'. Whether the wonder refers to the whole diggings or to Mr Clow's set-up at Wash-pen Creek is hard to fathom. Clow was James Maxwell Clow, Assistant Commissioner for that section of the Mount Alexander field, who had temporarily abandoned his pastoral lease in the far western Wimmera to take a post with the new goldfields administration.²³ The creek with the sheep washpen was presumably the



Ham Brothers, lithographers
Stratford Lodge, the station of Jas. Orr Esqr, Port Phillip, c.1850
 Lithograph on buff paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H1606
 Published in *The Illustrated Australian Magazine*, vol.1, October 1850

site of his camp somewhere near the southern end of the diggings. La Trobe's notes for the following day begin just as densely: 'Tuesday. The Hash! Wright leaves us.' Was the Hash a comment on a meal served by their host of the previous night?

After Commissioner Wright departed, the touring party went 'forward to young Mr Ross's, [who] married Miss Baynton, then to Ebdon's Station, Jennings old station'.²⁴ It would seem that they were travelling north-east across the Axedale and Campaspe plains to reach 'Mt McIvor', the hill near present-day Heathcote. There La Trobe wrote: 'Beautiful country. Prospecting', with a final comment, 'Little sunshine & tolerable quarters.'

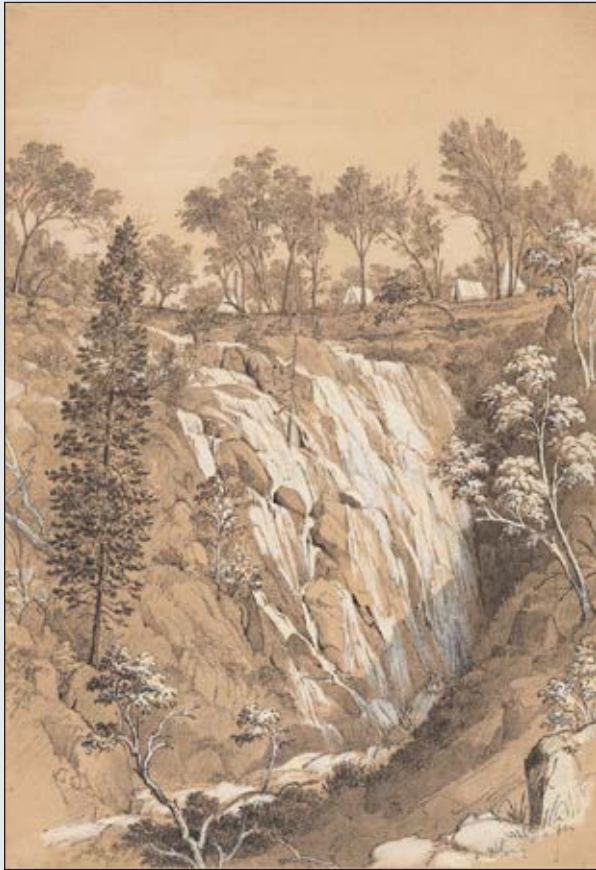
Starting out early the following day, they went east-north-east through the upper Goulburn valley to reach 'Middlemiss to breakfast, then to Honeysuckle Creek.' The references are to Hugh Middlemiss's Salutation Inn at Winding Creek (near present-day Longwood), and what became Violet Town rather than Honeysuckle Creek, both early staging posts on the route to and from Sydney. The day's notes ended: 'Reach Benalla (Smythe's) an hour after day [ended], very bad roads, water and holes.' Just after midday on Friday they set out in a light two-wheeled gig, possibly Smythe's, with La Trobe noting: 'Cross Futter's range,— horrible roads, & on to

Wangaratta, with Bell, Dana & Smythe'. Futter's Range is the long north-south granitic hills now largely encompassed in the Warby Ovens National Park. Originally named by Major Mitchell in 1836, the northern section took the name Warby from Ben Warby who held *Taminick Plains* run from 1844 to 1858.

It was well recognised that the purpose of La Trobe's visit to the Ovens was to establish an administrative structure near Reid's pastoral station *Curnargarmonge* upstream of Wangaratta where there had been a 'rush' over the summer months. The *Argus* correspondent was characteristically disdainful:

I have been given to understand that there are now only four or five diggers left in this locality, the demand of the licence and non-protective system having driven the others away, most of whom have already sloped to the Mount. The remnants are, and have been averaging 1 oz [ounce] per day. Have not the Viceroy and his gallant captain been 'rayther' too premature?²⁵

La Trobe's memoranda record over the next two days, and renewed finds over the following months would give the lie to that, an indication that he had enough experience by then, through his own 'prospecting' and reports of others, to gauge the area's potential.



Edward La Trobe Bateman,
1816-1897, artist
**Waterfall at the entrance of
Spring Creek, May Day Hill,
Ovens, Australia, 1852**
Pencil heightened with white on card
State Library of New South Wales,
DGA34/1

The gauging began soon after his early morning walk round Wangaratta on Saturday 30 April. George Faithfull had driven his tandem in from *Oxley Plains* station to take the Lieutenant-Governor out to 'Mr Reid's'. Retired naval doctor David Reid had overlanded from Sydney in 1838, and secured a lease on country stretching from the north bank of the Ovens back into the hills that gave rise to several creeks, some later labelled Spring, Woolshed, Reedy and Reid's for one that joined the Ovens. Reid had died in 1840, therefore his namesake son would have hosted La Trobe's overnight stay in 1852. The notes continue on 1 May: 'into the hills to the new diggings, rock, pines, Wild Dog Creek. The May Day Hill. Return p.m. to Wangaratta to dinner'. It was on 'May Day Hill', the high ridge with Spring Creek flowing around its base on two sides, that the Commissioner's camp was afterwards sited, with the name etched onto Victoria's maps. Beechworth, proclaimed in 1856 as the municipal centre of the diggings, retained May Day Hills for the lunatic asylum (mental hospital) established in 1867.²⁶

A measure of rapid discovery in the latter half of 1852 is William Howitt's triumphant letter from 'Ovens diggings':

Hurrah! ...On reaching the brow of a hill, we see a broad valley lying below us, and white tents scattered along it for a mile or more... [Others] glance out of the woods on all sides... and there is a long stretch up the centre of the valley where all the ground has been turned up, and looks like a desert of pale clay.²⁷

Similar scenes were replicated over and over for another decade in books and letters and by artists. One opinion influencing the Howitt party's choice of destination for their first gold-seeking venture is likely to have come from C.J. La Trobe, whom Howitt talked with shortly after landing in September 1852.²⁸

The return journey for La Trobe and his party started on 2 May by going to breakfast with George Faithfull '& then by heavy rain & bad roads to Benalla', seemingly to conclude business matters with Commissioner Smythe, despite its being Sunday. More heavy rain and bad roads marred the next day's travel to Honeysuckle Creek, then reaching 'Middlemiss to sleep'. Roads and weather get no mention on the last two days. On the first, he notes passing through Avenel and Seymour to reach 'Fergusson's [*sic*] Sunday Creek... after dark'.



David Tulloch, artist
 Thomas Ham, 1821-1870, engraver
Commissioners Tent & Officers Quarters Forest Creek, Dec.1851
 Engraving, coloured
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, 30328102131678/6

Ferguson's inn was the nucleus of the town of Broadford. On the next, La Trobe borrowed a fresh horse from Anthony Beveridge's inn (now Beveridge township) and reached *Jolimont* by

6pm. His final concerned note about O'Brien suggests that an ailing Dana may have been driven by Bell to Donald Cameron's, possibly from Sunday Creek.

Part 2, The spreading goldfields network and developing administration

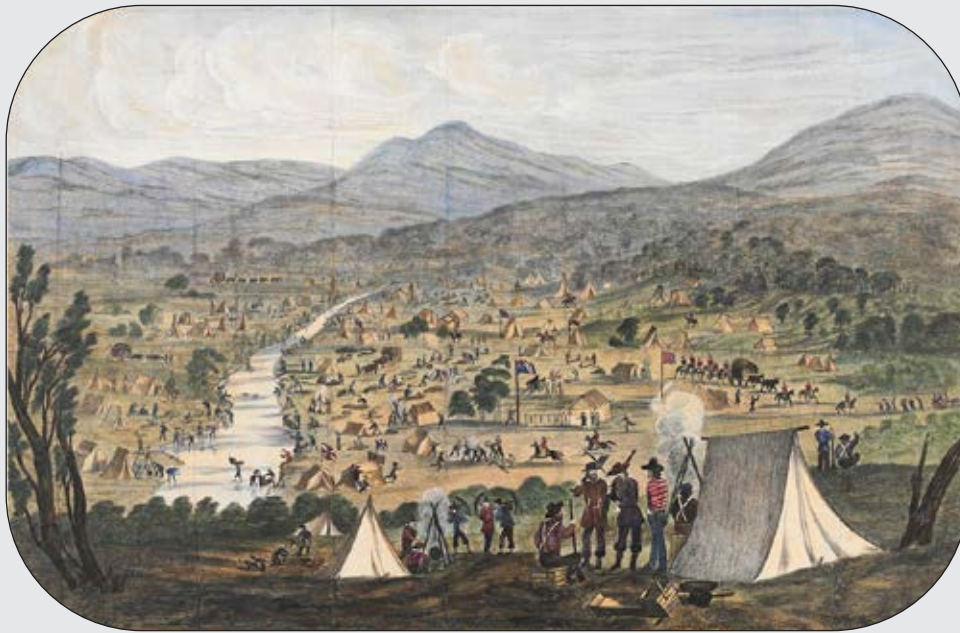
November 1852

Six months later, with William Wright who by then was Chief Goldfields Commissioner, La Trobe made a return visit of just eight days to the major fields of Ballarat, Mount Alexander and Bendigo. On Friday 19 November he noted, 'drove him [Wright] to Keilor, & then to Crook's, Bacchus Marsh'. On Saturday they set out for Ballarat taking a different route from the April one, travelling north then easterly 'by the Pentland Hills. Beveridges. Bacchus [probably W.H. Bacchus junior's station on the upper Yarrowee River] and Warrenheip'. At the last, La Trobe's geological interest came to the fore and he climbed the 741 metres of Mount Warrenheip to the east of Ballarat to look into the 'fragment of a crater of large size, its rim being breached on the northern side.²⁹ From Warrenheip their destination was reached, 'Mr Sherrard [*sic*] – the new camp'. Newly-arrived Charles Wale Sherard was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Crown Land for the Gold Fields on 28 October 1852 although formal gazettal of his and five other appointments was delayed in the

confusion of that year with a tsunami of old inhabitants and new arrivals abandoning settled districts and rolling towards the golden inland.³⁰

After a quiet Sunday at the new camp, La Trobe began 'a round of new & old workings – the Eureka – then to Creswick's Creek', where with 'Mr Brackenbury' in charge, all was declared 'excellent'. Walter Charles Brackenbury was a very recent appointee as Assistant Commissioner to the Goldfields and Victorian magistrate, being formally gazetted on 30 November.³¹ The camp was still in tented accommodation when an *Argus* agent and correspondent visited Creswick's Creek in April 1853, enjoying 'the utmost kindness and hospitality' from the Commissioner and 'settlers in the neighbourhood'. His sharp sketch is worth citing for the light thrown on particulars that La Trobe would have seen just the day before, being again on a diggings tour:

To the steady digger, Creswick's Creek is at this moment yielding more than any creek or gully on the Balaarat [*sic*]



Robert Shortried Anderson, 1833-1874, artist
Mackay and Kirkwood, Glasgow, lithographer
Mount Alexander gold diggings, Australia, 1852
 Lithograph, hand coloured, adhered to original board
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H83.303

gold-field. In some cases, large nuggets have been discovered; one of massive gold, without any admixture of quartz, was shown me yesterday; and the flats are yielding five, six, and even seven ounces per day, to certain parties now at work opposite the Commissioner's tents.³²

The next day, on Tuesday 23 November 1852, La Trobe left the Ballarat field to go to 'Hepburn's & the Aboriginal Station, [then] on by More Pork Diggings to Camp at Forest Creek'. It was a slight variant on the route taken in the autumn. The 'Aboriginal station' was recognition that Edward Stone Parker, the 'most understanding' of the assistant Protectors, had kept contact with some of those from the Larnabarrumul (Jim Crow) Protectorate that he had managed from 1841 until the scheme was abolished in 1849. Parker continued to live in the area with his second wife and large family until his death in 1865. He and the Lieutenant-Governor may have differed in some of their opinions about Aboriginal people, their past and their future, but Parker was sufficiently respected to be appointed Magistrate for the Loddon in January 1852.³³ The More Pork diggings, by contrast, illustrated the messy transient present and glittering prospects. On 9 November the *Argus* correspondent at Forest Creek could report that:

Two or three new gullies on Campbell's Creek, the principal being named More Pork, are turning out very favorably, and I have heard of 2 or 3 instances of good luck last week, one party having washed four pounds weight out of one bucket of earth. More Pork is at present the attraction here, and within the last week as many as six or eight hundred tents and stores have made their appearance there.³⁴

After a full day on the Mount Alexander field, La Trobe rode 'off for Bendigo, by the Bendigo Gap' on Thursday with 'Capt. Bull & Mr Frick'. Captain Bull can be identified as John Edward Newell Bull, formerly of the 99th Regiment of Foot, who had been Superintendent of Convicts at Blackheath, Blue Mountains, and then in charge of Public Works in Newcastle before his appointment in October 1852 in the mixed capacity of Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Gold Fields and Magistrate for Victoria, replacing William Wright at Mount Alexander.³⁵ Mr Frick has been impossible to further identify, if it is not an abbreviation for Fenwick, when it would refer to William Fenwick, then one of four assistant commissioners at Forest Creek.³⁶ On the way to Bendigo, La Trobe's notes emphasised the 'View from Mt Taurus'. Since the only Victorian place with that name is in the western district, 'Taurus' may be a play on Captain Bull's surname, and



Charles Norton, 1826–1872, artist
 Clunes – the Station of Donald Cameron Esq, JP, c.1844
 Watercolour on cream paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H88.21/4

hence a high point on their track through Bendigo Gap, with Bull perhaps guiding their view both ways – north to the diggings along the wide flats of Bendigo and tributary creeks, and south to the spread around Mount Alexander. In the afternoon La Trobe noted visits to ‘The White Hills, the Quartz Dyke [and] White Eagle Gully,’ places still in local memory. On Friday, he went ‘back to Sawpit Gully, where I part with Wright & go on with Littleton to Carlsruhe.’ Littleton is likely to be Thomas Lyttleton who in January 1853 was appointed acting Inspector of Police at Carlsruhe in the initial round of appointments to the new Victoria-wide police force.³⁷ Planning for that force was well underway in November 1852. William Mair,³⁸ then commander of mounted police and shortly to become the first police paymaster, was also at Carlsruhe. La Trobe started out on Saturday in Mair’s four-wheeled drag to breakfast at the Jeffreys brothers’ station, originally *Carlsruhe* and renamed *Kineton*, before riding ‘back to Melbourne [in] beautiful weather’.

These goldfield tours illustrate the active role taken by La Trobe in establishing an organisational structure that would ensure civil order within the province of the law among gold-seekers flooding Victoria from within and without Australia. To be avoided at all costs was the unregulated ‘wild west’ of the Californian diggings that had erupted in 1848. In a letter to Deas Thomson, his chief official correspondent

in Sydney who had become a trusted friend, La Trobe wrote in mid-December 1852:

I look upon the [heady] spirits of the year that is soon to close with wonder. I am not afraid but when the day comes that men can strain the gold dust out of their eyes and look upon things calmly, some credit will befall to the place of the Gov. which neither lost its head nor its temper under such circumstances.³⁹

On the last day of that year, he wrote his letter of resignation to the Colonial Office. While awaiting a response from London, which did not arrive for six months, it was arranged that his less than robust wife with the three younger children should return to Europe before him. His memoranda for February 1853 detail the week spent settling the family into their quarters aboard the *Blackwall*, lodging with them during its final days of loading before a measured trip to Swan Spit near the Heads, where he went ashore to watch from the signal station at Queenscliff until the ship disappeared over the horizon.

Autumn 1853

During March La Trobe spent three days at Yering in the Yarra Valley accompanied by ‘Carey’. This was his new aide-de-camp Captain Robert Carey from the recently-arrived detachment of the 40th Regiment that, under



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
Ben Nevis, Pyrenees, 1853

Sepia wash on paper

Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

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

The *Decameron* homestead may be seen in the foreground

orders from La Trobe's successor, was to have a crucial role at Eureka in December 1854. Carey accompanied him to Geelong for three days in early April, and then for a round of the goldfields beginning on Friday 15th and lasting just over two weeks.⁴⁰ With so many people and localities mentioned in the memoranda, he may have seen it as a kind of farewell tour. But there were some new fields to examine as well.

Driving his drag with his horses Calverley and Prince, he and Carey, joined by 'Hall at first' (possibly C.B. Hall of *Glenmona*), left Melbourne after a Friday morning meeting of the Executive Council, travelling 'over the plains to Bacchus Marsh where we dine and sleep'. On Saturday and Sunday at Ballarat he mentions two assistant commissioners 'Fenwick & [Sherard]', as well as Hamilton. On Monday he was at Creswick's Creek for breakfast with Brackenbury, then over 'open country' and Coghill's Creek to *Clunes*, where he met with the Cameron household and 'Mr Bagot'. The drag was probably stored at *Clunes* before heading to new diggings at Daisy Hill, which they made 'just before dark'.

Daisy Hill is in the Pyrenees region south of present-day Maryborough. La Trobe

was curious to see the area for another reason. On Tuesday he noted 'the old hut. See gold discovery 1848'. As an *Argus* informant wrote in August 1852, the Daisy Hill 'Diggings are in the immediate neighbourhood of the spot where... the piece of gold was found which created such a commotion about four years since.'⁴¹ Early in 1849 Thomas Chapman had taken a bag of nuggets garnered near his shepherding outstation down to Melbourne, where it was bought and displayed in a jeweller's window. However a subsequent 'rush' proved unrewarding and public interest evaporated. La Trobe's detractors claimed he had quashed the affair and the finder, but the nature of the field was more likely responsible for others' lack of success, as indicated by a *Geelong Advertiser* report in February 1853: 'The diggings at Daisy Hill are voted to be decidedly slow. There are about two thousand diggers, in or about there, doing [only] a little. The sinking is shallow, being from three to five feet deep. The gold is nuggety but scarce.'⁴²

On Tuesday La Trobe and Carey left the new diggings aiming for *Decameron* station to the west of present-day Elmhurst. It proved to be a rough day. They started out 'by the Quarry

Hill to Halls station', Quarry Hill being a likely source of local building granite, while Charles Browning Hall, a Port Phillip magistrate from January 1851, held *Glenmona* on Bet Bet Creek west of Maryborough. However they missed 'the road to Gap' and instead reached Burn Bank, the original name for Lexton. For some reason they wished to 'avoid' it, so turned back north to Amphitheatre 'whence take a line new to me, & make Decameron with difficulty, Carey's horse gives in.' *Decameron* had been held since 1842 by James Allan Cameron, a local magistrate since 1844 with the appointment renewed in 1852,⁴³ although he makes no appearance in the *Notes*. La Trobe was expecting to find his former secretary Edward Bell at the homestead, but instead 'Mrs B. had left that very morning, and Bell absent in Horsham'. Since June 1852 Bell had been Commissioner for Crown Lands for the Wimmera District, and Police Magistrate at Lexton since February 1853.⁴⁴ His wife whom he had married in 1844 was a welcome visitor at *Jolimont*, seemingly fluent in French, having being born in Denmark and raised on the Continent, as were her brothers Fairfax and Nicholas Alexander Fenwick who were of some prominence in Geelong and district during the 1840s.⁴⁵

On Wednesday La Trobe noted 'An idle day. Resting the horses. Pigeon shooting'. Bell returned the following morning 'with a fit of lumbago', so they decided 'to stay & rest the horses till Saturday'. He and Carey climbed nearby Ben Nevis with the aide-de-camp apparently unburdening 'his complaints' along the way, but there was compensation in the all-round view from the top 'of [Mount] Elephant, Grampians, Murray plains'. With Bell still inactive on Friday, La Trobe went to 'lunch alone on the spur leading up to Ben Cruachan', perhaps a locally-named part of the massif encompassed within Mount Cole State Forest, 'and then meet my companions'. Following that is the obscure word 'Haxhausen'. A possible explanation is that Danish-born Louis Maximilian Haxthausen, who gave his occupation as 'veterinary surgeon' when he was granted a naturalisation certificate on 28 June 1853, was working at *Decameron* in April, and approached either Bell or La Trobe for advice on the procedure.⁴⁶

A number of 'companions' joined La Trobe's excursion at *Decameron*, with some likely identities revealed later in the *Notes*. Saturday afternoon was spent on a long ride via 'Mackay's inn' and 'Rostrons', where they were given misleading directions from 'Old Rostron', then on 'to Glenfillen... Davies on a branch of the Avon', where 'Mrs Hawley does the honours'. That overnight location remains clouded apart from it being on a branch of Avon

Creek/River, since Glenfillen does not appear on any available index and Davies/Davis is too vague for identification. However, Lawrence Rostron held the licence for the conjoined Wimmera runs of *Ramsbottom* and *Tottington*, while in February 1853 Mackay's Inn at Wattle Creek was declared a place for holding Courts of Petty Sessions, with James Mackay appointed Clerk.⁴⁷ It later became the goldfields township Navarre, west of Avoca on the road to Adelaide. On that basis the party would appear to be heading north towards new diggings near Mount Korong, the apex of what has since been dubbed Victoria's Golden Triangle on account of its extremely large nuggets, including Moliagul's 'Welcome Stranger' (1869) a world record weight of 2,322 Troy ounces (72.22kg).

Sunday 24 April was anything but a quiet Sabbath. At 10am they began a ride of ten miles (16km) to James Ellis' *Avoca Forest*, noting 'Spring Hill, Sunday Morning Hill & Molyagall [Mount Moliagul] in the distance', then travelling 'six miles to Wilson's'. Next comes a tantalising 'The inquest', perhaps a body found in the bush. 'Wilson's' was most likely the *Spring Hill and Richmond Plains* run, which was managed from January 1852 to July 1857 for non-resident licensee James Milne Wilson, a significant Tasmanian politician.⁴⁸ Thereafter the party: 'Meet [Bookey], Reid & Berkeley. W[est] ten miles to Camp, Korong'. That indicates that the camp was on *Torpichen* station, where the first Korong nuggets had been found in May 1852, and hence near where the township of Wedderburn was proclaimed in February 1861.⁴⁹

At Camp, La Trobe noted a lunch of 'poor mutton chops' before going 'forward'. However, they then

take a wrong track within sight of the house even, & run on some 30 miles into the great plains & back, till 12 at night, when Carey & self, cadets Nasen & Judd, orderly Hudson, trooper Anderson & ten horses have to tie up for the night, without food or water, but a splendid night.

'Splendid' reveals how his spirits lifted in natural surroundings, in this case under the stars on a crisp clear night, even though bushed. Back 'in the saddle at day break, & set to work to extricate my party'; steering south by west he climbed a rocky hill, which he identifies as the 'Buckra na Bagnal range', now Mount Buckrabanyule, which geographically is the end of the north-eastern extension of the Great Divide. In the distance he recognised 'Richmond & Salisbury plains', pastoral stations to the south

west and west over which they had travelled on Sunday. At 8am they 'came out upon old trail, find pool of water for the horses', and 'get back to Wilson's 10am meeting Reid on the search', then on to the camp. La Trobe estimated the mileage of their 'wanderings' to be '66 probably'. That evening there was 'violent rain & wind for several hours, better than last night!'

The large party at the camp including two cadets, an orderly and a trooper, suggests that it was, at least in part, a training excursion for Victoria's new police force, formed in January 1853 under a Legislative Council Act with gazettal of the original senior appointments.⁵⁰ The 'Reid' in the trio that rode out to meet La Trobe's party on the previous Sunday may well be Francis Archibald Savage Reid, one of fifteen district Sub-Inspectors at the start of a long police career. Berkeley was probably Charles Berkeley appointed a Magistrate for Victoria in June 1852, and who as 'Captain Berkeley' was prominent in Castlemaine affairs before his sudden death in January 1856.⁵¹ Bookey was probably Power Le Poer Bookey, another of the original Sub-inspectors whose career continued to his death in December 1872.⁵² Moreover, at Korong after their 'wanderings', they heard of 'Frick's adventures in the same country, three days out. The deserted hut, outstation of Wilson's.' Again, a likely identification is William Fenwick, Gold Commissioner at Mount Alexander in November 1852, at Beechworth in 1853 and at the new Avoca district field in 1854. By 1858 he was goldfields warden at Pleasant Creek (Stawell). He was a younger brother of the Fenwicks of Geelong mentioned earlier.⁵³

The return journey began the following day, but not before viewing the Korong workings ('Peculiar vegetation') and climbing Mount Korong with Carey and Reid ('noble view'). Threading their way through what is now the Kooyoorra State Park near Inglewood, they went through 'the Gap to McIntyre's', where a recorded note about 'Reid & the lobster' is likely to remain mysterious. They then took a 'very circuitous route to Catto's, making the Loddon too low down. Diggings.' These were in the vicinity of what became Bridgewater on the Loddon with the travellers apparently staying overnight at Catto's station. Next day starting at 10 o'clock they went twelve miles (19.3 km) to 'Campbell's Bulla Creek' – that is Bullock Creek later Marong – and then another nine to Bendigo. La Trobe added the obscure: 'McRavac and the Guard of honour. Mr McLachlan', and thus provokes speculation. Did Bendigo's new Police Magistrate, Lachlan McLachlan, organise a mock guard of honour to welcome him? Was masculine bonhomie in play?

Next morning began with a 'tour through the diggings with troopers Panton & Armstrong', then crossed Robert Ross's *Axedale* run 'but do not call, on to Patterson's (Jennings) meaning to pass, but finally turn & go & spend the night there'. The previous year this had been Ebden's run but was now J.H. Patterson's *Moorabee* which La Trobe places at the junction of Wild Duck and McIvor Creeks, just north of present-day Heathcote. La Trobe's hesitancy probably arose from knowing that Patterson was in Melbourne having put his entire pastoral estate on the market, intending to take his family back to England. An advertisement in January 1853 described a solid *Moorabee* homestead 'built of stone, with lightning conductors over it, and contains eleven elegantly finished rooms, wash-house and large cellars, a six-stalled stable, coach-house, and stores detached'.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding the owner's absence, it still honoured the bush custom of sheltering travellers of all kinds, with La Trobe noting another visitor 'The Rev'd Mr Gill, late of Granada'. That would have given rise to talk of travel experiences, while 'Carey & chess' suggests further diversion.

Riding six miles (9.6km) to the McIvor diggings early next morning, he saw the unearthing of a rare crystalline gold nugget, which he immediately arranged to purchase and which in 1858 he sold to Britain's Natural History Museum where it is now displayed in its treasures Vault.⁵⁵ Noting that 'goldfield not arranged yet', they went on 'to the McIvor Inn, and then to... breakfast at the "Pick & Shovel" [on] Patterson's original station', present-day Tooborac. Continuing south, they passed through 'Mollison's *Pyalong* and Hamilton's (*Calbinibin*)', then 'across country with some difficulty to Gavan's Table Land & Fergusson's', also noting a distinctive hill 'The Sugar Loaf' and Sunday Creek. A year earlier he had stayed at Ferguson's inn with Bell and Dana, so it was with some feeling that he wrote 'Recollections of the past. Stormy night and heavy rain.' The mention of 'Gavan's Table Land' suggests that he knew of the remarkable Emily Gavan, the preceptress/governess from county Cork who took out her first pastoral licence on Sunday Creek in 1843, and became a pioneer agriculturalist and benefactor in the Broadford district, along with three of her sisters and a doctor brother-in-law.⁵⁶

It was still raining when they left Ferguson's the next morning for Kilmore, a well-established township 'on the Sydney road',⁵⁷ where they breakfasted and 'did business for two hours'. Making for home again, he and Carey climbed the hill at Beveridge's, and taking a 'new track' covered thirteen miles (21km) to reach Broadmeadows through heavy showers. A final note was tinged with melancholy: 'get

home to my lonely perch about half p[ast] 6.⁷ He was missing the family who had left for Europe in February.

Personal traits emerging from these touring notes are La Trobe's energy, stamina, horsemanship, navigational skill, a feeling for mountains and for good conversation, and acquiring on-ground knowledge to inform

public planning. He has a well-founded claim to be a governor-administrator who lost neither his temper nor his head during the onset of the unexpectedly trying period of the early 1850s in the new colony of Victoria.

Endnotes

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- 15 McLeod information ex *inter alia*, Billis and Kenyon, p.91; *Port Phillip Gazette*, 29 April 1843, p.2; obituary of namesake son, *Portland Guardian*, 20 April 1886, p.2.
- 16 See advertisement *Argus*, 17 July 1852, p.3.
- 17 'Early Ballan', *Ballan Times*, 11 January 1917, p.2.
- 18 L J Blake, 'Wright, William Henry (1816-1877)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.6, pp.444-445.
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- 20 *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 1 May 1852, p.2. (The 'pensioners' were aged or infirm non-commissioned officers and privates who had agreed to serve out their army careers as convict guards in Van Diemen's Land in exchange for a grant of land and a cottage.)
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- 38 See Thomas Sheehy, 'Mair, William (1806-1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.5, pp.199-200.
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- 44 *Ibid*, 30 June 1853, p.614; 9 February 1853, p.188.
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‘The High Ground’: Robert Russell, artist, architect and surveyor

By Dr Dianne Reilly AM

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This is a revised version of a presentation given at State Library Victoria on 24 February 2020.

‘The preference for the locality—the high ground between Queen, King, Flinders, and Bourke streets—lasted for some time after the building of Melbourne had begun.’¹

It is well recognised that ‘Libraries are all about memory’, State Library Victoria being among those most highly ranked, with its huge, in-depth collections on every facet of knowledge. In particular, the strength of the Library’s Australian history and heritage collections has given it the status of the Victorian centre for Australiana research and the international centre for studies related to Victoria. The documented memories of our state’s past are preserved for the use of all Victorians within this august institution.

In February 2020, members of the La Trobe Society were among those invited to a special preview of one of the Library’s newest and most valuable acquisitions concerning Victoria’s heritage. This hitherto unknown album of sixty pages, containing sixty-five watercolour, graphite and ink drawings by Robert Russell, together with another nineteen loose sketches, was donated in December 2018 through family members with a direct line of descent from Russell.

At the preview, this important album of sketches documenting the Port Phillip District in the earliest years of European settlement was on display along with a selection of Russell’s views previously acquired by the Library, some sketched in England before his arrival here, and others drawn later in his life. State Library holdings of original Russell art works and memorabilia amount to 236 items, together with a large collection of manuscript material

comprising correspondence, notebooks and other documents. Two smaller collections of pictorial works by Robert Russell are held at the National Library of Australia, and in the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales. These are mostly landscapes sketched in New South Wales, but the Mitchell Library also holds some sketches of Melbourne and vicinity in the 1840s.

While the recently acquired album is physically in the Library, it is in a very fragile condition, due largely to its age and to the way it has been stored since Robert Russell created it. The binding is broken with pages separated and many of the sketches torn and stained. Before it can be made available to Library users, it must be painstakingly conserved and repaired by the Library’s expert conservators. Each of the original art works will first need to be skillfully stabilized, a task made more complex in that many of the drawings and watercolours are double-sided, with numerous hand-written annotations and descriptive notes by the artist himself. The earliest drawing in the album is dated October 1827, and the most recent was sketched in September 1877. Fortunately, Library conservators will be able to wave their magic professional wands to bring them back to a stable condition so that the damage will hardly be noticed. The images will then be physically preserved in specially-made archival housing after being digitised so that they will become freely available to us all on the Library’s website. This new collection is a really important addition

to State Library Victoria holdings, documenting as it does Robert Russell's life and the Victorian landscape in early times.

Who was Robert Russell, and what is his significance in Victoria's history? Despite the fact that some articles about this multi-talented surveyor, architect and artist and his work have appeared in print, two by historian Dr Fay Woodhouse being in the La Trobe Society journal *La Trobeana*,² to date only one brief biography of the man has been published. Patricia Hawkins' fascinating study *Robert Russell: Artist of Early Melbourne*, a profile edited by Fay Woodhouse that is available for purchase online, adds materially to our knowledge of the man.

Russell was born in 1808 near London, the son of a merchant and amateur artist.³ After a sound education, he was articled in 1823 in Edinburgh for five years to the eminent Scottish architect William Burn,⁴ noted for his fine country house designs. He then gained experience with other architects in London, including John Nash, the most eminent architect of the Regency period, during the alterations and additions to Buckingham Palace before Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837.⁵

As was then the custom for educated young men, Russell took walking tours in his leisure at various times between 1827 and 1832, following well-defined footpaths along the valley of the Medway River in Kent, sketching the charming villages and churches he encountered at Maidstone, Barming, Malling, Teston and other beauty spots further afield. Known today as the Medway River Walk, this linear route along the banks of the River Medway was for centuries a key transport route through the county. The walk follows the river valley from Tonbridge to the estuary town of Rochester, through undulating landscape, ancient woodland and picturesque villages. It also boasts many of the finest historic properties in England, from churches and cathedrals to castles and stately homes. As the newly-acquired album reveals, Russell sketched 'Lord Romney's House', *Mote House*, near Maidstone in October 1828.

On a later walking tour in October 1832, his detailed view of the ruins of the impressive Norman fortress of Rochester Castle, built within the existing defences of a former Roman town, shows him as a competent draughtsman and recorder of this architectural jewel. At the other end of the scale on this tour, he documented a number of parish churches in the town of Maidstone, and in the villages of Allington, Barming and Malling.



Unknown artist
Portrait of a colonial surveyor, c.1845
Oil on canvas
Detail from *Portrait of a colonial surveyor and his family*
Image reproduced courtesy of The Australiana Fund
– for the picture in its entirety see p.29.

Russell's walks were a reflection of the walking and sketching tour by the La Trobe brothers, Charles Joseph and Peter, to a number of the same villages in 1829.⁶ They, like Russell, had walked towards Teston 'through a district whose truly English features not even a drizzly murky evening could obscure',⁷ when they were 'admiring the extended views of the broad vale of Maidstone... to the house and domain of *Barham Court* – the village of Teston with its spire, and the antique bridge over the river immediately below'.⁸ No sketches of the Teston church or its bridge by Charles Joseph La Trobe are known to exist. However, Robert Russell's preliminary drawing in the new album, executed on 28 July 1830, depicts in a rudimentary way the picturesque fourteenth-century bridge of six arches over the Medway River at Teston,⁹ and the beautifully situated house at *Barham Court*, where William Wilberforce and his coterie, the Teston Evangelicals, did much of their planning to effect the abolition of slavery.¹⁰

In 1830/31 Russell was employed by the British Ordnance Survey, the national mapping agency for Great Britain, at Drogheda in Ireland, where he became intrigued by the science of land surveying. From 1825 to 1846, teams of British surveyors led by officers of the Royal Engineers were charged with mapping Ireland. Russell was one of those employed in the mapping process, the policy being that no Irish surveyors were to be engaged for this task.



Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Lord Romney's house, Maidstone, 1828
 Pen and ink on paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria



Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Part of interior of Rochester Castle, 1832
 Pen and ink on paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria

Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Sydney in 1835 - sketched from Dawes' Point
 Pen and ink on cloth adhered to board
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H38124
 One of seven drawings designed to create a panorama



Like the La Trobe brothers, he made use of his leisure to sketch his surroundings wherever he found himself. It is fortunate that he did sketch his various locations in this pre-photography era, bequeathing to future generations perhaps the only early views of villages and landscapes in County Meath and County Louth. Many of his Irish and English pencil works are contained in the newly-acquired album.

Russell emigrated to Sydney in 1833 with letters of introduction from influential contacts in England to Major (later Sir) Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, and he was soon employed in the Survey Department. He took great pleasure in sketching his new surroundings in and around Sydney. He was one of the earliest pupils of the renowned landscape artist and water-colourist Conrad Martens, who had been the official artist on the second voyage of HMS *Beagle* with Captain Robert FitzRoy and naturalist Charles Darwin.¹¹ The State Library of New South Wales holds six albums of Martens' sketches executed on walking tours similar to those enjoyed by Russell, but mainly in Devonshire before his own emigration to Australia in April 1835.

Many of Russell's watercolours show the distinct influence of Martens' fine work. Martens subscribed to the theory that '... it is through the medium of art only that we are able to see nature correctly'.¹² From him, Russell learned to convey 'the character and true delineation of the trees, plants etc. in the landscapes of this country...',¹³ thus making his own portrayal of the uniquely Australian environment all the more realistic and recognizable. He remained in regular contact with Martens, who as late as 1867 was helping him sell his drawings.¹⁴

Until 1835, the southerly Port Phillip District of New South Wales was decreed to be beyond the 'Limits of Settlement' until such time that it could be officially surveyed. The alarm felt in the Colonial Office after the so-called treaty with the Aboriginal people in 1835 by John Batman and other members of the Port Phillip Association resulted in Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of New South Wales, dispatching Captain William Lonsdale in September 1836 to the settlement on the Yarra. Lonsdale's powers were very similar to those of La Trobe on the latter's appointment as Superintendent of the District three years later. As well as his military function as Commandant of the detachment of troops stationed in the district, Lonsdale was to act as Chief Agent of Government and as Police Magistrate.¹⁵

At the same time, Russell was appointed surveyor and a commissioner of crown lands in

the infant colony where he arrived in October 1836 with two assistants, Frederick Robert D'Arcy as draughtsman and William Wedge Darke as chain-man. Russell's role was 'to survey the shores, mountains, rivers and their subsidiaries both surrounding and within the settlement', and he was to report to Lonsdale.¹⁶ However, theirs was a very difficult relationship from the beginning, since Russell refused to report to Lonsdale, seeing his responsibility as being only to the Chief Surveyor in Sydney.¹⁷

The situation was complicated by the fact that a rough voyage from Sydney, and the late arrival of Russell's equipment, stores and horses on another ship, delayed the commencement of the planned survey work. To fill in the time, he considered it practical to commence a plan of the Settlement, Lonsdale writing to confirm this proposal with the Colonial Secretary in Sydney. Soon after, Russell created his 'Map shewing the site of Melbourne and the position of the huts and buildings previous to the foundation of the township by Sir Richard Bourke in 1837'.¹⁸

While a survey of the town was not part of his assignment, he and his assistants initially lacked the equipment and horses to trace the topography of the surrounding districts, their designated work. Matters were made even more difficult by the fact that the horses, when they did arrive, were in such poor condition through lack of feed that they were unfit for work. While waiting for them to recuperate, Russell made his first surveys on foot in the Geelong and Werribee areas.

By early 1837, Governor Bourke had become irritated by the lack of surveying progress, and planned a visit of inspection to the Port Phillip District. Accompanied by the experienced surveyor Robert Hoddle, he arrived in March.¹⁹ He found the Settlement to be well located, and officially proclaimed it as Melbourne in honour of the British Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, on 10 April 1837.²⁰ Robert Russell was relieved of his post, and Hoddle was then appointed Assistant Surveyor.

Hoddle had long experience both in England and the Cape Colony before his arrival in Australia in 1823. His first appointment was as an assistant surveyor under Oxley on an expedition in 1824 to Moreton Bay where he worked on the initial survey and establishment of Brisbane. He subsequently practised for twelve years in New South Wales. His methods depended on the use of a 'Gunter's chain', a surveying instrument, first developed in 1624 for ground measurements. The chain used by Hoddle to measure out Melbourne's streets and blocks is held in the heritage collections at State



Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
The Settlement, from a sketch Nov 1836, looking southward (1880)
 Watercolour
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H24492
 Shows the huts of Skene Craig and Henry Batman, the Post Office, and in the distance the schooner *Enterprise* belonging to J. P. Fawcner



Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
View from Batman's Hill, February 5 1844 looking North West (1884)
 Watercolour
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H24487

Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Melbourne from the Falls, from sketch Nov 6 1844
 Watercolour on buff paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H3883
 Customs House, centre, may be seen below the Falls



Robert Russell,
1808-1900, artist
R. Russell's cottage
at 'the Falls', from
sketch 1837 (1881)
Pen, ink and wash
Pictures Collection,
State Library Victoria,
H38131-2
Cottage on the south
side of the Yarra River
about opposite
Queen Street



Library Victoria. Along its twenty metres length it has 100 links marked by a brass ring every ten links that enabled accurate measurement of ten square chains to measure one acre (0.4 hectare). The chain folded up easily to be carried by the chain-men.²¹

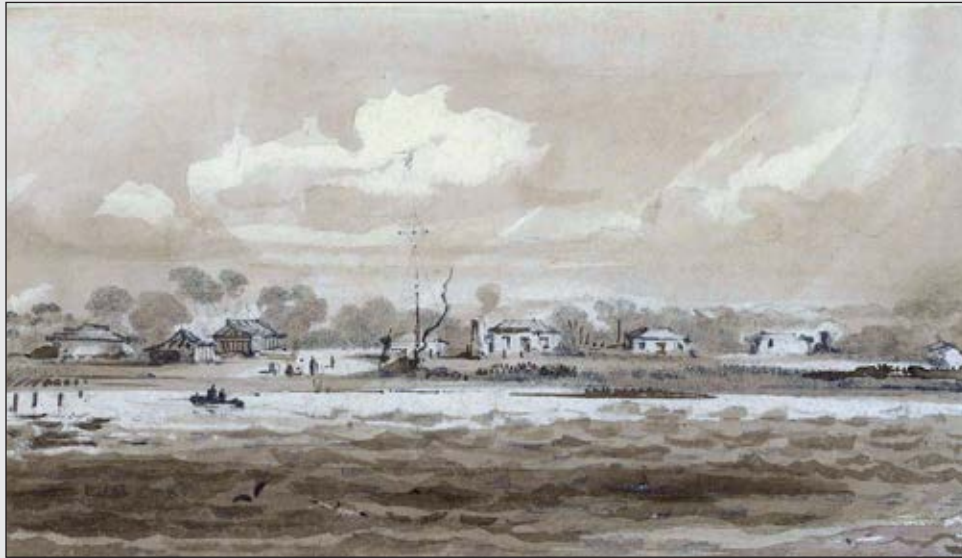
While there has been spirited debate among historians over the decades as to who laid out the plan of Melbourne, Russell himself claimed as 'facts' in 1881: 'That I was the first "surveyor in charge" at Port Phillip; that I was superseded...; and that Mr Hoddle drew his lines of street on the plan of my survey'.²² James Grant and Geoffrey Serle came to a similar reasonable and inclusive assessment of this question in 1956, a view held by many historians since,²³ when they noted that the Hoddle Grid was 'probably largely the work of his predecessor and junior Robert Russell', based on a generic town plan he had obtained in Sydney, but 'for the original features of the plan – the width of the principal streets and the lanes between – Melbourne is indebted to Hoddle...'.²⁴

From the evidence, it would seem then that Hoddle used Russell's feature drawing as a base, and traced his own general outline of the township as we know it today onto the earlier plan. The shape of the town was a standard rectilinear grid aligned along the river. It meant that Hoddle was able to start very quickly marking out allotments and public reserves for the land sales so urgently required by Governor Bourke, thus bringing order and stability into the rudimentary settlement. Using the rectangular grid required by Governor Darling's 1829 town-planning regulations, all major streets are one and a half chains (99 feet; 30 metres) in width, while all blocks are exactly 10 chains (660 feet;

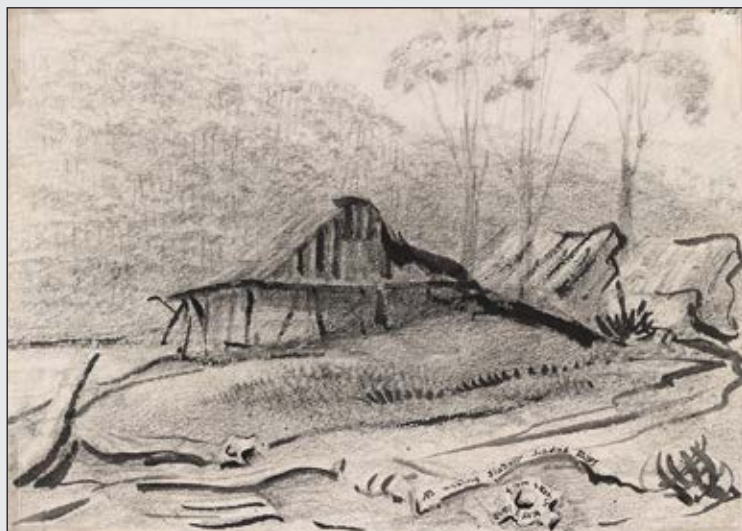
200 metres) square.²⁵ At Governor Bourke's insistence, 'little streets' were inserted east west through the middle of the blocks to allow for rear access to the long, narrow allotments.²⁶ It was also Governor Bourke who gave the names to the streets on the Hoddle Grid.²⁷ Although one of the streets was called Russell Street, it is not, in fact, named for Robert Russell, but for Lord John Russell, Secretary of State in Lord Melbourne's government of 1835-1841, and later British Prime Minister.

A disappointed Russell returned to Sydney in May 1837, having been 'relieved by Mr Surveyor Hoddle'. However, he came back to Melbourne in March 1838 as Clerk of Works to the Port Phillip District. His return distressed the administrator, William Lonsdale, who had earlier accused him of neglecting his duties and of being insubordinate. The clash of personalities, combined perhaps with something of the 'artistic temperament' in Russell's character, meant that he held that position only until June 1839 when Governor Gipps directed from Sydney that he be removed from office.²⁸

During these fifteen months in Melbourne as Clerk of Works under Hoddle, Russell was given responsibility for the design of the Customs House and a number of other rudimentary government buildings.²⁹ He is also known to have had private commissions as an architect, one project being a house, 'Yarra Cottage' renamed *Campbellfield*, for grazier James David Lyon Campbell, at Collingwood (later Abbotsford).³⁰ Another was the first Bank of Australasia (1840-41), a two-storey stone building that stood on the north side of Collins Street west of the Queen Street intersection.³¹



Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
First settlement, Port Albert, Gippsland, May 1843
 Pen, ink and wash
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria H6286



Robert Russell,
1808-1900, artist
Whaling station
Lady's Bay,
from sketch
May 3 1843
 Pastel and ink on paper
 Pictures Collection,
 State Library Victoria,
 H2007.50/1

After his dismissal for the second time in 1839, Russell remained in Melbourne establishing a private practice as architect and surveyor. With his typical excitement for everything that was going on around him, he was one of five gentlemen who formed the Melbourne Cricket Club on 15 November 1838.³² He played in the first cricket match against the Military on 17 November in a paddock in William Street, once the site of the Royal Mint, where 'Mr Russell's batting attracted universal applause'.³³ He was also among the twenty-three colonists – another being his former assistant surveyor and chain-man William Wedge Darke – who agreed to found the Melbourne Club in November 1838, the management being elected and the Club opened in January 1839.³⁴

Russell's most important and enduring design as a private architect was St James' Church of England near the corner of Little Collins and William Streets. The newly-arrived Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe laid its foundation stone in November 1839, and Russell was married in the still incomplete building to Mary Ann Collis Smith, a daughter of early Port Phillip settler, landowner and magistrate James Smith, on 17 December 1839.³⁵ The church opened for worship on 2 October 1842 and was finally completed in 1847. The oldest church still existing in Victoria, it later became known as St James' Old Cathedral, with the edifice being relocated stone by stone in 1914 to the corner of King and Batman Streets, opposite the Flagstaff Gardens.



Robert Russell, 1808–1900, artist
Camp Tuesday April 27, 1852, wet

Pen, ink and wash
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H7385
 Inscribed on verso: Mr Staughton's Station, Werribee



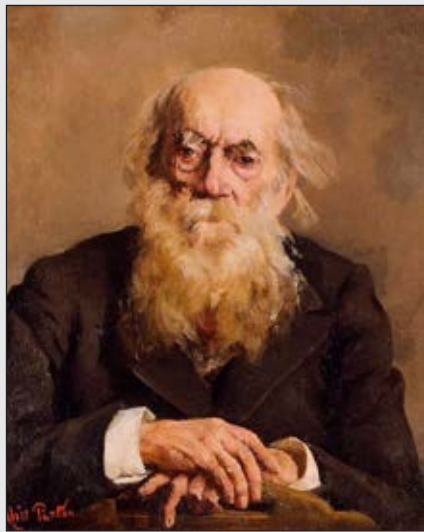
Robert Russell, 1808–1900, artist
Single span bridge over the Yarra River, 1879

Watercolour on buff paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H5015
 Opened by Charles Joseph La Trobe 1850
 Replaced by the Prince's Bridge in 1888

With a deep interest in exploration and surveying of new territory, it was not long before Russell made expeditions to remote and sometimes dangerous areas of Gippsland. Port Albert had been reached in 1841 by Angus McMillan in his search for a port giving easier access for pastoralists over the ranges in New South Wales to markets in Van Diemen's Land. A temporary settlement grew up at the port, and Robert Russell quickly accepted a commission in 1843 to survey the town of Port Albert, Wilson's Promontory and the interior of the region later called Gippsland. He was so impressed by the beauty of South Gippsland and the safe location of the port that he returned numerous times, purchasing land, and conducting a number of private surveys of this vast area. This work gave

him many opportunities to sketch landscapes which captured his artist's eye. In 1843 on a surveying excursion to Wilson's Promontory, later Victoria's first national park, he sketched a whaling station at Lady's Bay, now known as Refuge Cove.³⁶ No other image is known of this long-forgotten station.

The range of Russell's interests was considerable. 'He was the pioneer lithographer and etcher in Victoria, his etchings showing the influence of Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine'.³⁷ It is believed that he was introduced to photography by the geologist and explorer Paul Strzelecki about June 1840. In retrospect, he noted that Strzelecki 'first brought information of the discovery of photographic impressions and



Alice Julie Panton 1863-1960, artist
Portrait – Mr Robert Russell, 1899
Oil on canvas
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H141893

told me all that was then known of the methods as practised by Daguerre[e] on silvered plates of copper'.³⁸ In 1872, his work was awarded a bronze medal at the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition for 'excellence in etchings on glass, printed by means of light', the photo-lithographer in this case being Troedel.³⁹

Russell was also a writer, his literary work encompassing poetry and fiction. 'The Heart', an unpublished novel written in May 1849, probably while he was in Gippsland, tells the tale of a dramatic shipwreck and the supposed capture of a white woman by the local Aboriginal people in the 1840s near Port Albert. The manuscript of this work is held in the National Library of Australia.⁴⁰

Curiously, given their chequered history as fellow surveyors, Russell in 1851 was employed by Robert Hoddle to carry out official surveys in country Victoria. Once again, he showed little enthusiasm for the work, and was of little support to Hoddle. La Trobe too was displeased by his lack of activity, and he was again dismissed from public service in 1853. However, in the following year he was under contract with the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company, a private enterprise of mostly British investors. English engineer and surveyor, Edward Snell, had been appointed to survey and design Victoria's first country railway, including a station and extensive workshops at Geelong, and a number of bluestone and timber bridges along the way. Construction commenced from the Geelong end in 1854. Russell's task as a supervisor was to oversee the construction of the

first nine miles (14.4 km) of the railway line, a role he carried out until the end of 1855. Slow progress was made due to labour shortages with most able-bodied men lured to the goldfields. The 38.5 miles (62 km) of track opened with gala celebrations on 25 June 1857. Services between Geelong and Duck Ponds (Lara) had begun on 1 November 1856, and the line was extended to Little River and Werribee, finally reaching Melbourne at Greenwich (renamed Newport in 1881) in June 1857. The Company subsequently ran into financial problems and the line with assets was purchased by the Victorian Government during 1860.⁴¹

In June 1856 Russell left for London with his wife and five children and his wife's parents. While there, he sought to secure equipment and labourers in England for further railway work in Victoria. Russell was, however, recalled to Melbourne in 1857 to give evidence to the Victorian Government's Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly upon Railways on his experience in Victoria and acquaintance with the situation in England,⁴² after which he rejoined his family in London.

After his return with his family to Melbourne in 1860, he continued to work privately as an architect. In the course of the next forty years, he made numerous sketches of the Melbourne settlement and, as architectural historian George Tibbits has noted, 'whatever judgement might be passed on his poor performance as surveyor and clerk of works, [he] left later generations the clearest indication of what early Melbourne looked like'.⁴³ Robert Russell's wonderful memory for events of the past was acknowledged by Edmund Finn ('Garryowen'): '...one of the "Old Guard" of 1836 and the first Principal Officer of Government Surveys in Port Phillip. In him I found a *Thesaurus* of hitherto unprinted events, and, when I questioned any of his statements, an excerpt from an old field-book, a tracing, or a pencil sketch would convince me of his correctness'.⁴⁴ A large number of Russell's surviving sketches and paintings indicate to the trained eye his usual working methods. He would first sketch a scene in pencil and ink, with colours and materials recorded in a hand-written note. Working in watercolours based on the rough sketch he refined the image as he proceeded. His works were usually, but not always, signed and dated. His habit in later years was to rework earlier sketches as more finished works.

The Russell family lived in various inner suburbs of Melbourne, the last residence being a cottage in Burnley Street, Richmond when the patriarch was in poor health. Robert Russell

died on 10 April 1900, aged ninety-two, perhaps in financial difficulties as he was granted a small government pension shortly before his death. This amounted to £78 a year,⁴⁵ in recognition of his services ‘as a surveyor in locating Melbourne where it now stands’.⁴⁶ He was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. An obituary in the newspaper *Table Talk* described him as ‘the man to whom we owe the splendid design of the City of Melbourne’.⁴⁷ In 1899, the year before his death, a fine portrait of Melbourne’s first surveyor had been painted when he was ninety-one by the artist Alice Panton. Purchased from the artist by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1908, it was transferred to the historical pictures collection at State Library Victoria in about 1935.

Robert Russell contributed substantially to the necessary surveying of the Port Phillip District. His topographical delineations include landscapes of Sydney, Melbourne and environs, and the coastal and inland areas of Victoria. Very few pictures of Melbourne and environs in the earliest days of white settlement exist. The newly-acquired album of works by Robert Russell, along with other images and papers by Russell held by State Library Victoria, provide invaluable documentation of the history of this state from Russell’s arrival in Melbourne in 1836, almost until his death in 1900, a period of more than sixty years.

Endnotes

- 1 ‘The Father of Melbourne, Mr Robert Russell: how the first survey was made’, *Argus*, 26 April 1899, p.5, Interview with Robert Russell, 25 April 1899. See also note 18.
- 2 Fay Woodhouse, ‘Politics, Power and Passion: Port Phillip before the gold rush’, *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.2, July 2017, pp.12-21; ‘Surveying the Landscape: Robert Russell, Robert Hoddle and the first plan of Melbourne’, *La Trobeana*, vol.16, no.3, November 2017, pp.6-14.
- 3 George Tibbits, ‘Robert Russell, b.1808’, Design & Art Australia Online, 1992, updated 2011, <https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/robert-russell/biography> (accessed 19 August 2020).
- 4 Dictionary of Scottish Architects online, www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/index.php (accessed 16 July 2020).
- 5 ‘John Nash, British architect’, <https://britannica.com/biography/John-Nash-british-architect> (accessed 16 July 2020).
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- 7 Peter La Trobe, ‘Ramble in Kent with C.J. La Trobe in August 1829’, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354, Folder 34, p.9.
- 8 *Ibid.* p.14.
- 9 For information about this medieval bridge, see Teston Bridge over the Medway’, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1005185> (accessed 23 September 2018).
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- 12 ‘Conrad Marten’s lecture to the Sydney Sketching Club’, 21 July 1856, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1856, p.5.
- 13 Conrad Martens to his brother Henry, 18 March 1851, <https://documents.uow.edu.au/~morgan/graphics/cmletters.pdf> (accessed online 30 November 2020)
- 14 Tibbits.
- 15 George Tibbits and Angela Roennfeldt, *Port Phillip Colonial 1801-1851: early government buildings and surveys in Victoria; an exhibition at... the State Library of Victoria, 1989*, Clifton Hill, Vic.: Port Phillip Colonial, 1989, p.11.
- 16 Russell’s Instructions, *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.5: Surveyors’ Problems and Achievements, 1836-1839*, edited by Michael Cannon and Ian MacFarlane, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1988, pp.6-8.
- 17 Ernest Scott, ‘Captain Lonsdale and the Foundation of Melbourne’, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol.4, no.3, March 1915, p.109.
- 18 Robert Russell, *Map shewing the site of Melbourne and the position of the huts and buildings previous to the foundation of the township by Sir Richard Bourke in 1837*, Currie Collection, State Library Victoria, H24500; reprint Maps Collection. (In his interview with the *Argus* in April 1899 he explained that in making his survey he sought to disturb the early settlers as little as possible, by having ‘as few of the huts as possible actually in the streets, from which in a very little time they would have to be removed’.)
- 19 A.G.L Shaw, ‘Foundation and Early History’, *eMelbourne: the city past & present* (accessed online 16 July 2020).
- 20 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 12 April 1837, p.303.
- 21 Ann Moyal, ‘Surveyors: mapping the distance, early surveying in Australia’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 17 November 2020). For a picture, see *Surveyors’ chain reputedly used by Robert Hoddle in laying out Melbourne* [realia], Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H16888.
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- 29 Ibid, pp.37-38.
- 30 Robert Russell, Yarra Cottage: plan and elevations, 25 May 1839, Graham Bros collection, 1961.0014.00001, University of Melbourne Archives.
- 31 Tibbits. For a picture, see steel engraving, S.T. Gill (artist), A. Willmore (engraver), 1862, p.40.
- 32 In Search of the Founders', <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/in-search-of-the-founders-melbourne-cricket-club/WwIyRQc8p2LRKQ?hl=en> (accessed 19 November 2020).
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- 37 Harley Preston, 'Russell, Robert (1808-1900)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 16 July 2020).
- 38 Tibbits.
- 39 Ibid.
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- 41 Edward Snell, *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell: the illustrated diary of an artist, engineer and adventurer in the Australian colonies 1849 to 1859*, edited and introduced by Tom Griffiths, North Ryde, N.S.W., Angus & Robertson and The Library Council of Victoria, 1988.
- 42 Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Committee upon Railways, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 3 June 1857, pp.153-155.
- 43 Tibbits, op cit.
- 44 Garryowen, *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835 to 1852: historical, anecdotal and personal*, Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, 1888, p.vi, Preface.
- 45 *Australasian*, 10 March 1900, p.35, pension reducing to £52 a year on his death or that of his wife.
- 46 *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, Legislative Assembly, 29 August 1899, p.859.
- 47 'Mr Robert Russell', obituary, *Table Talk*, 19 April 1900, p.5.



Unknown artist
Portrait of a colonial surveyor
and his family, c.1845
 Oil on canvas
 Hanging at Government House,
 Canberra
 Image reproduced courtesy of
 The Australiana Fund

Patricius William Welsh: a man of high hopes and ambition

By Peter McL Hiscock AM

Peter Hiscock spent twenty-two years in the manufacturing sector in corporate finance, followed by twenty-two years as CEO of the Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Ballarat. He was on the Museum Board/Museums Victoria, the Heritage Council and the Board of Tourism Victoria. Peter's current research stems from an interest in Buninyong's early history and his wish to learn more about P W Welsh, the man who built the house he has lived in for the past forty years. He knew the late Dr Joan Hunt who had a genealogical interest in Welsh because one of her ancestors was Welsh's eldest daughter. Together they shared their research pursuits on the life of P W Welsh.

Patricius William Welsh in Launceston

In the early days of the settlement of the Port Phillip District, the pioneering men had high hopes. Most had endured hardship and poor diets in the Spartan conditions of the time. Women, who were in the minority, undoubtedly found the conditions doubly difficult. This is the story of one such pioneering couple, both immigrants, who had talent, high hopes and great ambition.

Patricius William Welsh (1802-1869), also known as Patrick, was an experienced merchant, shipping agent, wool broker, land speculator and land agent. As this article makes clear, Welsh was a man whose energy and ambition sometimes exceeded his scruples. Welsh was born on 29 August 1802 in Dublin, Ireland, the son of a medical practitioner, Luke, and his wife Julia. Patrick arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1828 as a young man of twenty-five. He made rapid progress in the colony establishing himself as a merchant and was later appointed to the posts of Chief Constable, Pound Keeper and Inspector of Distilleries. In this position, Welsh was scurrilously attacked by Fawkner's *Launceston Advertiser*, but his actions were defended by Governor Arthur. Fawkner, to avoid heavy fines, printed an abject apology in June 1830.¹

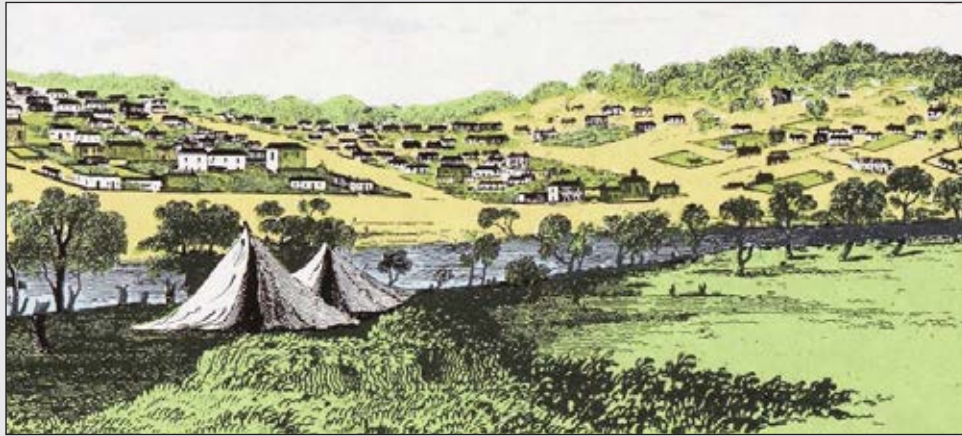
In the Tamar region, in less than four years after his arrival in Van Diemen's Land, Welsh had made John Batman's acquaintance, offended John Pascoe Fawkner and married the daughter of a wealthy free settler. Patrick courted and married, in September 1832, Marguerite Pringle Allan at her parents' home *Allanvale*, a property overlooking the Tamar River near Launceston. Marguerite (known as Maggie and sometimes

Margaret) was born in 1811 in Greenock, Scotland, as were her siblings. The Allan family emigrated to Launceston in 1829. Maggie, just twenty-one at the time of her marriage, was destined to survive many voyages and the birth of many children. Her first child, Julia, was born ten months after the marriage but did not survive; their second child, Isabella, was born at *Allanvale* in November 1834 and was followed by a son, Thomas, born in January 1836; he survived for only four months.

Just five months later, Patrick and Maggie took the unusual step of returning to England and Scotland, sailing on the barque *Anne* on 23 June 1836. Maggie, once again pregnant, gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, in London in January 1837. In England and Scotland, the couple stayed with their respective families, long enough for Patrick to raise some capital. Later that year they sailed for Launceston with their two infants. Fourteen months later George Allan Welsh was born on 12 April 1838. All three children lived into old age.

Welsh arrives in Port Phillip

Welsh did not tarry long at *Allanvale*. He seems to have immediately made plans to sail for Port Phillip. He arrived in Melbourne from Launceston aboard the *Black Joke* on 17 October 1838, and was included – along with his wife – in the second census taken for that year. He wrote to his father-in-law, George Allan, in November 1838 informing him that they were staying at Fawkner's Hotel and that Maggie and baby George were very well. One month later, he wrote again to Allan telling him that he was negotiating to take over the management of the Melbourne shipping business, Eddie and Co.²



John Adamson, d.1841, artist
John Carmichael, 1803–1857, lithographer
Melbourne from the south side of the Yarra Yarra, 1839

Hand coloured lithograph (facsimile 1971, detail)
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H35341

Yarra Yarra Cottage far right, Surveyors' tents left foreground

Legend shows P.W. Welsh Store in the middle block between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets

He was also elected to the Melbourne Club as one of its first trustees in 1838.

The couple made quite a splash in early Melbourne. He set up his business as a shipping agent and general merchant, and had a warehouse built in Little Flinders Street (Flinders Lane) and a large and commodious cottage in Flinders Street near the river and 'close to the site reserved for the new bridge.'³ William Westgarth later described it as 'about in the middle' along the street,⁴ and Georgiana McCrae as being between Russell and Exhibitions Streets.⁵ They named the house *Yarra Yarra Cottage*.⁶ In June 1839 Maggie gave birth to another son, baptised at St James' Church as Patricius William Foster Welsh.

Welsh had sufficient cash to throw himself into land speculation with gusto. He bought a number of blocks in the early Port Phillip land sales on 11 August 1839 including Lot 9, the south-west corner of Russell and Little Bourke Streets and four other blocks in 1839. He bought further land in 1839 in Melbourne and three large blocks in Geelong, and in 1840 he purchased land in Williamstown. It is unclear how quickly he turned over these purchases and to what extent he had borrowed.⁷ However, the speculative spree continued further afield: he purchased twenty-five acres (ten hectares) on Wattle Creek for £326/12/- in Portland's first land sales in 1840. It was no surprise, therefore, to find his name among those submitting a petition to Superintendent Charles La Trobe, protesting at the setting of a minimum price of Crown Land in public sales only three months later.⁸ We need to see his speculative spree in the context of the times. Some big fortunes

were made. In 1837 Hoddle had auctioned 100 blocks of half-an-acre (0.2ha) each in the fledgling town of Melbourne, named after the then British Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. Of these, the most expensive was £95 while the average price was £38. At the sale, one Charles H. Ebdon had bought three lots in Collins Street for £136. He sold them in September 1839 for £10,244. Welsh was perhaps a little late to the party, but he flung himself into it with abandon whilst it still had a few years to run.

Welsh was securing his position as one of the 'inner circle' of influential gentlemen who organised a welcoming committee for the new Superintendent;⁹ he was also one of the signatories to the 'Welcoming Address'. Much of Melbourne's social life, its regattas, early race meetings, balls and celebratory dinners were organised by this group. More importantly, the group were all suitable gentlemen to become the directors of the banks and commercial houses.

On 23 February 1839, Welsh chaired a meeting of merchants and other inhabitants of Melbourne to petition the Governor to declare Melbourne a 'free warehousing port'.¹⁰ The matter was referred to Governor Gipps in Sydney. Gipps, in his response, obviously saw this as a ploy to avoid paying customs duty and very firmly directed that the same rules as applied in Sydney would apply in Port Phillip. Welsh had an interest in the warehousing arrangements as his trading later extended to Alberton in Gippsland.¹¹

In September 1839, Welsh purchased the contents of the brig *Britannia*, which had

founded in Port Phillip [Bay]. In November of the same year he guaranteed the employment of two immigrants, a blacksmith and a domestic servant, on the recently arrived bounty ship, the *David Clark*.¹²

Clearly, *Yarra Yarra Cottage* was an early landmark. On 29 May 1839 Mr T. Capel advertised that his Australia Brewery was 'adjoining the residence of P.W. Welsh Esq.',¹³ whilst in August 1840 Allotment 6 Block 5, having a frontage to Flinders Street, was said to be 'in the immediate neighbourhood of the beautiful cottage of P.W. Welsh Esq'.¹⁴ Robert Russell's map of 1837 shows Allotment 6 as being located between Swanston and Russell Streets.¹⁵

Maggie made an impact in early Melbourne. Together with the wife of merchant John Hodgson, she was the joint patroness of 'the Ball of this season,' held at William Meek's (Meek was Melbourne's first lawyer) on 22 March 1839, about which the *Port Phillip Patriot* remarked: 'The attendance of Ladies was more numerous (as well as select) than on any former occasion. This is gratifying to all the lovers of the Social Virtues'.¹⁶

Later that year their own ball of the season was given at *Yarra Yarra Cottage* on 5 September, when the ninety-six guests spilled into the large garden. Maggie is described as 'seated on a dais beneath a canopy receiving the elite of the place'.¹⁷ It was lavishly written up by both the *Patriot* and the *Gazette*.¹⁸ However, the hosts failed to invite George Arden, the editor of the *Gazette*, who had some uncomplimentary things to say about the now affluent Welsh whose 'perseverance joined to fortunate marriage' had placed him in a respectable footing in society.¹⁹ Undaunted, Welsh offered such a generous subscription to the planned Mechanics' Institution that the organising Committee asked him, in effect, to make it less extravagant.

Welsh was surely a vigorous player in the land deals. The diarist Anthony Beale describes him as a grasping 'sharper in the land dealing way' in one entry; but acknowledges in another that he 'was kind enough to endorse my bills which lay unaccepted by the Australia Bank'.²⁰ Maggie may have been a levelling force; Beale describes her as 'a very pleasant woman with whom [daughters] Issie and Bessy were to spend the day'. On another occasion Maggie and her sister made a call, and returned home in a chaise. At that time the La Trobes enjoyed no such transport elegance.

Maggie and Patrick returned briefly to Launceston in 1839 probably enduring rough crossings with three small children and a baby in

the small schooners of the time. Sadly, a heavily pregnant Maggie was to see this infant (Patricius William Foster Welsh), by then 11 months old, become ill and die on 16 May 1840. Some six weeks later Maggie gave birth to another son on 3 July 1840 at *Yarra Yarra Cottage*. The baby, Cosgrove Welsh was baptised at St James' Church of England but died one month later.

Welsh and La Trobe

Superintendent Charles La Trobe appointed Welsh, J.B. Were and others to a committee to investigate a better public water supply for Melbourne.²¹ Given his first-hand experience with infant mortality, Welsh must have approached this with vigour. The investigation, like others which followed, did not provide a reliable solution and it was not until La Trobe commissioned the scheme that became the Yan Yean Reservoir that it was resolved.²²

In Melbourne, Welsh became a trustee of John Batman's will. William Lonsdale and James Simpson, the original executors, had withdrawn and Welsh and E.T. Newton were appointed in June 1839 to sort out a seemingly inextricable mess. Batman died on 6 May 1839, afflicted by the effects of syphilis and with his claim to his property on Batman's Hill unresolved. Correspondence held at Public Record Office Victoria between La Trobe and Welsh in May 1840 concerns Batman's house. Welsh was advised by La Trobe that the Colonial Secretary had ruled that 'the late Mr Batman's claim to purchase at the minimum price the land on which his house and other improvements were situated was declared inadmissible'.²³ Welsh was further advised that moveables in the house could be taken away for the benefit of Batman's family and that the house could then be leased for up to one year, that is until 7 August 1841, when it would then revert to the ownership of the colonial government.²⁴ The legal proceedings dragged on for many years. The legal fees amounted to £765 and cost Welsh dearly, both in the case itself and his efforts to support Batman's family members.²⁵

By June 1840 Welsh had taken on a new cause. He was a supporting speaker at a meeting held at Scots School House on Eastern Hill calling for the separation of Port Phillip from the Colony of New South Wales.²⁶ The issue of separation from New South Wales was one of the ongoing issues which took up a great deal of La Trobe's time and energy until 1851. He was heavily criticised until the event finally took place. The following month Welsh is listed as a subscriber to a fund to establish a Proprietary School.²⁷ In August 1841, at a meeting of merchants and others interested in the



Eugene von Guérard, 1811-1901, artist
Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat, 1854
 Oil on canvas on plywood
 National Gallery of Victoria, A32-1977

mercantile prospects of Port Phillip, he moved that a Chamber of Commerce be formed,²⁸ and in October was presented to Governor George Gipps at a levee held at the new Customs House during the Governor's visit from Sydney to Port Phillip.²⁹

Looking for a new project, Welsh joined two others in taking on the lease of *Warrenheip Station*.³⁰ He was an entrepreneur, not a pastoralist, and one suspects that this sleeping partnership was destined to fail. Welsh inevitably had close contact with Henry Fysche Gisborne whom La Trobe had appointed as Commissioner for Crown Lands. Sadly, he and Farquhar McCrae unexpectedly found themselves as executors of Gisborne's will when he (Gisborne) died prematurely on the way back to England in mid-1841 at the age of only twenty-six.³¹

About this time (March 1841) the couple had invited Georgiana McCrae to a dinner at *Yarra Yarra Cottage* in honour of Maggie's sister after her recent marriage to surveyor Henry Smythe. Georgiana noted this as her 'debut' dinner in the colony.³² The McCraes returned the hospitality in July of 1841. Maggie's imminent confinement was probably the reason why her husband only was listed among the guests who included W.C Wentworth and Mrs Meek.³³ In August Maggie gave birth to another son, but this time at their new residence, *Avoca Cottage*.³⁴ They called the boy Patricius William and he survived.

Welsh goes broke

In August 1843 at *Avoca Cottage* Maggie had another daughter, Margaret, and mercifully she survived. However, 1843 proved a momentous year. Her husband was declared insolvent. It was a period of considerable financial stress in the Port Phillip District, and was the first depression the district experienced. In facing bankruptcy, Welsh was not alone. He was one of a group of notable people dubbed the 'Twelve Apostles', who jointly guaranteed the huge debts of merchant W.F.A. Rucker with the Union Bank and who were all subsequently brought down when the bank called in the guarantees.³⁵ The Port Phillip Bank was destined to fail. Welsh had reluctantly resigned his directorship of the bank some months earlier when his own position became precarious.

The bankrupts in this period of two years were to include his critic, George Arden. Judge John Walpole Willis declared from the bench in one case, that there were so many insolvents that he did not know their names and he had not known a place in such a state before.³⁶ The only 'Apostle' to escape bankruptcy was J.B. Were whose family in England, rather than divine intervention, saved this apostle and to his lasting glory. Welsh faced committal proceedings in 1845 before Judge Therry on charges of false pretences. It seems he had floated an auction company and misappropriated shares, but was acquitted on a technicality.³⁷ Welsh's spectacular bankruptcy was something from which he never



Aphrasia Cottage, Newtown, Geelong, 1853
 Inset from Plan of Aphrasia Cottage & Grounds, Newtown, late residence of P.W. Welsh Esq.
 Geelong Heritage Centre Archives, 2030/A44
 Plan signed by surveyor Joseph Shaw, 24 March 1853

fully recovered. To quote one writer, ‘Welsh went up like a rocket and was extinguished in darkness’ – his assets totalled £56,000 and his liabilities £74,000.³⁸ Another writer claimed that his debts exceeded £29,000.³⁹

Welsh and South Gippsland

At the time of his bankruptcy Welsh is said to have had a land holding at Alberton in South Gippsland. He had made several trips to Port Albert in early days and shipped cut sandstone from Van Diemen’s Land used in the construction of some of the early buildings at Welshpool.⁴⁰ Maggie and the five children sailed to Port Albert to join him in October 1844.⁴¹ Georgiana McCrae records that her brother-in-law, Dr Thomas, borrowed her husband’s spring-cart ‘to take poor Mrs P.W. Welsh and her luggage to the steamer’.⁴² Welsh had preceded them sailing from Launceston. At first, they lived behind the store but by the end of the year they were to be comfortably settled in a simple cottage of wattle and daub construction.⁴³ Both his father-in-law and Maggie’s brother had suffered losses through his financial demise.⁴⁴ So too ended Welsh’s hopes in Port Welshpool on Corner Inlet becoming a shipping port for Gippsland produce.⁴⁵

Welsh leaves Port Phillip

To further escape the wrath of his considerable creditors, Welsh discreetly sailed for Moreton

Bay in mid-1846 where he became a wool broker and merchant. He had a residence and office in Brisbane. Interestingly, at this time the Melbourne press reported that he attended to the funeral arrangements of the Clerk of the Supreme Court in Melbourne, who had died unexpectedly whilst on leave in Brisbane.⁴⁶ We know that Welsh completed at least one voyage to north Queensland aboard the brig *Harriet*. He is reported to have arrived from Port Curtis (Gladstone Harbour) at Brisbane on 17 April 1847. In Queensland, Welsh had dealings in wool broking with Robert Towns, after whom Townsville was named, indicating he must have repaired his financial situation. With wealthy relatives in Launceston and other interests in Van Diemen’s Land, he appears to have accomplished this but not to the extent of his earlier flamboyance.

Maggie gamely accompanied her husband to Brisbane but must have returned to the Port Phillip district earlier. Their son Aeneas Allan was born at *Campbellfield* on 9 August 1847; he died at four weeks and was buried on 9 September at St Peter’s, East Melbourne. Whether Patrick was with her is unclear, for in December 1847 he was defending a legal action in the Magistrate’s Court in Brisbane, an action which was ultimately successful.

Patrick and Maggie settled not in Melbourne but in Geelong early in 1848. They purchased a small cottage next to a baker’s shop.

So installed, Maggie had a son in 1849 and a daughter in 1851. With these last three births, each infant survived for about four weeks only. In fact, by that stage, Maggie had suffered the death of five babies in their first month of life, and one after eleven months.

Prior to his bankruptcy Welsh had owned a forty-hectare block (Crown Allotment 2 of 100 acres) in what was to become Geelong West. He had purchased it in 1839. It later became part of the Ashby sub-division.⁴⁷ In Geelong he owned several cottages and shops at different times, with his business address as Corio Street. He advertised as a shipping agent and as a store offering imported building materials. Inevitably he was also speculating in land subdivision, showering Irish names on his residential estates and his children's names on the streets.⁴⁸ However, the rush to the goldfields dampened the Geelong property market and Welsh suffered. Nonetheless in 1852 we find him on a provisional committee for the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company,⁴⁹ that venture also not without its risks.

Welsh was one of the twenty-two men who, in 1854, issued a prospectus to raise one million pounds to float a company called the 'Geelong, Ballarat and North Western Railway Company' to build a railway between Geelong and Ballarat. The backers are listed in a Legislative Council paper dated 21 February 1854 and there are several notable names among them.⁵⁰ Their appointed engineer with responsibility for the works was Francis Bell. When it became clear that the private proponents could not raise the capital in Britain, the Colonial Government took over the responsibility for building the rail line and in fact appointed Francis Bell as engineer. The Government purchased the Williamstown Newport Geelong private railway and thus the Victorian Railways began. Railway historians record that the two great trunk lines first constructed by the Victorian Railways, between Geelong and Ballarat and Melbourne and Bendigo with their dual tracks, viaducts and blue stone station buildings, were built to standards unequalled in subsequent railway engineering. It is doubtful that they would have been equalled had the capital raising planned in 1854 by Welsh and others been successful.

Welsh finally settles at Buninyong and Ballarat

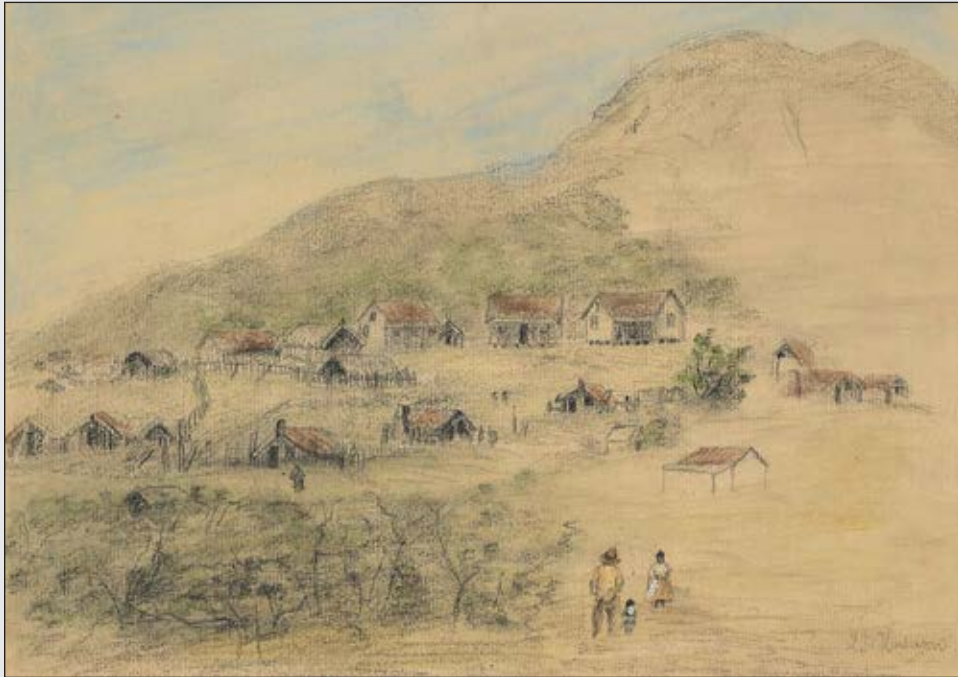
Welsh, ever the opportunist, had purchased several blocks of land in Ballarat's first land sales in August 1852, including the block on which the Town Hall now stands. The family lived in Ballarat at a turbulent time. As people who always travelled cabin class on their many

voyages, they may well have lived for a time at the then best hotel in town, Bentley's Eureka Hotel. In October 1854 Bentley's was burnt down by a mob in the lead-up to the Eureka rebellion. The clue to possible residency is that Welsh unsuccessfully claimed compensation for goods destroyed in that fire. He had a warehouse near the Ballarat Haymarket and traded in building materials. Welsh had purchased town allotments in Buninyong's first land sales in 1852 and then, in February 1854 when Buninyong's first sales of larger Crown allotments took place, he purchased three blocks including Lot 70 in Geelong Road on which he was to build *Ballantrae*,⁵¹ as it is now known, in 1856-57.

Maggie Welsh did not live to enjoy the family's new residence. In the primitive conditions at Ballarat she had given birth to twins in November 1855. Neither survived. Maggie's parents had relocated to the Bellarine Peninsula, buying a property they also named *Allanvale*, near present-day Leopold. Exhausted and ill, following the birth of the twins, Maggie was taken by coach over the terrible roads at the time to Geelong and then on to her parents' home. She died there on the 14 February 1856. She was only forty-five years of age. She had given birth to fifteen children, of whom only five survived.⁵² She had supported her husband in his own travails and followed him in his many ventures; survived hardship at Alberton as their cottage was built, numerous crossings of Bass Strait and longer coastal voyages in small ships, but not the goldfields.

Some months after her death, later in 1856, Welsh established a business in Buninyong. He owned a block bounded by Learmonth Street to the south and Scott Street to the north in the present-day commercial precinct. In *Huxtable's Ballarat Commercial Directory* of 1857, he is listed in the Buninyong section as a storekeeper and wine merchant, with a Learmonth Street address. A year later, the *The Star* newspaper of 19 February 1858 'advises of an auction by Carver of the furniture of Welsh's cottage in the Buninyong township which he intends to let'.⁵³ *Ballantrae*, high on the outskirts of the town, became his principal residence for the next six years. In August 1862 Welsh held a ball at his Buninyong residence to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of his son Patricius William Junior, by then articulated to Thomas Randall, solicitor. Consequent upon the sale of *Ballantrae* to Thomas Christopher Coates, *The Star* of April 1863 advertised the sale of the contents of the house and listed the furniture.⁵⁴

The 1866 *Ballarat Directory* listed Welsh as an estate agent and his address as Webster Street, Ballarat. Never one to show restraint, in February



John Black Henderson, 1827-1918, artist
Huts, goldfields, Mount Buninyong, c.1853-c.1856
 Pencil, watercolour and gouache on cream paper
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H28122



Solomon & Bardwell, Ballarat, photographer
'Ballantrae', Buninyong, c.1859
 Collection: Peter and Yvette Hiscock



Jean Hill (Coates), artist
'Ballantrae', Buninyong, 1985
 Watercolour
 Collection: Peter and Yvette Hiscock
 Painted from a photograph c.1900-c.1905

1868 he had signed a loyal address to the Duke of Edinburgh and added ‘father of commerce in Australia’ to his signature. Within a year, on 17 May 1869, Patricius William Welsh died at his residence in Doveton Street, Ballarat, close to the age of sixty-seven.⁵⁵ Wills and Probate papers have not been located, therefore the extent of his estate is unknown, although P.L. Brown suggests that at his death he was worth £200.⁵⁶ The cause of death is listed as severe apoplexy, the final stroke for this inveterate player.

Epilogue

Of Patricius William Welsh’s surviving children, we know that his eldest daughter, Isabella, married Charles Sherard at St Paul’s Geelong in May 1856 some three months after her mother’s death. (The son of a clergyman, Sherard was a Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Gold Fields and later Goldfields Warden at Ballarat.) His second daughter, Elizabeth, married George

Lowther (Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Gold Fields and Magistrate), but she died at the age of twenty-seven in 1860. His first son, George Allan, was an accountant and legal manager in Castlemaine before moving to Silverton, New South Wales, where he had mining interests. He died in Melbourne in 1891 at the age of fifty-three. His second son, Patricius William, practised as a solicitor at Emerald Hill and then in Young, New South Wales, and for some time as Solicitor for a mining syndicate at Silverton. He moved to Western Australia as Solicitor for mining interests in Kalgoorlie and died in Perth in 1907. Margaret, born at *Avoca Cottage* in 1843, married within the extended family to Aeneas Morrison Allan at St Paul’s Church, Ballarat.

Apart from some street names in Geelong, there is one lasting legacy. Welshpool in South Gippsland, gazetted in 1851, was named after Patricius William Welsh.⁵⁷

Endnotes

- There are no known images of Patricius or Marguerite.
- 1 *Launceston Advertiser*, 7 June 1830, p.2.
- 2 Letters from Welsh to George Allan, Higgins Collection, Geelong Heritage Centre. (See also letters quoted by Philip Lawrence Brown, ‘The Story of Allanvale, Kensington, near Geelong’, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol.24, 1951, pp.36-38.)
- 3 *Kerr’s Melbourne Almanac and Port Phillip Directory for 1841*, p.255; *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 8 April 1841, p.1 (advertisement: adjoining the cottage were ‘sheds... capable of containing 100 tons of goods’).
- 4 William Westgarth, *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria*, Melbourne: George Robertson, & Co., 1888, p.15. He was referring to ‘Flinders Street East’, which fell between Elizabeth and Spring Streets.
- 5 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana’s Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*, edited by Hugh McCrae, new edition, [with a note on the text by Marguerite Hancock]. Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, p.62.
- 6 Also referred to as *Yarra Cottage*. Not to be confused with the ‘Yarra Cottage’ designed by architect Robert Russell for J.D. L. (Lyon) Campbell and renamed *Campbellfield* at Collingwood (now Abbotsford); nor with *Yarra House* of John Hodgson in Flinders Street west of Swanston Street (which became the Port Phillip Club house).
- 7 PROV files on land transactions.
- 8 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 14 October 1840, p.1.
- 9 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 2 September 1839, p.17.
- 10 *Ibid*, 27 February 1839, pp.3-4.
- 11 P.W. Welsh & Co., Letterbook, 1839, Feb. 25-1842 Dec. 17, Manuscript Collection, State Library Victoria. MS MSM 233 (MICROFILM).
- 12 PROV VPRS 14, Assisted passenger lists, 1838-1871, Dispersal list of immigrants by the ship David Clark.
- 13 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 29 May 1839, p.1.
- 14 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 17 August 1840, p.6 (advertisement).
- 15 Robert Russell, *Map shewing the site of Melbourne and the position of the huts & buildings previous to the foundation of the township by Sir Richard Bourke in 1837*, [Reprint], Map Collection, State Library Victoria.
- 16 Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen: and good society in Melbourne before the gold rushes*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980, p.75; *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 27 March 1839, p.4.
- 17 De Serville.
- 18 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 9 September 1839, p.6; *Port Phillip Gazette*, 11 September 1839, p.3.
- 19 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 11 September 1839, p.3.
- 20 Anthony Beale diary, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 10751, entries for 11 January, 28 March and 14 August 1840. (Unpublished transcription, Tim Gatehouse.)
- 21 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 16 May 1840, p.4; 27 May 1840, p.2.
- 22 Tim Gatehouse, ‘Melbourne’s first Water Supply: the La Trobe Family’s contribution’, *La Trobeana*, vol.13, no.2, July 2014, pp.34-40.
- 23 *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol. 3, *The Early Development of Melbourne*, edited by Michael Cannon and Ian MacFarlane, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1991, p.33.
- 24 *Ibid*.

- 25 Philip Lawrence Brown, 'Batman, John (1801-1839)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, p.70.
- 26 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 10 June 1840, p.2, and 17 June 1840, p.3.
- 27 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 16 July 1840, p.2.
- 28 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 28 August 1841, p.2.
- 29 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 28 October 1841, p.2.
- 30 William Bramwell Withers, *The History of Ballarat: from the first pastoral settlement to the present time, with plans, illustrations, and original documents*, Ballarat: Ballarat Star, 1870, pp.5-6.
- 31 N. M. O'Donnell, 'The Australian Career of Henry Fische Gisborne', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol.5, 1917, p.134.
- 32 McCrae, p.62. She mistakenly wrote retrospectively that the dinner was given in honour of 'P.W.W.'s sister' after her recent marriage with 'Mr. George Smythe'.
- 33 *Ibid*, p.68.
- 34 *Avoca Cottage*, a villa on the south back of the Yarra, two miles from town in grounds of twenty-three acres, *Port Phillip Gazette*, 6 September 1843, p.3 (advertisement). In August 1841, Welsh had moved from *Yarra Yarra Cottage*, which became the Northumberland Hotel, and it was there in Flinders Street where Governor Gipps stayed during his visit of 23-29 October 1841.
- 35 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 31 August 1842, p.3, Garryowen, *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne, 1835 to 1852: historical, anecdotal and personal*, Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, 1888, pp.707-710.
- 36 Garryowen, p.115.
- 37 *Port Phillip Gazette*, March 1845, p.3.
- 38 Brown, (1951), pp.36-38.
- 39 O'Donnell, p.134. (By way of comparison, Superintendent La Trobe's salary at this time was £1,500, see p.48, endnote 3.)
- 40 *Ensign*, Toora, 29 October 1952, p.1; *Argus week-end magazine*, 18 March 1950, p.2 (both echoing an item in Hobart's *Colonial Times* of a century earlier).
- 41 *Melbourne Weekly Courier*, 26 October 1844, p.2.
- 42 McCrae, p.203.
- 43 Maggie to her father, George Allan, 10 November 1844, quoted in P.L. Brown, (ed.), *Clyde Company Papers*, Vol. 3, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, p.631.
- 44 Brown (1951), pp.40-41.
- 45 A.W. Reed, *Place Names of Australia*, Sydney, Reed, 1973, p.224.
- 46 *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*, 26 August 1846, p.2.
- 47 Gladys Seaton, *The Ashby Story: a history of Geelong West*, Geelong West: Geelong West City Council, 1978, p.18.
- 48 *Ibid*, pp.34-40.
- 49 *Argus*, 13 September 1852, p.3.
- 50 *Geelong, Ballarat, and North Western Railway Company* [prospectus], Melbourne: Government Printer, 1854. Chairman of Provisional Committee: Alexander Thomson MLC.
- 51 There is no record of the house's name during Welsh's ownership. The two subsequent owners gave it different names: Coates Family (1863-1944) *La Maisonette*; Lippiart Family (1944-1980) *Hawthorn Park*. The Victorian Heritage Register, number H0551, states that: 'Ballantrae is of architectural significance as an exceptional example of a Picturesque Gothic Revival house from the mid-nineteenth century and is especially notable for its extensive and elaborate timber carving'.
- 52 Isabella aged 21, Elizabeth 18, George Allan 17, Patricius William 15 and Margaret aged 13.
- 53 *Star*, Ballarat, 19 February 1858, p.3.
- 54 *Ibid*, 7 April 1863, p.3.
- 55 Obituaries, *Herald*, Melbourne, 18 May 1869, p.3, *Star*, Ballarat, 18 May, 1869, p.2.
- 56 Brown, (1951), p.36.
- 57 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 9 September 1851, pp.498-499; VICNAMES: The Register of Geographic Names (<https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/VicnamesUI.jsp>, accessed 31 October 2020).

Edward a'Beckett, 1844–1932, artist
David Charteris McArthur, 1884
Oil on canvas
Collection: Australian and
New Zealand Banking Group



‘Charterisville’: the home of David Charteris McArthur

By Tim Gatehouse

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‘I often pay you a visit in fancy in your pretty retreat on the Yarra & half wish I could do so in reality.’¹

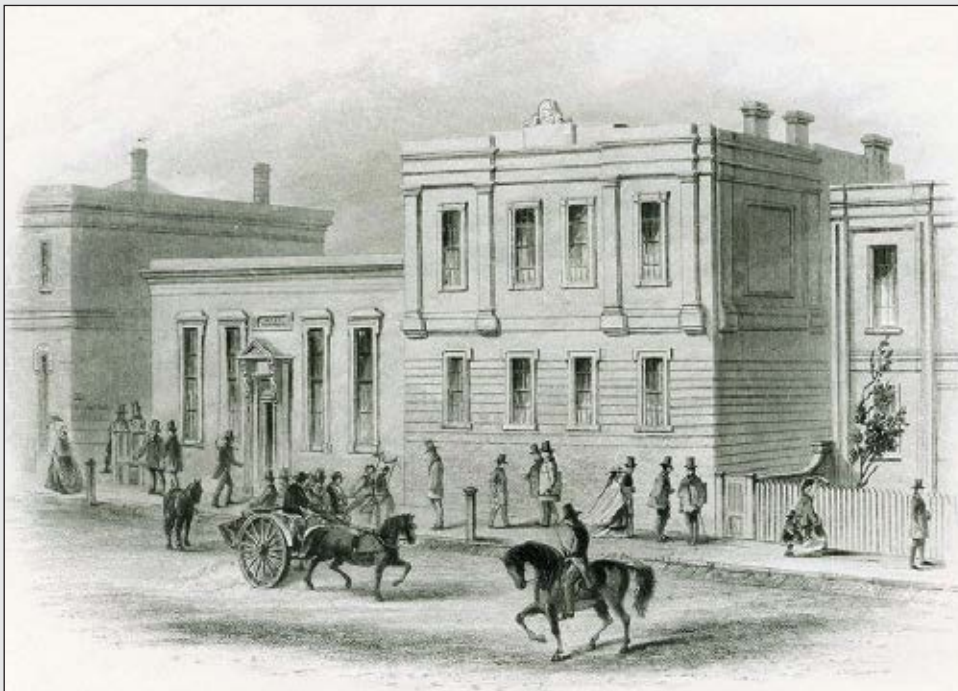
David Charteris McArthur was Melbourne’s first bank manager. *Charterisville*, the house he built in 1840, still stands in Burke Road, East Ivanhoe,² although the estate of which it was the centre has long been overtaken by suburban subdivision. McArthur was a friend and confidant of Charles Joseph La Trobe and a prominent figure in the commercial and public life of Victoria.

McArthur was born on 20 September 1808. His father Captain Donald McArthur was an army officer who had fought in the Peninsular War. His mother was Elizabeth Wemyss, a distant relative of the Earls of Wemyss whose family name was Charteris. After the family was left in financial straits by the death of McArthur’s father it was decided to emigrate to Australia.³ The family group comprised

David McArthur, his wife Caroline whom he married shortly before departure, his brother Donald and his wife Elizabeth,⁴ his three sisters and Donald McArthur’s sister-in-law. Another sister followed later. They sailed from Plymouth in May 1835 as cabin passengers on the *Canton*, disembarking at Sydney in October.⁵

Initially employed by the Bank of Australasia as a clerk, McArthur was rapidly promoted and in 1838 was appointed founding manager of the new branch in Melbourne, where he arrived in August 1838, setting up the bank in a small cottage on the corner of Queen Street and Little Flinders Street (Flinders Lane).⁶

The bank flourished until the early 1840s when it sustained losses after rampant speculation in land led to a collapse in values. Despite criticism from the bank’s London



Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818–1880, artist
 Arthur Willmore, 1814–1888, engraver
The Bank of Australasia, Melbourne, c.1862

Steel engraving
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H11992
 Completed 1841, the single storey section was added during the gold rush

directors McArthur's reputation in the bank was restored with the return of prosperity in the late 1840s and in the years following the discovery of gold in 1851 when the bank's business increased six-fold and the Melbourne office became its effective headquarters.⁷

From the date of his arrival in Melbourne McArthur won the confidence of La Trobe and remained his financial advisor in his public and private capacities. After La Trobe returned to England McArthur was one of the trustees who managed his affairs in Victoria and was an executor of his will. McArthur's advice was vital in the aftermath of the discovery of gold when the unprecedented circumstances of those years threatened to overwhelm the administration. He advised the government in the negotiations for the Gabrielli loan, the first overseas borrowings by a Victorian government for public works, in this case used to make the roads in Melbourne and Geelong, and was a member of the committee appointed by Sir Charles Hotham to restructure Victoria's financial administration.⁸ In 1867 McArthur was appointed Superintendent of the bank, but in 1876 it was felt that he identified himself more closely with the interests of the customers than those of the bank and he was persuaded to retire on very generous terms.

William Westgarth stated of McArthur that 'there was none who entered more readily, constantly or acceptably into the varied life of the community'.⁹ Taking a leading role in activities for the public benefit was a characteristic of the English landed classes, emulated by those in prominent positions in Port Phillip society, and in McArthur's case, also as a means of regaining the position in society which had been lost to his family through poverty after the death of his father.

McArthur's chief qualification for inclusion in the management of the many public institutions with which he was involved was his financial acumen, organisational capacity and integrity. At Heidelberg he was a magistrate and a trustee of St John's Church of England where he managed the building fund through the bank. He was a member of the lay committee which advised Bishop Perry and attended the Convocation of 1856. He was also Chairman of the Heidelberg Road Trust, responsible for the construction of the first made road in the colony. In 1853 McArthur was nominated by La Trobe as a trustee of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery of which he became President in 1880, and of the Botanic Gardens, sharing La Trobe's passion for horticulture, if not his knowledge of botany. La Trobe visited



Unknown photographer
Charterisville, c.1960

Heidelberg Historical Society Archives

Depicted before the 1962 demolition of the north wing that included the nearest bay window

Charterisville on several occasions. McArthur also shared La Trobe's interest in the Mechanics' Institution founded in 1839, serving as Vice-President and President. He was Chairman of the Old Colonists' Association established to provide permanent homes for elderly colonists who could no longer provide for themselves, and Chairman of the board of the Austin Hospital for those with incurable diseases. His sporting interests were reflected by his membership of the Melbourne Cricket Club of which he was President from 1868 to 1877.¹⁰

As McArthur's position in Melbourne's commercial life grew, he and Caroline were integrated into its social life and sought a more salubrious home than the living quarters at the bank. By the late 1830s the hills around Heidelberg had become the favoured residential location for the gentlemen of Melbourne where they could emulate the lives of the English landed classes in a picturesque rural setting and still be close enough to Melbourne to attend to their business affairs. Heidelberg was named by Richard Henry Browne,¹¹ one of the first purchasers at the 1838 sales, who discerned similarities in the topography of the Yarra Valley with that of the Neckar Valley near Heidelberg in Germany through which he had travelled on his Grand Tour. He was dubbed 'Continental Browne' to distinguish

him from all the other Brownes (and Browns and in the case of Rolf Boldrewood, both) in the colony. One of the first purchasers of land at Heidelberg was the Sydney merchant Thomas Walker. The 4,100 acres (1,659 ha) he purchased there in 1838 included the land which later became the *Charterisville* estate. In that year McArthur purchased an L-shaped block of 84 acres (34 ha) from Walker for £350, its eastern and southern boundaries being the Yarra River. It surrounded a property named *Waverley*, purchased by William Wedge Darke, surveyor, who was married to McArthur's sister Isabella. Darke subsequently subdivided *Waverley* into three portions, all of which were purchased by Captain Sylvester Brown. Brown mortgaged them to Thomas Walker, but when Brown's fortunes collapsed in 1844 Walker foreclosed and in 1853 sold them to McArthur, bringing *Charterisville* to its full size of 168 acres (68 ha).¹²

From 1838 McArthur began to develop *Charterisville* as a farm managed by a married couple for whom a small cottage was built. Later another cottage was built as a weekend retreat for the McArthurs. This became known as the 'Honeymoon Cottage' after it was used as such by McArthur's cousin Anna Maria Gallie and Edward Henty after their marriage in 1840. Anna Maria's brother David later became the



**Emmanuel Phillips Fox, 1865–1915, artist
Studio, Charterisville, c.1900**

Oil on cedar panel

Joseph Brown Collection, National Gallery of Victoria, 2004–172

Weatherboard studio that Fox erected 1895 and worked in during the winter months. 'The garden which sloped down to the Yarra was as beautiful and neglected as it could be', Violet Teague

manager of the Portland branch of the Bank of Australasia, furthering the links between the families.¹³

In 1841 the Bank of Australasia moved to a double-storey building on the north side of Collins Street near Bank Place. This may have been the catalyst for the McArthurs moving permanently to *Charterisville* in the same year and the construction of the present house.¹⁴ The identity of the architect has not been ascertained but there are two strong contenders: John Gill (1797–1866) and Robert Russell (1808–1900).¹⁵ Gill designed *Banyule House* at Heidelberg for Joseph Hawdon in 1846. The Tudoresque design of *Banyule* is totally different from that of *Charterisville*, but Gill was adept at working in various styles, as demonstrated by his restrained Italianate design of Royal Terrace in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy in 1854. Amongst Russell's work was *Campbellfield* built in 1839 at Abbotsford for J.D. Lyon Campbell, similar to *Charterisville* in its Colonial Georgian style, but not in plan.¹⁶ A factor in favour of Robert Russell as architect is that having designed the new premises for the Bank of Australasia in 1840 he already had a connection with McArthur, their private and business lives frequently overlapping.¹⁷

It has been suggested that *Charterisville* was not constructed in the one build, but at

different periods. If it was built in stages, there is no outward evidence, and all stages were built to a unified design. The long single-storey house with a low-pitched slate roof was built below the crest of a hill facing east over the river flats to the Dandenongs. Two short wings projected from the rear to form a courtyard. Based on bluestone foundations the sandstone walls were faced on the main front with red brick, white brick highlighting the two bay windows, between them being a verandah overlooking the garden.

The northern and western boundaries of the estate were bordered by cypresses, the river forming the other boundaries. The house was accessed by a fir-lined carriageway which ran up from Heidelberg Road to the back of the house where the sandstone stables and accommodation for staff were located. On the terraces below the garden front were a summer house and fountain, from where water was piped to the house, shrubberies and flower beds, banksia roses being amongst McArthur's favourites. Exotic plants were nurtured in glass houses and exotic birds acclimatised in aviaries before being released amongst the European trees planted throughout the estate. Below the garden was a vinery made from 150 whale ribs given to McArthur by Edward Henty who shared McArthur's love of gardening. The wine was stored in a cellar under the drawing room. The farm which was extended after the purchase of the *Waverley* estate

was run on commercial lines and included an eleven-acre orchard, market garden and a dairy. Wheat, oats and potatoes were grown on the rich river flats.¹⁸

David McArthur died at *Charterisville* on 15 November 1887. His estate totalling over £30,000 was left to his wife Caroline. He is commemorated by a stained-glass window depicting King David in St John's Anglican Church, Heidelberg, by streets named after him and his estate in East Ivanhoe, by the McArthur Gallery in State Library Victoria and McArthur Drive at the Old Colonists' Homes. After his death Caroline McArthur moved to *Beulah*, a house in Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, where she died in 1890.

In 1888 McArthur's executors sold *Charterisville* to John Ferguson and John Lloyd Roberts for £33,000. They were directors of the City of Melbourne Bank which was established in 1879 and wound up in 1896 amidst disclosures of fraud and corruption which characterised the demise of many financial institutions when the boom ended.¹⁹ However, their acquisition of *Charterisville* was financed not through the bank but by a mortgage from the de Castella family of vigneron in the Yarra Valley. Purchased with a view to profitable subdivision at the height of the boom, *Charterisville* became unsalable when land values crashed in the early 1890s. Even when prices began to recover Heidelberg did not share in the renewed prosperity, as by that time it had become a rustic backwater. Popular residential suburbs had developed to the south and east of the city, but Heidelberg could only be accessed through the insalubrious industrial area of Collingwood, and essential services necessary for residential expansion, in particular the railway, were lacking. Consequently, many of the old estates at Heidelberg like *Charterisville* remained intact although increasingly neglected.

The failure of *Charterisville* as a commercial venture proved to be an unintended benefit to Australian art, as was also the case with the nearby *Eaglemont* estate. Being unable to sell *Charterisville* Ferguson and Roberts leased it to a dairy farmer named William Veitch. He lived with his family in the north wing and from 1890 to 1894 let the south wing to artist Walter Withers, who rented some of the rooms to other artists.²⁰ In 1894 Emmanuel Phillips Fox took over the lease from Withers and with Tudor St. George Tucker conducted a summer art school. The students included Hugh Ramsay, Violet Teague and Ursula Foster. In the late 1890s the etcher John Shirlow, water-colourist Alexander McClintock and pastellist Alfred Fischer occupied rooms in the house or cottages in the garden. Another cottage was shared by Norman

and Lionel Lindsay and water-colourist Ernest Moffitt, where they were said to have enjoyed the 'pagan pleasures of nature' in the garden, a frequent subject of Norman Lindsay's paintings. Lionel Lindsay wrote of *Charterisville* at this period 'The house itself faced the valley, with a rose garden in front that descended the hill to a circular fountain that had long ceased playing... It was the most poetical of all man's achievements – a great garden gone to waste... The beauty of the place in spring haunts me still'.²¹

In 1906 the garden became the principal location for filming *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, at that date the longest narrative film made in Australia. It was produced by theatrical entrepreneurs John and (James) Nevin Tait, and directed by their brother Charles, whose wife Elizabeth was the daughter of William Veitch, the lessee of the *Charterisville* dairy farm.²²

In 1906 the de Castella family foreclosed on their mortgage over *Charterisville*, Roberts having died in 1899 and Ferguson having been declared insolvent in 1900. Charles Hubert de Castella (known as Hubert, 1825-1907), his brother Paul (1827-1903) and Guillaume de Pury (1831-1890) were amongst the Swiss vigneron inspired by the presence of La Trobe's Swiss-born wife Sophie to settle in Victoria. In 1862 Hubert de Castella and Guillaume de Pury established the St Hubert's vineyard at Yering which acquired a reputation for the fine quality of its wine. Hubert's son François (1867-1953) studied viticulture in Switzerland and France from 1883 to 1886, returning to Victoria in that year to manage the vineyard. Hubert then retired to Switzerland. He had previously taken Andrew Rowan into partnership and in 1890 sold Rowan his interest. He returned to Victoria in 1906, but died the following year at *Charterisville*, being succeeded by his son François.²³

After the sale of his father's share of the vineyard in 1890, François joined the Victorian Department of Agriculture as a consultant in viticulture. After he was retrenched in 1892, he purchased the Tongala vineyard and managed the Chateau Dookie vineyard on behalf of the Bank of Victoria. In 1907 after phylloxera destroyed most Victorian vineyards the Victorian government commissioned de Castella to investigate the industry in Europe. His report laid the foundations for the re-establishment of the Victorian wine industry. De Castella's expertise was recognised internationally by the award of the Ordre de Mérite agricole by the French government in 1937. He died at *Charterisville* in 1953.²⁴

With the extension of the railway Heidelberg became a more desirable residential

area, and the large estates were gradually subdivided into suburban allotments. The first subdivision of *Charterisville* was in 1916. During the 1930s it became a convalescent home under the superintendence of Mrs de Castella, who was a nurse prior to her marriage. Sufficient land remained for its rural atmosphere and views to be promoted as one of its major attractions. Further areas were sold in 1920, 1927 and 1939. Following the death of Mrs de Castella, the final subdivision in 1964 was facilitated by the demolition of the north wing. Since that date the house has had several owners. Additions have been made to the rear, but the remainder of the garden front retains its views over the Yarra River to the Dandenongs.

Endnotes

- 1 Charles Joseph La Trobe to David Charteris McArthur, Whitbourne Court, Worcester, 16 January 1860, in L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, p.54.
- 2 The area was originally known as Warringal and later Heidelberg. (Donald S. Garden, *Heidelberg: the land and its people 1838-1900*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.5, 19-20.)
- 3 J.A. Tosolini, 'David Charteris McArthur: a colonial gentleman', Thesis (MA), University of Melbourne, 2002. Copy held at MS 14608, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.
- 4 For a biographical sketch of Caroline and Elizabeth McArthur, see Anne Marsden, *And the Women Came Too: the families of the founders of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution*, Melbourne: Anne Marsden in association with The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc., 2018, pp.145-160.
- 5 Alan Telford, Telford Family of Ellinbank: from Scotland and England to Australia, telfordfamily.id.au (accessed 23 December 2020).
- 6 Sally Graham (ed.), *Pioneer Merchant: the letters of James Graham, 1839-54*, South Yarra: Hyland House, 1985 p. 242.
- 7 Tosolini. p.37.
- 8 *Leader*, Melbourne, Supplement 18 June 1881, p.1.
- 9 Michael Cannon, *Old Melbourne Town: before the Gold Rush*, Main Ridge: Loch Haven Books, 1991, p.439.
- 10 Geoffrey Blainey, 'McArthur, David Charteris (1808-1887)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 December 2020); dates from <https://www.mcc.org.au/about-the-club/club-history/previous-office-bearers>.
- 11 Garden, p.19
- 12 *Ibid*, pp.32-34, 42.
- 13 *Ibid*, p.33.
- 14 Victorian Heritage Register Numbers H1140 and H31172.
- 15 Graeme Butler, *Heidelberg Conservation Study*, Part 1, *Heidelberg historic buildings & areas assessment*, Heidelberg: Heidelberg City Council, 1985, p.57.
- 16 Miles Lewis, 'The Victorian House', in *The History & Design of the Australian House*, comp. Robert Irving, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985, p.66. (In this work the house is given its original name, 'Yarra Cottage', whilst its location is mistakenly given as Flinders Street.)
- 17 Cannon, p.438.
- 18 Garden, p.33.
- 19 Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers: the complete illustrated history*, South Yarra: Lloyd O'Neil, 1972, p.221.
- 20 Andrew Mackenzie, 'Withers, Walter Herbert (1854-1914)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 December 2020).
- 21 Garden, p.158, citing Daryl Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree: my family*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1965, pp.49-50.
- 22 Frank Van Straten, 'Tait, Charles (1868-1933)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 December 2020).
- 23 K.A.R. Horn, 'Castella, Charles Hubert de (1825-1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 December 2020).
- 24 David Dunstan, 'de Castella, François Robert (1867-1953)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 December 2020).

Jaunting car, Ireland, c.1900
en.wikipedia.org



‘Driving I. in my Drag’: glimpses of La Trobe’s carriage – a research report

By Helen Armstrong

Helen Armstrong is co-editor of *La Trobeana* and a volunteer guide at Government House and La Trobe’s Cottage. Through these activities she has developed a deep interest in the life and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe.

A great horseman, Charles Joseph La Trobe made over ninety documented journeys on horseback around the Port Phillip District (or Victoria as it became in July 1851). He travelled as far west as Portland and Mount Gambier, Korong on the lower Loddon and Swan Hill on the Murray, May Day Hills (Beechworth), Port Albert and Boisdale in Gippsland, and through the Otway Ranges when attempting to blaze a way for a site for a much-needed lighthouse. For the most part he derived pleasure and satisfaction from these challenging and arduous journeys, which are briefly recorded in his *Australian Notes*,¹ and illuminated in Peter Hiscock’s article, ‘La Trobe and his Horses – testing times’.²

During his twelve years as Superintendent, La Trobe’s modest salary of not more than £1,500 per annum did not readily allow for keeping a carriage,³ therefore his duties until the

later 1840s were undertaken either on horseback or on foot. When travelling to Geelong the alternatives were to take a bay steamer or have an exhilarating ride across the plains. The implications of him not keeping a carriage – lacking the prestige flowing from a ‘well-turned out equipage’ in early Melbourne – are outlined by Jim Badger in an earlier *La Trobeana* article.⁴

A welcome development for him would have been the bequest in 1844 of a ‘new outside car’⁵ from his friend J.D. Lyon Campbell. He was then able to take his ‘dear wife’ Sophie in the jaunting car on pleasure trips, such as one in the following autumn when they visited Georgiana McCrae at *Mayfield* on the Yarra (at Collingwood, now Abbotsford) to view the miniatures she had painted, before all returning to *Jolimont* to dine.⁶ There were two types of jaunting car: an inside one in which the occupants sat facing one another for a very uncomfortable



Station d'Yering (detail)
La Trobes at Yering Station, February 1852
For full caption, see page 48

ride, and an outside one, as gifted, in which the occupants faced outwards over the wheels, in a more comfortable if less safe manner.

While La Trobe was away on a two-week journey on horseback to the Grampians in March 1850, Sophie had a fall from the car and sustained significant bruising. On learning of the fall, La Trobe wrote promptly from Muston's Creek: 'I pray God that you may have been recovering from the effects of your tumble... Poor Cherie—take care of yourself & don't take a spite against Vic [her pony] & riding... God bless you my darling. I wish you could join me in the mountains...', adding next day from Mount Sturgeon Inn: 'All I can say is that I wish you were with me. I hope you are feeling less sore day by day—& will be ready for a ride when I come back'.⁷

The first we read of La Trobe owning a carriage is the *Argus* report of an accident in Collins Street as Governor Charles FitzRoy was returning to the Royal Hotel after dining with the La Trobes at *Jolimont* on the evening of 13 March 1849.⁸ This was at the beginning of the Governor's ten-day visit to the Port Phillip District. According to the newspaper, 'His Excellency was a good deal shaken by the violence of his fall, and Mr FitzRoy, the Private Secretary, had one of his arms a good deal bruised'.⁹ The coachman was scratched on the legs and face, and the carriage was 'much shattered'.

The carriage was either repaired or replaced. It may have been again in use on 2 May when La Trobe noted: 'To Geelong with S. and the children'.¹⁰ An *Argus* report on 4 May confirmed that 'His Honor the Superintendent, with his family, arrived in Geelong on Wednesday evening'. The family may have been on holiday, with the pony Vic purchased for Sophie's use during this time, but La Trobe remained on duty. Between their arrival at

Geelong and 'All home' on 25 May, he had two working spells back in Melbourne, in addition to meeting Geelong delegations about municipal incorporation, and establishing funding and site for a hospital.¹¹

Towards the end of 1849 Sophie accompanied her husband to the Mount Macedon district, when they stayed with the Riddells on 17 October at *Cairn Hill* on Kerrie Creek, just east of Gisborne.¹² On the following day La Trobe took a ride with Thomas Hamilton, cousin and business partner of John Riddell, 'about the skirt of Mt Macedon', commenting on the Grevillea, while Sophie was driven to Frederick Powlett's a little to the west, 'on the edge of the great marsh'.¹³ Powlett drove her back to town next day with a hot wind blowing, while La Trobe went forward on horseback to the Loddon Aboriginal Station at Frankford, in the company of Henry Dana, Commandant of the Native Police Corps and a friend who is reputed to have twice saved his life.¹⁴ After visiting a number of his pastoralist friends, including Adolphus Goldsmith at *Travalla* near present-day Beaufort, and delighting in the district's scenery, he arrived home after a week away.

La Trobe wished that Sophie would accompany him more often on some of his journeys. Whilst away on a fifteen-day round trip to Swan Hill he wrote to her from the Pyrenees on 20 January 1850:

We have been favored hitherto with most beautiful weather bright but cool—and nothing is in my enjoyment of the fine scenery in the midst of these picturesque hills but that only of my wife & children. Really you ought to come here—there is no difficulty for a carriage coming all the way from Melbourne & much of the road latterly especially is good in every sense of the word'.¹⁵



Edward La Trobe Bateman, 1816–1897, artist
Carriage at stables, Jolimont, 1853
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria,
 H98.135/16 (detail)
 Pencil and Chinese white on brown paper



Turrill and Sons, London, coachbuilder
Barouche, c.1830–c.1840
 National Trust Carriage Museum (UK),
 NT 272886.1
 Travelling barouche built for the Marquess of Bute

A month later he noted ‘With dear S. & little Charlie to N. N. [Narre Narre] Warren to see the Hills & the Fern Tree Gullies’.¹⁶ Their friend at *Tirhatuan* homestead on the Narre Warren Creek was the Rev. James Clow, who had held the first Presbyterian service in what was later Melbourne before taking up the *Corhanuarrabul* run, the Woiwurrung name for the Dandenong Range.¹⁷ On the following ‘beautiful day’, La Trobe had a long ride through the range to Clow’s cattle outstation, noting that he was accompanied by little Charlie (aged four) ‘on horseback before a Black trooper’. Although the third day was very hot they returned home by a ‘roundabout road by Upper Brighton’. We can be certain that Sophie would have enjoyed the ambience of the Dandenongs as she had enjoyed the scenery in Van Diemen’s Land three years earlier during Charles’s four months as Administrator; there the mountainous country reminded her of her native Switzerland.

In early October 1850 they returned to the Mount Macedon district as he noted: ‘With S. to Powlett’s’.¹⁸ They visited the Griffiths, the Riddells and the Laballieres. Although not clear in the *Notes*, it is probable that Sophie then returned to town with Frederick Powlett, as she did the year before, while La Trobe went to Geelong and the Heads on another of his ‘tours of inspection’.¹⁹ New government works underway or planned included Geelong’s harbour, police office and hospital at Geelong, and re-siting and upgrading the lighthouse and signal station on Shortland’s Bluff. Returning to Melbourne he went up Station Peak (You Yangs), indulging his love of mountains and botanical interests, while examining its potential as a site for one of the beacon fires planned to spread the imminently anticipated news of Separation.²⁰

La Trobe made his first official visit to Geelong as Lieutenant-Governor in early September 1851. On 2nd he noted: ‘Off early, driving Mrs Bell & S. in the carriage, across the plains. Bell on horseback’.²¹ Edward Bell was La Trobe’s aide-de-camp and had been his private secretary since 1849. They arrived at 4pm, in readiness for the next day’s program: a levee at noon followed by a dinner-party (‘a dull expensive affair’). The following day they dined with Captain Foster Fyans, Commissioner for Crown Lands for Portland Bay District, at his *Bellbird* homestead on the Barwon and returned to Geelong for a Ball (‘strange arrangements’). On the 5th, they went back over the plains, reaching home at 4pm.

A journey in the opposite direction, to the Upper Yarra, commenced on 19 February 1852, La Trobe noting ‘Visit Castella at Yering with S., driving her in my drag with Calverley, & Prince outrigger’.²² In a letter to his daughter Agnes, he described Prince as a ‘fine strong grey’ and Calverley a very good horse.²³ This visit was to see Paul de Castella and Adolphe de Meuron, Sophie’s nephew, who had jointly purchased the *Yering* cattle station from the Ryrie brothers in 1850.²⁴ Returning one evening from the Ryries on the north bank of the Yarra, La Trobe found the ‘drag run away & overturned, & Calverley much injured’. Because of Calverley’s injury they endured a very slow journey home on the 23rd ‘by help of a terribly slow horse lent us by Mr Gardiner’.²⁵ La Trobe definitely wanted speed in his horses.²⁶

The next mention of the drag is after Sophie and the children had left for Europe, in order for her to seek expert medical care. La Trobe had resigned on 31 December 1852 and his family

departed, to his deep sorrow, on 22 February 1853.²⁷ Some weeks later on 15 April 1853 he set off in the drag, with two companions and Calverley and Prince, for a journey of seventeen days to the goldfields. They went via Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat, Clunes (where they probably left the vehicle), Bendigo and newer fields in the Pyrenees and lower Loddon.²⁸

What was a ‘drag’, and what type of carriage was La Trobe’s vehicle? The term ‘drag’ referred to a privately-owned coach used for leisure travel,²⁹ or more succinctly, a gentleman’s coach kept for pleasure.³⁰ Historically, it referred to a private stage-coach usually drawn by four horses, with seats inside and on the top.³¹ The La Trobe carriage was drawn by two horses.

The two pictures from the 1850s on the previous pages show it to be a Barouche,³² a

four-wheeled vehicle with a collapsible hood over the rear half, a seat high in front for the driver, and seats facing each other for the passengers.³³ Heavy and luxurious, with panelled curving bodywork suspended on C-springs, and with upholstered seating, a barouche provided both dignified comfort and utility.

When and on what basis La Trobe acquired his carriage cannot be determined. Perhaps it was a gift from a friend,³⁴ as the jaunting car had been. In any case, we can see that he derived continuing pleasure from journeying in it to the country with ‘dear S.’

And what became of the drag? For the auction at *Jolimont* on 21 August 1862 of ‘elegant household furniture and effects’, there was an additional listing of a ‘Handsome Buggy – Neat hooded buggy, nearly new’.³⁵ Perhaps the drag had remained in the stables since La Trobe’s departure in 1854 – an interesting thought.

Endnotes

Station d’Yering, 1861, Karl Girardet, 1813–1871 (artist), Charles Maurand, 1824–1904 (engraver).

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

- 1 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.
 - 2 Peter Hiscock, ‘La Trobe and his Horses – testing times’, *La Trobeana*, vol.17, no.3, November 2018, pp.5-14.
 - 3 La Trobe’s salary was £800 from March 1839 to January 1842. From then until 30 June 1851 it was £1,500 (a figure initially to match the salary of Justice J.W. Willis, first Resident Judge). With Separation, it increased to £2,000, from 1 July 1851 until May 1852; and then further increased to £5,000. His successor, Governor Hotham, in 1854 received £10,000. (Davis McCaughey, Naomi Perkins and Angus Trumble. *Victoria’s Colonial Governors, 1839-1900*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press at The Miegunyah Press, 1993, pp.16, 48.) John Barnes in *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor* (Canberra: Halstead Press in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, pp.154–155) remarks that after removal expenses La Trobe was in debt on arrival and would remain so for most of his time in Australia. He also points out that the Superintendent initially received £200 a year for the forage of two horses.
 - 4 Jim (Ian James) Badger, ‘“The La Trobes came in their Jaunting Car”: keeping a carriage in the age of La Trobe’, *La Trobeana*, vol.8, no.3, November 2009, pp.11-20; see also his *Australian Horse-Drawn Vehicles*, Adelaide: Rigby, 1977, pp.11-14, 24, and ‘Swank or “Wheels”’: how Australians regarded private horse-drawn vehicles, 1788-1940’, Thesis (PhD), La Trobe University, 2006, pp.126, 154, 338.
 - 5 Georgiana McCrae, *Georgiana’s Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*, ed. by Hugh McCrae [new edition], Canberra: Halstead Press, 2013, p.120. Note at entry for 19 December 1842, p.120.
 - 6 *Ibid*, entry for 18 April 1845, p.234.
 - 7 L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, pp.38-39, Letters of 11 and 12 March 1850. (La Trobe bought Vic at Geelong in May 1849, *Australian Notes*, p.180.)
 - 8 *Argus*, 16 March 1849, pp.2, 4. See also Susan Priestley, ‘The Governor, the Superintendent and his Carriage’, *La Trobeana*, vol.19, no.3, November 2020, pp.22-25.
 - 9 *Argus*, 16 March 1849, p.2.
 - 10 *Australian Notes*, p.180
 - 11 *Geelong Advertiser*, 15 May 1849, p.2
 - 12 *Australian Notes*, p.180. Gisborne was then known as Bush Inn.
 - 13 *Ibid*. Powlett had a cottage in the Police Paddock at Gisborne overlooking the creek. The cottage, which escaped the devastating bush fires of February 1851 (*Argus*, 12 February 1851), is shown on an 1856 map as ‘Commissioner’s residence’, overlooking the ‘western branch of the Salt-Walter-River’ (*Town and Suburban Lands at Gisborne in the County of Bourke*, Melbourne: Surveyor General’s Office. 1856, Map Collection, State Library Victoria). Remnants of the Gisborne Marshlands remain as sedgy wetland. The creek is now known as Jacksons Creek, flowing into the Maribyrnong River.
 - 14 Blake, p.80; Marilyn I. Norman, ‘Dana, Henry Edward Pulteney (1820-1852)’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, p.278. However, Barnes (p.186) points out that this has never been documented.
 - 15 Blake, p.37, written from Wright’s *Decameron*. This was W.N. Wright, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Wimmera District, located at Allan Cameron’s station near Mount Cole, *Melbourne Argus*, 14 May 1847, p.1.
 - 16 *Australian Notes*, p.188, departed 20 February 1852.
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- 17 Thomas Francis Bride (ed.), *Letters from Victorian Pioneers: a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the Aborigines, etc., addressed by Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria* [1853]; edited with an introduction and notes by C.E Sayers, Melbourne: Lloyd O'Neill for Currey O'Neil, 1983, p.106.
- 18 *Australian Notes*, p.194.
- 19 *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 October 1850, p.2.
- 20 Ibid, 17 and 24 July, 23 September 1850, p.2.
- 21 *Australian Notes*, p.202.
- 22 Ibid. p.210. An 'outrigger' was a relief horse running outside the shafts.
- 23 Letter 28 February 1852, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria, MS 13354, folder 28.
- 24 Raymond Henderson, *From Jolimont to Yering – and along our Yarra Valleys with Neuchatel's bachelor vigneron*, Kilsyth, Vic.: Roundabout Publishing, 2006, p.118.
- 25 *Australian Notes*, p.210. Mr Gardiner was overlander John Gardiner, of *Brushy Park*, Mooroolbark.
- 26 Hiscock (p.13) writes that when on horseback La Trobe had the ability to 'ride long and hard'. Annie Baxter Dawbin observed in 1845: '...he is cruel to his horses I think in riding so terribly fast', *A Face in the Glass: the journal and life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, [ed.] Lucy Frost, Melbourne: Heinemann, 1992, p.72.
- 27 He finally sailed on 6 May 1854; his reluctant successor, Governor Hotham, arrived six weeks later on 22 June 1854.
- 28 *Australian Notes*, p.216. See also Susan Priestley, 'The Lieutenant-Governor's Goldfields Tours, 1851-1853', in this issue of *La Trobeana*, pp.14-16.
- 29 Sara A. Heller, 'Horses and Carriages', *Victorian Britain: an encyclopedia*, edited by Sally Mitchell, Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2011, p.375.
- 30 Coach (carriage), *Wikipedia* (accessed 24 June 2020).
- 31 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1989, <https://www.oed.com> (accessed 24 June 2020).
- 32 The following people played a part in identifying the Barouche: Jim Badger, Jock Murphy and the curators at the Queensland Museum (Brisbane) and its Cobb & Co Museum (Toowoomba).
- 33 *Oxford English Dictionary*.
- 34 Possibly from Adolphus Goldsmith, a turf enthusiast, whose family remained in France throughout his thirteen years in Port Phillip/Victoria. He retired to France in 1854 and it was during a visit to Goldsmith's 'pretty chateau' near Tours that La Trobe completely lost his eye-sight, Letter to James Graham, 24 October 1865, Blake, p.65; 'Re-member (former members)' database, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/re-member/details/24/524> (accessed 2 July 2020).
- 35 *Argus*, 21 August 1862, p.2, Mr [Thomas] Stubbs, auctioneer.

Forthcoming events

If health requirements necessitate, some of these events may be presented via Zoom. Bookings are essential for all events

MARCH

Saturday 20

La Trobe Society Gala Celebration

Time: 6.30–8.30 pm

Venue: Cowen Gallery,
State Library Victoria

Guest speaker: Kate Torney OAM,
CEO State Library Victoria

Refreshments

Admission: \$85

Invitations have been sent for members and guests

APRIL

Tuesday 20

Joint La Trobe Society/ RHSV

AGL Shaw Lecture

Time: 5.30–7.30 pm

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

Speaker: Dr Simon Smith, AM FRHSV

Topic: Law, Lawyers & La Trobe

Refreshments

Admission: \$35 per person, tbc

MAY

Wednesday 12

Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Lecture

Time: 5.30–7.30 pm

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

Speaker: Helen Botham

Topic: C J La Trobe: Jolimont plantsman

Refreshments

Admission: \$25 per person, tbc

JUNE

Sunday 20

Sunday Talk for Members and Friends

Time: 2.30–4.00 pm

(doors open at 2.00 pm)

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

Guest speaker: Megan Anderson, 2019
La Trobe Society Fellow

Topic: Extravagance, Tradition and Power:
Charles La Trobe's uniform

Refreshments

Admission: \$10 per person tbc

JULY

Friday 9 tbc

Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture

Time: 6.30–8.00 pm

Venue: Tonic House, 386 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne tbc

Guest speaker: tba

Sunday 18

Sunday Talk for Members and Friends

Time: 2.30–4.00 pm

(doors open at 2.00 pm)

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

Guest speaker: Greg Hill, Collector of
Australian pottery

Topic: Victoria's Earliest Potteries

Refreshments

Admission: \$10 per person, tbc

AUGUST

Wednesday 4

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

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place,
Melbourne

Guest speaker: tba

Invitations will be sent to members

Bookings

For catering purposes, bookings are essential for all events
Email: secretary@latrobesociety.org.au

Or phone Dianne Reilly on 9646 2112
(please leave a message)
or mobile 0412 517 061

For the latest information on
upcoming events, please refer to the
Society's events page,
www.latrobesociety.org.au/events.html

Back Issues

Back issues of La Trobeana are available on the Society's website, except for the last issue.

The back issues may be accessed at www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html

They may be searched by keyword.

Contributions welcome

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

For copies of guidelines for contributors and subscriptions enquiries contact:

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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

