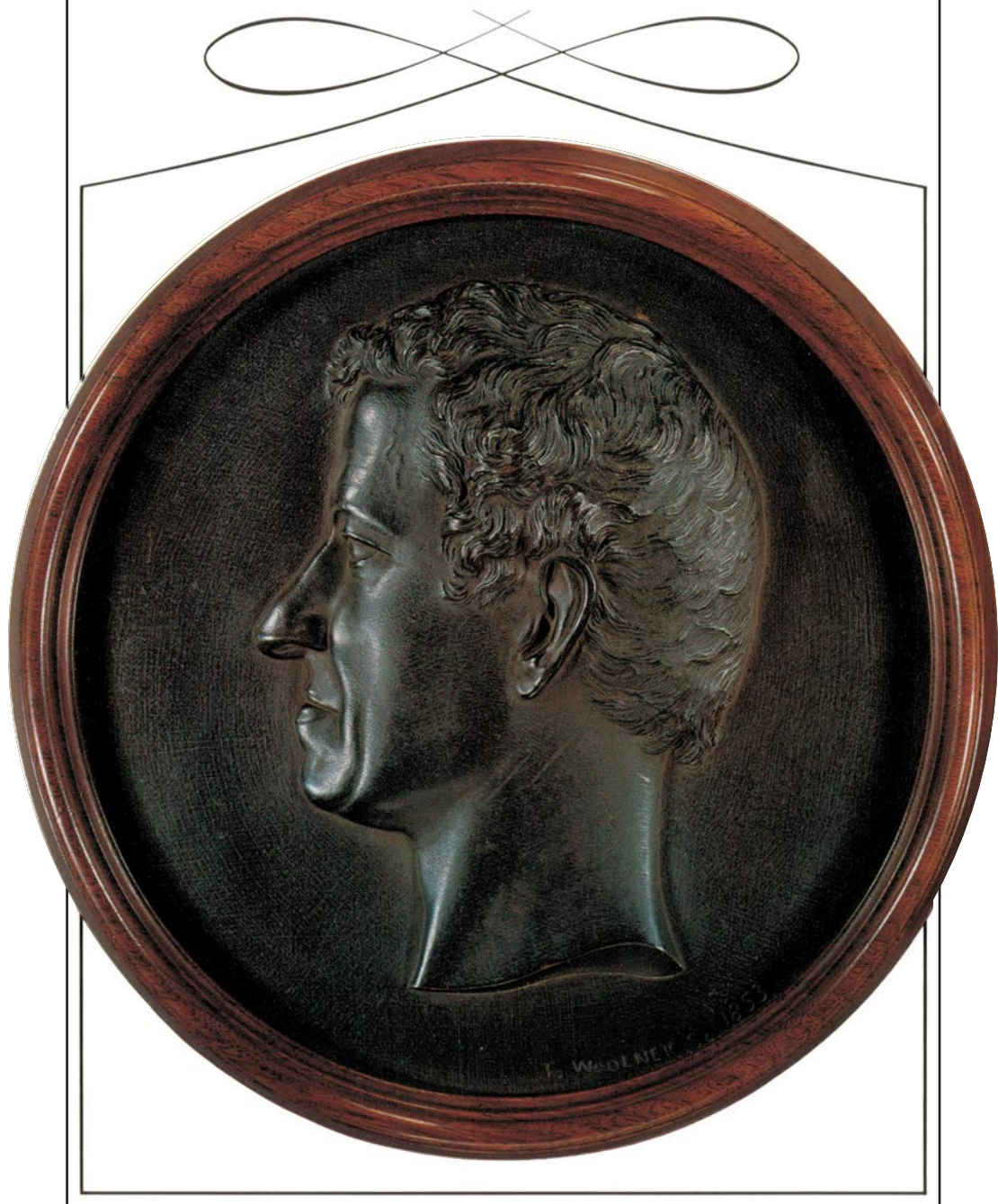


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol 24, No 1, March 2025**

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## ***La Trobeana***

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

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



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### **FRONT COVER**

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

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

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

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

Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H5489

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## A Word from the President

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It is with regret that we commence this edition of *La Trobeana* with a tribute to our greatly loved and admired co-Founder and Treasurer John Drury OAM who began his work for the La Trobe Society in early 2001. Originally John was a reluctant Treasurer, believing that his engineering background did not equip him suitably for managing the fledgling society's finances. But time proved him wrong, and he continued successfully in the role until his death on 9 November 2024. Vale John!

It is with deep sadness that I also acknowledge the recent deaths of our valued member David Goldsworthy and former member Anne Marsden. Following a career in agriculture, David was an honorary board member for Onemda, an organization providing services and support to people with disabilities, for eleven years, including five as chairman. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his wife Shirley and their family.

Anne was a volunteer researcher at the Athenaeum Library archives, and held an Honorary Creative Fellowship at State Library Victoria in 2012-13, researching the founders in 1839 of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution. She authored five *La Trobeana* articles, on women in early Melbourne and on Wesleyan Methodist family life during the La Trobe era. Our condolences are extended to the Marsden family.

The article leading this edition is based on the History Month Lecture for 2024 which Lorraine Finlay delivered about the ship's surgeon and colonial doctor John Auchterlonie Creelman. After departing Glasgow in 1847, Dr Creelman arrived in Melbourne in January 1848 and was soon practising as a doctor in Geelong. His work brought him back to Melbourne and to regional towns, culminating in his appointment by the colonial government as Coroner in western Victoria.

Walter Heale's extensive research into the pioneer period of medical history in Victoria has in his article embraced the all-too-brief life and work of Edmund Charles Hobson. Based on his study of the Hobson Papers at State Library Victoria, Dr Heale has painted a picture of this extraordinary pioneer physician and highly-respected naturalist. He was one of the founders of the Tasmanian Society for the Advancement of Natural Science, along with Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin, and Ronald Campbell Gunn. In October 1844, La Trobe appointed him to the inaugural Medical Board in Melbourne. Hobson also lobbied the government for what was to become the first Melbourne Hospital, but he did not live to see it opened, since he died unexpectedly in March 1848. A fascinating tale.

Member Rob Christie, having recently returned from Ireland, has contributed quite a different aspect of history in his article: an informative and fascinating analysis of the Gracehill Moravian Settlement in Northern Ireland. In July 2024, the Moravian settlements of Herrnhut in Germany, Bethlehem in Pennsylvania, United States, and Gracehill in Northern Ireland were accorded the honour of being added to the list of World Heritage Sites. This piece informs further our understanding of Moravianism and something of its significance in the world today.

La Trobe's Birthday celebration in the Cottage garden is on Sunday 23 March when member Tim Gatehouse will give us insights on some of the Cottage furniture: 'From India to Jolimont'.

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



## *John Stuart Drury OAM*

**27 November 1932 – 9 November 2024**

### **A Tribute**

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**S**adly, the next item in this section of the journal is a farewell and tribute to John Drury OAM, the La Trobe Society's Manager and Treasurer and much more. John died on 9 November 2024 after a long illness.

John over his long life was a man of many parts. He was a devoted father, husband and skilled engineer. He was of a generation who could turn their hand to anything. He repaired cars, restored houses, designed and built furniture, gardened and much more. He was a traveller from his very early days. He combined all these skills with a love of history and music, and especially French culture. John loved France and visited many times. Indeed, he was a founding member of the Institute for the Study of French Australian Relations in 1985. His biography *Two French Sisters in Australia 1881-1922: Berthe Mouchette and Marie Lion, artists and teachers* was published in 2021.

John, together with his beloved wife Dr Dianne Reilly AM and Richard Heathcote, initiated and established the CJ La Trobe Society. Indeed, I remember those early discussions about what a society could achieve. I think John, Dianne and others should be very proud of what has been accomplished due in large part to John's hard work. Our journal *La Trobeana* alone is a testament to all the original research done on the early decades of Victoria, during Charles La Trobe's time as Superintendent and Lieutenant-Governor. The La Trobe family's prefabricated house has been repaired, restored and reopened, a commemorative La Trobe statue placed on State Library Victoria's forecourt, tours undertaken – the list goes on. John was always there guiding, encouraging, supporting and directing the Society.

Over the past twenty-three years John has managed and overseen the successful and

smooth-running of the C J La Trobe Society and all its initiatives and activities. A highlight was when the Society raised funds to erect the bronze statue of La Trobe on the forecourt of State Library Victoria. The sculpture was commissioned with Peter Corlett OAM and unveiled by our patron the then Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC, in November 2006 during the National Trust's Year of La Trobe. Subsequently, John wrote *The Making of a Statue: Charles Joseph La Trobe* (2010). Delightful La Trobe Society anniversary functions were held at Government House and at State Library Victoria under John's guidance.

Due to John's careful funds management, the Society currently facilitates a biennial Fellowship under the umbrella of the State Library's Creative Fellowships Program. Research fellows have provided original in-depth research on the period 1839 to 1854 when La Trobe and his family lived in Melbourne.

The Society also set up the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, to support the National Trust Victoria in maintaining and promoting La Trobe's Cottage. Back in 2009, following notification from the National Trust that, as a result of falling numbers after the move of the Cottage from alongside the Botanic Gardens to its current site, the Cottage would be closed,

John campaigned for the formation of a Friends of La Trobe's Cottage group: a group that would, through activities and volunteers, enable the Cottage to re-open and survive. Helen Botham was the founding Chair for 2009 and 2010. John then took the Chair and led the group till 2017. He was proactive in seeking meetings with stake-holders: the National Trust, the City of Melbourne and the Royal Botanic Gardens, in his efforts to provide improvements to the Cottage and to support the volunteers. Most recently he encouraged La Trobe Society members to donate to the appeal for the restoration of the La Trobe family portraits, with the target being reached in a time-frame that surprised the National Trust.

Since leaving the Friends committee John continued, through the La Trobe Society, to support the Cottage. To his great surprise, in 2015, he was honoured with the Medal of the Order of Australia 'For service to community history through a range of roles'.

John has been a linchpin for all the Society's many and various activities over the decades. He will be sadly missed.

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



William Clark, 1803–1883, artist  
 The barque 'Kilblain' becalmed off the Cloch Lighthouse, c.1840  
 Oil on canvas  
 McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenoch, Inverclyde  
 Both Scottish-built barques, the *Kilblain* and *Marchioness of Douglas*,  
 were a similar age and tonnage.

# John Auchterlonie Creelman: a ship's surgeon and colonial doctor, 1848 to 1889

By Lorraine Finlay

Lorraine Finlay, a member of the La Trobe Society, is the former Volunteer Property Manager of La Trobe's Cottage and a graduate of Monash University in Visual Arts and History, with an MA in Australian Studies. The history of early Port Phillip and the era of Charles La Trobe's governorship and his legacy continue to be of special interest.

*This is an edited version of the La Trobe Society History Month lecture presented at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria on 15 October 2024.*

John Auchterlonie Creelman was appointed surgeon of the barque *Marchioness of Douglas* that left Glasgow on 19 September 1847 for a passage to Port Phillip and Sydney. It arrived at Port Phillip four months later on 27 January 1848. A list of passengers indicates nine were in cabin class, twenty-eight in the intermediate section of whom twelve were bounty immigrants, and twenty-nine in steerage.<sup>1</sup> The barque also carried merchandise.

Dr Creelman as a ship's surgeon was bound by the regulations of Britain's *Passenger Vessels Act* of 1803 and its amendments, with additional responsibilities regarding the care of emigrants on their journey to Australia. The legislation was designed to stop exploitation and to regulate the conditions of hygiene, food and accommodation on board British-owned convict and emigrant ships. By the late 1830s, the Colonial Land Emigration Commission (CLEC) was established to encourage emigrants

under the Bounty Scheme to settle in Australian colonies, using revenue from land sales to subsidise the cost. A directive of the Colonial Land Emigration scheme was that emigration officers at the ports of embarkation and arrival were to be appointed to enforce the *Passenger Vessels Act*. It was also mandatory for a surgeon superintendent to be appointed to emigrant vessels. For example, under an 1847 amendment to the *Passenger Vessel Act*,<sup>2</sup> the ship's surgeon was responsible for passengers on merchant ships carrying over thirty people to be provided with good quality provisions, a proper supply of light and ventilation, with fresh water and medical stores to be replenished during the voyage.

A ship's surgeon was not only to provide medical attention but also enforce disciplinary measures, a role entailing considerable authority that could exceed even the captain in relation to the conditions on board. The instructions for surgeons superintendent were exacting and exhaustive.<sup>3</sup> Prior to embarkation, they had to ensure an adequate supply of medical stores, including vaccines, equipment and suitable hospital furniture. The surgical equipment included scalpels, midwifery forceps, trachea tubes, catheters, amputating knife and saw, tourniquets and cupping apparatus. Drugs or basic remedies were provided by the Apothecaries Company of London, such as opium for the relief of pain, castor oil, cod-liver oil and chloride of zinc that was used in a syringe as a disinfecting agent.<sup>4</sup> Surgeons also had to check that there was adequate space for emigrants' luggage and bedding, that there was sufficient meat and vegetables, a suitable 'mess' (dining arrangements) and proper distribution of messing utensils.

The surgeon was to inspect all prospective emigrants at immigrant depots to show evidence of vaccination against smallpox and to deny embarkation for any person, especially families with children who appeared to be suffering from any of the childhood diseases. Inoculations against smallpox had been widespread in Britain since the 1720s; however a *Vaccination Act* passed in Britain in 1853 made it obligatory for infants to be inoculated against it.<sup>5</sup> Inoculation involved the scab or lymph from an infected person being applied to broken skin to develop a mild form of the disease. Vaccination involved lymph matter usually extracted from calves infected with cowpox being rubbed into an incision, which gradually became the preferred method as it controlled the spread of smallpox. Jonathan Burdon in a lecture in 2015 enumerated an extensive list of contagious diseases carried to Australia aboard emigrant ships during the colonial era.<sup>6</sup> It was compulsory for ships' surgeons to keep two journals on the voyage:

a medical journal with all treatments rendered, plus records of births and deaths, and another recording observations on the ship's progress with a list of the deficiencies or otherwise on board. These journals were to be submitted upon arrival to the colonial secretary via the local agent for emigration and to be returned to London. If not satisfactory, the surgeon superintendent would not receive his gratuity.

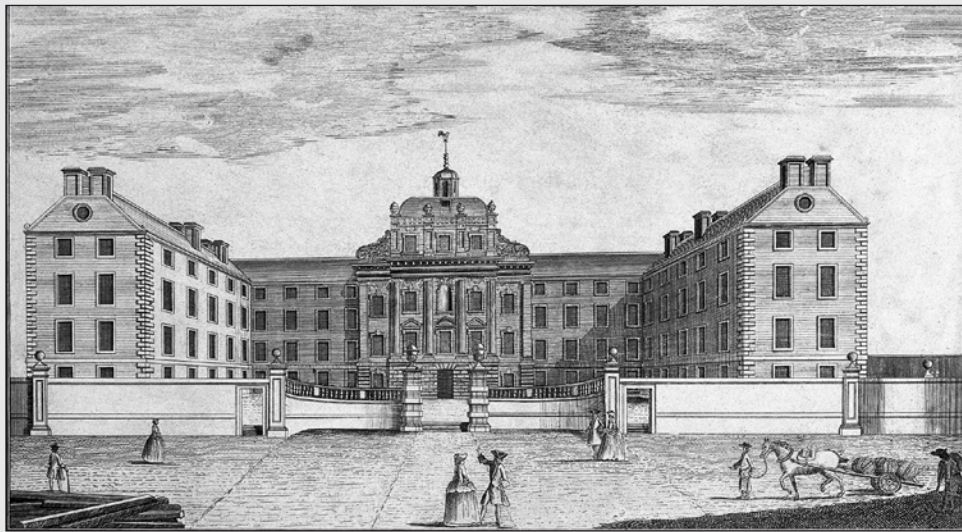
Once at sea the surgeon superintendent had to administer rules regarding cleanliness of clothing, sleeping places and decks and to maintain adequate ventilation in the steerage quarters. As well, he was to provide a school for children and divine service on Sundays, ensure there was no gambling, and most importantly, make sure that no emigrant was molested during festivities when crossing the Equator. He was responsible for having all emigrants out of bed at 7am with bedding rolled up and out on deck; breakfast ready at 8am, dinner at 1pm and tea at 6pm. The sick were to be visited twice a day and medical assistance provided to the crew.

Not all surgeons employed by the CLEC proved suitable. Don Charlwood referred to some of the twenty-two of seventy-eight surgeons sent out to Australia in 1849 who were found lacking:

Surgeon died on the voyage from a disease brought on by intemperance; surgeon efficient, but guilty of gross misconduct after landing with respect to a female emigrant; surgeon extremely inefficient, apparently from intemperance, fined £48; surgeon inflicted improper punishments on some single females; great neglect of his duties on the part of the surgeon, owing apparently to his becoming insane.<sup>7</sup>

On 5 March 1849 Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe wrote a damning report on a number of surgeons on emigrant ships that had arrived during 1848 and early 1849:

253 Immigrants by the 'Thetis' were placed in the charge of a man (Surgeon Superintendent Dr Bourne) of evidently doubtful character, & as it proves of confirmed debased & intemperate habits, totally incapacitating him from the proper discharge of the duties of his station. This is the 3rd instance of unfortunate selection, to use the mildest term, which has been made of a Surgeon Superintendent for Emigrant Vessels proceeding to this Port since the resumption of Emigration.



John Elphinstone, 1706–1753, artist  
A perspective view of the front of the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, 1740  
Engraving  
Wellcome Collection, London, 17277i

Furthermore,

the subsequent conduct & demeanour of the Surgeon Superintendent of both the 'Nelson' & the 'Labuan' on shore have been notoriously so low & debauched, as not only to render it clear that such responsibility should never have been placed in such hands, but to induce a suspicion that in these as in many other instances doubtless under present arrangements, the whole truth as to the proceedings on board ship & during the voyage has not come to the knowledge of the local authorities. Recommending that Her Majesty's Government must take into serious consideration the alternative so long urged upon its attention, viz. the employment of Naval Surgeons of undoubted character & efficiency in this branch of the public service.<sup>8</sup>

The *Thetis* arrived on 15 February 1849 with the surgeon Dr Bourne, the *Nelson* on 11 November 1848 with the surgeon Dr John Denniston, the *Labuan* on 11 February 1849 with the surgeon Dr J Gordon. La Trobe did not elaborate on what he considered their low and debauched behaviour. A later newspaper article referred to his assessment of the *Lady Peel*'s surgeon superintendent, Dr William Dease (arrived 16 February 1848) as being totally unfit for duties from incapacity and want of moral character.<sup>9</sup>

No such criticism applied to Dr Creelman. An experienced doctor/surgeon prior to the

voyage, he brought excellent references from his university supervisors and a medical colleague. The immigration agent at Melbourne reported the satisfactory condition of the bounty immigrants under his charge on the *Marchioness of Douglas* and there is no record of inappropriate behaviour on the voyage. From early 1848 onwards he appears to have been a conscientious doctor, notwithstanding an unsettled existence and financial difficulties.

\*\*\*

John Creelman was born in Edinburgh in 1820, the only child of George Creelman, a coal merchant at the time of his birth, and Euphemia Auchterlonie.<sup>10</sup> He studied in the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh, with lectures and practical classes being held in the Royal Infirmary building.<sup>11</sup> Students purchased a 'ticket' to attend lectures. On the back of one certificate of attendance, he wrote '4 pounds 4 shillings'.<sup>12</sup> He studied eight subjects over three years. His teachers were Charles Bell, Professor of Surgery, James Symes, Professor of Clinical Surgery, William Handyside, Professor of Anatomy (also Professor of Philosophy), Kenneth Kemp, lecturer on Practical Chemistry and Pharmacy, Sir William Ferguson, surgeon at the Royal Infirmary, Robert Graham, Professor of Medicine and Botany, and James Young Simpson, Professor of Midwifery and Obstetrics.<sup>13</sup>

Medical students were also required to undertake a year's hospital apprenticeship. Between April 1838 and 14 April 1839 John



Henry Gibson Duguid, 1805–1860, artist  
Queensberry House, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1855  
Watercolour on paper  
National Galleries of Scotland, D 2489

Creelman was an assistant to the surgeon in charge of the House of Refuge, a hospital for paupers in Queensberry House, Canongate, affiliated with Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary. The surgeon in charge wrote a referral noting John Creelman's practical knowledge in the treatment of disease and his kindness to inmates of all ages entrusted to his care.<sup>14</sup> He qualified in 1840 for his Licentiate'ship (LRCS) from the Royal College of Edinburgh, a Licentiate being an officially recognised Diploma of Medicine, an alternative to a university medical degree. Once licensed he could practise surgery.<sup>15</sup>

As a child and student John Creelman would have lived with his mother Euphemia who is listed in the Edinburgh directories from the early 1820s as running a boarding house and then as a housekeeper from 1828 to 1836 at the Royal Exchange, which leased offices for merchant traders, and at the similarly purposed City Chambers in 1841. There is no listing for his father in Edinburgh after 1824. Following his graduation, the 1841 Scottish census recorded Dr Creelman aged just twenty-one at Falkirk (west of Edinburgh) working with Dr George Hamilton. Hamilton gave a glowing reference to Dr Creelman describing him as a reliable assistant who had up to three hundred families in his care, carried out some serious operations and showed himself to be well acquainted with the principles of his profession.<sup>16</sup> By 1846 Dr Creelman was at Kirkcaldy (north-east of Edinburgh) and placed advertisements as a doctor/surgeon who could provide inoculations against smallpox.<sup>17</sup> His mother Euphemia died in December 1846 whilst living with him in Kirkcaldy and this may have been the impetus for him to consider migrating.

In early September 1847 he was appointed ship's surgeon on the *Marchioness of Douglas*. It was a private arrangement as he was not appointed by the CLEC, possibly on the basis of a free passage or for some remuneration arranged by the ship's captain David Henderson or its owners Downie and Peake.<sup>18</sup> As the ship was carrying bounty emigrants as well as paying passengers, Dr Creelman would have followed the role of a ship's surgeon as prescribed by the *Passenger Vessels Act* for the provision of the necessary surgical equipment and the typical remedies of that time for treating a range of illnesses. More than likely he would also have had his own personal surgical instruments and a medicine chest stocked with mid-nineteenth century drugs for treating all manner of illness if he were intending to work as a medical practitioner in the Port Phillip District.

Although the majority of passengers on the *Marchioness of Douglas* had paid for their voyage, the twelve bounty immigrants were subject to scrutiny by the CLEC. They had migrated under private contract to Claud Farie, a cabin passenger who had a pastoral run *Merrang* in the Western District on the Hopkins River; he appears to have recruited them to work on his property.<sup>19</sup> Dr John Patterson, Immigration Agent for the Port Phillip District, wrote of their satisfactory treatment on the journey, recording on 28 January 1848:

I hereby certify that the persons of whom I subjoin a schedule and who seem to have been embarked under contract with the Commissioners of Land & Emigration have been safely landed in the colony & do not appear



to have been insufficiently provided for or improperly treated during the voyage, and that no bounty has been paid in respect of any of them... These people came out with Claude Fairrie [sic] Esq.<sup>20</sup>

There were no births or deaths recorded by Dr Creelman for the duration of the voyage. Upon arrival in Melbourne, he presented his credentials to the Port Phillip Medical Board.<sup>21</sup> It had been established in 1845 by Doctors Cussen, Howitt, Wilmot and Hobson in order to establish ethical standards and set a standardised scale of fees.<sup>22</sup> The Board would have authenticated any documents Dr Creelman brought with him, such as his apprenticeship papers, the record of his hospital training, testimonials and academic certificates before he could practise. He was also listed as having submitted the necessary documents to be a medical witness at coronial inquests.<sup>23</sup> Just twelve days after leaving the ship it was reported in *The Argus* that Dr John Creelman was called to appear as a surgeon witness into the inquest of a reported drowning at Merri Creek.<sup>24</sup> However, he did not remain in Melbourne, as a month or so later he joined the practice of Dr Jonathan Clarke in Malop Street, Geelong, on a temporary basis as Clarke was 'indisposed'.<sup>25</sup>

Once settled he gave a series of lectures that were reported in *The Geelong Advertiser*, the first in April 1848 on the subject of Hydropathy. In it, he claimed he had cured the servant of a

farmer in the Barrabool Hills of a rheumatic complaint using the treatment.<sup>26</sup> Hydropathy or water cure was popular in the mid-nineteenth century for treating a wide range of ailments from depression to gastrointestinal disorders. It could involve the patient's immersion in cold water or drinking mineral waters. Its effectiveness today is seen as therapeutic rather than curative. Other widely-used treatments such as bloodletting, purging and application of leeches are now largely discredited as a panacea for a range of conditions. Two further lectures by Dr Creelman followed in April and June organised by the Geelong Mechanics' Institute. The first on the 'physical senses' and the second on the structure and function of the human brain were reported verbatim in *The Geelong Advertiser*.<sup>27</sup>

Dr Creelman left Geelong in late 1848 adopting a new role as itinerant doctor attending to patients residing on properties and small settlements north of Geelong. *The Geelong Advertiser* commented on the 'retirement of Dr Creelman, who, as they clerically term it, has received "a call" from the inhabitants of the Wardiyallock and will proceed there shortly'.<sup>28</sup> He based his practice at Wardy Yallock (today Pitfield) approximately eighty-four kilometres north-west of Geelong. On 3 November 1848 he wrote to Captain Fyans, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Portland District, requesting a small portion of land to build a dwelling house with a small garden and a paddock for two horses near Thomas Chirnside's *Wardy Yallock* run and



Henry Winkles, 1800-1860, artist  
 The township of Buninyong, Victoria (1853) 1855  
 Engraving, coloured  
 Private collection

the *Emu Inn* by the Wardy Yallock River. The letter mentions that the settlers had long desired to have a surgeon amongst them as they were fifty miles from any medical person. Captain Fyans granted his request.<sup>29</sup>

In August 1849 he married Harriet Spencer at the property *Naringal*, Wardy Yallock Creek. She was born in Huntingdonshire in 1814, but it is not known when she arrived in the Port Phillip District.<sup>30</sup> Following their marriage they left Wardy Yallock; perhaps the home he had built did not suit his new wife. They settled in the small village of The Grange (later Hamilton) where their first child Robert was born 21 August 1850. Three months later, on 25 November 1850, Dr Creelman wrote to Charles La Trobe requesting an appointment as a clerk of the bench for the Hopkins/Warrnambool District, which would be in addition to his medical work for the district.<sup>31</sup> There is no record of his being granted the position.

It was in Hamilton that he was called to examine the body of Mary Kennedy who had been brutally murdered on 30 April 1851 by her husband Patrick Kennedy, a shepherd on a local pastoral property at Peshurst. Mary had just given birth to her sixth child and Dr Creelman was called to the property to ascertain the cause of her death, writing a medical account on the state of her body following an horrific attack. His detailed forensic examination was used in the subsequent trial.<sup>32</sup> Kennedy was found guilty and subsequently executed in the Melbourne Gaol

in November 1851, and has the ignominious reputation as being the first person to be hanged in the newly-created Colony of Victoria.

The Creelmans were living in Geelong in October 1851 when the doctor gave medical evidence in another unfortunate case heard in the local Circuit Court concerning the death of an Indigenous man at Bushy Creek, near Geelong in June 1851. The case was that of William Hickling who was charged with the murder of Indigenous man Mr Murray. Hickling claimed that Murray had stolen clothes from his hut and in retaliation he had gone to the camp of the Aboriginal people to retrieve the items. A fight ensued and Hickling had hit Murray with a yam stick resulting in death. Dr Creelman examined the body and deposed that he found a fracture on the back of the head with the brain protruding from the wound which might have been caused by the stick. The jury consulted for a few minutes before acquitting Hickling. The judge did remark that 'notwithstanding the melancholy result, he [Hickling] should bear in mind that any unnecessary violence on the blacks will be visited with the rigour of the law'.<sup>33</sup> In December he applied for a position with the Geelong Infirmary and Benevolent Asylum, as well as for Mrs Creelman to be appointed Matron.<sup>34</sup> They were not successful.

In 1852 the Creelmans returned to Melbourne initially living in Gore Street, Collingwood (later Fitzroy) before the practice moved to the corner of Lonsdale and Spring

Streets. Their daughter Harriet Euphemia was born on 21 June 1852. He advertised in *The Argus* that he would give people who were unable to pay 'advice gratis' between the hours of nine and ten o'clock in the morning.<sup>35</sup> Given the influx of immigrants once the gold rush had taken hold, he was most probably responding to the desperate need of those arriving without sufficient means. He could have been following his experience as a student where treatment was on a charitable basis for paupers at the House of Refuge in Edinburgh. In 1853 he was also appointed Honorary Surgeon for the Benevolent Asylum that had opened in Victoria Street, West Melbourne in 1851. He later resigned from the position when it was suggested he had been negligent over the death of an inmate for whom he had prescribed an opiate that was believed to have hastened the man's demise.<sup>36</sup>

The pattern of constantly changing locations continued for the next thirty-five years. It is not known how his wife and family coped with the peripatetic lifestyle. In 1854 they were living in Campbellfield, north of Melbourne, where their third child, John Auchterlonie, was born on 25 February. In 1855 his medical practice was relocated to Buninyong, an established centre of mining activities. He was registered at Buninyong on Victoria's 1856 Electoral Roll. A report in *The Geelong Advertiser* mentioned that Dr Creelman had opened a hospital that would be a great good for the mining population,<sup>37</sup> although miners were likely to only remain through the winter and then move on. The Green Hills-Durham Lead south of the Buninyong township had opened in March 1856 with 3,000 men mining the area. Dr Creelman's 'hospital' was most likely close to the Lead,<sup>38</sup> but it proved to be only a temporary arrangement. He would have attended injuries sustained in mining accidents as well as a variety of illnesses and childbirth for the local population.

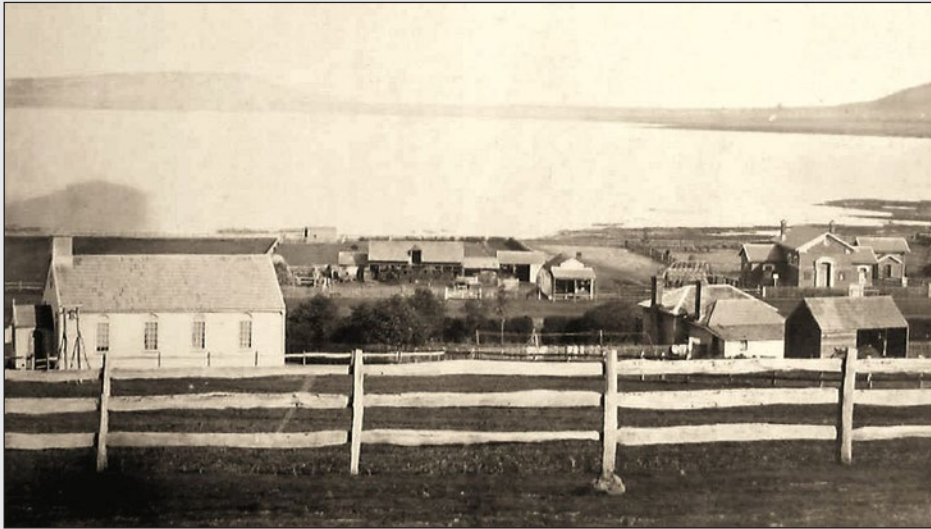
He had been appointed a public smallpox vaccinator at Campbellfield at the beginning of 1855.<sup>39</sup> Victoria's adoption of the 1853 British *Vaccination Act* meant that from 1854 there was compulsory free vaccination for all children born from 1850 onwards, with doctors maintaining a register of all children vaccinated. Under the *Medical Practitioners Act* of 1854, the colony was divided into twenty-eight vaccination districts and public vaccinators appointed for each district. Registers were maintained recording the child's name, father, address, town or district.<sup>40</sup> The medical profession would have been kept informed of other health initiatives through the *Australian Medical Journal* established in 1856. Colonial doctors also sent material to the British medical journal *The Lancet*, which

was widely available throughout the colonies keeping doctors abreast of advances in anatomical knowledge, causes of disease, and the increasing use of ether and chloroform in surgery.<sup>41</sup> Although only a recent discovery, Dr Creelman was already familiar with the use of chloroform as he testified in a court case in Ballarat in 1856 describing how chloroform should be correctly administered.<sup>42</sup>

His inability to establish a permanent residence and practice could be explained by a restless trait in his personality, but also by the economic imperative to survive. There was increasing competition from the large number of doctors employed as ships' surgeons who arrived and set up practices in the Port Phillip District (later Victoria). For instance in 1848, the year of his arrival, fourteen immigrant ships had docked in Melbourne, all carrying ships' surgeons.<sup>43</sup> Numbers would also have been boosted by medical practitioners arriving independently with the advent of the gold rush. In 1856, five years after the discovery of gold in central Victoria, Ballarat's *Star* newspaper published a list of the qualified practitioners in that district. John Creelman was one of thirty-five and a year later one of thirty-three practising doctors.<sup>44</sup> Even more daunting were the approximately 455 legally qualified medical practitioners in the colony approved by the Medical Board by February 1857.<sup>45</sup> It has been estimated that in the gold districts there was one doctor to every 300 to 400 persons.<sup>46</sup>

All doctors on the goldfields would also have been subject to the unreliability of the number of patients requiring medical treatment due to the transient nature of the population moving between the diggings. A contemporary of Dr Creelman, George Wakefield, had a practice and pharmacy in Ballarat from 1856 to the early 1860s. In letters written home to his father in 1859 and in about 1862 he bemoaned the difficulties that he faced so 'that matters have arrived at such a crisis that it is impossible to obtain a living'. Moreover, he had a great deal of money owing to him and there had been so many insolvencies he could not compel people to pay him. He commented that 'there is such a number of medical men that they are reducing their fees to next to nothing'.<sup>47</sup>

As well as the oversupply of doctors, another issue to contend with was that of unqualified persons described as 'quacks' or practising 'quackery' in Ballarat and the district. A letter from 'Medicus' to the Editor of the *Australian Medical Journal* in April 1857 claimed that a proposed medical reform bill would not protect the community from the 'host of swindlers in the shape of druggist and unqualified



**Archibald Vincent Smith, 1837-1874, photographer**  
**Lake Learmonth, c.1866**  
 Albumen silver  
 Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H1780  
 Presbyterian Church (1858) in foreground.  
 Dr Creelman's home and surgery were further to the right



**Unknown photographer**  
**Stone wall of the surgery in the**  
**altered and extended house of today**  
 Courtesy Learmonth Historical Society

practitioners who infest the diggings'. The writer cited several cases where unsuspecting persons had consulted unprincipled druggists who would stoop to any unjustifiable act to make a few shillings. They deceived the community, obtained money under false pretences, robbed the profession, doing an incalculable amount of injury: 'Their charge is about one-third of that of medical men.' Any penalty did not go far enough.<sup>48</sup>

Dr Creelman set up a practice in Learmonth (22 kilometres west of Ballarat) by 1858 where he successfully applied for a number government positions including deputy registrar for births and deaths.<sup>49</sup> In May 1860 he was reappointed a public vaccinator for smallpox,<sup>50</sup> and in 1862 Coroner for Learmonth.<sup>51</sup> These appointments could be seen as official recognition of his competency and professionalism, and would have supplemented the income acquired from his private practice. As well as outbreaks of smallpox other contagious diseases confronting him were diphtheria, influenza, typhoid, typhus, dysentery, tuberculosis and the endemic presence of syphilis. At some stage, possibly whilst living and working in Buninyong, he had been declared bankrupt and after leaving Buninyong he spent a short time in Maryborough,<sup>52</sup> but by the time he

settled in Learmonth he received a certificate of discharge from insolvency in 1863.<sup>53</sup>

It was while he was living in Learmonth that he was called to give medical evidence following an autopsy he performed in another notorious case. John Hynes was accused of the murder of Timothy Ryan at the rural property *Ercildoune*, near Ballarat. Dr Creelman attested that Ryan's death was caused by gun-shot wounds, pieces of shot being extracted from the collar bone downwards. John Hynes was found guilty and sentenced to be executed.<sup>54</sup> As Coroner he presided over numerous inquests. Examples relating to accidental deaths were an incident at Christmas 1863 when a miner from Clunes drowned during an attempt to sail with four others across Lake Learmonth.<sup>55</sup> Another inquest at the township of Springs near Mount Bolton concerned the death of a two-year-old child, Sarah Monteith, who was playing with two other children in a stable when a fire broke out. It was not determined what started the fire.<sup>56</sup>

The Creelmans also became involved in Learmonth's community activities. At the 1861 stone-laying prior to the erection of a parsonage for the Wickliffe Church of England, Mrs Creelman (Harriet) assisted in providing



Unknown photographer  
Quorn, c.1879

State Library of South Australia, B352804  
Left to right: ES&A Bank (replaced 1881), Pinkerton Hotel  
(later the Austral), Transcontinental Hotel, Dunn's Mill

refreshments and flowers for the occasion.<sup>57</sup> Dr Creelman was twice elected as surgeon for the Loyal Learmonth Lodge.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately in 1869, he was declared bankrupt for a second time.<sup>59</sup> His impending bankruptcy may have been the reason he was forced to sell their home and close his practice. In 1860 he had purchased two High Street allotments at the government land sales, and on the upper allotment built a seven-room weatherboard and stone residence and surgery, later adding a chemist shop at the front of the house. There was also a detached servant's bedroom plus stables and coach house and an established garden.<sup>60</sup> He advertised the property for sale at the end of 1868,<sup>61</sup> and shortly afterwards resigned his position as Coroner.<sup>62</sup> The Creelmans had lived in the town for ten years and had achieved some continuity professionally and socially, so it must have been devastating to lose their home and practice.

After brief stays in the nearby towns of Shelford in 1869 and Rokewood in 1870 where he was registered as a medical practitioner, the Creelmans returned to Geelong.<sup>63</sup> In November 1870 he reported to police that his morocco case containing medical instruments (three lancets) had been stolen from his home.<sup>64</sup> In 1871 he advertised his new practice at a house at the corner of Latrobe Terrace and O'Connell Street.<sup>65</sup> He was seemingly discharged from bankruptcy by this time, and had some expectation of permanency since he was granted government-paid appointments as assistant surgeon in the 2nd Geelong Voluntary Artillery Corps in May 1871 and then surgeon to the Southern Corps 2nd

metropolitan Battalion in 1876. It was permitted to maintain a private practice while holding these salaried positions.<sup>66</sup> He was also appointed medical officer for Geelong Lodge Order of St Andrew, Independent Order of Rechabites, and St Mary's Total Abstinence Society.<sup>67</sup>

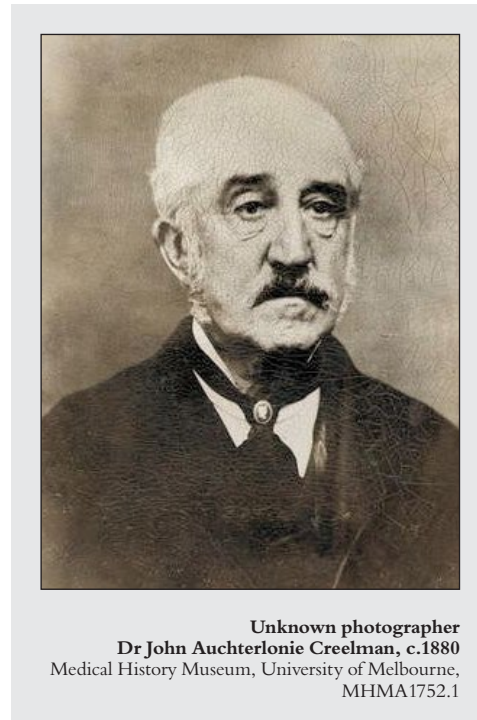
However, these roles were relinquished when he crossed the border into South Australia, being registered at Kingston in 1875 and advertising in February 1876 that he had commenced a practice at his residence.<sup>68</sup> He was then appointed by the South Australian Commissioner of Lands as medical officer for an Aboriginal mission at Lacepede Bay, just outside Kingston.<sup>69</sup> Three years later, in early 1879, he moved his practice to the new railway town of Quorn, forty kilometres north of Port Augusta and 336 kilometres north of Adelaide in the Flinders Ranges. There he held three positions in 1883 as government medical officer, public vaccinator and medical officer to the Destitute Board. He resigned from these roles in 1886;<sup>70</sup> this may have been because he had reportedly suffered a stroke.

The Creelmans' final destination was Adelaide where he was listed in mid-1888 as a practitioner at Kenilworth Road, Parkside. The move may have been influenced by the marriage of their daughter in Adelaide in June 1888.<sup>71</sup> John Creelman's ill-health worsened and he was admitted to Parkside Lunatic Asylum where he died on 3 February 1889 in the Asylum hospital in his sixty-eighth year.<sup>72</sup> According to a probate file, his estate consisted only of some personal

effects.<sup>73</sup> However, Harriet's will drawn up in 1896<sup>74</sup> lists ownership of three allotments at Rosetown, Lacepede Bay, likely purchased in the 1870s while the Creelmans were living in the district, and possibly bought in her name. No other property or assets were acquired in the years leading up to his death.

Life seemed to have been sounder economically for their two sons, as both led stable professional lives. The elder, Robert A Creelman, was a qualified pharmacist, working from 1876 in dispensaries in Bridge Road, Richmond, Melbourne and later in a United Friendly Society dispensary at 294 Church Street, Richmond. By 1914 he had his own chemist business at Camperdown in the Western District.<sup>75</sup> The younger son, John A Creelman, had a long public service career in Victoria initially as a receiver and paymaster, then a land officer, then clerk of courts in a number of regional towns in central, west and eastern Victoria until his retirement in 1914.<sup>76</sup> Daughter Harriet, who married George Lane on 21 June 1888 in Adelaide, died of peritonitis in 1896.<sup>77</sup>

John Auchterlonie Creelman's life may not have been unusual. An extensive database of colonial doctors from the 1850s indicates that some urban doctors acquired considerable wealth, while country practitioners often struggled to survive.<sup>78</sup> Despite financial



challenges over forty years to establish some permanency as a colonial doctor in regional Victoria and South Australia, Dr Creelman persisted in a seemingly never-ending struggle to make an adequate living whilst pursuing his chosen profession of medicine and can be commended for his perseverance.

#### Endnotes

- 1 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 29 January 1848, p.2, *Melbourne Argus*, 28 January 1848, p.2, [www.portphillip.info/Scotland\\_Passenger\\_Lists\\_1839-1851](http://www.portphillip.info/Scotland_Passenger_Lists_1839-1851). There is no known picture of the *Marchioness of Douglas*.
- 2 Parliamentary Papers of the House of Commons, 26 April 1847, p.319.
- 3 Great Britain. Colonial Office, *Instructions for the Surgeons Superintendent of Government Emigrant Ships going to New South Wales*, London: W. Clowes & Sons, for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1839.
- 4 Don Charlwood, *The Long Farewell*, Warrandyte, Vic.: Burgewood Books, 1998, pp.150-152.
- 5 Nicola Cousen, 'The Smallpox on Ballarat', *Provenance*, 16, 2018.
- 6 Jonathan Burdon, 'Medicine in Melbourne in the time of La Trobe' (Melbourne Rare Book Week lecture), *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.3, November 2015, p.14.
- 7 Charlwood, pp.139-140.
- 8 Dianne Reilly (ed.), *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes, 1839-1854*, Yarra Glen, Vic: Tarcoola Press, State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006, p.335.
- 9 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1850, p.2.
- 10 Baptism record St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh. See also St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, Marriage of George Creelman and Euphemia Auchterlonie on 8 August 1817. Burial of Euphemia Auchterlonie wife of George Creelman, 25 December 1846, Kirkcaldy.
- 11 A reference written on 10 March 1840 by the chief surgeon, Sir William Ferguson, that John Creelman was a pupil for several years in the Royal Infirmary. The original document is in the private collection of Jane Karslake, Melbourne.
- 12 Certificates of Attendance for J. A. Creelman in private collection of Jane Karslake.
- 13 Albyne Creelman, 'Life of John Auchterlonie Creelman', 1967, MS 8314, Box 971/1(c), Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria. Albyne Creelman, a grandson of Dr Creelman, wrote a one-page document containing some family history, in which he mentions an extra subject – Dr Munroe, Military Surgery.
- 14 The referral is in the private collection of Jane Karslake. The House of Refuge was located in Queensberry House (built in 1680s) 64 Canongate, Edinburgh. The directors of the House of Refuge acquired a lease and some adjoining premises from the Royal Infirmary in 1834. Today Queensberry House is incorporated in the Scottish Parliamentary precinct.
- 15 <https://archiveandlibrary.rcsed.ac.uk/surgeons-database>.

- 16 'John Auchterlonie Creelman', copy of a reference by Mr George Hamilton, Falkirk, 26 May, 1841 (Ancestry.com, members records).
- 17 *Fifeshire Advertiser*, 1 August 1846 and 15 August 1846 (Ancestry.com vital records).
- 18 *Lloyd's Shipping Register*, 1845, 1847, 1848, <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online>. The barque was built in the port of Leith in 1844, 469 tons, owner Mowbray; in 1847 it was registered in Glasgow to Downie & Peake. See also *Immigration: Return to Address – Mr O'Shanassy, 25 November [1851]*, Melbourne: Government Office, 1852, p.108. Dr Creelman is not recorded as being a Colonial Land Emigration Commission appointee.
- 19 Claud Farie was born at Glasgow 1816 and died at Coburg, Melbourne, in 1870. Member of the Victorian Parliament for the electorate of Villiers and Heytesbury, 1854-1855; Sheriff of the Colony, 1852; Inspector-General of Penal Establishments in 1869. His pastoral run on the Hopkins River was also known as *Marong*.
- 20 PROV Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom, VPRS 14/POOOO Book 2/3, p.289.
- 21 PROV Superintendent, Inward registered correspondence, VPRS 19/P0000, 48/2298, 6 November 1848.
- 22 Walter Heale, 'Registration of Medical Practitioners in the Port Phillip District', *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.3, November 2015, p.24, for history of the Port Phillip Medical Board.
- 23 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 7 February 1849, p.62.
- 24 *Argus*, 8 February 1848, p.2.
- 25 *Geelong Advertiser*, 13 July 1848, p.3, reference to Malop Street.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 4 April 1848, p.2.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 22 April 1848, p.2; 14 June 1848, p.1.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 16 November 1848, p.2.
- 29 PROV VPRS 19/POOOO, 48/2298, 3 November 1848. He referred in his letter to Captain Fyans to Henry Stewart owner of the *Emu Inn* at that time.
- 30 Harriet Spencer born in Godmanchester, Huntingdonshire, baptised 6 October 1814. She died 10 June 1896 in Richmond, Melbourne, Death certificate No.12648, Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne. Father Robert Spencer, mother Annie Kent, who married 27 May 1805, Huntingdonshire. Copy of Marriage document, John Creelman and Harriet Spencer on 21 August 1849 in collection of Jane Karlake. The Reverend John Gow celebrant wrote on the certificate that the wedding was at *Naringal*, Wardy Yallock with William Rowe, owner of *Naringal* as witness.
- 31 PROV Letters outward, VPRS, 50/2185, To his Hon. C. J. La Trobe dated Grange Hamilton, 25 November 1850.
- 32 Christina Twomey, 'Nasty Talk: anatomy of the first wife murder in the new colony of Victoria', *Provenance*, 19, 2021.
- 33 *Argus*, 23 October 1851, p.2.
- 34 *Geelong Advertiser*, 11 December 1851, p.2, 'Advertisement' setting out his qualifications and experience.
- 35 *Argus*, 23 June 1852, p.7.
- 36 <https://collections.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/objects/36393/correspondence-regarding-dr-john-auchterlonie-creelman-c1821-1889> (accessed 1 October 2024).
- 37 *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 2 May 1856, p.2.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 17 May 1856, p.4. The township of Buninyong was to be extended from Dr Creelman's house by 10 chains (201 metres) by the government surveyor.
- 39 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 2 January 1855, p.13. He was registered in Campbellfield.
- 40 Cousen, *op.cit*
- 41 Australian Medical Pioneers Index, [www.medicalpioneers.com/colonial.htm](http://www.medicalpioneers.com/colonial.htm) (accessed 1 October 2024).
- 42 *Star*, Ballarat, 24 December 1856, p.3.
- 43 *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 October 1849, p.1. Returns names and capacities of ships which conveyed immigrants landed in Sydney and Port Phillip District during 1848. Of 32 ships chartered by the government, 17 discharged passengers at Sydney and 14 at Port Phillip.
- 44 *Star*, 16 September 1856, p.4; 6 January 1857, p.4.
- 45 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 20 February 1857, p.321.
- 46 Diana Dyason, 'The Medical Profession in Colonial Victoria, 1834 -1901', in Roy Macleod and Milton Lewis (eds), *Disease, Medicine and Empire: perspectives on western medicine and the experience of European expansion*, London: Routledge, 1988, p.98. The article covers themes relating to qualifications and statistics of immigrant doctors, registration, hospitals, journals and medical schools and societies.
- 47 Papers of George Wakefield, 1853-1887, MS 684, National Library of Australia. He arrived in the Colony of Victoria in 1853 on the ship *Nimrod* and practised in Melbourne, Ballarat and Kerang.
- 48 'Medicus', Ballarat, 8 December 1856, *Australian Medical Journal*, April 1857, pp.156-159. The Medical Society of Victoria was formulating an Act to regulate the practice of Medicine and Surgery in Melbourne and vicinity.
- 49 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 10 December 1858, No. 166, p.2488.
- 50 <https://collections.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/objects/36393/correspondence-regarding-dr-john-auchterlonie-creelman-c1821-1889>.
- 51 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 11 November 1862, Issue 132, p.2221.
- 52 *Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser* 10 August 1858, p.3.
- 53 *Age*, 13 March 1863, p.3.
- 54 *Star*, 14 February 1862, p.1.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 28 December 1863, p.2.

- 56 Ibid., 3 January 1863, p.2.
- 57 Ibid., 28 March 1861, p.3.
- 58 *Ballarat Star*, 28 March 1861, p.3; 12 August 1865, p.2; 26 July 1867, p.2.
- 59 PROV Geelong Court of Insolvency Schedules, VPRS 815/89/2289, 26 May 1869.
- 60 *Learmonth Heritage Walk*, brochure 2010. Landata Map L35 indicating Creelman's 3 allotments—Sections E, K and J (courtesy of the Learmonth Historical Society). The residence he put up for sale by auction was situated in Section E, Allot, 3, 1a, 2r, 7p, purchased on 24 February 1860.
- 61 *Ballarat Star*, 12 December 1868, p.3.
- 62 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 12 February 1869, Issue 10, p.282.
- 63 Australian Medical Pioneers Index.
- 64 *Australian Police Gazette*, 14 November 1870.
- 65 *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 September 1871, p.1.
- 66 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 19 May 1871, No.31, p.771. Position cancelled following his departure from Victoria, *Victorian Government Gazette*, 30 June 1876, No.45, p.1207.
- 67 UK and Ireland Medical Directory 1845–1942 (Wellcome Library, London, via Ancestry.com). John Auchterlonie Creelman of Latrobe St Geelong is listed in 1875 as Medical Officer for Geelong Lodge Order of St Andrew, I. O. Rechabites, and St Mary's Total Abstinence Society.
- 68 *Mount Gambier Standard*, 26 February 1876, p.1.
- 69 *Report of the Sub-Protector of Aborigines, South Australia*, 1878, p.5.
- 70 Australian Medical Pioneers Index.
- 71 *Adelaide Directory*, 1889, p.254. *South Australian Register*, 25 June 1888, p.3, Marriage of Harriet Euphemia, only daughter of J.A. Creelman, M.R.C.S.E., late of Quorn, to George Thomas Lane.
- 72 Admission papers, Lunatic Asylum, Fullarton Road, Parkside, 3 January 1889. See State Records of South Australia, GRS 13461, File 4/1889 Case No. P0873227078: Prognosis 'softening of the brain' i.e. dementia following a stroke. It was noted he had been ill for 3 years. Death Certificate 3 February 1889, Adelaide, Reg. 289; *South Australian Advertiser*, 4 February 1889, p.2. Funeral from All Souls Church, East Adelaide to West Terrace Cemetery.
- 73 Probate granted by South Australian Supreme Court 20 February 1889. (File digitised by Family Search, p.88.) His will written in 1876 only mentioned policies: Colonial Mutual Life Insurance of Victoria and Australian Widows Fund which he bequeathed to his wife Harriet with a request that she pay any outstanding debts.
- 74 PROV Wills, VPRS 7591/POOO2, 61/311, 17 July 1896, Harriet Creelman.
- 75 *Victorian Government Gazette*, 15 January 1912, No.9; *Pharmaceutical Register Medical Act 1890*, p.203. Robert A Creelman, registered on 27 June 1877. Previous business registered on 1 October 1876. The *Sands & McDougall Melbourne and Suburban Directory*, 1877 lists him as chemist and druggist 161 Bridge Road, Richmond.
- 76 See *Victorian Government Gazette* numerous entries from 1882 until 1914.
- 77 *Adelaide Chronicle*, 4 February 1896, p.3.
- 78 Australian Medical Pioneers Index.



Unknown artist  
Edmund Charles Hobson, c.1838  
Oil on canvas  
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria, H141891  
Donated by Hobson's granddaughter Mrs M M Hamilton

## Edmund Charles Hobson: *esteemed naturalist and physician, 1814-1848*

By Dr Walter Heale

Walter Heale is a retired physician with a long-term interest in history, in particular the pioneer period of medical history in Victoria from 1835 to 1856, the development of medical services and the contribution of individual clinicians in the Port Phillip District. This article is based on his study of the Hobson Papers at State Library Victoria.

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The Hobson Papers at State Library Victoria<sup>1</sup> contain valuable personal and professional documents on the life of Edmund Charles Hobson, as this article shows. The collection formed part of the archive used for the article on the 'physician

and naturalist' that appeared in Volume 1 of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1966).<sup>2</sup> His brother Edward, who became a Victorian pastoralist, was included as a minor entry in the volume.

The untimely death of Edmund Charles Hobson was probably due to the occupational hazard of pulmonary tuberculosis. That he was highly regarded by his peers and patients, who appreciated his demeanour and communication

skills, and for his many other attributes, is evident in an obituary written shortly after his death in March 1848 and subsequently published in *The Argus*:<sup>3</sup>

**The Late Dr Hobson  
Minute of The Tasmanian Society  
March 29, 1848**

Mr Ronald C. Gunn announced to the Society the lamented death, at the early age of 34, of Edmund Charles Hobson, M.D., which event took place at his villa, near Melbourne, Port Phillip, on the 4th March instant, after an illness of four days.

Dr E.C. Hobson was a native of Tasmania [sic], studied for some years under Dr James Scott, R.N., Colonial Surgeon at Hobart Town, from whom he acquired much and varied information, and then visited England to complete his studies, where he obtained the regard and esteem of Professors Owen and Grant, and other eminent men in London. After visiting Paris, and various parts of Germany, he returned to Van Diemen's Land in 1838, where he commenced practice as a general practitioner in Hobart Town.

In 1839, Dr Hobson, in association with two or three gentlemen of congenial tastes, and under the auspices of his Excellency Sir John Franklin, our then estimable Governor, founded the Tasmanian Society for the Advancement of Natural Science in Australia, which Society still flourishes, and publishes the Tasmanian Journal.

In 1840, he had an attack of fever at Hobart Town, which seriously injured a constitution which had been previously debilitated by repeated attacks of bronchitis, and obliged him to seek the warmer climate of Port Phillip, as being more favourable to one in his impaired state of health. There, as in Van Diemen's Land, his amiable and kind disposition attracted towards him the love of the poor, as it also conciliated and won the affections of the rich, and by both he was universally beloved.

A paper by Dr Hobson, on the *Callorynchus Australis*, appeared in the first number of the Tasmanian Journal, and his subsequent papers and observations on the blood globules of the *Ornithorynchus paradoxus* (quoted by Professor Owen in Cyclo. of Anat. and Physiol. Art. Montremata); on the fossil bones of the *Diprotodon*, *Kangaroos*, &c., at Mount Macedon, Port Phillip; on the geology of Point Nepean, and other parts of Port Phillip, &c., are too well known to the readers of this Journal to require further comment, and his labours have been fully appreciated and acknowledged by Professor Owen and others.

Besides possessing an admirable knowledge of his profession, he was well versed in comparative anatomy, geology, and botany, although the two former claimed the preference in his attentions; but the writer of this sketch is largely indebted to him for numerous most interesting plants, collected by him during his various excursions at Port Phillip, as also for various botanical observations on different districts of that colony.

As one of the founders of the Tasmanian Society, and one of its most able and zealous members and supporters, his memory will be long and fondly cherished by all who pursue science in Australia.

*The Argus*, 7 November 1848, page 4

The following biographical sketch gives a framework for items from the State Library collection that relate to significant moments in our subject's life and career.

Edmund Charles Hobson was born in March 1814 in Parramatta, New South Wales.

His father, Edmund, was employed by the local Commissariat and his mother, Malvina, was the daughter of colonial assistant surgeon, Edward Luttrell.<sup>4</sup> Two years later a brother Edward was born, the children moving to Hobart to live with their maternal grandparents. As noted in the obituary, Edmund began his medical

training there under the auspices of Dr James Scott R.N., the colonial surgeon in Hobart, and later with Dr Bedford.<sup>5</sup> His subsequent training began in London in 1836 under the supervision of Professor Richard Owen at the London Royal College of Surgeons, and Professor Robert Grant of the University of London. Then followed visits to Paris, Edinburgh and Germany, culminating in formal accreditation with a Diploma of Medicine from the University of Erlangen in Bavaria. Before returning to Australia, he married Margaret, daughter of John Adamson, a London merchant, on 27 September 1838.

### ***Chronicle of Events in Britain and Europe***

December 7 1836, Invitation from J. Clark (Sir James Clark, FRS, Physician to Queen Victoria) to dine next Sunday. Addressed to 'Mr Hobson' at 17 'Seymour Street, Euston Square, London'.

September 4 1837, from L'école anatomique des hôpitals et la Société anatomique, Paris, 'certifying that Monsieur Edmund C. Hobson' completed a course in anatomy and medical practice.

September 7 1837, Letter from Jacobina Burn, London, an 'epistle from an old woman' addressed to Monsieur Hobson, Hotel Racine, Place de l'Odéon, Paris, 'My dear young friend... I need not tell you the delight I experience in your correspondence nor the affectionate interest I shall feel for your happiness and prosperity'. Jacobina Burn was the first woman to be granted land in Van Diemen's Land, in 1821, but returned with her son to England in 1836.<sup>6</sup>

January 9 1838, from John Forbes, FRS MD, editor of the *British and Foreign Medical Review* and active member of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association (later Sir John Forbes, court physician to Prince Albert and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians):<sup>7</sup> 'I presume you yourself proceed to V.D.L. to remain: if so, and you are sure of continuing there as a Practitioner I will, if you wish it, propose you at the next Meeting of the Provincial Association as the "Honorary Corresponding Member" in place of the late Mr Scott, and should you give me the excuse, by sending to our Museum here a small collection of specimens in any department of Nat. History, we will make you an Honorary Member also. From what I have seen & heard of you I anticipate considerable accessions to both Natural history & Medicine from your exertions: I can only add that if I can promote your views in any way, it will give me much pleasure'.

April 28 1838, Letter from William Wagner, Dean of the Medical Faculty, Berlin, replying to a letter of 19 April, training, and procedure for foreign students to gain admission to the school by applying to the Secretary of State. Says that lectures and examinations are carried out in Latin. Addressed to Hobson at University College London, from Hamburg.

July 10 1838, Note from R. Jameson (Robert Jameson, professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh<sup>8</sup>): 'Admit the bearer, Mr Hobson, to the Lectures and Museum of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh during his stay in Edinburgh'. From the Cadet Office.

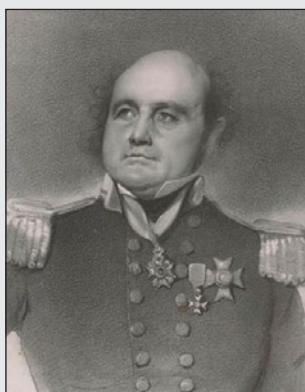
August 18 1838, Letter from E. Kirkaldy, 22 Windsor St, addressed to 'Dr Hobson, Mr Adamson, 9 Princes Place, Kennington, London' with a description of a nice young lady [Miss Milne], 'an accomplished artist, who draws beautifully'.

September 25 1838, From Hobson: 9 Princes Place, Kennington Road: 'I am desirous of being married at St. Marks on Thursday morning at half past ten – may I beg you mite [might] do me the favour of performing the ceremony if that hour mite be convenient'.

October 3, 1838. From John George Children, FRS, Keeper of the Natural History Collection at the British Museum, 1822-1840, wishing 'yourself and Mrs Hobson every felicity the married state is capable of bestowing'. The former Margaret Adamson later assisted Edmund in illustrating his scientific papers.

October 12 1838, from C. Loddiges and Sons, renowned nurserymen at Hackney, to Dr Hobson, at 3 Bond Court, Walbrook (a business address for his father-in-law), supplying an extensive list of plants in a 'glazed box' for which there will be 'no care required further than keeping it constantly exposed to light and sun on deck...' and requesting that it be returned to them with ferns, and roots of orchids, and seeds especially of the Epacris family and 'anything newly discovered and beautiful. We shall be most happy to refill the box and return it from time to time... and trust that our correspondence may become mutually interesting and agreeable'.

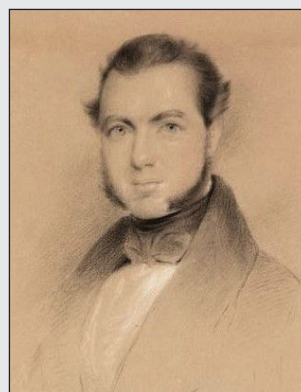
October 13 1838, Sailed for Hobart from London on the *Appoline* arriving on 12 March 1839. Mrs Burn and Miss Milne accompanied them. Margaret Hobson stayed in Hobart whilst Edmund joined Lady Franklin's entourage as medical advisor for her planned overland journey to Sydney, which began on board the *Tamar* from Launceston to Melbourne on the last day of March.



**Thomas Herbert Maguire, 1821–1895, lithographer**  
**Sir John Franklin, 1837 (detail)**  
 National Portrait Gallery, London, D37795



**Thomas Bock, 1793–1855, artist**  
**Jane, Lady Franklin, 1838**  
 Chalk on paper  
 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, FD.497



**Thomas Bock, 1793–1855, artist**  
**Ronald Campbell Gunn, 1848**  
 Crayon on paper  
 Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales, DG471

### ***Expedition to the Murray***

Hobson's diary of the expedition from Melbourne to the Hume (Murray) River, in which he participated as Lady Franklin's medical attendant, was presented to the Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria in 1909 by Charles Perry Hobson (1847–1923), son of Edmund Hobson. A portion covering the journey as far as the Murray was published by H.S. Parris in 1950.<sup>9</sup>

The diary begins with his arrival at Melbourne on 4 April 1839, proceeding at once to Arthur's Seat where his brother Edward had a station: 'Our meeting was agreeable, not having seen each other for nearly four years'. The brothers subsequently developed pastoral interests in Gippsland at Tarwin Meadows and Traralgon. Meanwhile, Lady Franklin spent three very active days in Melbourne,<sup>10</sup> allowing Hobson to catch up and begin his diary of the journey that includes the following extracts:

April 7 1839, 'The country at the back of Melbourne is fertile and beautiful. It presents one extensive undulating surface of green. The high grounds consist of light alluvial soil which seem to be well adapted to potatoes'.

April 11 1839, 'This day we halted to give our horses refreshment. The Goulburn is about 50 yards wide – in some parts very rapid, in others dilating into still smooth pools. The banks of the river were covered with gums whilst all above the bank are box. Swans and ducks — ornithorhynchus [platypus] are few'; the last word is unclear.

April 21 1839, 'We breakfasted upon mushrooms this morning – a contribution from a native. These people have a natural and unassuming manner'.

Hobson left the expedition after it reached Sydney on 18 May.<sup>11</sup> His return to Hobart two weeks later was noticed by a local paper which included the information that he had been appointed Secretary to the Education Board, the Lieutenant-Governor's initiative to foster primary schooling in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>12</sup>

In Hobart, he participated in the founding of the Tasmanian Society for the Advancement of Natural Science with other interested pioneers, including Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin and Ronald Campbell Gunn (botanist, public servant and politician) who was also a friend and correspondent of Charles Joseph La Trobe.<sup>13</sup> Hobson contributed two papers to the first volume of the Society's Journal, published in 1841, then others over time.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Illness, then transfer to Melbourne***

On May 29 1840, Edmund wrote to Margaret from *Glen Leith*, property of a friend in the Derwent Valley: 'I have not improved much since you left. I have had but little pain or cough, but I feel feverish, and my pulse still remains very quick. My appetite is very good which is fortunate... Since you left, I have felt very dull and moody which I attribute to the dreadful weather which has confined me since you left... I walked for 2 hours yesterday'. He had already decided to move to the warmer climate of Melbourne: 'I hope you have commenced packing... I am very anxious to get off as soon as possible for my health's sake'.

He left Hobart on July 5 1840 to live in Melbourne, and later received a certificate from the Natural History Society in the Duchy of Nassau (capital Wiesbaden), dated September 4 1840, appointing 'Dr Edmund Hobson of Hobart

Town in Van Diemen's Land as a corresponding member of this society by diploma'.

\*\*\*

[Mr Gunn] will give you... a full account of the revival of our society which slumbered or slept during our absence in S. Australia. ...the first sheets of the first no. [of the report of the journey] are at last... in the hands of the Government Printer, Mr Barnard... Mr Bradbury undertakes the lithography. Your 2 papers on the blood of the Platypus and on the Chimaera are to be in this first no. Your 3rd paper was considered too incomplete... and will I believe be forwarded to you for revision. We shall rely therefore on this & on one or two papers on the geology of Port Phillip for the 2d no. which will follow the other in 3 months. An account of the coal formations at Western Port will be particularly interesting.

You give me scarcely any account of yourself & none of Mrs Hobson & the baby. We long to have you back amongst us, & yet you will not say a word about it... As soon as I return, if you are not already here, I must think of some new mode of enticing you back again. I beg my kindest regards to Mrs Hobson and am ever dear Dr Hobson with great truth & regard ever yours Jane Franklin.

We were absent between 5 & 6 weeks on our S.A. trip. Besides Adelaide we visited Mt Lofty, and some very pretty country on the other side of it. Encounter Bay & the mouth of the Murray, Port Lincoln in Spencer's Gulf & Kangaroo Island. We leave out the word Town after Hobart in our journal. Who ever hears of London Town, excepting John Gilpin, I hope you approve of this.

### ***Sir John Franklin departs***

On January 8 1844, Sir John Franklin (late Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land), while awaiting passage to England having been recalled, wrote: 'I beg your acceptance of the enclosed for attendance on Lady Franklin and my daughter and am much obliged by your kind attentions to them. It will give me at all times the greatest pleasure to promote any of your views as far as be in my power in England and I will not fail to make known your great zeal in the Cause of Australian Science'.

This letter was written shortly before Sir John and Lady Franklin and his daughter sailed aboard the *Rajah* for England. It would appear that during their month in Port Phillip, Lady Franklin and step-daughter Eleanor were treated by Dr Hobson. During their stay, Sir John and Lady Franklin spent time with the La Trobes, spending Christmas Day 1843 at *Jolimont* in Melbourne.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Professor Owen's correspondence***

Professor Richard Owen, FRS, MRCS, FRCS was Curator at the Royal College of Surgeons Hunterian Museum. In 1832, he published his findings on the museum's collection of platypus specimens, proving the animal's classification as a mammal, and marking the start of a lifetime's work on the physiology and

### ***Lady Franklin in South Australia***

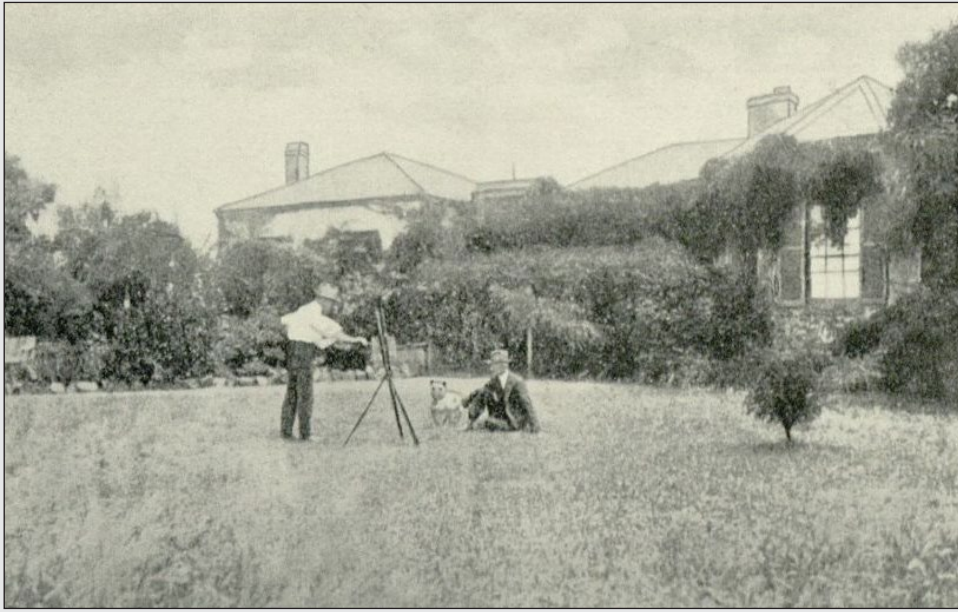
From 13 December 1840 to 18 February 1841, Lady Franklin undertook an expedition to South Australia. On her return she wrote to Hobson, on 18 February:<sup>15</sup>

palaeontology of Australian marsupials and monotremes and their extinct antecedents. It was primarily because of his vision and efforts that London's Natural History Museum was established.<sup>17</sup> In September 1838 he had written that, in connection with Dr Hobson's proposed return to Van Diemen's Land, the British Government should avail itself of the services of one whom he knew to be so eminently versed in subjects of natural science.<sup>18</sup> Sir John Franklin recommended the appointment of a Naturalist for Van Diemen's Land with Hobson for the office, but this proposition was not accepted by the government.<sup>19</sup>

Later, Professor Owen wrote to Edmund Hobson in Melbourne:

May 11 1841, 'I have received three boxes... which you were kind enough to say you should send me in a letter... in April 1840... and were presented by me in your name to the College... Many thanks for your valuable information, which you will receive in print, (on the blood of *Ornithorhynchus*) in the next despatch from me, and with Mrs Owen's kindest regards and those of all our circle'.

May 25 1845, 'I have the pleasure to forward to you a copy of the Catalogue in which you will find descriptions of all the Australian fossils I have as yet received including those very interesting ones from Mount Macedon which



**Unknown photographer  
Bona Vista, South Yarra**

Source: Emily Maud Robb, *Early Toorak and District*, Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1934, p.29  
Architect possibly John Gill; built 1845 in St Edmunds Road, later Kensington Road  
Subsequently known as *Carlsberg* and then *Grantham*, remnants of which were demolished 2001

I owe to Mrs Mayne & yourself. I know your class of natural objects likely to prove more interesting than such fossils and I hope that every specimen which accident or research may bring to light will be preserved, and I hope duplicates at least, may be transmitted here. Recent brains of marsupials and monotremes and impregnated Uteri of Echidna or Ornithorhynchi are still greatly desired by me’.

### ***Physician in Port Phillip District***

In July 1844 when Hobson was thirty, he was one of fifteen signatories on a petition to Governor Gipps seeking the establishment of a Melbourne-based Medical Board to obviate anxiety about transmitting precious credentials to Sydney. The enabling Act was passed in September; in October Hobson accepted an offer from Charles Joseph La Trobe to be a Board member before the Act was promulgated in November seeking Registrants.<sup>20</sup> The initial twenty-one registrants were published in January 1845 over the names of Board Members as follows: P. Cussen M.D. President, Godfrey Howitt M.D., William Wilmott M.D., E. C. Hobson M.D. Sixteen of the original twenty-one registrants were still on the register in 1862.

While busy building up his practice and being involved in discussions about the Medical Board and the new hospital, Hobson continued

to follow his interest in Natural History. He corresponded not only with experts in England, supplying specimens, but also with those who shared his interest in Australia, exchanging letters, books and journals regularly with Ronald Gunn in Van Diemen’s Land. Their mutual friend La Trobe was occasionally mentioned. A letter from Ronald Gunn dated 18 June 1847, addressed to ‘Dr E.C. Hobson, Collins St Melbourne’ included: ‘I hope you finished Darwin’s Journal – and if you did I am quite sure you will be delighted with the enlightened views which he takes upon all Geological questions. La Trobe has the book, so that if you want to refer to it at any time you will be able to get it from him’.<sup>21</sup>

He established connections with naturalists in central and western Victoria, including William Adeney,<sup>22</sup> who in 1846 found fossils of the Thylacine which were sent by Hobson to Richard Owen in London. Owen used them to classify *Thylacoleo* described in his paper, ‘On the Fossil Mammals of Australia’, in which he wrote: ‘That evidence was received in the year 1846 with the accompanying letter from my esteemed friend and correspondent, Dr Hobson, of Melbourne’. He quotes in full Hobson’s letter, from ‘Bona Vista, New Melbourne, 25 January 1846’.<sup>23</sup> So while developing his eminent medical career, Hobson was contributing significantly to the new understanding of Australian fauna.

### ***Further illness, senior medical appointments***

On 24 September 1845 Hobson wrote from 'Yarra Bank' to Ronald Gunn:

Since I last wrote to you, I have been dangerously ill and still remain very weak from partial paralysis... I have determined (if I recover this attack) to give up general practice... as I can command enough consulting practice to give me at least 100£ per annum which together with my stocks and other little... [page is torn].

Mrs Hobson was safely confined of a daughter four days ago and I am glad to say both are well... Mrs Hobson joins me in kindest regards to Mrs Gunn and yourself.

After a partial recovery he and the family continued living in *Bona Vista*, 'one of Major Davidson's houses on the opposite bank of the Yarra'.<sup>24</sup> He walked from there to Collins Street to consult. The artist Frederic McCubbin subsequently lived in the house, by then named *Carlsberg* in Kensington Road, South Yarra.

A special general meeting of the Governors of the Melbourne Hospital, then under construction, was held on 15 July 1847 to decide on who would qualify as senior medical staff. It was decided that 'all gentlemen declared legally qualified medical practitioners by either the New South Wales or Port Phillip Medical Boards shall be eligible as physicians and surgeons in this hospital'. This cleared the way for Hobson's appointment as a Physician in light of his German qualification.<sup>25</sup>

A pioneering treatment of the era was the use of ether anaesthetic. The *Port Phillip Gazette* reported in September 1847 that 'the operation of amputation of the toe was performed upon a patient named Buckley by Drs Hobson, Thomas and Campbell. Ether was applied in this instance, and the time occupied in the performance of the operation was only two minutes. The patient did not complain of the slightest pain, but on the contrary felt a pleasing sensation'.<sup>26</sup> The three practitioners were all recent appointees to the Melbourne Hospital.

On 14 January 1848 Hobson wrote to Margaret reporting his arrival at Colac, when visiting his friend Andrew Murray (who in partnership with L. Webster opened Colac's first inn, the Crook and Plaid):<sup>27</sup> 'My dear Marg, I arrived here yesterday after a journey of 56 miles... I feel but little fatigued. I have been

round the lake this morning with Murray in a gig and have been delighted with the face of the country'.

Hobson died at 'his villa, near Melbourne' on 4 March 1848, after four days of lung haemorrhage and just before the Melbourne Hospital opened on 15 March.<sup>28</sup> He was survived by Margaret, three sons and one daughter.

### ***Tributes***

On 13 March 1848 Ronald Gunn wrote a letter of condolence to Margaret:

It is with unfeigned sorrow that I have this afternoon learned by a letter from Mr La Trobe of the most unexpected death of my dear friend Hobson... I had not heard of his illness – beyond a paragraph in his last letter that he had not recently been so well & mentioning an intended trip to Gippsland as a restorative... I shall miss the enjoyment of his correspondence and that fund of information on Natural History subjects which he knew so well how to communicate. On these points regret is vain, but in years to come it may soothe you to know how universally your husband was esteemed by all who knew him. Pray let me know how I can be of assistance.

He sent her a case of apples from his property *Penquite* outside Launceston.

On 7 April 1848 Charles La Trobe wrote to Ronald Gunn:

You would I find have heard direct from poor Hobson's friends on the subject you wrote to me about. He was very collected up to the last & left everything in good order, being I am glad to say able to leave certain provision for Mrs H. & his children... I saw her the other day & she acknowledged your kindness & readiness to come to her aid. I still grieve over her husband's loss. I had always at hand as long as he was alive in my vicinity, an intelligent mind to which I could communicate any matter of interest that came under my notice in my various journeys & was sure to draw out valuable opinions & information. We have [lost] a noble & new held opinion in this country & really now no one who has either time, taste or talent to turn it to account.<sup>29</sup>

On 23 March 1848 a public meeting raised £100 to construct a memorial to Hobson which was completed in 1850. It was installed over his grave which was initially in the Old Melbourne Cemetery (later the site of Victoria Market), and then transferred to Fawkner Cemetery in the 1920s:

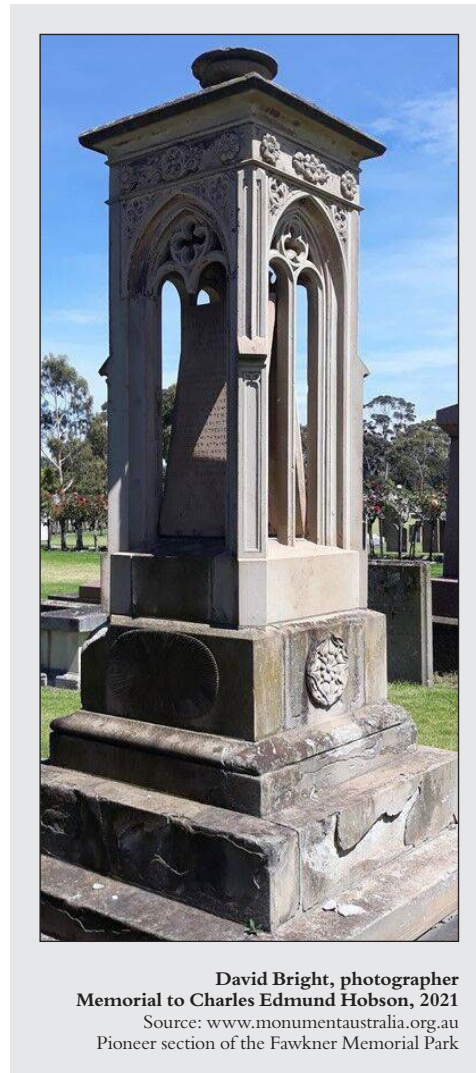
THIS MONUMENT  
IN MEMORY OF  
EDMUND CHARLES  
HOBSON, M.D.

Born at Parramatta, August the 10th 1814  
Died at Melbourne March the 4th 1848  
HAS BEEN ERECTED BY PUBLIC  
SUBSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF A  
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW  
COLONIST  
WHO WAS PREEMINENT IN HIS  
PROFESSION, AND WHOSE SKILL  
AND ATTENTION  
WERE NEVER SOLICITED BY THE  
POOR OR DISTRESSED IN VAIN.  
HE UNITED WITH RARE MEDICAL  
AND OTHER ATTAINMENTS,  
DISPOSITIONS, AND VIRTUES  
WHICH ENDEARED HIM AS A MAN  
AND A CHRISTIAN  
TO HIS MANY FRIENDS.  
He Died Universally regretted  
in the 34th Year  
of his Age

According to Garryowen, 'Hobson's death was regarded as little short of a public loss'.<sup>30</sup>

In a later era, Edmund Hobson would likely have achieved University professorial status. In 1853 La Trobe made a grant of 100 acres (40.5 hectares) to establish the University of Melbourne. A Scheme for the Institution of a Faculty of Medicine in 1857 led to a Medical School opening in 1862.<sup>31</sup>

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### ***Parramatta commemoration: a postscript***

At the end of October 1938 Parramatta mounted a ten-day-long display of 587 items to commemorate the 150th anniversary of European settlement in Australia. Three contributions from Melbourne were provided: Letters of Dr Edmund Charles Hobson, a short sketch of his life, and a photograph of his portrait. A brochure promoting the display is now held in the archive.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of staff of the Heritage Room State Library Victoria, at State Library of New South Wales, Parramatta and District Historical Society, and the State Library and Archive Service, Libraries Tasmania, in addition to members of the *La Trobeana* editorial team.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 Edmund Charles Hobson Papers, 1825-1937, MS 8457, referred to as the Hobson archive (and Diary, April 1839, M 383, accessible online), Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.
- 2 C.A. McCallum, 'Hobson, Edmund Charles (1814-1848)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966, p.544-545. See also 'Memoir of the Late Dr Hobson', *Illustrated Australian Magazine*, vol.1, no.6, December 1850, pp.395-408 (held State Library of New South Wales and the National Library of Australia). It is recorded by McCallum that William Hobson (1793-1842), naval officer and governor of New Zealand, was Edmund's second cousin.

- 3 *Argus*, 7 November 1848, p.4.
- 4 'Luttrell, Edward (1756-1824), surgeon', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.2, 1967, pp.139-140.
- 5 William Crowther, 'E.S.P. Bedford and his Hospital and Medical School of St Mary's, Van Diemen's Land', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol.2, no.2, 8 July 1944, p.25.
- 6 D.H. Borchardt, 'Burn, David (c.1799-1875)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, pp.181-182.
- 7 R.A.L. Agnew, 'John Forbes FRS (1787-1861)', *JLL Bulletin: Commentaries on the history of treatment evaluation*, <https://www.jameslindlibrary.org/articles/john-forbes-frs-1787-1861> (accessed 3 December 2024).
- 8 <https://archives.collections.ed.ac.uk/agents/people/24> (accessed 5 December 2024).
- 9 H. S. Parris, 'From Melbourne to the Murray: extracts from the diary of a pioneer naturalist, Dr Edmund Charles Hobson', *Victorian Naturalist*, vol.66, 1950, pp.183-190, 203-210 (and SLV M 383 accessible online).
- 10 *Port Phillip Patriot*, 10 April 1839, pp.3-4.
- 11 More about Hobson on the journey, together with some diary extracts, may be found in Penny Russell's *This Errant Lady: Jane Franklin's overland journey to Port Phillip and Sydney in 1839*, Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002, accessible at [https://www.nla.gov.au/sites/default/files/this\\_errant\\_lady.pdf](https://www.nla.gov.au/sites/default/files/this_errant_lady.pdf).
- 12 *Austral-Asiatic Review*, (Hobart), 4 June 1839, p.7; Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'Franklin, Sir John (1786-1847)', rear-admiral, Arctic explorer and lieutenant governor, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, pp.412-415.
- 13 The Natural History Society of Van Diemen's Land, later known as the Tasmanian Society for the Advancement of Natural Science, was formed in 1838 by Sir John Franklin (strongly under the influence of Lady Franklin) in partnership with local VDL scientists. In 1841 the Society began publishing the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics, &c.* The Society was active until 1848 when it merged with the Royal Society of Tasmania (*Encyclopedia of Australian Science and Innovation*, <https://www.coas.info/biogs/P005879b.htm>, accessed 1 November 2024.)
- 14 Hobson's two papers published in Volume 1 of the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*: 'On the *Callorhynchus Australis*', 1841 January, pp.14-20; and 'Observations on the blood of the *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*', 1841 July, pp.94-98. Subsequently, in Volume 2: 'Extract from a letter "on some Fossil Bones discovered at Mount Macedon, Port Phillip"', 1844 January, pp.208-210; 'On the Fossil Bones at Mount Macedon, Port Phillip', 1845 April, p.311; 'On the Fossil Bones from Mount Macedon, Port Phillip (with two plates)' - three figures drawn by G.A. Gilbert 'from sketches by Mrs E.C. Hobson', 1845 July, pp.344-347; and Volume 3, 'On the Jaw of the *Diprotodon Australis* and its dental formula', 1849 January, p.387.
- 15 The letter of 18 February 1841 was donated to the Public Library in 1932 by Mrs M.M. Sharp (née Hobson, later Mrs Hamilton, Edmund's granddaughter).
- 16 John Botham 'The Good Old Rajah': and those who sailed in her', *La Trobeana*, vol. 14, no. 2, July 2015, pp.35-36.
- 17 'Sir Richard Owens, 1804-1892', <https://www.portrait.gov.au/people/richard-owens-1804> (accessed 2 December 2024).
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- 19 *Ibid.*, p.399.
- 20 Walter Heale, 'Registration of Medical Practitioners in the Port Phillip District', *La Trobeana*, vol.14, no.3, November 2015, pp.24-30.
- 21 Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round The World, under the command of Capt. Fitz Roy, R.N.*, Second edition, corrected, with additions, London: John Murray, 1845.
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- 23 Richard Owen, 'On the Fossil Mammals of Australia', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1859, p.310 (see <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/45496652>). In the letter Hobson's name is incorrectly printed as Henry.
- 24 Alexander Davidson (1792-1856) was an early resident in the area. See George Tibbits, *Prahran Conservation Study: history of the development of Prahran*, Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983, pp.17-18; and *Conservation Review, City of Prahran*, Context Pty Ltd, 1993, Vol.2, pp.64-65 for information about *Bona Vista*.
- 25 Alan Gregory, *The Ever Open Door: a history of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, 1848-1998*, South Melbourne: Hyland House, pp.14-15.
- 26 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 4 September 1847, p.2.
- 27 *Colac: a short history from 1837*, Colac, Vic.: Colac and District Historical Society, [1982?], pp.1-2.
- 28 Gregory, p.18.
- 29 L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1975, p.32.
- 30 'Garryowen' (Edmund Finn), *Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835 to 1852: historical, anecdotal and personal*, Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, 1988, p.881.
- 31 Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell, *The Melbourne Medical School, 1862-1962*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977, pp.12-13.



The Gracehill Church, 2024  
bbc.co.uk © copyright 2024 BBC

# UNESCO World Heritage listing for Northern Ireland Moravian settlement

By Robert Christie

**Rob Christie, a former secondary teacher of history and a primary school principal, has lived in Gippsland for the past forty years and in that time has written a number of books specialising in Victorian high country goldfields history. His book, *A Convenient Scapegoat: Angus McMillan and the Gippsland Massacres*, was published in 2023. He has visited Ireland many times in pursuit of his family origins and recently completed a digital record of all the headstones and burial sites in the Gracehill graveyard.**

In July 2024 the Moravian settlements of Herrnhut in Germany, Bethlehem in Pennsylvania, United States, and Gracehill in Northern Ireland were added to the list of World Heritage sites. The importance of Gracehill was originally acknowledged in 1975 when it was declared Northern Ireland's first Conservation Area.

Gracehill, the only complete Moravian settlement in Northern Ireland, is part of a Transnational Designation entitled 'Moravian Church Settlements'. This means that there is one listing but includes several sites in different

countries.<sup>1</sup> To be included and protected under a UNESCO World Heritage listing, a site must have Outstanding Universal Value determined by its cultural, historical or scientific significance. Gracehill, founded in 1759, is and was seen as an outstanding example of town planning reflecting the Moravian values of education, equality, industry, tolerance and spirituality.<sup>2</sup>

The village is built around a main square, dominated by the majestic Montgomery oak and overlooked by the Church, a Grade A listed building of 1765, which is the focal point of the community. The character of Gracehill has



**Robert Christie, photographer**  
**Former Single Brethren's House, Gracehill, 2024**  
 Built 1820, it has been a private dwelling since the late 1850s

been preserved in the distinctive eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stone buildings which surround the square.

Initially the village, on the outskirts of Ballymena, was self-sufficient with crafts people providing all the necessities for the local population. It was famed for its linen manufactory and lacework;<sup>3</sup> handkerchiefs were sent to Queen Adelaide in 1834 and a christening robe was made for King Edward VII.<sup>4</sup> The Moravians placed a strong emphasis on education, both for girls and boys, and at one time there were four schools in the settlement.

Church members were grouped into 'choirs' of the same sex and similar age. This separation, it was believed, reduced distraction and allowed men and women to focus their attention on God. Single brothers and single sisters had their own communal houses, as did widows and widowers.

This division was extended to the burial ground known as God's Acre where men are still buried on the left-hand side of the central path and women on the right. All the headstones are of a comparable size and shape, laid flat on the ground as the Moravians believe that everyone is equal in death.

The community had complete faith in God's will and as a result all important decisions were put to 'the Lot.' When a decision on a question was needed three pieces of paper were

placed in a container, one had a positive response, one a negative and one a blank. The outcome was determined by what was drawn out.<sup>5</sup>

The Moravian Church is one of the oldest Protestant denominations dating back to the fifteenth century. John Cennick and Benjamin La Trobe, whose grandson was Charles Joseph La Trobe, were instrumental in establishing the religion in Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Although it is not known if Charles La Trobe ever visited Gracehill, Benjamin's half-brother James Gottlieb married his second wife, Sarah Rouse, there in 1806. His son James La Trobe spent time in the community and became a bishop in 1863.<sup>7</sup>

Gracehill has a vast archive of historical material dating back to the establishment of the settlement. Ministers wrote daily diaries detailing occurrences in the town and there are numerous journals recording the minutes of the various committees of management. This history was crucial in providing the basis for the application for World Heritage listing.

Preparing the case for inclusion as a World Heritage site commenced more than twenty years ago. Dr David Johnston, Chair of the Gracehill Heritage Trust which was behind the application, travelled to India for the announcement. Reflecting on the successful outcome he commented that the 'committee focussed on collaborating with partners local, national and international to highlight the important heritage that exists in Gracehill.'<sup>8</sup>

Gracehill is still an active Moravian community led by Bishop Sarah Groves who said, 'It shows that what we have in terms of our history, buildings, layout, archives and our living culture and faith is of local, regional and international importance'.<sup>9</sup> A visit to Gracehill today gives a rare insight into a vibrant community and beautiful village which was established 265 years ago and is still serving the needs of its local community.

#### Endnotes

For further information on Gracehill, see Robert Christie, 'The Moravian Village of Gracehill, Northern Ireland: the La Trobes and an Australian connection', *La Trobeana*, vol.20, no.3, November 2021, pp.34-43.

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2 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria>.

3 Edna Cooper, 'Old Gracehill and some of its Residents in the 19th and 20th centuries', *Moravian History Magazine*, 2019, p.2.

4 Rosalie White, *A History of Gracehill Moravian Settlement*, [Gracehill: The Author], 1996, p.24.

5 Gracehill Congregational diaries, 1759-1780.

6 Gary Martin Best, *John Cennick: the forgotten evangelist*, Bristol: New Room Publications, 2016, pp.279-303.

7 Gracehill Congregational diaries, 1806-1863. (One of James's sons founded the New Zealand branch of the family.)

8 David Johnston, 'Gracehill wins UNESCO World Heritage Site Status', British Broadcasting Corporation, 27 July 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8809jgn9d8o> (accessed 22 August 2024).

9 Sarah Groves, Interview with Rob Christie at Gracehill, 1 August 2024.

## *La Trobe's Cottage podcasts*

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The La Trobe's Cottage Volunteer Management Team has initiated a series of podcasts on aspects of the property. The series is hosted by La Trobe Society member Peter Jewell, a volunteer at the Cottage, who is a town planner and longstanding built-environment podcaster. Peter interviews five experts on their areas of interest.

Biographer Dianne Reilly answers questions about Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe. Researcher John Botham

discusses the Cottage building. Collections Manager Katie Potter reveals the Cottage collection. Garden Coordinator Helen Botham describes La Trobe's original garden and the reconstructed garden today. Longstanding volunteer Neville Jarvis talks about volunteering at La Trobe's Cottage.

This enlightening series may be accessed via the La Trobe Society website, <https://www.latrobesociety.org.au/la-trobes-cottage-podcasts>.

## La Trobe's Cottage Podcasts

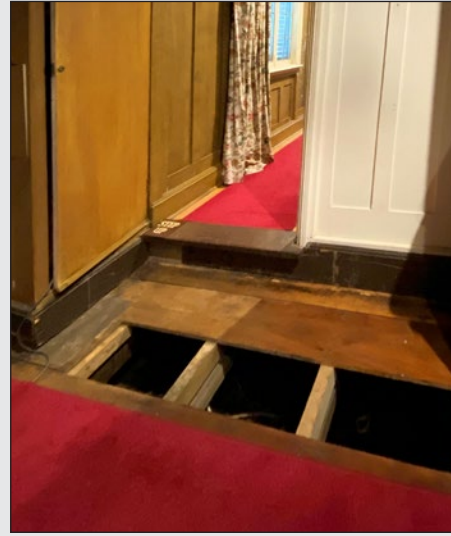


A series of podcasts hosted by **Peter Jewell**.

1. Dianne Reilly answers questions about La Trobe.
2. John Botham discusses the Cottage building.
3. Neville Jarvis talks about volunteering.
4. Helen Botham describes La Trobe's garden and the reconstructed garden today.
5. Katie Potter reveals the Cottage collection.



Trench outside the fence-line



Raised floor-boards in the dining room

## Water leak at La Trobe's Cottage

The cause of a long-standing and intractable water leak under La Trobe's Cottage has finally been identified and the leak fixed. About two years ago it became apparent that water was collecting under the building, but this was attributed to the slope of the land and high levels of water coming from sprinklers watering the neighbouring Kings Domain lawns. The sprinklers were moderated, but last winter when the atmosphere in the cottage was decidedly cold and damp, and a substantial build-up of mould was discovered in the service cupboard, it was clear that something else was at play and concern for the collection reached a new level.

When monitoring by the National Trust Collections Manager showed a very high level of humidity, dehumidifiers were installed in the three main rooms and these required daily emptying for three long months by members of the Cottage Volunteer Management Team, who were then assisted for another two months by the Assets Team. The Assets Operations Manager arranged for City of Melbourne inspectors to visit and they noted wet conditions underneath the dining room, which was at first thought to

be due to a leak from the fire sprinkler system. However, more careful inspection after the National Trust Maintenance staff raised some dining room floorboards revealed a break in an old, discontinued pipe that was dripping onto the ground underneath the dining room, where the recently-restored oil portraits of the La Trobe Family are hanging.

Unbeknown to the heritage architects in the 1990s, this capped pipe under full pressure was there when the building was relocated in 1998 from its former position alongside the Royal Botanic Gardens to its present location 100 metres away on Dallas Brooks Drive in Kings Domain.

Supported by the Trust's Assets and Maintenance teams, the City of Melbourne contractors re-capped the pipe prior to the Cottage fence-line and the dehumidifiers were eventually put into storage. The Collections Manager continues to monitor the humidity levels (and the floorboards can be readily raised again should that be required, but we are hoping not!).

# Forthcoming events

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Invitations will be emailed to members in advance of each event.  
Bookings are essential.

## 2025

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### MARCH

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**Sunday 23**

**La Trobe's Birthday Celebration**

**Time:** 4.30 - 6.00 pm

**Venue:** La Trobe's Cottage Garden, Dallas Brooks Drive, Kings Domain, Melbourne

**Speaker:** Tim Gatehouse, researcher into Victoria's colonial history

**Topic:** From India to Jolimont: new insights on some of the Cottage furniture

**Admission:** \$15 per person

**Sparkling wine and cake will be served**

### APRIL

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**Tuesday 15**

**Joint La Trobe Society/RHSV**

**AGL Shaw Lecture**

**Time:** 5.30 - 7.30 pm

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

**Speaker:** Dr Andrew Kilsby, La Trobe Society Fellow, 2024-25

**Topic:** La Trobe, Red Coats and the Mounted Police: their presence in the Port Phillip District until Separation in 1851

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$35 per person

## MAY

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**Tuesday 13 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 & Topic:** tba

**Refreshments**

**Admission:** \$25 per person

## JULY

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**Thursday 24**

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

**Time:** 6.30 - 8.30 pm

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

**Speaker:** Dr Jonathan Burdon AM MD FRACP

**Topic:** Doctors in Melbourne in the Time of La Trobe

**Refreshments**

**No charge**

## AUGUST

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**Thursday 7 tbc**

**La Trobe Society**

**Annual General Meeting & Dinner**

**Time:** 6.30pm

**Details to be advised.**

## Bookings

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For catering purposes, bookings are essential

Email: [secretary@latrobesociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@latrobesociety.org.au)

Or phone Dianne Reilly on 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](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana)

They may be searched by keyword.

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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

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