

Newsletter No.37

30 June 2021

Dear Volunteers,

We hope you managed our latest lockdown without too much inconvenience. We were very fortunate that the second of our post-Covid openings took place just before this, on Sunday 23 May. We trialled new opening hours of 1-4pm and we felt this worked well for the volunteer team and gave some of the early-afternoon park goers an opportunity to visit. We also trialled a card-only payment policy. This simplifies the transactions we need to manage on the Square point-of-sale system and worked smoothly throughout the afternoon, with no would-be visitors inconvenienced by it. 31 people attended, 20 of whom had pre-booked. Many thanks to the volunteers who assisted with the day.

We have been noting with growing concern rat droppings, and even some damage to furniture, every time we visit the Cottage. Colin and Alyce have been in touch with Adams Pest Control who have increased the number of bait stations, and blocked any obvious possible entry points, but to no avail. What appears to be an extreme measure has now been adopted. Katie Potter, National Trust Collections Coordinator, has provided our Curatorial Coordinator, Sheetal, with a large roll of Tyvec sheeting. This is made of spun plastic, is soft and suitable for use on heritage furniture and the rodents won't eat it. Sheetal, with assistance from Helen Armstrong, has covered all the furniture at risk with this sheeting. This is a good time to do this, as there are no planned tours of the Cottage for some months, and we'll hope to be able to remove the Tyvec with confidence later in the year.

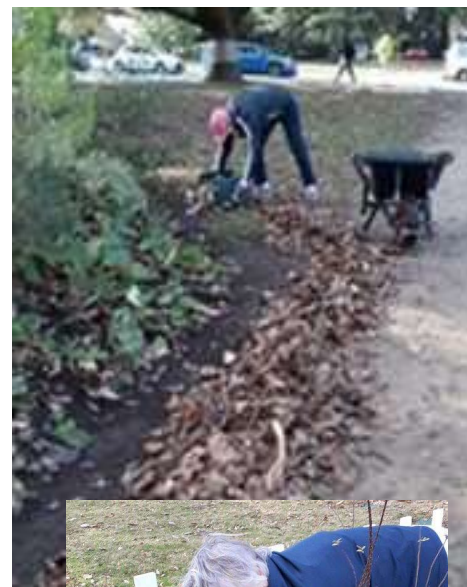


The garden Working Bee on 18 May enabled us to get the garden looking its best for the opening on 23 May. Our National Trust gardener Eliasha Muldowney attended with two colleagues and they cut back some large boughs of the *Correa*, *Prunus* and *Viburnum* behind the Cottage. There's been another Working Bee since then, on 22 June. This was a day focused on pruning roses, apples and spireas. We were most grateful to heritage rose expert Geoff Crowhurst for attending and demonstrating how to prune these heritage plants. We lifted some Arthur de Sansal roses to make room for the Coupe d'Hebe and Baronne Prevost roses soon to arrive from South Australia. These were on the list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851. The Arthur de Sansal roses, which have bloomed with their deep maroon flowers for many years, are now grouped slightly closer together, in order to provide a good show. We found that the ground

**Cottage Management Team**

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cover *Crucianella* (now *Phuopsis*) *stylosa* (Crosswort), which had been growing in between the roses, had been suffocating the roses with its thick matted roots. This was on the list of plants sent to La Trobe by his friend Ronald Gunn in Van Diemen's Land, in April 1844. It flowered beautifully last summer, and we wondered why it isn't a more popular garden plant today. Now we know - we've had to remove it. It was a very successful Working Bee – many thanks to those who attended.



Geoff pruning with Graham and Carolyn. Tim preparing ground for new roses.  
Right: Angela raking leaves. Kathy pruning spireas.

We had a very pleasant morning at Bishops court, the home of the Anglican Archbishop in East Melbourne, on Thursday 13 May. This was a substitute for an end-of season meeting and provided an opportunity for the volunteers and their family and friends to get together after not much contact over the past year. After Morning Tea in the elegant Drawing Room we were taken by Tim Gatehouse, a garden volunteer at La Trobe's Cottage, on a most informative tour of the public rooms and the chapel. Being also a volunteer at Bishops court, Tim has an interest in the architecture, and the early residents, of Bishops court, and has written two books on these subjects. He provided an excellent tour for us, bringing in the many links between the first residents, the Perrys, and their friend La Trobe. Helen Botham, also a volunteer at Bishops court, then led a tour of the garden, noting the great support La Trobe provided to Mrs Perry as she developed her garden. Another dual La Trobe's Cottage/Bishops court volunteer, Robyn Mullins, helped with the morning tea. We want to thank Tim for his wonderful tour, Libby Marsden for organising the visit for us, and Archbishop and Mrs Freier for making us welcome in their home.

The Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Annual Lecture *C J La Trobe: Jolimont plantsman*, scheduled for Wednesday 26 May, was postponed due to the lockdown and has been re-scheduled for 22 September.

Megan Anderson, 2019 La Trobe Society Fellow at State Library Victoria, gave a talk for La Trobe Society members and friends on 23 June. Titled *Extravagance, Tradition and Power: Charles La Trobe's uniform*, the presentation outlined the history of La Trobe's official uniform, and the actual construction and tailoring of this splendid attire. The skill and experience Megan brought to her work was reflected in the many interesting details her research revealed. She brought examples of the type of hat, buttons, collars and cuffs La Trobe might have worn. This presentation is to be followed up by an article in *La Trobeana* later this year – a 'must-read' for all of us!

Let's hope we keep Covid at bay in Victoria, and have no more lockdowns!  
Best wishes to you all, on behalf of the Cottage Management Team,  
Helen

Helen Botham,  
La Trobe's Cottage Management Team