

La Trobe's Cottage Garden News 2016-2020

November 2020

Volunteers are still unable to access the Cottage garden, so Eliasha Muldowney from the National Trust Horticulture team has visited and pruned the *Acacia latrobei* after its spectacular Spring display. She and her team also gave the olive and one of the buddleias a prune, dead-headed the echiums, which had flowered so well in September, and did a general tidy around the beds. The roses and many other spring flowers are blooming now.



Rosa Louise Odier



Apple blossom



Veronica and Valerian



Evening Primrose,
Foxgloves, Dianthus

September 2020

I'm glad to tell you that the garden is being looked after. The gardens team from Serco have been working – they have completed weeding, edging and final mulching using 'a fine grade product from Bark King called 'Feeder' mulch'. And the garden really is looking very nice – the 'Elm Bed' is full of pretty flowers, and the cliveas and echium are at their best.



July 2020

Some may think winter is a dreary time in the garden, but throughout this winter, while volunteers have been unable to attend the site because of COVID19, there has always been something flowering prettily in the La Trobe's Cottage garden, as seen from the photographs.



The jonquils are creating a bright splash of colour, both in the bed by the Cottage and in the Elm bed, where the anemones are starting to bloom.

There are three daphne bushes at the Cottage and they are at their best just now blooming profusely with their lovely perfume. The *Correa reflexa* is doing well.



Chaenomeles japonica always adds colour to our winter garden

Judy Rigg propagated this pretty daisy from seed, and it looks wonderful just now.



Two of our latrobei plants are working up to their best show: *Grevillea latrobei* syn *rosmarinifolia*, and the *Acacia latrobei* syn *acinacea* are just coming into flower and will be at their best over the coming weeks. These plants are a reminder of Sandi Pullman's dedication to setting up La Trobe's Cottage garden.



Now, with lockdown restrictions again in place, volunteers are unable to return to the garden. So Eliasha of the National Trust Horticulture team was asked to come back to the Cottage to prune the roses, spireas and hydrangeas, and to decide whether the apples need pruning. Other plants can probably wait a little longer for some attention. It's hoped that we may be back in September for fertilising and mulching.

June 2020

With the closure of all National Trust properties due to COVID 19, no garden working bees were organised after 17 March. We had been concerned about the garden, and the need for winter pruning and tidying. So coordinator Helen asked Eliasha Muldowney of the NT Horticulture team, who oversees our work, if she could visit to carry out some pest and disease treatment, and some of the more urgent pruning which is required. Eliasha did a wonderful job, pruning the fuchsias, salvia, philadelphus and vibernum, and spraying the roses. She raked some leaves and did a general tidy. As Serco also visited and mowed the grass and trimmed the edges, the garden now looks very well cared-for, as you can in the picture opposite. We'll arrange a Garden Working Bee as soon as we get the go-ahead from the National Trust - we hope that we might be back in time to complete the pruning tasks.



Winter Garden June 2020

Fiona Glover, the secretary of The Australian Lavender Growers Association, visited the Cottage on Australia Day, and told us that the lavenders we have in the garden would not have been available in La Trobe's time. Although Sandi Pullman had sourced the lavenders as *Lavandula angustifolia*, Fiona said that they were in fact *Lavandula x intermedia* (*Lavandins*) - Lavandins are described as another species to *angustifolias*. Fiona said that true English Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*, has short flower stems which appear in late Spring. Plants would have been cultivated from seed collected in France where it grew wild. This was the species of Lavender most popularly grown for its scent during La Trobe's time. It was often referred to as *Lavandula officinalis* or *Lavandula spica* or true English lavender.

In recent times, nurseries have labelled their Lavenders as 'English Lavender' or 'French Lavender', rather than using the correct botanic name which has led to confusion of plants. 'English Lavender' is a Lavandin and is a hybrid developed in the late nineteenth century. Known for its vigour, it has tall flower spikes and flowers in Summer. It does not set seed and has to be propagated from cuttings. This is the variety that Sandi had, in good faith, acquired for the Cottage.

Fiona kindly offered to donate some more suitable lavender plants during the winter, when she would be lifting her lavender plants. I visited her in Ballarat in late June, and she gave us six plants of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Egerton Blue'. Although this is a relatively recent cultivar, bred by the renowned lavender expert the late Rosemary Holmes and named after Mt Egerton near Buninyong, Fiona says that this is very close to what La Trobe would have had.

We are most grateful to Fiona for her kind donation of these plants - I'm hoping I'll be able to get to the garden before long to plant them - they should flower in November.



March 2020

We held a working bee on 17 March, supported by Eliasha Muldowney, of the National Trust Horticulture team. She led the work to rejuvenate the Weeping Elm bed – we removed all the plants from a section of that bed, dug in new soil and cow manure, and then replanted it. We hope to complete the work in this bed over the coming winter. We also planted a *Polygala myrtifolia*. This is a common garden plant in Melbourne, and in fact in some areas is a declared weed, but 'Polygala speciosa' was on the list of plants sent to La Trobe from the Sydney Botanic Gardens in June 1844. A native of South Africa, it features in a catalogue of plants cultivated in the Botanic Garden, Sydney, as early as 1828. *Polygala myrtifolia* is the closest we can get to the original species. It has been planted by the dining room door.



Polygala

Although the Cottage lawn does get quite long at times, the Serco Mowing Team are keen to help us keep the Cottage looking neat and are doing their best. We will attempt to eradicate some of the weeds in the lawn this autumn/winter.

December 2019

Working Bees were held on 19 November and 17 December. Summer pruning and tidying was carried out and we planted some *Phuopsis stylosa* plants which our coordinator Judy germinated from seed she had sourced from a seed supplier. '*Crucianella stylosa*' is among the plants sent to La Trobe by his friend Ronald Gunn in Tasmania in 1844. This is now known as *Phuopsis stylosa*, common name 'Crosswort.' We planted them between the Arthur de Sansal roses along the back wall of the Cottage. We hope they may flower next summer. Three members of the gardening team have volunteered to contribute to top-up summer watering of the garden. This can be supplemented, if necessary, by Sunday volunteers who can set the hose on a sprinkler and move it around the garden during the afternoon.

Judy Rigg has decided to step down as Gardens Coordinator. Judy has made a significant contribution to the Cottage garden during her time as Coordinator, sourcing appropriate plants, liaising with Serco, organising the garden working bees, and keeping the garden in very good order. We thank her for all her dedicated work in the garden and we're delighted that she will continue to be involved as an active member of the garden working-bee team. Helen Botham will take on the role of Garden Coordinator.



La Trobe's Cottage Garden News



2019 working bees



Spring Opening and Garden Day, Sunday 6 October 2019.

A celebration of La Trobe's garden brought a good number of visitors to the Cottage. Tours of the garden explained how La Trobe loved his garden and planned it carefully. Visitors were shown the 'latrobeii' species we have in the garden: *Grevillea latrobeii* syn *G. rosmarinifolia*, *Acacia latrobeii* syn *A. acinacea* and *Eremophila latrobeii*.



Eremophila latrobeii



Acacia latrobeii syn *A. acinacea*

September/October 2019

In July, the Arthur de Sansal roses were re-positioned into fresh soil (supplied by Serco) to a distance of 50cm from their original positions along the back wall of the Cottage. This was done to allow more air circulation around the roses and to enable treating of the roses without spraying the Cottage wall. The day lilies in the bed outside the dining room verandah were lifted, and the bed dug and cleared of roots, then the day lilies were replanted.

We had noted that the Camellia 'Plantation Pink', in the corner at the back of the Kitchen block, has what appears to be severe borer damage to the trunk. We attempted to remove the damage to the trunk and pruned the tree, as well as applying white oil and some liquid fertiliser. However, it seemed unlikely to survive, so we removed it in October. It was replaced by the *Camellia japonica* Welbankii, which we moved from a shady position near the garden box. Jane Edmanson and Jo Reitze had planted it there in March 2015 after we had purchased it from the Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. It is listed as early as 1843 in the Colonial Plants Database (Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection, Sydney Living Museums, Historic Houses Trust of NSW) as *Camellia Japonica welbankii* [*Camellia japonica* cv. *Welbankiana*], in the catalogue of plants cultivated at Camden Park.



Arthur de Sansal rose

January 2019

We had some extremely hot days in January with temperatures in excess of 40 degrees. Despite this the garden is looking healthy and green thanks to the very effective irrigation system which is monitored by our Maintenance Coordinator. After some discussion it was decided to limit the size of the espaliered apples rather than increase the framing on which they are growing and they have been pruned accordingly. They are currently laden with fruit and look impressive and enticing.



In preparation for the Australia Day opening the garden was kept watered and was given a general tidy up, including weeding, pruning and shaping of shrubs, including the *Buddleia salvifolia*, *Ruscus aculeatus* (known as Butcher's Broom—the plant with red berries in the bed outside the small garden gate), the correas, the philadelphus and the olive tree. The roses were dead-headed and fed with Seasol, along with the apples. General weeding was carried out in all beds.

Some areas are looking a little bare and it is hoped that we will obtain some plants from Rippon Lea and other sources in February/March and a working bee will be held to plant these in various spots around the garden. Edging of beds is also required at this time.

We hope that next year we will have a more varied display of summer annuals in flower and planning will be done throughout the year in an effort to achieve this.

December 2018

In December Judy Rigg, a new volunteer, took on the Garden Coordinator role. This enables Ellen Walters to move to the role of Housekeeping Coordinator. Judy is a very experienced gardener and has developed and maintained some beautiful large gardens. She will be working with the garden volunteers to renew some of the beds that need revitalising, moving some plants around the garden, and development some new areas in the garden. She started by arranging a couple of December working bees in order to carry out some summer tidying of the garden and to spread a large delivery of mulch which she had arranged.



Judy leading the garden volunteers

June 2018

Sandi Pullman has sadly left the Cottage garden. As mentioned in December 2016, Sandi's dedication has provided us with a garden of which La Trobe would be proud. She sourced plants named after La Trobe including the *Grevillea latrobei* she planted in 2011 which is now a large shrub which blooms for much of the year, and the *Acacia latrobei* (Gold Dust wattle) whose golden flowers provide a magnificent display early every Spring. This acacia was propagated for Sandi by Jenny Happel, a guide at the Botanic Gardens and a descendent of Georgiana McCrae. Sandi organised the



Sandi panting *Grevillea latrobei* in 2011

creation of the garden seat under the elm, which was made, as a copy of the bench in the La Trobe Bateman picture *Part of lower rockery at Jolimont, 1853*, by Alastair Boell with wood from a Monterey cypress that was blown over in a storm in the King's Domain. Sandi also arranged the photo-shoot that provided a portfolio of superb pictures of the garden, which records the beautiful array of plants, most of which were either grown by La Trobe or would have been available in its time.

Sandi's efforts to recreate La Trobe's Cottage garden were recognised in the Historical Interpretation Award of the Victorian Community History Awards of 2014. We thank Sandi for her dedication to La Trobe's garden, and wish her well for the future.

Ellen Walters took on the role of Garden Coordinator and is coordinating La Trobe Cottage garden working bees. We are slowly working around the garden both inside and outside the gates, taming the amazing healthy growth that can be seen in every corner of the place, deciding collectively how to proceed.

Ellen also led a couple of garden tours explaining the history of the development of Charles La Trobe's vision for his 'estate' over his fifteen year tenure, as well as pointing out some of the more important plants that we have growing here.

She thanked all who helped make things happen in the garden.



Ellen with her gardening team

November 2017

Spring is the best time in our garden as it is looking its best. Roses are out, lavender setting flowers for summer and the foxgloves and larkspur are in their full glory. The best light to view the garden is early in the morning or at dusk. The heritage apple trees have set fruit and hopefully we'll have a bumper crop (and not the possums).

The National Trust gardeners are going to help us propagate some more of the red rose *Rosa 'Arthur de Sansal'* for the front garden and English lavender, as some of the existing lavender is starting to look woody and needs replacing.



August 2017



The garden is looking very colourful with the white and yellow jonquils and the red flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*). Sandi has taken some cuttings of this in the hope they will strike and some more can be planted along the fence. Recently we purchased a half barrel and we planted it with succulents. The tiny *Agave americana* 'Variegata' came from the plants growing along the East Melbourne train line that once was a part of Jolimont. *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer' is flowering at the front door of the Cottage and the gorgeous scent in that area is from the *Daphne odora*. Once the weather warms up, we are hoping that all the plants we pruned hard will sprout and shower us with their new juvenile foliage.

Thanks to Sandi Pullman's negotiating skills we now have sole access to a shed in the garden service depot adjacent to Domain House. It is a reasonable size (approx. 4 x 2 metres) giving room for storage of gardening equipment as well as items previously kept in the Kitchen block not required on a regular basis.

After initial early cleaning by volunteers last March, further cleaning will be carried out shortly to prepare for the addition of extra shelving, and hooks will be added along with a large two-door steel cabinet provided to us by Bunnings, Port Melbourne, as part of their Community Support Program. We are most grateful for their generosity; the shed should prove a most useful facility for us.



Shed cleaning

June 2017

Sandi Pullman is back tending to the Cottage garden, now being employed by the National Trust.

She reports: Our garden is still very floriferous with the dahlias and zinnias still flowering; when they have finished, I will plant pansies for winter colour. Looking towards spring, the jonquils and anemones are starting to come up.

We had our best apple crop this year, picking over 3kg, which were made into an apple slice served for morning tea at the volunteers meeting on 28 April. The *Correa alba* and *Spirea* have been pruned back, and the autumn leaves have been raked and added to our compost heap for use as mulch later.

With the help of Sam Davis of Serco we are getting some garden hoops for the front beds. Although La Trobe did not have garden hoops they will give the front an attractive presence.

I am working towards a Spring garden festival to celebrate the start of our summer season on 1 October. It may be a small event this year, but hopefully we will be able to build it up to be more impressive for next year.

December 2016

Our dedicated Garden Coordinator, Sandi Pullman, has sadly had to withdraw from her voluntary duties at La Trobe's Cottage garden due to study and work demands. Sandi has led the work to transform the garden area into the style La Trobe would have had in place, featuring many of the plants it is known he grew. She has also sourced many plants of interest including a collection of 'latrobei' species (*Grevillea*, *Eremophila*, *Glycine*, *Acacia*) and has initiated many garden projects such as the making of the garden seat, the bird bath, the storage box, and the painting by Jo Reitze from which cards were produced with sale proceeds going to the Cottage. Lorraine Finlay will, with help from Tim Gatehouse and Ellen Walters, continue to arrange occasional working bees.

Sandi has produced a schedule of activities required throughout the year. A copy of this and her plant census and Richard Thomas's plan of the garden is now available in the Cottage for volunteers to view; the plan and census may also be viewed on the Cottage garden web page, <http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/garden.html>.

We thank Sandi for all her hard work at the Cottage over the last seven years. She will still be in touch to advise.



Sandi's bird bath

March 2016

The garden has held up well to the summer, our pride and joy this year being our heritage apple trees producing six apples. The dahlias also put on a very colourful show. Recently the volunteers pruned the lavender which has been put in muslin bags to be used throughout the cottage.

At the end of last year, a digitised landscape plan of the garden was completed and this has now been loaded onto the Friends website <http://www.folc.latrobesociety.org.au/garden-plan.html>. It provides a snap shot of the garden as of February 2016.

The Friends also received an unusual present of an old c. 1850 hand pump from Bishopscourt (the Anglican Archbishop's home in East Melbourne). It is planned to mount it on one of our recently acquired wine barrels which would have been used to cart water in La Trobe's time.

La Trobe's Cottage garden is to be included in a book, funded by Gary Morgan, about Melbourne gardens. Sandi met author David Wilkinson and photographer Kim Baker just before Christmas, and showed them around the garden.



Visit of Australian Garden History Society National Management Committee



Sandi Pullman addresses the
AGHS NMC

Richard Heathcote, Chair of the Australian Garden History Society National Management Committee, brought his committee to visit the Cottage on 24 February. It was Richard who, during 2004-2005 when he was at the National Trust, encouraged research into La Trobe's garden which led to the publication of *La Trobe's Jolimont, A walk round my garden* in 2006. The AGHS and the La Trobe Society shared the costs for the production of the book. Sandi Pullman and Helen Botham were delighted to show the committee around the Cottage. Sandi reported on the Historical Interpretation Award, which was awarded to the La Trobe's Cottage site in 2014. She told the members of the committee about the garden plants, the history of the, and her plans.