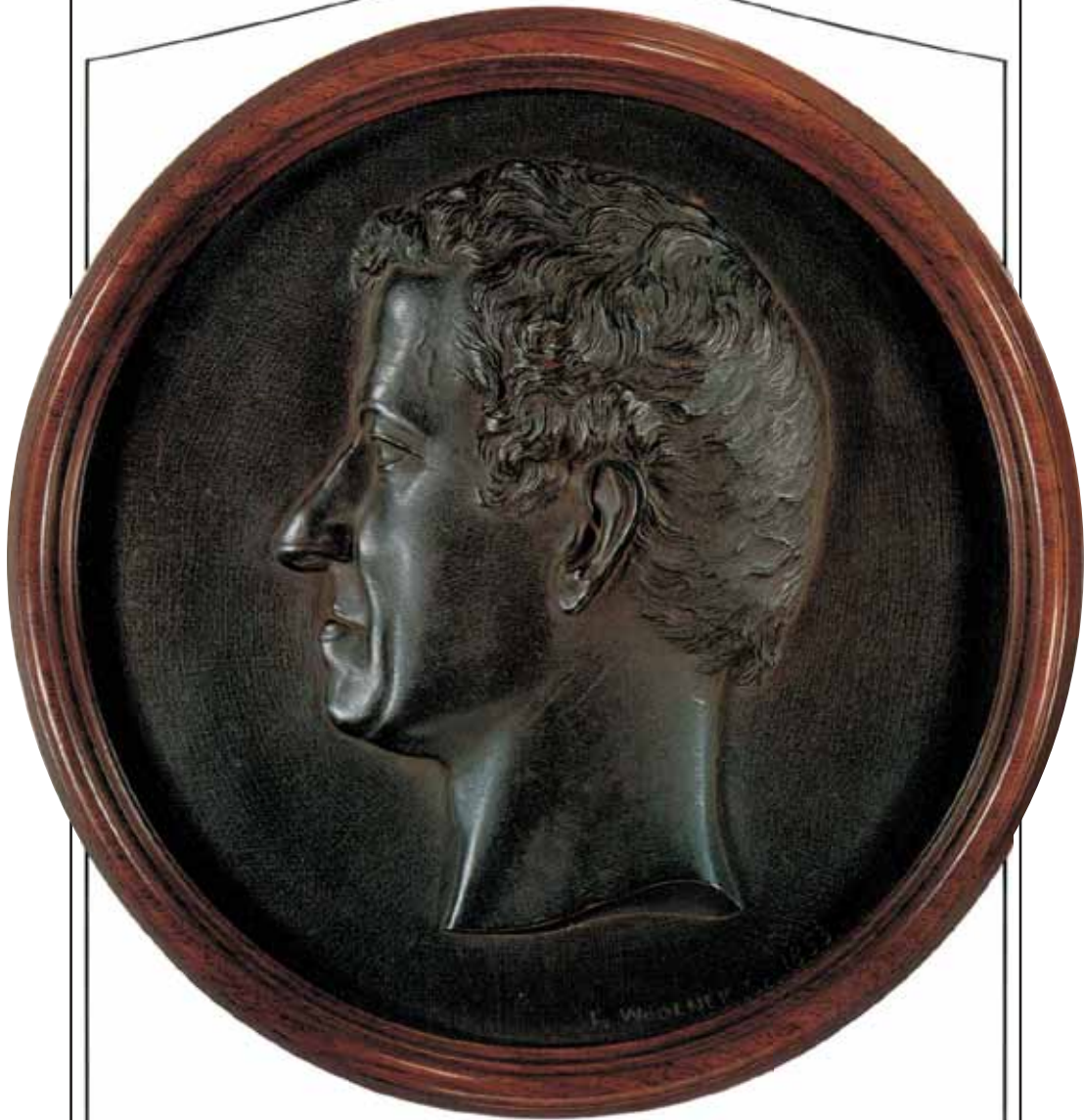


# LA TROBEANA



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

**Vol.11, No. 3, November 2012**

ISSN 1447-4026

La Trobeana  
is kindly sponsored by  
Mr Peter Lovell

**LOVELL CHEN  
ARCHITECTS & HERITAGE  
CONSULTANTS**

Lovell Chen Pty Ltd, Level 5, 176 Wellington Pde, East Melbourne 3002, Australia  
Tel: +61 (0)3 9667 0800 Fax: +61 (0)3 9416 1818 Email enquiry@lovellchen.com.au ABN 20 005 803 494



**La Trobeana**

Journal of the C J La Trobe Society Inc.  
Vol. 11, No 3, November 2012.

ISSN 1447-4026

**Editorial Committee**

Loreen Chambers (Hon Editor)  
Helen Armstrong  
Dianne Reilly  
Robyn Riddett

**Designed by**

Michael Owen michaelowen.mto@gmail.com

**For contributions and subscriptions enquiries contact:**

The Honorary Secretary: Dr Dianne Reilly AM  
The C. J. La Trobe Society  
401 Collins Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000  
Phone: 9646 2112  
Email: dmreilly@optusnet.com.au

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

**FRONT COVER**

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor  
Charles Joseph La Trobe  
1853, diam, 24.0cm. Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe.  
Signature and date incised in bronze 1.1.: T. Woolner. Sc. 1853:/M  
La Trobe, Charles Joseph, 1801-1875. Accessioned 1894  
La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

# Contents

4 Introduction  
*A Word from the President*

5 Adrienne E. Clarke  
*A Message from the Chancellor of  
La Trobe University*

**Tributes**

6 Dr Brian La Trobe

7 Dr Jean McCaughey

8 Mr Bruce Nixon

**Articles**

9 R.W. Home  
*La Trobe's 'honest looking German':  
Ferdinand Mueller and the botanical  
exploration of gold-rush Victoria*

17 Anna Murphy  
*In Search of Three-leaf Clovers: A note  
on the Clover Glycine, Charles La Trobe  
and threatened species recovery in Victoria*

21 Sandi Pullman  
*Charles La Trobe and Ferdinand Mueller*

25 Tom Darragh  
*Ferdinand Mueller and Charles La  
Trobe: 'So many signs of benevolence  
and favour'*

30 Lynn Blackwood  
*The Contribution of Ronald Gunn to  
our knowledge of the Flora and Fauna  
of Tasmania*

37 Jane Wilson  
*Research Report: Charles La Trobe's  
contribution to the establishment of the  
Horticultural Gardens at Burnley*

39 Susan Priestley  
*Crises of 1852 for Lieutenant-Governor  
La Trobe, Captain William Dugdale and  
Henrietta Augusta Davies*

46 Tim Gatehouse  
*The Turkish La Trobe: The career of  
Claude Alexandre de Bonneval, the  
Sultan's advisor at the Ottoman Court*

54 Roz Greenwood  
*Book Review: The French Closet by  
Alison Anderson Burgess*

**Reports and Notices**

56 Helen Botham  
*Anniversary of the Death of  
Charles La Trobe*

57 Jack Martin  
*La Trobe Society Digitisation Project at  
the Public Record Office Victoria*

60 Friends of La Trobe's Cottage

61 Forthcoming events

62 Contributions welcome

# Introduction

---

## From the President

The La Trobe Society AGMs are becoming a not to be missed event in our annual calendar as they combine fascinating talks with a delicious meal. This year was no exception with Tim Gatehouse's address on the incredible career of the 'Turkish La Trobe' – Claude Alexandre de Bonneval. Tim exceeded our expectations with his revelations of the amazing story of the Turkish connections of Claude Alexandre de Bonneval. It seemed hard to believe that a European establishment figure with such aristocratic connections would provide military advice and support to the Turks in their march on Europe. I was reminded of my visit to the Vienna History Museum where I saw displayed Turkish banners, pikes and other battle artifacts and read the story of the Turkish invasion being stopped at the gates to Vienna. Tim discussed how it was Claude who had advised the Sultan at the Ottoman Court on European fighting techniques. Claude de Bonneval is still known in Turkey though largely forgotten in Europe.

The various botanical articles in this La Trobeana usher us into Summer and remind us of La Trobe's passionate interest in Nature. The eminent science historian Professor Rod Home presented a superb lecture on the legendary Ferdinand Mueller who as a young man arrived in Melbourne in 1852 and was promptly appointed by Charles La Trobe as Government Botanist. Each time I visit our Royal Botanic Gardens I quietly thank La Trobe for his vision and foresight in setting this land aside. The gardens are used for important scientific research but as important are the generations of children who have grown up with a love and appreciation of the serene beauty of these gardens. Other articles will entice members to consider the superb legacy La Trobe and people, such as Ronald Campbell Gunn of Van Diemen's Land and Ferdinand von Mueller, who have added to this legacy. Modern writers

and archivists interested in exploring this past, such as Tom Darragh, Anna Murphy, Jane Wilson and Sandi Pullman have contributed to our understanding in various ways.

We have also included the text of the most interesting lecture Susan Priestley gave us on the occasion of the annual AGL Shaw lecture, hosted jointly by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and C J La Trobe Society in June 2012 on 'Crises of 1852 for Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe, Captain William Dugdale and Henrietta Augusta Davies'. Susan's article, based on her recently published book *Henrietta Dugdale: Activist 1827-1918* (2011), is written in her usual witty and elegant prose and is meticulously researched.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the La Trobe Society Committee and members, to acknowledge the generosity of Daryl Ross, one of our Vice-Presidents, and Marjorie Ross, for their generosity in donating an Audioline Portable Sound System for use at La Trobe's Cottage and at other outdoor and indoor functions. This much-needed piece of equipment will greatly improve the sound quality of our presentations.

On a final note, I am delighted to inform you that at the recent Victorian Community History Awards presented by the Public Record Office Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria our journal La Trobeana was awarded a Commendation in the category – Local History – Small Publication Award category. Congratulations to Loreen Chambers who oversees the editorial process, our designer Michael Owen, and all connected with producing our journal.

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

# A Message from the Chancellor of La Trobe University

By **Adrienne E. Clarke AC**

---

Since commencing as Chancellor of La Trobe University early last year, I have had the pleasure of discovering more about the first Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, Charles Joseph La Trobe. He was by all accounts a truly visionary leader of his time.

Members of the C J La Trobe Society will be aware that Charles La Trobe was a man of strong moral character and was driven by his need to make a difference to the communities he served. His legacy continues today at La Trobe University, which is known for its commitment to social justice, amongst other things. In this regular column I will let you know some of the exciting developments at La Trobe University today.

Like the man himself, La Trobe University is driven by progressive social values and a commitment to making a difference to the communities we serve. From his arrival in Port Phillip in 1839 it was clear that Charles La Trobe was a controversial figure with the courage to challenge the status quo. It is said he shocked the Victorian colonists with his strident arrival speech:

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

Religious sentiment aside, in these passionate and pointed words it is clear that Charles La Trobe placed people, values and community before personal acquisition and materialism. He wasn't afraid to ruffle a few colonial feathers. He did not fear being

considered idealistic – instead he wore it as a badge of honour. How very at home he would feel today on campus at La Trobe University, with our passionate and vocal student body.

I recently hosted La Trobe University's Annual Dinner where we honoured some of our most distinguished alumni including Garry Weaven – the founder of Australian superannuation, environmental conservationist James Thomas, trade union leader Bill Kelty, respected author Don Watson, Australian Public Service reform leader Terry Moran and medical researcher Dr Hala Raghieb. On reflection, these great leaders do more than just embody La Trobe values, they carry on the example of community service set by our first Lieutenant Governor.

In closing I would like to leave you with an excerpt from the speech delivered by our Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar at the dinner. In paying homage to our distinguished alumni, their pioneering spirit and unwavering idealism, he said:

"It (La Trobe) wasn't a place where your prestige rested on your potential earning capacity, but on what you stood for. What you had to say for yourself."

Charles La Trobe couldn't have said it better himself.



## Dr Brian La Trobe

1929-2012

### A Tribute



## Dr Jean McCaughey AO

1917-2012

### A Tribute

Photo: angustrumble.blogspot.com

Brian Essex La Trobe passed away on Wednesday 12 September 2012 in Johannesburg. He is survived by his dear wife Peggy, and four devoted sons Christopher, Mark, Gavin & Andrew & their families.

La Trobe Society members will remember meeting Brian and Peggy when they came to Melbourne specially so that Brian could deliver a lecture for the Society at the Lyceum Club on 4 March 2011.

Brian completed his undergraduate studies at Cape Town and London Universities. He undertook postgraduate studies at the University of Witwatersrand, popularly known as 'Wits', and at the University of Rochester in New York State. He soon qualified as a dental surgeon at the University of London and at the Royal College of Surgeons, and he practised for 25 years in South Africa. He was elected a Grahamstown City Councillor for 12 years, serving as Mayor from 1982 to 1986. He was active on the Council of Rhodes University for 20 years, retiring as its Vice-Chairman to pursue his passion for the environment.

His research career centred around waste management and energy from water. The Enviro Loo system was invented by Brian as an effective waterless, on-site, dry sanitation toilet system in use in countless countries where water is scarce. His scientific work has been recognized worldwide with numerous awards.

Brian was tremendously proud of his La Trobe heritage, and his lecture in Melbourne on Christian Ignatius La Trobe will be long remembered.

**Dianne Reilly**  
**Hon. Secretary**

It is with deep sadness that the La Trobe Society records the death of long-time member and strong supporter Dr Jean McCaughey AO. Jean died after a short illness in Melbourne on 15 September 2012 at the age of 95.

Jean McCaughey was the widow of Dr Davis McCaughey, Governor of Victoria from 1986 to 1992. With Dr McCaughey, and in her own right as a social activist and leading expert on poverty, she made lasting contributions to the Victorian community.

Born in County Antrim, Ireland, Jean was an outstanding student and won a scholarship to Queen's University in Belfast, where she studied medicine. It was there she met Davis McCaughey at a meeting of the Student Christian Movement. After their marriage in 1940 she went with him to Edinburgh, where he was completing his theology degree, and from there in 1952, with their family, to Australia where Dr Davis McCaughey took up an appointment at the University of Melbourne.

In her own right, Jean played a significant part in the life of the University, the Church, and the community. Between 1967 and 1977, she was a Research Fellow at the Melbourne Institute for Applied Economic and Social Research where she worked with Professor Ronald Henderson on the ground-breaking research into poverty in Australia. She later went

on to work as Research Fellow at the Institute of Family Studies. Her many influential social research publications included *Who Cares? Family Problems, Community Links and Helping Services* (1977) and *Where Now? Homeless Families* in the 90s. In 1990, she was co-founder of the community-based research and advocacy project, *People Together*.

Devoted to her five children, 11 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren, Jean was always committed to building a more just and compassionate society. She was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1988.

Jean and Davis McCaughey espoused the necessity of 'knowledge for the common good', a philosophy put forward by La Trobe in his quest for education for all. The McCaughey Centre in the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne, established in July 2006, is named in their honour.

Our sincere condolences are extended to the McCaughey family.

**Dianne Reilly**  
**Hon. Secretary**

With acknowledgement to The Age obituary, 22 October 2012, by Professor John Langmore, and to 'Community Wellbeing in an Unwell World', Brasher & Wiseman, McCaughey Centre, University of Melbourne, 2007.





Bruce Nixon

1934–2012

A Tribute

Members will be deeply saddened to learn of the death of the La Trobe Society's inaugural President W. Bruce Nixon on 8 September 2012 at his home Tarcoola-on-Yarra at Yarra Glen. A respected businessman, Bruce was the proprietor of his family's bus company in Melbourne, and the founder in 1980 of Cobb and Co. Coaches. Described by friends as 'a scholar, pastor, mentor, publisher and patron of the arts', Bruce was all these and more. He was passionate about Victoria's history, and an admirer of the first Lieutenant-Governor as one who brought to Melbourne with him all the best values and ambitions for the people of the Port Phillip District.

I first met Bruce Nixon in the early 1990s at the opening of an exhibition of La Trobe's watercolours at the Old Treasury Building, Melbourne. Our conversation about

the importance of publishing La Trobe's watercolours for wider appreciation resulted in our collaboration, under the experienced eye of publisher Rob Blackmore, on the beautiful monograph Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches (State Library of Victoria, Tarcoola Press, National Trust of Australia, Victoria, 1999). We again worked together on Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes, 1839–54, published in 2006, which won the 2007 National Print Awards' prestigious Gold Medal in the category 'Books of Limited Edition'.

Bruce's wise counsel on all matters relating to La Trobe and his continued support of the La Trobe Society will be greatly missed. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his wife Berys and his children.

**Dianne Reilly**  
**Hon. Secretary**

# La Trobe's 'honest looking German': Ferdinand Mueller and the botanical exploration of gold-rush Victoria

By R. W. Home

Professor Rod Home was educated at the University of Melbourne (BSc), and at Indiana University. He was Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne from 1975 to 2002, and has a particular interest in the History of Physical Sciences from Newton to the 20th Century.

He continues to play a leading role in documenting and preserving the history of Australian science as Editor of Historical Records of Australian Science (HRAS), the journal of record for the history of science, pure and applied, in Australia and the southwest Pacific Foundation Director of the Australian Science Archives Project, Rod was named a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1995. He received the award of Member of the Order of Australia for 'his services to education as a scholar and archivist of the history & philosophy of science' in 2010.

*This address was given on the occasion of the 2012 Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Lecture which was held at Domain House on 15 August 2012. Dr Dianne Reilly welcomed the Guest Speaker the internationally renowned and distinguished science historian, Professor Rod Home.*

'There is an honest looking German here, Dr Müller,' Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe wrote to his friend the Tasmanian magistrate and fellow botanical enthusiast Ronald Campbell Gunn on 8 October 1852, 'who as far as I can judge seems to be more of a botanist than any man I have hitherto met with in the Colony; and I shall give him every encouragement'.<sup>1</sup> True to his word, La Trobe wasted no time in securing the services of the young botanist, Ferdinand Mueller. In the Estimates he presented to

Victoria's Legislative Council two months after writing to Gunn, a sum of £300 was included for a new position of Government Botanist that was clearly earmarked for Mueller. It seems that Mueller successfully held out for more money, for in a supplementary Estimate on 6 January 1853, £200 was added to the budget for the new position to cover contingencies, including travelling expenses, while Mueller's formal letter of appointment specified a salary of £400 per annum, to commence on 26 January 1853.<sup>2</sup> (This was still, however, only half the salary of the recently appointed Government Geologist,

Alfred Selwyn.) Mueller's position was officially gazetted on 2 February 1853. On the following day, he left Melbourne on the first of three major journeys of botanical exploration that he was to undertake around Victoria during the following two-and-a-bit years.

This sequence of events raises a number of questions that I propose discussing here. Who was Mueller, what was he doing in Victoria and how did he come to La Trobe's attention, and, more particularly, why was La Trobe so keen to get him on to the Victorian Government's payroll?



Photographer unknown  
Ferdinand Müller, aged 18.  
daguerrotype  
Reproduced by permission from the  
Library, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich Müller was born on 30 June 1825 in the ancient Hanseatic town of Rostock, on Germany's Baltic coast, where his father was a government official. His father died, however, when he was only 9, and his mother subsequently took him and his three surviving sisters – five other children had died in infancy<sup>3</sup> – to live with her family in Tönning, a small town at the mouth of the Eider River, on the North Sea coast of what is now the German province of Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>4</sup> Four years after the move to Tönning the mother also died, shortly after arranging for Mueller to be apprenticed to a pharmacist in Husum, on the North Sea coast 25 km north of Tönning.<sup>5</sup>

At that time and indeed for many years afterwards, pharmacy apprentices were required, as part of their training, to put together a properly labelled herbarium of dried plants.<sup>6</sup> The requirement of course reflected the fact that most of the drugs used at the time were obtained from plants: apprentices were expected to learn to recognise the plants from which the drugs that they dispensed were extracted. Mueller,

in the course of meeting the requirement, developed a passion for botany, spending most of his free time on botanical rambles through the surrounding countryside. Almost certainly through his employer, who was also a plant enthusiast, Mueller soon linked up with a network of botanical collectors from all over Schleswig-Holstein who swapped specimens and information among themselves. He became very knowledgeable about the local flora, and his herbarium quickly swelled far beyond what was required to satisfy the pharmacy board's requirement, eventually amounting to some 5,000 well-chosen specimens. Long afterwards, in a public lecture in Melbourne, he gave what was surely an autobiographical account of his botanical development during these years, from which his passion for the subject shines clearly forth from his characteristically stilted and formal prose:

I have a vivid remembrance with what an enthusiastic avidity many a student commenced his scientific collection of plants from gatherings in a botanic garden; how he sought for correct appellations, traced the indigenous localities of any species, endeavoured to understand the particular relationship of plants, and commenced to arrange systematically what he had gathered. Or I may have witnessed how the spare hours of a youth, eager for phytologic information, were spent, not in unprofitable plays or planless strolls, but among the flower-fields of free nature; how he soon recognised any additions to his collection, and greeted any rarity or novelty with the outburst of absolute delight. Soon an impetus to more extended observation is given, kindred spirits are drawn into co-operation, while recreative pleasures are advanced to sound philosophic speculations or applied knowledge, and thus simultaneously a pure fountain of never-ending joys, or an everlasting spring of utilitarian riches, is opened.<sup>7</sup>

His apprenticeship successfully completed, Mueller proceeded to the university at Kiel to complete the training required to make him a fully-qualified pharmacist, and

there in March 1847 he successfully presented for the *Staatsprüfung* in pharmacy.<sup>8</sup> He seems, however, to have devoted himself at university chiefly to chemical and botanical rather than pharmaceutical pursuits and in July 1847 he submitted his doctoral thesis in botany – not, as is usually stated in biographies of Mueller, a study of the common Shepherd's Purse, but a survey of the flora of south-west Schleswig, which was in effect a catalogue of his own herbarium.<sup>9</sup>

Late in the winter of 1844–45, Mueller's older sister Iwanne had died from tuberculosis, the same dread disease that had carried off both Mueller parents, and that was rampant throughout north Germany at the time. Thereafter, Mueller worried constantly about his own health – not surprisingly, since tuberculosis was thought to be hereditary – and more particularly about the health of his next sister, Bertha, in whom he thought he saw signs of the same disease. They both apparently suffered badly during the winter of 1846–47 and the decision was taken that they should move to a warmer and drier climate (this being the best response to tuberculosis known at the time). Their 13-year-old sister Clara would, of course, go with them.

Thus, Mueller came to Australia partly for health reasons. He was also, however, driven by scientific ambition, the same ambition that saw a small army of young, well-trained German scientists – whom the recently reformed German universities were producing in much larger numbers than were the educational systems elsewhere – fan out across the globe in pursuit of their science, in a way made newly possible by the expansion of European power.<sup>10</sup> They drew their chief inspiration from the writings of the great scientist-traveller Alexander von Humboldt who, in his account of his five-year journey through the Americas in the first years of the 19th century, set out an ambitious agenda for research. Humboldt's writings, Mueller told an audience in Melbourne years afterwards, made a profound impression on his youthful mind, an impression that had given direction to his plan for his life.<sup>11</sup> And in this, he was far from alone.

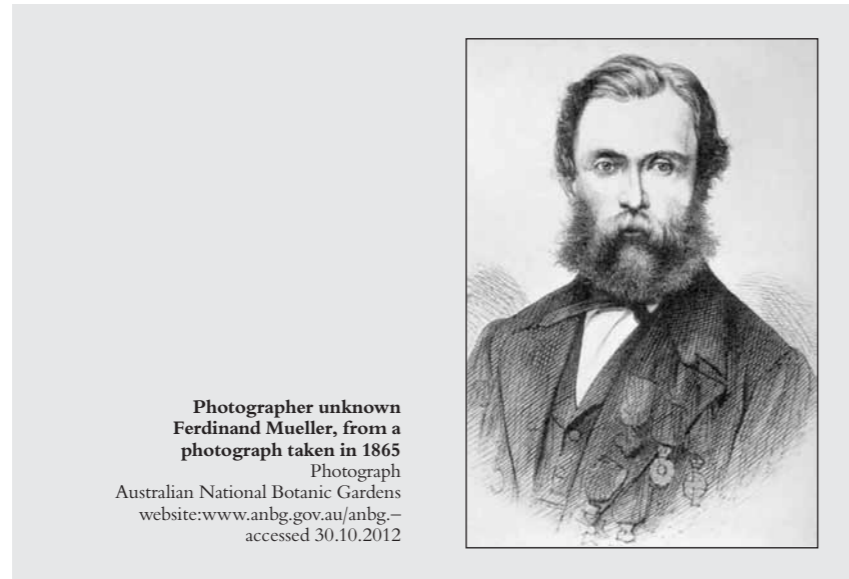
Not for Humboldt the easy generalizations of the casual observer or the meaningless collecting of unconnected data. For him, nature was 'one great whole, moved and animated by internal forces',<sup>12</sup> and the chief task of science was to arrive at an understanding of the inter-relationships between these forces, the effects of which we observe. Such understanding was not to be achieved by armchair philosophizing but depended on exact empirical inquiry. The Humboldtian philosopher travelled extensively and, while doing so, carried with him an array of measuring apparatus to support his habit

of exact observation. Humboldtian science demanded careful and systematic recording of a range of physical variables, and offered the hope that these could eventually be shown to be linked together as different aspects of large-scale (or even global) dynamical systems. (We see such ambitions realised today, of course, in for example the understanding of the El Niño phenomenon, that links atmospheric and oceanic factors to predict weather patterns on an almost global scale; but Humboldt was the first clearly to enunciate such a research programme.) A Humboldtian botanist like Mueller became a plant geographer, concerned not just to discover and identify new species – though taxonomy remained fundamental to the craft – but to understand the distribution of species and the relations between them, and the connections between plant distribution and variables such as climate, elevation and geological structure.<sup>13</sup>

So here we have Mueller, in 1847, fired with a passion to practise botany in the Humboldtian manner by investigating the flora of parts of the world not yet studied by European scientists, and driven by health considerations to go to a warmer climate. But where to go? He apparently briefly considered America, where many Germans were going in those years; then, more seriously, the mid-Atlantic island of Madeira. By a fortunate chance, he had recently seen, in Hamburg, a large collection of plants from the south-west of Western Australia brought back by a commercial collector, Ludwig Preiss, that was being catalogued and described by the director of the Hamburg Botanic Garden, Johann Lehmann.<sup>14</sup> The collection amply demonstrated the astonishing richness and diversity of the Australian flora, the Australian climate was just what he and his sister required. And so they decided to go to Australia. Both Preiss and the Austrian Baron Carl von Hügel<sup>15</sup> a decade earlier had collected extensively in Western Australia. Much less was known about the flora of South Australia, though there was no reason to think it any less rich. (In fact, it is much less rich, though still much richer than anything Mueller had seen in Europe.) Moreover, South Australia offered a more genteel environment than the other Australian colonies – there were no convicts there, whereas most of the others were primarily penal settlements – and there was also a substantial community of German immigrants to whom Mueller and his sisters could look for support. And so they fixed on Adelaide as their destination. His passport for the journey gives us an idea of what he was like at the time. Blond hair and eyebrows sat on an oval face and rounded chin where only a weak beard tried to grow, while a clear forehead and grey-blue eyes framed a well-proportioned nose. While his build was described as 'average'

(*mittlere*), this was really a comment on the stature of Europeans in general at the time, since we know that in Australia, where a new generation was noticeably outgrowing its parents, he was regarded as quite short. (He was actually not much over 5 ft tall.)

sorting out domestic arrangements for himself and his sisters, and he would have celebrated Christmas with his sisters and no doubt some of their shipboard companions in the German style, on Christmas Eve. But on Christmas Day, as we know from his collecting notes<sup>17</sup> and from



Photographer unknown  
Ferdinand Mueller, from a  
photograph taken in 1865  
Photograph  
Australian National Botanic Gardens  
website:www.anbg.gov.au/anbg.–  
accessed 30.10.2012

Mueller spent something over four and a half years in South Australia, from just before Christmas 1847 until August 1852, botanizing widely and developing a close knowledge of the local flora. It is often said that he worked at a pharmacy in Rundle Street, and he certainly had his mail directed there and stored at least part of his collection of dried plants in a shed out the back – some of the collection unfortunately being destroyed, including the material he had collected when the ship stopped at Rio de Janeiro on the way to Australia, when there was a fire in the shed.<sup>16</sup> But I don't think he ever worked in the shop on a full-time basis; he was too committed to the botanical research for which he had come to Australia to tie himself down in such a way. Maybe he helped out from time to time, but basically he was living on the money he had inherited from his parents – which was quite a significant amount, it seems.

Even before the ship on which he came to Australia cast anchor at Port Adelaide, Mueller was dredging for algae over the side of the ship; and there are over 70 specimens of land plants in the Melbourne Herbarium that he collected in the vicinity of the port on his first day ashore, when one might have expected him to be more concerned with settling some domestic arrangements. I find the number astonishing and also very revealing of his passion for his subject. He must have been almost beside himself with excitement at this first encounter with a flora so completely different from anything he had known before. He evidently then did spend a few days

other specimens in the Melbourne Herbarium, he set off on his first botanizing expedition in the new land, following the Torrens River inland towards Mount Lofty where it has its origin. This is a man on a mission indeed! During the next few months he ranged up and down the Adelaide Plain and the Mount Lofty Ranges, going northwards as far as Gawler and then into the Barossa Valley and the surrounding hills. In between excursions, he would of course have been busy sorting and studying the plants he had collected, using the reference books he had brought with him as a guide. The incessant activity belies his later claim that he was seriously concerned about his health, and must have left him fit and hardened to life on the road and in the bush. In April 1848, he ventured east beyond the ranges for the first time, to Lake Alexandrina at the mouth of the Murray River, and he was back there in October of that year, on his way along the Coorong to Rivoli Bay and Mount Gambier in the south-east of South Australia. At least on the journey to the south-east he had travelling companions – probably the mailman – but in 1851 he undertook a more arduous six-week journey, alone, to the Flinders Ranges, going as far north as Wilpena Pound. He also ventured into the desert country north of where Port Augusta now is, as far as the shore of Lake Torrens, and subsequently published an account of the vegetation of the region.<sup>18</sup> He had by this time become extremely knowledgeable about the flora of the whole colony.

It seems that for most of the time he was

in South Australia, Mueller intended to return to Germany to work up his collections, once he felt he had exhausted the area botanically. This is what Humboldt had done, as had other scientific heroes of Mueller's such as Charles Darwin and the botanists Christian Ehrenberg and Carl Philip von Martius. Eventually, however, Mueller decided to stay in Australia, anglicizing the spelling of his name and arranging for his assets, including his Schleswig-Holstein herbarium that he had left behind in 1847, to be sent to him.<sup>19</sup> And then in 1852, like so many others, he followed the lure of gold to Victoria.

Mueller was never a digger and never intended to be one. His initial plan was to go into partnership with his friend Dr Eduard Wehl, who was shortly to marry his sister Clara, and set up a medical practice and associated pharmacy on the goldfields. This never eventuated but for a time following his arrival in Melbourne, Mueller was actively making arrangements to set up a pharmacy in the town. Given the general shortage of accommodation, finding suitable premises could not have been easy, but in due course he placed a notice in the *Melbourne Commercial Directory* for 1853 – the volume would have been published in late 1852 – advertising, in the section for Chemists and Druggists, a business in his name at 244 Lonsdale Street East.<sup>20</sup> It seems unlikely, though, that the business ever actually operated, or that Mueller even got very far in installing the necessary fittings. In the next year's directory, the premises were occupied by a painter who would have had little use for the accoutrements of a pharmacy!

Botanizing remained Mueller's first priority, as we can tell from the specimen labels in the Melbourne Herbarium, which reveal the same level of frenetic collecting activity as we saw in South Australia. He walked several times to St Kilda and on to Brighton, and he followed the Yarra upstream to Darebin Creek and later to the Plenty River, which he then followed up to its source near Mount Disappointment, 50km to the north. He also went to Bacchus Marsh on the well-trodden road to the diggings at Ballarat. From November 1852 there are collections from the banks and lagoons of the Yarra River, at the Plenty River, at Brighton, and at Dandenong; and in December he travelled to the goldfields near Castlemaine where he visited Eduard Wehl at Campbell's Creek, collecting all along the way.

It was probably early in October 1852, just a few weeks after Mueller arrived in Melbourne, that he first met Victoria's Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe. When Mueller took ship for Victoria, he carried with him a letter of

introduction to La Trobe provided by one of South Australia's leading citizens, Francis Dutton, and he clearly made use of this since the letter is now lodged among the Governors' Records at the Victorian Public Record Office. Mueller's aim, Dutton told La Trobe, was to collect and describe the flora of Victoria: 'Dr Müller does not seek any pecuniary aid', he went on,

but he is in hopes that if any survey parties should at any time be sent to distant parts of the Province he might be allowed to join them, and thus have an opportunity of extending his researches, which would otherwise be rendered difficult to one of his humble means, and modest retiring disposition.<sup>21</sup>

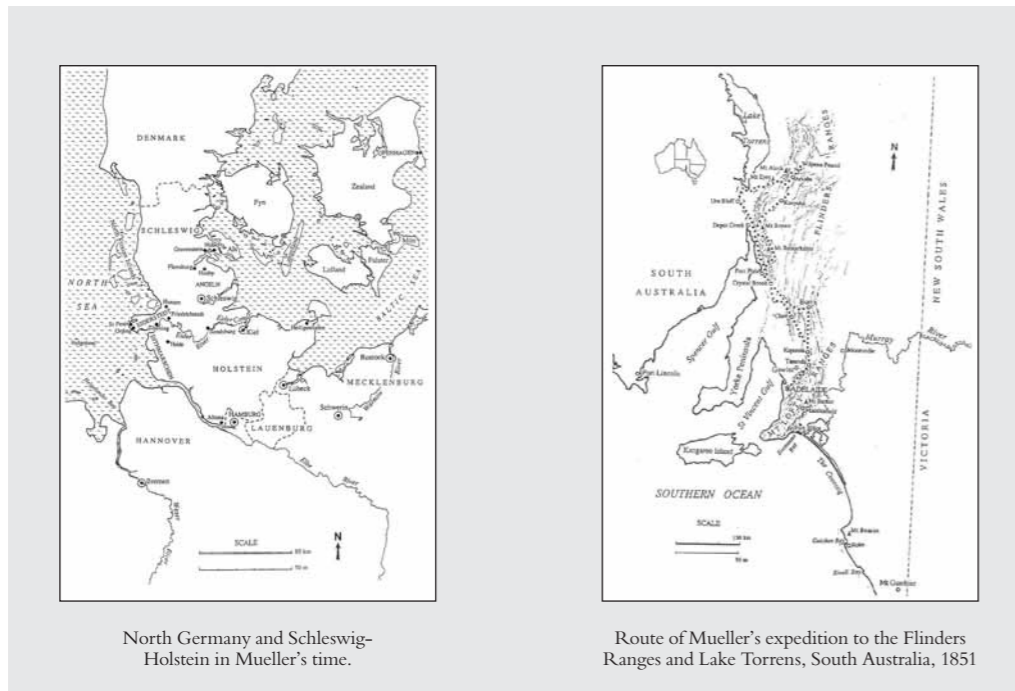
Whether Mueller used this letter to make his initial contact with La Trobe, or met La Trobe in some other way and then used the letter to confirm his respectability, is not known. Some years later, Mueller's Hamburg friend Wilhelm Sonder asserted that the two met accidentally, Mueller catching the Governor's eye when out botanizing one day.<sup>22</sup> Alan Gross, in his biography of Charles La Trobe, on the other hand, declares that Mueller was introduced to the Governor by the curator of the botanic garden, John Dallachy.<sup>23</sup> There appears to be no independent evidence to support either story. La Trobe was himself a botanical enthusiast who sought relief from the burdens of office by going for botanical rambles in the nearby countryside, so Sonder's story is entirely possible – but even if it is true, it is of course possible that Mueller engineered the encounter. However the two men met, Mueller then seems to have worked hard to maintain La Trobe's attention, providing him with the formal description of the genus *Latrobea* recently erected by the Swiss botanist Carl Meisner to encompass a couple of species formerly assigned to *Pultenaea*. He also told La Trobe that 'an exceedingly pretty dwarf acacia' that flourished on La Trobe's own land at Jolimont, a specimen of which La Trobe had sent to Europe, had been named by Meisner in his honour as *Acacia latrobei*.<sup>24</sup> To judge by the way La Trobe reported these matters to Ronald Gunn in Tasmania, he had not previously known about them.<sup>25</sup> La Trobe was a sensitive man and a lover of Nature. At a time when his administration of the colony was being assailed from all sides, the news that his name had been immortalized in this way must have come as welcome balm for his troubled spirit.<sup>26</sup> Mueller had found an excellent way of capturing his interest!



I have said enough, I hope – possibly more than enough – to answer the first set of questions I posed at the beginning of this lecture, namely who Mueller was, why he was in Victoria in late 1852, and how he came to La Trobe's attention. But there is still another question to answer, namely, what on earth prompted La Trobe to create a position for this somewhat obsessive young German in the Victorian government service?

a government grant to enable him to complete an illustrated natural history of Victoria, the proposal clearly struck a chord with La Trobe and led eventually to the establishment in Melbourne in April 1854 of a natural history museum, with Blandowski the first person appointed to its staff as Government Zoologist.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, when Robert Ellery, who before emigrating to Australia had had some experience



La Trobe actually created several scientific positions in the government service in these years, not just the position of Government Botanist that went to Mueller. He sought in this way to secure Victoria's long-term future by using some of the new wealth deriving from gold to engage scientists to survey the colony's natural resources and to provide other useful services.

Given the importance that mining had assumed in the economy of the colony, gaining an increased understanding of the local geology was obviously the first priority, and in October 1851, only two months after the first gold discoveries, La Trobe wrote to Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, requesting the appointment of a geological surveyor. In response, the Geological Survey of Great Britain selected one of its field officers, Alfred Selwyn, to go to Victoria. Selwyn reached Melbourne in November 1852 and quickly began systematic geological mapping in the Mount Alexander area near Castlemaine.<sup>27</sup>

Again, when an itinerant German naturalist, Wilhelm Blandowski, tired of the uncertain life of a miner, in mid-1853 sought

working at Greenwich Observatory in England, suggested that an astronomical observatory be established at Williamstown to provide a better time service for the shipping that crowded Hobson's Bay, La Trobe took up the idea at once and appointed Ellery to operate it.<sup>29</sup>

Botany was also on La Trobe's agenda. We need to remind ourselves how much greater a role plant products played in nineteenth-century economic life – in agriculture, forestry, medicine and many other aspects of contemporary life – than they do today. (And they still play a very important role today, of course.) La Trobe had already in the 1840s established a botanic garden in Melbourne, not as an indulgence to his own favourite pursuit, or as a mere public pleasure ground – though he no doubt expected it also to serve as such – but for eminently practical reasons, as a centre for propagating both indigenous and exotic species of potential economic value. But not only were many plants potentially of economic importance in themselves, the native vegetation was the best indicator available at that time of a region's likely suitability for agricultural development. Yet only fragmentary studies had ever been undertaken of the colony's plants, and

almost nothing was known of the vegetation of much of the colony. La Trobe was looking ahead to the time when the alluvial gold ran out and the thousands of diggers who had flocked to the goldfields could no longer make a living there. He was acutely conscious of the social problems that might then arise. He wanted a botanist to characterize the different parts of the colony as a guide to possible closer settlement, and to identify plants of economic value that were likely to thrive there.

In July 1852, while Mueller was still in Adelaide, the English naturalist William Swainson, who had emigrated to New Zealand in 1840 but was at this time living in the Illawarra district of New South Wales, offered his services to La Trobe to survey the timber trees of the colony – especially the eucalypts, the classification of which, in Swainson's opinion, left a great deal to be desired. Though the 63-year-old Swainson had made his reputation as a zoologist rather than as a botanist, La Trobe immediately recommended his appointment as a botanical draftsman for a twelve-month period from September 1852. The appointment was not a success. Swainson proved totally unsuited to the task and La Trobe quickly became thoroughly disillusioned with him. The alacrity with which he had accepted Swainson's initial proposal is clear evidence, however, of a desperately felt need for information about the botanical resources of the colony. Mueller, appearing on the scene as he did precisely at this time, must therefore have appeared as a godsend to him.<sup>30</sup>

And the rest, as they say, is history. The day after his appointment was officially gazetted, Mueller set off on the first of the three extraordinary expeditions in which he did precisely what La Trobe wanted and comprehensively surveyed the flora of most of the colony. But that is another story.

I might finish by squashing another myth about Mueller, this time one that concerns his appointment as Government Botanist and that says that Mueller owed his appointment to the recommendation of Sir William Hooker, director of England's Royal Gardens at Kew. But, firstly, there is no evidence whatsoever to support this claim; and, secondly, it is clear that there could not be because there is no way in which Hooker would have known of Mueller's existence, let alone that he was in Melbourne.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, there is clear evidence against the claim. On the first night out on his first expedition as Government Botanist, that is, the day after his position was gazetted, in camp on the headwaters of Darebin Creek, Mueller wrote to William Hooker to introduce himself and to tell Hooker of his appointment.<sup>32</sup> And it is absolutely clear from both the way he wrote and the way in which Hooker in due course responded<sup>33</sup> that this was the first contact between the two, and that Hooker had known nothing of Mueller until then. Mueller's appointment was indisputably La Trobe's initiative alone. It stands as testimony to both his concern to secure Victoria's future, once the upheavals and excitement of the gold rushes petered out, and his judgment in securing for the colony the services of such an extraordinary young man to help carry out his plan.

1 C. J. La Trobe to R. Gunn, 8 October 1852; *Regardsfully Yours: Selected Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller* (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 1998–2006), I, 768.  
 2 W. Lonsdale to Mueller, 26 January 1853; *Regardsfully Yours*, I, 138; Argus, 3 February 1853, p. 5.  
 3 The five children who died young all appear in the baptismal records in Rostock (information kindly supplied by the Town Archivist, Dr Karsten Schröder). However, they are not referred to in any contemporary or subsequent accounts of Mueller's life and are not mentioned in surviving family correspondence. The deaths of only two of them are noted in the records in Rostock, but the absence of any reference to the others anywhere except in the baptismal records and, above all, Louise Müller's failure to mention them in her 1836 application for a police permit to go with her children to Tönning (Archive der Hansestadt Rostock; Rat, Monatsakten Nr. 479, Bd. 39 [Müller 1800–1849]), indicates that they could not have lived for very long.  
 4 At the time, the whole of what is now Schleswig-Holstein was ruled by Denmark, and so in moving to Tönning, Mueller became a Danish subject. This is the source of the myth that has sometimes been peddled, that he was of Danish rather than German origin. However, Mueller's family was indisputably German on both sides. His mother's family were part of a steady influx of Germans into Schleswig and Holstein that had been going on for many years. They came from Magdeburg and moved to Tönning when she was a young girl because of the business opportunities her father saw there.



- 5 Most biographies of Mueller are riddled with errors. For reliable accounts of his upbringing, see J. H. Voigt and D. M. Sinkora, "Ferdinand (von) Mueller in Schleswig-Holstein or, the Making of a Scientist and of a Migrant", *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 11 (1) (1996), 13-33; R. W. Home, "Ferdinand Mueller: Migration and the Sense of Self", *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 11 (3) (1997), 311-323; A. M. Lucas, "Mueller [Müller], Sir Ferdinand Jacob Heinrich von", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Jan 2008.
- 6 Arnold Habernoll, *Die Entwicklung des Apothekenrechtes und der privilegierten Apotheken in Schleswig-Holstein* (Eutin, Holstein, 1951).
- 7 Mueller, *The Objects of a Botanic Garden in relation to Industries* (Melbourne, 1872), p. XX.
- 8 T. O. Achelis, *Prüflinge der Pharmazie in Schleswig-Holstein 1804-1866* (Eutin, Holstein, 1952), p. 17.
- 9 For the text of Mueller's doctoral diploma, see *Regardfully Yours*, I, 99-100.
- 10 R. W. Home, *Science as a German Export to Nineteenth-Century Australia* (London: Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 1995).
- 11 Mueller's address delivered at Humboldt commemoration, Melbourne, 14 September 1859; *Melbourn Deutsche Zeitung*, 21 October 1859, p. 42.
- 12 A. von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, p. vii.
- 13 M. Nicholson, "Alexander von Humboldt, Humboldtian Science and the Origins of the Study of Vegetation", *History of Science*, 25 (1987), 167-194.
- 14 J. Lehmann, *Plantae Preissianae* (2 vols., Hamburg, 1844-7). See also M to B. Woodward, 21 March 1891, in *West Australian*, 8 May 1891..
- 15 *Enumeratio plantarum quas in Novae Hollandiae ora austro-occidentali ad Fluvium Cygnorum et in Sinu Regis Georgii collegit Carolus liber baro de Hügel* (Vienna, 1837).
- 16 *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal*, 20 April 1850; also J. F. Mertens to Mueller, 28 August 1851, in *Regardfully Yours*, I, 120-125.
- 17 These notes are carefully recorded in Mueller's interleaved copy, now at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, of *Plantae Preissiana*, Johann Lehmann's account of Ludwig Preiss's Australian collections. Mueller evidently used this work as his initial guide to the Australian flora.
- 18 Mueller, "Die Vegetation des Gegenden um den Torrens-See", *Hamburger Garten-Blumenzeitung*, 9 (1853), 340-343; also published in English translation in *Hooker's Journal of Botany and Kew Garden Miscellany*, 5 (1853), 105-1909.
- 19 J. F. Mertens to Mueller, 28 August 1851.
- 20 *Melbourne Commercial Directory for the Year 1853*, p. 30.
- 21 F. Dutton to C. J. La Trobe, 11 August 1852, *Regardfully Yours*, I, 766-767.
- 22 W. Sonder to F. Krauss, 9 May 1867, . *Regardfully Yours*, II, 755-761.
- 23 A. Gross, *Charles Joseph La Trobe* (Melbourne, 1956), p. 77. The earliest reference to this story that I have found is J. H. Maiden, "Records of Victorian Botanists", *Victorian Naturalist*, 25 (1908), 106, but he gives no source.
- 24 Meisner described the species from a specimen collected by La Trobe and sent to the museum at Neuchâtel, his wife's home town; see Lehmann, *Plantae Preissianae*, I, 10.
- 25 La Trobe to Gunn, 8 October 1852, *Regardfully Yours*, I, 767-768.
- 26 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the Making of a Governor* (Melbourne, 2006).
- 27 Thomas A. Darragh, "The Geological Survey of Victoria under Alfred Selwyn, 1852-1868", *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 7 (1) (1987), 1-25.
- 28 C. Rasmussen et al., *A Museum for the People* (Melbourne, 2001), p. 18.
- 29 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, art. "Ellery".
- 30 Sara Maroske and Helen M. Cohn, " 'Such Ingenious Birds': Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria", *Muelleria*, 7 (1992), 529-553.
- 31 Helen M. Cohn, "Ferdinand Mueller, Government Botanist: The Role of William Hooker in His Appointment", *Muelleria*, 7 (1989), 99-102.
- 32 Mueller to W. Hooker, 3 February 1853; *Regardfully Yours*, I, 139-142.
- 33 W. Hooker to Mueller, 15 June 1853; *Regardfully Yours*, I, 144-146.

# In search of three-leaf clovers: A note on the Clover Glycine, Charles La Trobe and threatened species recovery in Victoria.

By Anna H. Murphy

Anna is a PhD Candidate, Department of Botany, School of Life Sciences, Faculty of Science and Technology, La Trobe University, Bundoora. She wishes to acknowledge the collaboration of Lance Williams, Environmental Consultant, Violet Town.

This is an enlarged version of the presentation Anna gave on the occasion of the 2012 Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Lecture which was held at Domain House on 15 August 2012.

## La Trobe's Botanical Legacy

Throughout his early years in Switzerland Charles La Trobe had enjoyed nature and the great outdoors immensely and depicted these adventures in his *The Alpenstock: Or Sketches of Swiss Scenery and Manners*, a book for armchair travellers (1829). Although not embracing the Australian landscape to the same extent, La Trobe's interest in natural history remained and he became a keen naturalist collecting Australian plants and sending them to his European contacts in Switzerland. One of these plants was a small, native herb and member of the Pea family. This species was later to be named (unbeknownst to him at the time) in 1844 by the Swiss Botanist Carl Meissner after its collector as *Zichya latrobeana* (Lehmann 1847). The genus *Zichya* was ultimately revised to *Glycine* leading to its current scientific name of *Glycine latrobeana* and is commonly referred to as Clover Glycine.

In 1846 Superintendent La Trobe established the Melbourne Botanic Gardens known today as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Then in January 1853, La Trobe appointed Dr Ferdinand Mueller as Government Botanist for the Colony of Victoria as part of his push to support the sciences.

That year, Mueller set out on his first expedition to survey the native flora of Victoria with the assistance of the Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens, John Dallachy. This was the first of a number of trips in which he sought to identify the 'practical usefulness of our vegetable creation' to source and identify plants that might hold some medicinal, economic or domestic application. By the end of 15 months he had travelled approximately 6,400 kilometres and collected specimens from 1,459 species, many yet to be named at that time. Mueller also came across our Clover Glycine and took with him a specimen which is now lodged at the National Herbarium of Victoria (Mueller 1853).

At some point in his travels we can imagine Mueller kneeling down to observe the diminutive Clover Glycine and perhaps noticing its close resemblance to the more familiar Clover (*Trifolium sp.*). The foliage of the Clover Glycine bears more than a passing resemblance to this exotic pasture plant with its delicate trifoliate leaves, trailing stems and ground-hugging habit. Its flower is rather exquisite, a violet and purple rendition of the classic ‘standard, wing and keel’



*Glycine latrobeana*, Clover Glycine  
Photograph  
Collection: Anna Murphy



Vegetation at Moliagul  
Photograph  
Collection: Anna Murphy  
During the gold rush the trees were removed and the soil was excavated and deposited in mullock heaps. In the background, the trees have become coppiced.

petal arrangement of the Pea family, *Fabaceae*. In autumn and winter when not in flower, these plants are quite inconspicuous. In a good flowering season, however, it produces a striking display of purple and violet. Clover Glycine is found only in the southern regions of Australia where less than 191 populations persist. Due to its continuing decline, the species is listed as threatened under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Today, similar surveys to those on which Mueller and Dallachy embarked are still undertaken by the staff at the National Herbarium of Victoria, a key facility within Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. This time, however, the emphasis is to protect our threatened and endemic flora from extinction by collecting and preserving seed. Expert botanists from the Victorian Conservation Seed Bank at the Royal

Botanic Gardens collect seed from a wide range of native plants across Victoria including many rare and endangered species such as Clover Glycine. Once collected, seed is subjected to cryogenic, long-term storage. In the event of catastrophic damage to the population in the wild, seeds can be reintroduced back into its original habitat to save the population. This work is critical to the security and recovery of threatened plant taxa in Victoria.

The botanical legacy of Charles La Trobe continues through other projects at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne through important work in the fields of plant taxonomy and ecology, as well as the *ex-situ* conservation of our threatened Victorian flora. Furthermore, Mueller’s specimens are invaluable to botanists and plant ecologists and have led to significant contributions to our understanding of the distribution and diversity of native flora in Victoria.

In previous years the Department of Sustainability and Environment has also focused on threatened flora recovery and this has included surveys the author, together with Lance Williams undertook last year to locate and protect populations of the rare Clover Glycine in Tooborac in Northern Victoria. This field work uncovered the largest population of the species in Victoria and possibly the country. Seed from nearby populations was collected and grown and two specimens are currently growing in the gardens of the La Trobe Cottage.

### *The Effect of Changes in Land Use during La Trobe’s Time.*

Since the early times of La Trobe and Mueller, impacts to plant populations have been acute and wide-ranging, often resulting in many species becoming rare and endangered. One of these species is the Clover Glycine, which we can reasonably imagine was fairly commonplace in the grasslands of south-western Victoria and grassy woodlands and forests of central Victoria.

From the initial forays of agriculture and other human-driven development, the modification and destruction of its habitat was particularly evident in the grasslands of western Victoria which were extensively cleared, grazed, fertilized and cropped. Two factors were likely to have brought about the demise of Clover Glycine in these regions: the first being the rapid introduction and expansion of agriculture (particularly grazing); the second its high palatability and nutritional value to stock (demonstrated by its close relation, the Soybean).

In 1849, the first gold was found in Port Phillip and over the following decade many more

discoveries were to be made. As we know now, this unexpected event made La Trobe’s role as Lieutenant-Governor extremely difficult. Much of Melbourne’s population poured out the town and people made their way to the goldfields. Thousands of immigrants began to arrive, all in search of their fortunes. The most intense period of small-scale mining and dispersal of Europeans across this landscape took place during this time in the 1850s.

The upheavals created by the gold rush did not simply cause social and administrative instability. This event also led to broad scale environmental devastation. The Box Ironbark forests of the central Victorian Goldfields, important as habitat to Clover Glycine were overrun by gold prospectors.

Ellen Clacy painted a picture of impacts to these habitats in central Victoria in her visit to the Gold Fields during 1852–3. Nothing resembling Ellen Clacy’s description of these magnificent forests remains in these regions and we can only imagine what they were once like:

‘Saturday 18: – Fine day; we now approached Bendigo. The timber here is very large. Here we first beheld the majestic iron bark Eucalypti, the trunks of which are fluted with the exquisite regularity of a Doric column; they are in truth the noblest ornaments of these mighty forests.

A few miles further, and the diggings themselves burst upon our view. Never shall I forget that scene, it well repaid a journey even of sixteen thousand miles. The trees had been all cut down. It looked like a sandy plain, or one vast broken succession of countless gravel pits – the earth was everywhere turned up – men’s heads in every direction were popping up and down from their holes.’

The catastrophic effects of the gold rush are likely to have decimated populations of La Trobe’s Clover Glycine that were associated with waterways. The widespread excavation of soil, removal of vegetation and washing of dirt by enthusiastic diggers was frequently focused along many of the lower slopes and creek banks where the species is known to occur. William Howitt a gold prospector in northern Victoria in the early 1850s wrote:

‘Thus we had quietness and greenness, and the most deliciously cool water, sweet and clear. But this quietness and greenness cannot last. Prospectors will quickly follow us. We foresee that all these bushy banks of the creek will be rapidly and violently invaded. The hop-scrubs will be burnt, the bushes in and on the creek cleared away, the trees on the slope felled, and the very ground torn up for miles around. The crystalline water will be made thick and foul with gold-washing; and the whole will be converted into a scene of desolation and discomfort.’

Gold prospecting had a number of direct impacts on the Box Ironbark forests. The timber was felled and following excavation the soil was left heaped in mullocks. Deep shafts were dug and topsoil, mullock and tailings were all mixed together and deposited in large piles. The soil seed bank and organic matter crucial for supporting soil biota like bacteria and fungi as well as supporting seedling germination were buried. Large, old hollow-bearing trees were cut down or ring barked causing a dramatic loss of habitat for fauna (particularly hollow-dwelling mammals and birds). The widespread harvesting of timber also led to the extensive coppicing we now see in these regions by creating younger stems that take many years to develop hollows. The denudation of the soil also led to erosion (particularly around waterways) which polluted creeks through siltation and sedimentation. In some instances the impacts to water bodies were so severe that creeks and streams were diverted.

Today, native vegetation continues to be affected by the activities of the gold rush. Furthermore these impacts are compounded by additional pressures such as: the continued clearance of native vegetation, invasion of weeds and pest animals and the spread of harmful plant pathogens such as Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*). Many of these activities have led to significant pressures on Clover Glycine.

By the late 1970s there were fears for the welfare of the Clover Glycine. At that stage there were few known populations and early searches had failed to find any more. As a result more intensive, targeted surveys were undertaken and a number of new populations have been discovered. Although the wholesale loss of habitat is mostly a thing of the past, the Clover Glycine nevertheless remains vulnerable with overall low



numbers occurring across a highly fragmented distribution. Those populations that do survive remain exposed to ongoing threats such as weed invasion, browsing by introduced herbivores and general degradation of their environment due to a loss of natural ecological processes.

Botanists and natural resource managers from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the National Herbarium of

At the Botany Department at La Trobe University, we continue to pursue research into a wide range of ecological questions including plant taxonomy to which Mueller was so committed. We also undertake research in some new disciplines that no doubt would have piqued his interest. Studies include population genetics, reproductive biology, pollination ecology and vegetation dynamics. It is hoped that these endeavours will further inform the plant



Lance Williams kneeling down to observe Clover Glycine during a highly successful survey where thousands of plants were located in the Tooborac region. Photograph Collection: Anna Murphy



Megan Hirst and Jeff Jeanes botanists from the National Herbarium of Victoria collecting seed for *Eucalyptus nitens* (Shining Gum) Photograph Collection: Victorian Conservation Seedbank

Victoria and Parks Victoria as well as interstate partners have been working to prevent further decline of Clover Glycine across its range and to increase its abundance. Their approach has been to survey and map populations, protect habitat from further loss, as well as propagate plants *ex situ* and store seed for long-term security.

conservationists to better protect our unique and diverse natural heritage. So, although the loss of our native vegetation still continues, albeit at a slower pace, perhaps the legacy of La Trobe remains through the commitment and dedication of the many 'clever little botanists' who were to follow.

#### References

- Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria (CHAH) *Australian Virtual Herbarium*. <http://www.anbg.gov.au/avh/index.jsp> [Website: Accessed 10 September, 2012].
- Foreman, D. B. and Walsh, N. G. (Eds.) *Flora of Victoria, Introduction Volume 1.*, Melbourne: Inkata Press, 1993.
- Garden, D. 'Catalyst or cataclysm?' Gold mining and the environment. *Victorian Historical Journal* 72 . (2001) (1-2): 28-44.
- Home, R.W. 'A botanist for a continent: Ferdinand von Mueller (1825-96)'. *Endeavour*. 22 (2) 1998.
- Home, R.W. & Lang, P. (Eds.) *Regardsfully Yours: Selected Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller, volume 1: 1840-1859.*, Bern, 1998.
- Howitt, W. *Land, Labour, and Gold: Two Years in Victoria: With Visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010
- La Trobe, C.J. *The Alpenstock: Or Sketches of Swiss Scenery and Manners.* London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1829
- Lehmann, C. *Plantae Preissianae sive Enumeratio plantarum quas in Australasia occidentali et meridionali-occidentali annis 1838-1841: collegit Ludovicus Preiss /Partim ab aliis partim a se ipso determinatas descriptas illustratas edidit.* Hamburg: 1847.
- Lynch, A.J.J. The identification and distribution of *Glycine latrobeana* (Meissn.) Benth. in Tasmania. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*. 128 1994: 17.
- Reilly, D. 'Duties of no ordinary difficulty, La Trobe's goldfields management.' *La Trobeana, Journal of the C.J La Trobe Society Inc.* .10 2011.
- Thompson, P. (Ed) (1963) *A lady's visit to the gold diggings in 1852 - 1853: written on the spot / by Mrs. Charles Clacy.* Melbourne: Lansdowne Press Pty Ltd, 1963.
- Walsh, N.G. and Entwisle, T.J. *Flora of Victoria, Volume 3. Dicotyledons: Winteraceae to Myrtaceae.*Melbourne: Inkata Press, 1996.
- Willis, J.H. 'Melbourne: a focal point for early botanical activity'. In: *History of Systematic Botany in Australasia. Proceedings of a symposium held at the University of Melbourne, 25 - 27 May 1988.* Ed. P.S. Short. Australian Systematic Botany Society, Canberra. 1990
- Willis, J.H. and Cohn, H.M. 'Botanical Exploration of Victoria in' *Flora of Victoria, Introduction, Volume 1.* Eds. D. B. Foreman and N. G. Walsh, North Ryde: Inkata Press, 1993.

## Charles La Trobe and Ferdinand Mueller

By Sandi Pullman

Sandra Pullman (B.App.Sc. Hort. Hons., Burnley, University of Melbourne) is a former ABC TV *Gardening Australia* Horticultural Advisor, journalist and teacher, with 21 years hands-on experience and is a regular contributor to *Vasili's Good Gardening* and *Your Veggie Patch*. She has also contributed to the Gardening section of *The Age* and to Australian Garden History Society journal over the years and was a founding member of the Friends of Burnley Gardens. Sandi has a passion for heritage gardens and is the volunteer garden co-ordinator of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage and is researching what plants were available from 1800 to 1854 to recreate an authentic garden of early Melbourne.

Plants were very important to the early settlers because they were dependent on them for survival, food and shelter. New South Wales had only been settled by Europeans since 1788 and colonists had very little experience of the climate and how the northern hemisphere crops performed in this strange environment. The settlers also had very little idea about how native plants performed here too and the purposes for which they could be used. As the nineteenth century progressed, many people became increasingly interested in all branches of knowledge but, in particular, botany as one of the natural history sciences. It was a period when exciting discoveries were being made of rare and unusual plants in exotic countries like China, and reports of these were capturing the imagination of an increasing readership in Europe.

Charles Joseph La Trobe was appointed Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, and arrived with his wife Sophie and daughter Agnes in 1839. After the separation of Port Phillip from New South Wales in 1851, he became Lieutenant Governor of the new colony of Victoria. Both these roles gave him scope for his interests. He was keenly interested in botany and personally set aside the land for Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens in 1846. From 1848, he was the first Patron of the Victorian Horticultural Society which later became the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria, establishing Burnley Gardens in 1861.

La Trobe indulged his great love of plants, often collecting them while on his many sojourns in the countryside. A fellow naturalist then resident in the Illawarra District of New South



Wales, William Swainson, zoologist, draftsman, writer on natural history and passionate shell collector, wrote to La Trobe, offering his services as a botanical draftsman and suggested carrying out an ambitious project of surveying Victoria's native flora. The Executive Council of the colony considered that this would be useful knowledge, and La Trobe accepted his offer in July 1852. At the same time, Swainson made the same offer to the government of New South Wales, but this was declined.<sup>1</sup> Why Swainson was employed by La Trobe, one can only wonder. Swainson was not a botanist and had not published any botanical papers, and his appointment was rather a controversial one. Perhaps it was because of

by the Botanic Gardens was not sufficient, and that Mueller was being paid more than he was. Swainson, however, was not as highly regarded professionally, nor was he as well qualified as Mueller. Nonetheless, Mueller's appointment was to cause a number of issues. Swainson was the first person to be employed to carry out botanical work, but he was not trained nor qualified. Mueller, on the other hand, was professionally qualified; thus, it may be concluded that he was the first professional botanist in Victoria.

A more important question was whether Sir William Hooker had helped Mueller to secure his position by recommending him to La Trobe.



**Correa lawrenceana var. latrobeana**  
Photographer unknown  
Correa lawrenciana var. latrobeana  
Photograph  
Source: Wikipedia, viewed 29.10.2012

the shortage of scientifically trained people, or perhaps it was the appeal of learning more about the native flora, which La Trobe had grown to love, that led to this decision.

Almost as soon as he became acquainted with Swainson, La Trobe met the qualified botanist, Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich Mueller who, from 1845 to 1847, had studied pharmacy at the University of Kiel. He was subsequently awarded a doctorate for his thesis surveying the flora of southern Schleswig. La Trobe was impressed with Mueller. Mueller and his sisters Clara and Bertha had immigrated for health reasons to South Australia in December 1847. He arrived in Victoria in 1852 and met La Trobe who engaged him on 26 January 1853 as Government Botanist of Victoria. This was a post he created especially for Mueller. Swainson was seriously displeased by the appointment, and complained that Mueller had better accommodation, that the single assistant provided for his own work

Hooker was appointed the first Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in 1841. Judging from all credible sources, it is highly unlikely that Hooker helped Mueller secure his position. The evidence that supports this claim is that he wrote a letter introducing himself to Hooker only on 3 February, 1853, after he had been appointed to the position. Hooker was also in the habit of suggesting British botanists for appointments rather than Europeans, and he replied, saying that he was 'most agreeably surprised' to receive a letter from Mueller.<sup>2</sup>

La Trobe was very satisfied with Mueller's appointment. The two men shared a passion for the exploration of Victoria. Mueller had barely started in his new position when, only days into his new job, he set off on the first of his three major journeys of exploration in the colony. He often travelled by himself, and this took him away for many months at a time. La Trobe showed his delight with Mueller's work in a



**Edward La Trobe Bateman, 1816-1897, artist**  
**Grevillia latrobei**  
Engraving  
La Trobe Picture Collection,  
State Library of Victoria

**Latrobea diosmifolia**

**Eremophila latrobei**

letter to his Tasmanian friend, Ronald Gunn, a keen botanist: 'My clever little Botanist has returned having done quite as much as expected & more'.<sup>3</sup> La Trobe himself made 94 major tours of the colony, delighting in visiting every region, including the Western District and Gippsland. He collected plants wherever he went. Two of these are housed in the Royal Botanic Gardens Herbarium in Melbourne, and are registered on its database. They are: *Derwentia perfoliata* (Diggers Speedwell) collected from the Loddon Range in 1850, and *Platylobium obtusangulum* (Common Flatpea) collected from the Port Phillip District in 1842.

Mueller evidently kept up with the botanical literature better than La Trobe did! He gave La Trobe a copy of the Swiss botanist Meisner's formal description of the genus *Latrobea*. It should be noted that Mueller did not name either the genus *Latrobea* nor the species *Acacia latrobei*; both names were coined by Meisner, to whom La Trobe had sent the specimens that led Meisner to characterize these new taxa. What Mueller did was tell La Trobe that he had been immortalized by Meisner in this way.

In a letter to his friend Ronald Gunn in Oct 1852, La Trobe is teasingly modest, noting that Mueller 'furnished' him with the description of a genus as *Latrobea*.<sup>4 5</sup> His sense of humour is again evident when he mentions the 'exceedingly pretty little dwarf acacia flowering abundantly in its native soil at Jolimont'. He jokes that the *Acacia acinacea* syn. *Acacia latrobei* (Golden Fields Wattle) 'has been distinguished with my name also'. La Trobe notes that it is likely that he will 'go down to posterity, in another form besides that of the 'withering curse' which the

Democrats of P.P. one time gave me – or that of the 'Flying Pieman' which was bestowed by your choice Colonists of Tasmania!'<sup>6</sup> showing his realisation that he is not popular with some sections of the community.

At this point, it might be useful to explain a little about the nomenclature of plants. Over time, some plants have undergone name changes. To understand this, it is helpful to know that there are strict rules set out in the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature concerning naming rights. The third principle of this code states that a plant name is determined 'by priority of publication', indicating that, if a botanist's publication on a particular plant is the first to appear on that subject, then the author's name is the name the plant is given.<sup>7</sup> This helps explain why some of the plants in the *Latrobea* genus now have different names, because it has subsequently been discovered that other botanists had published on these particular plants earlier than Mueller.

Plants are classified by family, genus and species and each plant has an individual name.

The following are the known plants, either in the genus of *Latrobea*, or named after him (species):

#### Genus named after La Trobe:

- In the family of *Fabaceae* alt. *Papilionaceae*
- *Latrobea abnormis* (F. Muell.) Base name *Daviesia abnormis* (F. Muell.)
- *Latrobea brunonis* (Benth.) Base name *Pultenaea brunonis* (Benth.) Meisn

- *Latrobea diosmifolia* (Benth.) Base name *Brutonia diosmifolia*
- *Latrobea diosmifolia* var. *diosmifolia* (Benth.)
- *Latrobea diosmifolia* var. *glabrescens* (Benth.)
- *Latrobea genistoides* (Meisn.) Base name *Pultenaea genistoides* (Meisn.)
- *Latrobea hirtella* Base name *Leptocytisus hirtellus* (Turcz.) Benth
- *Latrobea tenella* (Meisn.) Base name *Burtonia tenella* (Meisn)
- *Latrobea tenella* var. *grandiflora* (Benth.)
- *Latrobea tenella* (Meisn.) Benth var. *tenella*

#### Species named after La Trobe:

- *Acacia acinacea* syn. *Acacia latrobei* (Lindl.), (Meisn.)
- *Correa lawrenceana* var. *latrobeana* syn. *Correa latrobeana* (F.Muell. & Hannaford), Paul G.Wilson
- *Pandorea pandorana* syn. *Tecoma australis* syn. *Tecoma latrobei* (F.Muell.), (Andrews), (R.Brown) Steenis
- *Eremophila latrobei* (F.Muell.)
- *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* subspecies *rosmarinifolia* syn. *G. latrobei* (Meisn), (A. Cunn.)
- *Glycine latrobeana* (Benth.)

In recognition of La Trobe's support and enthusiasm for his work, Mueller named several plants after the Lieutenant-Governor. There is a delightful letter from Mueller to William Hooker at Kew, lamenting that *Tecoma latrobei* is going to be named *T. australis*. He expressed his disappointment because he had named it in acknowledgement of the support his patron Charles La Trobe had given him.<sup>8</sup> The two men shared a good working relationship based on their deep interest in science, especially botany. After Mueller was dismissed from his directorship of the Botanic Gardens in 1873, he continued in the role of Government Botanist to which he had been appointed in 1853, a position he held until 1893, and he remained a salaried civil servant on the Victorian Government's payroll.

It may certainly be concluded that both Mueller and La Trobe in their different roles made tremendous contributions in their respective fields in Victoria, having a common interest in the flora of Victoria. Today, La Trobe's Cottage is located in the King's Domain, Melbourne. Flourishing in the garden are two examples of the plants named for Charles Joseph La Trobe by Ferdinand von Mueller (as he later became). These thriving examples are a gentle reminder that these two visionary men did so much to promote advancement and understanding of Victoria's native flora.

- 1 Sara Maroske and Helen Cohn, ' "Such Ingenious Birds": Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria', *Muelleria*, Vol.7, No. 4, 1992, National Herbarium of Victoria, pp 529- 553.
- 2 Helen Cohn, 'Ferdinand Mueller Government Botanist: The Role of William Hooker in His Appointment', *Muelleria* Vol.7, No.1, 1989, National Herbarium of Victoria, pp 99-102.
- 3 R W Home ... [et al.] eds. *Regardfully yours : selected correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller*, Vol. 1: 1840-1859, New York, Peter Lang, 1998, p. 768 .
- 4 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Ronald Campbell Gunn, 8 October 1852, op. cit.
- 5 Note: The word 'furnished' is transcribed as 'punished' in LJ Blake's *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, 1975, p. 41.
- 6 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Ronald Campbell Gunn, 8 October 1852, op. cit.
- 7 Roger Spencer, Rob Cross & Peter Lumley., *Plant names: a guide to botanical nomenclature*, Collingwood, Vic., CSIRO Publishing, c. 2007, p.17.
- 8 R W Home ... [et al.], eds. *Regardfully Yours*, 1998, op. cit., p. 171 .

#### A note on Ferdinand Heinrich Jakob Mueller

Ferdinand Mueller's contribution to his field was recognised internationally during his life time. In 1871, he was appointed a hereditary baron by the King of Württemberg, having been granted his 'von' in 1867. He was made C.M.G. in 1869 and K.C.M.G. in 1879. He was awarded a royal medal of the Royal Society, London, in 1888 and won many European honours. Morris, Deirdre, 'Mueller, Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von (1825-1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mueller-sir-ferdinand-jakob-heinrich-von-4266/text6893>, accessed 22 September 2012. First published 1974 (Ed.)

# Ferdinand Mueller and Charles La Trobe: 'So many signs of benevolence and favour'<sup>1</sup>

By Thomas A. Darragh

Dr Thomas A. Darragh is a graduate of the University of Melbourne in invertebrate palaeontology. He worked at Museum Victoria, formerly National Museum of Victoria, as a Curator and in administration from 1965 to 2001. On retirement he was appointed Curator Emeritus. His research interests are in the field of Tertiary marine molluscs and he has published many papers on this subject. He also has had a long standing interest in the history of the natural sciences, particularly geology, in Victoria and in the people involved in engraving and lithography in nineteenth century Victoria. He has also carried out research on nineteenth century German scientists and intellectuals in Victoria. He is the author of several papers and books on these topics. He has translated many letters for the Ferdinand von Mueller Correspondence Project and currently is working on translations of the diaries of Ludwig Leichhardt as well as on a directory of engravers and lithographers working in colonial Victoria.

*Tom Darragh has kindly given us permission to reprint this article which first appeared in La Trobeana Vol 2, No 2, June 2004.*

During his period as Governor of Victoria following the separation of the Port Phillip District from New South Wales as the new colony of Victoria, Charles Joseph La Trobe established or encouraged the development of several cultural and scientific institutions. Among them was the institution now known as the National Herbarium of Victoria. He did this by the appointment of a Government Botanist. Botany was just one of La Trobe's many interests, but since his arrival in Melbourne, he had little opportunity to further it. This was due to lack of time and perhaps more importantly to the absence of anybody in the District who knew anything about the subject.<sup>2</sup> La Trobe had

occasionally collected plant specimens on his various tours through the District that he sent to the herbarium at Neuchâtel in Switzerland. These specimens were examined by Carl Friedrich Meisner, Professor of Botany at Basel University, and when describing plants collected in Australia by Ludwig Preiss, he honoured La Trobe by dedicating a new genus of bush pea, *Latrobea*, to him.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1852 La Trobe had the opportunity to indulge his botanical interests as well as further the interests of the Colony. He received a letter from the well-known English naturalist William Swainson, then in New South Wales, offering his services to undertake a botanical



survey of the Colony for one year. La Trobe accepted this offer, but as it turned out the results of Swainson's work were very disappointing. Shortly after receiving this offer, La Trobe would have been surprised and pleased to meet a university-trained German botanist, Ferdinand Mueller, who carried a letter of introduction to La Trobe from the Adelaide merchant Francis Dutton. La Trobe mentioned Mueller in a letter to the Tasmanian naturalist Robert Gunn:

There is an honest looking German here, Dr Müller, who as far as I can judge seems to be more of a botanist than any man I have hitherto met in the Colony; and I shall give him every encouragt. – He has furnished me with the description of the genus *Latrobea* of Meisner. Both the species *brunonis* & *genistoides* were formerly ranked as *Pulteneae* it appears. I have no specimen but if I can procure any from any quarter, will take care that you get it. He tells me that an exceeding pretty dwarf acacia flowering most abundantly in its native soil at Jolimont has been distinguished by my name also.<sup>4</sup>

La Trobe was so impressed by Mueller that he directed that a sum be placed on the estimates for the following year for employment of a Government Botanist and intended to offer Mueller the position when the money was voted by Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

Mueller had arrived in South Australia in December 1847. He was a qualified pharmacist, who had undertaken university studies in botany at Kiel University and made extensive botanical investigations in the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein where he lived. His parents and one sister had died of tuberculosis; so Mueller decided to take himself and his two surviving sisters to what he regarded as a healthier climate. He initially chose the island of Madeira,<sup>6</sup> but shortly before departure he seems to have been persuaded, apparently by the Hamburg pharmacist and botanist Wilhelm Sonder, to go to South Australia instead. No doubt this was because it would give Mueller the opportunity to pursue botany in an area that was still relatively unknown botanically and so had much to offer the botanical collection.

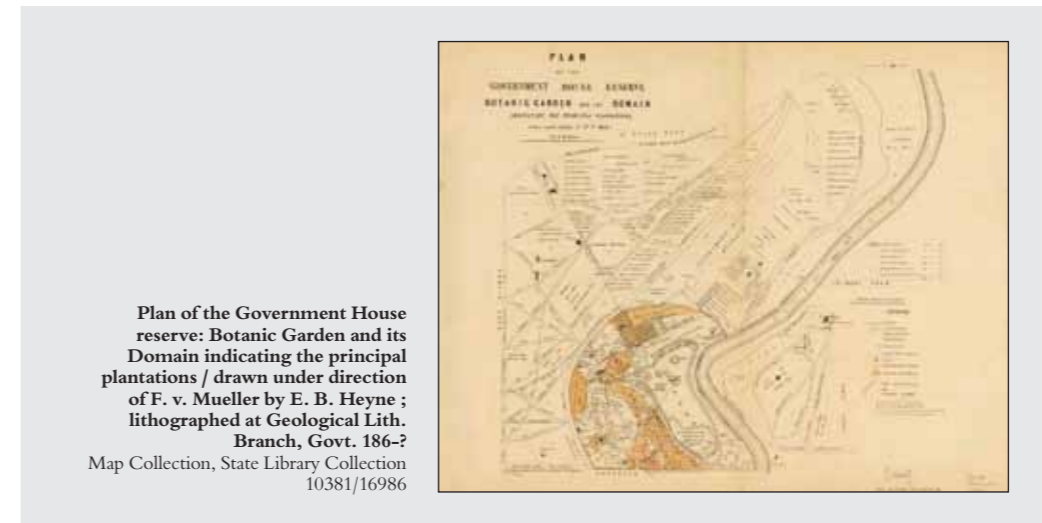
We know from family correspondence that Mueller never intended to stay in Australia. When his sisters were settled, it was his intention

to return to Schleswig and purchase a pharmacy there using part of a family legacy. In 1849 his uncle was negotiating with the owner of the Husum pharmacy where Mueller had undertaken his apprenticeship with a view to Ferdinand taking to over. The outbreak of war between the Danish Government and the German speaking inhabitants of the two duchies was one reason that prevented his return.<sup>7</sup> Another was probably money, given that he wanted to pursue his love of botany and to do that he needed to travel to collect plants. Collecting trips cost money and took him away from paid employment as a pharmacist in Adelaide. By 1851 he was sending part of his collections to Europe, where Sonder arranged their description and sale.<sup>8</sup>

Following the discovery of gold and the consequent increase in population of neighbouring Victoria, Mueller took the opportunity to move there in August 1852. He arrived in Melbourne aboard *Hero* on 14 August and set up in business as a pharmacist at 244 Lonsdale Street East, Melbourne.<sup>9</sup> Whether Mueller actually practiced as a pharmacist in Melbourne is not clear. Although his business is listed in the 1853 director, which would indicate that he moved in to the shop and perhaps had paid his rate instalment, he could only have operated there for a very short time. By January 1853 he was appointed Government Botanist and started on his first collecting tour on 29 January to the eastern half of the Colony, three days after his appointment. La Trobe had specifically directed Mueller to investigate the Victorian Alps, probably because this was an area that La Trobe himself had never had the chance to visit during his tours of the Colony. Mueller returned in the following June, having done, as La Trobe expressed it 'as much as I expected & more than any but a German, drunk with the love of his Science, – & careless of ease – & regardless of difficulty in whatever form it might present itself – could have effected in the time & under the circumstances'.<sup>10</sup>

Mueller's first collections of plants were sent to La Trobe by ship from Gippsland and La Trobe directed that a place be made available for the plants in the Botanical Gardens where Mueller could work on them.<sup>11</sup>

Mueller wrote extensive reports on his botanical findings during this first excursion which were avidly read by La Trobe. Mueller's first report, dated 28 July 1853, bears the annotation by La Trobe 'Let me have all these reports from the outset'.<sup>12</sup> In August 1853 Mueller proposed another trip through the western half of the colony and the Victorian Alps from which he returned in April 1854. On a third excursion undertaken after La Trobe



had departed and Charles Hotham had taken over as the new Governor, Mueller ascended the Bogong Range discovering two high mountains. In his annual report he solicited 'His Excellency's permission to name the grandest of both Mt Hotham, and the second in height Mt Latrobe'. Unfortunately Mueller's compass bearings taken to locate these two mountains as well as other features named by him were inaccurate owing to the magnetic interference of basalt in the vicinity and his names were not used. Mueller's Mt Latrobe is now known as Mt Loch. Mt Hotham and Mt Latrobe did come into use, but applied to other features.<sup>13</sup>

None of Mueller's reports were addressed to La Trobe of course. As a proper public servant, all his correspondence was addressed to his immediate superior the Colonial Secretary, William Lonsdale, but all official reports were read by La Trobe as head of government and bear his initials that he has read them.<sup>14</sup> Because of his interest, La Trobe also had copies made of some, if not all, of Mueller's reports which he retained for his own use.<sup>15</sup> A copy of Mueller's report of 5 September 1853 was sent by La Trobe to the Secretary of State of the Colonies with the comment that:

The gentleman whose services in the capacity of Government Botanist it has been our good fortune to secure, is one whose ability both in the collection & examination of the Flora of this and the neighbouring Colonies is beyond all question.<sup>16</sup>

It is also clear from the correspondence and reports that though there is very little direct official correspondence between the two men, La Trobe and Mueller did meet and discuss Mueller's work and findings. One letter, written

whilst Mueller was still in the field from Angus McMillan's property, *Bushy Park*, in Gippsland, was probably addressed to La Trobe personally because Mueller feared that La Trobe would have departed before Mueller's return and he would not have the opportunity to thank La Trobe. It runs as follows:

Bush Park, 14 March 1854

Sir

According to your Excellency's former permission, I took the liberty of forwarding the botanical collections, which I formed in the Snowy mountains and latterly in the eastern parts of Gipps land, to the Police Magistrate at Alberton, whom I desired to forward them to your Excellency.

The collections from the Grampians have been partly despatched by the mail to the Postmaster in Geelong, and partly through Mr Commissioner Bell to Melbourne; and the Murray plants I had an opportunity of sending to the botanic Garden. The herbarium from this environs will pass through Mr Capt. Careys hands.

If my progress is not interrupted by unforeseen obstacles, I hope to increase during my next excursions to Mount Wellington and some other outskirts of the



Australian alps my collections from this season to nearly 600 species, which, added to about 1000 phanerogamic and 200 cryptogamic plants of last year, would leave hardly more than 200 Victoria plants undiscovered, presuming that this colony possesses about 2000 really indigenous and well marked species.

As your Excellency might have possibly departed from Melbourne before my travels ended, I feel it my duty at this opportunity to express to your Excellency my deepest gratitude for so many signs of benevolence and favour, and for the unceasing interest and patronage, which you, Sir, evinced towards my department and my humble labours.

I have the honour to be,  
your Excellency's  
most obedient and humblest  
servant  
Ferd. Mueller

His Excellency Governor  
La Trobe,  
&c &c &c  
Melbourne.<sup>17</sup>

Because of heavy rain, Mueller was prevented from visiting Mount Wellington, so returned to Melbourne in April well before La Trobe's departure. When La Trobe left Melbourne in May 1854, he acted as a courier for Mueller, taking manuscripts, specimens and letters, which included material to be passed over to Sir William Hooker of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. This was to ensure that the material arrived safely.<sup>18</sup>

It is not clear whether Mueller and La Trobe remained in close contact after La Trobe's departure. However, Mueller never forgot an obligation and he was deeply indebted to La Trobe, who gave him the opportunity to pursue his life interest. So it is no surprise to find that in 1859 Mueller sent a specimen of the genus *Latrobea* when he finally had material to send. The specimen was accompanied by a letter:

Melbourne bot. & zool  
Garden 16 Aug 1859

My dear Mr La Trobe

Since your departure from us I bear always your request in mind, of furnishing you with a specimen of the genus *Latrobea*, established by Prof. Meisner, but was not able to do so until now, when our collector sends for the first time the *Latrobea* genistoides from W. Australia.

I feel confident, altho' I have seen no specimens of it, that the *Latrobea Brunonis* Meisner is nothing but a meagre desert form of *L. genistoides*.

My work on the plants of Victoria, which you, much beloved Sir, so kindly & generously initiated, is now under the press and many beautiful illustrations for it are prepared. My multifarious duties do not render it possible to make much rapid progress with it, yet I hope, – *si fata velint*<sup>19</sup> – to send you the first fascicle before the end of the year. Our mutual venerable friend, Sir William Hooker, takes in my labours as lively an interest as ever.

Wishing with your numerous friends here you all prosperity. I remain, dear & esteemed Sir, your always grateful

Ferd. Mueller  
C.J. Latrobe Esq., C.B.  
&c &c &c<sup>20</sup>

Whether this letter prompted a gift in return is not known, but La Trobe sent Mueller a book on Swiss fungi with coloured plates in November 1859. It was a copy of J. Berger *Die essbaren, verdächtigen & giftigen Schwaemme der Schweiz* (Bern, 1845-1850) bearing the inscription:

To Dr Ferdinand Müller  
with kind regards  
C.J. La Trobe  
Nov 1859<sup>21</sup>

This is the last evidence we have of any contact between the two men following La Trobe's departure from Victoria.

---

#### References

- L. Gilbank, 1992, Alpine botanical expeditions of Ferdinand Mueller, *Muelleria* 7(4), pp.473-489.  
R. Home, A.M. Lucas, S. Maroske, D.M. Sinkora and J.H. Voigt (eds). *Regardfully Yours: Selected Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller*. Volume 1: 1840-1859, Bern, Lang, 1998.  
S. Maroske & H.M. Cohn, 1992. 'Such Ingenious Birds'; Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria, *Muelleria* 7(4), pp.529-553.  
J.H. Voigt & D.M. Sinkora, 1996. Ferdinand (von) Müller in Schleswig-Holstein, or: 'The Making of a Scientist and of a Migrant'. *Historical Records of Australian Science* 11(1), pp.13-33.

#### Endnotes

- 1 This article draws on the letters collected together by the Ferdinand von Mueller Correspondence Project. I am grateful to my project colleagues Sara Maroske and Helen Cohn for their suggestions and comments.
- 2 Maroske, S. & Cohn, H.M., 1992, 'Such Ingenious Birds'; Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria. *Muelleria* 7(4), p.537.
- 3 Meisner, C.F., 1848, in Lehmann, J.G.C. (ed.), 1844-48, *Plantae preissianae...* (Meissner, Hamburg) 2 (2-3), p.219. Species of this genus are endemic to Western Australia.
- 4 Charles La Trobe to Ronald Gunn, 8 October 1853, Gunn correspondence, Mitchell Library, Sydney. The description copied by Mueller is in the La Trobe Papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria. The acacia was *Acacia latrobei* Meisner in Lehmann (1844-5), vol.1, p.10. The specimen on which the description was based was collected by La Trobe in Port Phillip and sent to the Neuchâtel Herbarium. It is currently regarded as a synonym of *Acacia acinacea* Lindley.
- 5 Maroske & Cohn, *op. cit.*, p.538; R.W. Home *et al.* (eds), 1998, *Regardfully Yours: Selected correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller* (Lang, Bern), volume 1 1840-1959, pp.138, 766, 767.
- 6 Mueller's Reisepass or passport No.317, dated Altona, 8 July 1847, (Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Library) was filled out for Madeira, but then altered to Port Adelaide.
- 7 Voigt, J. & Sinkora, D.M., 1996, Ferdinand (von) Müller in Schleswig-Holstein, or: The making of a scientist and of a migrant. *Historical Records of Australian Science* 11(1), p.28.
- 8 W. Sonder to Eduard Fenzl, 15 November 1852 (Archiv der Universität, Wien). The price for Mueller's plants was 8 Reichstalers per 100 specimens, a little over £1 Sterling.
- 9 *Melbourne Commercial Directory for 1853*, p.30.
- 10 Home *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp.768-769.
- 11 Annotation by La Trobe on letter by Mueller, dated Alberton 10 May 1853, informing La Trobe that he had forwarded an account of his journey by ship and requesting a quiet place to commence his work of describing them during the winter months. Public Record of Victoria VPRS 3991, unit 408, letter 53/4945.
- 12 R.W. Home *et al.*, *op. cit.* p.149.
- 13 Gillbank, L., 1992, Alpine botanical expeditions of Ferdinand Mueller, *Muelleria* 7(4), pp.478, 481.
- 14 Home *et al.*, *op. cit.* p.149.
- 15 Copies held in La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- 16 Home *et al.*, *op. cit.* p.164.
- 17 La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- 18 Home *et al.*, *op. cit.* p.179, 185.
- 19 If fate wishes.
- 20 La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- 21 This volume is held at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Library.

# The Contribution of Ronald Campbell Gunn to our Knowledge of the Flora and Fauna of Tasmania<sup>1</sup>

By Lynn Blackwood

Lynn Douglas Blackwood (1933–2012) was born at Wynyard, Northwest Tasmania. After attending an eight pupil country primary school she completed her education at Collegiate School in Hobart. Interested in the diversity of plants, she developed a ¼ acre garden after her marriage to David Blackwood. While studying for a Certificate of Horticulture she discovered that the legendary but almost forgotten Tasmanian plant hunter Ronald Campbell Gunn was her great-great grandfather. She then spent the next 25 years collecting information on him from institutions in Australia and Europe, as well as from private and family sources and hoped to write a book on him. In 2008, she was the convenor and driving force of the committee which raised over \$70,000 to erect a statue of Gunn in City Park Launceston. She died in February 2012 after a long period suffering from motor neurone disease. This paper has been produced with the kind assistance of David Blackwood who also contributed Some Notes specific to La Trobe and the Port Phillip District/Victoria

Ronald Campbell Gunn (1808–1881) was an important naturalist in Tasmania. He is generally known as a botanist but he accomplished a lot in various other fields of Natural History, as well as in exploration. For some twenty five years I have been collecting material relevant to my great-great-grandfather. Perhaps before writing of what became his life's passion I will give a brief outline of his private and family life.

Ronald Campbell Gunn was born at Cape Town in 1808 while his father was with a Highland regiment stationed there. The family came from the northern part of Scotland, but his childhood years were largely spent on Reunion

Island, as well as the West Indies at Antigua and Barbados. He was educated and worked for a while in Edinburgh. He married in Barbados and returned to Scotland briefly before coming to Van Diemen's Land in 1830 at the age of 21 years.

Initially, he held positions associated with the supervision of convicts in Hobart and Launceston and was Police Magistrate there before being transferred to Circular Head in 1835 in that position. The death of his first wife left him with a young family and he later remarried. I have been asked so many times if we are related to the Gunns of timber mill fame. The answer is 'No!'. From each of his families (six in each) only one daughter produced offspring

and so there are none who have his surname. Several rural families in southern Tasmania are descended, however, from his brother William.

What made Gunn become such an ardent naturalist? Certainly he was active at a time when many discoveries were occurring worldwide, but I think it is of interest that he arrived here as a young man aged 21 years, having spent all but the first year of his life on various islands, and was to spend the rest of his life as a resident of this island, and when he travelled it was to Flinders Island, to the Port Phillip settlement and to New Zealand.



Peter Corlett OAM, sculptor  
R C Gunn, (1808–1881), 2006  
Bronze  
Collection: Peter Corlett OAM

The relevance of all these travels and experiences is that he would have been influenced by the many geographical and climatic differences he observed, particularly those affecting the flora and fauna of these far-flung land masses. These observations, together with his enquiring mind, must have led him along the paths of discovery which he then travelled. In the 1830s he had noted the differences in several plant species present in both Port Phillip and Van Diemen's Land. During the next 30 years or more Gunn went on to collect thousands of specimens of our native plants, which he described, prepared and dispatched to Sir William Hooker and later Joseph Hooker, successive directors of Kew Gardens London. These specimens are still available for study today.

In 1840, Joseph Hooker was in Hobart for several months during the visits of the ships *Erebus* and *Terror* on the Antarctic voyage of Captains Crozier and Ross and he botanised with Gunn. Hooker used Gunn's work in the

preparation of his book *Flora Tasmaniae*, the first major publication solely devoted to the flora of this island, and in the introduction he wrote most warmly of Gunn:

There are few Tasmanian plants that Mr. Gunn has not seen alive, noted their habits in a living state, and collected large suites of specimens with singular tact and judgement. These have all been transmitted to England in perfect preservation, and are accompanied with notes that display remarkable powers of observation, and a facility for seizing important characters in the physiognomy of plants, such as few botanists possess.

It is noted that Charles Darwin used the *Flora Tasmaniae* in his subsequent work on the *Origin of Species*, which deals with the differences of evolution on various islands. Therefore, we can believe that Gunn had a significant place in scientific circles in the mid-1800s and, indeed, still has today. In fact, it has been stated that he was Tasmania's first resident scientist. Others, such as those on French and British expeditions, had only briefly touched on Tasmania's shorelines. As well as plants Gunn collected specimens of birds (which were his second main interest), animals, shells, seaweeds, mosses and fungi. What is left? Yes, geological specimens were collected also, as were fish. I will mention some of these later.

But what started Gunn on this journey of discovery? As stated earlier, he had a most enquiring mind (and deeply observant eyes). Perhaps, this was the reason that as a lad back in northern Scotland his brothers insisted he was the one to climb down a cliff to collect a bird's nest. Gunn's education included several years spent in Scotland and his letters tell us that at Barbados he spent his spare time reading to improve his education.

Later in the colony he was to amass a huge library reputed to be the finest in the land. After his death this library was offered to the Launceston City Council by his trustees for £300 but they declined to purchase it. It included one and possibly two copies of Gould's *Birds*. Today, his King James Bible is in the State Library of Victoria. His books were disbursed between 1907 and 1924.

Ronald Gunn, however, was not trained in the sciences which became his life interest. Whilst in Scotland, as a young man, he spent

some time assisting his brother who edited a newspaper and he also had a position cataloguing the library of a large Scottish estate.

These experiences must have given rise to his later concise and accurate writing and descriptions of places, plants, animals and birds, and also to his habit of recording lists of books he had acquired.

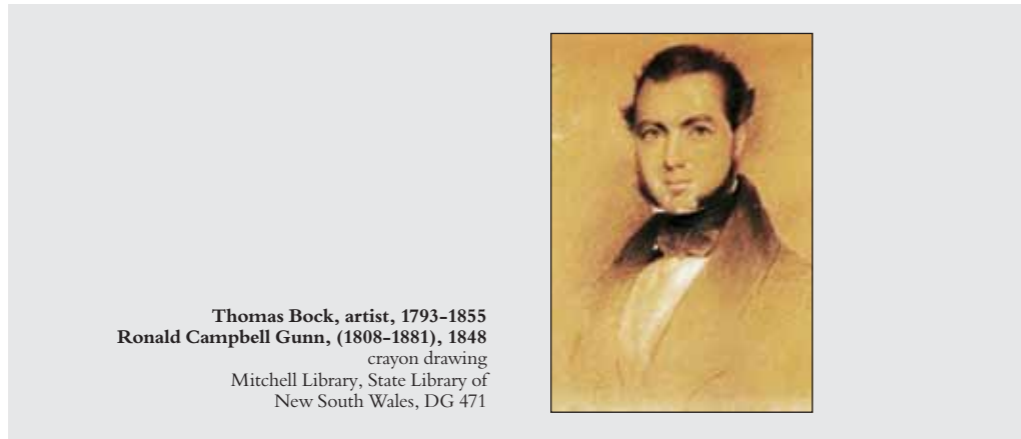
The first report we have of Gunn collecting, although it appeared years later, seems to be accurate as to time and place. This occurred before 1832 when from Capt. Moriarty's property *Dunorlan* (behind Deloraine)

Hobart, then as Assistant Superintendent of Convicts in Launceston, before being appointed Superintendent of Convicts for the Northern Division of Van Diemen's Land. In 1833, three years after his arrival, he was also appointed Police Magistrate and so at the age of 24 years was in charge of all convicts in the north and in this capacity he heard about 40 to 60 cases weekly (mostly of a minor nature).

It was at this time that Gunn made the acquaintance of Robert Lawrence of Cressy, a young man with botanical interests who introduced Gunn by letter to Sir William Hooker at Kew where Lawrence was already

bird specimens there in 1838 alone. These were still recorded in 1906 although by then in poor condition due to unsuitable display techniques of the time. In 2007, when I visited the Liverpool Museum in England, I was thrilled to find many bird specimens still in excellent condition.

at Kew Botanic Gardens, both to Sir William Hooker and to Joseph his son. Hooker senior became quite a mentor – he was responsible for sending parcels of the books necessary to Gunn in identifying plants and to establish plant families in his attempts to classify his discoveries.



he made a 10-day trip to the Western Tiers, accompanied by a gardener from the property. Accompanying him was Henry Douglas (who was also to become my great, great grandfather – his son Henry Douglas junior married Ronald's daughter Jane Franklin Gunn). On their return they looked so disreputable that they were taken for bushrangers! Among his collected plants, Gunn was proudly carrying a flower of *Telopea truncata* (waratah) and stated he wished to assemble a Herbarium containing all Tasmanian plants. When he then set off from *Dunorlan* to walk alone across country back to Launceston, the comment was reputed to have been made: 'not to worry as Mr Gunn was already a first class bushman'. He had been in the colony less than two years!

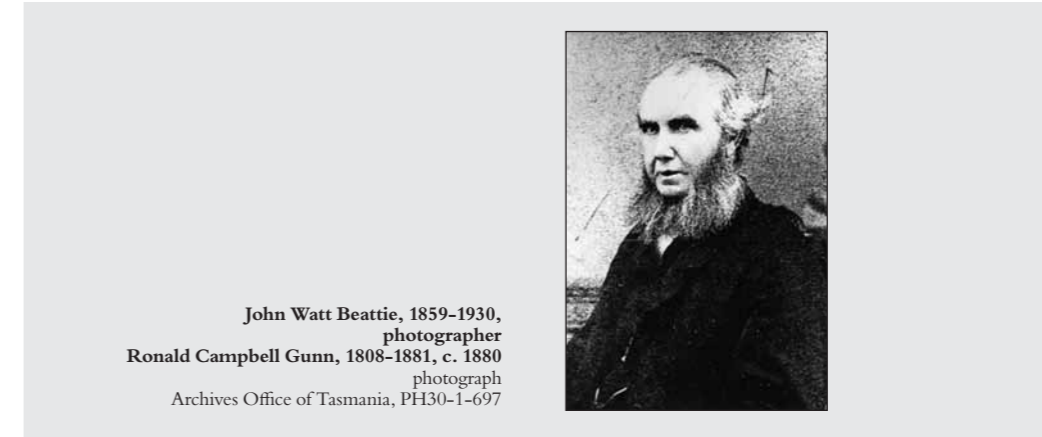
The pattern of Gunn's lifetime interest had been set. He would walk or ride long distances in his search for specimens. Once he reportedly walked 28 miles in one day collecting as he went. He was a tall man at 6 foot 3 inches (192 cm approx.) and obviously very fit. I think that his 'walks' could often be classed as 'bush bashing' through untracked country.

Of course, he had official positions for many years, firstly for a few months as the Superintendent of a convict barracks in

sending specimens. Gunn and Lawrence started botanising together but, unfortunately, Lawrence's untimely death two years later brought an end to the friendship, but it had given Gunn an added impetus to continue his botanising interests. Gunn went on to make many forays in the northern region covering the mountains surrounding Launceston, the northern Midlands and parts of the North East and coastal area around George Town. Many new types of specimens of plants were collected, as well as an abundance of others, including mosses and lichens.

A transfer to Circular Head where his workload was less arduous gave Gunn far more time for study of the natural sciences, as well as botanical collecting from *Woolnorth* to the Emu and Leven Rivers. He investigated the Middlesex Plains towards Cradle Mountain. This was the country held by the Van Diemen's Land Company.

Gunn became interested in studying birds and at one stage requested that he might have as assigned servant the next 'bird stuffer' to arrive. Thus, James Lee filled this position for some years. Lee was able to prepare many of the bird specimens sent to such places as the British Museum of Natural History. Gunn sent 138



He studied the Tasmanian Emu and reported years later that he had seen a hen with 11 chicks at Circular Head. In later life at his home *Newstead House* he kept two emus, but from mainland stock. He was able to compare these and wrote of the differences with the Tasmanian sub-species, now extinct.

At Circular Head, seaweeds were also collected with the help of Charlotte Smith the storekeeper's wife who dried and arranged the specimens. Gunn began his own publication *The Circular Head Scientific Journal*<sup>2</sup>. This was handwritten and continued for about two years. Most of the content concerns meticulous descriptions of birds of the area and this work is regarded as the first attempt to classify Tasmanian birds. Ted Davis an ornithologist from Boston USA has transcribed these papers, identified and updated the information and published them in a 263 page book in 2009 and titled: *Early Tasmanian Ornithology, the correspondence of Ronald Campbell Gunn and James Grant 1836-38*.

In 1836, Gunn made his first trip to Port Phillip and travelled as far as Port Fairy. He considered taking up land and becoming a squatter. On this as well as on all trips he made written comments on the type of country and suitability for agriculture. I am sure his decision to remain in Van Diemen's Land has left our state a great deal richer. Several later trips were made to Melbourne and environs and he had some correspondence with Ferdinand Mueller the Victorian State Botanist. Charles La Trobe told him about Mueller on his arrival.

Gunn was a prolific letter writer. The main surviving letters number in the hundreds

William Hooker was also frequently asked to send paper (blotting paper) for pressing the plants as this was not readily available in the colony. He managed to carry paper to arrange his finds (later he had one of the 'new' American plant presses). He was often out in the bush for days and up to three weeks at a time.

Initially over fifty plants carried the species name *gunnii* (these usually given by Hooker or other European botanists). Today, the number is forty two, due to changes in modern nomenclature. Genus names are fewer and there are just two, these include the tiny groundcover, *Gunnera cordifolia*, not to be confused with the giant gunnera sometimes cultivated in gardens.

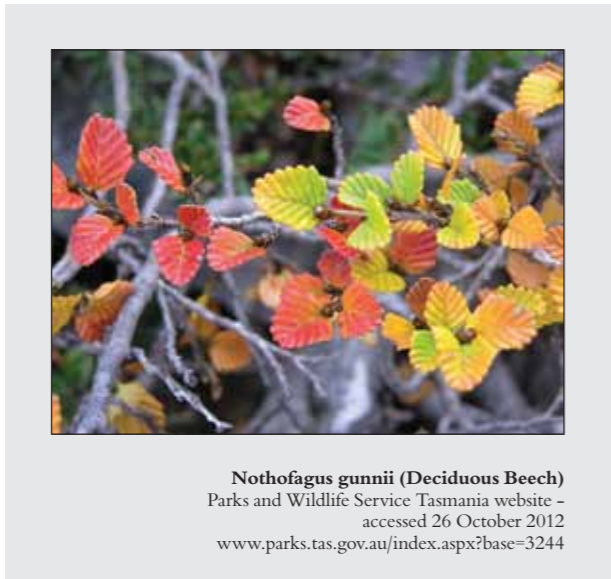
Following his stint on the North West coast, Gunn returned briefly to Launceston and here in 1838 was responsible together with William Henty in forming the Launceston Horticultural Society with the aim of improving cultivated plantings generally but with the emphasis on food production. He was President and Henty was Secretary. The Society is proud of its long unbroken history since that time.

Soon after the arrival of Sir John and Lady Franklin in January 1837, Gunn was in Hobart and became Sir John's private secretary for two years. The Franklins were already aware of Gunn's botanical work from their acquaintance with William Hooker. Ronald Gunn became their friend and frequent guest. He accompanied them on several journeys including to Flinders Island in January 1838 and to the Huon River but was unable to travel with them to Macquarie Harbour in 1842 owing to a broken leg. He was to retrace most of their route later and collected



alpine species at Mt. Olympus and Lake St. Clair on his way to the Franklin River. Sir John and Lady Franklin are well known for being the first people in authority with an interest in the Arts and Sciences and in education generally, and so Gunn at last felt he had patrons and allies for his many activities.

In December 1838, Gunn was with Lady Franklin, John Gould (of bird fame) and others on a trip destined for Port Davey; however, they were caught by bad weather and did not proceed beyond Recherche Bay. Undaunted, Lady Franklin made trips ashore and Gunn and Gould both collected avidly. They sought to



**Nothofagus gunnii (Deciduous Beech)**  
Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania website -  
accessed 26 October 2012  
[www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3244](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3244)

locate the site of the 'French Garden' planted 45 years earlier.<sup>3</sup> Despite having maps and details of the locality no trace of the garden was found, although two metal plaques still attached to fallen trees were sighted. I am somewhat sceptical of recent reports of findings when no trace was found 160 years ago.

During the Franklins' time the Tasmanian Society was formed to promote scientific enquiry and Gunn became Secretary. He also held that position in the Hobart Horticultural Society which had newly been created.

As mentioned earlier Joseph Hooker visited Hobart in 1840 and the two young men spent time botanising together and long discussions were held in Gunn's study. This was one of the first times that Gunn had enjoyed the company of a professional botanist. Joseph was in fact trained in medicine as were most botanists of the time this being necessary since most medicines were of plant origin. Specific training in the various sciences as we expect today did not often exist.

Later still in 1855, another professional man with similar interests was here and met Gunn. The noted Irish phycologist, William Harvey, collected seaweeds and subsequently, in appreciation of assistance with some specimens, dedicated a volume of his *Phycologie Australiae* to Gunn. I have seen some of these specimens which are at Trinity College, Dublin and they appear as if they could have been dried last week!

Gunn's own writings deserve a mention. It would be impossible to give a full list. In addition to his innumerable letters, his writing was mainly in the form of articles to the local

scientific papers of the day. These included the *Circular Head Journal* already mentioned. He was keen on the improvement of vegetable production and wrote on this subject, as he did on the encroachment of the sea along the north coast of Tasmania (1855). He rather pre-empted today's theories of rising sea levels! *The Tasmanian Journal of Natural Sciences*, begun in 1842 under the auspices of the Franklins had articles by Gunn in almost every publication, as did the Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of V.D.L. later. For John West's *History of Tasmania* (1852) Gunn wrote the section on the animals and birds of the island.

I should here mention that Gunn was back in Launceston from 1843 when he gave up Government appointments and became the manager of the many Lawrence estates in the north. He was also appointed to manage Lady Jane's properties on the Franklins' return to England. This gave him more freedom to botanise and continue his interests as he moved around these scattered properties.

One later trip he made on a Government contract was with Surveyor Peter Lette to the North West beyond the Mersey to ascertain if reports of gold discoveries were viable. The rumours proved unreliable. He made several trips to the North East, the first preceding Scott's (by a different route) and, indeed, accompanied Scott on his well-documented trip of exploration.

Gunn, who had grown over 1000 plants in readiness to commence a Botanical Garden at Glen Dhu, was thwarted when in the 1830s Governor Arthur was not able to grant the two assigned servants Gunn asked for to assist him - Arthur replied that having a Botanical Garden at Hobart was sufficient. We can conjecture that some of these plants survived to be planted in City Park (the Horticultural Society Gardens from 1840 till 1863). The massive Copper Beech and the two Cork oaks are of interest there as is the huge wisteria.

Before concluding, some mention of specific collections should be made. Gunn adopted his own distinctive style of label and numbering system used when boxes of specimens were dispatched. The collecting date is given, as is the dispatch date, a number refers to the actual specimen and is also used to identify that specimen in his accompanying notes on the locality and habitat where the find was made. The same number was used for all duplicate specimens. The prepared specimens were carefully packed in sealed boxes and often placed in the care of ships' captains. Some live plants were sent in Wardian cases (from 1840) and garden plants returned in these.

**Among the best known of 'Gunn' plants are:**

- *Nothofagus gunnii* the deciduous Tasmanian beech
- *Eucalyptus gunnii* (Type)
- *Epacris franklinii* (Type)
- *Boronia citroidora*
- *Helichrysum selaginoides* (Type)
- *Blandfordia punicea*
- *Epacris gunnii*

(This is only a minute list of all the plants sent.)

Being a 'Type' specimen refers to those which were first discovered, described classified and named. These become the one always

referred back to for comparison with other similar finds.

Joseph Hooker's botanising with Gunn resulted in several shared discoveries including *Eucalyptus risdonii*. Other collectors who forwarded specimens to Gunn to send on to Hooker were Dr Joseph Milligan who was at Circular Head, James Backhouse, James Lee the 'bird stuffer' mentioned earlier (two plants recorded) and Mary Ballantyne from New Norfolk. Rev. John Lillie was another who collected with Gunn.

A pair of stuffed Tasmanian Emus were sent to the British Museum as well as many other bird specimens (for which we must thank James Lee). The Emus and several eggs still exist there. And a live Thylacine! This may have been the one recorded there (in stuffed form) up until the Second World War. The Eastern Barred Bandicoot, *Parameles gunnii* is widely distributed in Tasmania. Four seashells include Gunn's screwshell (I don't have the Latinised name). Eighteen algal species collected by Gunn are on a list at the Sydney Herbarium.

You may wonder what happened to Gunn's own Herbarium of duplicate specimens? Not long before his death in 1881 he presented this valuable collection to the Royal Society of Tasmania. It remained uncurated for many years and about 1904 was moved to the National Herbarium in Sydney. At a later date duplicate material was returned to Hobart and is at the Tasmanian Herbarium.

Gunn was given prestigious honours in recognition of his work in natural history. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1854 (the first Tasmanian to be so honoured) and in 1850 had been elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society. The list of those who supported his nomination reads like a *Who's Who* of well-known naturalists of the day. Gunn, who had arrived in the Colony with very little, gradually prospered and owned property including the *Newstead* estate. Here he built his home in 1856 and the land which was gradually subdivided up until the late 1930s is now the suburb of Newstead. Gunn died there in 1881.

Without elaborating on his many official and voluntary duties as well as his enormous contribution to natural science in Tasmania it can be said that Ronald Campbell Gunn remains one of our great pioneers. His work should be and, I hope, will become more widely-known in his adopted state.

*The author wishes to acknowledge assistance and material she received from Alex Buchanan at the*

*Tasmanian Herbarium. Notes from Van Diemen's Correspondents 1827-1849 –Burns and Skemp, have also been used. Documents and information have been obtained from the various Museums mentioned in the text, as well as privately held papers.*

Lynn Blackwood June 2008

**Addendum:**

Some Notes specific to La Trobe and the Port Phillip District/Victoria

- In 1836 Ronald Gunn chartered the *Rebecca* for a visit to the following places which is probably the first detailed trip along the coastline:
  - 29 February Arthurs Seat.
  - 6 March Churchill Island.
  - 9 March Port Fairy.
  - 12 March Cape Otway.
- In 1842 Gunn wrote a paper "Observations on the flora of Geelong" for the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science* 1842. This was based on 112 plants sent to him by Miss H Roadknight and Mr R Burke.
- Gunn met La Trobe during his stay as acting-governor of Van Diemen's Land. As they had like interests they began corresponding. Domestic matters did arise as when La Trobe wrote 'Mrs La Trobe thanks you for the fruit sent by the *Shamrock*, of the unfortunate plums previously sent we know nothing.' (La Trobe Library 2-3-49.)

'We are in fact almost entirely dependent upon *Penquite* (Gunn's house) and only wish that we could secure all that is rotting on the ground under your trees every year.' La Trobe Library (7-6-50)

The last letter from La Trobe was in January 1864 reminiscing on life and people in Australia. (Dixon Library).

- Dr E C Hobson had moved from Hobart, where he had been active in the Tasmanian Society, to live in Collins Street, Port Phillip. Gunn corresponded regularly with him particularly on the fauna including the Bunyip episode. As to La Trobe he also sent fruit. On his death he offered to come to Melbourne to assist.

# Research Report: Charles La Trobe's contribution to the establishment of the Horticultural Gardens at Burnley

By Jane Wilson

Jane has a BA (Monash), Dip. Crim. (Melb.) and worked as a librarian before studying an Advanced Certificate of Horticulture at Burnley College. She became a Guide with the Friends of Burnley Gardens and now also works as the Volunteer Archivist for The University of Melbourne Burnley Campus archive collection.

Next year, 2013, will be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Burnley Gardens in Richmond. They are now part of The University of Melbourne's Burnley Campus but they were originally controlled by what later became the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria. The Friends of Burnley Gardens and The University of Melbourne will be celebrating this Anniversary next year and this might be an opportunity to show our gratitude to Charles La Trobe for his role in their creation.

The first settlers in Melbourne brought with them seeds of European trees, fruit and vegetables but it was only by trial and error that they were able to judge those best suited for the local conditions. In 1848 John Pascoe

Fawkner, an early pastoralist and nurseryman (among other things), called a meeting to form a horticultural society to further this knowledge. The Victorian Horticultural Society (VHS) was formed with Superintendent Charles La Trobe, a keen botanist, as its Patron. The President was his friend, Mayor Henry Moor.

There was a large area of Crown land in Richmond in a bend of the River Yarra, known as the Survey Paddock, as the Government Surveyor's horses were rested there. Through Charles La Trobe's and Henry Moor's efforts, an area was made available for the Victorian Horticultural Society to use. It appears that the VHS and local nurseries may have used part of the Survey Paddock for experimental planting as early as 1850 but this has not been substantiated.

---

1 Although the name Tasmania was used from the 1820s, it was not until November 1855 that the colony was officially renamed. (Ed.)

2 The Circular Head Journal was really an exchange of letters between Gunn and James Grant trying to classify the Tasmanian birds and happened before Gould did same and was very detailed. Each had sketchy European reference books, many with different names for the same bird. Some were new of course.

3 Note supplied by David Blackwood September 2012.

4 The French Garden was planted in 1792 and inspected on return in 1793 by Delahaye, gardener with Bruni D'Entrecasteaux's expedition and is claimed as the first in Tasmania. (Capt. Blyth, however, had planted fruit trees on Bruny Island prior to this.) The French Garden apparently consisted of plantings of a few types of vegetable seeds marked out by small stones. When they came back a year later several small plants had survived and nothing much else.

5 Note supplied by David Blackwood September 2012.



Photographer unknown  
 Students Working Around the Lily Ponds 1911  
 photograph  
 Courtesy of the Burnley Archives, The University of Melbourne  
 B94.872

A report in the *Port Phillip Herald* on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1850 stated that Mr La Trobe had promised to set aside 10 acres of land for the purpose of holding horticultural shows and for the experimental cultivation of horticultural materials but possibly due to the gold fever which ensued nothing came of it.

In 1856 a new society was formed, the Horticultural Society of Victoria (HSV), after Charles La Trobe had left Australia, and in 1860 the HSV, the Richmond Council and the residents of Hawthorn lobbied the Minister of Lands and Survey for a permanent grant of land. Finally, in December 1860 25 acres of the Survey

Paddock was temporarily reserved for the use of the HSV and by 1865 35 acres had been gazetted for permanent use by the HSV.

The Horticultural Gardens at Richmond were established at Richmond in 1861 and a competition was advertised for the design of the experimental gardens. This was won by Alfred Lynch, a local landscape designer. It was a condition of the land grant that a proportion of the land was to remain open to the public and it has remained so to this day. The gardens were officially opened on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1863 with a grand flower show.

#### References

- Burnley Gardens Conservation Management Plan prepared for The University of Melbourne by Lovell Chen in association with John Patrick Pty Ltd and Andrew Long and Associates, November 2005
- A.P. Winzenried. *Green Grows Our Garden, a Centenary History of Horticultural Education at Burnley*, Carlton: South Yarra: Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd, 1991

# Crises of 1852 for Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe, Captain William Dugdale and Henrietta Augusta Davies

by Susan Priestley

Susan Priestley, MA (Melbourne), FRHSV, is an independent historian who has produced a dozen commissioned histories, seven articles for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and one for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. A Councillor of the RHSV for 20 years, and its president between 1999 and 2004, she also served as vice-president of the C J La Trobe Society until 2008. Now smitten with biography as an engaging way into history, her biography of Henrietta Dugdale was published in 2011 and a biographical sketch of Annie Lowe is due as a journal article next year.

*This paper was given on the occasion of the 2012 AGL Shaw Lecture to a joint meeting of the La Trobe Society and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and C J La Trobe Society, 19 June 2012.*

It has become customary for public speakers to begin by acknowledging the first people of this country and paying tribute to their elders, past and present, a custom in which I am happy to acquiesce. In addition this evening, I am honoured to pay tribute to our own particular elder, Emeritus Professor Alan George Lewers Shaw, who died peacefully at home on 5 April. He served the RHSV with dedication and distinction as councillor for 20 years, as president from 1986 to 1991, continuing with the publications committee, and as a generous benefactor. He was an equally generous founding member of the C J La Trobe Society from its foundation in 2001, its president from 2002 to 2004, and in support of its research scholarships. This annual joint lecture offered by the two societies was most aptly named for him. The latest of AGL Shaw's historical monographs is *A History of the Port Phillip District, Victoria before Separation*, written during his retirement

and published in 1996. It is a rich book in many senses, enlivened by insight and his characteristic dry wit. The introductory chapter contains the kernel of his approach to history and it would seem to life. At his memorial service in Trinity College chapel, the chaplain used it as the basis for the homily. We might all benefit by listening again to the Shaw wisdom. The work, he says,

is old-fashioned narrative history, and though I fully realise its statements can not be proved philosophically 'true' and that my judgements are my own and therefore influenced by subjective bias and prejudice, in writing it I have been searching for the truth and trying to produce a narrative of unique events.



'Searching for the truth' and 'a narrative of unique events' have been my aims in this evening's lecture. Along with the whole history community, I am indebted to AGL Shaw for his tutelage and his precepts, and I remember him with great affection.

On Friday 6 January 1852 the first session of representative government in what the *Argus* newspaper boosted as 'the Model Colony' was formally prorogued by Lieutenant Governor C. J. La Trobe. The ceremonial opening of that first Legislative Council happened just two months earlier on 11 November 1851, which was



Margain & Jager, Grenoble, France, photographers  
Henrietta Dugdale, c1843-1845  
photograph  
Private collection.

exactly a year after Port Phillip settlers learned, via English newspapers from a mail ship, that separation from New South Wales had been officially granted. Ray Wright opens his excellent history of the Council, *A Blended House*, with an evocative scenario of that Monday in 1850 when the separation news was delivered to La Trobe while he was at dinner with some guests. The mayor of Melbourne, grocer William Nicholson, accompanied by a former mayor Augustus Greeves, had driven to Jolimont to be ushered into the dining room with the breathless news that the town had gone quite wild. What was the mayor to do? La Trobe smiled and told him to go and light his bonfire on Flagstaff Hill, the signal beacon that set off a chain of celebratory bonfires around the region. In the meantime, La Trobe returned to talking with his guests of how people in India used plantain leaves as plates.<sup>1</sup> The vignette neatly encapsulates the way in which La Trobe's intense interest in people from across the world underpinned his authority and management in Victoria.

When the new colony came into formal existence on 1 July 1851, it was just two months since the initial gold discoveries near Bathurst in New South Wales, and just days before the discovery at Clunes heralded the swift tumble

of Victorian rushes. The news of Victoria's gold, and the first export consignment, reached England on the *Honduras* on 8 January 1852. In the same mail was La Trobe's report to the Colonial Office, which among other matters sought advice on managing and financing the new fields, how revenue was to be garnered, whether from mining licences, royalties, export duties or some other combination. The Colonial Office's reply to the financing question was not expected before May 1852, and in fact the Legislative Council did not reassemble until 22 June, with the second session lasting until 8 February 1853.<sup>2</sup>

La Trobe's initial imposition of a licence system, which took effect from 1 September 1851, had been modified a little after vehement public protest fostered by elements in the local press. The *Argus*, for instance, was only too happy to reprint a piece from the *Geelong Advertiser* which castigated 'our miserable apology for a Governor' thereby stimulating the *Argus's* own litany of derisive comment on La Trobe which rose to a quite vitriolic pitch in 1852.<sup>3</sup> The editor and joint owner of the *Argus* was Edward Wilson, and I find it intriguing that co-owner James Stewart Johnston was an elected member of the Legislative Council, at least until he resigned in November after his motion of no confidence in the 'weak, vacillating and spiritless executive' was lost.<sup>4</sup> Some latter-day writers incautiously cite the *Argus* condemnation as an impersonal, justifiable, even universal, opinion of the La Trobe administration. It was not.

The thirty Legislative Councillors were not remunerated for their attendance, and were sometimes reluctant to be distracted from personal business, particularly if they lived at a distance from Melbourne. Twenty were elected from among men who qualified as property holders and ten were nominated, with La Trobe as Executive head. Among their number were

seven squatters, six merchants, four landholders, three shopkeepers, two newspaper proprietors, two doctors, a miller, an attorney and a financier. Their average age was 42, with J.P. Fawkner at 59 the oldest and John Mercer the youngest at 28. The working strength of Council in its first two sessions was undermined by two deaths and seven resignations. Moreover, members generally lacked experience in both governance and public administration, and with only a minimal civil service in place, they faced immense challenges, neatly summarized by Ray Wright.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from ... the procedural intricacies that lay at the core of Westminster government, there were ... the additional problems of goldfields management, of unpredictable population growth and uncontrollable urban expansion, of financial control, of meeting the demands of extremely mobile and increasingly vocal miners, of social [fluidity], and [ultimately] of calls for political realignments.

Most of the burden of day-to-day decisions during 1852, not to mention forward planning, inevitably fell back on La Trobe's shoulders.

There were a few instances of relief. In early March 1852, the *Launceston Examiner* carried a report that 'His Excellency and Mrs La Trobe [were] on a tour of the interior'.<sup>6</sup> From Dianne Reilly's biography, I learned that this was a five day visit in late February to Yering in the Yarra Valley, the property bought in 1850 by Paul de Castella who had been encouraged to emigrate by letters sent back to Neuchatel, Sophie La Trobe's native place in Switzerland. With her husband at Yering she would have had the rare pleasure of being in the company of other French speakers and among scenery which her husband delighted to sketch and paint.

La Trobe's next excursion out of Melbourne was more in the nature of a tour of duty, all done on horseback. Over three weeks in April-May he visited Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat, Buninyong, Clunes, Castlemaine, Kyneton, Mt Alexander, Bendigo, Avenel, Benalla, Wangaratta, May Day Hills (later Beechworth) and Seymour. It meant that he was able to inform the Legislative Council, and his superiors in London, with first-hand accounts of conditions on a range of new goldfields and their impact on the pastoral economy, which had previously been a major source of revenue for the colony, chiefly through the export duty on wool.

La Trobe's opening speech to the second session of Council on 22 June covered the broad scope of matters needing urgent legislative attention.<sup>7</sup> The mineral wealth of the colony

had led to a 'great augmentation' in territorial revenue, that produced by land sales, almost all of town land. The other 'most extraordinary increase' was in general revenue, garnered largely from duty levied on cargo unloaded from the influx of ships arriving at Port Phillip from the start of 1852, ships which brought in addition about a hundred passengers each, some twice that. One contemporaneous statistic supplied by a Melbourne bullion broker for the *South Australian Register* was for a single mid-year week ending 26 June. It gave 876 persons arriving and 166 departures, making a nett addition to the population of 710.<sup>8</sup> The rate of arrivals was to rise dramatically in the second half of the year. Despite the fiscal enlargement, La Trobe's address to Council pointed 'with regret' to what he termed 'the embarrassments...[of] the pastoral and agricultural interests...which nothing but an ample supply of labour will remove.' He had therefore remitted 'large sums in advance' to further assisted immigration and had paid off 25,000 pounds raised upon Crown Revenue for such immigration in 1849.

In order to further stabilise Victoria's revenue sources, he reported that a new Tariff bill had been drafted covering wharfage, harbour, tonnage and light dues [presumably lighthouses and beacons]. He had taken care to forward the draft to authorities in the neighbouring colonies to ensure that it did not impinge on 'the unrestrained freedom of colonial and foreign trade'. If adopted by Council, a concurrent Customs bill would be required, as well as revised Harbour and Port Regulations, and a Seaman's Act more fitted to the recovery of deserting crew. He drew Council's attention to legislation extending criminal jurisdiction to the Court of Quarter Sessions (Victoria's Supreme Court had been established at the start of the year) and to amendments needed to establish local courts where it was considered advisable. Urgent attention was also required for post office regulation, registration of births deaths and marriages, a general Marriage Act, amendments to the criminal code to check 'the prevalence of horse and cattle stealing', and to facilitate the apprehension of convicted persons escaped to other colonies. He invited 'well-considered suggestions' from Council concerning general policing of the colony 'such as our present position urgently demands', foreshadowing the establishment of Victoria Police in 1853. Also in need of consideration were 'measures to promote the cleanliness and health of towns', foreshadowing the Local Government Act of 1854. In conclusion, he reiterated his 'anxiety to co-operate heartily with [Council] in all measures conducive to the public advantage, wherever they may originate, or to whatever points they may be directed'.

The range of topics bears witness to an ordered comprehensive vision and the constancy of work involved. His wife shared the stress. In July Sophie wrote to their fifteen-year-old daughter Agnes:

Your dear papa is still as busy as ever he can be. His head gets but little rest even in the night, so much he has to think about official business – most of the time of an unpleasant kind – and I see so little of him that sometimes it makes me quite unhappy – and every year I am hoping that if it is God’s will, it will be the last of that kind of life in this country and so far from all those who are dear to us.<sup>9</sup>

By December La Trobe was ready to acknowledge the strain, initially in private letters to a Sydney friend, where he concluded that ‘[b]oth Governor and governed have been exposed to some trial of patience by my long reign’. Ultimately on the last day of the year, he wrote a letter of resignation to Sir John Pakington, Secretary of State for the Colonies.<sup>10</sup> It demonstrates his always considered balance between the personal and the public interest:

I must at length acknowledge that I feel the necessity of seeking to secure, as soon as may be, some breathing time and some degree of complete relaxation from the constant strain upon the mind more than the body, which the weight and character of my public duty, particularly of late, have brought with them.

But beyond this, I think that the time has now arrived when a change in the head of the Executive Government of the Colony would be no disadvantage to the community.

As we know, his term was necessarily extended because of delay in appointing his replacement. He left Victoria on 6 May 1854, nearly fifteen months after his wife and family, and seventeen months after he had penned his resignation.

Turning now to crises faced by some immigrants of 1852, four people who were discovered, and in a sense brought back to life, while I was researching the life of one of them, Henrietta Augusta Dugdale (nee Worrell). The book was published last year. She arrived as the wife of Junius Augustus Davies who had been a ship’s officer but never rose above the rank of second mate. William Dugdale, who became her second husband, was captain of the *Duke of Bedford* which was in the vanguard of the 1852 influx of shipping. Her third husband Frederick Johnson was still a boy when he came in the family of the bandmaster to the 40<sup>th</sup> Regiment.<sup>11</sup>

William Dugdale was the first to arrive on 4 February, two months before his thirtieth birthday. He boldly steered the ‘splendid teak Indiaman...[of] 1200 tons’ through the Rip and up to safe anchorage in Hobsons Bay without the aid of a pilot. About 40 crewmen were needed to man such a large three-masted ship, which carried 175 passengers, including five infants and 28 children between the ages of one and fourteen. Thirty were cabin passengers and the rest travelled in intermediate accommodation for which the fare was a relatively modest 15 pounds. Within weeks, all crew except the officers absconded to the goldfields making it impossible to continue on to Adelaide as advertised during February–March. Word was sent back to London but the replacement crew also absconded and the *Duke of Bedford* joined the growing list of ships ‘in harbour’. Again taking the initiative, Dugdale discovered deep anchorage a hundred yards off the small pier at Sandridge (Port Melbourne) and moved the ship there, away from the press off Williamstown. In September 1852 the ‘fine ship’ was advertised as accommodation ‘for respectable families’, noted by the *Argus* as ‘one sign of the peculiar state of things in Melbourne’. The accommodation venture lasted for eight or nine months, with the captain severing his connection before its agents advertised the ship as storage space in June 1853. It was probably during September 1852 that Dugdale joined a foursome for his own excursion to the goldfields. The other three men were Geelong settlers and they set out for Ballarat well equipped with horses, tents and gear, but within a month everything had been purloined and they had to walk back. Within the men’s private circle, their tale of woe was often repeated with dry humour, but such instances compounded the burden of public complaint that lent urgency to La Trobe’s efforts to curtail lawlessness.

Next to arrive were the Davies couple, Junius Augustus who was nearly 36 and his wife who was eleven years younger. They were among 99 passengers, five of them accompanied by family, on the *Caroline Agnes* which reached Adelaide on 6 May 1852. That piece of information came to me on the evening after the biography was launched last August. It was discovered by that ‘advanced woman’ Lenore Frost cleverly interrogating the National Library’s Trove search engine. I had not found the Davies’ arrival in my own research. The *Caroline Agnes* came on to Melbourne five weeks later, but its manifest is not in the PROV collection and the Davies were not among its sixteen cabin passengers listed in the Melbourne papers.<sup>12</sup> Nor are they identifiable among passengers on other coastal vessels, except possibly ‘Mr and Mrs Davis’ (*sic*) who arrived at Geelong on 29 July 1852 on one of the schooner *Shamrock*’s regular

runs from Sydney. Gaps in the official record for 1852 are not uncommon, understandable given the accounts of chaotic Melbourne being almost bereft of men at all levels, including clerks, in the search for gold.

There remains a ten-month hiatus in evidence for the whereabouts of the Davies couple between the Adelaide landing and Henrietta’s marriage as a widow on 5 March 1853 in the new St Paul’s church. Its opening just five months earlier was one of the more positive events of 1852, in La Trobe’s eyes at

by a local jury summoned by a magistrate from Geelong. The body was a male about 30 years old with brown hair, which fits Davies’ physical characteristics outlined in the British Seamen’s Register. But further identification was impossible because all ‘flesh was removed from the head and face, the bones being completely denuded’. The right hand and arm were ‘almost fleshless’ as well and two upper front teeth were missing. But since the clothing was completely undisturbed, although coat and shoes were missing, the local jury concluded that there been no foul play, with body damage caused through



least, relieving pressure on St James’ parish at the western end of town and St Peter’s on Eastern Hill. As well as exerting moral influence, church ceremonies allowed for some legal record of births, deaths and marriages before the civil record was established.

In later life when Henrietta spoke of her first husband, she claimed that he died or was drowned shortly after their arrival. No death certificate was issued in Victoria or the other colonies, so I turned to inquests on the bodies of unknown males found in the Melbourne area whose death was attributed to drowning. At least 20 were held during 1852. That did not eliminate every possibility of course, even for a Victorian event, for the body may never have been found. The *Argus* noted that 13 bodies had washed up around the Bay just in the last three months of the year, at the same time taking it upon itself to admonish seamen for attempting to desert their ships.<sup>13</sup> Some class prejudice might be detected there.

Having read all the 1852 and early 1853 drowning inquests in the PRO, one body offers a possible (and I stress possible) identification as Junius Augustus Davies. It was found on the beach at Indented Head on the morning of 12 October 1852 and subjected to inquest

exposure and decomposition after death. He was dressed as a gentleman in a striped blue shirt, silk waistcoat, silk handkerchief (presumably a cravat or necktie), striped tweed trousers, flannel underclothing and worsted stockings, the latter items suggesting that he died on a winter’s day. The body was afterwards buried at Indented Head.

While all that information is in the book, I was hesitant about speculating further in print. But having learned something of the character of Henrietta and her spouses, I have come to indulge myself before audiences such as this. One can envisage a scenario where the man had been engaged in fisticuffs, perhaps a gentlemanly bout to settle a point of honour where coat and shoes were discarded, the latter to give better purchase on a ship’s deck. A knockout blow to the head could then have propelled him overboard into the bay, where flesh wounds to the head and right hand from the fist fight would have provided openings for tides and sea creatures to extend the damage. The missing front teeth also fit the picture. It calls to mind the *Duke of Bedford*, its accommodation venture, and the fact that Davies and Dugdale had been fellow officers on the ship, although only for one voyage immediately after Davies’ marriage to Henrietta Worrell in 1848. On that single

voyage in 1848–9 Davies remained as second mate, while Dugdale who was six years younger was the new first mate. The full circumstances will likely remain unclear, but Davies surely confronted his last crisis in the latter half of 1852.

Turning now to the fourth arrival: Frederick Johnson might have sensed adventure rather than personal crisis on his arrival in October just before his twelfth birthday. As an Army child, son of a regimental bandmaster, he was well accustomed to travel. Born in Toronto, Canada he had lived in London, Winchester and

1862. For Frederick's later connection with the Dugdales, see the biography.

Circling back from personal to official Victoria in 1852, a prime imperative resulting from the influx of ships, was the development of port facilities. Excluding regular circuits within the Bay and to Geelong and Warrnambool-Port Fairy, 1452 vessels arrived at the port of Melbourne during the year, with another 220 offloading at Geelong. When the *Duke of Bedford* arrived in early February, twin beacons on Shortlands Bluff and some channel markers were



C.C.Simpson, Queenscliff, photographer William Dugdale c1867. photograph Private collection.

Cork in southern Ireland. It was from the latter place that the 40<sup>th</sup> Regiment was summoned in June 1852 to assist the Victorian government in protecting 'life and property on the goldfields'. The steam troop ship *Vulcan* arrived at Port Phillip on 19 October with four companies of the regiment and some of their families. However, because of a smallpox scare on board, the ship was kept anchored off St Kilda for a fortnight before the regiment could disembark. To relieve the tedium, the officers asked for newspapers to be sent out and announced that the band would play on deck for an hour morning and evening. The *Argus* editor's response to the musical invitation was tinged with somewhat pompous sarcasm: 'We shall certainly take a swim round the *Vulcan* the very next time we find ourselves endeavouring to relieve the cares of State'.<sup>14</sup> Beachside residents and those on ships in the crowded harbour might have taken a different view. Band music wafting across the water was a foretaste of much memorable pleasure during the regiment's eight years in Victoria. For instance, Saturday afternoon concerts in the newly-opened Botanic Gardens after 1857 did much to erase the public shadow of the regiment's part at Eureka in December 1854. Frederick's father Henry, whose Army career ended in 1860, enhanced his local fame by agreeing to be adjudicator of Victoria's first band contest in

Dugdale's only guides in reaching the anchorage in Hobson's Bay, where there were just two or three small piers suitable for lighters and other small craft. The pilot service under the control of the Harbour Master, a position created just three earlier, was still only eleven strong at the start of the year and not immune to defections to the goldfields, however brief. By October the government had purchased a small brigantine as a floating station outside the Rip to shorten the waiting time for entrance. Ten new pilots were engaged by December and 29 more during 1853. Health and customs officers had to be similarly augmented, and following the arrival of the fever-stricken *Ticonderoga* in November 1852, a permanent quarantine station was established at Point Nepean. During the year La Trobe also ordered a preliminary survey for a township at the entrance, the genesis of Queenscliff which he named in June 1853. For him and his family Shortlands Bluff was a place of happy memory of summers at The Hermitage cottage which he had built in 1844. It was removed to Jolimont in 1848, where it became the upper cottage, famously leased to Bishop Perry while Bishopscourt was being built.<sup>15</sup> Henrietta and William Dugdale moved to Queenscliff shortly after their marriage in March 1853, and adopted The Hermitage name for their own dwelling, which may have incorporated remnant material

from the chimney and verandah of the La Trobe cottage. For more about the Dugdales' two decades in Queenscliff, see the biography.

In December 1852 the *Argus* published a detailed review of burgeoning Melbourne including the new camp for immigrants just across Princes Bridge, dubbed Canvas Town. A smaller encampment was on the beach at Sandridge with another described as 'north of the town', possibly in what is now Parkville where water was available in a well-remembered gully. The *Argus* reviewer also made a knowledgeable survey of the harbour. At anchor in Hobson's Bay were 53 ships, 49 barques, three steamers, twelve brigs and eight schooners. Another 25 schooners, three barques and a brig were of shallow enough draught to find a mooring in the Yarra. Those 154 vessels as well as 'numerous small craft' induced some Victorian 'blowing' as it was termed:

This fleet comprises some of the finest merchant vessels of England and America, and of a value beyond our calculation. The colors of many nations of the world now grace the waters

of Port Phillip, and if this be the progress made by a colony yet in her teens, what will she be even at so short a period as ten years hence? Sydney with all her vaunting, we doubt, has never reached such a pitch of maritime importance as Victoria can now boast of.<sup>16</sup>

And on that immodest and some would say ungrammatical note, I will end. It is not altogether at odds with the brash energy of the young colony itself and is redolent of the potential opportunities open to new arrivals in 1852.

---

1 Ray Wright, *A Blended House. The Legislative Council of Victoria 1851-1856*, 2001, Department of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria, p1  
2 *Argus*, 17 May 1852; Wright, *op cit*, Appendix C, pp144-5  
3 *Argus*, 2 September 1851, p 2  
4 Carole Woods, 'Johnston, James Stewart (1811-1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, volume 4, pp 485-6  
5 Wright, *op cit*, p 9  
6 *Launceston Examiner*, 3 March 1852, item headed Victoria, <http://trove.nla.gov.au> accessed 11/9/ 2011  
7 Reported in *South Australian Register*, 8 July 1852, p 3, <http://trove.nla.gov.au> accessed 11/9/2011  
8 *Ibid*, report by Edward Khull  
9 Cited in Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe The Making of a Governor*, 2006, Melbourne University Publishing Ltd, Carlton, p 228  
10 *Ibid*, p 229  
11 S. Priestley, *Henrietta Augusta Dugdale An Activist 1827-1918*, 2011, Melbourne Books, Melbourne, for full references to Davies, Dugdale and Johnson  
12 *South Australian Register*, 7 May 1852, p 2; *Argus*, 14 June 1852, p 4  
13 *Argus*, 13 December 1852, p 3  
14 *Ibid*, 26 October 1852, p 3  
15 Helen Botham, *La Trobe's Jolimont*, 2006, CJ La Trobe Society & Garden History Society, Melbourne, p 49  
16 *Argus*, 9 December 1852, p 5



# The Turkish Latrobe: The Career of Claude Alexandre de Bonneval, The Sultan's Advisor at the Ottoman Court

By Tim Gatehouse

---

**Tim Gatehouse is an eighth generation descendant of Henry Antes, the leader of the Moravian community in Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth century, and the great grandfather of Charles Joseph La Trobe. He is a retired Melbourne solicitor, with an interest in historical research and archaeology, and has worked on archaeological sites in Australia, Scotland, Italy and The Philippines.**

*This address was given on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting and Dinner of the C J La Trobe Society which was held at The Lyceum Club on 7 August 2012.*

There are many branches of the Latrobe<sup>1</sup> family scattered across the world, in Britain, Europe, South Africa, the United States and Australia. It may come as a surprise to know that there are also relatives of the family in Turkey. On 4 November 1804 Benjamin Henry Bonneval Latrobe, an architect practising in Philadelphia wrote to his brother Christian Ignatius in England 'From the days of our old grand uncle Count Bonneval, Pacha of Belgrade, we have been an eccentric breed'.<sup>2</sup>

The grand uncle referred to was Claude Alexandre, Comte de Bonneval. The Bonneval family was one of the oldest in the Limousin region of France and was related by marriage to

many other noble families including that of King Henry IV (Henry of Navarre).<sup>3</sup> The family seat is still the Chateau de Bonneval in the village of Coussac-Bonneval near Limoges. It has been in the family's possession since before the year 930, the date of the earliest construction work on the building, which has been altered and extended many times since that date to achieve its present form. The chateau is the home of the present head of the family, the Marquis Bernard de Bonneval. A room in the chateau is dedicated to memorabilia associated with Count Claude Alexandre de Bonneval.<sup>4</sup>

Many members of the Latrobe family have borne 'Bonneval' as a middle name, particularly those of the American branch, and the question

of the relationship between the Bonnevals and the Latrobes has exercised the minds of many of the family.

When John Frederic Latrobe, then living in Livonia (one of the Baltic states), contemplated marriage to a lady of a noble Baltic family to whom his antecedents were of significance, he wrote to his brother Christian Ignatius inquiring about the Bonneval connection. Christian Ignatius replied on 1 February 1820 that he didn't give a farthing for foreign nobility. The honour of being an Englishman, born in England and possessing all the rights of a Briton were quite enough for him. Then Christian went on to state that their father the Reverend Benjamin La Trobe had told him that their great grandfather had been the marquis de Bonneval and the Latrobe name itself derived from an unspecified event, which had greatly augmented the family fortunes.<sup>5</sup>

This rather equivocal statement appears to indicate that Benjamin did not know or possibly did not want to know the origin of the connection between the two families. There are at least two possibilities. The entry for Bonneval in the Dictionary of French Nobility gives a detailed genealogy of the family commencing in the eleventh century, but there is no reference to a marriage between a Bonneval and a Latrobe. The genealogy is not however exhaustive, and in many cases the children of particular marriages are not individually named, reference being made only to 'many children' or 'other children' of individually identified parents.<sup>6</sup> It is possibly one of these unnamed children who married a Latrobe, and due to the prestige of the Bonneval family, the name was perpetuated in the Latrobe family. The other possibility is that the names were given to an illegitimate child. The truth may never be known but the persistence of the belief of the connection with the Bonnevals in the Latrobe family over many generations does give it some credence.

Claude Alexandre de Bonneval was born on 14 July 1675 at the Chateau de Bonneval. He was a younger son. He commenced a naval career at the tender age of 12, when he was enrolled in the Marine Corps during the wars caused by the expansionary policies of Louis XIV. He received his first promotion, to Ensign, when he rebuked the Minister for the Navy, Colbert, when he remarked that Bonneval appeared to be too small to serve in the corps. Colbert evidently appreciated his audacity. Bonneval served with distinction in the naval battles at Dieppe, La Hogue and Cadiz.

He subsequently purchased a commission in the Guards and by 1701, at the commencement

of the War of the Spanish Succession was Colonel of the Labour-Infanterie Regiment.<sup>7</sup> The war was fought largely to determine whether the grandson of Louis XIV should succeed to the throne of Spain. France and Spain united under one monarch would have drastically altered the balance of power in Europe.

When the French army invaded Piedmont, Bonneval was appointed Governor of the Province of Biella. In 1706 he was accused of financial mismanagement and called to account by the Controller-General of Finances, Michel Chamillart, who was himself notorious for incompetence.<sup>8</sup>

With aristocratic contempt for someone he regarded as a mere clerk, Bonneval demanded an apology, but prudently retired to Venice in the meantime, out of harm's way. This time audacity did not carry the day; there were no peace overtures from Chamillart; so in Venice Bonneval stayed. There he whiled away the time in one of his favourite occupations, intrigue, the object being to transfer his services to Habsburg Emperor Joseph I, one of France's enemies in the current conflict. His offer to change sides was eventually accepted, and Bonneval was given a command in the army of Prince Eugene of Savoy.<sup>9</sup>

Prince Eugene's greatest achievement to date was the defeat of the Turkish army, which had besieged Vienna in 1683, and stemmed their hitherto steady advance into Western Europe. Quite apart from Bonneval's military abilities, Prince Eugene would have felt a certain empathy with Bonneval, because he too was an outcast from France. His father was Prince Eugene Maurice of Savoy, technically an independent state,<sup>10</sup> but in reality a satellite of France. His mother was Olympe Mancini, a former mistress of Louis XIV. Despite her sparkling looks and personality, Olympe lost her influence with the king by her constant meddling in state affairs, something he tolerated from no one.<sup>11</sup> Her final undoing came in 1680 when she was implicated in the Affair of the Poisons, when a number of high-ranking persons were accused of dabbling in love potions and poisons, to attract lovers and dispose of inconvenient spouses and rivals. When Olympe was accused, almost certainly falsely, of having poisoned her late husband, she fled to Brussels, never to return, and the reputation of the Savoy family was forever blackened in the eyes of the king.<sup>12</sup> When Prince Eugene requested a command in the French army, he was coldly refused. He then transferred his allegiance to the Habsburgs.<sup>13</sup>

Both Bonneval and Prince Eugene were deemed to be traitors at Versailles. Prince Eugene

not legally, because he was a Savoyard, but spiritually, because he had been born and raised in France. Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's second wife charitably remarked 'I hate Prince Eugene in the most Christian way I can'.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Bonneval, as a French subject, was regarded at law as a traitor, and his effigy was hanged in the Place de Greves.<sup>15</sup> Bonneval now fought against his former



**Tim Gatehouse, photographer**  
Chateau de Bonneval, birthplace of Claude Alexandre de Bonneval and the seat of the current head of the family, Marquis Bernard de Bonneval, 2011  
Photograph Collection: Tim Gatehouse



**Harvey Broadbent, photographer.**  
Garden of the Galata Mevlevi Lodge, Istanbul, the Dervish Monastery. 2011  
Courtesy of Major General Mike O'Brien.

compatriots. He had an awkward moment at the Battle of Turin in 1706 when he captured his own brother, the Marquis de Bonneval.<sup>16</sup> Later that year Bonneval participated in the successful campaign against the Papal States, which resulted in Pope Clement XI being obliged to support the claim of the Archduke Charles to the Spanish throne. Bonneval was briefly the Governor of the Province of Commachio and in 1709 he accompanied Prince Eugene to the Flemish theatre of the war, where they fought in alliance with the Duke of Marlborough then England's greatest general.

Bonneval had acquired a reputation not only for military prowess, but also for wit, learning and considerable social charm, and corresponded with the philosophers Voltaire, Leibniz and Montesquieu. He evidently impressed the Duke of Marlborough. In 1714 Bonneval received an invitation to visit England from Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, the Duke's domineering wife, one of the most powerful women in England through her influence over Queen Anne but, unfortunately, he was unable to accept. It would have been an interesting encounter.<sup>17</sup>

In 1716 when he returned to Vienna, Bonneval met Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, on her way to Constantinople to join her husband, the British ambassador to Turkey. Lady Mary is remembered today for her role in introducing small pox vaccination to England, having seen

it practised in Turkey. Her letters home were one of the earliest sources of knowledge of life in the east. She wrote to her sister Lady Mar of her visit to Prince Eugene's library, accompanied by Bonneval who she stated was a man of wit, with a bold and enterprising spirit. She was highly amused by his jest that the books were bound in the skins of captured Turkish soldiers. She described 'the smile of pleasure on the grave countenance of the famous warrior'.<sup>18</sup>

The death of Louis XIV in 1715 paved the way for two important events in Bonneval's life, his return to France and his marriage. Phillippe duc d'Orleans, Louis XIV's nephew assumed the government of France as Regent, during the minority of Louis XV. An easy-going libertine, the Regent was amenable to the entreaties of Bonneval and his supporters to annul the decree of banishment and permitted him to return to France. Reports of the major role he had played in the defeat of the Turks at the battle of Petrawardin in 1716, and the severe wound he sustained, regained Bonneval some of his lost reputation, and so he returned to Paris in 1717 as something of a celebrity. However, he was not welcomed in all circles. The duc d' Saint Simon, whose memoirs provide a fascinating insight into life at Versailles, was one of the members of the Regency Council who opposed his return. Saint Simon recorded that he had 'never seen a man less embarrassed'.<sup>19</sup> One suspects that along with Bonneval's charm was a certain element of brashness.

Bonneval's marriage in the same year was involved in the negotiations for his return to France, orchestrated by his widowed mother, who was of the opinion that at the age of 42, it was time he settled into a more conventional existence.

The bride was Judith Charlotte, daughter of Charles Armand de Gontaut, duc

d' Biron.<sup>20</sup> He was a renowned soldier and, of more importance to Bonneval, a friend of the Regent and an enthusiastic participant in the hedonistic excesses of the Regent's intimate circle. He was also in dire financial straits, made worse by having to provide for 14 children. De Biron and his wife were notorious for extorting money from their relatives and for failing to repay loans.<sup>21</sup> Providing Judith Charlotte with a suitable dowry was well-nigh impossible. In Saint Simon's opinion, Bonneval agreed to marry her without a dowry on condition that her father used his influence with the Regent to facilitate his return to France.<sup>22</sup> The bride's feelings are not recorded, but were probably not considered to be particularly relevant. From her portrait and surviving letters, Judith Charlotte appears to have been a very charming woman. This would have been, however, of little account to Bonneval, as 10 days after the wedding he returned to the army<sup>23</sup> and the continuing war against the Turks and later against Spain,<sup>24</sup> and never saw her again.

In 1724 Bonneval was appointed Master of the Ordnance in the Habsburg army garrisoning the former Spanish Netherlands, which had been ceded to the Habsburgs. Prince Eugene, had been appointed Governor, but preferred life in Vienna and nominated the Marquis de Prie as his Deputy Governor.<sup>25</sup> It was he who brought about the end of Bonneval's European career. De Prie's despotic rule made him extremely unpopular with the local nobility in Brussels. Understandably, he expected the support of his subordinates, but for reasons so far never explained Bonneval took the part of the disaffected nobility.

As if this were not enough, there was the curious affair of the reputation of the Queen of Spain. Queen Elisabeth of Spain was the daughter of Phillippe duc d'Orleans, the Regent of France. She had been married to King Louis Phillippe of Spain in 1722 as part of the political settlement of Europe after the wars of Louis XIV.<sup>26</sup>

Since then tales of her eccentric behaviour and rumours of infidelity had spread throughout Europe<sup>27</sup> and were eagerly taken up by De Prie, probably to tarnish the reputation of the former rulers of the territory he now governed.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps out of a sense of obligation to the Regent or perhaps from a realization that the immature Queen Elisabeth, who had been sacrificed to political expediency, was being unfairly slandered, Bonneval vigorously championed her reputation.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the reason, to deliberately antagonize his superior, who was the representative of his patron Prince

Eugene, was fraught with peril. De Prie had Bonneval arrested and court-martialed for insubordination.

The Emperor Charles VI commuted the initial sentence of death to one year's imprisonment, followed by banishment from the Habsburg territories. Bonneval served his sentence in the Spielberg fortress in Moravia, where his cell is still one of the sights shown to visitors, and was then escorted to the frontier.<sup>30</sup> For the next two years he led an idle life in Venice but his reputation for intrigue made him an unwelcome guest and he had to look for another haven. Although he had been permitted to return to France he could not expect to be employed in any military capacity there. As all Habsburg territories were barred to him on pain of death, and overtures to other European powers were unproductive, there remained only one alternative, Turkey.<sup>31</sup>

Bonneval believed that once the Venetian government learned that his destination was Turkey, the traditional enemy of Venice, his life would be in danger. This was not an idle fear as the Venetians had a fearsome reputation for tracking down and doing away with anyone regarded as a danger to the republic.<sup>32</sup> Turkey was therefore his last refuge and he had to ensure that he could remain there and obtain some form of employment.

This could only be achieved if he converted to Islam. He did so without any qualms as he had never been a devout Christian. Having passed his youth in the company of free thinkers like the duc de Vendome and the Marquis de la Fare and other companions of the Regent, making a formal declaration of Mohammedanism presented no difficulties at all. He was then safe from being returned to his enemies. He was created a Pasha of two tails, given a small pension and adopted the name Ahmet Pasha, but was required to live in Bosnia rather than Constantinople.<sup>33</sup> They did not quite trust him.

In Europe his prospects were not regarded as very promising. In September 1730 Lord Kinoull, the British ambassador to Turkey wrote to the Duke of Newcastle '...it is everybody's opinion that he has brought inevitable ruin upon his head. If he is of no use to them they will allow him just bread to live; if they trust him and put him in great employment, the great men of the country will lay a noose for him and procure him a bowstring'.<sup>34</sup> Strangulation with a bowstring being the Turkish method for dealing with inconvenient officials. However, by the end of 1730 Bonneval was at last summoned to Constantinople. The Turks had decided that he could be useful.



Ever since the capture of Constantinople in 1453 the Turks had been the terror of Europe. As their armies of conquest swept relentlessly westward the very survival of Christendom at times seemed threatened. But by 1683 with their defeat at the gates of Vienna by Prince Eugene the tide was turned and by the eighteenth century a series of military defeats convinced the Turkish government that it was now necessary to familiarize themselves with the world of the infidels, which, although mysterious and contemptible, was now also dangerous.<sup>35</sup>

It was not that the East had gone backwards, but it had failed to keep up with the



**Claude Alexandre de Bonneval (Humbaraci Ahmet Pasha) 1675-1747.**  
 Depicted in Turkish dress after entering the service of the Sultan and conversion to Islam.  
 It is a pastel portrait by Liotard.  
<http://snchasamvaadam.blogspot.com.au>  
 / Accessed 11.11.2012

technological advances made in Europe. This was largely due to conservative theological opinion, which was opposed to innovation because it interfered with the divine plan. Innovation came to have the same connotations to the Turks as heresy to Christians. Imitating the West was seen as a betrayal of Islam. But gradually more progressive elements reinterpreted scripture to permit Muslims to imitate those products of western technology, especially weapons and military organization, which could be used to defeat the West.<sup>36</sup>

It was against this background that Bonneval arrived in Constantinople in 1730 at the commencement of the reign of Sultan Mahmud I who had been placed on the throne as a result of a palace revolution. The Sultan was mainly occupied with his literary pursuits and left the government of the empire to the Grand Vizier, Topal Osman Pasha, a member of the reforming elite. Topal saw a pressing need for the reconstruction of the Artillery Corps, known as

the Humbaraci, which by this date was barely functional and was a major cause of Turkish military weakness.

Bonneval was given the new name and title of Humbaraci Ahmet Pasha, which translates as General of the Artillery, and commenced the task of transforming the Humbaraci into a modern European style artillery corps. Because the original corps was so small and ineffectual he was able to rebuild it without the usual entrenched opposition to change. He brought the strength of the corps up to 600 troops, constructed new barracks and established a school of geometry, which was the forerunner of all Turkish military technical schools. Foundries to cast the cannon were also established. The effectiveness of the new corps was proved by the Turkish success in the war against the Russians and Habsburgs, which ended in 1739.

The awakening interest of the Turks in the West was not limited to military matters. In the same way that Europeans romanticized the East as one picturesque entity, the Turks visualized Europe as one country. Bonneval was called upon to advise on such matters as the geography of the different nations, biographical details and character sketches of the rulers and the beliefs of the European religions.<sup>37</sup> Europeans having dealings with the Ottoman regime also sought assistance from Bonneval in navigating its internal politics.<sup>38</sup>

In 1744 the nineteen-year old adventurer Giacomo Casanova visited Constantinople with a letter of introduction from Cardinal Acquaviva<sup>39</sup> whose secretary he had been in Rome until his amorous escapades became an embarrassment. Casanova described Bonneval as a stout elderly gentleman, dressed as a Frenchman, and with a smiling countenance. He informed him that he still commanded the attention of the whole of Europe. To Casanova's surprise, when Bonneval invited him to see his library he found that the locked cabinets held not books but bottles of wine. Bonneval described it as both his library and his harem, explaining that women would only shorten his life, whereas good wine would prolong it or at least make it more agreeable. He told Casanova that he had not had to obtain a dispensation from the religious authorities to drink wine as the Turks permitted everyone to work out his own damnation, the libertine being pitied rather than persecuted. The only dispensation he had asked for was in respect of circumcision, which was granted on account of his age. In answer to questions about his change of religion Bonneval stated that he was a Mahomedan as he had been a Christian and that he was no better acquainted with the Koran than he had been with the Gospels.<sup>40</sup>



**Unknown photographer**  
**Topkapi Palace, Istanbul, residence of the Sultans of Turkey.**  
 Photograph  
[www.luzonet.com/magazine/mag12/istanbul.htm](http://www.luzonet.com/magazine/mag12/istanbul.htm) - viewed 30.10.12



**Harvey Broadbent (courtesy of Major General Mike O'Brien), photographer.**  
**Tomb of Humbaraci, Istanbul, Turkey, 2011**

During his sojourn in Constantinople, Casanova was introduced to many of Bonneval's Turkish friends, usually at dinner parties where all subjects from politics to religion, science and literature were freely discussed. The cuisine was French or Turkish, and the Turkish, French and Italian languages were spoken.<sup>41</sup> It must have been a cultured and cosmopolitan existence. Even Bonneval's house reflected the eastern and western aspects of his life, with one suite of reception rooms decorated in Turkish style and the other as in Europe.<sup>42</sup> Although the exact location of his house is unknown, it is thought to have been in Humbaraci Street in central Istanbul.

In his memoirs the Chevalier de Baufremont, an officer on the ship that conveyed the French ambassador, the Marquis de Castellane to Constantinople in 1741, gives a pleasant account of him. Bonneval was then aged sixty-six. The Chevalier wrote

'I had occasion there to make the acquaintance of the Count de Bonneval, for whom I was charged with a letter from his brother. I found him a delightful man, and the best company in the world. No one has more wit than he, to say nothing of his talents for war, which ought to have brought him to the greatest fortune. He possess all the sciences, and has a lively and accurate understanding which makes him seize the meaning of things at the first word ... He enjoys an income of forty thousand livres, and has a very good house and a well-served table, at which I found myself as often

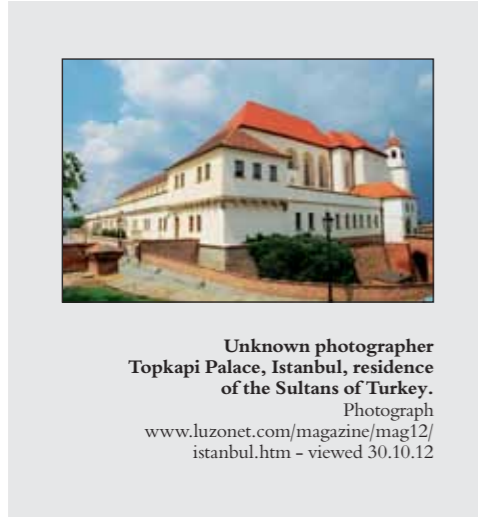
as I could, for it is impossible to be dull in the company of this amiable Pasha'.<sup>43</sup>

With age Bonneval's temper and impetuous nature mellowed. He still suffered from an unhealed wound in his side, now covered by a silver plate, sustained at the battle of Petrawardin, which would have necessitated a more sedentary life. He did, however, still retain his propensity for intrigue. Another French ambassador to Turkey, the Marquis de Villeneuve, commented that Bonneval could never be trusted with a secret. With his constant correspondence with European statesmen and philosophers, the Turks certainly had their doubts too, and in 1738 he was exiled to Asia Minor for several months.<sup>44</sup>

In his last years, Bonneval's main concern was to arrange his return to France. Although the decree of banishment had been annulled at the time of his marriage, his subsequent change of religion had made him distinctly *persona non grata* to the French government. However, he was fortunate to have the support of the Comte d'Argenson, the Minister for War, who was a friend and supporter of the *philosophes* and did not find Bonneval's apostasy as distasteful as did other members of Louis XV's government. On 20 March 1747 a letter, in cipher, arrived from Versailles and was handed to Bonneval by the French ambassador. Being ill he decided to wait till the next day to decipher it. He died in his sleep that night, without knowing that permission to return to France had been granted.<sup>45</sup> Bonneval was buried in the garden of the Galata Mevlevi Lodge, a Dervish monastery in Constantinople. It is now the Museum of Classical Divan Literature. The inscription on the tombstone translates as: 'God, abiding, glorious and great, give peace to the true believer, the deceased Ahmet Pasha, Chief of the Bombardiers, 1747'.



There were no children of Bonneval's marriage to Judith-Charlotte de Biron, but a son survived him, the identity of whose mother is a mystery. Known in France as the Comte de la Tour, he accompanied Bonneval to Turkey where he adopted the name of Soliman Aga. Little is known of him other than that he was born in 1725 and held a military post.<sup>46</sup> He remained in Turkey after his father's death and his descendants live there today.<sup>47</sup>



Bonneval's life assumed legendary proportions after his death. His purported memoirs were published by the Prince de Ligne in 1817, but are regarded as spurious. As the East became better known in Europe biographies also appeared, depicting a highly romanticized life of oriental decadence, catering to contemporary European notions of life in the east.

One writer who possibly had more accurate knowledge of Bonneval was James Morier, a British diplomat serving in Persia in the first decade of the nineteenth century. He drew on his experiences to write two highly amusing novels, still readable today, about the adventures of Hajji Baba, a courtier of the Shah. In discussing the question of how accurately a European can depict life in the east he refers to one who 'rejected his own faith and adopted the Mohamedan, as in the case of Monsieur de Bonneval, who rose to high rank in the Turkish government . . . a Topchi Bashi, or general of the artillery, . . .'.<sup>48</sup> The Morier family was of Swiss origin. James Morier's brother, David Richard Morier, was the British Minister Plenipotentiary to the Swiss Confederation. It was at his house in Berne on 16 September 1835 that Charles Joseph La Trobe married Sophie de Montmollin.<sup>49</sup> Had Morier heard from various members of the La Trobe family tales of their old great uncle, the Pasha? We will probably never know, but the question raises another source of speculation about this extraordinary man.

- 15 Coleman, op. cit. p. 326
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 Coleman, op. cit. p. 327
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 *ibid.*
- 20 *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse*, 1775, p. 646
- 21 Norton, op. cit. Vol. III pp.153, 471
- 22 Coleman, op. cit. p. 328
- 23 Coleman, op. cit. p. 329
- 24 Nicholas Henderson, *Prince Eugene of Savoy*, Phoenix, 1964, p. 221
- 25 McKay, op. cit. p. 180
- 26 Norton, op. cit. Vol. III p. 310
- 27 Norton, op. cit. Vol. III, p. 385
- 28 Coleman, op. cit. pp. 329, 330
- 29 Coleman, op. cit. p. 330
- 30 Coleman, op. cit. p. 331
- 31 Coleman, op. cit. p. 332
- 32 James Morris, Venice, Faber, 1974 p. 183
- 33 Coleman, op. cit. p. 333
- 34 *ibid.*
- 35 Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, Phoenix, 1982 pp. 42, 43
- 36 Lewis, op. cit. pp. 224, 225
- 37 Lewis, op. cit. pp. 168, 170
- 38 Julia Landweber, "Fashioning Nationality and Identity in the Eighteenth Century: The Comte de Bonneval in the Ottoman Empire", In *The International History Review*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, 2008, p. 1
- 39 Ian Kelly, *Casanova*, Penguin, 2008, p. 95
- 40 Arthur Machen (Translator), *Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798, Memoirs*, Unabridged London edition, 1894, The University of Adelaide, Chapter 14, (unpaginated).
- 41 *ibid.*
- 42 Coleman, op. cit. p. 334
- 43 *ibid.*
- 44 Coleman, op. cit. p. 333
- 45 Coleman, op. cit. p. 335
- 46 *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse*, 1775, p. 646
- 47 Communication to author from descendant of Comte de Bonneval
- 48 James Justinian Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, Oxford University Press (The World's Classics edition), 1970, p. 3
- 49 Dianne Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: The Making of a Governor*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp. 102,103

---

1 In France and in the USA the family spell the name: 'Latrobe'. In other places such as England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa the name is spelt: 'La Trobe' at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Pierre Latrobe, 'The Patronymic: The Latrobe/La Trobe family name.' *La Trobeana*, vol.9, no 2, July 2010, p.2. (Ed.)

2 Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry LaTrobe*, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 4

3 A. I. Du P. Coleman, "Bonneval Pasha". In *The Mid-West Quarterly* (1913-1918), University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1914, p. 324

4 Chateau de Bonneval website

5 Dr. John Henry de LaTrobe and Renate de LaTrobe, *The Bonneval Legend*, Association LaTrobe International Symposium 1997, p. 224

6 *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse*, 1775, p. 646

7 Coleman, op. cit. pp.324, 325

8 Lucy Norton, *Historical Memoirs of the duc de Saint-Simon*, Vol. I, Hamish Hamilton, 1974, p. 343

9 Coleman, op. cit. pp.326

10 Derek McKay, *Prince Eugene of Savoy*, Thames and Hudson, 1977, pp. 9, 10

11 Antonia Fraser, *Love and Louis XIV: The Women in the life of the Sun King*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2006, p. 96

12 Anne Somerset, *The Affair of The Poisons*, Phoenix, 2004, pp.253-256

13 Friedrich Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire*, Phoenix, 2002 p. 228

14 Fraser, op. cit. pp.275, 276

# Book Review

By Roz Greenwood

## *The French Closet* by Alison Anderson Burgess

---

Alison Anderson Burgess is a former teacher who lives on a Western District grazing property. Her great interest is in local history and she is a very active member of Hamilton History Centre. She is able to reveal an amazing gallery of characters in her just-published biography of Acheson French, this district's first Police Magistrate, which also serves as a family history of epic proportions. The book's focus is the story of an educated and well-connected Irishman, spurred on by religious dissension, who was able to make an impact on a society in formation on the far side of the world.

*The French Closet* is certainly an achievement in its breadth of scholarship and for the assiduous travel for research it involved in order for its author to provide a sense of place for the reader, whether it be of early nineteenth century Ireland, the gardens of St. Ouen in Rouen, Monivea Castle in County Galway, or of the banks of Muddy Creek at the *Monivae* homestead on the outskirts of Hamilton in the Western District of Victoria.

Whilst the many members of the extended family descendents of Acheson French will read the early chapters avidly, Alison Anderson Burgess has still managed a difficult task well

in making the book a 'must' for any history buff. She presents a lively early history of the original Irish *Monivea* and its owners, with its changing fortunes from a thirteenth century remnant, through the centuries of rebuilding, until it virtually disappeared as an entity in Ireland after 1939. From ancient Scandinavian warlords to French aristocrats in the time of the Napoleonic Wars, this early saga sets the stage for Acheson French to take up the life of an early pioneer and pastoralist, as well as a highly important government post, and, of course, as the builder of another *Monivae* homestead in the southern hemisphere.

Acheson French arrived in Melbourne three months before Charles La Trobe took up his commission as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in 1839. Captain Foster Fyans had been appointed Police Magistrate for the Geelong area, and not long afterwards he made an official overland trip to Portland, describing it as 'our ride of 55 miles into Australia Felix, passing into Major Mitchell's country so well known'.

Several years later, after much wider settlement of these areas in the far west of the Port Phillip District, Acheson French had taken up the 27 square miles run he named 'Monivae'.

By this time, native attacks, stock thefts and deaths had increased accordingly, and a stronger and more local system of law and order needed to be established. In 1841, Governor Gipps in Sydney announced, on Superintendent La Trobe's recommendation, his appointment of Acheson French as Police Magistrate to the Hamilton District. When he had been suggested, George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, agreed with La Trobe that French was a truthful man who would protect the whites, but protect the blacks as well.

What follows this appointment is a wide-ranging and engaging history of a Western District dynasty. The first permanent settlement south of the Grange where the Police Magistrate's hut was set up opens a lively narrative in the book of the good and the bad settlers, of the harsh treatment of the first inhabitants, of working families and landed squatters and of daily life on the frontier. The Winters, the Learmonths, the Hentys, the Camerons, the Wattons and the Frenches, apart from giving us Hamilton and district street names today, were just some of the players in the social, business and political development of the area. The sporting world of the day is well-described, and much related to racing, steeplechasing, hunting and cricket. There are sudden deaths, murders

and bankruptcies, droughts and other difficulties of the life away from the cities. The author has pulled a great deal of detailed research together and managed to create a vast book full of interest for the general reader as well as the historian. Acheson French himself is a larger-than-life figure who had a shocking and controversial death. Alison Anderson Burgess has done his memory a well-deserved service by bringing him vividly back to life.

**Alison Anderson Burgess.**  
***The French Closet.* Tarrington, Vic.: A. Anderson Burgess, 2012.**

617pp hardback, \$110.00 plus \$15.00 postage. Available now, signed by the author in a limited edition, from the author and from Roz Greenwood Old and Rare Books in Dunkeld.

REPORTS & NOTICES

Anniversary of the Death of  
Charles La Trobe

4 December 1875



Frederick Grosse.  
St Peter's Church (Episcopalian,  
Melbourne. c.1854-59.  
Wood engraving after a drawing by  
Nicholas Chevalier

Charles Joseph La Trobe was remembered on Sunday 2 December at the 11am Advent Sunday service at St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne, coinciding with a memorial service being held by the vicar and congregation of St Michael the Archangel, Litlington, Sussex, where La Trobe is buried.

La Trobe lived for the last ten years of his life, from 1866 to 1875, at Clapham House, Litlington, set amidst the pretty green Sussex countryside, and it is the vicar of that parish, Rev. James Howson whom I met recently and who expressed great interest in the La Trobe Society and pride in St Michael's famous parishioner.

La Trobe Society members and the Vicar of St Peter's Eastern Hill, Rev. Dr Hugh Kempster, and the congregation of that parish also honoured Charles La Trobe who laid St Peter's foundation stone in June 1846 where he was a regular worshipper. Flowers from the La Trobe Society were sent to St Michael's for their service.

I will report in greater detail on my visit to Litlington in the February issue of *La Trobeana*.

**Helen Botham**

La Trobe Society  
Digitisation Project at the  
Public Record Office Victoria

By Jack Martin

Jack Martin is Co-ordinator, Collection Management, Public Record Office Victoria.

In the February 2012 edition of *La Trobeana*, Dianne Reilly (quoting my progress report to the R E Ross Trust), wrote about the collaborative project between the La Trobe Society and Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) to turn the 1839 – 1851 correspondence received by C J La Trobe in his role as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District into an online, digitised collection. These records, which we call “Victorian Public Record Series (VPRS) 19”, are amongst the earliest in the collection, and provide a fascinating insight into the early administration of the Colony of Victoria. The project has now been active for eighteen months and the forecast is for it to be finished before the end of 2013.

Since its commencement, volunteers have created over sixteen thousand index entries and taken ten thousand images of the records. Publishing of the records online has commenced; however, even before then the data has become quite useful. As someone whose job often involves responding to researcher queries, I can attest to the ease with which a number of leads can be generated quickly to questions such as “I’m researching Williamstown in the 1840s –

where do I start?” or “I’m trying to find out how early bailiffs were appointed.” These two queries yield a number of results, just for the 1841 data. The project has had other unexpected results, such as the discovery of reports of marriages conducted in the 1840s which, until last year, were unknown to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

There are any number of facts and figures which could be listed to support the project's value – the thousands of correspondence items which will be listed, images that will end up being published, the expected number of downloads by researchers, or even the financial worth of the records. However, rather than just promote PROV's view, I thought I'd ask volunteers working on the project for their perspectives.

In eighteen months on the project, Dianne Reilly has indexed thousands of letters.

“The La Trobe Society is delighted to be partnered with PROV,” she said, “This is such an important key resource to the colonial history of this state.”





Digitising Space in Action at PROV

Dianne also confessed that, once one got used to the challenge of reading the handwriting, it was easy to get sidetracked by reading letters rather than indexing them. “I’ve seen enough material for another biography of La Trobe in this project.” Dianne reflected that her interest is likely to be typical of future researchers – those interested in the life and times of La Trobe.

John Drury has taken thousands of images of correspondence over the last eighteen months. “It’s so important to be able to preserve these records for the future, and to make access easier. And the process is a pleasure rather than chore – it’s so interesting to be able to read snippets of the letters and get an understanding of how life was at that time.” John mentioned in particular how clear the barriers were to effective governance – slow communications, coupled with limited budget and an authority so restricted that on one occasion La Trobe needed to write to Sydney to get permission to purchase forage for his horse!

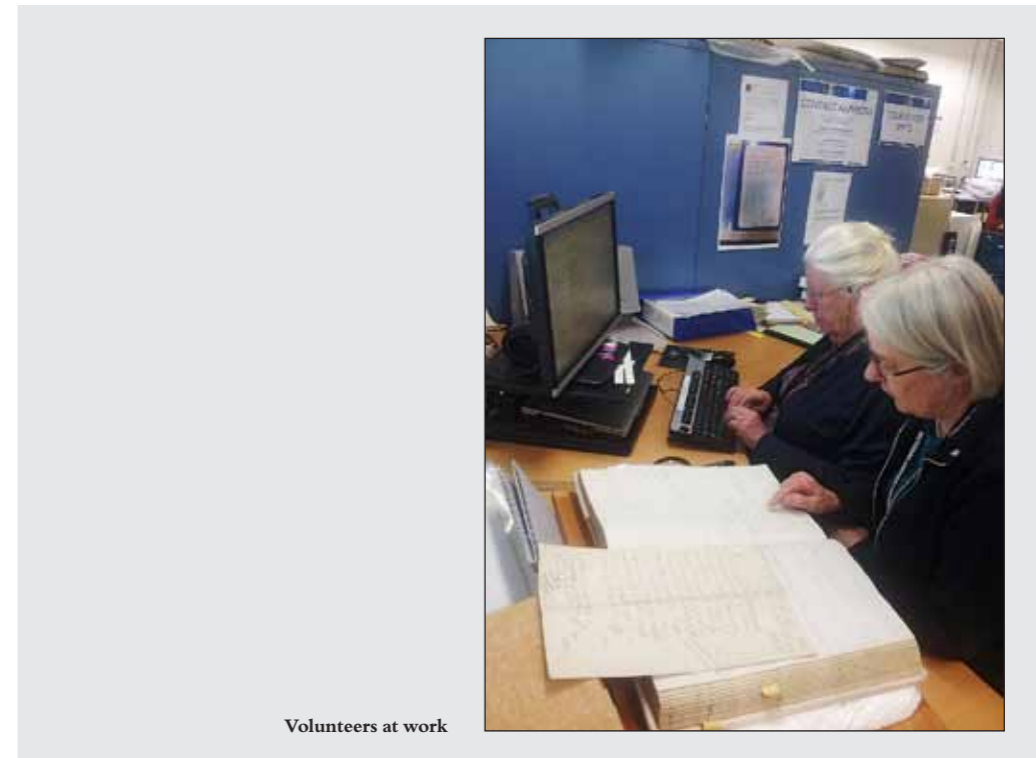
Irene Kearsey joined the La Trobe project this year, having over five years’ experience volunteering on other PROV projects, and as a tour guide at the Victorian Archives Centre. She says that it is a privilege to be contributing to the creation of something that will no doubt result in

an increase in research of all types. “The pencil notes by La Trobe and others commenting on letters are often wonderful to read – there was clearly no Freedom of Information in those days!” Irene also mentioned the interest that this project will have for those with a taste for arcane language – transcription of correspondence register entries regularly involves internet research into whether a word like “supersedas” really exists – or existed.

These views, of course, represent just a few of the ten volunteers who have so far contributed to the project – another progressed his research into early registration of medical practitioners with the first demonstration of how to use the searchable data, whilst others have expressed an interest in how the project will also support common research interests, such as genealogy.

For me, there are three principal reasons why this is such an excellent project.

Firstly, PROV is strongly committed to seeking out collaborative projects which will ensure that records which are of significant value in understanding Australia’s rich history will be promoted and made more discoverable. Large-scale digitisation and index projects



Volunteers at work

require a huge commitment of resources, both in time and finances – the partnership with the C.J La Trobe Society for this project has been the key. Together we’ve made a successful application for \$40,000 funding from the RE Ross Trust, supporting the purchase and installation of volunteer workstations and computer equipment. The Society also effectively recruited the initial volunteer team, getting the project off to a flying start.

Secondly, it will be a boon for PROV’s researchers. Identifying records in this collection has, until now, been time-consuming – this will be reduced dramatically. The collection will also effectively become a resource that can be used worldwide, rather than just by those who can travel to Melbourne – this opens up the possibility of increased use for purposes such as publications and education.

Finally, the increased visibility of the La Trobe correspondence will have the effect of promoting PROV’s collection broadly. This will support to PROV’s goal of pursuing further large-scale digitisation projects and partnerships, including the correspondence covering the three years of La Trobe’s Lieutenant-Governorship.

The following members of the La Trobe Society are, with some PROV general volunteers, generously contributing up to one day each per week to the La Trobe correspondence indexing and digitising project:

- Greta Diskin
- John Drury
- Shirley Goldsworthy
- Walter Heale
- Irene Kearsey
- Dianne Reilly
- John Waugh

## Treasurer's Report and Cottage News

---

This year The C J La Trobe Society will be sponsoring a six month C J La Trobe Society Fellowship at the State Library of Victoria.

At the Library celebrations for the Centenary of The Dome will be held in 2013 and it is appropriate that a La Trobe Society Fellowship is awarded during that year.

The La Trobe Society Cocktails will be held in the Dome, officially known as the La Trobe Reading Room, in December 2013, a fitting conclusion to the celebrations.

The current membership subscriptions for the La Trobe Society are \$30.00 per person and \$50.00 per family. To raise more funds for fellowships the committee has decided to increase the fees next year to \$40.00 per individual and \$60.00 per family, still far below many other organisations.

As Chair of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage (FOLTC) I am pleased to advise that tours of La Trobe's Cottage and Government House have resumed. The tours were suspended in March 2010 following extensive storm

damage to the ceilings, furniture and furnishings throughout Government House. Tours up until that time had been running for over twenty five years.

Resumption of tours in August on Monday and Thursday mornings have been heavily booked and have already made a dramatic improvement on the revenue raised to assist the National Trust maintaining and running La Trobe's Cottage.

Sunday openings from 2pm to 4pm will continue from October through to the end of April.

La Trobe's Cottage was a participant in the Melbourne Open House Weekend on the 28/29 July and despite cold and wet weather the Cottage attracted 365 visitors over the Saturday and Sunday. The Friends of the Cottage Volunteers took tours 'on demand' and sales of tea, coffee and cakes at the 'refreshment table' provided a boost to the FOLTC funds.

**John Drury**  
**Hon. Treasurer**

## Forthcoming events

---

### DECEMBER

Friday 7

**Christmas Cocktails and Exhibition of paintings of Early Melbourne**

**Time:** 6.30 – 8.30pm

**Venue:** 401 Collins Street, Melbourne

**Host:** Mr Gary Morgan

**Guest Speaker:** Dr Helen MacDonald

**Topic:** Inhabiting Melbourne, 1835-1845: Henry Condell and other early settlers.

**Invitations have been sent out.**

Tuesday 18

**Christmas Carols at La Trobe's Cottage**

**Time:** 7.00 – 9.00pm

**Venue:** La Trobe's Cottage

Birdwood Avenue

South Yarra

**Melway ref:** 2L A1

**Choir:** The Lyceum Singers

**Conductor:** Penelope Alexander

**Invitations will be sent closer to the date**

### FEBRUARY

Wednesday 20

**Opening of Charles La Trobe Lounge**

**Venue:** La Trobe University

Library Level 1

Bundoora Campus

Kingsbury Drive, Bundoora

**Host:** Adrienne E Clarke, Chancellor.

**Invitations will be sent closer to the date.**

### MARCH

Sunday 24

**Charles La Trobe's Birthday celebrations**

**Final details will be advised in the February Journal.**

## *Contributions welcome*

---

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

**Further information about the Journal  
may be found at**

<http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeanaIndex.html>.

**For contributions and subscriptions  
enquiries contact:**

The Honorary Secretary: Dr Dianne Reilly AM  
The C. J. La Trobe Society  
401 Collins Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000  
Phone: 9646 2112  
Email: [dmreilly@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dmreilly@optusnet.com.au)



