

# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 22, No 1, March 2023**

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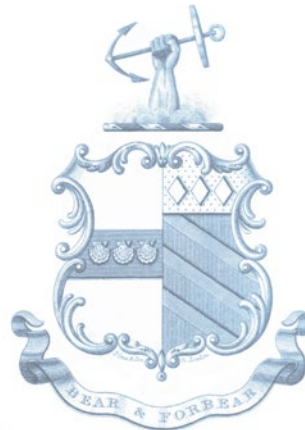
## *La Trobeana*

Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc  
Vol 22, No 1, March 2023

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

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



*C. J. La Trobe*

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### **FRONT COVER**

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1853

Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe, diam. 24cm.

Signature and date incised in bronze l.r.: T. Woolner Sc. 1853: / M

La Trobe, Charles Joseph, 1801-1875. Accessioned 1894

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H5489

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## A Word from the President

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All good wishes to our members for a happy and healthy New Year, and let us hope that 2023 will be a very positive and successful year for the La Trobe Society.

With deep regret, I bring you the sad news of the death of Professor John Barnes, MA (Melb), MA (Cantab). John was Emeritus Professor of English at La Trobe University where he taught for twenty-five years, specialising in Australian literature. He was the acclaimed editor of State Library Victoria's scholarly publication *The La Trobe Journal* from 1998 to 2007. During the term of Rodney Davidson's presidency of the La Trobe Society, John joined the Committee, serving from 2003 to 2006. His interest in La Trobe was personal as his great-grandmother came from a Swiss family in the canton of Neuchâtel in 1854. His 2017 biography, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, is a greatly valued contribution to the La Trobe bibliography. Although ill-health prevented his attendance at our events in recent years, he was nevertheless a very supportive member who will be greatly missed.

This first edition of *La Trobeana* for 2023 is introduced by the Rev'd Dr Michael Bowie, newly-appointed Vicar of St Peter's Anglican Church, Eastern Hill. Fr Bowie will ably continue the outreach and engagement with the wider community for which St Peter's is known. It is so pleasing that he has kept up the established tradition of remembering Charles Joseph La Trobe on the anniversary of his death in his sermon at St Peter's on Sunday 4 December 2022.

Member Tim Gatehouse a retired solicitor with a deep interest in the history of pre-goldrush Victoria, shares his ancestry with La Trobe through the American ancestors his family shares with the La Trobe family. In this issue, he gives us a considered article on 'Charles Joseph La Trobe's Moravian Heritage and its Impact on his Administration in Victoria'.

In her article 'Father Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan OSF (1805-1864)' La Trobe Society Secretary Dr Dianne Reilly AM pays tribute to a forgotten pioneer and a contemporary of La Trobe, Fr Patrick Geoghegan OSF, Melbourne's first Catholic priest.

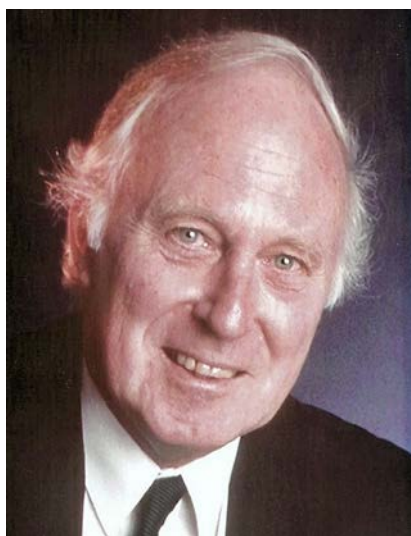
Dr Elizabeth Rushen AM is the ideal historian to contribute the article, 'The Bishop and the Lieutenant-Governor', given her great experience as writer and publisher on early Melbourne, in particular her 2013 book *Bishopscourt Melbourne: Official residence and family home*. This article is a revised version of her History Month lecture to a joint meeting of the La Trobe Society and Anglican Historical Society at Holy Trinity, East Melbourne, in October 2022.

The article, 'St John's La Trobe Street: A Vanished Church', is an edited version of a talk, 'The Two St John's Churches in La Trobe Street', delivered in September 2022 to the Anglican Historical Society by Roger Meyer who is Hon. Secretary of the Society. This paper reveals the almost forgotten story of a now demolished fourth Anglican church in the city of Melbourne. Thanks to Mr Meyer's research, its place in our history is now ensured.

We are grateful to Helen Armstrong, our redoubtable Hon. Editor, for the informative report on the 'Portraits of Reverend Benjamin La Trobe and Christian Ignatius La Trobe' which hang at La Trobe's Cottage.

The first event for the year is the celebration of La Trobe's 222nd birthday at La Trobe's Cottage on Sunday 19 March. I look forward to seeing you there.

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



## *Emeritus Professor John Barnes*

10 December 1931 – 6 January 2023

### A Tribute

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John Barnes was born in rural Gippsland, growing up on his grandparents' farm after his father's death. A scholarship to the University of Melbourne after matriculating from Yallourn High School was the start of an academic career in literature that included studies at Cambridge University, and positions at the Universities of Melbourne and Western Australia, the Chair of English at La Trobe University, and more recently a visiting role at Barcelona. An abiding attachment to rural Australia not only shaped the choice of a family home from about 1972 on an acre of garden at North Warrandyte, but an expanding appreciation of Australian writers such as Joseph Furphy and his masterpiece *Such is Life*. His biography of Furphy published in 1991, and another about Henry Hyde Champion, subtitled *Portrait of the Gentleman as Crusader* (2006), were precursors to *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor* (2017).

The last was a culmination of his service to State Library Victoria, where he was a skilled editor of *The La Trobe Journal*, encouraging library staff to write about their researches in the Library's collections that include the La Trobe manuscripts. It was during that time that Dianne Reilly asked him to join the committee of the

C J La Trobe Society, which was then in its formative stage. A committee member from 2003 to 2006, he afterwards contributed seven articles to *La Trobeana* on aspects of La Trobe's life, which are of lasting interest.

At his memorial service on 20 January, a wide range of people including family members, university and library colleagues, and his gardener, formerly the local policeman, spoke of his continuing enjoyment of people, music and good conversation, whether that be at the local coffee shop or pub, at the Savage Club or with fellow literary enthusiasts. The nature of his character was illuminated in a reading from T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*, a favourite poem, beginning 'We shall not cease from exploration...'.

Most recently he was engaged on literary reminiscences which he titled 'Partial Portraits' that will, perhaps, provide for us the personal reflections from this deeply perceptive wordsmith, a gentle man in all its senses, on the nine decades of his life.

**Susan Priestley**  
**Vice-President (2002-2009)**

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# Remembering Charles Joseph La Trobe

By Rev'd Dr Michael Bowie

Father Dr Michael Bowie has been Vicar since July 2022 of the historic St Peter's Eastern Hill. He was assistant priest at All Saints Margaret Street in London for eight years, and prior to that worked in churches in Hertfordshire and Sheffield - as well as in his boyhood Christ Church St Laurence in central Sydney, and previously in churches in Wales and Kent.

*This is an edited version of the sermon delivered at St Peter's, Eastern Hill, on Sunday, 4 December 2022, on the 147th anniversary of La Trobe's death.*

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As a Sydneysider I knew little about Charles Joseph La Trobe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, before moving to St Peter's, but his connection to this church was far more than a passing interaction; he didn't just lay a foundation stone, he worshipped here regularly.

Of French Huguenot descent and Moravian Christian upbringing La Trobe was an unusual choice for a colonial governor, having no army or naval training and little administrative experience. According to his friend, the American writer Washington Irving, La Trobe was

a man of a thousand occupations, a botanist, a geologist, a hunter of beetles and butterflies, a musical amateur, a sketcher of no mean pretensions, in short a complete virtuoso; added to which he was an indefatigable if not always a very successful sportsman.<sup>1</sup>

His posting in Melbourne, with a population of only 3,000 when he first arrived, was crucial to the founding of this city, but his time here was a rough ride and took a toll on La Trobe and his family. In his first speech in Melbourne, he famously remarked that

It will not be by individual aggrandisement, by the possession of numerous flocks and herds, or by costly acres, that the people shall secure for the country enduring prosperity or happiness; but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions without which no country can become truly great.<sup>2</sup>

This high moral and religious tone he set for his administration was bound to conflict with the material aspirations of the settlers who had come looking for precisely those flocks, herds and costly acres – my Victorian ancestors among them – and there were many conflicts between



**Charles Norton, 1826–1872, artist**  
**St Peter's, 1850**

Watercolour on cream paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H88.21/63

his principles and the aspirations of the citizenry. But it is fascinating to me to learn that the self-image of this city as a home for culture and the arts can be traced to its first Superintendent and Lieutenant-Governor, to whom we also owe the Botanic Gardens and foundations such as the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Philharmonic, the State Library and the University of Melbourne.

And although Victoria is now the least religious state in Australia, those aspirations, those *hopes* embodied in La Trobe's principles, derived from his Christian faith, precisely from that hope which this Advent season proclaims. La Trobe saw the new settlement as an opportunity to build something new and better under God.

Interestingly the Advent wreath, marking the hope of the coming of Christ, which we decorate and light in this season, originates from the same Moravian Christian tradition

that formed La Trobe; Moravians are a pre-Lutheran Reformation tradition from Bohemia which survives today, a denomination devoted to sharing the Gospel through personal devotion to Christ, good works, ecumenism, pacifism and music; I know them as providing valuable mediation and bridge-building resources to churches in England.

One can see in the lighting of each candle in the wreath and the beautiful Christmas candle at the centre of it, an enactment of that anticipation and hope in Christ which animated La Trobe's life and work. And it is an interesting reminder that Christmas customs before we get to the feast itself predate the commercial Christmas we may too readily denigrate.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Washington Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1835, p.3.
  - 2 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.4.
-



Abraham Ludwig Brandt, 1717-1797, engraver  
Herrnhut, c.1757

Copper engraving  
Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats und Universitätsbibliothek, SLUB/KS B2357  
The Herrnhut Moravian community founded in Saxony in 1722

# *Charles Joseph La Trobe's Moravian Heritage*

*and its impact on his administration in Victoria*

By Tim Gatehouse

**Tim Gatehouse is a retired solicitor with interests in the history of pre-goldrush Victoria, architecture, gardening and libraries. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals. He has also published the titles *On Board with the Bishop: Charles Perry's Voyage to Port Phillip on the 'Stag'* (2017), *The Two Wings of Bishops court* (2017), *Titanga: A Homestead in the Landscape* (2021), and other booklets. His interest in Charles Joseph La Trobe stems from the American ancestors his family shares with the La Trobes.**

The administration of Charles Joseph La Trobe as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and later as Lieutenant-Governor of the newly-created colony of Victoria from 1839 to 1854 was marked by some of the most momentous events in Victoria's history. During his fifteen years in office the colony was transformed from a small pastoral settlement on the edge of the Empire into one of the most valuable possessions of the British crown. To a large

degree this resulted from the discovery of gold in 1851, but it was La Trobe's administration which created the government infrastructure which managed the huge influx of population and created the institutions which became the foundation of an orderly society. Had he failed, Victoria could have lapsed into a lawless state similar to that which prevailed on the goldfields of California.<sup>1</sup> His administration channelled the newly-discovered wealth of the colony into the creation of public works and philanthropic





**Unknown photographer**  
**Henry Antes' house**  
**in Upper Frederick,**  
**Pennsylvania, 2011**  
Goschenhoppen  
Historians Inc.  
Childhood home of  
La Trobe's grandmother  
Anna Margareta Antes



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer**  
**Ballinderry Moravian Church, 2016**  
The church in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, where Christian  
Ignatius La Trobe's father-in-law, Rev. Peter Syms, was minister

and cultural institutions from which we benefit today, and he saved Victoria from the degrading effects of being a penal colony by resisting the pressure of the British government to receive transported convicts.

Some aspects of his government were justifiably subject to criticism. With hindsight his administration of the goldfields, which culminated in the Eureka uprising shortly after his departure, could have been handled more wisely and the expenditure of public funds, albeit for worthy purposes, should have been subject to greater oversight. But at no time did even his most virulent critics ever cast a slur on his personal conduct and even if the failures of policy could not be attributed to the unforeseen pressures which arose from the gold rush they

do not explain the upsurge of hostility which gradually enveloped La Trobe throughout his term of office, in marked contrast to the enthusiastic welcome he received on his arrival.<sup>2</sup>

It has been written that the most surprising thing about La Trobe's governorship was that he was ever appointed, for he was by no means the standard British colonial administrator.<sup>3</sup> The immediate cause of his appointment to Port Phillip was his well-received reports to the British government on the educational provisions made for the freed slaves of the West Indies.<sup>4</sup> He had been regarded as suited to this task because of his family's close connections with the Moravian missions which were established in the West Indies in 1754 to support the slave population there.

It is arguable that to a very large extent La Trobe's approach to his official duties, as to all aspects of his life, was conditioned by his Moravian heritage. The La Trobes were the most prominent Moravian family in Britain, and it was the Moravian ethos, religion and education, and the origins of his family in Britain as Huguenot refugees, which moulded Charles La Trobe's character. Moravians are members of a Protestant Episcopalian church, one of the many denominations established in Europe during the Protestant Reformation in the fifteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Founded by a preacher named Johann Hus, its members referred to themselves as the *Unitas Fratrum*, or United Brethren, but as most members came from Moravia and Bohemia, then provinces of the Holy Roman Empire but now part of the Czech Republic, they came to be known as Moravians. After centuries of persecution by the Catholic authorities of the territories in which they lived, the Moravians were granted refuge on the estate of the Lutheran Pietist Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf. The town they founded there, Herrnhut, became and still is the centre of the Moravians' worldwide activities. Count Zinzendorf joined the Moravians and became their leader and subsequently a bishop of the church.<sup>6</sup> From Herrnhut the Moravians established communities in Europe, England and Ireland and by 1732, only five years after the formal constitution of the church, commenced their pioneering missionary work.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Joseph La Trobe's great-great-grandfather Jean Latrobe [*sic*] was one of the many Huguenots forced to leave France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes which had given Protestants the freedom to practise their religion in France. According to family tradition having joined the army of William of Orange in his invasion of Ireland in 1690, Jean Latrobe remained there after the victory at the Battle of the Boyne and established his family in the linen industry. Jean's grandson Benjamin and then son James both joined the Moravian congregation in Dublin, Benjamin attaining a reputation as a gifted orator. He married Anna Margareta Antes, the daughter of Henry Antes, a prominent Moravian from Pennsylvania and his wife Christina Elizabeth De Wees, the daughter of Dutch Mennonite parents.<sup>8</sup> After their marriage at Herrnhut, Benjamin and Anna Margareta La Trobe lived at the Moravian community at Fulneck in Yorkshire where Benjamin was headmaster of the school, and leader of the Moravian congregations in England. Benjamin's eldest son Christian Ignatius became secretary of the Moravian church. He married Hannah Benigna Syms, the daughter of a Moravian minister from Ballinderry in Ireland. Charles Joseph La Trobe was one of their six children.

Although Moravians did not proselytise amongst other Christian denominations, believing that all people had the right to worship as they wished, one of their core beliefs was having a divinely appointed obligation to spread Christianity to what were regarded as the heathen peoples of the world in lands then becoming known through European exploration and colonisation. Missionaries were sent to Greenland, Lapland, the African and South American coasts, to British colonies in North America and the West Indies and later to Australia. Believing that they were an exclusive group charged with a divine mission, and being born from persecution, they pursued their goals with purpose and determination.<sup>9</sup>

For Moravians, education was a primary instrument for effecting their task of evangelisation. The system they developed was intended to educate not only those destined for the Moravian ministry serving at home and in its missions abroad, but the laity whose lives were lived in its closed communities. Their schools also accepted students who were not Moravians. Their educational philosophy had been formulated by the Moravian bishop John Amos Comenius in the early seventeenth century during the church's period of persecution and must have been almost unique for that period. By the 1770s Moravian schools had become famous throughout Britain and Europe. The overall aim of the Moravian educational system was to develop a person as a whole: intellectually, spiritually, morally and emotionally, seeking to identify a child's innate abilities and encouraging each student to understand the individuality of his or her own mind.<sup>10</sup> Unusually for the period Moravians believed in the education of women as well as men in segregated schools which provided vocational as well as intellectual instruction. Students were moved between schools in Britain and Germany in accordance with their levels of maturity and career choice. The curriculum was broadly based and included religious instruction, sacred, secular, ancient and modern history, languages, drawing, mathematics, science, grammar, reading, natural philosophy, poetry and music. Music, an important component of Moravian church services, was believed to promote piety. Students were organised in 'choirs': groups of the same age and gender educated collectively while living outside their families. Children aged from three to twelve received a general education, while those aged from twelve to seventeen were required to choose an occupation into which they would be apprenticed.

Although this system provided a highly effective education, in some respects it was stultifying and counterproductive. Students

**Betty Longbottom, photographer**  
**Fulneck Moravian settlement near Leeds, Yorkshire, 2007**  
Charles Joseph La Trobe was a student here from age six to eighteen



**Barrie Price, photographer**  
**Fairfield Moravian settlement on the outskirts of Manchester, 2008**  
La Trobe studied and taught here prior to travelling to Switzerland  
The chapel and some other buildings were designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, son of the Reverend Benjamin La Trobe

were isolated from surrounding society and were expected to conform unquestioningly to Moravian beliefs. In many ways the system was too successful, overeducating students to such a degree that they became frustrated by the limited employment available to them in their isolated communities. The elevation of intellectual achievement and the contempt for commerce inherent in the Moravian ethos encouraged an element of elitism, and many Moravians ended their education with aspirations in life which could not be fulfilled.<sup>11</sup>

La Trobe's Moravian upbringing and education with its strong emphasis on ethical conduct gave him an unwavering sense of duty and conscientiousness in performing it. His decisions, although not always right, were not made without undue consideration. He had a strong sense of his moral and legal obligations to the colony he governed and to the authorities on whose behalf he did so. As to how these influences formed his view of his duties and the manner in which he intended performing them is indicated in his reply to the address of



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist  
 Samuel Williams, 1785-1853, engraver  
**The chamois-hunter and traveller - outline of the Jungfrau and Eiger (1825)**  
 Vignette from title-page of *The Alpenstock*, London: Seeley and Burnside, 1829

welcome he received on his arrival in Melbourne on 3 October 1839:

I pray to God... to know my duty, and to do my duty diligently, temperately and fearlessly... It will not be by individual aggrandizement, by the possession of numerous flocks and herds, or of costly acres, that we shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness; but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great.<sup>12</sup>

This was almost a statement of fundamental Moravian beliefs, but it certainly did not accord with those of most of the settlers, for whom the acquisition of costly acres and numerous flocks and herds were the very reasons they had crossed Bass Strait or overlanded from Sydney.

La Trobe's attitude to colonisation was influenced by the Moravians' belief in their mission to spread Christianity, and by implication civilisation, to the heathen peoples of the world, and imperialism was the instrument

by which this would be accomplished. His application of this principle to the Indigenous population of Port Phillip led to unfortunate consequences, brought about by ignorance rather than ill-will. The establishment by the Colonial Office of Aboriginal protectorates in 1838, prior to La Trobe's posting to Australia, indicated an assumption by the British that the Indigenous people of Port Phillip could be transformed into citizens of the empire by the same methods as the freed slaves in the West Indies. This displayed not only a total lack of understanding of Indigenous culture, but also the inbuilt belief shared by many Europeans engaged in colonisation of the innate superiority of their own culture.<sup>13</sup>

La Trobe was criticised for not giving sufficient encouragement to the economic progress of the colony, but in this he was more in tune with Moravian precepts than the ambitions of the colonists. Moravians were not materialistic. They despised aggrandisement, ostentation and commerce, instead valuing piety, probity and intellectual attainments. The austere elegance of the buildings of their communities is testament to these values. Some elements of the austere Mennonite faith of La Trobe's grandmother

Anna Margaretta Antes may also have filtered down to him. Although constrained by his small salary from maintaining a more hospitable lifestyle and a residence more in keeping with his position, by Moravian standards it may not have been inappropriate, even though his wife, coming from the Swiss aristocracy, possibly expected something more imposing.

La Trobe's education was the springboard for his encouragement of the educational, scientific and cultural institutions founded during his administration. The author Washington Irving who met La Trobe during his travels to the United States described him as being a 'man of a thousand occupations'.<sup>14</sup> The broadly-based curriculum of the Moravian schools and the stimulation of the curiosity they encouraged was evidenced by his wide knowledge and thirst to acquire more. An intrepid hiker and alpinist, the observations in his journals and the travel books reveal the delight he took in the discoveries he made on his journeys through Alpine Europe, the United States, Mexico and Victoria.

Much criticism was levelled at La Trobe for what was believed to be the undue deference he paid to Governor Gipps and his failure to promote the interests of Port Phillip more vigorously with the governments in Sydney and London.<sup>15</sup> This was largely unjustified for under the terms of his appointment, especially before Separation, he had little freedom of action. But he also had a highly-developed respect for established authority which he regarded as the most effective instrument for maintaining an orderly society and the benefits it brought. To Moravians, the maintenance of an orderly society was an essential component of their mission of evangelisation.<sup>16</sup>

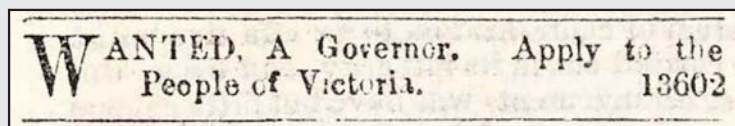
They believed that the salvation of individual souls was their paramount duty. It was the afterlife with which they were concerned, not the present conditions of those to whom they ministered. In many of the territories in which their missions operated, especially those where slavery was established, the governing authorities regarded the missionaries' activities as subversive and sought to obstruct them where possible. To allay these fears and carry out their work it was necessary for the missionaries to do so with the consent of the governing authorities. Consequently, Moravians deliberately abstained from politics or social activism.<sup>17</sup> When Christian Ignatius La Trobe gave his support to the anti-slavery movement, he was required to make clear that he did so as an individual, not on behalf of the Moravian Church. In Charles Joseph La Trobe's book *The Rambler in North America*, Moravian beliefs in the benefits of orderly societies are reflected in his speculations

as whether in America 'the demon of disorder, or the angel of order will eventually prevail'. A later reference to 'the degrading style of warfare carried on against private characters by the innumerable polemical newspapers' was a prescient foretaste of what he would be subjected to in his later career.<sup>18</sup>

On contentious issues like Separation and the introduction of convicts to Port Phillip, La Trobe expressed his opinions forthrightly but deferentially to Governor Gipps in accordance with their respective positions in the government hierarchy. With regard to Separation La Trobe's public stance was muted, for although he regarded it as inevitable, he had little confidence in the ability of the colonists to govern themselves responsibly. For this reason, he preferred a nominated Executive Council to one which was partly elected. The opinion he expressed of the Melbourne Town Council in 1846 probably summed up his views of local politicians in general when he referred to them as being, 'too many whose character and understanding do not harmonise with the positions they have assumed',<sup>19</sup> an elegantly phrased put-down which was not appreciated by the council members when it was published and read in the colony, but one which was shared by Governor Gipps and Lord Grey, the Colonial Secretary in London.

Despite the Moravian belief in the equality of all in the eyes of God, La Trobe was in no way a democrat and his conservative view of the proper ordering of society did not accord with the colonists' aspirations of self-government. Moravians' view of equality had more in common with the expression of equality in the American Declaration of Independence which clearly did not include Native Americans nor the slaves who provided the labour on the founding fathers' plantations. La Trobe could not have been immune from the generally accepted notions of class of the period, but these may have been reinforced by the Moravian sense of exclusiveness as well as by his superior education. La Trobe's views were clearly stated when he wrote 'distinctions of rank there must be, and such will be felt, as long as the world exists—arising from education, breeding, wealth and talent, and must we not say gentle blood?'<sup>20</sup>

There was a considerable disparity in the opinions of La Trobe between those who knew him well and those whose only contact with him was through official business. The diaries and recollections of La Trobe's friends and those with whom he felt at ease record his charm and friendliness, but a general perception prevailed throughout the colony that he was aloof and unfriendly.<sup>21</sup> There were several reasons why



Advertisement – Wanted a Governor  
*The Argus*, 25 October 1852, p.3

This mocking 'advertisement' appeared in *The Argus* over a period of eight months

this may have been the case, some deriving from his Moravian upbringing, some from his life's experiences.

The obvious and sincere religious beliefs La Trobe held set him apart from most of the colonists, including the more conventionally religious. The conscientiousness and dedication which were as much a part of his character as they were of the Moravian ethos, overrode any desire for popularity and contributed to the perception of aloofness. His Moravian education had given La Trobe intellectual attainments and a range of interests which were shared by few other colonists other than perhaps Bishop Perry, Georgiana McCrae, William Stawell, Redmond Barry and Ronald Gunn in Van Diemen's Land. The 'man of a thousand occupations' had few peers.

La Trobe's experience of the wider world differed from that of most colonial administrators and colonists. In England he had grown up in the secluded world of the Moravians, where although his father socialised outside the Moravian community, it was still within educated, artistic and musical circles. In Switzerland he lived in the cultured aristocratic circle into which he later married. In the United States and Mexico, he was a traveller and observer, but did not have to fit into a social role and in the West Indies his interactions with the residents were confined to the duties of his official assignment.

His family's history also set La Trobe apart from mainstream society. On the one hand their experience as refugees from France made them

proud to be British subjects, able to enjoy the comparative religious tolerance of their adopted country, but on the other the international activities of the Moravian church, its missions throughout the world and the presence of family members in many countries gave the La Trobes a cosmopolitan world view which contrasted with British insularity. The La Trobes belonged to a small highly educated transnational community rather than to one country. Charles La Trobe's position was summed up well by Washington Irving who considered him to be 'a citizen of the world'.<sup>22</sup>

Arriving in the rumbustious community of Port Phillip must have come as a culture shock to La Trobe. To the colonists, after the initial 'honeymoon' period he must have been perceived as something of an oddity.<sup>23</sup> His moral (and at times moralistic) principles, erudition, aura of exclusiveness, foreign wife and enthusiasm for cultural institutions set him apart from most of them. Given the different aspirations for the colony of La Trobe and those he was sent to govern, made worse by the unforeseen discovery of gold and its consequences, it is unlikely that he would ever have been popular, but dissatisfaction with the policies of his government does not explain the virulence of the criticism to which he was subjected. A contributing factor may have been the perception of his differentness, the Moravian heritage which set him apart. His critics may not have articulated it in this way, but they felt he was not one of them.

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#### Endnotes

Portraits of Reverend Benjamin La Trobe and Christian Ignatius La Trobe may be seen on page 44.

1 Norman Bartlett, *The Gold Seekers: the story of the Australian Gold Rush*, London: Jarrolds, 1965, p.52.

2 Ibid, p.144.

3 Davis McCaughey, Naomi Perkins, Angus Trumble, *Victoria's Colonial Governors, 1839-1900*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993, p.13.

4 John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*, Canberra: Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017, p. 142. (The reports are accessible via U.K. Parliamentary Papers Online, links at <http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/works-by-latrobe.html>.)

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Unknown photographer  
Bishop Patrick  
Bonaventure Geoghegan,  
c.1864  
Adelaide Catholic  
Archdiocesan Archives

# Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan O.S.F (1805-1864): pioneering Catholic priest

By Dr Dianne Reilly AM

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**F**r Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan (pronounced *gay'gan*) arrived in 1839 as the first Catholic priest appointed to the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, only four years after the establishment of the European settlement there, and a year after Melbourne was officially named. Located on the banks of the Yarra River, it was still at a rudimentary stage of its development when Fr Geoghegan encountered it on 15 May 1839, arriving in Hobson's Bay from Sydney on board the schooner *Paul Pry*. It was nearly five months before Charles Joseph La Trobe landed to take up his position as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District on 3 October.

A newcomer could not help but be struck by the primitive conditions for about 3,000 people who were already there. The first Port Phillip land surveys had been carried out with input from surveyors Robert Russell

and Robert Hoddle in 1836 and early 1837, as necessary preliminaries to the first land sales in Melbourne on 1 June 1837.<sup>1</sup> The embryonic town would have been an amazing contrast for Fr Geoghegan, accustomed as he was to such established cities as Dublin and Lisbon, as would La Trobe's first impressions of the primitive environs been compounded by his familiarity with the size and elegance of London, Paris and Neuchâtel.

The journalist and historian Edmund Finn ('Garryowen') was later to recollect his first sighting of Melbourne in this very early stage of its existence:

It was a kind of big 'settlement'... with houses, sheds and tents in clusters, or scattered in ones and twos. There were streets marked out, but... so dispersed that after dark residents incurred not





**Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist**  
**Melbourne from the Falls, from sketch Nov 6 1844**

Watercolour on buff paper

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H3883

In this view of early Melbourne the Customs House can be seen below the Falls and then the Auction House on the horizon

only trouble but danger in moving about... the majority of the business or residential tenements were made up of colonial 'wattle-and-daub', roofed with sheets of bark or coarse shingle... As for the thoroughfares (misnamed streets), they were almost indescribable... In fact, during the winter the streets were chains of waterholes, and the traffic had to be suspended in places.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the 'address of welcome' presented on La Trobe's arrival on behalf of a large number of Melbourne residents, and published in a local newspaper a few days later, lauded the settlement's amazing growth:

Already Melbourne, which eighteen months ago possessed only three brick houses, is a flourishing town, with a population of between two and three thousand souls, and containing most of the appendages of an advanced civilization. It has five places of worship of different denominations of Christians, a Court of Justice, two Schools, two Banks, one Club with sixty members, a Fire and Marine Assurance Company, and two Newspapers are efficiently supported. Of the learned professions, there are six Clergymen, twelve Medical Men, and five Lawyers.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, in September 1841, the Jewish Congregational Society, soon renamed the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, was established and in 1844 they had received a land grant to build the first synagogue in Bourke Street, which remained there until 1930.<sup>4</sup> By the mid-1840s Melbourne was the main business centre for the pastoral industry and the main port and administrative centre for southern New South Wales. La Trobe as Superintendent was instrumental in laying foundations for the future colony of Victoria. He made it clear from the beginning to the welcoming crowd on his arrival that 'enduring prosperity and happiness' could only be achieved through the adoption of 'sound religious and moral institutions'.<sup>5</sup> These beliefs made him unpopular in certain circles. This philosophy was in marked contrast to the materialism of the early settlers which came through in every word of their address of welcome. After all, these were people who had emigrated in search of a better life and greater opportunities than were available in the lands they had left behind.

Nevertheless, some did have higher aspirations. No doubt due to a camaraderie born of isolation, and a mutual realisation of the social value of religious faith and its civilising effect on colonial life, esteem and trust and a spirit of religious harmony rather than sectarianism prevailed among the various denominations in Melbourne, even before Geoghegan arrived. His letter appearing in the local newspapers just

weeks after he had landed, fostered that spirit among his own congregation:

I desire to impress on you... the very essence of the Christian religion – it is the cultivation of kind, liberal feelings and deportment towards the members of all religious persuasions... To recognize the right of everyone to worship God according to his conscience, is a noble and enlightened principle.<sup>6</sup>

His belief that this principle ‘alone can give a permanent basis to society, because upon it alone can be combined the varied forms of Christian Worship into a structure for the common good’<sup>7</sup> aligned him entirely with the direction that La Trobe proposed to take his administration – ‘by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions, without which no country can become truly great’.<sup>8</sup>

The small Catholic community had been meeting regularly for prayer in a modest wooden structure adjacent to the house of Peter Bodecin, a French carpenter, who came to Melbourne in early 1839, having bought land in Lonsdale Street, near the Swanston Street corner, at the Sydney land sales of 1837 and 1838. It was here that funds for a permanent building were collected in the early months of 1839.<sup>9</sup> An ‘Appeal of the Roman Catholics of Melbourne to their Protestant and Christian Brethren’<sup>10</sup> for contributions to build a suitable church was launched in May, just two days before the long hoped-for resident priest actually arrived.

The arrival of Irish Franciscan, Fr Geoghegan, who was sent from Sydney by Bishop John Bede Polding OSB (Order of St Benedict), was favourably reported in the two Melbourne newspapers.<sup>11</sup> Born in Dublin in 1805, he was baptised on the feast of Ireland’s Patron, hence the name Patrick. His childhood, after the death of his parents when he was eight years old, included years in a Protestant orphanage, followed by transferral to a Franciscan children’s home.<sup>12</sup> He was primarily educated at Edgeworthstown, County Longford.<sup>13</sup>

At the age of sixteen, Patrick joined the Franciscan order of priests, and because of political tensions in Ireland, along with revolutionary turmoil in Rome and much of Italy at the time that eventually led to the unification of Italy in 1861, Patrick was sent to the Irish College at Lisbon, and he was professed as a member of the Franciscan Order at Coimbra in Portugal on 21 February 1830.<sup>14</sup> He took the religious name of Friar Bonaventure, after

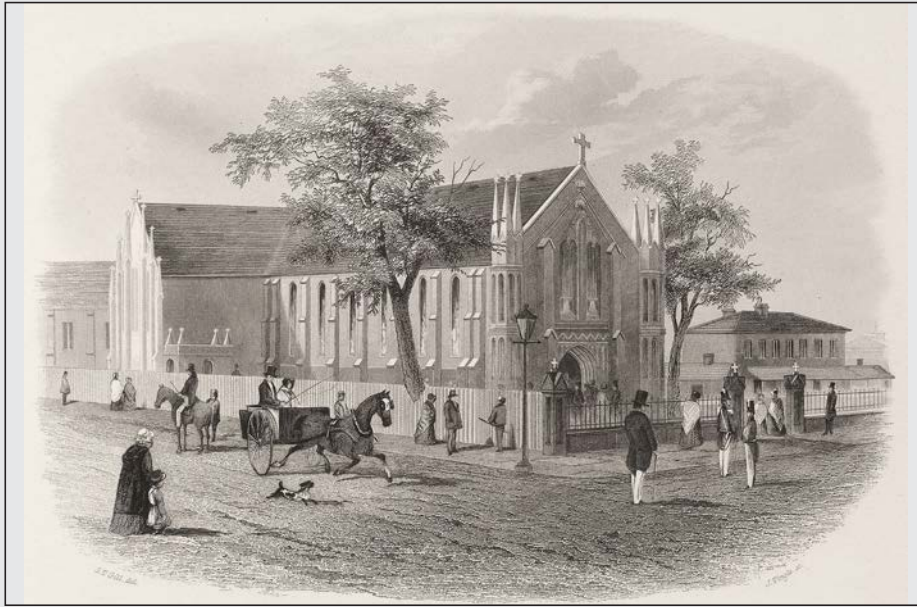
the Franciscan Doctor of the Church, as his special patron. On completing his studies, he was ordained a priest in Lisbon before being appointed to St Francis’ Church (known as the Adam and Eve Church) in Dublin. There he met William Ullathorne, the English Benedictine priest then in Europe seeking more priests for the Australian mission. Geoghegan volunteered to go for seven years, and he was provided with a stipend by the Colonial Office for his passage and the necessities for the journey.<sup>15</sup> He sailed from London on the transport vessel the *Francis Spaight*, arriving in Sydney on 31 December 1838.

Fr Geoghegan was attached for a few months to St Benedict’s, Broadway soon after his arrival in Sydney,<sup>16</sup> and then assigned briefly to the parish of Bathurst but, after only four months, Bishop Polding sent him to establish the first Catholic mission in Melbourne, arriving on 15 May 1839.<sup>17</sup> Edmund Finn, who was to become a personal friend, wrote many years later:

Fr Geoghegan was of small stature... his elocutionary powers... were considerable. He was a round, chubby, natty little man, a perfect picture of health and cheerfulness, and though most uncompromising in maintaining his rights and privileges, was as liberal minded and tolerant as he was kind hearted and charitable. There never was in the colony so universal a favourite with all classes.<sup>18</sup>

Fr Geoghegan celebrated Melbourne’s first Mass on Pentecost Sunday, 19 May 1839, the altar being a large wooden box in an unfinished store on the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets.<sup>19</sup> A week later, he addressed the Catholics of the colony through the pages of the Melbourne newspapers: ‘We must endeavor to erect a plain, commodious building for our public worship. You are not wealthy, but you have the numbers and a little from each will do much’.<sup>20</sup>

Geoghegan’s ecumenical spirit was clear in his acknowledged commitment ‘To recognize the right of everyone to worship God according to his conscience... a noble and enlightened principle’.<sup>21</sup> The liberal religious spirit of the District was shown in the various Christian denominations seeking funds for their church-building projects from the general community. The Presbyterian Church was one, its first building constructed in 1841. On his arrival in Melbourne, Fr Geoghegan was befriended by Rev. James Clow who had celebrated the first Presbyterian service in the town after his arrival



**Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818–1880, artist**  
**James Tingle, 1790–1858/60, engraver**  
**St Francis' Cathedral, Melbourne, 1857**  
 Steel engraving  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H10860  
 View of c.1854 in collection *Victoria Illustrated* 1857

from Scotland on 31 December 1837, assisted by the first resident Presbyterian minister, Rev. James Forbes. Fr Geoghegan afterwards contributed to the Presbyterian building fund, and an amusing anecdote was reported:

One day, as he was passing a trustee, he thrust a £5 and £1 note into his hand with a murmured apology that it was all he could afford. A *Herald* reporter wrote up the story as an illustration of the friendship between churches; but when Fr Geoghegan read the report he protested that he had given only two £1 notes. However, when it was proved that he was wrong, he refused to accept the £4 offered to him.<sup>22</sup>

Rev. William Waterfield, the first minister of the Independent Church to come to Melbourne, was also welcomed in May 1838 by the Presbyterian minister Rev. Clow, who 'testified that the utmost friendliness existed between the members of all denominations'.<sup>23</sup> He in turn welcomed the Rev. John Couch Grylls, the first resident Anglican clergyman assigned to Port Phillip in September 1838, and 'they became fast friends... and co-operated with each other in every way. Mr Waterfield also later became an intimate with the two RC priests (Geoghegan and Walsh)... and was frequently in their company and in that of Rev. James Forbes'.<sup>24</sup>

Rev. Joseph Orton, a Wesleyan minister visiting Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land, had been the first ordained clergyman to conduct divine service in the town on Batman's Hill on 24 April 1836, according to the liturgy of the Church of England of which Wesleyanism was an offshoot.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Grylls was relieved by Rev. James Yelverton Wilson in January 1840.<sup>26</sup> As with Geoghegan and other clergy, he received a government stipend of £150 a year, 'and engendered sufficient enthusiasm amongst his people for them to begin the permanent church of St James'.<sup>27</sup> The foundation stone was laid on the site bounded by Bourke, William and Collins Streets on 9 November 1839 by La Trobe who had generously supported the building fund. The church was relocated in 1914 to a corner site of King Street and Batman Street, West Melbourne.

Referring to Fr Geoghegan, the prominent statistician and Registrar-General of Victoria from 1853–1872, William Henry Archer, recalled many years later:

He had a kind heart and a genial smile, which often lit up his frank face of brilliant natural complexion, and his wise words of counsel gained weight in his manner of utterance. He had no house of his own, but slept in the bar of a neighbouring public house. A pallet was prepared for him nightly by the



Samuel Thomas Gill, 1818-1880, artist  
 Campbell & Fergusson, lithographers  
 St Patrick's Church, East Melbourne, 1854  
 Tinted lithograph  
 State Library of New South Wales, nvg8D401

hands of the good-natured landlady on a few planks placed across some beer barrels. The poorest of his flock knew that their pastor practised a poverty severer than theirs, and saw what was a matter of admiration for them, was but a matter of course for him...<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, Geoghegan, an eloquent speaker, exhorted his congregation to contribute what they could to the church's building fund. But no sooner had funds been raised and construction of a simple wooden building begun, than a larger piece of land was promised by the Crown on what was then the town outskirts. The land on which St Francis' Church now stands on the north-east corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Streets was granted by the government in July 1839 and the temporary chapel was moved to the site where the first Mass was held. A church designed by pioneer architect Samuel Jackson and dedicated to St Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order, was built on this site between 1841 and 1845, with the foundation stone being laid by Fr Geoghegan on 4 October 1841. As such, it is the oldest Catholic church in Victoria, and one of only three buildings still existing in Melbourne to pre-date the 1851 gold rush. It has close historical links with the family of Mary MacKillop – Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop – who was baptised in the partially-built St Francis' Church in 1842. The first Mass in the completed nave was held on 22 May 1842

and the completed church blessed and opened by Fr Geoghegan on 23 October 1845.<sup>29</sup>

In mid-1847, due to population growth and the need for a second church within Melbourne, Fr Geoghegan and another Franciscan, Dean Nicholas Coffey, applied successfully to Superintendent La Trobe for a land grant to the east of the town, with the intention of dividing the settlement into two parishes.<sup>30</sup> Coinciding with these negotiations was the announcement by Pope Pius IX on 25 June 1847 that Melbourne was now formally a diocese in its own right.<sup>31</sup>

The first Catholic Bishop of Melbourne, James Alipius Goold OSA (Order of St Augustine), reached Melbourne on 4 October 1848, having travelled overland from Sydney in a four-horse carriage, rather than taking the journey by steamer, treating the expedition as an opportunity to meet Catholics encountered along the way. He was enthroned in the pro-Cathedral of St Francis on 8 October 1848. Goold lived at St Francis' presbytery from 1848 to 1853 when he transferred to a new residence in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, which in 1857 became the Academy of Mary Immaculate.<sup>32</sup>

Work began on St Patrick's Church, Eastern Hill, in April 1850, and was only partially complete when it was opened for divine service on 14 February 1858. Shortly afterwards,



John Hardman & Co., Birmingham  
 West Window to the memory of Bishop  
 Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan,  
 St Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne, 1867  
 Panel depicting Fr Geoghagen as St John  
 the Evangelist  
 Photographer Sandra Brown

Goold accepted the design of the great architect William Wilkinson Wardell for a new Gothic Cathedral on the site.<sup>33</sup> St Patrick's Cathedral, which replaced the smaller church of the same name, was not formally consecrated until 27 October 1897. Goold had the great foresight to build a fine cathedral, and he dedicated the large western window to the memory of Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan, Melbourne's first Catholic priest.

The Town of Melbourne was raised to the status of a City by Letters Patent of Queen Victoria dated 25 June 1847. This royal action arose from a desire to establish a See of the Church of England. As the establishment of a bishopric required the status of a city, Melbourne was ecclesiastically created a cathedral city by the letters which the Queen gave to the first bishop.<sup>34</sup>

The Right Reverend Dr Charles Perry (picture, page 28) arrived in Melbourne on 23 January 1848. His consecration on 29 June 1847 at Westminster Abbey as the first Bishop of Melbourne, followed the annulment of the existing Bishopric of Australia, and the creation of four replacement Sees, or seats at Sydney, Van Diemen's Land, Adelaide and Melbourne. On arrival, the Bishop and his wife Frances were taken to the vicarage of St James in the western part of the town. After a visit to La Trobe at his home at *Jolimont*, they caught a first glimpse of the church of St Peter on Eastern Hill. Frances Perry described it as 'the very pretty new church, sweetly situated on the brow of the hill overlooking Melbourne, the sea, the dry plains and on two sides an immense extent of undulating, well wooded country, with blue ranges of hill in the horizon'.<sup>35</sup>

The foundation stone for St Peter's had been laid on 18 June 1846 by Charles Joseph La Trobe, and the first service took place on 6 August 1848 when Perry was the preacher.<sup>36</sup> It is one of very few pre-goldfields buildings still extant in Melbourne, and is the oldest Anglican church in the city still on its original site.<sup>37</sup> Its historical significance increased with the Letters Patent of Queen Victoria granting Melbourne status as a city being read inside the church 'at the close of Morning Prayer on 13 February 1848 by the diocesan registrar' Henry Moor,<sup>38</sup> a solicitor and later Melbourne's second Mayor.

Soon after his arrival, Bishop Perry had managed to shock the Australia Felix Total Abstinence Society by sternly declining their invitation to join the organisation. Formed in Melbourne in response to the growing threats to community stability of opium and alcohol addiction, it was inaugurated in the Scots



**Darien Pullen, sculptor**  
**Fr Patrick Bonaventure**  
**Geoghegan OSF, 2017 (detail)**  
 Bronze  
 St Francis' Church, Melbourne  
 Photographer Helen Botham

Church Hall about 1842.<sup>39</sup> Perry's letter to the Society of 14 February 1848 appeared in the *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*. In strong terms he gave his reasons for not joining the Society, concluding that 'wine and beer equally with bread and meat were the gifts of the gracious God', and that 'temperance and not abstinence is the duty of a Christian'.<sup>40</sup>

Regrettably, it was not long before the Bishop offended many others in the community by expressing an uncompromising attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church and its followers. The widely respected Catholic pastor, Fr Geoghegan, had paid the Bishop a visit to welcome him to Melbourne. Bishop Perry was out at the time, and the Irishman left his calling card. On his return, Bishop Perry wrote him a letter on 31 January, later published in full in the *Port Phillip Gazette* newspaper,<sup>41</sup> advising that 'I cannot but regard every Clergyman of the Church of Rome as guilty of perverting the Gospel of Christ, and therefore, one to whom are applicable the words of the Apostle Paul, 'Let him be accursed' (Gal.i., 8-9)'.<sup>42</sup>

Eminent Anglican historian Bishop James Grant has summed up the situation: 'That this was Perry's sincerely held opinion was patent, but both within and without his own church, his uncharitable response was seen as "offensive" and "disgraceful"'.<sup>43</sup> In his defence, it must be said that Bishop Perry's previous experience in the exclusively Anglican University of Cambridge had not prepared him for the colonial situation of various Christian denominations all living, at the time of his arrival in Melbourne, in harmony with one another. He was afraid of 'infidel latitudinarianism'<sup>44</sup> potentially diminishing the role of the Church of England in the colony. Despite some controversy during his twenty-six years in Melbourne, Perry was generally highly

regarded for the manner in which he bore his weighty responsibilities as pioneering Bishop in the colony; 'the quality of his statesmanship' ranks him among the foremost pioneers of Victoria.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that Perry was a true friend to the beleaguered Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe, both during his time as administrator and in that painful period in 1855 when La Trobe wished to marry his deceased wife's sister.<sup>46</sup>

While it would be inconceivable for a man of Perry's convictions not to express his views, the effects of his rebuttal on Fr Geoghegan were devastating. A deeply sensitive man, who felt personally slighted and hurt by such overt dislike, Geoghegan saw the incident as a 'disingenuous opportunity... taken from an unsuspecting act of courtesy on my part, to address to me the offensive matter contained in your letter'.<sup>47</sup> However, three months later, he seems to have recovered his equilibrium when writing sympathetically of Perry to Bishop Goold in Sydney: 'Bishop Perry is no ordinary man, untiring in exertion, even of the humblest kind among his order... he has gone over nearly all the ground at Port Fairy, which I traversed with much labour and exertion last year'.<sup>48</sup>

It is especially heartening that in 2017, after almost 170 years, 'Perry's rude response to Geoghegan's friendly overture has been publicly put to rest'.<sup>49</sup> The Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Philip Freier, played a prominent part in leading the intercessions at the blessing of the new statue of Fr Geoghegan erected on the forecourt of St Francis' Church.<sup>50</sup> The newsletter of St Francis' Church recorded the occasion:

Anglican Archbishop Philip Freier... made an already historic event all the more memorable. He said how glad



**Harvey & Dunden, Geelong, photographers**  
**St Mary of the Angels, c.1872**

Albumen silver

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H87.91/23

As completed in 1872, without pinnacles at south end (right) or spire at north (left)

and grateful he was to be present at ‘a very reconciling moment’ because the first Anglican bishop of Melbourne, Dr Charles Perry (1807-1891), had displayed a lack of charity and grace in refusing to receive the welcome of the friendly and open-minded Fr Geoghegan in January 1848. Archbishop Freier’s warmth and ease certainly righted that wrong.<sup>51</sup>

The Archbishop went on to comment that ‘it is a lovely blessing that times are better, the winds of friendship are more favourable in our directions now, than they were back in 1848’.<sup>52</sup>

In his first months in the colony, Fr Geoghegan was in desperate need of an assistant in his Melbourne mission, especially in the school he opened adjacent to St Francis’ Church on New Year’s Day 1840. He wrote to La Trobe, seeking an increase in his stipend to enable him to pay his curate, Rev. Richard Walsh, since ‘for his support, I am totally responsible’.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, from 24 December 1840, Geoghegan’s stipend was increased by £50. Fr Walsh was transferred to Norfolk Island in December 1840, and was replaced by Fr Michael Ryan.

At this time, Geoghegan began to turn his attention to the pastoral needs of rapidly growing Geelong, a flourishing port for wool and wheat from the developing Western District. Fr Ryan was the first priest stationed at Geelong, arriving in September 1841 to service a parish stretching from Geelong to Portland that involved travel on horseback to Colac, Buninyong and Portland. He stayed only a few weeks until his recall to Sydney in October, yet was able to lay the foundation stone of a small wooden chapel in Yarra Street. He was succeeded in Geelong in March 1842 by Fr Michael Stephens.

As the congregation outgrew this simple building, Fr Geoghegan laid the foundation stone on 19 August 1846 for a larger stone church named St Mary of the Angels, designed by Melbourne architect, Samuel Jackson. This building was completed and blessed by Fr Geoghegan in 1847. Extensions were envisaged in 1853 with Bishop Goold laying the foundation stone, but work on the building soon ceased and was not resumed until 1870. Though not fully completed till 1937, St Mary of the Angels was officially opened by Bishop Goold on 4 February 1872.<sup>54</sup> It was elevated to the status of Basilica in 2004, ‘due largely to its architectural significance’.<sup>55</sup>

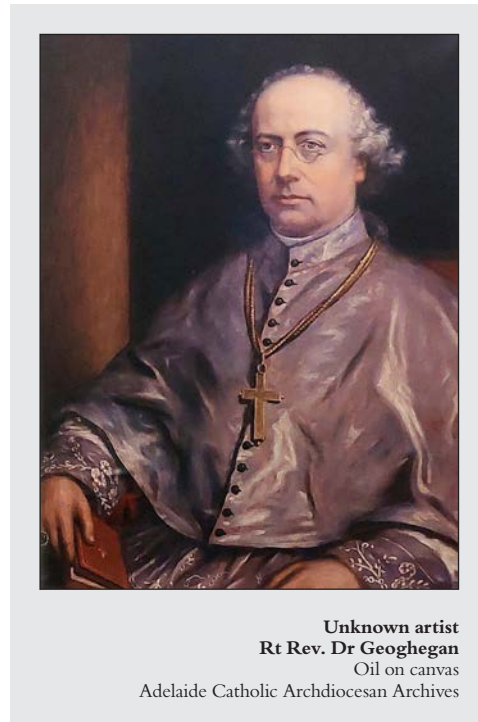
Fr Geoghegan's public image of a man almost universally admired and approachable, however, did not give the whole picture of his character. Some fellow priests found him authoritarian and difficult to work with, and he frequently found fault with them. He was sometimes out of favour with his superiors in Sydney, no doubt because of his constant complaints about lack of assistant priests to develop the Catholic presence in Port Phillip.<sup>56</sup> He made numerous coastal voyages to Sydney, Hobart and Launceston during the 1840s, in search of possible recruits for the Port Phillip mission. He resigned his position on two occasions, in March 1842 and again in October 1846, planning to return to Ireland via Hobart. Surprisingly, after some months away, he returned to his role in Melbourne.<sup>57</sup>

In 1848 he was appointed Vicar-General, or deputy administrator of the diocese, when Dr James Alipius Goold arrived as first Catholic Bishop of Melbourne, a role he was to share with Rev. John Fitzpatrick from 1853 to 1859, due to his disputations with the Bishop. A year later, Geoghegan went to Ireland and England in a desperate search for more priests for Victoria, and to carry out various duties in London for Goold, including negotiating with officials in the Colonial Office for proper recognition of Catholic bishops in the Australian colonies.<sup>58</sup> He returned in March 1851 with nine recruits, including his cousin, Horatio Geoghegan, who was ordained a priest in Hobart on 15 August 1852, and went on to minister for many years in country Victoria until his death at Kyneton in 1895.<sup>59</sup> Patrick Geoghegan became pastor at St Mary's, Williamstown in 1853 until his appointment as Bishop of Adelaide.

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Following the death of Bishop Francis Murphy, Patrick Geoghegan was formally installed as the second Bishop of Adelaide at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral on Sunday 6 November 1859,<sup>60</sup> choosing to wear the traditional grey robes of Franciscan bishops. He showed great energy in the laborious work of fund-raising and seeking land grants for the establishment of a network of Catholic schools and churches in South Australia. Clergy were always in short supply, and in 1862 he sailed again for Europe to recruit additional priests.

Obviously exhausted by the demands of his position, Bishop Geoghegan had requested before leaving Adelaide a less onerous placement. On 10 March 1864 while in Rome, he was appointed to the new smaller See of Goulburn in New South Wales, but regrettably was never to take up this posting. From Italy, he went to



Dublin where he fell extremely ill from an old throat ailment which had become cancerous. He died aged fifty-nine on 9 May 1864 in the coastal town of Kingston (Dun Laoghaire), and was buried at the Franciscan Church of the Immaculate Conception at Merchant's Quay in Dublin.

Rev. Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan OSF was a priest who, over twenty-three laborious years, developed the Catholic presence in Melbourne, traversing the far-flung colony of Port Phillip and Victoria on horseback to visit his flock. His dedication continued as Bishop of Adelaide. He was truly sincere in his role of 'the promotion of the general good', as expressed in 1841.

This is the doctrine of Australia Felix; in this doctrine she has been cradled, and may every year of our growth be invigorated by it, until the maturity of her prosperity shall serve as a bright example of what men, by religious freedom and brotherly love, can effect for the good of their country.<sup>61</sup>



## Acknowledgement

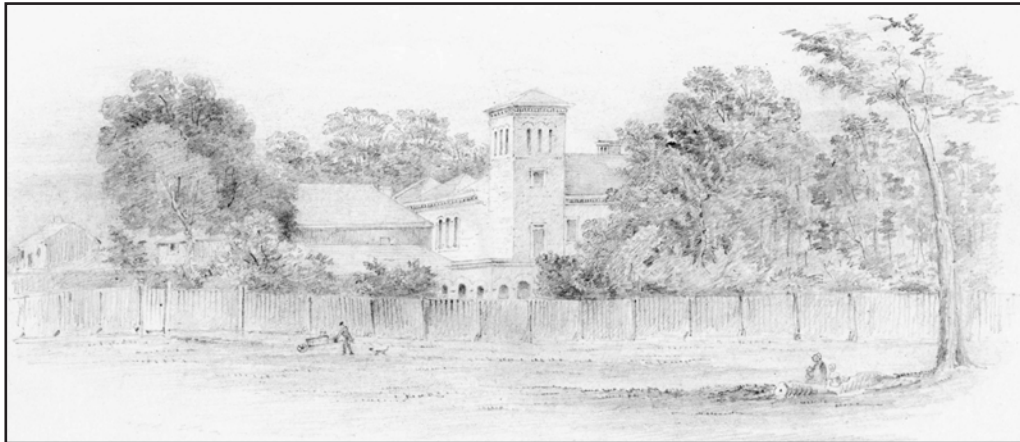
The author acknowledges her indebtedness to Damien Cash, Provincial Archivist/Historian, Blessed Sacrament Congregation and St Francis' Church Heritage Centre, for his kind and professional assistance with her research.

## Endnotes

Post-nominal abbreviation OSF, Order of St Francis, is contemporaneous with Geoghegan's times. Now OFM, Order of Friars Minor, applies to members of the branch of the Franciscans that Geoghegan joined.

- 1 James Grant and Geoffrey Serle, *The Melbourne Scene, 1803-1856*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957, p.6.
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- 3 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.3.
- 4 Susan Priestley, 'The Jewish Community in Port Phillip and Victoria, 1835-1854', *La Trobeana*, vol.20, no.2, July 2021, p.17; Early History, Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, [melbournesynagogue.org.au/early-history.html](http://melbournesynagogue.org.au/early-history.html) (accessed 22 December 2022).
- 5 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 7 October 1839, p.4.
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Jane Dorothea Cannan, 1823-1861, artist  
The Bishop's palace, 1853  
Pencil on paper  
Collection: Royal Historical Society of Victoria

# The Bishop and the Lieutenant-Governor

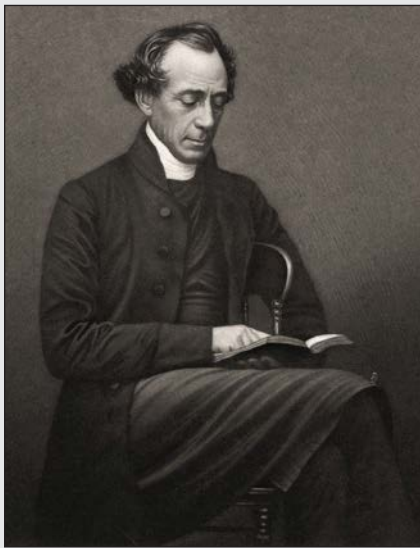
By Dr Liz Rushen AM

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*This article is a revision of the History Month lecture given to a joint meeting of the C J La Trobe Society and Anglican Historical Society at Holy Trinity Church, East Melbourne, on 19 October 2022.*

The site of Bishopscourt Melbourne and the adjoining Holy Trinity Church is the land of the Wurundjeri-balluk people of the Woi Wurrung language group. Originally a lightly treed landscape, following the arrival of Bishop Perry to Melbourne in 1848 this site became part of a large grant of land to the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> Bishop Perry envisioned it as the future site of his cathedral and it became known as the 'cathedral reserve'.

Both Charles Perry and his wife, Frances, on whom he relied so much, had shipping in their blood and relished the opportunities presented to them in this far-flung diocese. Aged forty-one when he arrived in the Port Phillip District, Charles was the youngest son of John Perry and his second wife Mary, the daughter of a Blackwall shipbuilder. John Perry was head of another prominent shipbuilding firm, the makers of several ships which secured victory for the British at the Battle of Trafalgar.



**Antoine Fauchery, 1823–1861, photographer**  
**The Right Reverent Bishop of**  
**Melbourne, c.1858**  
Albumen silver  
Pictures Collection,  
State Library Victoria, H84.167/17

Raised in a comfortable and well-connected family, Charles attended a small school at Clapham, where one of his fellow pupils was Thomas Babington Macaulay. Charles then attended Harrow before he studied law at Lincoln's Inn, gaining knowledge which would hold him in good stead as the first Bishop of Melbourne. Charles changed to the ministry and graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1828. While at Trinity, he tutored Edward Hoare, later Canon Hoare, a leading figure in the religious life of Tunbridge Wells and son of Louisa Gurney, the nineteenth-century English diarist and education reformist, and her banker husband Samuel Hoare.

Influential Anglican Evangelicals (and formerly Quakers), the Hoares formed part of the Gurney-led push for penal reform, joining forces with their brothers-in-law Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, Samuel Gurney and Joseph Fry and his wife Elizabeth, who was widely known as the 'Angel of the Prisons'. Perry's interest in evangelicalism can be sourced to his contact with the extended Gurney-Hoare family.

Charles Perry's developing evangelical principles led to his involvement in the work of the Church Missionary Society and he became a close friend of the secretary Henry Venn. Another of Perry's fellow classics scholars at Trinity was John Cooper. Their interest in the classics was shared by John's sister Frances and the engagement was soon announced between Charles Perry and Frances Cooper. This caused

some consternation among their friends, one remarking that Charles was 'too grave for one so gay', as she was 'lively' and 'enjoyed society so much'.<sup>2</sup>

Frances was the third daughter of Dorothy and Samuel Cooper, a shipowner and oil merchant of Kingston upon Hull in Yorkshire. She was born in 1814 and baptised at the Fish Street Congregational Chapel where George Lambert, the founder of the London Missionary Society, was minister. Frances grew up in a large, noisy home, living with her nine siblings at the family residence at Tranby, five miles (eight kilometres) west of Hull.

Frances's parents instilled the evangelical influences so crucial to her life, and which would hold her in good stead when she later met Charles Joseph La Trobe, who was raised within the ambit of the Moravians at Fulneck in Yorkshire. Thus, Frances Perry and Charles La Trobe were raised within dissenting circles just sixty miles (ninety-six kilometres) apart.

Samuel Cooper was a partner in one of the major shipbuilding and whaling firms in Hull. In tandem with its shipping and industrial development Hull became a centre of evangelical revival where a re-awakened religious enthusiasm led to an active involvement in social issues. The potent combination of social reform together with missionary and philanthropic ideologies can be traced in the lives of Charles and Frances Perry who married in October 1841 at the parish church near Frances's home at Tranby.

Following their marriage, they settled into a life of comfort and security at Cambridge, Charles becoming founding vicar of St Paul's in 1845. His active work on behalf of the Church Missionary Society resulted in his candidacy for the proposed diocese of Melbourne in the newly-formed See in the Port Phillip District. Keen to put his missioning principles into practice and with a secure private income to supplement the relatively meagre episcopal stipend provided by the government, Perry was well-positioned to accept nomination.

Significantly, Charles Perry was consecrated a bishop at Westminster Abbey in June 1847, the same month that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Melbourne was created. The first Catholic bishop was the young and urbane, but somewhat aloof James Goold. Intent on announcing his arrival at his diocese in 1848, Bishop Goold travelled the 600 miles (965 kilometres) from Sydney by an innovative and difficult overland journey by coach-and-four. Over two hundred people congregated on the outskirts of Melbourne to escort their new



Samuel Bellin, 1799-1893, engraver  
Sir Francis Grant, 1803-1878, artist  
Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1855 (detail)  
Mezzotint

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H15575

bishop to his home, to be installed in St Francis Pro-Cathedral, nine months after Bishop Perry's installation as the Anglican bishop of Melbourne.

When the Perrys arrived on 23 January 1848, Charles Perry had with him the Letters Patent, which appointed him as the First Bishop of the See of Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> Thus with his arrival, Melbourne became a city. As Alan Gross notes, 'to La Trobe, with his sincere religious convictions and his descent from a family of clergymen, the event could be nothing less than a triumph. On his own arrival under nine years previously, there had not been a permanent place of worship; not only had these been provided, but a cathedral would soon arise by the Yarra'.<sup>4</sup>

Bishop Perry arrived in Melbourne with key clergy and lay people he had hand-picked, comprising a virtual army of evangelisers intent on their civilising mission in regard to both the Indigenous population and the new settlers, to establish the church in the new mission field of Victoria.

Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe, too, saw his direction as attempting to bring Christianity to the Indigenous people of Port Phillip. As Dianne Reilly has noted, La Trobe had a total commitment to Christianity through his Moravian faith. It was evangelical, but it had a worldliness, or a more secular dimension that set it apart from other Protestant sects.<sup>5</sup>

Charles and Frances Perry were fortunate that their arrival coincided with La Trobe's

tenure as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. Educated at the Fulneck Moravian School in West Yorkshire, La Trobe's religious sensibilities were acute and he supported the work of the churches. With few men of their status or religious leanings in Melbourne's small population they became good friends, a friendship which cemented the alliance between church and state. La Trobe laid the foundation stones for St James' and St Peter's, the first two Anglican churches in Melbourne, and frequently made personal donations to Anglican causes and buildings at a time when it was difficult for the church to attract funding. While the two men had only six years together in Melbourne, their friendship was to last a life-time.<sup>6</sup>

The close relationship began immediately when, on the day of the Perrys' arrival in Melbourne, La Trobe whisked the ladies to lunch at his house, which was, according to Frances standing 'in a very pretty garden—surrounded by trees on every side' much like 'a gentleman's park'.<sup>7</sup> We can see in this statement that this was the beginning of La Trobe and Frances Perry's shared interest in gardening.

Bishop Perry was most grateful to find in the Superintendent of the colony a kind-hearted man who was supportive of his role as the head of the Anglican Church in Victoria. Perry appreciated the 'kind attention and true hospitality' shown to them by La Trobe when they first arrived, further noting in a letter to London:

I have received also, directly and indirectly, the most important help in the fulfilment of my duties. In the position which I occupy, I feel it to be a ground for peculiar thankfulness that the highest civil functionary in this Province is one who by his unblemished character, his regular attendance upon all the ordinances of the Church, and his liberal aid in every good work, exhibits an example to the whole community. I pray that the Divine blessing may rest abundantly upon him and upon his family.<sup>8</sup>

As the Perrys were unable to find a suitable house, La Trobe offered them the use of a small prefabricated cottage which he had brought with him from England. It was to be their home for five years. The cottage was located on the north-east corner of 12½ acres (5 hectares) of sloping land by the Yarra River which La Trobe had purchased from the government and named *Jolimont*, and where he had erected his own even smaller prefabricated home.



Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn Liardet, 1799-1878, artist  
**Bishop Perry's residence, (1849) 1875**  
 Watercolour with pen, ink and pencil  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H28250/21

The location of the Perry's 'Upper House', as Frances described it, was ideal. Surrounded by government reserves, its proximity to the La Trobes' home immediately included the Perrys in official circles, a reality no doubt compensating for the small size of the cottage.<sup>9</sup> At their own expense the Perrys undertook some renovations to enlarge the cottage and make it more liveable; the kitchen was joined to the house by a walkway and two new bedrooms were built.

The grounds were idyllic and the Perrys were pleased to have ready-made flower and kitchen gardens which were laid out in the formal manner of the times, as shown in Liardet's painting, altogether, in Frances's view, it 'looks very pretty'. Like Superintendent La Trobe, Frances Perry set about creating a private garden, writing in January 1848, 'We have only seen two creepers in flower yet, and they were both at Mr [La Trobe's]; the one was my pet, the purple *mirandia barcliana* [sic] [*Maurandya barclaiana*] which used to hang so gracefully from the baskets in our garden at Cambridge'.<sup>10</sup>

La Trobe assisted Frances as she embarked on creating a garden in the unfamiliar environment. Shortly after she and Bishop Perry had arrived, she wrote, 'Mr [La Trobe] says, as soon as we get a garden, he will set to work to get it into order for us. He is going to take our seeds (if our garden is not forthcoming before sowing time) and appropriate a bed in his garden to them, to be called Mrs [Perry's] bed. Is it not kind?'.<sup>11</sup> And La Trobe was true to his word in assisting the Perrys create a suitable garden.

In 1850, as they were preparing the garden for their new home, Bishops court, La Trobe wrote to Ronald Gunn, the editor of the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*, asking him to 'send me by the return boat the lists of seeds & shrubs etc. of your gardener and seedsman... [as] my neighbour Mrs Perry is at a loss who to apply to, to furnish her with the requisite shrubs etc for her new garden'.<sup>12</sup>

Like so many of her contemporaries, Frances Perry re-created an English garden in Melbourne, using plants that were familiar to her. The volunteer gardeners who have been working at Bishops court for over two decades have re-introduced many plants that would have been in the garden during the Perrys' time.

As Helen Botham has described in a recent talk to the La Trobe Society, La Trobe was also a keen gardener. He collected plant specimens on his travels throughout the world and the Port Phillip District and sent them to the Neuchâtel Museum and other scientists in Switzerland. *Eremophila latrobei* and *Grevillea latrobei*, named after La Trobe, can both be found in the garden at La Trobe's Cottage in the Government Domain.<sup>13</sup> La Trobe had plants and trees sent to him by the Botanic Garden in Sydney. As Helen Botham explains, although initially La Trobe aimed to re-create the gardens of 'Home', it is possible that the hot dry summer of 1843-44 may have persuaded him of the value in transitioning to Mediterranean and local plants. She has identified botanical specimens collected by La Trobe, several of which have also been planted in the garden of La Trobe's Cottage.



**Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801–1875, artist**  
**Bishopscourt, East Melbourne, viewed from the south-west, 1853**  
 Pencil on paper  
 Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)  
 Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria

Aware that they could not remain in La Trobe's Upper House indefinitely, in July 1849 Bishop Perry applied to La Trobe for a grant of land for his new residence. He had his eye on a two-acre (0.8 hectare) site in Clarendon Street, in the emerging suburb of East Melbourne, in line of sight of his home at *Jolimont*. The land for the episcopal residence was well-drained and provided a light, airy and 'healthful' aspect. It was in an excellent position, less than two kilometres from the Melbourne Post Office and opposite the land set aside for the Fitzroy Gardens. With its magnificent views, we can see how this block would have appealed to the Perrys.

The Bishop had a clear vision for his precinct, foreseeing not only his residence, but also a cathedral, a vicarage and a school, with an open reserve fronting Powlett Street. Perry deemed this configuration would 'exercise a very powerful influence in moulding the minds and tastes' of the 'young community' of Victoria. He considered that it was a bishop's duty to offer hospitality and that his residence should be suitable to meet these demands. Yet he was aware of the expense involved in building this dream and was relieved when £2000 from the Church and Schools Reserves was earmarked by the government for an episcopal residence, not for general church purposes. In the end, the Bishop was not allocated all the land he wanted down to Powlett Street, but in exchange, he was offered another two-acre block bounded by Hotham, Clarendon and George Streets for a cathedral.<sup>14</sup>

The government made grants and land reservations for churches, schools and ministers' residences in East Melbourne for twelve different denominations, including a grant in 1851 for an episcopal residence for the Roman Catholic bishop.<sup>15</sup> This land was on the corner of Albert

and Lansdowne Streets, which resulted in the two bishops facing each other across the Fitzroy Gardens. The bishops, and their successors, handled this situation with varying degrees of success. A man of strong opinions which bordered on bigotry, Perry unwisely snubbed the much-loved Catholic priest, Patrick Geoghegan, when he called to welcome the Perrys to their new home. Bishop Perry was not at home and Geoghegan was forced to leave his card, which Perry returned.<sup>16</sup> This caused a sectarian rift which was not repaired until the arrival of Perry's more ecumenical successor, James Moorhouse. As Peter Sherlock has noted, Bishop Perry assumed his church brought an entitlement to authority, yet he found himself competing to be heard in a multi-denominational colony with a pronounced cynicism about religion.<sup>17</sup>

Although Bishop Perry had nominated a grant of land for his residence,<sup>18</sup> the process of building a house fit for a bishop was as protracted as the land grant proved to be. When the gold rushes hit Victoria soon after building had commenced, the price of labour and building materials increased. With many skilled workmen deserting to the goldfields, the Perrys were fortunate that their building works did not cease altogether. To keep the costs down, they purchased their own cart, as it was cheaper to buy one than pay for cartage, but it broke down when the workmen were hauling a load of bluestones from the quarries at Pentridge. La Trobe lent them his cart to retrieve the bricks and it, too, broke down. A dray was eventually hired; the rate haggled down from £5 to £3 to complete the job.<sup>19</sup>

As shown in a pencil sketch by La Trobe dated 21 October 1853, Bishopscourt was designed to be seen from the south-west corner. Now hidden behind a high fence and extensive

plantings, from this aspect the land rises up and the front of the residence is in full view. La Trobe's sketch has helped us to identify that the original driveway entered the property from this corner, which was the direction from which walkers would approach the house from *Jolimont* and the Fitzroy Gardens.

The kitchen was detached, as was the custom of the day, and the servants were accommodated in another two-storey bluestone building, just visible in an 1853 sketch by contemporary Jane Cannan. Both this and La Trobe's sketch were made shortly after Charles and Frances Perry moved in. It had taken five years from the first application for the grant but the house was still unfinished.

While the views were outstanding and the clarity of the air was alluring, the area was not without its disadvantages. At the time, both sites now occupied by the Fitzroy and Treasury Gardens were swampy areas, largely used as rubbish dumps, with a stream running between them. The future Fitzroy Gardens were bisected by an ugly eroded gully carrying stormwater and sewage south to the Yarra River, hazardous for residents travelling between the township and East Melbourne. It was not until the mid-1850s that Clement Hodgkinson was given responsibility for laying out the gardens. Influenced by the alignment of the surrounding streets, Hodgkinson utilised the existing track, now known as Hotham Walk, to connect Collins and Hotham Streets, to end at the south-west corner of Bishops court.

In November 1850, Victorians received news that their longed-for separation from New South Wales had been approved by Queen Victoria. Judge Pohlman describes how the Perrys and La Trobes celebrated this momentous event. The evening after the news was received, Judge Pohlman and his wife dined at the Perrys' home with the La Trobes and several others, described by Pohlman as an evening with bonfires lit after dinner.<sup>20</sup>

When setting up the administrative structure for self-government of the new colony, the leading settlers modelled the familiar institutions left behind in Britain and Ireland. In a letter to his mother, Hugh Childers, newly appointed to the Executive Council, educated like Charles Perry at Cambridge University and regarded by Perry as his protégé, outlined the 'table of precedency' in Melbourne:

- the Governor
- the Bishop (i.e. Bishop Perry)
- the Roman Catholic Bishop
- the Chief Justice

- the Executive Council, comprising Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General, Colonial Treasurer, Collector of Customs, Auditor-General, Speaker, Puisne Judges
- the Legislative Council, with the Solicitor-General and the Surveyor-General leading this group.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, in the small pre-gold rush population of Melbourne, the La Trobes were at the apex of the pyramid-shaped social structure, and the Perrys were second in importance in a society where the divisions were sharply drawn.

Childers was one of several members of the Legislative Council who were also lay leaders within the Anglican Church, the others being William Stawell, William Haines, Charles Sladen, Thomas a'Beckett and James Palmer, many of whom were later knighted. They not only worked together in developing Victoria's legal and parliamentary framework, but they worshipped and socialised together and formed a small nucleus of friendship for Charles La Trobe and Charles Perry.

But the relationship between Frances Perry and La Trobe's Swiss-born wife, Sophie, was not as warm. Unencumbered by the care of children Frances enjoyed robust good health and relished riding on horseback through the bush in driving wind and rain. She spent many hours as her husband's unpaid assistant, writing and copying out his letters, smoothing the waters when he had caused offence, as well as heading up many organisations, especially those involved in the welfare of women and children, such as the Governesses' Institute, the Ladies' Benevolent Society, and the Lying-In Hospital (now the Royal Women's Hospital).

Bishop Perry oversaw an extraordinary expansion of an Anglican presence throughout colonial Victoria: parishes, vicarages, churches and clergy had been created across the suburbs and towns of the colony, two Church of England private boys' schools were established, and an Anglican hall of residence was in place at the University of Melbourne,<sup>22</sup> and Frances Perry was very much a part of this work.

When the Perrys moved out of La Trobe's cottage, it was offered to Emily and Hugh Childers. Emily was delighted and considered her new abode a 'pretty little cottage'. She had recently visited Frances there, noting it was 'all in great confusion... Mrs P. very busy'.<sup>23</sup> The move to Bishops court marked a greater change for the Perrys than a simple house-move. Much of their status revolved around hospitality and they now had room to hold monthly clerical meetings at





Hennah & Kent, Brighton, England,  
photographer  
Frances Perry, c.1855 (detail)  
Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

home, entertain in style and have visitors stay.<sup>24</sup> Several colonists record visiting Bishopscourt during 1853: the Childers attended a dinner party in June while Jane Macartney, wife of Dean Macartney, made frequent references to lunches, dinners and meetings at Bishopscourt. Canon Goodman stated that he and his family were the first guests to stay at the 'new palace'.<sup>25</sup> On one occasion, Frances wrote that 'A young lady, Miss—is come to stay with us for a week, being homeless'.<sup>26</sup>

Melbourne's population rose from 29,000 in 1851 to 141,000 in 1861, with many people living in a large tent city, known as Canvas Town, on the south side of the Yarra. Frances was concerned for the welfare of these new immigrants, writing to a clergyman's wife, of 'the number of poor destitute people who arrive and sicken and sometimes die in their tents here. There are upwards of 4,000 persons in tents just over the river and much sorrow and suffering amongst them'.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the progress in the civil establishment, lawlessness was rampant and the old social order had changed: the streets 'swarmed with strange figures. Public-houses were filled with rough crowds of men... robbery, violence and murder, prevailed by day and night'.<sup>28</sup> While commenting on this unrest, Canon Goodman's comments also reflected deeper changes in the Melbourne of the early 1850s, '*Egalité* and *fraternité* are as nearly allied to *la liberté* in this colony as in any country in the world. Ranks appear to be fused in more respects

than equality of worldly wealth; indeed, there is, I am inclined to think, less polish in the upper classes, whilst the civility shown by workpeople and shopmen is very noticeable'.<sup>29</sup>

The old patterns of life were disrupted by the huge influx of a mixed population, and the old order had been turned upside down by the new wealth suddenly in the hands of a different group of people. Another major impact of the gold rushes was the breakdown of the family structure. So many men left for the goldfields that women and families were suddenly deserted, left in Melbourne to survive as best they could. In Frances's words, Melbourne was 'pretty nearly under petticoat dominion'.<sup>30</sup> There was a great need for support and the Perrys, with their philanthropic bent, were partners in setting up many charities which replicated the charity network they had witnessed in Hull.

The Perrys' role, too, in this new world, had to change, but we only have snippets of their lives at this time. On one occasion not long after the Perrys moved into Bishopscourt, they were invited by the Childers to dine with the La Trobes at the cottage which had been their former home. Emily Childers revealed the extent to which Frances directed the Bishop's life, when she wrote: 'Mrs Perry had asked specially if the dinner could be *punctually* at 6 o'clock so that the Bishop could get to a meeting at 7.30 otherwise they would not be able to come'.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast to Frances Perry's absorption in her husband's work and role, Sophie La Trobe was retiring in disposition and suffered from neuralgic headaches. She was frequently sick, occasionally pregnant and devoted her time to the care of her four young children.<sup>32</sup> Although quietly involved in philanthropic activities,<sup>33</sup> she was not the leader of society the locals had hoped for. Yet Frances and Sophie were the two leading women of Melbourne society and as neighbours and in a society where women were scarce, their lives were necessarily closely intermingled.

When La Trobe left Victoria in May 1854, he left a colony well-endowed with public and private gardens, an administrative framework and a self-governing colony. Clearly he regarded his legacy with mixed feelings, as he was to write eleven years later: 'I think the... people of Melbourne may have some appreciation for the foresight... which has secured them their ample means of recreation – Botanic Gardens & Parks on both sides of the Yarra – I have nothing on my conscience on that score'.<sup>34</sup> And Melburnians certainly are the beneficiaries of that legacy today with the Treasury and Fitzroy Gardens, Yarra Park, Birrarung Marr, Alexandra Gardens and Kings Domain surrounding the Yarra.

Six months later, at the height of the miners' unrest at Eureka, the Perrys sailed to England. They were away from Melbourne for a year and the timing of their visit ensured that Bishop Perry was absent during the political crisis in Victoria. The Victorian Constitution came into effect in November 1854, the month they departed for their trip. La Trobe's successor, Sir Charles Hotham, lost the confidence of the Victorian people in failing to deal with protests over the high costs of gold licences, and in ignoring the advice of the Executive Council who threatened to resign. A year after Eureka, and shortly after the Perrys returned, Governor Hotham caught a chill and died on the last day of 1855.<sup>35</sup>

The warm relationship between La Trobe and Bishop Perry continued after La Trobe left Melbourne, as revealed in a letter he wrote to Sophie's friend and housekeeper, Charlotte Pellet from London in April 1855. La Trobe thought highly of Charlotte Pellet, writing to her in April 1854 when he was on the cusp of leaving Victoria, that he always counted her 'as one of my family'.<sup>36</sup> In his 1855 letter, he reveals both his joy at meeting up with his old friends, but a sense of loss about the years that had passed and the memories they brought:

I had sent the enclosed to you... enclosed in a letter to Mrs Perry, when all of a sudden I learned that she was daily expected in England, and here she is, safe and well, with my dear friend the good Bishop. You may be

sure, that I have not met them without many mixed feelings, tho' with great pleasure. I was glad to find that Mrs Perry had really seen you, and could report that you were well & happy...<sup>37</sup>

Bishop Perry presided at the wedding of Charlotte's daughter Rose to Geelong vigneron Frederic Amiet in 1854, and later officiated in October 1874 at the wedding of La Trobe's daughter Agnes to Count Peter de Salis at Litlington in Sussex. In 1855 Charles Perry supported his old friend in his decision to marry Rose de Meuron, his late wife's sister, although Perry was aware this arrangement was illegal under English civil and ecclesiastical law.<sup>38</sup>

Perry and La Trobe's friendship is also amply demonstrated in a series of letters compiled by Les Blake in 1975 which reveal that La Trobe frequently asked his correspondents to pass on his good wishes, couching his sentiments in the words 'my dear friend the good Bishop'. To his agent, merchant James Graham, La Trobe wrote in 1865, 'I do not know that I should be able to write to Mrs Perry by this mail, but if you should stumble upon her or the Bishop anywhere, pray give my kindest regards, and add such information about me as this [letter] may enable you to offer.'<sup>39</sup> Indeed, hearing of La Trobe's death in 1875, Frances referred to him as 'our dear old friend'.<sup>40</sup>

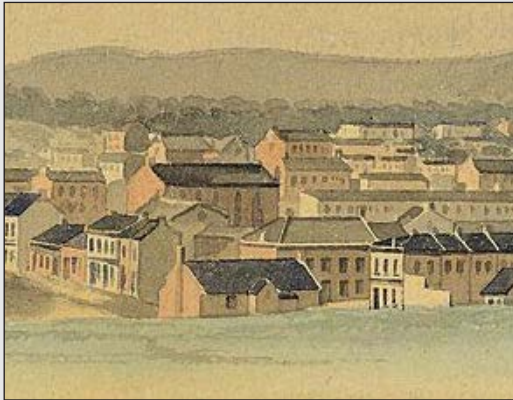
Both Charles La Trobe and Charles Perry were men of strong faith who made outstanding contributions to the development of Melbourne.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 *Argus*, 1 November, 1849, p.[1] and 17 December 1849, p.2.
- 2 Mary Ann Fenstall to Elizabeth Clare Lambert, November 1841, quoted by Patricia Grimshaw, *Frances Perry and the Relationship of Christianity, Women and Social Reform in the Nineteenth Century*, [West Melbourne: Evangelical Fellowship of Victoria, 1988], p.3 (The Bishop Perry Memorial Lecture, 1988).
- 3 State Records New South Wales, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 4/2821, 48/1856, La Trobe to Colonial Secretary, 3 February 1848. Reporting arrival of Bishop of Melbourne, with enclosure, Perry to La Trobe, 3 February 1848.
- 4 Alan Gross, *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Superintendent of the Port Phillip District 1839-1851, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria 1851-1854*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1956, p.88.
- 5 Dianne Reilly, 'Books and Culture in La Trobe's Melbourne', *La Trobeana*, vol.12, no.3, November 2013, p.8.
- 6 James Grant also wrote of the enduring nature of their friendship, see his 'Soulmates: C J La Trobe and Charles Perry', *La Trobeana*, vol.10, no.1, February 2011, p.32.
- 7 A. de Q. Robin (ed.), *Australian Sketches: the journals and letters of Frances Perry*, Carlton, Vic.: Queensbury Hill Press, 2002, p.70.
- 8 'A Letter from the Lord Bishop of Melbourne, to the Honorary Secretary of the Special Committee for that Diocese, dated November 1849', for forwarding to London, *Church in the Colonies*, (Vol.5), No.24, June 1850, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, p.21 (accessible <http://anglicanhistory.org/aus/spg24.html>).
- 9 E.W. Moorhead, 'Excursion to Jolimont, 1838-1855', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol.27, no.2, January 1956, p.59; Jean Uhl, *A Woman of Importance: Emily Childers in Melbourne 1850-1856*, [Blackburn, Vic.]: Jean Uhl, 1992, p.59.
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- 11 Ibid.
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- 14 Perry to La Trobe, 18 December 1849, Melbourne Diocesan Archives GLB1, 2/268; Perry to La Trobe and annotation, 28 March 1850, MDA, GLB1, 272; Perry to Colonial Secretary, 28 March 1851, MDA Bp2, 51/50; Perry to La Trobe, 28 March 1851, Bp2, 51/43.
- 15 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 5 February 1851, pp.110-111.
- 16 James Grant, 'Mutual Society, Help and Comfort: Charles Joseph La Trobe and Charles Perry, 1848-1854', *La Trobeana*, vol.7, no.2, August 2008, p.11.
- 17 Peter Sherlock, 'Anglican Inventions of Melbourne: Perry and Moorhouse', Paper delivered at the University of Melbourne, 18 February 2020, as part of the conference 'Translating European Culture to Colonial Melbourne'.
- 18 The legal ownership of the Bishops court site remained unclear and the correspondence continued for over a decade. The government finally conveyed the land to the church on 16 October 1863, *Victorian Government Gazette*, 16 October, pp.2319-2320. See also Elizabeth Rushen, *Bishops court Melbourne: official residence and family home*, Preston, Vic.: Mosaic Press, 2013, Chapter 2.
- 19 Robin, p.182.
- 20 Robert Williams Pohlman, Diary 1846-1850, MS 11856, Box 2187/7 (b), Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria. Entry for 12 November 1850, with thanks to Caroline Clemente for these references.
- 21 Hugh Childers to his mother, 20 January 1854, quoted in Uhl, p.137.
- 22 These establishments were Melbourne Grammar School (1849), Geelong Grammar School (1857) and Trinity College (which opened in 1872).
- 23 Uhl, p.50.
- 24 *The Church of England Record for the Diocese of Melbourne*, vol.4, no.37, January 1860, p.6 reports a clerical meeting at Bishops court in December 1859; Jane Macartney, Diary, 20 September 1859, 18 October 1859, MS 012929, Box 3, Royal Historical Society of Victoria.
- 25 *The Church of England Messenger*, 1 October 1903, p.122, Canon Goodman's diary, 15 December 1853.
- 26 Robin, p.180, 30 September 1852.
- 27 Frances Perry to Elizabeth Hall, 11 January 1853, Hall Papers, 'Glenalbyn Grange', Kingower, near Inglewood (courtesy James Grant).
- 28 George Goodman, *The Church in Victoria during the Episcopate of Bishop Perry: first Bishop of Melbourne, Prelate of the Order of St Michael and St George*, Melbourne: Melville, Mullen and Slade; London, Seeley and Co., 1892, p.157, based on William Westgarth's description of Melbourne.
- 29 *The Church of England Messenger*, 1 October 1903, p.121, Goodman diary, 15 December 1853.
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- 31 Uhl, p.61.
- 32 Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen: and good society in Melbourne before the gold rushes*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980 p.58; Marguerite Hancock, *Colonial Consorts: the wives of Victoria's colonial governors, 1839-1900*, Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Press, 2001, pp.20-21.
- 33 Sophie La Trobe, Frances Perry and Matilda a'Beckett were patrons of the 1850 Fancy Bazaar for the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, see Susan Priestley, 'Melbourne Ladies in Community Work: a research note', *La Trobeana*, vol.20, no.2, July 2021, p.32. In 1851, Sophie became patron of the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society, Peter Sherlock, 'Religious Belief and Practice in Early Melbourne', *La Trobeana*, vol.10, no.1, February 2011, p.11. In 1845, she had encouraged Rose, the daughter of Charlotte Pellet, Sophie's Swiss-born housekeeper, to sew baby clothes 'for poor people', Sophie La Trobe to her daughter Agnes, 15 August 1845, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archive, MS 13354/27, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.
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- 35 B.A. Knox, 'Hotham, Sir Charles (1806-1855)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (accessed online 23 January 2023).
- 36 La Trobe to Charlotte Pellet, 29 April 1854, letter written from Bishops court, MS 7873, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.
- 37 Blake, pp.49-50, 3 April 1855.
- 38 Frances Perry to La Trobe, 10 September 1855, and Charles and Frances Perry to La Trobe, 25 October 1855, in Dianne Reilly, 'My Dear Mr La Trobe', *La Trobeana*, vol.7, no.2, August 2008, pp.17-18. See also James Grant, 'Soulmates: C.J. La Trobe and Charles Perry', p.32.
- 39 Blake, p.67, 18 November 1865.
- 40 Frances Perry to Mary Anne Sibella Riddell, 17 December 1875, MS 11260, Box 1664/1, Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.



Andrew Robertson, artist  
Melbourne from the Flagstaff Hill, 1853 (detail)  
Watercolour on buff paper  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria H273  
St John's School may be seen in the centre foreground

## St John's La Trobe Street: a vanished church

By Roger Meyer OAM

Roger Meyer is the Hon. Secretary of the Anglican Historical Society. Roger worked in air traffic control engineering for forty years. He was involved in establishing the Airways Museum and the Civil Aviation Historical Society, based at Essendon Airport. He has long been interested in the music and history of the Anglican Church and is at present writing the history of the Canterbury Fellowship, originally called the Fellowship of St John.

This is an abridged and edited version of a talk entitled 'The two St John's Churches in La Trobe Street', delivered to the Anglican Historical Society by Roger Meyer on 21 September 2022 at Holy Trinity, Hotham Street, East Melbourne. We are indebted to Roger for his decision to bring to light the existence of a fourth city church that was the subject of two lectures given at the Church of England (now Anglican) Historical Society by its founder, the Reverend Sydney Smith MA BD, in May 1965 and November 1968.<sup>1</sup> This article concentrates on the nineteenth century period, but with reference to the period up to the demolition of the second St John's in 1957.

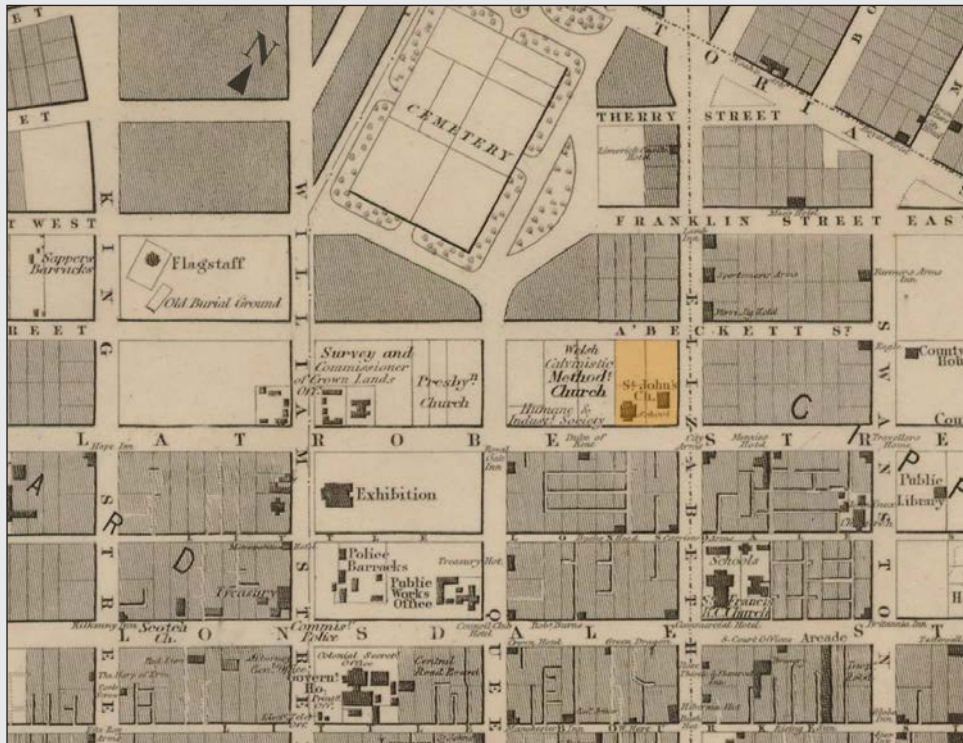
In 1850, before the discovery of gold in Victoria, there were in Melbourne only two churches – St James' Cathedral in William Street and St Peter's in Gisborne Street, East Melbourne – serving that half of the population which described itself in the census of 1851 as Church of England. The situation was not remedied until the building of two more churches, St Paul's (Swanston and Flinders Streets) in 1852 and St John's (La Trobe and Elizabeth Streets) in 1854. The need for increased church accommodation was highlighted in 1849 by Bishop Perry:

On a fine Sunday... both our churches were quite full, and not only were many, as we knew, prevented from attending because they could not

obtain sittings; but many actually came to the doors and were compelled to go away again for want of room. A labouring man told one of our visitors that he had been several times to St Peter's, but was unable to get in.<sup>2</sup>

Another writer was particularly concerned about the large mass of the population dwelling between Russell Street on the east and Queen Street on the west. The years 1851 to 1853 were interrupted by the gold rush and in January 1853 Dean Hussey Burgh Macartney (1799–1894) wrote:

It has long been felt that Melbourne requires a fourth church... At the junction of La Trobe Street and



**James Kearney, draughtsman  
Melbourne, 1855 (detail)**

From *Melbourne and its Suburbs*, Victoria Surveyor-General,  
Map Collection, State Library Victoria  
St John's Church and School are highlighted

Elizabeth Street a site has been granted on which a school house has been built; and here, in a populous and rising neighbourhood, it is proposed to place the new Church, to be called St John's.<sup>3</sup>

The explanation of 'the fourth church' is that St Paul's Church had opened for service on 5 December 1852. The new St Paul's (in Swanston Street) was built of bluestone in the Early Gothic style; St John's on the other hand was a larger, imposing-looking sandstone church built in the Norman style. Both were initially plagued by want of workmen during the gold rush but eventually recovered. By February 1853 subscriptions towards a new church had amounted to £1,394 and plans were made for the erection of a church by the end of July 1854.

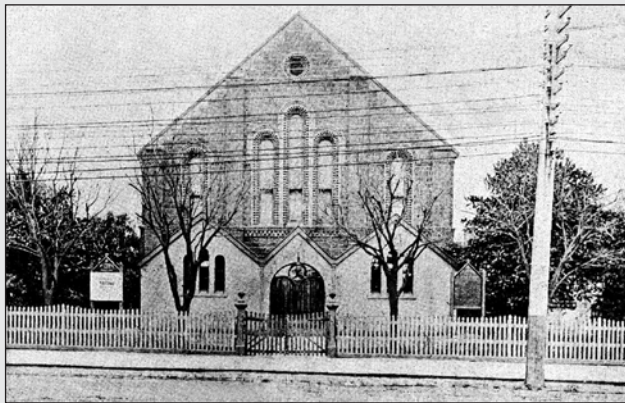
In 1849, only three years after Charles Joseph La Trobe had laid the foundation stone of St Peter's East Melbourne, Bishop Perry had drawn attention 'to the great want of school buildings for the large and populous district lying north of Bourke Street and west of Elizabeth Street'.<sup>4</sup> He was hopeful of obtaining the liberal grant of £600 from the Christian Knowledge Society

to establish a school which is greatly needed, in the north-west portion of the city, where there is a crowded population of from about 4,000 to 5,000 persons, or upwards, without any provision whatever for the instruction of the children of Protestants. In consequence, a large number attend the Roman Catholic School and many more are growing up in total ignorance.<sup>5</sup>

In April 1850 Bishop Perry obtained from the Government a grant of £300 on a large two-acre (0.8 hectare) site and in consequence a Sunday or Sabbath School and a Day School were opened in September 1850 near the corner of La Trobe and Elizabeth Streets. The Sabbath School was under the superintendence of the Reverend Augustus Strong who was then at St James' Cathedral with the Reverend S.L. Chase. This, then, was the beginning of St John's Church, but not as a separate parish; it remained a part of St James' Parish and followed the usual pattern of development from school room used for Divine Service to church building.

The official boundary of the original St John's Parish began at the Melbourne General

F A Campbell, photographer  
St John's Melbourne, 1904  
From *Jubilee of St John's Church*, p. [2]



Cemetery, continued along Sydney Road, across to William Street to Little Lonsdale Street, a little way then until crossing into Lonsdale Street, along Lonsdale Street to Queen Street, crossing over to Little Bourke Street, then east to Stephen Street (now Exhibition Street) then along Stephen Street, crossing Victoria Parade into Drummond Street and back to the Cemetery, then along to the starting point in Sydney Road.

The parish included the area known notoriously, especially later in the nineteenth century, as 'Little Lon'. It was a very poor area of the parish delineated by Little Lonsdale Street, intersected by Spring Street on its east and by Exhibition Street on the west, and bordered by La Trobe Street to the south. It was a residential precinct which, during La Trobe's time in Melbourne, was 'a straggling hamlet of two-roomed weatherboard cottages. As the century progressed it grew into a cheek-by-jowl place of working-class residence'.<sup>6</sup> Homeless children, bereft families, prostitution and opium dens were a feature of this part of Melbourne.<sup>7</sup>

Problems emerged in the early stage of construction of the new St John's church, as the site previously formed a deep creek after rain and generally made its way downhill to the Yarra. Indeed, the Melbourne *Argus* (founded in 1846) described the area in 1854 as 'a complete bog'. This added to the cost of digging the foundations. Money was found however, such was the enthusiasm of Anglicans, presumably the more affluent, who lived in Melbourne, and the foundation stone was duly laid on 30 January 1854 by Dean Macartney, with the band of the 40th Regiment and a large body of clergy in attendance.<sup>8</sup> The architect George R. Cox had just designed another St John's church in the new and wealthy parish of Heidelberg (then called Warringal) which still stands.<sup>9</sup> This first portion of the new St John's in La Trobe Street was opened for Divine Service in June

1854.<sup>10</sup> While from the exterior it presented as a beautiful building, worshippers had to keep the 'eyes right' position when it was opened because the chancel was unfinished, and the left side of the church was boarded up. Three years later, in 1857, new interior fittings and a handsome ceiling were added.<sup>11</sup> Together, Cox and the builder John Snowball planned the new city church to be a church of great magnificence, the first part alone to cost £5,000.

In addition to the progress in providing for worshippers, it is worth noting the remarkable expansion of the parish schools in the 1850s; by 1857 they catered for 350 children. In 1855 land was secured and a branch school established in South Carlton in Queensbury Street between Lygon and Drummond Streets. This school was called St Matthew's School and some of the old buildings still remain. The whole property, known as St Matthew's Church Lands, is still owned by the church, and a considerable income from the diocese is derived therefrom. Thus, the foundation of these schools and property acquisition promoted not only the educational needs of the time but also diocesan finances in the future.

Meanwhile, church building continued on a grand scale. The chancel was completed, and the side wall erected, with another opening of the church by Bishop Perry on 26 October 1856. The style of architecture was described as Norman (also known in Australia as Victorian Romanesque). Norman Romanesque work was the earliest surviving masonry architecture in Britain and was considered appropriate architecture in a new British colony. It was also reasoned that the bulky masonry and rugged detailing of Norman work would be particularly suited to situations where skilled masons were in short supply, as they were during the gold rush.<sup>12</sup> The building measured 93 feet (28.3 metres) from the south entrance in La Trobe Street to the chancel; the width of the nave



**F A Campbell, photographer**  
**Interior view of St John's**  
**Melbourne, 1904**  
 From *Jubilee of St John's Church*, p. [27]

was 50 feet six inches (15.4 metres) and the height of the walls 31 feet (9.5 metres). The church aimed to accommodate 800 persons. Future improvements included the installation of a Fincham organ which was reported in the *Melbourne Age* on 17 July 1855:

Through the liberality of his Worship the Mayor, and a few members of the congregation worshipping in St John's Church, corner of Elizabeth and Latrobe Streets, an elegant and sweet-toned organ has been erected in the building. The case is of Spanish mahogany, with gilt pipes in front. The instrument has a very handsome appearance, and being raised about three feet from the floor upon a platform, is quite an ornament to the place.

There is room near the organ for the accommodation of the principal or leading voices forming the choir, who meet as we are informed every Tuesday and Saturday evenings, for the practice of sacred music...<sup>13</sup>

In the years 1856 to 1859 the congregation gradually diminished, while the debt of the church gradually increased until it reached £4,136. This was unsurprising considering that many worshippers would probably have gone to the gold diggings. Under the circumstances, the Trustees of St John's were determined to lease the vacant land adjoining the church facing Elizabeth Street, which they did for fourteen years. Perhaps in a moment of ecclesiastical rebellion, they did so in defiance of the authority of the Bishop, although under the *State Aid to Religion Abolition Act 1871*, churches were allowed to sell or lease surplus church property. The Elizabeth Street frontage of the St John's site was given over to shops, and ground rent only

was payable in the first instance. The area nearest to St John's and to the north was still chiefly residential and although the neighbourhood was largely working class, the parish and its schools were flourishing with large congregations and successful social gatherings, many coming from outside the parish.

In 1866, figuratively speaking, St John's gave birth to a daughter, afterwards known as St Jude's, Carlton. The matter was mooted in 1864 and the need for a new church arose from the large increase in the population in Carlton which was then expanding along Lygon Street and to the east and west of it to an extent which could not well be included in St John's Parish. The site, on the corner of Keppel and Lygon Streets, was given by the government and subscriptions invited for a new church.

Any clergyman appointed to the St John's Parish regarded it as high promotion. The first incumbent of the new St John's was James Darling, 1854-1861. He was followed by John Barlow, 1861-1876; Septimus Lloyd Chase, 1877-1893; and George Torrance, 1894-1899. The Choir at St John's had a fine reputation and frequent references were made to the musicians at the church: men like Mr S. Greenwood the organist. Extant pictures of the choir show sixty men and boys who formed the usual membership.

St John's Vicarage was a commodious brick residence built in 1864, ten years after the church was completed, for £850. It was built on the land reserved for church purposes, adjoining St Matthew's School, on the corner of Drummond and Queensbury Streets. Though it was a long way from St John's Church, it should be remembered that at that time it was in the centre of the Parish (St Jude's Parish, Carlton, not having yet been created). This vicarage was in later times leased for many years by diocesan



**Irwin & Stevenson, architect**  
**St John's Church of England La Trobe Street Melbourne,**  
**new church and school, 1922**

Architectural drawing: pencil, ink, with watercolour  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, LTAD143/19

authorities as a residential hostel for girls. It was stated that St John's Church was not dependent upon state aid but was financing itself by voluntary contributions. The parish also derived good rents from properties in Elizabeth Street, which proceeds they applied to the liquidation of their debts, as well as to their mission services. During 1883 the interior of the church underwent a process of extensive repair and renovation which improved its general appearance. A new stained glass memorial window was also installed,<sup>14</sup> and the church re-opened in 1884 after the alterations had been completed.

St John's was described by contemporaries as 'perhaps the most successful benefice in the Colony of Victoria'.<sup>15</sup> The years 1854 to 1899 were described by the Reverend Sydney Smith as the 'good years' for St John's as a parochial church and when the short Jubilee History of St John's Church was written in 1904, due recognition was made of the church's achievements in its first fifty years.<sup>16</sup>

In Melbourne, the effects of the 1880s land boom led to the growth of new suburbs beyond the centre of the city. The growth of the railways and the tram networks provided access to the new suburbs of Essendon, Hawthorn, Kew and Camberwell.<sup>17</sup> The upwardly mobile children of those who had once formed the congregation of St John's were attracted to these new suburbs which eventually came to be seen as the 'Bible belt' with their large number of new (Protestant) churches and church schools. In such new suburbs the emerging middle-classes could bring up their families in settings that matched their aspirations; they sent their children to the newly-built church schools.<sup>18</sup>

### *The demise of St Paul's and St John's*

The two urgently-needed churches built in the early 1850s to satisfy the demand for a place of worship for those adhering to the faith of the Church of England were both demolished: St Paul's in 1880 and St John's in the 1920s. St Paul's was replaced by a magnificent cathedral, whereas St John's fate was to be very different as it was replaced by a smaller church in 1924.

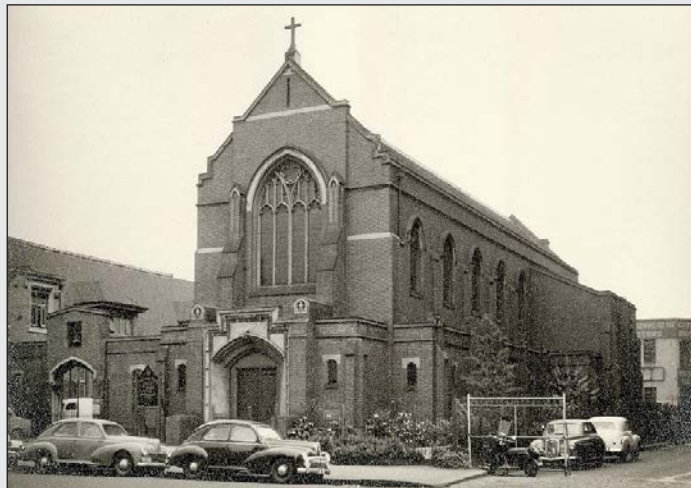
Some of the land owned by the Church of England in Elizabeth Street was sold by the diocesan authorities to support their ongoing mission services for the underprivileged. Reverend Sydney Smith writes that after 1914 'the controlling Committee of the Mission... emerged as commercial developers of St John's lands rather than in the role of Mission to the poor'. In 1921 the incumbent, Reverend Cyril Barclay's appointment was terminated; disharmony and division were present within this parish. In that year the old St John's church was demolished.

Prior to the construction of a new church, a parish hall was opened by Archbishop Lees and the foundation stone of the new church was laid by him on 14 March 1923. The new, smaller and more attractive church was built at 300 La Trobe Street and was consecrated twelve months later, on 24 March 1924. The Archbishop implored the congregation to 'forget the past divisions'. It is unclear that this was the case. During the Second World War St John's became popular as a venue for marriages before embarkation for overseas service.

In August 1956, the *Argus* and Australasian Ltd, publisher of the *Argus*, which



Unknown photographer  
St John's Melbourne,  
c.1956  
Collection: Roger Meyer



had previously secured and built on the corner of the La Trobe/Elizabeth Street frontage, acquired the whole La Trobe Street property of St John's, including the lane separating the *Argus* building from the church property. The demolition of St John's church was a condition of the contract of sale. The intention of the company was to build on the property.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the *Argus* ceased publication in January 1957, merging into the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. The second St John's Church was demolished in 1957.

A poignant postscript must be added to the story of St John's Church. The old ship's bell once used in St John's was given to St Silas', North Balwyn (part of the 'Bible Belt') as a memorial to the Reverend J.L. Watt. It was dedicated along

with the bell-tower on 1 December 1957. Most of the furnishings of the second St John's church were given to the new church of St Mary's, South Camberwell (also part of the 'Bible Belt'), from whence the St John's font was later moved to Trinity College Chapel. Many of the church's fittings and liturgical vestments, Communion vessels and sheet music also found their way to Trinity College Chapel,<sup>20</sup> where some remain in use today.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 Sydney Smith, 'A Vanished Church: the history of St John's, La Trobe Street Melbourne', lectures to the Church of England Historical Society, 1965 and 1968, may be accessed at the Melbourne Diocesan Archives, North Fitzroy, archives@melbourneanglican.org.au. (Note: Sydney Herbert Smith was the incumbent at St Jude's, Carlton, 1945-1951, and the Mollison Librarian at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, 1952-1971.)
- 2 'A Letter from the Lord Bishop in Melbourne, to the Honorary Secretary of the Special Committee for that Diocese, dated November 1849', for forwarding to London, *Church of the Colonies*, (Vol.5), No.24, June 1850, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, pp.10-11 (accessible <http://anglicanhistory.org/aus/spg24.html>).
- 3 *The Melbourne Church of England Messenger*, Vol.4, 1853, pp.41-43.
- 4 *Jubilee of St John's Church, Melbourne: short historical sketch of the Church and parish, 1854-1904*, Melbourne: [The Church], 1904, p.4.
- 5 'A Letter from the Lord Bishop in Melbourne', November 1849, pp.6-7.
- 6 Alan Mayne and Susan Lawrence, 'An Ethnography of Place: imagining "little Lon"', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol 22, 1998, p.99.
- 7 Alan Mayne, 'Little Lon', *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, edited by Andrew Brown-May and Shirlee Swan, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.426.
- 8 *The Melbourne Church of England Messenger*, new series, vol.1, 1854, p.91.
- 9 Co-incidentally Dr Hussey Burgh Macartney was the first minister at Heidelberg in 1848.
- 10 *Argus*, 29 June 1854, p.5, and 3 July 1854, p.5.
- 11 Sydney Smith (1965).
- 12 Anne Neale, 'Romanesque Revival in Australia' in Philip Goad and Elizabeth Willis (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.601.
- 13 *Age*, 17 July 1855, p.5. (The Mayor was Trustee John Thomas Smith, who was elected mayor seven times between 1851 and 1864 and served as a Member of Parliament from 1851 to 1879, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed online, 22 December 2022.)

- 14 *Argus*, 18 October 1883, p.5. The window was in memory of John Thomas Smith.
- 15 Sydney Smith (1965).
- 16 *Jubilee of St John's Church, Melbourne*, pp.1-10.
- 17 Jill Eastwood, *Melbourne, the Growth of a Metropolis: commentary and documents*, Melbourne: Nelson, pp.70-71.
- 18 Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978, p.140.  
Geoffrey Blainey's, *A History of Camberwell* (1964) brilliantly captures the essence of the generation of Protestant church-goers.
- 19 Sydney Smith (1968).
- 20 *Ibid.*



**Unknown photographer**

**St John's Church of England, La Trobe Street Melbourne, 1910**

A view of Lost Melbourne. The church was on the north-west corner of La Trobe and Elizabeth Streets, to the right of the photograph. This is a view along the street, showing the school hall and the verger's cottage, with the Welsh Church and St David's Hall (both still standing) to the left  
Royal Historical Society of Victoria, A-163-C

# Portraits of the Reverend Benjamin La Trobe and Christian Ignatius La Trobe

By Helen Armstrong

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

In 1960 Captain Charles La Trobe and Mrs Victoria La Trobe Shea-Simonds, grandchildren of Charles Joseph La Trobe, presented to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria ) three family portraits and other art works. The full-length portrait of La Trobe by Sir Francis Grant RA, 1855, hangs in the Executive Council Chamber at the Old Treasury Building, while his sketches and landscapes are on permanent loan to State Library Victoria. The portraits of his grandfather Reverend Benjamin La Trobe (1728-1786) and father Christian Ignatius La Trobe (1758-1836) – see next page – hang at La Trobe's Cottage.

**B**enjamin La Trobe, born in Dublin, matriculated at Glasgow University in 1743 and then returned to Ireland where he became a convert in the Moravian Church. He went to London in 1848 and then to Germany where he was ordained. He was a scholar and teacher, and rose to be head of the church's fledgling British province by his extraordinary talent as a persuasive preacher, peacemaker and administrator. He administered the Fulneck Moravian Settlement, at Pudsey near Leeds, for eleven years from 1757, and later founded the Fairfield Moravian Settlement, at Droylsden near Manchester, as a centre for evangelistic work of the Moravian Church from 1785. (His grandson Charles Joseph La Trobe was later educated at Fulneck and Fairfield, and taught at Fairfield.) Based in London, Benjamin had connections with people at the centre of the evangelical circle opposing slavery, including Bishop Beilby Porteus and Captain Charles Middleton (later Admiral, Lord Barham of Teston).

John Astley, who was a painter of portraits and still-lives, was born in Shropshire. He was a pupil of Thomas Hudson in London, along with Joshua Reynolds, and in about 1747 went to study in Rome and Florence - one of his teachers being Pompeo Batoni. He established his career during several years in Dublin and afterwards settled in England. He was a highly talented portrait painter whose portrait in 1859 of the wealthy Lady Daniell, widow of Sir William Dukinfield, found so much favour with the lady that she promptly offered herself to him in marriage, but she died soon afterwards. After her death, he came into the Dukinfield estates that were located just a short distance from Fairfield. Interestingly, Astley had a reputation for being dissipated; extravagance, ostentation and his handsome person earned him the appellation 'Beau Astley'.

**Christian Ignatius La Trobe** was educated at Fulneck and in Germany, where he went on to have a seminary teaching position,



**Thomas Barber, 1768–1843, artist**  
**Christian Ignatius La Trobe, c.1815**  
Oil on canvas  
National Trust of Australia (Victoria) LTC 153



**John Astley, 1724–1787, artist**  
**Benjamin La Trobe, c.1770**  
Oil on canvas  
National Trust of Australia (Victoria) LTC 147

returning to London aged twenty-seven to assist his father in the Moravian church. He was ordained in Germany about four years later in 1788, but subsequently found his true role in administration. In 1792 he became secretary of the international church in Britain and was a promoter of its extensive missionary activity. Christian Ignatius was a supporter of William Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement, but was unable to take an active part due to the church's rule of members not meddling in politics. Known for his companionable nature and lively disposition, he was also an accomplished musician and composer, a friend of Haydn, and was significantly influential in disseminating the European classical style of church music in Britain. He dedicated three piano sonatas to Haydn, in addition to composing clarinet concertos, duets and arias, and more than a hundred vocal works. As well as the piano, and organ, he played ten other musical instruments.

Thomas Barber was a portrait painter from Nottingham who studied under and assisted Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830),

Britain's leading portrait painter of the early nineteenth century. He founded a successful practice, and exhibited steadily in London at the Royal Academy from 1810 until 1829. Spending most of his working life in Derby, he offered comfortable families in the Midlands and North of England an elegant portrait style, in convenient surroundings, at a fraction of the cost of London painters such as Lawrence. He painted members of the Coke family of the stately *Holkham Hall* in Norfolk.

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Both paintings are of excellent quality, but are in urgent need of restoration. The original frames in particular need extensive restoration work. The National Trust has launched an appeal for funds to undertake the conservation work, see <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/la-trobe-portraits>.

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#### References

- John Barnes, *La Trobe: Traveller, Writer, Governor*. Canberra: Halstead Press, in association with State Library Victoria and La Trobe University, 2017.
- Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006.
- John Mason, 'Benjamin and Christian Ignatius La Trobe in the Moravian Church', *The La Trobe Journal*, No.71, Autumn 2003, pp.17–27.
- Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, Paris: Grund, 2006.
- Walter G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, Dublin: Maunsell, 1913.

# Forthcoming events

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Bookings are essential for all events.

**2023**

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## MARCH

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**Sunday 19**

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30 – 6.00pm

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

**Guest Speaker:** Catherine Gay, PhD candidate, University of Melbourne, and National Trust volunteer guide

**Topic:** The Cottage Samplers

Catherine will enlighten us on how the samplers we have on display in La Trobe's Cottage, and the beautiful reproduction of Charlotte Pellet's sampler, reflect the importance placed on the development of home-making skills in the education of young ladies during La Trobe's time. You are invited to bring along a family sampler for us all to see

**Admission:** \$15 per person

Sparkling wine and cake will be served

## APRIL

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**Tuesday 18**

**Joint La Trobe Society/RHSV**

**AGL Shaw Lecture**

**Time:** 5.30 – 7.00pm

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

**Speaker:** Dr Ashleigh Green

Ashleigh is a tutor in classics and archaeology at the University of Melbourne and the author of the book *Birds in Roman Life and Myth*. She has worked as a volunteer guide for the National Trust at Old Melbourne Gaol, and more recently as an historical tour guide throughout Melbourne and at Old Geelong Gaol.

As the 2022 La Trobe Society Fellow at State Library Victoria, she researched the untold stories of the state's very first penal

institutions. She is currently working on a book that explores the prisons and prisoners of Port Phillip from 1835 to 1857

**Topic:** Law and Order Under La Trobe: The First Prisons of Port Phillip

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$35 per person

## MAY

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**Tuesday 2 (tbc)**

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

**Time:** 5.30 – 7.30 pm

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

**Speaker:** John Botham, Chairman of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage and La Trobe Society Webmaster

**Topic:** The Golden Age: La Trobe's Journey Home

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$25 per person

## JULY

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**Friday 21 (tbc)**

**Melbourne Rare Book Week La Trobe  
Society Lecture**

**Time:** 6.30 – 8.30 pm

## AUGUST

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**Wednesday 2 August (tbc)**

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

**Time:** 6.30 pm

## Bookings

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For catering purposes, bookings are essential

Email: [secretary@latrobsociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@latrobsociety.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](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/events)

## Back Issues

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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](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html)  
They may be searched by keyword.

## Contributions welcome

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

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

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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



