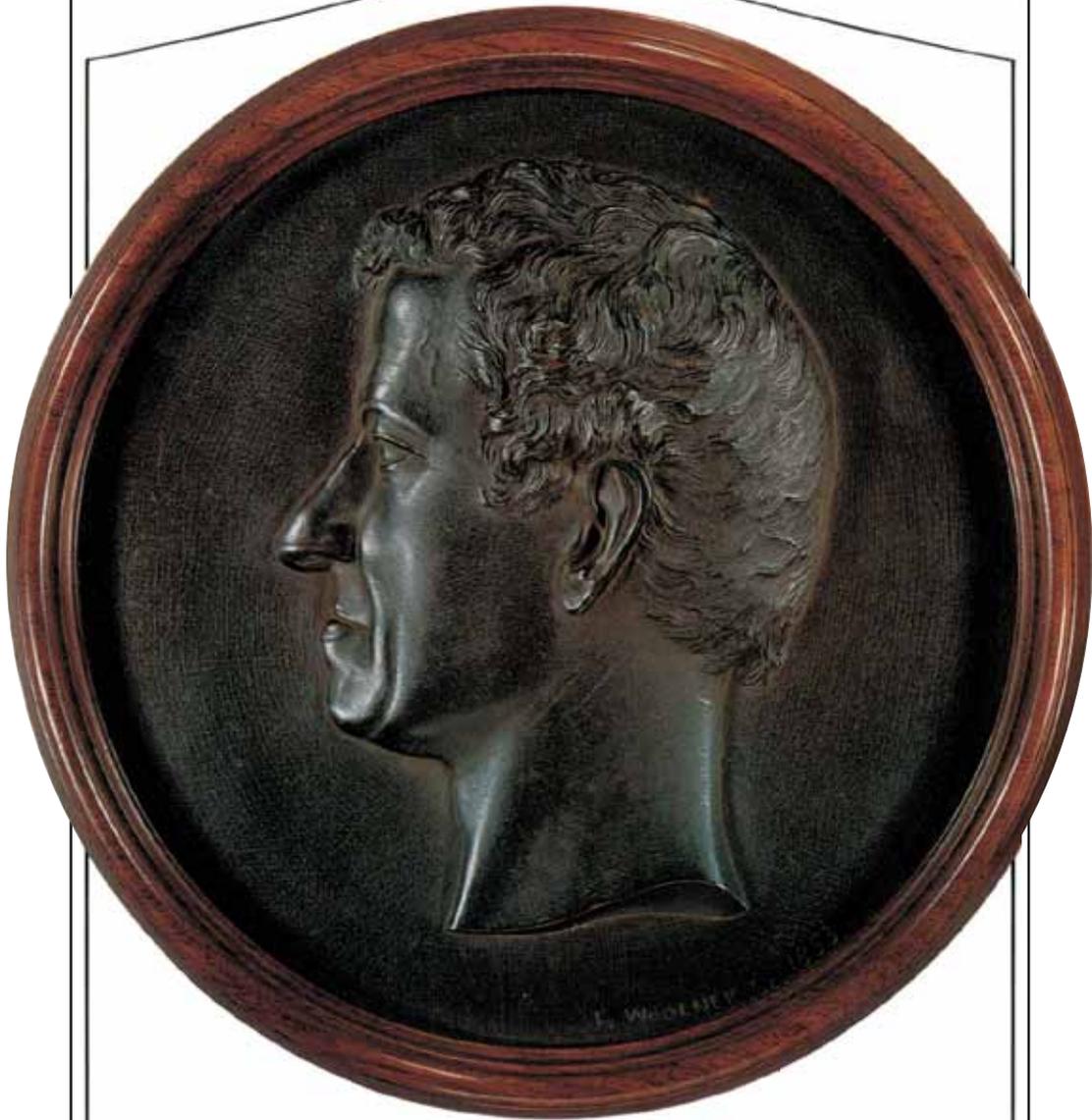


LA TROBEANA



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

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The C J La Trobe Society Inc was formed in 2001 to
promote understanding and appreciation of the life, work and times of
Charles Joseph La Trobe, Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor.
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La Trobeana

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FRONT COVER

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor
Charles Joseph La Trobe
1853, diam. 24cm. Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe.
Signature and date incised in bronze l.r.: T.Woolner. Sc. 1853: / M
La Trobe, Charles Joseph, 1801-1875. Accessioned 1894
La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

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A word from the President

The La Trobe Society's year began with the launch of the Charles La Trobe Lounge at La Trobe University on 20 February 2013. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Dewar, warmly welcomed La Trobe Society members to the University. He was followed by the Chancellor, Professor Adrienne Clarke AC, who highlighted the features of the new, improved and very stylish study space for academic and senior staff and alumni, and postgraduate research students. Designed by Darren Carnell Architects, this new space provides many more workstations, meeting spaces and social networking areas than previously. To coincide with the opening of the beautiful new space, it was pleasing to see 'La Trobe, an Exhibition of Books, Prints and Sculptures', curated by our Treasurer John Drury, on show again.

La Trobe's 212th birthday was celebrated in appropriate style in March at La Trobe's Cottage with the participation of representatives of La Trobe University. The afternoon began with a presentation by Jack Martin, Coordinator-Collection Management at the Public Record Office Victoria on 'Digitising La Trobe'. I had the pleasure, with La Trobe University's Fundraising Coordinator (Alumni & Advancement Office) Jenny Morrison, to then cut the birthday cake and propose a toast to Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor. A report of Jack's paper may be consulted in this issue.

The question is frequently asked if the La Trobe Society is ever likely to run out of contributions about La Trobe and his circle for inclusion in this splendid journal. Thankfully, that has never been a concern in the twelve years since it began in 2002! This edition is no different – it is full of interesting content.

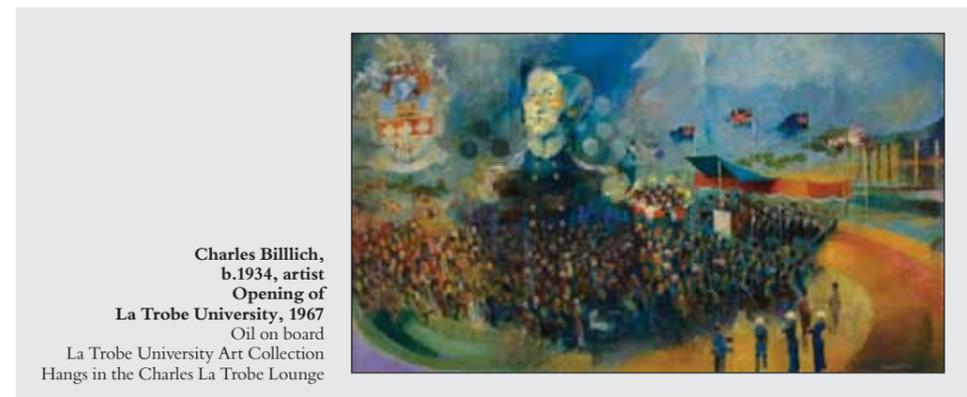
In April, we were privileged to be included by the Mornington Branch of the National Trust in an event at The Briars Homestead in Mount Martha when Dr Bronwyn Hughes spoke on 'The Governor's Window', which was a gift of the People of Victoria to La Chapelle l'Ermitage, Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Created by Melbourne artist Alan Sumner, this window is of great interest to La Trobe Society members. Dr Hughes, internationally renowned as a glass artist, lecturer and historian of glass, has increasingly focused on documenting Australian stained glass. She has kindly agreed to publishing her paper in this edition of La Trobeana.

Following the successful seminar at the Swiss Club in October last year which focused on La Trobe's Swiss connections, two papers by La Trobe Society Secretary Dianne Reilly are included here. The first attempts to recreate Neuchâtel in the nineteenth century during the period when Charles Joseph La Trobe spent so much time living there, and the second details his alliance with the shy Neuchâteloise Sophie de Montmollin. Marion Johnstone's appreciation of the letter written in 1854 by their daughters Cécile and Eleanora in Neuchâtel to their friend Rose Pellet in Melbourne take us into the next generation.

And there is much more in this edition which furthers our fascination with all matters La Trobe.

I look forward to catching up with many of you at some of the La Trobe Society's forthcoming events..

Diane Gardiner
Hon. President C J La Trobe Society



Charles Billich,
b.1934, artist
Opening of
La Trobe University, 1967
Oil on board
La Trobe University Art Collection
Hangs in the Charles La Trobe Lounge

The Chancellor's Column

The importance of life-long learning is a concept that has been heard increasingly in recent years. It is the idea that an individual should not consider their studies complete when they leave school or complete a degree. In the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century people need to be open to the possibility of further study throughout their lives: be that through professional development programs, postgraduate study or embracing new technologies.

The concept of ongoing 'life-long' learning is becoming widely accepted and practiced in modern society. Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe was an early practitioner and was committed to on-going learning and self-improvement. He was a true polymath. We owe a debt of gratitude to this visionary man for laying the foundations for education in Victoria.

How fitting it was that La Trobe University chose its Library as the place to locate a special hub for distinguished visitors and scholars in which to work, study and commune. The Charles La Trobe Lounge is a beautiful space with meeting rooms, individual study carrels and airy, open seating areas on the second floor of the Borchardt Library at the University's Melbourne campus. The Lounge is surrounded by students engaged in their studies and faces out onto the Agora, at the heart of an institution devoted to the acquisition of new knowledge and education.

I was delighted in February this year to host the official opening of the Charles La Trobe Lounge. The opening was a joint event between the C J La Trobe Society and La Trobe University. It was with great pleasure that I welcomed to

the Opening both Diane Gardiner, President of the C J La Trobe Society, and John Drury, its Treasurer. The event presented a wonderful opportunity for members of the Society to meet with senior University staff. Guests were also given the chance to explore the superb exhibition on the history of Charles La Trobe that John Drury loaned and curated. Our thanks go to John for providing such a fitting backdrop to the occasion.

The University is delighted to extend to the members of the C J La Trobe Society an invitation to use the Charles La Trobe Lounge for further study or just to enjoy the inspiring surroundings. We hope that in future we will also see C J La Trobe Society events held in this space.

Charles La Trobe's vision for the new Port Phillip District was not only a Christian but a highly educated community 'well versed in the arts and sciences'. I think that he would be proud to see that the legacy he left is being realised and that, through the establishment of significant educational institutions bearing his name, we are recognising and celebrating his achievements and lasting contributions.

Adrienne E Clarke AC
Chancellor, La Trobe University

Neuchâtel in the Nineteenth Century

By Dr Dianne Reilly

Dianne Reilly is an historian who was La Trobe Librarian at the State Library of Victoria from 1982 until she retired in 2008. A graduate of the University of Melbourne where she completed her PhD in 2003, and of Monash University, her published works about La Trobe include:

Charles Joseph La Trobe: the Making of a Governor (2006)
Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes, 1839-1854 (2006) and
Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches (1999).

An Honorary Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, she is at present working on a second volume of biography of Charles Joseph La Trobe, the subject of her doctoral thesis. She is a co-founder of the C J La Trobe Society, and is currently its Secretary.

This paper was delivered at a joint Swiss Club/La Trobe Society event on La Trobe and his Swiss connections, at the Swiss Club of Victoria on 19 October 2012.

When Charles Joseph La Trobe first visited Neuchâtel in October 1824, he approached it on foot after 'toiling through the recesses of those deep and secluded defiles in the Jura'¹ from Basel to Bienne when the 'sun was just sinking towards the western horizon, throwing his beams horizontally over the whole length of the wide sheet of water'.² He wrote of the Alps in his first book of adventures, *The Alpenstock*, that

I cannot express in words the feelings of wonder and awe with which I gazed for the first time upon this magnificent scene; the sense of exultation, with which my eye measured the successive heights as they rose from the steep shores of the lake, till surmounted by the towering glaciers of the central chain ...³

At the age of twenty-three, he went to Switzerland as tutor to the French-Swiss family

of Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès. There is nothing surviving in the family correspondence or records which points to how arrangements were made for his employment, but La Trobe does mention 'having entered into a contract, which left me undisputed master of an apartment about fourteen square feet',⁴ in the town of Neuchâtel, no doubt alluding to arrangements made by the Comte de Pourtalès for his engagement as tutor. La Trobe referred to the fact that he had come to Switzerland 'under the influence of peculiar feelings ... trials, which are not the less painful to the individual, from the knowledge that all are more or less liable to experience them'.⁵ The probable cause for the low ebb of his feelings was the death of his mother on 8 April 1824.⁶ This quiet time in a new environment was the opportunity for him who 'had no objection to solitude'⁷ to 'find in the scenes around me ... sufficient amusement to prevent me suffering from ennui'.⁸ He found in Neuchâtel a picturesque and flourishing town nestled at the foot of the Jura mountain range on the shore of the Lake of Neuchâtel. The lake, thirty-eight kilometres long, and ranging between three and eight kilometres wide,

commands the attention from every perspective. The town is located on the northwestern shore of the lake, 123 kilometres from Basel in the north, and 45 kilometres from Berne further east. The River Doubs marks the border with France in the west, with Dijon only three hours away, and Besançon half that distance.

While Neuchâtel is certainly a modern city, it has its feet in antiquity. The oldest traces of humans in the Neuchâtel area date from 13,000 BC. An ancient hunting camp was discovered in 1990 during construction

the foundation stones of the present cathedral were laid around 1000 AD. By the middle of the 1200s, the town had expanded down the slopes and across the *River Seyon*, which over the years has been diverted from flowing through the city centre.

The construction of this massive château was begun on the best available vantage point in the twelfth century as a residence for the Counts of Neuchâtel and, long before La Trobe arrived, this imposing building had become the centre of government for the canton of Neuchâtel. It is still

After Jean Henri Baumann, 1801-1858,
Swiss artist

Vue de Neuchâtel, c. 1818-1827

Published by Frederick Jeanneret, 1793-1849

Print made by Johann Jakob Sperle, 1770-1841

hand-coloured aquatint

British Museum, Registration No.

1958,0712.705

View from a hilltop of the town of Neuchâtel on the right and the lake on the left, a road descends to the left on which three figures walk; in the right hand foreground, three figures tend to a group of large wooden tubs containing the grape harvest.



of the A5 motorway at Monruz (La Coudre) nearby. More recently, relics of the early Iron Age, Gallo-Roman baths dating to the second and third centuries, and Merovingian cemeteries have been discovered.

Today above Neuchâtel, roads and train tracks rise steeply into the folds and ridges of the Jura mountain range – known proprietorially within the canton as the *Montagnes Neuchâteloises*. This was, in the nineteenth century, wild and hilly country, not exactly mountainous compared with the massive Alps further south but still characterized by remote, windswept settlements and deep, rugged valleys.

Physically, La Trobe discovered the town to have a small, well laid-out civic centre with impressive public buildings, and areas where the *hôtels particuliers*⁹ of the bourgeoisie lined well-kept boulevards. The town owes its origin to its value as an easily fortified location where, in former times, the population was well protected by the Jura to the north, the Lake to the south, and the River Seyon to the west. The centre of the Old Town is located at the top of the highest hill, accessed by the steeply winding Rue du Château. The Collégiale church, begun in 1185 and consecrated in 1276, is a graceful example of early Gothic architecture. Beside the church is the dominating château. The medieval castle served to keep an eye on traffic at the foot of the *Jura* Mountains, and the to-ing and fro-ing around the lake. Within a few steps of the castle

in use as the offices of the cantonal government, and the Neuchâtel archives are housed there. Dominated alternatively by the French and the Prussians, Neuchâtel was under Prussian rule from 1707 to 1798, and again from 1814. Neuchâtel had joined the Swiss Confederation in 1815, but continued under Prussian governance until 1857 when William IV gave up any claim to Neuchâtel.

Neuchâtel's Old Town was then, and is now, very picturesque, with as many as 140 street fountains, some of which date from the sixteenth century. The Place des Halles (the market place) is overlooked by fine Louis XIV architecture in the shuttered facades and the turreted orioles of the sixteenth-century *Maison des Halles*. Nearby, on the Rue de l'Hôpital, is the grand Hôtel de Ville¹⁰, designed by Louis XVI's chief architect Pierre-Adrien Paris and built in 1790, and the Hospital, founded by the philanthropic Pourtalès family and opened in 1811, which is still in operation today.

Social contact for the newly-arrived La Trobe was at the highest level. Not only did he frequent the Pourtalès mansion in the course of his teaching but, as an attractive and charming Englishman, he was greatly sought after as a guest in the salons of the merchants, bankers and nobility of Neuchâtel. In an era when many cultivated people were Anglophiles, he was also a frequent guest at the aristocratic country homes of the Neuchâtelois in various parts of

Switzerland. It was often said at this period that everyone in Neuchâtel was related. Certainly, this was a fact among the noble families. A glance at any genealogical chart will show that the Merveilleux, Tribolet, Montmollin, Osterwald, Pury, Pourtalès and many more families were all interlinked by marriages across the centuries. La Trobe was later to describe Neuchâtel as a place where cousins 'swarm like herrings in every corner of the country'.¹¹



After Jean Henri Baumann, 1801-1858, Swiss artist
Vue de Neuchâtel prise au Rocher, c.1818-1827
 Published by Frederick Jeanneret, 1793-1849
 Print made by Johann Hürlimann, 1793-1850
 hand-coloured aquatint
 British Museum, Registration No. 1958,0712.704
 View of Neuchâtel from a hilltop; behind it is the Lake of Neuchâtel with the Chateau on the lake shore.



After Jean Henri Baumann, 1801-1858, Swiss artist
Vue d'une partie de la ville de Neuchâtel depuis le Môle, c.1840-1868
 Published by Frederick Jeanneret, 1793-1849
 Print made by Johann Jakob Sperli, 1815-1868
 hand-coloured aquatint
 British Museum, Registration number: 1958,0712.2385
 Le Môle is a mountain in the Haute-Savoie region of France, close to the border with Switzerland.

The family of Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès, which received La Trobe as a trusted tutor, had a background remarkably similar to that of the La Trobe family. The Pourtalès ancestors were also Huguenots who had managed to remain in France during the persecution following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, before moving to Neuchâtel in 1720. Despite political uncertainty, the Pourtalès family prospered in banking, importing and exporting and related financial enterprises. Jérémie de Pourtalès was elevated to the nobility by Frederick the Great in May 1750.¹² His grandson, Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès, gained the honour of attachment in 1809 to Napoleon's household as Master-of-the-Horse to the Empress Joséphine. In due course, he married Joséphine's lady-in-waiting, the Comtesse Marie-Louise-Elisabeth de Castellane-Norante, and went on to become a Swiss Councillor of State and aide-de-camp to the Prussian Prince Berthier, Comte de Neuchâtel.¹³

Charles Joseph La Trobe was engaged for the education, either principally or maybe even exclusively, of one of their sons, Comte Albert-Alexandre de Pourtalès,¹⁴ twelve years old at the time of La Trobe's arrival in October 1824. With frequent breaks to enjoy mountaineering, La Trobe tutored Albert for nearly three years until February 1827 after which he returned to

England, but they remained close friends, despite their age difference, for many years until Albert's premature death in 1861. They had spent over two years touring North America and Mexico together from 1832 to 1834.¹⁵

La Trobe noted that in 1829, 'the population of the canton is computed at between fifty and sixty thousand'. In 2011, the population of the almost entirely French-

speaking Canton of Neuchâtel was 173,183, and the city of Neuchâtel within it had a population of 53,223.¹⁶ Historically, Neuchâtel has been strongly Protestant, but in recent decades there has been an influx of Roman Catholic arrivals.¹⁷

The adjacent towns to Neuchâtel of La Chaux de Fonds and Le Locle were once the world centre of the watch-making industry for well over a hundred years. Sadly, with the mass production of watches and clocks elsewhere in the world, the industry has now diversified into machine tools, micro-technology and watch components, and tourism is focussed on the International Watch Museum in La Chaux de Fonds. During the last two decades or so, the region of Neuchâtel has attracted many leading companies in the high-tech sectors such as medical technology, micro-technology, biotechnology, machines & equipment, IT and clean technologies.

The Neuchâtel region has a long and distinguished history in the production of wine. In 998, Count Rudolf of Neuchâtel made a gift of land to the Bevaix Abbey, the monastery that became the nucleus of viticulture in Neuchâtel. The greatest expansion in the industry took place in the seventeenth century. Production peaked in the nineteenth century, when 1,200 hectares under mainly white wine cultivation

were harvested. La Trobe would certainly have tasted wine from these vintages during his many visits to Neuchâtel both before and after his time in Australia. Production dropped to 570 hectares in the 1970s. Today, about 650 hectares are under grape cultivation, and wine still makes a considerable contribution to the economy.



After Niklas Sprüngli, 1732-1802, Swiss painter
Vue du Lac et de la Ville de Neuchâtel, c. 1750-1802
 hand-coloured etching
 British Museum, Registration No. 1958,0712.2416

Red and white varieties are grown, a speciality of Neuchâtel being the Oeil-de-Perdrix rosé variety, the name meaning 'eye of partridge' in French, a reference to the pale pink colour of the eye of the bird.¹⁸

After spending the winter of 1824-25 in Neuchâtel, tutoring his young charge and in private study, La Trobe made three extensive tours of Switzerland in his three years' sojourn there: the first, from June to October 1825; the second, between June and August 1826; and the third during September and October 1826. These are described in great detail in his book *The Alpenstock*, which was first published in 1829. One particularly evocative passage is the description of his view of the high peaks of the Jungfrau and the Eigers from a vantage point on the Wengern-Alp, between Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald:

The Jungfrau and two Eigers, with the Wetterhorn and its neighbours to the Eastward, all rose before me in unclouded sublimity; the early morning sun lighting up one peak after another, and making the long waste of glaciers between them sparkle with the whiteness and brilliancy of burnished silver.¹⁹

In the course of the three separate journeys described, La Trobe the sportsman climbed the sizeable mountain peaks of the Stockhorn (2,193m.) and the Righi-Kulm (1,801m.), among others, viewed the Eiger,

the Münch and the Jungfrau at sunrise, and traversed the Simmenthal Valley. He penetrated the Simplon, Brunig, and the Great St Bernard's Passes, and surveyed the great Rhône Glacier at Gletsch which is at the junction of the Furka and Grimsel Passes.

La Trobe's period of employment in Switzerland concluded in March 1827. He had felt himself very much at home in Neuchâtel, and it was with regret that his residence there had come to an end: 'The thaw commenced early in March, and this was the signal for my departure from a country, which, much as I may love my own, had long ceased to be a foreign land to me'.²⁰

In 1829, La Trobe 'resumed the same winter-quarters as formerly',²¹ and spent nearly eight months in Neuchâtel during one of the coldest winters recorded, when the Lakes of Neuchâtel and Bièvre were completely and solidly frozen over:

The whole of the lake of Bièvre, sheltered as it was by the Jura, had during this whole period, remained solidly frozen, and was traversed by carts and sledges in every direction. The Isle St Pierre was crowded with visitors; as many as forty horse-sledges having been there at the same time.²²

As in *The Alpenstock*, he recorded the course of his personal 'Grand Tour' in chronological order in his notebook, which he later revised for his book *The Pedestrian* published in 1832. The journeys he undertook in 1830 led him on foot from his beloved Neuchâtel to picturesque parts of the Tyrol, and to Italy, in particular, to Venice and Rome. Travels over, after a sojourn of nearly six months,

he turned towards England and his father's home at Fairfield near Manchester.

By now, he was terribly restless, no doubt because he seemed to have made up his mind to marry. Back again in Neuchâtel in 1834, he confided to the Comtesse de Pourtalès that he was 'dreaming of a wife',²³ and it may have been she who suggested one of her unmarried cousins as the perfect solution. However, I will leave that part of La Trobe's Swiss story to another paper which follows.

Later, La Trobe's honeymoon was spent at 'Jolimont',²⁴ a property belonging to Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès, an uncle of the bride, and father of his former student Albert de Pourtalès. This house was situated on a hill outside the village of Cerlier (its name in French), or Erlach as it is more commonly known, overlooking the scenic Lake of Biemme where the Ile St Pierre is situated.

After his long period of employment in Australia, La Trobe returned to Neuchâtel in 1854 to reclaim his four children following the death of his wife, Sophie. The Montmollin

family was always warm and supportive of him and his family. In the twenty-one years of his retirement which followed Sophie's death, during which he embraced his second marriage to Rose de Montmollin de Meuron,²⁵ he and the children returned from England countless times to Neuchâtel where they were always made welcome by their large extended Swiss family. A voluminous correspondence between the La Trobes and the many Montmollin cousins continued until well into the twentieth century.

No doubt his parting thoughts as he left Neuchâtel in 1825 would be reflected in his thoughts each time in the future that he left his adopted home: 'Then there is the gorgeous autumnal sunset closing the short day; and, in this land of the lake and mountain, it is indeed a scene of enchantment ... while the snows of the Alps are glowing like molten ore – I see it still – and it warms my heart's blood'.²⁶

The Governor's Window

By Dr Bronwyn Hughes

This paper was delivered to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Mornington Peninsula Branch and the C J La Trobe Society at *The Briars* on Sunday 21 April 2013.

Bronwyn Hughes writes and lectures on history, design and conservation of stained glass and is a consultant to heritage architects and organisations across Australia. Since completing a PhD thesis on the art and professional life of William Montgomery, Melbourne's leading stained glass artist 1887-1927, she has revisited earlier research on Alan Sumner, embarked on compiling and editing the first encyclopaedia of Australia's stained glass makers and continues researching Australia's commemorative stained glass from the Boer to Korean Wars.

It is hard to believe that before the centenary of his death in 1975, Victorians knew little about Charles Joseph La Trobe, the man appointed Superintendent of the fledgling Port Phillip District and who would become the first Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Victoria. Although the 'La Trobe' name was commemorated around the state on streets, a river, valley, library, university, and a federal electorate, Charles La Trobe, the man, was little understood and remained an enigma to most Victorians for many years.

The La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee set out to change public perceptions and to bring a new awareness of the man behind the familiar name through a series of celebratory events throughout the state of Victoria.¹ Throughout December 1975, a number of new memorials were unveiled in La Trobe's honour: a commemorative plaque by Michael Meszaros at Victoria's Parliament House, next to the National Trust plaque, another on the Time Ball Tower at Williamstown and three in the Geelong/Cape Otway region.² Not far from *The Briars* at Mount Martha, in an area

that La Trobe had ridden when the Parade was 'a mere dirt track', a parcel of land was given by the Shire of Flinders and named La Trobe Reserve by the Premier, the Hon. Rupert Hamer on 6 December.³ The official committee record also mentioned a substantial prize for a statue of our first Governor, although it was to be many more years before Peter Corlett's 2006 sculpture was to be unveiled on the lawns of Victoria's State Library.

Memorial church services were held at St Peter's Eastern Hill, St James' Old Cathedral and St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and, just as importantly, the centenary was also celebrated at the Chapelle l'Ermitage, Neuchâtel in Switzerland on 3 December 1975. The chapel's Pastor, Roger de Montmollin, led the service that was attended by the Official Secretary to the Agent-General, Mr. George Bolwell and his wife, on behalf of the Victorian Parliament.⁴

The little chapel, designed by Geneva architect Louis-Daniel Perrier, was founded as a private sanctuary by Rose Isabelle La Trobe (née de Montmollin) (1821-1883) in memory of

1 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Alpenstock*, London: R B Seeley and W Burnside, 1829, p.1.

2 *Alpenstock*, p.2.

3 *Alpenstock*, p.3.

4 *Alpenstock*, p.2.

5 *Alpenstock*, p.3.

6 Register of the Moravian Chapel, RG4/4392, Public Record Office, Kew.

7 *Alpenstock*, p.6.

8 *Alpenstock*, p.7.

9 Hôtels particuliers are private town houses.

10 Town Hall.

11 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 30 August 1851, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.

12 Jacques Petitpierre, 'Journal Colonel Pourtalès', *Patrie Neuchateloise: Ve volume de Chroniques Independantes d'Histoire Regionale*, Messeiller, Neuchâtel, 1957, p.35.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Dianne Reilly, *The Making of a Governor*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2006, p.68.

15 Documented in La Trobe's two published works *The Rambler in North America*, London: R B Seeley and W Burnside, 1835, and *The Rambler in Mexico*, London: R B Seeley and W Burnside, 1836.

16 *The Statistical Encyclopedia*; online data search, www.bfs.admin.ch. Accessed 16 April 2013.

17 Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Neuchatel. Accessed 16 April 2013.

18 fineswisswine.ch/swiss-wine-regions/neuchatel. Accessed 16 April 2013.

19 *Alpenstock*, p.48.

20 *Alpenstock*, p.383.

21 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Pedestrian*, London: R B Seeley and W Burnside, 1832, p.2.

22 *Pedestrian*, p.4

23 Charles Joseph La Trobe, Fairfield, to the Comtesse de Pourtalès, Berlin, 8 August 1834, Fonds Petitpierre, Carton 43, Dossier 45(b), Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.

24 Jolimont overlooks the Lake of Biemme and the Ile St Pierre near Cerlier (Erlach) in the Canton of Berne, Switzerland.

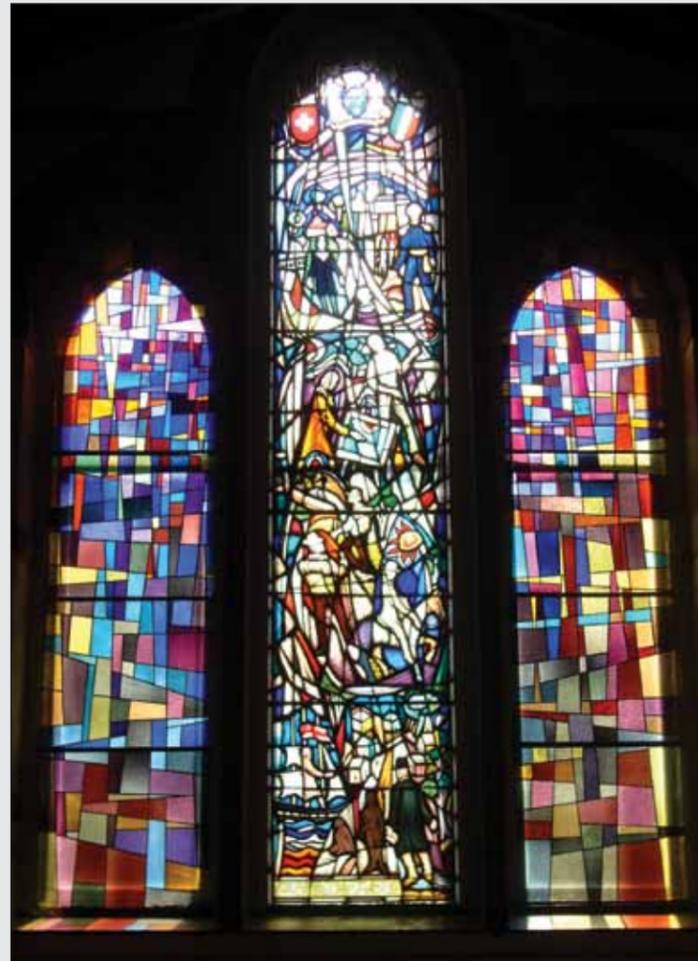
25 Rose de Montmollin de Meuron was Sophie's widowed younger sister.

26 *Alpenstock*, p.163.

her husband Charles Joseph and their daughter Isabelle Castellane Helen La Trobe. Perrier designed an appropriately proportioned building (the nave is only 16 feet in length) that combined elements of both local and English church architecture and it has certainly the air of a village church in England. It has been described as one of the most distinguished churches in the canton.⁵

as 'Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow him'. These three windows were designed by an artist from Geneva, Jacques Wasem, dedicated on 5 April 1936.⁷

It was to be more than forty years later before the next figurative window, the memorial to Charles La Trobe, was installed — in the central light of the west window. The outer



La Trobe Commemorative Window (centre)
Chapelle de l'Ermitage,
Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Judy Walsh, photographer

When the Chapel opened in 1878, the windows were all plain glass leadlight and it was not until 1936 that the first figurative windows were installed in the east end of the church.⁶ The two-light lancet window portrayed *The Agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* and the *Resurrection of Christ*, events that surround the central story of Christianity, the Crucifixion. This was referenced in the oculus above the lancets in the *Agnes Dei* or Lamb of God, the pivotal image and emblem of the Moravian Church, the faith in which La Trobe was raised. The Moravian seal is often depicted with the text *Vicit Agnus Noster, Eum Sequamur interpreted*

lights of plain glass remained unfilled until the 125th anniversary of the chapel in 2003 when the diamond quarries were replaced with coloured leadlight under the guidance of glass painter, Daniel Goetsch.⁸ He supervised 'enthusiastic parishioners' in the making of the windows to a colour scheme and composition that modulated and captured the light at its best in all weathers and times of day.

Notwithstanding the colourful and decorative aspects of these other windows, it is *The Governor's Window* that is the showpiece of the Chapel's interior, and which is really

the story of two men from totally different backgrounds, education and times in history — Charles La Trobe and the window's designer, Alan Sumner. Sumner certainly considered it to be amongst his finest achievements and although the commissioning process remains somewhat obscure, it is worth examining his early career and key installations that may have led to this significant assignment.⁹

Alan Robert Melbourne Sumner (1910-1994) was born to Claude Frederick Sydney and Gertrude Sumner on 10 November 1910.¹⁰ He was 15 years old when he joined the stained glass department of E. L. Yencken & Co. as an 'apprentice' under the guidance of the firm's glass artist, William 'Jock' Frater.¹¹ Sumner learned the hard way, by sweeping floors and watching the master at work, but he gradually learned the skills of the glass painter and became Frater's trusted assistant.

Stained glass combines both art and craft: that is, the subject and composition of the window comprise the art, and fabrication of the window is the craft, a process that has changed little since the Middle Ages. After first selecting a subject, a small coloured drawing of the finished window is drawn to scale with sufficient detail to convey a good impression of the finished window. Sumner was artist, draughtsman, glass cutter, painter and lead light glazier and, once the design was approved by the client, he would translate the small scale sketch into a full-sized drawing, known as the cartoon, which was the blueprint for all stages of making the window. Using the cartoon as a template, each glass piece was cut to size and fixed to a glass easel with bees wax; the easel set against a light source where the glass painter added details of faces, drapery and floral backgrounds onto the glass surface. This process has hardly changed since medieval times except that, these days, the glass is sometimes placed on a horizontal light box instead of using natural light. Only after the glass-painter was satisfied with the result would the glass be carefully removed from the easel and kiln-fired to ensure the permanence of the paint. It was the process of painting on glass that gave 'stained glass' its name, derived from the silver stain that appeared as shades of pale lemon to rich gold after firing. Each piece of glass might need to be painted and fired in a kiln several times before the desired depth of line or shading was achieved; only then would the glass be leaded up into a window. It is easy to see why this was (and remains today) a time-consuming and expensive art form.

Stained glass is the art of light. Of all art forms, none relies on light for its existence in quite the same way as stained glass. Of course,

to see a painting, print or sculpture, we must have reflected light but if light is not transmitted through stained glass then it is totally dark and dead. No wonder folk in medieval times thought that glass was a magical substance that actually changed the light as it passed through the glass from the outside world to the interior of the church.

Alan Sumner recognised very quickly that to become a successful stained glass artist he needed to hone his drawing skills and thus he attended night classes at the National Gallery School for a time before his acceptance into the George Bell School.¹² Sumner described the experience he gained with both Frater and Bell as vital to his later success, not only as a stained glass artist but also as a painter and as Australia's first artist to use silk-screen printing as an artistic medium instead of a commercial technique.¹³

Under Frater's tutelage, Sumner gradually took on greater responsibility for painting the conventional windows preferred by Yencken's conservative clientele. The porch window at Wesley Uniting Church installed in 1936 has been identified as the work of both men and verified by the small initials — 'WF' and 'AS' — painted just above the title, *Saint Luke*.¹⁴ Inserted by Sumner without Frater's agreement, he received the full fury of Frater's ire when the thinly disguised lettering was spotted. Frater was known to sign his work, but only when he was particularly proud of it; however, he more often railed against the mundane and cliqué commissions he was required to fulfil. Sumner gradually understood that Classical Modernism would not find an outlet within Yencken's walls and his developing interest in contemporary style was to be confined to George Bell's studio.

E. L. Yencken & Co. was forced to close the doors on its stained glass operations for the duration of the Second World War, as stained glass was deemed a 'non-essential industry', and its materials and man-power were diverted to the war effort. Frater chose to retire to pursue his longed-for career as a full-time artist, and in 1943 Sumner joined the Air Force where, as Leading Aircraftman Sumner, his artistic skills were used to great effect in the camouflage section.¹⁵

In the post-war 1940s Sumner set up in business at his own home, on the corner of Wellington and Easey Streets in Collingwood, building a studio on the Wellington Street frontage to accommodate his benches, kiln and glass racks.¹⁶ A room upstairs with good light served as his glass-painting studio where he was to work for nearly fifty years. Yencken did not reopen its stained glass department and Sumner's first orders came from the firm in July 1946, the

majority for memorial windows honouring men killed so recently in war. The designs and styles barely differed from earlier Yencken windows and bore little resemblance to Sumner's later and better known Modernist works, although there were occasional hints of a different future.

The turning point in Sumner's glass art appears to be his early 1950s European tour. Visits to major cathedrals, including Tours and Chartres to examine medieval stained glass, close examination of mosaics and paintings by Old Masters, Impressionists and Modernists,

and important subjects; however, he managed to create remarkable effects with the judicious use of glass paint and silver stain. Two years later Robertson designed St Bridget's at Mordialloc and Sumner was employed once again to fill three grand openings on the west wall.²⁰ Unusually for a Catholic church, one of these was a war memorial window in honour of the men of the 58/59 Battalion of the Australian Army who died in battles against the Axis powers in Tobruk, New Guinea and Borneo. Parish Priest and builder of the new church, Father Jim English, had been through those battles with the men as



La Trobe Commemorative Window, detail
Chapelle de l'Ermitage,
Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Judy Walsh, photographer

were all enjoyed and analysed in some detail, as his diary notes show.¹⁷ He returned with a great understanding of Western artistic traditions and an emerging notion of a future direction for his stained glass.

The 1950s brought the 'baby boom' as well as unprecedented emigration from Europe that heralded an inevitable expansion of new suburbs, and new churches, to accommodate the growing population all around Melbourne's outskirts. Church architecture was heavily influenced by Sir Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral of St Michael, a distinct break with the Gothic revival of nineteenth-century Britain. Melbourne's new architecture demanded Modernist stained glass and Sumner's glass was sought out by architects, such as Alan Robertson, as an integrated element within his 1954 design for St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Frankston.¹⁸

For the large expanse of stained glass in the west wall, Sumner designed *Redemption* based on a simple cross and the symbols of Christ's Passion.¹⁹ He overcame tight post-war budgets and shortages of materials by filling walls of glass with a majority of commercial glasses, and by restricting expensive 'Antique' for focal points

Chaplain to the Battalion in New Guinea.²¹ He welcomed the gift of the window and for all his years at Mordialloc, he held services in honour of the sacrifice of his soldier friends. Not long after, Sumner used similar imagery for a memorial to all the Caulfield Grammarians who served in wars from the Boer War to the Korean War.²²

Sumner's subjects in memorials in the immediate post-Second World War years were almost exclusively traditional Biblical figures, for example *Joshua* at Dorcas Street South Melbourne and *David* at Frankston's Methodist church that were in marked contrast to the later installations at Mordialloc and Caulfield where the realities of warfare were woven into the long-established Christian message. Not only had Sumner's art changed, but the acceptance of his style and iconography reflected far-reaching changes within Australian society over a very short period.

The window at Neuchâtel was not Sumner's first memorial to a Governor of Victoria. In 1967, Sumner was asked to design a series of windows for a new Anglican church at Frankston East, St Luke's, the last significant work of another Modernist architect, Edward Billson (1892-1986). The nave windows were

unusual upside-down U-shapes set with symbols of the church; however, the focal point of the interior was to be the west window, dedicated to the church's patron saint and also a memorial to a former parishioner, Sir Dallas Brooks, Governor of Victoria (1896-1966).²³

The grand design celebrated the life of St Luke as church builder, physician and gospel writer, alongside the risen Christ. Sir Dallas was represented by his various insignia and awards, masterfully painted by Sumner and set into the lower central sections of the window. This

One reference put the installation at the time of the centenary of the Chapel in 1978,²⁴ although Alfred Schnegg's centenary publication *La Chapelle de l'Ermitage à Neuchâtel 1878-1978* included comprehensive information on the early east wall installation but made no reference whatsoever to the La Trobe window.²⁵ It can only be assumed that Sumner's window was an even later addition. Sumner is no help here either as he kept few records beyond a 1940s account book that was abandoned as soon as he no longer fulfilled Yencken orders. He rarely signed a contract and preferred to do business on



Alan Sumner drawing up a cartoon, c.1990
Alan Cowburn, photographer
Collection: Bronwyn Hughes

commission marked the beginning of a decade of extraordinary achievements by Sumner, and it is not surprising that it culminated in the commission to design and fabricate the memorial to Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe for Neuchâtel.

It is not clear exactly when the La Trobe window was commissioned or installed. The comprehensive report of the activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee made no mention of *The Governor's Window* at the Neuchâtel service in 1975, or at any other event, or at any of the months of meetings of the Committee, or even a hint that such a memorial was being planned. This omission seems to suggest that the window was not considered for La Trobe's centenary but was commissioned at a later time, possibly for the centenary of the Chapel instead, which was not until three years later in 1978. However, without Victoria's La Trobe Centenary celebrations, the window was unlikely to have been commissioned at all.

the seal of a handshake. When I questioned him about this in the 1990s, he remained entirely comfortable with the arrangement and had few, if any, disputes about designs, costs or delivery times. Nevertheless, it was hardly likely that he avoided a government contract in the late 1970s, despite the lack of any formal document surfacing to date.

Sumner usually made many rough sketches while honing his composition; however, the only surviving sketch of the La Trobe design is the presentation drawing, now held by the National Gallery of Australia.²⁶ This design closely follows the finished window, which confirms that Sumner had the structure and detail of the design firmly established before the design was accepted. The final window became rather more colourful than the restrained palette seen in the scale drawing; apart from the usual minor alterations that were inevitable when scaling up to full size, this is the only discernible difference between the two.

Despite his Modernist approach, Sumner divided the space in a very traditional manner, reminiscent of 12th century European stained glass, which was often divided into small circles or squares depicting related Biblical scenes in a rhythmic pattern. While Sumner's vignettes are not immediately obvious, each of four loosely-divided sections contains a small scene or snapshot of La Trobe's activities and preoccupations during his years spent in Victoria.

Reading the glass from bottom to top, we start with the inscription 'Presented by the people of Victoria Australia to the parishioners of Chapelle de l'Ermitage in memory of Charles Joseph La Trobe (1801-1875) First Governor:



'St Luke' Memorial to Sir Dallas Brooks, detail
St Luke's Anglican Church,
Frankston East
Vlad Bunyevich, photographer

Colony of Victoria' and a signature 'Alan Sumner artist Melbourne Australia'; unfortunately the date is indecipherable.²⁷ Above the inscription is the image of a ship flying a white flag with a red cross, the emblem of St George and of England. We can assume that the figure is that of La Trobe, as he makes his way to Australia, relatively young and keen to perform his duties with distinction. His stance is one of confidence as he reaches forward into the new.

Centrally placed in this lower panel are two aboriginal people, identifiable from the boomerangs in front of the squatting figure and the bark shields each has in hand. Sheltered by a bark hut, they are being approached by a gentleman in frock coat and hat, with cane in one hand and scroll in the other, suggesting he is a member of the clergy. Given La Trobe's interest in the welfare of native peoples, the figure is most likely a Moravian minister, 'spreading the Word to the furthest ends of the earth, to the

most destitute and degraded, [where they were] reputed to succeed where all others failed'.²⁸ La Trobe anticipated that through his efforts both religion and education would be brought to the Australian aborigines and result in 'a better organised social system', by using a similar model to the one used among slaves and ex-slaves in the West Indies, an ambitious project not destined for success in Victoria in La Trobe's time.²⁹ The backdrop to the whole scene is the shacks and tents that made up the ramshackle village that was Melbourne at the time of La Trobe's arrival in 1839.

Sumner's next scene shows La Trobe, the accomplished horseman, mountaineer and bushman; maybe even hinting at his interest

in botany through the stylised foliage under the searing Southern sun and referencing his establishment of Victoria's botanical gardens. In this scene Sumner manages to suggest vast distance travelled by diminishing the size of the walking figure until La Trobe is merely a silhouette in the far distance. It was a device that he had used previously, for example, to represent the hard slog on Kokoda in the windows at Mordialloc and Caulfield Grammar.

La Trobe, artist and writer is the thrust of the next panel, and it can hardly be a compositional accident that Sumner has made the image on the easel the focal point of the entire window. Maybe, this was Sumner's tribute to a kindred artistic spirit; these days we can appreciate La Trobe's art, too, for this has left a record of a time and landscape no longer visible.

Finally in the fourth vignette we are re-introduced to La Trobe's primary role as

Governor. In the uniform and regalia of office, cocked hat in hand, one can readily believe that Sumner had taken Francis Grant's full length portrait as the basis for his depiction.³⁰ The evidence becomes stronger when the window is compared with the presentation sketch, where La Trobe was depicted in a black uniform and gold braid.³¹ Behind the Governor is the backdrop of Melbourne dominated by a church building; no longer the tent town of 1839, and well on the way to becoming one of the premier cities of the British Empire, with educational and religious institutions established, just as La Trobe had envisaged.

Maybe, if the right hand part of the scene is the Governor in Victoria, the left hand refers to Neuchâtel, with its Chapel in the background in front of a mountain peak, and the figure of an elderly Charles La Trobe. Sumner's figure might well have been modelled on the photograph of La Trobe, taken by the Bruder Brothers in Neuchâtel in 1868 and now held in Victoria's State Library.³² The portly figure in dark frock coat, light-coloured hat and carrying a cane, bears some distinct resemblance. It is, of course, open to question; however, emblems at

the head of the lancet arch with the Swiss flag and that of the Canton of Neuchâtel placed at either side of the coat of arms of Victoria add weight to the images below.

Instead of being just one of a number of windows in the Chapel, the Governor's window is undoubtedly its centrepiece. Careful thought underpinned Alan Sumner's selection of certain key aspects of La Trobe's life, all evident in the presentation sketch; conscious decisions on the design and execution of the finished window ensured it became a significant work in stained glass. Although not anywhere near as large or as decorative as many other of his major works, Sumner understood the memorial's importance and certainly considered it to be among his most successful and best works. It continues to be worthy of its prominent position in the Chapel de l'Ermitage at Neuchâtel and it is a tribute to the founding leader of Victoria, this place on which Charles Joseph La Trobe's influence remains so firmly embedded.

- 1 The 17-member committee was formed at a meeting of the History Advisory Council of Victoria on 14 April 1975 under the chairmanship of Sir John Holland. See *Report of the activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee, December 1975*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1976.
- 2 Events described in *Principal Addresses of the C. J. La Trobe Commemorative Celebrations*, Melbourne: Government Printer, 1978.
- 3 Rupert Hamer, *Principal Addresses*, p.72.
- 4 *Report of the activities of the La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Committee*, p.7.
- 5 Leadlight windows are visible in the image 'Chapelle de L'Ermitage, en ville de Neuchâtel' <http://www3.orgues-et-vitraux.ch/default.asp/2-0-1148-6-6-1/> Accessed 13 April 2013.
- 6 Alfred Schnegg, *La Chapelle de l'Ermitage a Neuchâtel 1878-1978*, pp.29-30.
- 7 'Chapelle de L'Ermitage, en ville de Neuchâtel' <http://www3.orgues-et-vitraux.ch/default.asp/2-0-1148-6-6-1/> Accessed 13 April 2013.
- 8 'Chapelle de l'Ermitage, en ville de Neuchâtel' <http://www3.orgues-et-vitraux.ch/print.asp?dw=2-0-1148-6-6-1> Accessed 13 April 2013.
- 9 Alan Sumner interview with the author, November 1992.
- 10 For further details of Sumner's career, see Bronwyn Hughes, 'Alan Sumner and Joseph Stansfield: a comparative study of twentieth century stained glass', MA (Prelim) thesis, University of Melbourne, 1992.
- 11 Sumner was termed an 'improver' as this was not a formal apprenticeship.
- 12 It was Frater who introduced Sumner to his friend George Bell by showing him a Sumner self-portrait. Alan Sumner interview with the author, November 1992.
- 13 Sumner later became a teacher at the National Gallery School and its Head 1953-1962. Alan Sumner interview with the author, November 1992.
- 14 Memorial window to Dr. John Wilkinson unveiled 5 April 1936. *Argus*, 4 April 1936, p.19.
- 15 Sumner enlisted on 24 November 1943 and was discharged on 10 January 1946, World War Two Nominal Roll, Department of Veteran Affairs, Canberra, <http://www.vw2roll.gov.au/VeteranCertificate.aspx?VeteranID=983857> Accessed 11 July 2012.
- 16 Many items including the glass and racks for its storage came from the old Yencken studio. In the early 1990s the racks retained labels hand written by Sumner in the 1920s.
- 17 Diary notes held in the author's collection.
- 18 Architects Reg Appleford and Stan Moran were two who regularly recommended Sumner's stained glass.
- 19 Sumner designed windows for the entire church, however only *Redemption* and a large transept window of the church's patron saint, *St Francis Xavier* were commissioned.

- 20 Three west wall windows depicted *Our Lady, Patron Saint of Australia* flanked by the *St Michael War Memorial* and *St Bridget*, as well as small symbolic panels for doors throughout the church. The largest of Sumner's stained glass commissions, some 1,800 square feet (1961-1964), was completed for St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Church, Pascoe Vale, designed by Alan Robertson 1959-1960.
- 21 Tom Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac: Australian Catholic service chaplains*, Church Archivists' Press, Brisbane, 2001, pp.158-160.
- 22 Sumner based his design for Caulfield Grammar Hall (architect Reg Appleford) on 'Service' and a number of sub-themes that he explained in a typewritten note held in the Caulfield Grammar School archives.
- 23 After serving as Governor of Victoria 1949-1963, Sir Dallas and Lady Violet Brooks retired to Frankston where Sir Dallas died only three years later.
- 24 <http://www3.orgues-et-vitraux.ch/print.asp?2w=2-0-1148-6-6-1> suggests the window was offered to the parish in 1978.
- 25 Alfred Schnegg, *La Chapelle de l'Ermitage à Neuchâtel 1897-1978*, Collège des anciens du Foyer de l'Ermitage, 1978.
- 26 Design for a stained glass window: design for Chapelle Hermitage [*sic*], Neuchâtel, Switzerland c.1960s. Bequest of the artist 1994. Accession No. NGA 96.149.
- 27 The date is obscured and could read 1975, 1978 or even 1979.
- 28 Robert Kenny, 'La Trobe, Lake Boga and the 'Enemy of Souls': the first Moravian Mission in Australia, *La Trobe Journal*, No. 71, pp.97-113.
- 29 Dianne Reilly, 'The Creation of a Civil Servant: La Trobe in the West Indies', *La Trobe Journal*, No. 71, Autumn 2003, pp.80-81. La Trobe's reports to Lord Glenelg were undoubtedly one factor in his appointment to the Colony.
- 30 Sir Francis Grant (1803-1878), *Charles Joseph La Trobe*, 1855, Accession No. H30870, State Library of Victoria.
- 31 La Trobe was depicted in a blue uniform. Black or opaque colours are difficult to incorporate into glass as they tend to upset the tonal harmony overall design. Sumner recognised that blue would blend more successfully, just as the green coat of the clergyman in the lowest panel was depicted in green, rather than black.
- 32 Frères Bruder, photographers, *C. J. La Trobe 1868*, MS9790, State Library of Victoria. See *La Trobe Journal*, No.71, Autumn 2003, p.10.

An Anglo-Swiss Alliance

The Marriage of Charles Joseph La Trobe and Sophie de Montmollin of Neuchâtel

By Dr Dianne Reilly

Following more than two years touring North America and Mexico with Albert de Pourtalès, his former student, Charles Joseph La Trobe spent the best part of 1834 with his father and sister Charlotte at their home in the Moravian settlement at Fairfield near Manchester. He made frequent visits to friends in other Moravian enclaves at Ockbrook in Derbyshire, Calverly and Fulneck villages in Leeds, West Yorkshire, and in London. During this period, he finished the manuscript of his third book, *The Rambler in North America*, and handed it to his publishers.¹ At the same time, the turmoil in his mind about his future prospects became increasingly evident in his diary entries. The book was published in the last week of May 1835, but a certain apprehension clouded his elation on seeing his work in print: he noted that 'The "Rambler in N. America" was published the last week of the month and as far as I could judge from the first days' sale was, in spite of all its faults, likely to do well. Nous verrons ... !'²

On 30 May, probably financed by his publisher, he was off on another journey, this time to the Continent for four months.

He was terribly restless, no doubt because he seemed to have made up his mind to marry. He had recently confided to the Comtesse de Pourtalès that he was 'dreaming of a wife',³ and it may have been she who suggested one of her unmarried cousins as the perfect solution. La Trobe enjoyed nothing better than to be up and 'off again at ½ 6' to some unknown beauty spot or historic site, but this time the aim of his travel was to take him to Neuchâtel once again with a particular purpose in mind. No doubt, La Trobe planned to visit his former travelling companion, Albert de Pourtalès. Although he was so discreet as never to mention her name in any correspondence or diary entries, it can be concluded that he also intended to renew an acquaintance with the young Count's cousin, Sophie de Montmollin, the ninth of the thirteen children of a Swiss aristocrat, Comte Frédéric Auguste de Montmollin. For two weeks, his journal entries recorded the dozens of visits he made to such beautiful and historic places as Thun and Montmirail, and to see former acquaintances made while he had been employed in Neuchâtel, especially the various friends and relations of the Pourtalès family. Considering how small and inter-married was the society

of Neuchâtel — La Trobe was later to describe Neuchâtel as a place where cousins ‘swarm like herrings in every corner of the country’⁴ — this welcoming circle necessarily included Sophie and her wealthy, aristocratic family.

It is probable that La Trobe had met Sophie during the period 1823 to 1827 when he had tutored Albert de Pourtalès. Born on 8 February 1810, she had been christened ‘Sophia’.⁵ Her father, Comte Frédéric Auguste de Montmollin, was a Councillor of State, Mayor of Valangin, the town near which his country estate, La Borcarderie, was situated, and

his daughter’s hand in marriage. By a series of almost farcical just-missed meetings, — ‘To the Borcarderie early — too late, miss him — but find her’,⁷ — La Trobe was in a feverish state of mind. ‘I can think of n. but S’⁸ — so much so that ‘my mind made up to the justice of setting S. at liberty by telling her father’.⁹ While awaiting a response from Monsieur de Montmollin, he wrote: ‘If I get S. I know what I have in her, neither beauty nor wealth but —’,¹⁰ and his relief was indicated in the single word ‘Approved’¹¹ for his diary entry five days later. Regrettably, there is no record of Sophie’s feelings about the impending engagement to this nervous young man.



William Brockedon RA, 1787-1854
Charles Joseph La Trobe, 26.3.1835, aged 34
 Brown, red and black chalk on paper
 National Portrait Gallery, London



Unknown artist
Charles Joseph La Trobe, c.1835
 Oil
 Frontispiece to *The Rambler in Oklahoma*,
 Oklahoma City: Harlow, 1955

Chamberlain to the King of Prussia who ruled Neuchâtel until his defeat by Napoleon in 1857. Her mother, Rose Marguerite Augustine de Montmollin, née de Meuron, was a daughter of Jean Jacques de Meuron and his wife Marianne de Tribolet who moved in elevated Neuchâtel circles. The Montmollin town house is the most splendid building on the Place du Marché in Neuchâtel.

Nothing is known of La Trobe’s and Sophie’s courtship, other than the anxious notations in his journal. It may be the case that La Trobe had never seriously contemplated marriage before this time, or he may have felt that he would not have been considered a serious suitor for Sophie. On meeting her again at her aunt’s home, his agitation was apparent: ‘Don’t know what to think; am like a ship lying at anchor but with a spring on its cable ready to make off at a moment’s notice’.⁶ Two weeks later, his purpose firm, he sought out Monsieur de Montmollin, presumably to ask for

Although rather enigmatic in his cryptic diary notes, La Trobe must surely have appreciated Sophie’s good qualities and disposition. The clearest insight into his feelings for her was given in the letter he wrote a few weeks later to his friend John Murray, the publisher, that ‘In short, I am on the point of being married to one I have long loved and esteemed’.¹² Given that he considered that she had ‘neither beauty nor wealth’, it is clear that his feelings for her were much deeper, and that he had a judicious appreciation of her fine character. By this alliance, La Trobe would have considered that he had made a very suitable catch. He was bringing education, a gentlemanly family, reliability and the Protestant faith to their union, while she was a member of a distinguished, well-connected, educated Protestant family which was also prosperous, judging by their impressive property holdings. This may have been part of the attraction for La Trobe. He needed to marry well. In an era when arranged marriages were the norm among social elites, the

proper introductions would certainly have been arranged and the appropriate moves to steer the young people together would have occurred. No doubt Sophie’s parents were keen to have her marry eligibly since there were a number of other unmarried daughters in the family still to be suitably settled. There was, quite probably, a dowry to accompany his bride and this would have helped to provide the financial basis on which the couple would begin their life together.

village of Cerlier (its name in French), or Erlach as it is more commonly known, overlooking the scenic Lake of Biemme. La Trobe noted rather enigmatically in his diary on his wedding day: ‘God be with us and bless us — je n’ai pas d’illusion’,¹⁷ as though he was not altogether sure of their compatibility. This was certainly not an affirmation of love, nor of great hope in the promise of a happy future life together. However, the remark may simply have been indicative



John Friedrich Dietler, 1787-1854
Sophie de Montmollin, 1834
 Watercolour
 Archives de l’Etat, Neuchâtel



John Friedrich Dietler, 1787-1854
Sophie de Montmollin with her mother, 1834
 Watercolour
 Archives de l’Etat, Neuchâtel

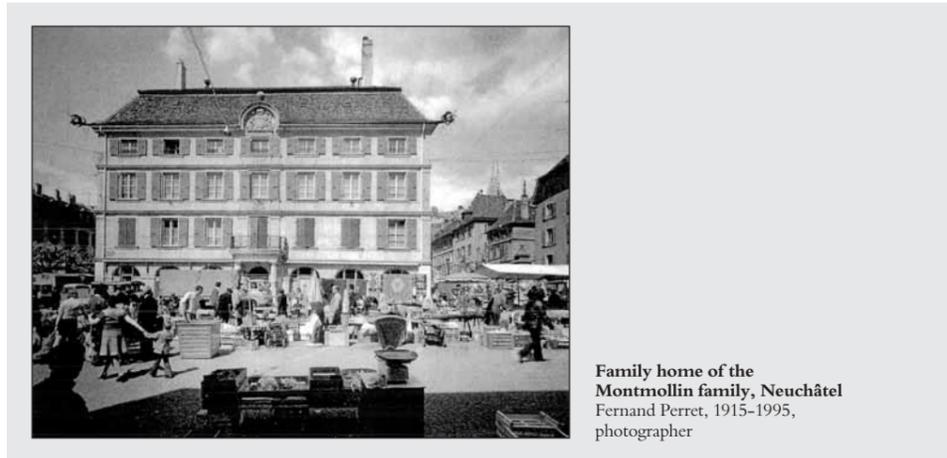
La Trobe, being at that time resident in Switzerland, had his brother, the Reverend Peter La Trobe, a minister of the Moravian Church in London, make arrangements for his marriage. The banns were read in London, at the Parish Church of Saint Andrew, Holborn, on 16, 23 and 30 August 1835.¹³ The marriage took place at the British Legation in Berne which was in the home of David Richard Morier, ‘His Britannic Majesty’s Minister Plenipotentiary to the Swiss Confederation’ on 16 September 1835 ‘according to the ceremonies of the Church of England’, with the Reverend Hubert McLaughlin officiating.¹⁴ Although Charles Joseph was of the Moravian faith, a sect closely aligned in England with the Anglican Church, Sophie came from a Calvinist family; that is to say, the Montmollins were of a reformed Protestant faith, similar to Presbyterianism in Scotland, which had much in common with Moravianism.¹⁵ Their honeymoon was spent at ‘Jolimont’,¹⁶ a property belonging to Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès, an uncle of the bride, and father of his former student Albert de Pourtalès. This house was situated on a hill outside the

of his typical lack of certainty, or timidity, or scrupulosity, in matters of importance. As it fortunately turned out, it was a very good match and a happy marriage for them both.

Two superb portraits of La Trobe are known to have been executed at about the time of his marriage to Sophie de Montmollin in 1835. The earlier image, a pastel drawing in the National Portrait Gallery collection in London, was the work of his friend, the popular society artist of the 1820s and 1830s, William Brockedon.¹⁸ It shows a good-looking young man of thirty-four, lively, healthy and full of expectation for what life was about to offer him. La Trobe looks the typical Regency dandy, with carefully tousled hair and an air of confidence that he is any man’s peer. In this portrait, the sensitivity and refinement of the man are certainly in evidence, and the direct gaze and firm yet gentle features give an impression of positivity and assertiveness. The second picture, an oil painting once owned by La Trobe’s late grandson, Captain Charles La Trobe, was by an accomplished but unnamed artist. Until the

1950s, it is known to have hung, together with a contemporary portrait of the twenty-five year old Sophie by the Swiss-German portrait painter, Johann Friedrich Dietler (1804-1874), in the London family home, but regrettably, it is now missing. It survives, however, as the frontispiece to *The Rambler in Oklahoma*.¹⁹ A full-length portrait, it shows a tall, slim man who adopts a calculated negligence before the painter. He is rather Byronic in appearance, and once again,

mother was his 'mother' in all senses except biological, and Madame de Montmollin would have considered him as one of her 'sons'. No doubt, had La Trobe been financially better off than he was, he would have provided his own roof over their heads. However, since he was not, and the Montmollins were able to accommodate them, this fact was accepted by all concerned as entirely appropriate. La Trobe was now a married man with all the responsibilities which



Family home of the Montmollin family, Neuchâtel
Fernand Perret, 1915-1995,
photographer

exuded an air of self-possession, resolution and vigour. The effect of these two portraits on the observer is striking: the subject is obviously a man with a great deal of promise and ability, who would be equal to any challenge and who could be relied upon to achieve in all his undertakings. A copy of the Dietler watercolour of Sophie, and another in which she is seated with her mother, belong to the Archives de l'Etat in Neuchâtel. They show a delicate rather charming young woman, dressed luxuriously – no doubt in the height of fashion – who stares unsmilingly at the painter. Although of delicate appearance, she has a certain self-assurance and directness in her gaze, indicative of the unwavering support she would always show towards her husband. Perhaps these portraits were commissioned by the Montmollins to celebrate their daughter's marriage, to be kept as mementoes when she left for long years at Port Phillip.

After their honeymoon, Sophie's mother made available spacious apartments for the newly-weds in the Montmollin family residence on the market square in Neuchâtel, overlooking the Lake of Neuchâtel with the Alps in the distance. La Trobe wrote to his sister Charlotte, describing their new home, and commenting that 'our dear mother is very anxious that we should be comfortable in her house, and I am sure that we shall be so'.²⁰ La Trobe voiced here the accepted norm: he had married into a well-to-do family and was therefore treated as any of the children of that family would be. Sophie's

accompany that state. He needed to provide for himself and his wife with more than just the proceeds of his books. Writing once again to the Comtesse de Pourtalès of his proposed permanent residence in Switzerland, he indicated a rather reluctant return to his former role as a teacher: 'I see at present no alternative to my securing if possible two or three pupils (if suitable can be found)'.²¹ If La Trobe did take on students again, it can only have been on a spasmodic basis, since his correspondence to the Comtesse described frequent visits to his ailing father in England.

Then, in February 1837, he was offered a British government posting to carry out an assignment in the West Indies. Through the agency of his own family who had strong connections with intellectuals of influence in the anti-slavery movement and in the Colonial Office, as well as in the Moravian Church, La Trobe was sent in 1837 to examine and report on the allocation of funds for the education of the 700,000 newly-liberated slaves. His reports so impressed the Colonial Office that he was, immediately on his return to London in 1839, offered the new position of Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in far-off Australia. By this time, Charles Joseph and Sophie La Trobe had a two-year old daughter, Agnes, and three further children were born in their cottage at Jolimont: Eleanora Sophia in 1842, Mary Cecilia in 1843 and Charles Albert in 1845.

Their life-style in Melbourne was necessarily modest, due largely to the Superintendent's less than adequate salary. They did not entertain on a large scale, preferring to enjoy the simple pleasures of their home and garden at Jolimont, or private gatherings with their closest friends. Sophie La Trobe is credited with the introduction of the European tradition of the Christmas tree to Melbourne²² as the focus of their children's parties. As historian Marguerite Hancock has noted:

As far as it is possible to tell, Sophie La Trobe's circle of friends included refined women such as Phebe Howitt (the wife of her doctor) and Anne Greene; one belonging to a well-known Quaker family, the other to the Irish Ascendancy. Another friend was Georgiana McCrae, whose journal gives such a vivid account of early Melbourne.²³

In the few surviving letters from Sophie in Melbourne to Agnes at home in Neuchâtel for her education, Sophie reveals herself as a devoted mother, and the loving and concerned companion of her overworked husband:

I suppose he [Papa] tells you how much those gold discoveries have given him to do – how harrassed [sic] and worried he feels at times – but thank God who keeps him in good health and in strength of mind & heart. For a week towards the end of the year I got very anxious about him – he had lost his appetite, his sleep, in part – and for a week, or a fortnight we never saw a smile on his face – you know, that is not at all like him – but thanks be to God – he seems quite himself again – and goes to his work with courage – though he is surrounded by difficulties on every side ...²⁴

Six months later, Sophie was still troubled for Charles Joseph. She, who knew him better than anyone else, could observe the great

toll his responsibilities were taking on him. Without Gipps, who had been succeeded by FitzRoy as Governor in Sydney, as his mentor and confidant, he suffered great stress over the running of the colony:

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.²⁵

When the time came for her departure for medical treatment in Switzerland, Sophie had very mixed feelings about leaving:

I need not tell you, dear child, that if the joy to see you will be great – the prospect of having to leave your dear papa, on this side of the world, is a very sorrowful and grievous one to me – and if I had been allowed to choose, I would have much preferred [sic] waiting for him that we might all meet again together – but it [is] not to be ...²⁶

La Trobe felt the separation from his wife acutely. He wrote to Agnes:

Dear Mamma has left many many friends who are very sorry that she has gone & who feel the value which her example as a good Christian wife and mother has been in the community.²⁷

Theirs was a happy marriage for nineteen years, which ended only with the death of Sophie de Montmollin La Trobe in Neuchâtel on 30 January 1854 just before her forty-fourth birthday.

1 C J La Trobe, 'Private Memoranda, 6 September 1834 -2 May 1835, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
2 C J La Trobe, 'Private Memoranda, 6 June 1835, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel. Nous verrons ... != We shall see!
3 C J La Trobe, Fairfield, to the Comtesse de Pourtalès, Berlin, 8 August 1834, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.

- 4 C J La Trobe, Melbourne, to Agnes La Trobe, Neuchâtel, 30 August 1851, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 5 Marguerite Hancock, *Colonial Consorts: the Wives of Victoria's Governors 1839-1900*, Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2001, p.8.
- 6 Ibid., C J La Trobe 'Private Memoranda', 25 June 1835.
- 7 Ibid., 17 July 1835.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid., 25 July 1835.
- 10 Ibid., 26 July 1835.
- 11 Ibid., 31 July 1835.
- 12 C J La Trobe to John Murray, 1 September 1835, John Murray Archive, London.
- 13 Parish Records, St Andrew's, Holborn. 1835; copy held in Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 14 Marriage Certificate, 16 September 1835, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 15 Maurice de Tribolet, Archivist de Neuchâtel, to Marguerite Hancock, Melbourne, 17 June 2000. private correspondence.
- 16 C J La Trobe, 'Private Memoranda', 16 September 1835.
- 17 Ibid. je n'ai pas d'illusion = I have no illusions.
- 18 William Brockedon, RA, 1787-1854. He proposed La Trobe for membership of the Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall, London, in November 1853. La Trobe was elected on 27 March 1855 after his return from Australia.
- 19 C J La Trobe, *The Rambler in Oklahoma: La Trobe's Tour with Washington Irving*. Reprinted from *The Rambler in North America*, eds Muriel H Wright and George H Shir, Oklahoma City: Harlow, 1955.
- 20 C J La Trobe, Greng, to Charlotte La Trobe. Bridlington, Yorkshire, 28 August 1836, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 21 C J La Trobe, Fairfield near Manchester, to the Comtesse de Pourtalès, Berlin, 20 December 1835, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 22 Hancock, p.23.
- 23 Hancock, p.18.
- 24 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 23 January 1852, Fonds Petitpierre, Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel.
- 25 Ibid., 12 July 1852.
- 26 Ibid., 1 January 1853.
- 27 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 10 March 1853.

Cécile and Eleanora La Trobe's letter from Carcelles to Rose Pellet

By Marion Johnstone

Marion Johnstone lives in Melbourne. She is the great-great-great granddaughter of Charlotte Pellet, who was a close friend and housekeeper to Governor La Trobe and his household from 1841 till his departure from the colony in 1854. Marion is a registered Nurse and Midwife who has travelled extensively and has a keen interest in nineteenth-century history and Australia's colonisation.

In May 1854 Charles Joseph La Trobe left his post as Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria without handing over this responsibility to his successor Sir Charles Hotham, though the incoming lieutenant-governor was only six weeks away. Did the letter from his daughters Cécile and Eleanora have any bearing on that decision?

This letter is held in the State Library of Victoria¹. It is very hard to read as both sides of the paper have been used and the ink has bled through. (A transcription follows.)

It shows us one element of the geographically fractured nature of the La Trobe family in 1853 and 1854. It was written in response to a letter from Rose Pellet who was 16 years old and still living at *Jolimont*, the former home of Cécile and Eleanora. Rose was the daughter of the La Trobes' housekeeper, Charlotte Pellet, and had travelled to Australia from Switzerland when she was three years old.

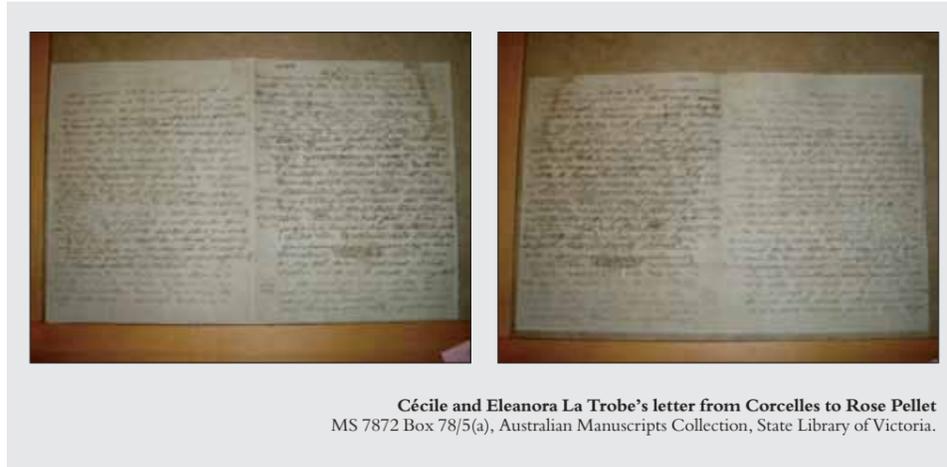
She had lived at *Jolimont* with Cécile, Eleanora, and their younger brother, Charles, until their departure from Australia with their chronically ill mother in February 1853. She had shared their life, their governess and their pastimes.

The girls were obviously very close, as Eleanora mentions how much she would like to kiss her and Charlotte again. In her letter, which would have been sent from Melbourne in August or September 1853, Rose must have mentioned to the girls that she would not be returning to Switzerland. Up till this point, they had been assuming that she would be coming back. There is no hint in the letter from Cécile and Eleanora of the reason why she is not returning, nor of Frédéric Amiet whom Rose was to marry in May 1854.

Although the La Trobe girls do not complain, life at the time of writing this letter must have been very unsettled. Cécile and Eleanora, 10 and 11 years old respectively,

were two young Australian girls who have been brought up with the comparative freedom to play in the open space of *Jolimont*. Around them were beautiful gardens, the Yarra River to the south, and the manna gum forest just across the track to the north (now the Treasury and Fitzroy gardens). They had left behind their Papa, Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe, who was trying to resolve issues relating to the Gold Rush

La Borcarderie (the Montmollin summer house), and over New Year in their Neuchâtel residence, it would appear that their current arrangements in Corcelles were semi-permanent, as classes had been arranged for them. Their one link with their former life was Mme Béguin, their former governess, but she was not living in the house with them. The La Trobe girls seemed to be looking for any contact with people they



Cécile and Eleanora La Trobe's letter from Corcelles to Rose Pellet
MS 7872 Box 78/5(a), Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

that seemed to be going from bad to worse. His tenure as administrator of Victoria was steadily becoming more difficult and stressful. He had resigned, but was not in a position to join them as yet. As well as Rose and Charlotte, they had also left behind other friends whom they name in the letter, and all their pets. Cécile also speaks of the beauty of the gardens and Eleanora of 'the dear old house' in Melbourne, not wanting to think about whom their Papa might give it to when he leaves. Eleanora speaks of the beauty of Switzerland as if it was still a foreign country and Cécile mentions that her Mamma had given her a 'French Bible' as a present on New Year's Day, implying that French was not yet a natural language for them.

Their mother, Sophie La Trobe née de Montmollin, had been very unwell for some years, her illness prompting her to return to Switzerland ahead of her husband to seek medical attention. Instead of improving, her condition must have been deteriorating at the time the girls wrote this letter. Cécile and Eleanora have been removed from the family, probably to shield them from the tragedy unfolding at the time in the Montmollin house in Neuchâtel. It would appear that they were not even staying with extended family, as Eleanora refers to their host as 'a very nice gentleman'. They were staying in Corcelles, about five kilometres west of Neuchâtel. Although they had stayed with their English family in June of 1853, and their Swiss family in the summer at

had known in Australia, as Eleanora mentions how glad she was that the Lonsdales would be returning to England, hoping that they would be able to see them. Even poor little Cécile's doll from Australia had been discarded after being eaten by rats on the voyage back. They seemed unaware, or had been asked not to mention in their letter, how ill their mother had become. The only real complaint is from Eleanora, who wanted to be allowed to run outside in the snow. They must have been feeling displaced, homesick and lonely. There is no mention of them having made new friends, and it must have been yet another blow to find out that Rose and Charlotte would not be coming back to Switzerland. Life of course was to become worse for them when their young mother succumbed to her illness on 30 January 1854, just three weeks after this letter was completed. She was not quite 44 years old.

For all of this, the letter is very positive, with Eleanora describing the beauty of the country and her satisfaction with their living and learning arrangements. Cécile, like most ten year old girls, jauntily describes all the presents she had been given and contact with Elizabeth de Montmollin's dog, Fido.

Despite the girls appearing relatively happy and well cared for, this letter must have disturbed their father (assuming Rose shared it with him) and added more worry to the insurmountable pressures he was already experiencing. Up to this point he may have been under the

misapprehension that his family was happy and safe in Switzerland. It must have seemed ominous that their mother is only mentioned once, by one of his daughters in passing, when her poor health was the whole reason that they were in Switzerland without him. Failing to mention her would do nothing to reassure La Trobe of Sophie's wellbeing. Alarm bells probably rang when he asked himself two big questions: Why are my children living with strangers in a strange town, and What is happening with their mother?

The letter to Rose Pellet from Cécile and Eleanora La Trobe would have arrived in Melbourne in late March or early April 1854, approximately three months after it was written, and when La Trobe would have been making his travel arrangements. Could this have contributed to the uncharacteristic decision to leave his post early, before handing over to his successor Lieutenant-Governor (later Governor) Hotham?²

Written with help from David Amiet and Cheryl Kirchner and inspiration from Dianne Reilly and John Drury.

This article is a result of my research and interpretations of available facts and data, and as such there may be omissions I am unaware of. I would welcome discussion or feedback, and can be contacted through the La Trobe Society.



Letter from Cécile La Trobe to Rose Pellet

23 of December, Corcelles, Switz.

Dear Rose

We thank you a great deal for the kind letter you sent us. It gave us great deal of pleasure, so much as the epitaph of the bird. I suppose the garden is very pretty now, as for us we are all in snow. I began my letter before Christmas and now it is the 5 of January. I have been all of one week at Neuchatel. The presents I received on New Year's Day are a set of tea cups from Tante Cécile Montmollin, from Elizabeth Montmollin a copy book, as well as another from M'elle Pedolin her governess. A bonnet and a biscome* from Oncle François, a book from Maurice Du Pasquier, a sovereign from Mamma with a French Bible, a biscome and 5 francs from Grandmamma, a biscome and a book from Tante Louisa [Daulon?] and a bonnet for my doll from Agnes, and Mr Fritz Béguin made me a cradle for my doll.

6 of January 1854. The doll I have got now is not the same that I had when I left Australia for the rats ate it on board ship. We take lessons four times a week with a gentleman, and twice a week we take German lessons with a lady. I forgot to tell you that Tante Louise Montmollin gave me on New Year's Day the Fables de la Fontaine beautifully illustrated. On my birthday which I spent in London Uncle Peter and Aunt Janetta gave me a work box, cousin Louisa a doll, Aunt Charlotte a parasol and Aunt Elizabeth and cousin Kate a pen wiper. Maddy sends you many many loves. I send my love to Papa, Charlotte, Martha, Kate, Ann and Lough. I hope Peppy is still alive and all the cats. I suppose Cesar has never come back. The dog of Elizabeth Montmollin is called Fido. When I was there every morning we gave him a cushion to lie on and we petted him a great deal.

Goodbye dear Rose. Believe me to be your very affectionate friend.

Cécile La Trobe

* A biscome is a gingerbread. (Ed.)



Letter from Eleanora Sophia La Trobe to Rose Pellet

Corcelles, 4 December 1854*

My dear Rose

I shall write a few words to you as well as Cecy and I hope that you will be interested by what I am going to tell you. We are with Mademoiselle at Corcelles but we have just been for a week at Neuchâtel for the holidays, there was a beautiful tree at Grandmamma's. I think Switzerland a very beautiful country; tell Charlotte that I have been to Valangin many times; as it is near the Borcarderie we passed through it pretty often. We send this letter by Mr Breguet, he is delivering to Australia with one of his nieces. I am very sorry to hear that you are not coming back. I wish so much to kiss you and Charlotte again; I thank you very much for your letter; and am very glad to hear that the Lonsdales are coming back to England. I hope that we shall see them. We don't find it very cold here, although we have got some colds it is rather disagreeable not to be able to go out; it would be such fun to run in the snow; the water is all covered with ice, sometimes it is so hard that men go and take large hammers and strike and strike until it breaks.

I wonder who Papa will give the dear old house to when he goes away, I hope it will be to somebody he knows very well, C and I don't like to think about it. I shall tell you in what house we are living, it is a large house which belongs to a very kind gentleman. We live at the second story and he lives at the first, we breakfast and we take tea here and we take dinner with Mme Beguin at her house. Our drawing-room windows look on the lake and the Alps as well as on a quantity of vineyards. The bedroom windows look on the orchard and our kitchen windows on the garden. One of Maddy's brothers is here; he is very kind and we call him Oncle Fritz. I hope that Charlotte is well, kiss her from me. Give my love to Martha when you write to her as well as Kate, Ann, Lough and Mary when you see her.

Now my dear with many kisses for yourself I remain yours affectionately.

Eleanora Sophia La Trobe

* Written on 4 January 1854. (Ed.)

1 Cécile (Mary Cecilia) La Trobe, Letter to Rose Amiet [sic], 23 December 1853–6 January 1854; and Eleanora Sophia La Trobe, Letter to Rose Amiet [sic], 4 December [i.e. January] 1854, 4 pages on one sheet, MS 7872 Box 78/5(a), Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

2 La Trobe had submitted his resignation to the Secretary of State in London on 31 December 1852, sixteen months before leaving his post. Sir Charles Hotham, who was extremely reluctant to accept the post, was finally appointed on 6 December 1853. (Ed.)

Book Review: *Les Squatters australiens*

By Daryl Ross

Daryl Ross, an industrial chemist by training, is a retired business executive and former export consultant with extensive experience in Africa and Asia. He was chair of the Australian Southern African Business Council from 1986 to 1996 and retains an active interest in international affairs. Daryl's great grandfather, Louis Ernest Leuba, one of the many Neuchâtel Swiss encouraged by Charles and Sophie La Trobe to settle in Victoria, arrived in Melbourne in March 1854 accompanied by Hubert de Castella and Adolphe de Meuron. Daryl is one of the two Vice Presidents of the La Trobe Society, the other being Peter Corlett OAM.

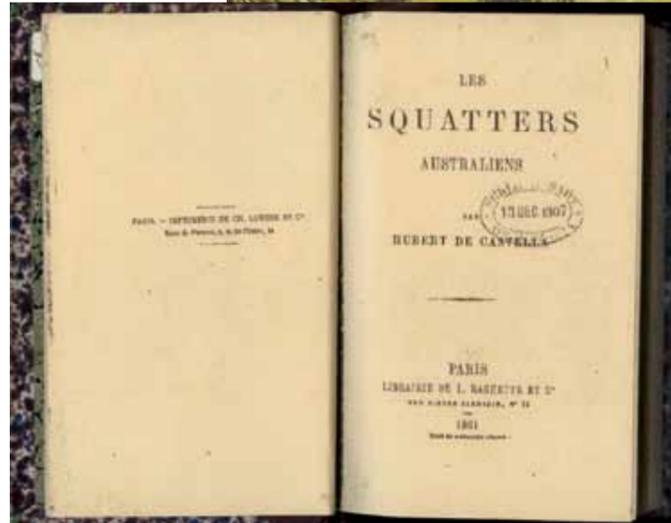
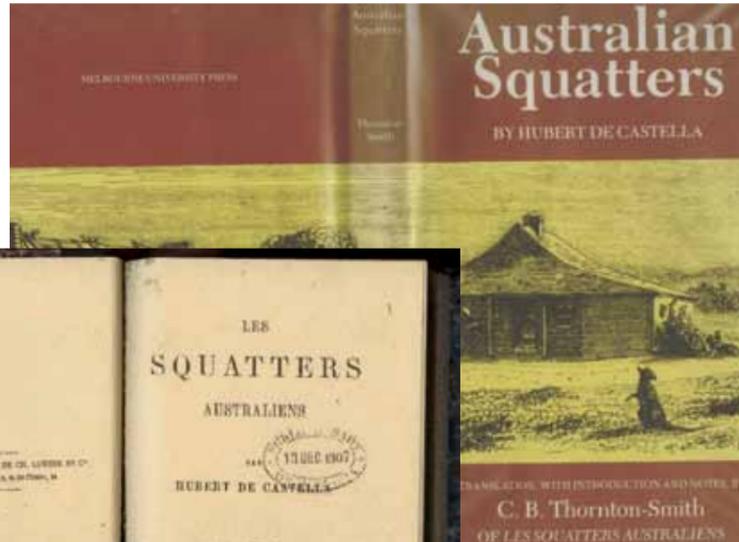
The unique first-hand account of rural life around Melbourne that tells the story of Swiss immigration to the Yarra Valley and elsewhere is recounted in a remarkable book written in his native French language by Hubert de Castella and published in 1861. The appointment of Charles Joseph La Trobe as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of the Colony of New South Wales in 1839 was more than a confirmation of the Colonial Office's determination to control the hitherto random 'land grab' at the expense of the Aboriginal population — it opened the way for organised resettlement from Britain as well as from other British colonies. The boom in land prices that had sustained the colony in the early years burst in 1842; nonetheless, the need for reliable skilled labour to develop the colony had become obvious. In consequence, an assisted immigration program was introduced to encourage free settlers. La Trobe saw the need, however, to balance this program with a class of well-capitalised settlers to invest principally in a range of agricultural activities.

important potential immigrants. Through his wife Sophie's family connections in Switzerland he was able to influence a number of appropriate settlers. A nephew of Sophie's, Adolphe de Meuron was one such settler who came in 1848 and, in partnership with his school friend Paul de Castella, purchased a squatting lease of prime Yarra Valley land known as Yering Station on which to breed and fatten cattle. In 1849, they were joined by the son of another aristocratic Swiss family, Guillaume de Pury, and subsequently by his younger brother Samuel. Other Swiss families chose land west of Geelong in the Barrabool Hills principally for viticulture. The success of these ventures became good news in land-starved Switzerland encouraging labourers as well as investors to join their compatriots in Australia Felix. In 1851 the gold discoveries and the influx of would-be miners saw prices skyrocket. Beef cattle values trebled in a year, as did prime land values. The early 1850s saw the arrival of many more Swiss settlers, not so much as miners but as investors or simply as well-paid skilled farm workers.

From his earlier time in the Neuchâtel canton of Switzerland, La Trobe appreciated the work ethic of its people whom he saw as

Although Neuchâtel was a French-speaking canton in the Swiss Confederation, it was also historically a principality of Prussia

Hubert de Castella,
Australian Squatters,
 Carlton: Melbourne
 University Press, 1987



Hubert de Castella,
*Les Squatters
 australiens*, Paris:
 Hachette, 1861

until 1848. Like much of Europe the Swiss economy relied on agriculture but with limited land there were limited opportunities. A major export, however, were military mercenaries serving France and Prussia. One such was Paul de Castella's brother, Hubert, who bought out his commission in December 1853 after serving five years in the French cavalry. Learning of his brother's successful venture in the now independent colony of Victoria he decided to visit Paul at Yering. Meanwhile, Adolphe de Meuron, having sold his share of Yering station to his partner, Paul de Castella, made a brief return visit to his family in Neuchâtel. Hubert welcomed the opportunity to accompany Adolphe on his planned return to Yering, and Adolphe also encouraged another boyhood friend, Ernest Leuba, to join them. Together they travelled first class on the *Marlborough* that sailed out of Liverpool on 1 January 1854.

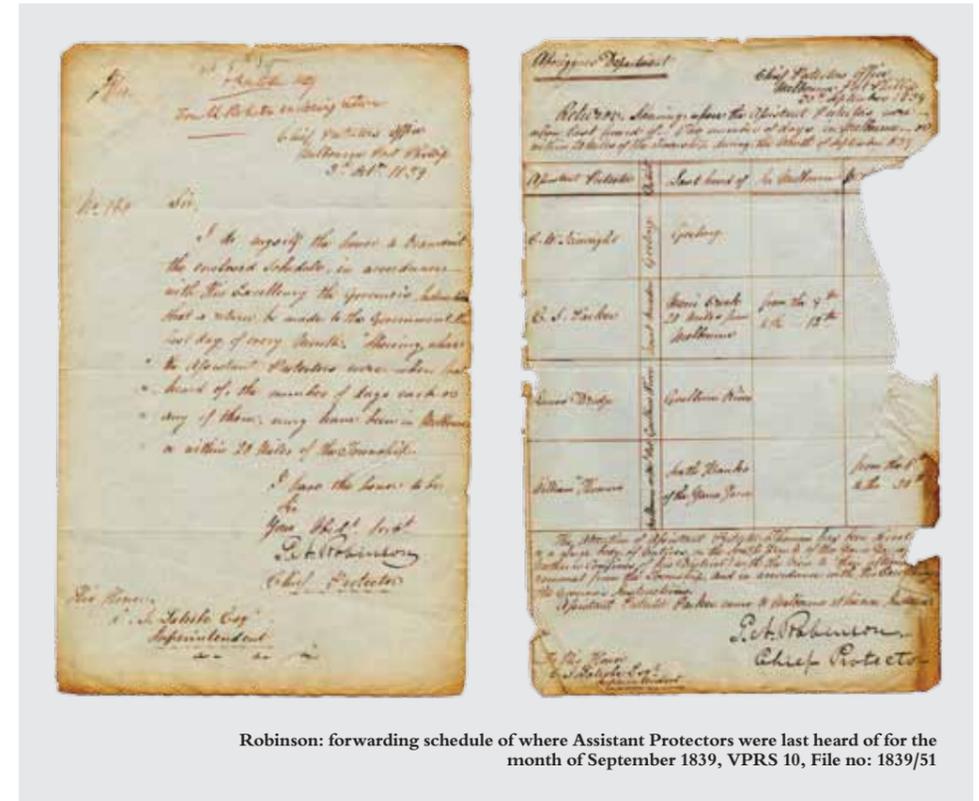
After 22 months Hubert returned to Switzerland for family reasons but enthused by his experiences in the antipodes. Here he was somewhat shocked to learn of the recent publication of two books by different French writers painting a rather negative picture of Victoria in the gold rush era. Encouraged by his family, he set out to write his personal version of life as a squatter in Victoria.

The story of these young Swiss bachelors in the new colony of Victoria is told by Hubert in

his aptly named *Les Squatters australiens* published in 1861 by Hachette et Cie in Paris. This account was masterfully translated into English by Dr Colin Thornton-Smith, then Chair of the French Department at the University of Melbourne, and published by Melbourne University Press in 1987. His translation is enhanced by extensive research into many aspects of the personalities and incidents mentioned in the original that is included as notes in the translation.

De Castella's original manuscript was serialised in a French publication *Le Tour du Monde* and being a sketcher much in the style of La Trobe himself, he illustrated several scenes and incidents covered in the original text. Some of these illustrations are included in Thornton-Smith's translation, with that of the Yering Station taking pride of place on the dust cover. Whereas the 1861 French version of *Les Squatters australiens* is now an archival rarity, the Thornton-Smith translation is available in many municipal libraries. This book presents a fascinating personal insight into life in Victoria at the end of the La Trobe era, and is of particular value to history students and family history researchers, as well as general readers of Australian history.

Hubert de Castella, *Australian Squatters*.
 Translation, with introduction and notes,
 by C. B. Thornton-Smith, Carlton:
 Melbourne University Press, 1987, 212 pages.



Robinson: forwarding schedule of where Assistant Protectors were last heard of for the month of September 1839, VPRS 10, File no: 1839/51

The La Trobe Digitisation Project

Late in 2012 I wrote a piece for *La Trobeana* about the Public Record Office Victoria's collaboration with the C J La Trobe Society in a project to digitise and make available online La Trobe's official inwards correspondence (1839-1851), in the role of Superintendent, Port Phillip District.

The project is expected to last three years and be completed at the end of 2013. The records are housed in 151 boxes (approximately 75,000 individual sheets of paper) and cover such issues as courts, schools, the indigenous population, farming, police and the finances of the fledgling District.

In March this year, it was my pleasure to be the guest speaker at the annual celebration of La Trobe's birthday, at which I shared with many of your members some information about the project, the records and PROV's collection

generally. It was also an opportunity to thank the many Society members who have volunteered their time towards this project.

The presentation featured images of some of the records in the series that are the subject of the project:

VPRS 19 – Inward registered correspondence, and

VPRS 10 – Inward registered correspondence, relating to Aboriginal affairs.

Links to these PROV records are conveniently provided at:

www.latrobesociety.org.au/archives.html

PROV website and catalogue

<http://prov.vic.gov.au>

<http://access.prov.vic.gov.au>

Jack Martin
 Coordinator - Collection Management
 Public Record Office Victoria

Visit of Mrs Phyllis Murphy to La Trobe's Cottage

By Helen Botham

Helen Botham is a member of the La Trobe Society and a guide at La Trobe's Cottage. She was foundation chair of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage and is the author of *La Trobe's Jolimont: A walk round my garden* published in 2006. Since then she has maintained a deep interest in the life of C J La Trobe and the continuing preservation and development of his Cottage.

Members of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage were delighted recently to welcome Mrs Phyllis Murphy to the Cottage. Phyllis, with her late husband, John, ran a successful architectural practice and they managed, on an honorary basis, the removal of La Trobe's Cottage from Jolimont to the Domain, near the Royal Botanic Gardens, during 1961-1964.¹

When the Cottage Masterplan was being developed in 2009, Phyllis provided copies of architectural drawings and plans, and her memories of the status of the Cottage before its removal from Jolimont contributed to the formulation of the Masterplan. Following the recent improvements to the Cottage, the Friends were keen to invite Phyllis to inspect the changes with her son, Jock, on Tuesday 7 May.

As she was escorted through the Cottage by Property Manager, Lorraine Finlay, Phyllis provided many insights and anecdotes about the project. She recalled that the original dining room, which still stood, was carefully cut into sections for removal. Much of the drawing room front wall had also been retained, and some of the original panels were used in the reconstruction of that wall. Paint scrapes of those panels revealed the original painted wood graining, which was reinstated in the reconstructed rooms. Phyllis said that the profile of the original drawing room ceiling was visible in the remaining section of that room, which enabled that ceiling to be reinstated; they constructed the bedroom ceiling to the same profile. Some original building materials were found around the Cottage at the Jolimont site, including hand-made nails and hand-made bricks that had been part of



Phyllis Murphy,
Dianne Reilly,
John Drury



Jock Murphy, Dianne Reilly,
Lorraine Finlay, John Drury,
Phyllis Murphy, Sandi Pullman

the original cottage and many of those bricks were incorporated into the reconstruction. She reminded us that the Cottage's current front door knob is original!

Phyllis was pleased to see the Cottage now so well maintained and was interested to hear about the projects that have brought it to its current well-loved state and about plans for the future.

It was indeed fortunate that the Murphys were able, as part of their architectural practice,

to become involved in the project to rescue what remained of La Trobe's Cottage, and to play such a large role in its reconstruction.² This was just one of many projects in which they were involved to rescue and reinstate some of Victoria's significant heritage properties.

¹ Phyllis Murphy, 'An Official Residence: La Trobe's Cottage – the move to the Domain in 1961', *La Trobeana*, vol. 8, no. 2, June 2009, pp.12-15.

² Miles Lewis, *La Trobe's Cottage: a conservation analysis*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1994, pp.80-93. See also <http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/history.html>

Events earlier in the year

Opening of the Charles La Trobe Lounge at La Trobe University, February 2013



Diane Gardiner, President, C J La Trobe Society, and Adrienne Clarke AC, Chancellor, La Trobe University



Sculptor Peter Corlett with Prof. Adrienne Clarke, discussing the making of a statue

Celebration of La Trobe's Birthday at La Trobe's Cottage, March 2013



Guest speaker Jack Martin, Coordinator-Collection Management, Public Record Office Victoria, pictured at PROV



Jenny Morrison, La Trobe University Alumni and Advancement Office, cutting the birthday cake, with John Joyce, John Cudmore, Lorraine Finlay and Diane Gardiner



John Drury, Chairman of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, speaking with Tim Gatehouse; Neville Jarvis, centre, with Alexis Jarvis and Daryl Ross



Richard White with
Rosemary Hanscombe -
National Trust curator

La Trobe Brick

At La Trobe's Cottage one of the more unusual catalogued items are four cream-pink coloured hand made bricks from the original cottage, circa 1839. During World War II hand made bricks from the site in Jolimont, some with makers' thumbprints in them to indicate the hundredth brick made, were sold by the Red Cross to raise money. In the early 1960s the National Trust followed suit and sold more bricks at £5 (\$10) each to raise funds for the restoration of the cottage. In 1985 four such bricks were donated back to the National Trust.

One of these bricks is now on loan for an exhibition, 'Touring the Past: Tourism and History in Australia, 1850-2010', at the

Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney. It is joined by a replica of Ned Kelly's helmet from the Old Melbourne Goal. The exhibition, which is curated by cultural historian Richard White, Associate Professor in the Department of History, University of Sydney, opens on 24 August and runs until the end of February 2014.

Helen Armstrong

Forthcoming events

JULY

Tuesday 2

La Trobe University Annual Lecture

Venue: La Trobe University AgriBio Centre, La Trobe University, Bundoora
Time: 6.15-8.30pm (for a 6.30pm start)

Guest Speaker: Dr Peter Sale, Reader and Associate Professor, Professor, School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University *'Feeding the Colony – Feeding the World'*.
Invitations have been sent to members direct from La Trobe University.

Tuesday 16

Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Lecture

Venue: Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne
Time: 6.00-7.30pm

Mr Martin Purslow, CEO, National Trust will discuss his experience of *'Breathing new life into historic properties'*.

Friday 19

La Trobe Society/Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture

Venue: Morgans at 401, 401 Collins Street, Melbourne

Time: 6.00-7.30 pm
Dr Dianne Reilly AM, co-founder of The La Trobe Society, will present an illustrated lecture on *'Books and Culture in La Trobe's Melbourne'*.

AUGUST

Wednesday 7

La Trobe Society Annual General Meeting and Dinner

Venue: Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place, Melbourne
Guest Speaker: Professor Harriet Edquist, Professor of Architectural History, RMIT University

DECEMBER

Friday 6

Christmas Cocktails

Venue: La Trobe Reading Room, State Library of Victoria
Time: 6.30-8.30pm
Ms Sue Roberts, CEO & State Librarian: The State Library's Dome Centenary Candlelit Carols at La Trobe's Cottage

Tuesday 17*

Candlelit Carols at La Trobe's Cottage

Venue: La Trobe's Cottage, Cnr Birdwood Avenue and Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne
Time: 7.00-9.00pm
*Date to be confirmed

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**

latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeanaIndex.html

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