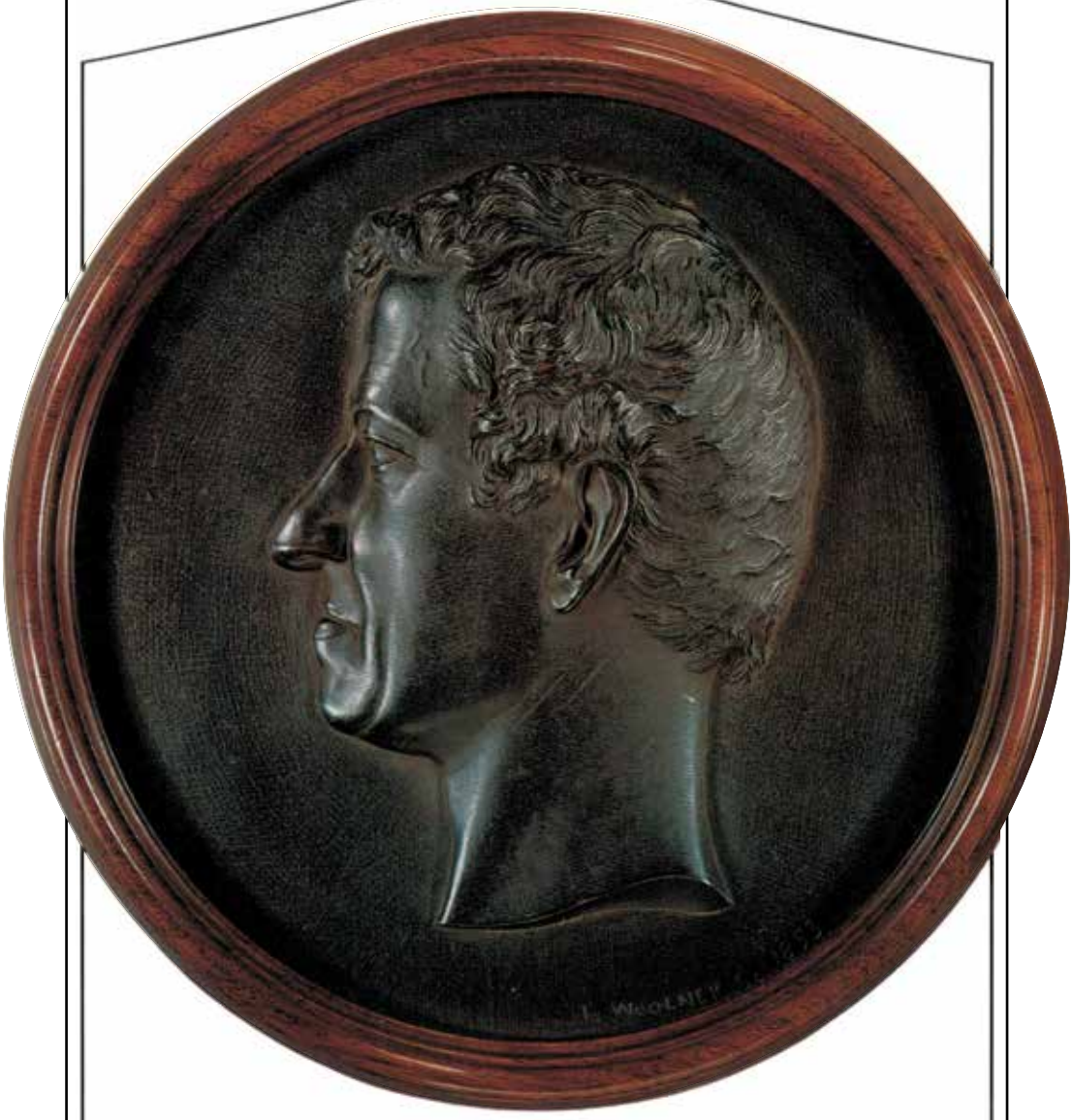
La Trobeana



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

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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
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H5489

Contents

A Word from the President

We are fortunate in this edition of the La Trobe Society journal to be able to feature articles by experts in their different fields. Dr Sylvia Whitmore's examination of La Trobe's adventure in Mexico, accompanied by his young *protégé* Albert de Pourtalès, reveals much about the determination of the 'rambler' in Mexico and his spirit of adventure as he leads his party into dangerous territory in a relatively unknown country, and La Trobe's trip was placed in the context of the religious and political turmoil in Mexico at that time. The relationship between La Trobe and Washington Irving, the great American writer of the 19th century, who travelled together in North America in 1832, is clarified for us in Susan Priestley's succinct analysis.

Two medical doctors, Dr Jonathan Burdon AM and Dr Walter Heale, have given us, on the one hand an informative if sometimes alarming account of health and the hazards of contemporary medicine in the La Trobe era, and on the other, a synopsis of the introduction to the Port Phillip District of the essential medical registration system, followed by a moving biographical sketch of one of Melbourne's first physicians, Dr Arthur O'Mullane and his family. Sandra Pullman's account of her ancestor, James Wentworth Davis, a pioneer of Alberton in Gippsland, and his family who had originally settled in Van Diemen's Land, provides an interesting glimpse into the lives of our predecessors.

This edition also includes a review of a new edition of that classic of Australian history *The Long Farewell* by the highly-commended Melbourne author Don Charlwood AM. Based on more than 120 diaries kept by immigrants on the long sailing ship voyages to Australia, and numerous letters the settlers wrote home, the superbly illustrated book describes life on board and the reasons for emigration. It is wonderful background to the perils of the long journey to Australia in the period of first settlement.

It is particularly pleasing that the servants' quarters at La Trobe's Cottage now have a new shingle roof. Thanks to the generosity of a number of La Trobe Society members, and with the support of the National Trust, the red wood shingles were imported from Canada and installed by Hallam Whittle, one of Melbourne's few roofers who specialises in the restoration of historic buildings.

Archbishop Philip Freier and Mrs Joy Freier, both members of the La Trobe Society, warmly welcomed members in September to *Bishopscourt*, the residence of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. We now look forward to our last event in the year at the Parliament of Victoria. Mr Murray Thompson, Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly for the electorate of Sandringham, will be the guest speaker at the La Trobe Society's Cocktail Party in the Federation Room, Parliament House, on Wednesday 25 November 2015. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Diane Gardiner AM
Hon. President
C J La Trobe Society

Charles Joseph La Trobe's adventure in Mexico in 1834

Dr Sylvia Whitmore

Dr Sylvia Whitmore's passion for learning has taken her on a journey through three different universities and five different subject areas since she recommenced her education as an adult student. After completing an Arts degree at La Trobe University, Sylvia was employed in the Australian office of a multi-national engineering company as the executive secretary of its social club, progressing to positions in its telecommunications research and development laboratory and a major software development project. To complement these roles, she undertook a Graduate Diploma in Information Technology at Swinburne University, followed by a Master's Degree in Project Management at RMIT University. Her subsequent employment was in software project management with banking and financial organisations, and finally, as test manager in the large software development group within one of Melbourne's pre-eminent stockbrokers.

Upon retirement in 2001, Sylvia completed another Arts Degree with Honours, majoring in Archaeology at her alma mater La Trobe University. In 2012, she completed a PhD with a thesis on divination in Mesoamerica.

This paper discusses La Trobe's adventures in Mexico in 1834 with his young companion, Count Albert de Pourtalès during a particularly unsettled period in the history of the former Spanish Colony. It is obvious from La Trobe's choice of a more difficult route through this troubled country that he wanted to 'experience' and learn about Mexico, although he was aware that this approach would sometimes involve risk-taking and danger. Their escapades included activities such as disembarking from a ship in the middle of a raging storm, exploring the deep underground shaft of a silver mine, investigating the inside of a massive pyramid and being caught up in the beginnings of a Mexican political coup.

Charles Joseph La Trobe's courage and keen sense of adventure are evident from the account he gives of his travels in *The Rambler in Mexico.*[1] The book comprises a series of nine informative letters addressed to his brother Frederick Benjamin, which describe his experiences during his three months visit to the former Spanish colony in 1834. The young Count Albert de Pourtalès accompanied him on his adventures, the Mexican trip being an extension of their previous travels in North

America. La Trobe's narration of his journey presents an interesting eye witness perspective on the newly independent country. His book also reveals the influence of Romanticism in his beautiful descriptions of the landscape, and it is implicit in his approach to travel whilst in Mexico.

Romanticism has been described in general terms as a late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century broad, cultural movement which typified many works associated with the arts, and 'emphasised the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary and the transcendental'.[2] According to Carl Thompson, a 'fascination' with 'misadventures' becomes particularly noticeable in British culture during this period. This was evident in travel literature, where there was a desire by many authors to distinguish their activities from those of other tourists by relating the harrowing experiences, discomfort and suffering they had endured during their journeys. In a similar manner, Romantic poetry had a propensity to suggest 'that the poet himself is, or has been some sort of suffering traveller'.[3] It is apparent from *The Rambler in Mexico*, that La Trobe likewise did not want to be viewed as a tourist who followed a comfortable, commonplace itinerary. His intention was to go off the beaten track so that he and his young companion could 'experience' and learn from the places they visited, even if this sometimes involved an element of risk taking, discomfort, suffering or danger.

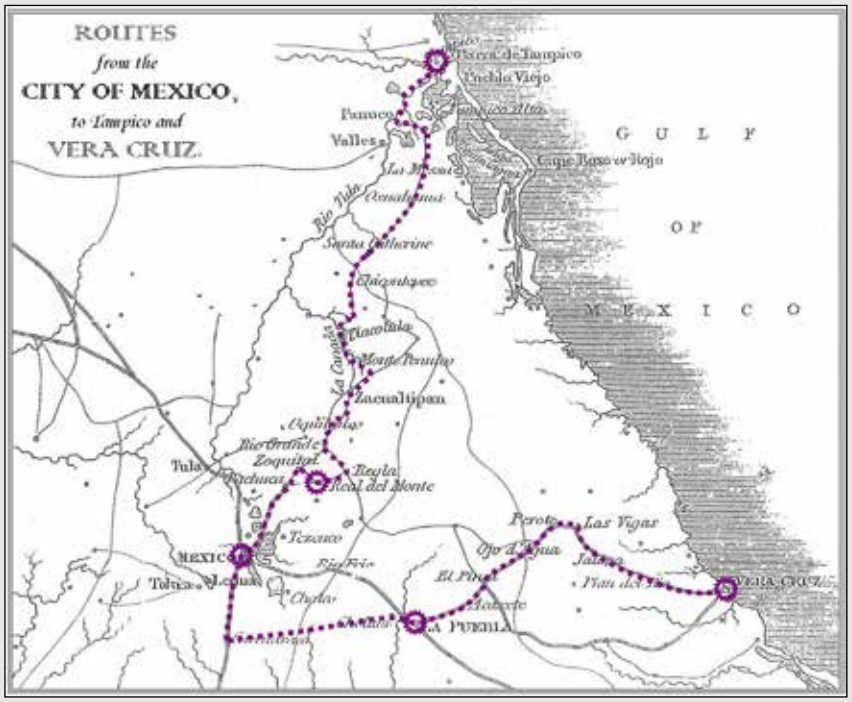
Mexico at the time of La Trobe's visit was an unsettled and potentially dangerous country for travellers. Unfortunately, independence from Spain in 1821 did not lead to a better future. In the years that followed 1821, the Mexicans tried an empire with an emperor which ended with his abdication in 1823. This was followed by a federalist republic that had a succession of eight different presidents in ten years. A constitution similar to that of the United States of America was established in 1824, although religious freedom and trial by jury were excluded. At the time that La Trobe and his young companion entered Mexico in January 1834, the government under the control of the federalist Vice-President Valentín Gómez Farías, heading a Congress intent on achieving substantial change. The President, Antonio López Santa Anna, who had been elected about twelve months previously, had retired to his hacienda because of ill health and left the Vice-President in charge.[4]

It is clear that La Trobe knew, prior to his visit, that travel within Mexico would indeed represent a risky venture. Throughout *The Rambler in Mexico,* he frequently references the published works of Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt and British diplomat Henry Ward, who had travelled in Mexico during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries respectively and recorded the raft of problems they had faced. They mention difficulties such as lack of proper roads, constant threat of attacks by bandits, poor accommodation, frequent outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera, the often hostile reception given to foreigners and the volatile political climate.[5] Travel in Mexico was indeed a vastly different undertaking from the traditional classic European Grand Tour where large numbers of tourists generally followed conventional, well-known routes.[6]

Sylvia Whitmore, after Sir Francis Grant, artist
La Trobe in Mexican gear, 2015
Digital artwork, in collaboration with John Botham

Unlike some Romantic travellers such as the iconic poets Byron and Shelley who died as a result of their respective adventures,[7] La Trobe did not deliberately seek out unexpected events or engage in reckless endeavours. His writings reveal that he did take steps to minimise potential problems whilst in Mexico, with preparations that included researching many of the sites and locations along the route he intended to travel.[8] Moreover, a strong British diplomatic presence in Mexico, may have given La Trobe some sense of security. It had been established to protect British commercial interests and to offset the growing influence of the United States in the Latin American region.[9] Nevertheless, there were times when La Trobe engaged in activities or unexpectedly found himself in unplanned situations that were potentially dangerous. One instance encompassed the perilous events that occurred during the sea voyage to Mexico.

The Rambler in Mexico begins with a vivid description of La Trobe and Pourtalès' passage aboard the goélette *Halcyon*, a two-masted schooner that departed from New Orleans on 15 January 1834 destined for Tampico in



J. Sleuth, engraver
Routes from the City of Mexico, to Tampico and Vera Cruz
Map published in *The Rambler in Mexico 1834* London: Seeley and Burnside, 1836
La Trobe's route drawn by Sylvia Whitmore in collaboration with John Botham

Mexico.[10] Their problems first became acute when the ship was unable to dock in Tampico because of wild weather and had to anchor about three miles offshore. Rather than remain on board waiting for better weather, La Trobe, Pourtalès and a fellow traveller named M'Euen[11] disembarked from the *Halcyon* and rowed to land in a borrowed skiff with only the clothes they were wearing. It was La Trobe who made the calculated decision to depart from the ship in this manner, believing that they would face far greater danger if they remained on board, since the captain appeared indifferent to the welfare of his passengers. La Trobe predicted that there would be precious little food and water available for those on board if the bad weather forced the ship to remain at sea for an extended period. The unfortunate travellers on this voyage had already experienced one delay when the *Halcyon* was blown 150 miles off course due to the gale force winds. La Trobe's judgement to leave the goélette proved to be sound, as after he and his companions had left, the *Halcyon* was again blown far out to sea when it tried to comply with a customs request to up anchor and move closer to the shore. The ship was unable to return to its former position until ten days later. When the trio eventually reached land in the small boat, La Trobe thanked God for their safe deliverance. M'Euen continued to travel with them on their journey through Mexico.[12]

It was in Tampico that La Trobe gained his first impressions of Mexico and it became evident that their troubles would continue. The three companions had great difficulty finding accommodation, food supplies were scarce and they had to endure bitterly cold weather. Tampico was very crowded and La Trobe relates that smuggling was widespread, everything whether local or imported was extremely expensive, yellow fever was an annual event and the population was 'the most mongrel' that could be conceived.[13] Consequently, the hapless people virtually trapped in the area for long periods whilst awaiting an incoming ship or cargo to be unloaded, were fair game for the merchants and others. He regarded this type of behaviour as extremely immoral, declaring that the 'God of the South is Mammon'.[14]

During the ten days that the three companions had to wait to retrieve their baggage from the *Halcyon*, La Trobe's resilience was further tested. Whilst exploring and admiring the different varieties of plants and insects in the vicinity of Tampico, he was attacked by a species of Mexican wood bug. This resulted in an itchy affliction that continued for about three weeks and, combined with the nightly problem of mosquito bites, caused him considerable suffering and discomfort. La Trobe acknowledged that he had to be more careful when exploring the

Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801–1875, artist
Real del Monte, 1834
Pencil and sepia wash on paper
Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

natural environment in order to avoid a repeat of this form of 'torment'.[15] However, this did not dampen his spirits or stop him from organising their journey to Mexico City.

With the aid of letters of credit and with the help of a gentleman who acted as both English and American consul in Tampico, La Trobe bought horses, a 'broad-eaved palmetto sombrero' and sufficient supplies to ensure that they were well prepared for their trip to Mexico City. In spite of their previous difficulties, the three travellers did not take the easy 'much used circuitous route' to the capital. Instead, in the spirit of adventure, a decision was made to take a challenging but more direct picturesque mule track by the Rio de la Cañada. The trio set out on horseback, sensibly garbed in a mixture of European and Mexican attire, with a group of hired guides and a train of mules to carry their gear along the rugged, narrow tracks. All were heavily armed in case of bandit attacks, which were a significant problem throughout the country.[16] During their travels in Mexico, La Trobe always made sure they had an armed escort and that their guns were clearly visible as a deterrent to bandits.

Nonetheless, he did manage to find some distraction from the rigours of travel in observing and sketching the splendour of the Mexican scenery which he clearly admired. In typical Romantic style, *The Rambler in Mexico* contains vivid descriptions of the magnificence of the landscape, not only in the vicinity of the Rio de la Cañada but also other parts of Mexico. La Trobe is eloquent about the spectacular beauty of the mountainous countryside, and conveys feelings of awe and reverence similar to those experienced when confronted with the 'sublime'. He relates:

> The most sublime part of the defile of the Cañada is that which extends two or three leagues above Tlacolula. A mountain of very great elevation appears literally cloven in twain from the very summit to the foundation; displaying immense perpendicular sheets of white rock, the innumerable lamina of which are twisted and gnarled like the roots of a tree.[17]

Among the many places La Trobe and his companions visited on the way to Mexico City was the village of Real del Monte where they stopped for two days to visit and inspect the silver mines of the British Real del Monte Company. It was during the visit to the Real del Monte mines that La Trobe participated in another daring escapade. From the books referenced in *The Rambler in Mexico,* he would have known that in the years following Mexico's independence from Spain, the British public invested millions of pounds into Anglo-Mexican mining companies. Since about the seventeenth century, Mexico had been the main source of the world's silver and it was considered by British investors that the introduction of British technology, skills and capital into these ancient mines would lead to fast profits.[18] Therefore, it was unlikely to have been simply for curiosity and adventure that La Trobe wanted to take a close look at these operations. He writes that he and M'Euen were warmly received by the mine superintendent and given a comprehensive tour of the premises.[19] They not only undertook a detailed inspection of the above ground facilities, but also spent an audacious six hours underground, in 'the bowels of the earth', investigating the two main shafts, the Dolores and the Terreros. To take the underground tour, they had to dress in typical miner's gear and wear the required 'felt helmet'.

La Trobe explains that they had to climb down thirty-two ladders to reach the bottom of the narrow Terreros shaft which extended to a depth of about a thousand feet.[20] This was not an activity for the faint-hearted or those who suffered from claustrophobia!

However, their underground inspection should not be construed as unduly reckless. La Trobe knew that a colony of English miners had been brought to Real del Monte from the mining district of Cornwall because of their expertise.[21] He also understood that significant improvements had been undertaken by the British Company from the time it had purchased the mine in 1824. It is conceivable that such knowledge would have given him some reassurance that the mine shafts were reasonably safe. Nonetheless, in spite of British enhancements, La Trobe was not convinced of the mine's investment potential and advised his readers to seek other means of making their fortune.[22] Again his judgement proved correct, since later assessments report that the British Real del Monte Company lost about five million pounds in its Mexican operations between 1824 and 1849.[23]

After leaving Real del Monte the travellers continued on their way towards Mexico City, intending a one-month stay. It was during their journey across the mountain range surrounding the valley of Mexico that, from a lofty vantage point, La Trobe first glimpsed the capital with its spectacular canals and causeways. In a manner reminiscent of the Romantic poets, he tried to put himself in the place of the Spanish invaders and imagine how the scene below would have affected them when they first set eyes on the Aztec city. He was aware that during the time of the Aztec ruler Montezuma, the city was surrounded on all sides by water and that three causeways connected the capital to the surrounding land. He also admired the roads, churches, aqueducts, colourful houses and palaces that were built over the ruins of Tenochtitlan by the Spanish.[24]

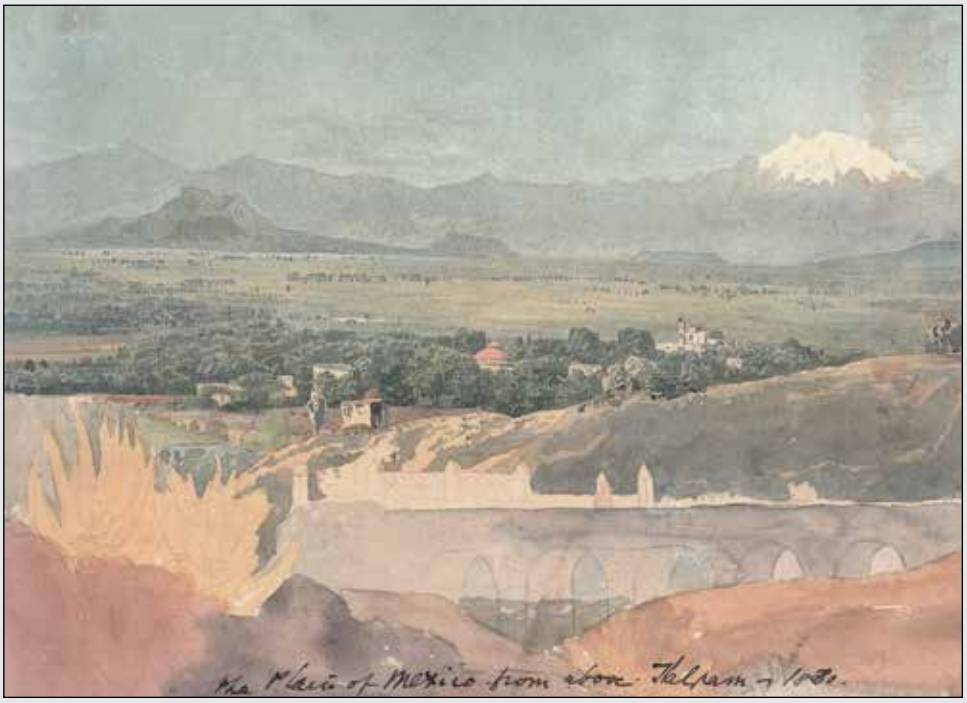
One of La Trobe's first impressions when entering Mexico City was that it was dominated by the 'papal religion'. His anti-Catholicism becomes obvious, although this is not surprising, given his Protestant Moravian background.[25] In contrast to Catholicism, Moravianism is based solely on the Bible and the belief that a person can communicate directly with God without the aid of a priest.[26] He was shocked to learn that, for a population of about 160,000, there were fifty-six churches and thirty-eight monasteries and convents in the confines of the city. He makes the comparison with San Francisco (San Pancho) where there were only five churches. He was further dismayed that, despite the large number of Catholic churches, there were no places of worship available for non-Catholics, concluding that the Mexican government was 'bigoted and intolerant'.[27]

Mexico City proved to be an inhospitable and dangerous place for La Trobe and Pourtalès.

Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
Chapultepec, 1834
Watercolour on paper
Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

Soon after their arrival, and in a bid to make social contact with the 'better class of natives', La Trobe delivered 'letters of credence and introduction' that he had been given by contacts in both Europe and the United States. Unfortunately, the letters did not result in any social invitations or engagements. While he and Pourtalès were treated courteously, they were kept at a distance by the Mexicans who were very wary of foreigners.[28]

Week took place. La Trobe clearly found the religious pageantry and elaborate representations of the sacred scenes of the Passion distasteful. He maintained that in spite of all the rituals and ceremonies associated with Holy Week, and the efforts of the Spanish clergy, the indigenous population knew nothing about basic Christianity. Furthermore, he believed that they had not forsaken their own indigenous religion but simply merged it surreptitiously



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
The Plain of Mexico from above Tlalpam, 1834
Watercolour on paper
Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

A lack of law and order also presented a significant problem. La Trobe records that a murder took place in the house where they were lodging and that assassinations in the capital were common. *The Rambler in Mexico* makes other references to serious deficiencies in law and order throughout the country. Robberies committed on property or persons on public roads were rife and no village was safe from the ruffians who roamed the countryside. La Trobe mused that a 'Bonaparte' would be a 'blessing' for Mexico,[29] no doubt considering that a leader of Bonaparte's abilities was necessary to rectify the many problems faced by Mexico. Napoleon Bonaparte was credited with having restored law and order in France after the turmoil of the French Revolution.[30]

During the time that they were in Mexico City the important religious event of Holy

into Catholicism. As a result, he believed that the people would simply continue their usual activities, which in some cases could include robbery, gambling or even assassinations, as they had done before.[31] It is apparent that, from La Trobe's point of view, the moral foundation necessary for civilisation and order that was so clearly lacking in Mexico, depended on the people being truly Christianised.

Nevertheless, La Trobe, Pourtalès and M'Euen determined to see as much as possible in Mexico City and its surrounds. When exploring the hinterlands of the capital, they paid a visit to the ancient city of Teotihuacan, undertaking another bold activity. Located in a broad, central corridor named the Path of the Dead are two massive, stepped platform pyramids known as the House of the Sun and the House of the Moon that dominate the ancient city. La Trobe

Carl Nebel, 1805–1855, artist
Plaza Mayor de Mexico, 1836
Hand-colored lithograph highlighted with gum arabic
From *Voyage pittoresque et archéologique dans la partie la plus intéressante du Méxique*, Paris: Moench, 1836
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nebel_Voyage_48_Plaza_Mayor_de_Mexico.jpg
(viewed 20 September 2015)

knew from information he had obtained in Mexico City that the House of the Moon contained a small entrance in its southern face. This provided an interesting challenge for the three adventurers, who located the opening in the pyramid and managed to squeeze inside. In the centre of the structure, they found a wide gallery that contained two wells. M'Euen fearlessly explored one well by being lowered on a rope to a depth of about fifteen feet. To his disappointment, nothing was discovered by this daring and the second well did not warrant investigation as it was very shallow.[32]

The physical and psychological challenge of mountain climbing was also a strong attraction for La Trobe, but to his regret, lack of time prevented such strenuous and potentially dangerous activity in Mexico. He had intended to climb the magnificent snow-capped, active volcano Popocatépetl (Smoking Mountain), located about seventy kilometres from Mexico City, with two members of the diplomatic corps. He was seemingly unconcerned that the volcano was still potentially active, knowing full well that the Spaniard, Diego de Ordaz, had been forced to retreat from his attempted ascent in 1519, when the mountain began to erupt. La Trobe's interest in Popocatépetl continued after he had left Mexico, as he records in a detailed footnote that three Europeans had managed to reach the summit only four days after he and his party had passed through the area.[33]

On their way to the port of Vera Cruz for their intended departure from Mexico, scheduled for 1 May 1834, La Trobe and his party stopped for a short time at Puebla where they were confronted with another potentially dangerous situation. In this city, they experienced firsthand the turmoil that eventually contributed to a political coup in Mexico. La Trobe relates that Puebla was 'in a disturbed state' due to a general feeling of anger against the reforms introduced by the Mexican government. He also mentions that the bishop of Puebla had gone into hiding, although he does not explain why this had occurred.[34]

However, my own investigations have revealed the probable reason. In order to reduce the dominance and wealth of the Church, the federalist liberal reform administration headed by Vice-President Farías had contentiously transferred education from the control of the church to the state. In addition, a particularly controversial church reform was issued on 17 December 1833, in the month prior to La Trobe's arrival in Mexico. It decreed that the government and not the Pope would be responsible for filling parish vacancies, and ruled that clergy not complying with this decree would be fined on the first two occasions and exiled from the country on a third offence. Bishop

Vázquez of Puebla refused to accept the reforms and eventually received an expulsion order.[35] He was undoubtedly the bishop who was in hiding whilst La Trobe and his party were in Puebla.

Luckily, the disturbance in Puebla did not result in any problems for La Trobe or his companions and they hastily continued on their way to Jalapa, the capital of the state of Vera Cruz, in order to prepare for their eventual departure from Mexico. Regrettably, their intended destination, the port of Vera Cruz (city), also presented a significant risk, as it was infected with an outbreak of the dreaded yellow fever or *vomito*, for which there was no certain antidote. The disease was a constant danger throughout Mexico, particularly at certain times of the year. La Trobe was obviously conscious of this during his journeying as he noted the large number of deaths that had occurred from this affliction,[36] and also from cholera in many of the locations he visited.[37] His uncle, architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, died of yellow fever in New Orleans in 1820, as had his cousin Henry Sellon Boneval Latrobe three years earlier in 1817. His brother Dr Frederick Benjamin La Trobe, to whom *The Rambler in Mexico* is addressed, was to succumb to it in Jamaica in 1842.[38]

Sensibly, La Trobe and his two companions wasted no time in arriving at the port and boarding their departure vessel. In contrast, a young Frenchman who was also booked as a passenger on the ship recklessly ignored good advice and spent time socialising in the central area of the city. As a result of this rash behaviour he contracted the dreaded ailment and became extremely ill. Although the ship's captain provided excellent treatment for the sick young man, aided by the caring watch of La Trobe and Pourtalès, he eventually died. La Trobe writes that, as there was no clergyman on board, he was nominated to conduct the sea burial service and that he would always remember this tragic event.[39]

It is evident from La Trobe's book that he kept track of the political events in Mexico after he and the young Count had departed. He knew that the Mexican President Santa Anna had changed his allegiance from a federalist to a centralist stance and then led a successful rebellion against Vice-President Farías and the reformists.[40] This resulted in a reversal of most of the laws passed by the federalist liberal reform administration and paved the way for a centralised republic.[41] La Trobe disapproved of this action and relates that the party that had wanted to introduce the reforms, which were based on 'the more enlightened policies of the United States or Europe,' was in disgrace and their leaders were exiled. In addition, education was discouraged, hatred and jealousy towards foreigners increased and the administration of justice was shamefully abused.[42]

La Trobe's courage, judgement and ability to manage potentially dangerous situations were undoubtedly the reasons that he and Pourtalès managed to leave Mexico unscathed. Although in the spirit of Romanticism, he wanted to fully experience the places he visited, notwithstanding the risks, discomfort and danger involved, La Trobe did so in a considered manner. Unfortunately, Mexico proved to be very disappointing, with the exception of the splendour of its scenery and the fascinating variety of plants and insects. La Trobe was a person with a reputation for being fair and ethical, and his negative impressions of Mexico were most likely due to his frustration with the state of lawlessness, his belief that the people knew nothing of Christianity, their generally hostile attitude to foreigners, the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church and the volatility of the political system. Yet, in spite of La Trobe's poor opinion, his firsthand experiences and observations whilst in the former Spanish colony would have stood him in good stead (and no doubt enhanced his curriculum vitae) when he was eventually appointed Superintendent of the remote Australian location of the Port Phillip District in 1839.

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10 La Trobe, pp.1-22.

11 M'Euen [McEuen] had also travelled with La Trobe and Pourtalès during their trip to North America.

12 La Trobe, pp.7-21, 32-33.

13 La Trobe, pp.22-23.

14 La Trobe, p.25.

15 La Trobe, pp.30-32.

16 La Trobe, pp.27, 30, 38- 40.

17 La Trobe, p.58.

18 Ward, vol.2, book IV, pp.2-165.

19 La Trobe indicates that Pourtalès did not attend the investigation of the mine and stayed in his grass hammock in the Real del Monte village, sipping pulque and smoking cigarettes.

20 La Trobe, pp.70-76.

21 La Trobe, p.74; Ward, vol.2, book IV, pp.76, 432.

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Medicine in Melbourne in the time of La Trobe

By Dr Jonathan Burdon AM

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Apart from these activities, Jonathan is a bookseller (Pilgrim Books) and on the Board of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Antiquarian Booksellers. Bookselling is in his blood; his late mother was deeply involved in antiquarian books and prints, as are his two sisters. Married to antiquarian bookseller Kay Craddock, Jonathan has an active interest in the military section of their Collins Street shop. In 2014 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of his significant service to respiratory medicine.

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Overview

Medicine in the days when Charles Joseph La Trobe was Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and then Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, was very different to the health care currently enjoyed by Australians. Infectious disease was common, mortality rates high and there was little effective health care available, even for those who could afford it.

This paper in centred on the period in which La Trobe held office. Nevertheless discussion must stray outside this time, for medicine is a dynamic science and culture, evolving in the wake of discoveries and experience of its practitioners and researchers. In some cases, I have taken the subject matter under discussion well beyond La Trobe's time, if I thought the issue was of significant interest and the beginnings of important changes to come. Constraints of space have limited the examination to a very general overview.

Charles Joseph La Trobe was Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor, occupying this post from July 1851 to May 1854, following the separation of the Port Phillip District from New South Wales.[1] When he arrived as Superintendent of the District in October 1839, Melbourne was still an infant town, barely four years old. From an initial thirteen buildings, the Yarra settlement grew to have a population of 177 in mid-1836, comprising 142 males and 35 females. About 800 Aboriginal people were thought to be living in the vicinity. By 1851 Melbourne had about 29,000 residents in a total Victorian population of approximately 75,000. The discovery of gold from July 1851 led to a further rush of immigrants, so that by 1861 Victoria's population was about 540,000.[2]

These figures determined the level of services and infrastructure that government had to provide to serve community needs. The original settlers sought economic success in a

community of law and order with facilities that we expect in society today. Thus, a quickly developing social structure was underpinned by schools, churches, hotels, banks, newspapers and the like. Health was no less important as it underpins the fabric and productivity of the community and society in general.

Travel to Australia – the people and the health issues

In the nineteenth century the tyranny of distance and the long journey from Britain to Australia posed problems not previously encountered by the British authorities, used to the shorter North America trip. The journey to Australia involved at least three to four months at sea,[3] and most supplies including livestock had to be carried on board.

The introduction of clipper ships with a large sail area designed for speed, and subsequently auxiliary steam ships, gradually reduced the length of voyage to six or eight weeks by the end of the century.

In order to improve the health of convicts on the way to Australia, authority for their care was taken from the ship's captain with the appointment of Surgeon Superintendents from 1792.[4] Dr Colin Arnott Browning was a forward thinking Superintendent who undertook his first voyage in 1831 in HMS *Surrey*.[5] His enlightened attitude improved the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of his charges. Living and deck areas were cleaned regularly, personal hygiene was addressed, clothing was washed weekly, living areas were well ventilated and fumigated; he also arranged schooling for the illiterate.

Similar conditions were later applied to government sponsored immigrant ships. Free settlers from Britain and Europe came to Australia in increasing numbers, often encouraged by family members already here, and, from 1830, through assisted immigration. Between 1815 and 1840, approximately 58,000 free settlers arrived, with about one-third paying their own way.[6] Women were particularly encouraged in order to address the gender balance.

Stormy weather and icebergs encountered in the southern ocean meant that shipwreck was not uncommon. Life at sea was difficult for all passengers but particularly for those in steerage class. Quarters were cramped, ventilation in living areas and time on deck limited. Arthropods, such as fleas and ticks, were endemic and vectored diseases, such as typhus. They were almost impossible to eradicate from the ship's woodwork and the straw filled bedding. Sanitation and washing facilities were basic. Some would wash under a blanket using a damp cloth; others did not wash at all during the whole journey. Despite the work of Dr James Lind in the mid-eighteenth century, scurvy and other deficiency diseases were not uncommon due to the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables. Even dry and preserved foods might dwindle and become stale, compounding the tendency to ill health. Death at sea was common, particularly among children. By the 1830s all immigrant ships were bound to carry a surgeon and appropriate medical supplies and to maintain a standard of cleanliness by the ship's crew, often with the aid of female passengers. Some hardy souls indulged in a dip in the sea or in seawater tubs on deck, particularly in the warm, still tropics.[7]

Personal medicine

Once on shore, limited medical care and living conditions meant that common illnesses such as influenza, typhoid, typhus, dysentery and tuberculosis spread quickly, and there were occasional outbreaks of smallpox.[8] Medicine chests for home use, available in Europe from the late eighteenth century, were common by 1820. They were often accompanied by a book or 'Companion to the Medicine Chest' as a ready source of information. Medicine chests were promoted for the use of 'clergymen, private families, heads of schools and persons emigrating'.[9] An example belonging to the La Trobe family has been preserved and is currently located at the cottage in King's Domain.[10] The medicine chests were initially stocked by the manufacturer but later restocked by their owners. Medicines found in La Trobe's chest were replaced years after La Trobe had returned to Britain, as they bear the name of a South Melbourne chemist.[11] Common medicines in these early chests include Turkey rhubarb (healing properties), cream of tartar (laxative), laudanum (contains opium, used for calming, pain, gout, spasmodic disorders), lavender (digestive ailments, depression, sickness and languor), sal volatile (restorative in fainting or collapse), tincture of bark (appetite stimulant), magnesia (antacid, peptic ulcer treatment), tartar emetic (expectorant, emetic depending on dose) and 'grey powder' (laxative, teething, syphilis), to mention just a few.[12]

The paucity of medical services, particularly for the severely ill, together with problems of distance, were major challenges in early Melbourne and Victoria. People were dependent on their own knowledge and resources, particularly those living in the bush.[13] Women were usually the managers of family health, treating disease and injury; a 'woman's foresight' was valued more than a man's

courage.[14] Sharing of home remedies and the medicine chest was common.[15] Infant mortality or the loss of a child who had wandered away created significant distress.[16] However, isolation did have advantages in reducing the likelihood of contracting infectious diseases that were common in towns, although any small dwelling likely to become overcrowded increased the risk of contagion.[17]

Public health

Public health has been defined as 'the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organised effort and informed choices of society, organisations, public and private, communities and individuals'.[18]

A 1982 publication, *Mr. Punch Down Under: A Social History of the Colony from 1856 to 1900 via Cartoons and Extracts from Melbourne Punch*, paints a grim picture of the times.[19] Public health was compromised by rubbish-strewn, badly-drained streets, a polluted water supply, adulterated foodstuffs of dubious quality and often contaminated. In some hotels, the sale of clean water became a 'specialty of the house'![20]

Tanneries, factories, abattoirs and domestic drainage polluted the Yarra and tributary creeks. The problem induced a visiting British journalist in 1883 to dub Melbourne 'Smellbourne'. It is reasonable to question what the authorities were doing to address public health issues.

Illnesses and the prevalence of disease

Three-quarters of the community lived in overcrowded conditions, and there was a general ignorance of hygiene and the concept of sanitation. Not surprisingly, there were periodic epidemics of dysentery, typhoid, tuberculosis, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, smallpox, gastro-enteritis and whooping cough. The death rate from infection in the poorer suburbs was similar to that of the London slums and was particularly high among children. It prompted an editorial in the *Australian Medical Journal* in the mid-1850s, which was noted in the *Third Annual Report of the Births, Deaths, and Marriages in the Colony of Victoria*. Of 5,760 deaths in the year to 30 June 1856, 2,668 (46 per cent) were children under five years of age and of these 2,420 (91 per cent) were under two, or 42 per cent of the overall death rate. The authors attributed these terrible figures to nine factors: improper diet; want of exercise in the open air; badly ventilated bedrooms and localities; occupying the same room with the parents; want of due attention to cleanliness; too long continued nursing; the administration of narcotics; unsuitable clothing; and 'the ordinary diseases of childhood – all of which were aggravated by one or more of the foregoing causes.[21]

Peter Oram, photographer
La Trobe Family medicine chest, 2014
A plate once fitted to the inner surface of the lid read 'Savory & Moore, chemists to the Queen, 143 New Bond Street and 220 Regent Street, London' (c.1839)

Typhoid fever was a major health problem in nineteenth century Australia and became endemic in most areas settled by the immigrant population, not least in the camps of gold diggers and railway construction workers.[22] It was said to be a normal part of life in Collingwood.[23] In the mid to late nineteenth century, typhoid sufferers could be found in almost every ward of the Melbourne Hospital.[24] Dysentery and gastroenteritis of various aetiologies were most common, the spread promoted by the polluted water supplies, lack of sanitation and the ever present Australian flies. Few new arrivals escaped it,[25] and the death rate was particularly high among infants. In Sydney, for instance, the confirmed mortality rate was about 15 per cent and was probably much more in Melbourne.[26] Some less virulent forms, known as 'colonial fever', were also identified. The disease was, therefore, probably more prevalent than the statistics would suggest.[27]

Typhus was a shipboard disease spread by fleas and ticks encouraged by poor hygiene and the use of straw as bedding. It was particularly common among convicts. For this reason, Melbourne saw little of this disease as felons were not sent directly to Victoria.[28]

Erysipelas (skin infection) was common in La Trobe's time,[29] and scarlet fever occurred sporadically from 1833.[30] Diphtheria was first reported in Australia in 1858, but earlier cases of croup, described in Tasmania and Western

Australia in 1842, were almost certainly misdiagnosed cases of diphtheria.[31] The long journey south protected Melbourne from influenza until about 1860 but faster shipping later in the century ensured the occurrence of sporadic cases, although the first epidemic was not until 1885. Whooping cough, introduced through Sydney in 1828, was well known in Victoria by 1849,[32] and measles arrived in Melbourne on the ship *Persian* in 1842. Venereal diseases, rheumatism and 'dropsy' were also common in these early days.[33]

George O'Brien, 1821-1888, artist
Melbourne seen from the front of S.W. corner of General Hospital grounds, c.1850-c.1854
Drawing, pencil and watercolour
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H257
Gift of John Pascoe Fawkner, 1869

Tuberculosis was widespread in Britain and Europe and was translated to Australia for several reasons. Many sufferers, including doctors, sought the fresh air, sunshine and the promise of a better climate in the hope of a cure. The first cases came with the First Fleet in 1788 but tuberculosis only became a major health problem during the gold rushes.[34] Some recoveries were attributed to various cures such as dugong oil,[35] but the death rate was high and effective treatment was still more than a century away.

It is of interest to note that by the mid-nineteenth century some amelioration of ill health was already being attributed to the effects of a change in climate. In this regard, Dr James Kilgour, while noting that 'the data yet possessed are not sufficient to conclusively determine these questions', observed that: 'Most persons emigrating from Europe to Australia, are conscious of some change in their constitutions, after a short residence here, the most important embrace variations in weight, in muscular power, and vital energy'. He also observed that 'nervous energy is likewise thought to be diminished in the Australian climate'.[36]

Maternity was associated with significant morbidity and the maternal mortality rate was high. Most babies were born at home, although the opening of the Melbourne Lying-in Hospital in 1855 made a difference for poorer families. The maternal death rate at the hospital was 1.17 per cent in the period 1855-1866,[37] or about 117 per 100,000, a startling comparison to the 6.8 per 100,000 in the period 2006-2010.[38] Despite the early work and understanding of the theory of contagion, peripartum infection and puerperal fever were major problems, and the death rate significant. Perioperative infection following surgical procedures was also very common. The concept of the 'germ theory' of infection was not widely known nor accepted. Even when the work of others, including Louis Pasteur in the 1850s, and Joseph Lister's methods of anti-sepsis, announced in 1867, became better understood, infection was a major problem that continued beyond the turn of the century.

The first recorded epidemic of small pox occurred in Victoria in 1857, introduced by infected travellers on the ship *Commodore Perry*.[39] There was a second outbreak in 1868, with the first cases occurring in the poorer parts of Melbourne. Of unvaccinated persons, the mortality rate was 66 per cent, but among those adults vaccinated in infancy only 12 per cent died. All those who had been revaccinated survived.[40] The mortality rate of the unvaccinated is a disappointing statistic because Governor King, in Sydney, had gone to great lengths, about sixty years previously, to introduce smallpox vaccination into Australia. It had not met with universal acceptance.[41] Today, the protective effect of vaccination against various infectious diseases is clear but, sadly, resistance to this very effective public health measure seems to be increasing again.

Mental health also created a significant demand on resources. A report to the Parliament of Victoria in 1869[42] listed that in 1848 there were twenty-five in-patients in the Hospital for the Insane in Melbourne; two recovered and one died. Two years later, these numbers were fifteen, eight and two respectively. By 1860,

Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Melbourne from the Falls, 1883
Watercolour and oil
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H24951
Another version of a painting
6 November 1844

the numbers had grown to 185, seventy-two and fifty-eight and, in 1868, there were 230 in-patients of whom sixty-three recovered and fifty-seven died. Of the deaths in 1868, forty-five were males and twelve females, the causes comprising 'cerebral or spinal fever' (twenty-five), 'thoracic disease' (sixteen, including nine deaths from 'tuberculosis'), 'abdominal disease' (eight), 'renal disease' (one), 'cancer' (two) and 'suicide' (two).

Sadly, the poor personal and public health standards of European settlers had a significant effect on the well-being of the Aboriginal people. It is estimated that a majority of indigenous deaths in the Port Phillip area were due to introduced diseases.[43]

The Aboriginal population had little or no immunity to introduced diseases, such as measles, influenza, chickenpox, bronchitis and the like, and smallpox, tuberculosis and syphilis and other venereal diseases were a cause of significant morbidity and mortality in both populations. In this regard, it is estimated that an outbreak of smallpox, spreading south from Sydney in 1789, was responsible for the deaths of about a third of the indigenous population in eastern Australia.

Other factors also contributed to the decline in the health of the indigenous population. Their dietary habits gradually changed as access to traditional bush tucker was restricted by fencing, by shooting native animals for sport and by the introduction of cattle and sheep, resulting in destruction of native vegetation and further reducing the availability of traditional foodstuffs. This was compounded by a change to a European lifestyle and diet. Alcohol played a big part in the generation of poor health and significantly contributed to the death rate. The spread of disease was also promoted by the progressive loss of the previous nomadic lifestyle, which provided a regular source of nutritious food, and acted as a pseudo sewerage system.

The germ theory of disease was not widely accepted in the mid-nineteenth century. Infection was considered by many to be caused by a noxious form of bad air, 'miasma', thought at the time to emanate from rotting organic matter. The dispute between the contagionists (supporters of the germ theory) and the anti-contagionists was fierce and it was not until much later in the century, following the work of Louis Pasteur and others, that the germ theory became more widely accepted. The success of the antiseptic practices (carbolic spray) promulgated by Joseph Lister and mostly adopted by surgeons in Australia by the early 1880s,[44] and the control of an outbreak of the plague in Sydney, achieved by exterminating the rat population, finally cemented the 'new' microbiological theories into medical practice.

In 1837, the surveyor Robert Hoddle set Melbourne's roadway grid (now known as 'Hoddle's Grid') parallel to the river. It is of particular interest that Hoddle argued strongly that roadways should be ninety-nine feet wide, in contrast to Governor Bourke's direction of sixty-six feet.[45] Hoddle felt very strongly about wider streets because he believed that they would be airier, better for health and more convenient, despite the anti-contagionist theories of the time. The smaller east west lanes in Melbourne would suggest that a compromise was reached with Bourke.

The provision of a clean water supply assumed great importance in early Melbourne, the main supply being taken from the Yarra River and distributed by water carts. Water was collected from the river above the region of what is now Queen Street where a rocky reef separated fresh water from the salty which came up from the sea. As time passed the river became more and more polluted prompting the

Robert Russell, 1808-1900, artist
Melbourne from Collins Street East, 1883
Watercolour over pen and ink
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H38114
A copy of an earlier painting
11 November 1844

need for a reliable, safe and fresh supply from elsewhere.[46],[47] It is noted that the Melbourne Town Council, created following the passing of the Municipal Corporation Act in August 1842, had been given the authority to regulate the water supply but without the appropriate powers to raise the necessary capital to underwrite the project. La Trobe took a particular interest in the project and fostered its progress.[48] In 1849 he recruited James Blackburn, an engineer and surveyor from Van Diemen's Land, who had designed the Launceston water supply, to be the surveyor to the Melbourne City Council, established 1847. Blackburn considered the options presented by various other potential water supplies and recommended that the best options would be to dam the Plenty River at Yan Yean. The plans were later modified by Matthew Jackson and work began in 1853. The project was completed in 1857 at a total cost of £750,000.[49] Later in the nineteenth century, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works became responsible for controlling the water supply and, by the turn of the century, the mortality rate from typhoid and other infectious diseases had halved. Clean water significantly contributed to this outcome.

There was no formal sanitation or sewerage system in Melbourne's early days. Waste, including the contents of chamber pots, was generally dumped into open drains in the streets where it gradually found its way into the nearby creeks and, subsequently the Yarra River. Industrial, farm and household waste was dumped into open ground. The streets thus became open sewers and environmental cleanliness a major problem. Gradually lavatories consisting of a bucket located under a box seat ('thunderbox') became more common in dwellings. This 'privy' was often separate from the house and usually backed onto a laneway where the contents could be removed by 'the nightman' who would call about once weekly. Many preferred not to make the trip to the privy in the dark, cold and rain and chamber pots were used at night and emptied during daylight hours. Thus, sanitation was primitive at best and contributed to the prevalence of infectious diseases in the community. With population increase the disposal of human waste became a progressively bigger problem. In 1888, three decades after La Trobe had returned to Britain, a Royal Commission was set up to provide a solution. A sewerage system of underground pipes and drains was developed by James Mansergh, an English engineer. With plans modified by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Work's Engineer-in-Chief, construction began in 1892. A sewerage treatment farm was established in Werribee with a pumping station at Spotswood. The first homes were connected to the system in 1897.[50]

Hospitals

Melbourne's original hospital was a two room building next to the barracks on Flagstaff Hill set up in 1838, before moving to a larger building in King Street. It treated convicts, government servants, and occasionally private people. Among La Trobe's early requests to his superior, Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales, was one in 1840 for funds to build a general hospital in Melbourne. He was told that such a project was 'no business of government'.[51] Many might observe that little has changed in the last 175 years!

Since there was no nationalised medicine as we know it today, people who could afford it might consult one of the eighteen physicians or surgeons practising in Melbourne by 1841. In the same year, and in response to growing demand, an important public meeting called for the establishment of a hospital for Melbourne.[52] A building grant was obtained in 1844 and one for an asylum for the mentally ill in the following year.[53] The foundation stone for the hospital in Lonsdale Street was laid on 20 March 1846,

and two years later eighty-nine in-patients and ninety-eight out-patients were treated. The numbers slowly increased respectively to 189 and 134 in 1850, and to 1,460 and 1,704 in 1854. Thirty years later, over 3,000 in-patients and 13,000 out-patients passed through the hospital doors.[54] A century later the Queen Victoria Hospital took over the premises.

It is pertinent that medical cleanliness and asepsis, as we know it today, was an unknown concept in 1848. Vermin were common, the sick were left unwashed, and infected clothing passed on to others when the original owner died. Only when the nature of contagion was fully recognised and understood did champions of the 'new' approach surface.

The special needs of women and children were addressed soon after with the establishment in 1856 of the Melbourne Lying-In Hospital and Infirmary for Diseases of Women and Children. It opened as a charity hospital for needy women and children.[55] An earlier hospital was located in a two storey house at 41 Albert Street, Eastern Hill, now East Melbourne. In 1858 the hospital moved to Madeline Street, North Melbourne, now Swanston Street, Carlton. In 1884 its name was simplified to the Women's Hospital.[56]

About twenty years after the Melbourne Hospital opened its doors, and following much heated argument among the medical profession regarding the need, a second general hospital, the Alfred Hospital was founded in 1869. The Kew Asylum for the mentally ill opened in 1871, St. Vincent's Hospital in 1893 and the Queen Victoria Hospital in 1896.

Homeopathy was also firmly established in Melbourne by the middle of the century. An attempt was made by founders of the Melbourne Homœopathic Dispensary in Collins Street to establish a ward at the Alfred Hospital, where patients would be treated using homeopathic principles, when it opened in 1869. Resistance from the medical profession saw this idea fail. The homeopaths went elsewhere, opening the Melbourne Homœopathic Hospital in temporary premises at 17 Spring Street in 1876. Nine years later the hospital moved to St Kilda Road and in 1934, with homeopathy losing its appeal, it became Prince Henry's Allopathic Hospital or 'Prince Henry's'.[57]

The early doctors

The first doctors in Australia were naval officers with the First Fleet in 1788. Once settlements had been established the Colonial Medical Service (CMS) provided a salaried service for convicts and free settlers.[58] The CMS doctors had a right to private practice and many gradually expanded their private work into full practices. Others were medically trained ex-convicts. In 1832 William Bland became Sydney's first full time private practitioner.[59] Another ex-convict doctor was William Redfern, whose efforts improved the health and well-being of later convicts on their journey south.

Unknown artist
Dr William Byam Wilmot, c.1858
Watercolour in grey tones
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H28379

In November 1835 Melbourne's first permanent doctor, Barry Cotter, arrived with John Fawkner from Van Diemen's Land. In April 1837, he was appointed Colonial Surgeon, the government medical officer. Like many doctors to follow, he sought wealth in land and other speculations.[60] Dr Alexander Thomson also came from Van Diemen's Land in 1836 as medical officer to the Batman syndicate (the Port Phillip Association), and was later based in Geelong.[61] Doctors outnumbered other professionals among new arrivals as they were required on sea journeys and in the Sydney and Hobart penal establishments. Many had been trained in Scottish universities that were at the time graduating doctors in excess of local requirements.[62] Some took up pastoral leases carving out properties in the bush, often setting up in areas with nearby settlements where they practised medicine and became influential contributors to the community as magistrates, school councillors, members of the racing club, etc.

Dr Patrick Edward Cussen came to Port Phillip in 1837 as the Assistant Surgeon for the District, bought land and ran a single room practice in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. He was Melbourne's first public vaccinator and

performed the first recorded surgical operation in Victoria, an amputation of an injured arm.[63] Dr William Byam Wilmot emigrated in 1839 and two years later was appointed Melbourne's first Coroner, then in 1848 honorary physician at the new Melbourne Hospital. Others, including Augustus Greeves, W.H. Campbell, James Palmer, David Wilkie, Edmund Hobson, Godfrey Howitt, John Patterson, John Singleton and Arthur O'Mullane, contributed significantly to medicine and science in early Melbourne.[64] By 1841, there were eighteen physicians and surgeons in Melbourne, all trained overseas.[65] Formal university medical schools in Australia began at Melbourne in 1862 and at Sydney in 1883, although the latter had been able to grant degrees without training facilities. The first Melbourne graduates were Patrick Moloney and William Rees in 1867.

Batchelder & Co., photographer
Sir James Palmer, c.1867
Albumen silver carte-de-visite
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H29453

Samuel Calvert, 1828-1913, engraver
The Late Godfrey Howitt, M.D., 1873
Wood engraving
Pictures Collection State Library of Victoria, IAN31/12/73/216
Published in The illustrated Australian news for home readers

Quacks and quackery

Any discussion about the doctors of early Melbourne would be incomplete without some reference to quackery, defined as the 'promotion of fraudulent or ignorant medical practises'.[66] The word comes from the Dutch *quacksalver*, a 'hawker of salve'. Michael Cannon deals with the topic in his *Life in the Cities*, noting that there was a 'fine line between the activities of the medical professionals and the quacks'.[67]

Mention has already been made of dugong oil in the treatment of tuberculosis. Others recommended extracts of the sputum of tuberculosis sufferers. Treating other diseases with extracts/preparations from known sufferers was recommended for all sorts of conditions. Bleeding and the use of leeches were common practices. It is important to reflect that medicine at the time was not evidence based, as is the case today. Treatments were often based on superstition, guess work and strange ideas.[68] 'Excitable' conditions were treated with depressants and the use of laudanum was common; debilitating diseases were treated with stimulants, alcohol and electricity.[69] Galvanic therapy became popular for a variety of different ailments and was even recommended for constipation by F.T. West Ford in a paper published in the *Australian Medical Journal* in 1856.[70]

Reflection

Charles Joseph La Trobe faced many challenges during his Superintendency and Governorship of Victoria. The health and well-being of the early Victorians was one such challenge. Health care has come a very long way since that time, and with it the virtual disappearance of many diseases and a vast improvement in life expectancy.

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Registration of Medical Practitioners in the Port Phillip District

By Dr Walter Heale

Walter Heale was a renal physician involved in the establishment of dialysis and transplant programs in Victoria and New Zealand from the 1960s until his retirement in 2009. He also served on Victorian government, Australasian, and international committees related to his speciality. A long-time interest in European history led to formal studies in Art History at La Trobe University and continuing membership of its Alumni Chapter. He is on the Heritage and Archives Committee of the Australian Medical Association Victoria, participating in their study of pioneer doctors and the establishment of the Port Phillip Medical Association in 1846, published in 2013. As a member of the La Trobe Society, he then participated in the project at the Public Record Office Victoria of indexing the Inward Correspondence to La Trobe, 1839–1851.

The project disclosed correspondence with Sydney from 1840–1844 about the administrative processes leading to the promulgation in January 1845 of the first medical practitioners registered locally. It was an early example of delegation of legislated authority by Sydney to the District of Port Phillip. Subsequently each State and Territory established a medical board, a system which persisted until 2010 when the Medical Board of Australia was formed. Research for this paper included amalgamated Victorian and New South Wales state records, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians archives, the Victorian Parliamentary Library and various websites.

The process leading to the formation of a Melbourne Medical Board began with a letter written by William Lonsdale to Charles La Trobe dated 31 January 1840:

> I have the honour to request your Honor will be pleased to recommend the appointment of a Coroner to this part of the Colony, which I think is now necessary from the number of sudden deaths which occur, and which are likely to increase with the augmentation to the population which is likely to take place; last quarter there were ten cases, and within the present month there have been three.
>
> I would also beg to recommend the appointment, as I am certain the public would be better satisfied if these enquires were made in the accustomed manner before a Coroner and Jury than before a Magistrate only.[1]

Lonsdale's request was forwarded to Sydney and in reply the Colonial Secretary stated the request would be considered in the next year's budget estimates.[2] The outcome was the appointment in February 1841 of Dr William Wilmot, a London trained physician, as Coroner County of Bourke including Melbourne. On 2 July 1842, Wilmot wrote to La Trobe proposing the formation of a medical board in the Port Phillip District, to scrutinise and verify the

W F E Liardet, 1799-1878, artist
Dr Cussen's House [1875]
Watercolour with pen, ink, gouache and pencil
Pictures Collection State Library of Victoria, H28230/30
A view of the house in 1843

credentials of medical practitioners who might be called to give evidence at a coronial enquiry. Wilmot gave as his main reason the unwillingness of practitioners to send their valuable documents to Sydney. He noted: 'besides the lapse of time which such transmission necessarily occasions, some unpleasant and inconvenient results have come to my knowledge'. Wilmot's letter was forwarded to Sydney on 4 July with a covering and supportive letter signed by La Trobe.[3]

The letter reached the Colonial Secretary in Sydney on 16 July and was brought to the attention of Governor Gipps who wrote in the margin: 'The matter shall be considered whenever a favourable opportunity may occur – but nothing can be done without an act of Council, the introduction of which would at present be inconvenient. G.G. July 16'. The reply on 20 July on his behalf by the Colonial Secretary reached Melbourne on 3 August noting the substance of the request and quoting Gipps's response verbatim.[4] The outcome of the request was conveyed to Wilmot on 12 August 1842.[5]

NSW Coronial inquests and medical credentials 1838–1845

The legislative background to Wilmot's request were Acts passed in London and Sydney in 1836 and 1838 respectively. The latter setting out the indications for a coronial inquest was passed in June 1838, with a recital as follows:

> Whereas an Act was passed in England in the Sixth and Seventh year of His late Majesty's reign entitled, *An Act to provide for the attendance and remuneration of Medical Witnesses at Coroner's Inquests,* and it is expedient to extend the several provisions of the said Act to this Colony in the manner hereinafter mentioned.[6]

The Act allowed coroners or justices of the peace to order the attendance of medical practitioners to give evidence as to the likely cause of death, required the performance of a post mortem and analysis of stomach contents if doubt existed, and the calling of expert witnesses where improper or negligent treatment was an issue. Remuneration for attendance was one guinea (one pound, one shilling), two guineas if a post-mortem was performed, and one shilling for every mile travelled beyond ten miles from his residence. The penalty for non-attendance was in the range of £3 to £20.

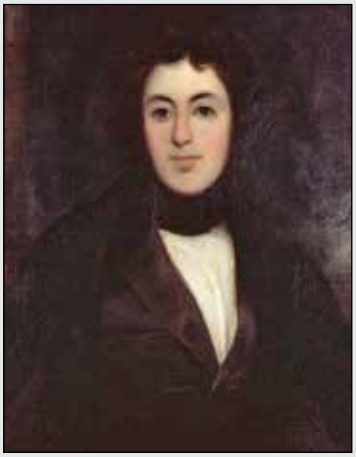
The next step in October 1838 was an Act to define qualified medical witnesses. The applicant had to prove that he was a:

> Doctor or Bachelor of Medicine of some University, or a Physician or Surgeon licensed by some College of Physicians or Surgeons in Great Britain or Ireland or a Member of the Company of Apothecaries of London or has been a Medical Officer duly appointed and confirmed of Her Majesty's sea or land service.

Proof would come in the form of presentation of a degree, diploma or other certification to the New South Wales Medical Board consisting of at least three medical members including a president, and a secretary. In return the successful applicant received a certificate of 'his being so qualified'. The Board was also required to record in a book the names of registered practitioners, and to publish the names annually in the *Government Gazette* 'for the information of Coroners, Magistrates and the Public'.[7]

The list of the first eighty-nine qualified practitioners was published in the *New South*

Wales Government Gazette in July 1839.[8] It included Drs John Holland and John Patterson R.N. of Melbourne, and Dr Thomas Black of Penrith who shortly moved to Melbourne. Dr Patterson was later to become Acting Immigration Agent on the Board established to oversee the settlement of Irish orphans,[9] and he was prominent in the Separation movement



Unknown artist
Edmund Charles Hobson, c.1838
Oil on canvas
Pictures Collection State Library of Victoria, H141891

Unknown photographer
David John Thomas, c.1860s
Royal Melbourne Hospital Archives

and initiation of local government, whilst Black in 1846 became Treasurer of the Port Phillip Medical Association. A supplementary list published in October 1839 included the names of Drs Samuel McCurdy and David Thomas, designated as practising in the Port Phillip District. Thomas was the first surgeon to use ether anaesthetic in Melbourne. In 1840 six doctors from the District were registered by the New South Wales Board, rising to twenty-one in 1845. Registration was not compulsory. Kerr's 1841 *Melbourne Almanac* listed eighteen doctors, and estimated that 'Not more than half the gentlemen of the medical profession resident in the province have thought it necessary to submit their claims to be considered duly qualified medical practitioners'.[10]

Establishment of the Melbourne Medical Board

In July 1844, La Trobe facilitated what proved to be a successful application to establish a local medical board. In his letter to Gipps he enclosed a petition from fifteen local practitioners, many of whom were to have prominent medical and secular roles in the District and later Colony. The petition stressed 'the expediency of discountenancing irregular unauthorized Practitioners rendering such an authentication imperative in all cases and whereas much inconvenience, delay and even risk have been incurred in the transmission of the necessary documents to Sydney'. Both the petition and La Trobe's letter have a legalistic tone, suggesting some care was taken in drafting the documents. It is likely the petition was presented directly to La Trobe, as no covering letter is recorded.

La Trobe was notified of the arrival of the documents in Sydney, and in turn informed Dr Godfrey Howitt, representing the petitioners.[11] Gipps again noted a bill would have to be introduced into the Legislative Council. A copy of the petition was forwarded to the Attorney-General asking him to 'introduce the necessary provisions'. A Medical Witnesses Act Amendment Bill was then introduced into the Legislative Council by Mr Young, one of the members representing Port Phillip, and passed on 23 August 1844. On 26 August, the Attorney-General informed the Colonial Secretary that with 'the prayer of the Petitioners being completed with the passing of a Bill', he was returning the copy of the petition. The Attorney-General then wrote: 'I think there is an omission which may be found to be inconvenient. I allude to the want of a clause declaring that medical men passed by the Branch Board shall be in every respect as if they had passed the Sydney Board'.[12]

The Act with amendments received Gipps's assent on 3 September 1844, and was printed the next day. The Bill stressed the role of the Superintendent in appointing 'The Medical Board for the District of Port Phillip', and that practitioners were registered to practice throughout New South Wales.[13] A formal letter from the Colonial Secretary enclosing

a copy of the Act was received in Melbourne, and in early October, the appointment of four members of a Melbourne Medical Board was published in the *Port Phillip Government Gazette,* with Dr Patrick Cussen as president.[14] In late October, La Trobe acknowledged the receipt of the Act and forwarded the list of Board members to Sydney, where their names were published in the *New South Wales Government Gazette*.[15]

George Alexander Gilbert, the artist, was appointed as Secretary, and placed regular notices in the local *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, publicising the work of the Board:

> THE medical board for the district of Port Phillip, will meet every Tuesday until further notice, at the residence of the President (Dr. Cussen) in Lonsdale-street, where all communications to the board are to be addressed. The medical gentlemen of the district are reminded that the Act of the Legislative Council requires a list of the legally qualified practitioners, shall be published on or about the 1st of January next.[16]

Gilbert also asked for a supply of stationery and printed qualification certificates, his letter completing the Inward Correspondence file from 1842-1844, outlining the formation of the Melbourne Board.[17] Gilbert later sought practitioners' practice addresses and instructions for the safe return of their diplomas. He remained Secretary until 1852.

In 1848, twenty copies of a memorandum initiated by the Attorney-General arrived from Sydney addressed to coroners and magistrates, advising that some discretion be used in calling medical witnesses because of the inconvenience and cost involved.[18] The memorandum did however re-enforce the need to call a medical witness if doubt existed as to the cause of death.

Local registration and the Medical Board Old Register 1845-1862

Dr Cussen's house, built about 1839, was on the south side of Lonsdale Street between William and Queen Streets, virtually adjoining the permanent Government offices on the corner of William Street built in 1845.

The role of the Board was to verify qualifications, to publish annually a list of approved doctors, and to maintain a record of registration. Acceptable qualifications changed over the years, with an 1845 New South Wales Act applicable to Port Phillip allowing the registration of members of the Apothecaries Hall of Dublin.[19] In 1854 Victorian legislation enabled the registration of graduates with four years medical training, including a year of residence, from schools or universities 'of sufficient credit and authority' outside the United Kingdom.[20] Subsequently seventeen foreign graduates from North America and Europe were successful in registration, whilst fourteen were rejected for reasons that are unclear. Somewhat belatedly, graduates of the Glasgow schools were recognized in 1860.[21]

The names of practitioners registered each year were collated in 1856 in the Medical Board Old Register Book.[22] From 1845 to 1851, the annual lists are handwritten, then recorded with pasted copies of the *Government Gazette*. The Old Register Book continued until 1862, revealing a substantial increase in the number of practitioners:

1845	21
1850	53
1855	369
1860	614
1862	671

From 1857, regular supplementary lists were published, rising to eleven times a year to complement the annual January listing. The next Register book ran from 1863 to 1949.

The names of the original twenty-one registered practitioners were published in the *Port Phillip Government Gazette* in January 1845:

> WE the undersigned, the president and members of the Port Phillip Medical Board, appointed by his honor the Superintendent, under the Act 2nd Victoria cap. 22 intituled "An Act to define the qualifications of Medical Witnesses at Coroner's Inquests and Inquiries held before Justices of the Peace, in the colony of New South Wales," do hereby certify that the undermentioned gentlemen have submitted the necessary testimonials of qualification, viz:–
>
> Bailey, James; Goulburn
> Campbell, William Henry; Melbourne
> Cheyne, Alexander M; M.D.
> Cussen, Patrick, M.D.; Melbourne
> Clutterbuck, James Bennett; Melbourne
> Dickson, James
> Drummond, James; Merri Creek
> Flemming, William; Melbourne
> Greeves, Augustus F. A.; Melbourne
> Griffin, John Sealy; Melbourne
> Howitt, Godfrey, M.D.; Melbourne
> Hobson, Edmund C.; Melbourne
> Lang, Thomas

O'Mullane, Arthur, M.D.; Melbourne
Pyke, William; Weiraby
Sproat, John, M.D.; Melbourne
Shaw, Foster; Geelong
Thomas, David John; Melbourne
Wilmot, William Byam, M.D.; Melbourne
Wilkie, David Elliot, M.D.; Melbourne
Watson, John Edward; Mount Rouse

———

And we do hereby further declare, that the several gentlemen whose names are above mentioned, are entitled to be deemed "Legally Qualified Medical Practitioners" in terms of and accordance with the provision of the aforesaid Act.

P.CUSSEN, M.D., President
GODFREY HOWITT, M.D.
WILLIAM BRIAN WILMOT, M.D.
E. C. HOBSON, M.D.
Melbourne Medical Board, January 1845.[23]

The original four Board members, and Drs O'Mullane, Thomas, and Wilkie who later joined the Board, were all signatories of the 1844 petition. Patrick Cussen died in 1849 and was replaced as Colonial Surgeon and President of the Board by Dr John Sullivan. In turn on his death in 1854, he was replaced in both roles by Dr William McCrea, maintaining the supervisory role of the Chief Government Medical Officer of the day. Of the original twenty-one registered partitioners sixteen were still on the Register in 1862.

Consolidation of medical roles 1854–1865

In 1854 following McCrea's appointment, an Act was passed 'promoting the public Health in populous places in the Colony of Victoria'. It was the first attempt to lay out a framework for public healthcare.[24] A parallel Act in 1854 made vaccination of children compulsory. Vaccination was to be done free of charge by a registered medical practitioner, who then had to produce a certificate recording successful vaccination to be lodged with the Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages.[25]

The debate around training and qualifications resumed in the Legislative Assembly in January 1861, when Dr Macadam proposed a law requiring at least three years training in British and other medical schools.[26] This sparked an extended debate resulting in an Act that introduced heavy penalties for those forging or falsely claiming qualifications. Other provisions stated that medical appointments could only be held and certificates issued by registered practitioners, and allowed practitioners to sue for fees. A final clause allowed the registration of practitioners who had undergone appropriate training and had practiced regularly in the Colony since January 1853, despite not having received a diploma or certificate.[27] The Act passed the Legislative Assembly on 17 June 1862, the same day as the School of Anatomy Bill as part of the development of the Melbourne Medical School.

Since 1838, laws had been developed in a piecemeal way reflecting the immediate issues of the day. In 1865, all previous Acts affecting registration of Victorian practitioners were repealed, and replaced by an Act in four-parts.[28]

No. CCLXII.
An Act to Consolidate the Laws relating to Medical Practitioners
[1st *June,* 1865.]

BE it enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Victoria in this present Parliament assembled and by the authority of the same as follows—

1. This Act shall come into operation on the first day of June in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and sixty-five and shall be called and may be cited as the "*Medical Practitioners Statute* 1865". It is divided into the following Parts—

PART 1. —Medical Board of Victoria ss. 3-8.
PART II. —Legally qualified Medical Practitioners ss. 9-14.
PART III. —Medical Witnesses ss. 15-19.
PART IV. — Schools of Anatomy ss. 20-35.

Requirements, rights, and penalties were clearly defined, providing the basis for the ongoing supervision of the medical profession. The Act was part of a widespread Parliamentary exercise consolidating accumulated Victorian Legislation.[29]

Australian Medical Board Today

Over subsequent years, each State and Territory developed its own Medical Board, with practitioners moving interstate needing to re–register. In 2009-2010, a Health Practitioners Regulation National Law was enacted in all local jurisdictions to create uniformity of registration and codes of practice throughout the country.[30] The Medical Board of Australia is based in Melbourne, coordinating policy delegated to individual State and Territory Boards. By 2014, there were 24,113 registered medical practitioners in Victoria, and 99,033 in Australia.

Acknowledgement

This work was facilitated by Jack Martin, Co-ordinator, Collection Management, Public Records Office Victoria, and Gail Davis, Senior Curator, State Records of New South Wales.

Reference web sites

PROV: www.prov.vic.gov.au, then Access Collection/ Digitized Records VPRS 19/P1

Acts: www.austlii.edu.au, then NSW/Acts as Made 1824-
www.austlii.edu.au, then Victoria/Historical Acts, 1851-1995

Gazettes: www.austlii.edu.au, then Victoria/Other Materials/ Government Gazette

Hansard: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/hansard

Endnotes

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2 Ibid, item 1840/171, Appointment of Coroner deferred for the present & to be considered in the estimates for 1841.

3 State Records of New South Wales, Series No. 905 Colonial Secretary Letters Received, item (4/2572), letter no.42/5203, Proposing the formation of a Medical Board at Port Phillip.

4 PROV VA 473, Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 19/P Inward Registered Correspondence, unit 65, item 1842/1408 filed at 1844/2052, A local Medical Board for the inspection of Diplomas would require an Act of Council.

5 PROV VA 473, Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 16/P Outward Registered Correspondence, unit 3, item 1842/1055, To Dr Wilmot Coroner Melbourne reporting the failure of the attempt to establish a local Medical Board.

6 *An Act to provide for the attendance of Medical Witnesses at Coroner's Inquests and Inquires held by Justices of the Peace (13 June, 1838)*, 1 Victoria no.3.

7 *An Act to define the qualifications of Medical Witnesses at Coroners' Inquests and Inquires held before Justices of the Peace in the Colony of New South Wales (12 October 1838)* 2 Victoria no.22.

8 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 3 July 1839, no. 429, pp.733-734.

9 Ibid, 21 November 1848, no.133, p.1.

10 *Kerr's Melbourne Almanac & Port Phillip Directory for 1841*, compiled by William Kerr, Melbourne: Kerr and Holmes, 1841. Facsimile edition, Melbourne: Southwood Press, 1978, p.179.

11 PROV VA 473, Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 16/P Outward Registered Correspondence unit 4, item 1844/1308, Dr G. Howitt and other Gentlemen signing petition.

12 State Records of New South Wales, series no.905, Colonial Secretary Letters Received, item (4/2572) letter No 44/8403, Appointment of a Medical Board at Port Phillip District.

13 *An Act to define the qualifications of Medical Witnesses at Coroner's Inquests and Inquires held before Justices of the Peace in the Colony of New South Wales (23 August 1844)* 8 Vic, no.8.

14 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 8 October 1844, no.41, p.168.

15 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 12 November 1844, no.102, p.1380.

16 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 29 October 1844, no. 44, p.195.

17 PROV VA 473, Superintendent Port Phillip District, VPRS 19/P Inward Registered Correspondence, unit 65, item 1844/2052, Makes application for the necessary supply of stationery and printed forms of qualification certificates etc. required by the Board.

18 Ibid, unit 111, item 1848/2120, Medical witnesses Coroner's cases necessary 'as a matter of course' vs unnecessary.

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20 *An Act to extend the provisions of the Acts relating to legally qualified Medical Practitioners (31 March 1854)*, 17 Vic, no.14.

21 *An Act to amend an Act entitled 'An Act to extend the provisions of the Acts relating to legally qualified Medical Practitioners (18th September 1860)* 24 Vic, no.118.

22 PROV VA 1347, Medical Board of Victoria VPRS 16394/P0001 unit 1.

23 *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 28 January 1845, no.57, p.257. NOTE: Some of the names are incorrectly spelled in the Gazette, viz. William Fleming, John Sealey Griffin and Forster Shaw (Ed.)

24 *An Act for promoting the Public Health in populous places in the Colony of Victoria (19 December 1854)*, 18 Vic, no.13.

25 *An Act to make compulsory the Practice of Vaccination (20 November 1854)*, 18 Vic, no.4.

26 *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 1861-62, vol.7, p.1296 and vol.8, pp.171, 608, 1338, 1362.

27 *An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Registration of Legally qualified Medical Practitioners (18th June 1862)* 25 Vic, no.158.

28 *An Act to Consolidate the Laws relating to Medical Practitioners (1st June 1865)*, 28 Vic, no.262.

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30 *Health Practitioners Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009*, no.79.

Robert Russell, 1808–1900, artist
First settlement at Port Albert Gippsland, c.1860
Watercolour and ink on cream paper
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H27751
A copy of an earlier painting May 1843

James Wentworth Davis, pioneer of Alberton, Gippsland: a research report

By Sandra Pullman

Sandra Pullman is volunteer garden co-ordinator of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage. She has recently rediscovered connections of her great-great grandfather, James Wentworth Davis, with Charles Joseph La Trobe, and the musical career of her great-great grandmother Sophia Letitia Davis in Hobart.

James Wentworth Davis wrote to Charles Joseph La Trobe in 1848 regarding his licence on the run known as *Coal Hole*. To Davis's dismay, part of the licence was included in the reserve for the town of Alberton. La Trobe was unsympathetic and from then on was not popular within the Davis family. After a spate of letters Davis had to concede and bought another Alberton block. The Davis family interacted with many people of the time, some known to La Trobe. This is the story about how they finally settled in Alberton, Gippsland.

James Wentworth Davis, his wife Sophia Letitia Davis (née Jones) and their only surviving child, James Wentworth Davis junior, from Sligo in Ireland arrived in Hobart Town on 29 June 1832 on a ship called the *Lindsays*.[1] It is thought that they emigrated due to the political and religious unrest in Ireland, restrictions on growing tobacco, the scarcity of food in 1830 and outbreaks of cholera that started in the late 1820s and possibly claimed a daughter.[2]

The earliest letter in the family archive of James Wentworth Davis is dated 29 April 1829 from Sligo.[3] The Rt Hon. Charles Grant, MP, later Lord Glenelg, wrote to Davis concerning a proposal by the British Government to introduce a bill that would ban growing tobacco in Ireland. Davis had organised a petition against the bill, but Grant advised him not to present it, since the bill was not going to be introduced in that parliamentary session.

The family archive does not reveal where J.W. Davis was born, but it is thought that he may have come from a small town New Ross in county Wexford, in Ireland's south-east, where a Davis clan is known to have grown grain, brewed beer and milled flour. His wife, Sophia Letitia née Jones, was the daughter of a clergyman. She was an accomplished singer, having been a pupil of Haydn Corri, the son of Domenico Corri a leading Italian singing teacher. Haydn Corri was invited to Edinburgh by the Edinburgh Music Society and then moved to Dublin in 1821 where Sophia became his pupil.[4] One of Sophia's most treasured possessions was most likely the song dedicated to 'Miss Jones' composed by George Alexander Hodson about 1820. It was called *Haste Idle Time,* which was a celebrated pollacca (polonaise).[5]

When the Davis family came to Hobart Town, they brought with them letters of recommendation from prominent people in Sligo including an endorsement by Catholic Bishop Patrick Burke.[6] Only recently discovered are three beautiful card invitations from the wife of Governor George Arthur to an evening at Government House signed by Charles Arthur A.D.C., one of the governor's sons.[7] There is also a reference dated 24 September, 1833, written to Jacob Wench and Sons, seed merchants, London Bridge, from Richard Willis in Van Diemen's Land introducing James Davis, and mentioning that Sophia 'excels in music, she teaches some of the highest persons in this place, the family of his Excellency the Lieut. Governor, Chief Justice, Colonial Secretary & & &'.[8]

On 5 February 1836, the ship *Beagle* arrived in Hobart with Charles Darwin on board. His birthday on 12 February was celebrated the following day at a dinner hosted by the Attorney-General, Alfred Stephen, at his home *Stephenville*. After dinner Darwin notes in his diary that the company enjoyed an 'excellent concert of rare Italian music'.[9] Darwin does not mention the name of the singer, but it is quite possible that it was Sophia given her Italian training with Haydn Corri. Advertisements in the *Hobart Town Courier* and *Launceston Advertiser* also note that 'she continues to give instructions on piano-forte, guitar, Italian and English singing etc '.[10]

In a doctoral thesis completed in 2011 Graeme Skinner, Honorary Associate, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, made a study of colonial and early Federation music and musicians. The thesis was developed into an online resource called *Australharmony, now* published by Paradisec, Sydney Conservatorium of Music. It is a biographical register of Australian musical

Unknown artist
John Wentworth Davis
Watercolour with bodycolour
Collection: Davis Family, Melbourne

people, including updated information on Sophia Letitia Davis. In personal communications with me, Dr Skinner explained that while Sophia was among only a handful of professionals, there were many talented musicians and singers among gentlewomen, including in the Stephen family itself. Nevertheless it is possible that Sophia was one of the performers at the Darwin birthday celebration.[11]

In 1833 James and Sophia had leased a property called *Waverley Park* at Kangaroo Point (now known as Bellerive) from Dr James Scott R.N., who was a colonial surgeon.[12] *Waverley Park* was certainly included in Darwin's excursion around Hobart's eastern shores, so a meeting there with the Davis family was also possible. Based on Darwin's notes and observations, the Tasmanian Government and local councils have established a Charles Darwin Trail where you can retrace his footsteps. *Waverley Park* is now called Waverley Flora Park.[13]

In 1834 James Wentworth Davis established a warehouse business in Hobart selling 'farm, garden, flower and indigenous seed', plus many other household goods.[14] Davis advertised in the *Hobart Town Courier*, as did Daniel Bunce, who designed the Geelong Botanic Gardens in 1858. Competition became intense with Bunce advertising in the *Hobart Town Courier* of 6 May 1836 that trees, bulbs and 'a great variety of exotic seeds' were available, and Davis replied on 13 May that he had 'every description of farm, garden and flowers seeds for sale'. When Bunce went into receivership in 1839, Davis became Hobart's chief garden supplier.[15]

He tried his luck in many ventures but, with the depression biting, in February 1845 the family decided to go to Gippsland. Surprisingly by 1845 there was a shortage of suitable grazing land and choosing a run was fraught with difficulties. Besides understanding pastoral pursuits, understanding the Government regulations was even more important. However, apparently unaware of major changes to the squatting regulations. This is made clear in letters from his friend the Anglican clergyman Rev. Francis Hales, who inquires whether he has the new rules.[23] There were now distinctions between settled, unsettled land and intermediate land. The *Coal Hole* was on land that the government defined as settled and where they

Duterrau, Benjamin, 1767-1851, artist
A view of Hobart Town taken from Kangaroo Point, 1836
Etching, hand coloured
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

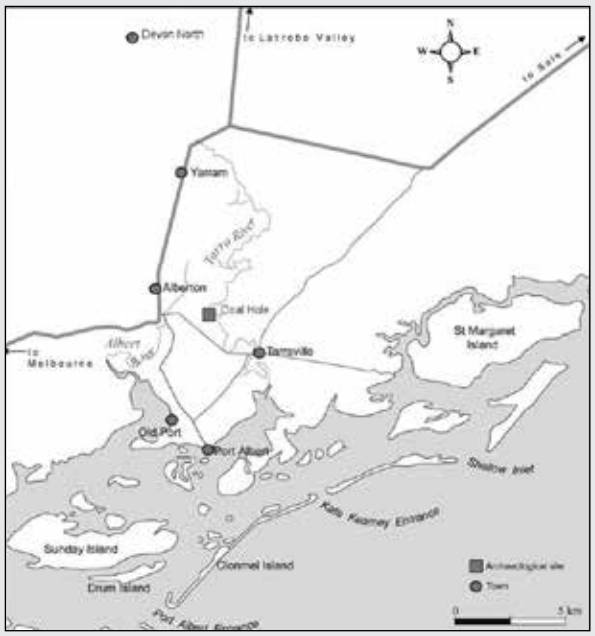
this was a difficult challenge due to constant changes by the government of the day and poor communications.[16]

They landed at the Old Port (Port Albert) and, after looking around for a property, settled at Alberton on a run called *Coal Hole* purchased from a Mr William Wade on 28 April 1845.[17] How it got this unusual name is a mystery but according to Pullman it is thought to have been part of the Port Albert station formed by Lachlan Macalister in 1841 to supply beef cattle to the lucrative Van Diemen's Land market,[18] but disposed of after his nephew was murdered by a 'party of blacks' in 1843.[19] La Trobe, interestingly, visited this area in March 1845 as part of his arduous two weeks' exploration through south Gippsland in the company of Henry Dana of the Native Police Corps and Frederick Armand Powlett, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Westernport District, to investigate amongst other things reports of coal near Westernport.[20] The family raised beef cattle that were shipped to Hobart to feed the expanding penal population and they also ran a dairying operation. They planted a large garden and fruit trees and enlarged and improved the dwelling on the property; in 1848, Davis described it as 'a very comfortable weather-boarded cottage, and out offices'.[21]

Correspondence between Charles Joseph La Trobe and Davis began in 1848. On 20 August Davis wrote to La Trobe asking 'for a lease of the entire run of the *Coal Hole*, Alberton' which he had purchased from Mr William Wade in 1845.[22] Davis was claiming a pre-emptive right attached to the run bought from Wade, planned the new township of Alberton, so his claim was refused.

La Trobe replied in a letter dated 23 February 1849 thinking to conclude the matter:

> I beg to state that I have made the representations made with respect to the land you have occupied, in the vicinity of Alberton hitherto under ordinary license, the subject of a reference to the Surveyor in Charge and I find from his report,
>
> 1stly, that it lies within what has long been set apart and defined as a Township Reserve, and
>
> 2ndly, that if not actually at this time included in the Settled Districts it will be wholly so when the extension of that District in the quarter in question is proclaimed.
>
> A renewal of your former license is under these circumstances quite out of the question. If any portion of the land remain in your hands it must be under the Regulations of March 29th, 1848, and with respect to the portions immediately contiguous to the Township of Alberton and the Special survey the Regulations recently promulgated respecting a concession of Commonage right to a certain extent to occupants of purchased lands of less extent than one Section as well



Helene Athanasiadis, illustrator
Major settlements in the Port Albert District
Map, adapted from Brooks et al, 'Ploughzone Archaeology', Australian Archaeology, June 2009

> as claims of those who may claim pre-emptive occupation under the 16th Section of the Orders in Council, will render any claim to exclusive occupancy you may be induced to advance quite inadmissible.
>
> Sd C.J.L.[24]

Davis remained unhappy and continued writing to La Trobe. In a letter dated 8 March 1849 he requests that his letter be forwarded to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney. But all to no avail. In 1849 he sold the *Coal Hole* cottage to Rev. Willoughby Bean who had recently been appointed the first Anglican priest in Gippsland, always a welcomed guest of James and Sophia.[25] In January 1850 Davis bought another Alberton property, allotment No. 7 Block 2, from Mr R. Turnbull for £15.0.0.[26]

Whether Sophia ever lived on the new block is unknown as she returned to Hobart Town to be nursed by a family friend, Mrs Carmody, who ran a boarding house. She died on 8 July 1850 of cancer and was buried in the graveyard of St George's Church, Battery Point.[27] After her death, James senior drifted around Victoria, dying of typhoid fever in January 1853 on the Castlemaine diggings.[28] By 1889 James junior had purchased land at Devon North, eleven kilometres north-west of Yarram. The property was named *Waverley,* after *Waverley Park* in Hobart, and it stayed in family for the next 120 years and was sold only in 2007.

Unknown artist [Beans's Parsonage, c.1851–c.1858]
Gippsland Regional Maritime Museum
Photograph of a picture thought to be the dwelling formerly known as *Coal Hole*

1 Ettie E. F. Pullman, *They Came from The Mall: being an account of the lives of James Wentworth and Sophia Letitia Davis*, [Cheltenham, Vic.] Ettie E. F. Pullman, 1982, p.24.

2 Ibid, p.8.

3 Charles Grant to J.W. Davis of Stephen Street, Sligo, 20 April, 1829, Davis Archive (privately held, Melbourne).

4 Pullman, p.12.

5 George Alexander Hodson, *Haste Idle Time*, 1820, bound leather volume of sheet music, Davis Archive.

6 Pullman, p.21.

7 Elizabeth Arthur, Invitations, Government House, Hobart Town, 1832-1833, Davis Archive; Pullman, p.99.

8 Richard Willis to Jacob Wench and Sons, Seed merchants, London Bridge, 24 September 1833, Davis Archive.

9 Charles Darwin, *The Beagle Letters*, edited by F. Burkhardt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.381.

10 *The Hobart Town Courier*, 29 June, 1832, p.3; *Launceston Advertisement*, 1 December, 1834, p.4

11 Email from Graeme Skinner to the author, 13 May, 2014.

12 Pullman, p.90.

13 Greater Hobart Trials, http://www.greaterhobarttrails.com.au/track/charles-darwin-trail (accessed 30 May 2014)

14 Pullman, p.73.

15 Daniel Bunce, 1836 *Catalogue of Seeds and Plants: indigenous and exotic, cultivated and on sale at Denmark Hill Nursery, New town Road, Hobart town*, Canberra: Mulini Press, 1994, (Facsimile reprint, with after-note by Victor Crittenden, 'Daniel Bunce and his catalogue'.)

16 Pullman, pp.115-116, 122.

17 Ibid, p.116-117. (Note: *Coal Hol*e was the site chosen for a case study in testing of new methods in ploughzone archaeology techniques. See Alasdair Brooks, et al, 'Ploughzone Archaeology on an Australian Historic Site: a case study for South Gippsland, Victoria', *Australian Archaeology*, No.68, June 2009, pp.37-44.)

18 Wayne Caldow, 'Perceptions of Place: the European Experience of Gippsland, 1839 to 1844', *La Trobeana*, vol.8, no.1, March 2009, pp.11-13; and 'The Early Livestock Trade Between Gippsland and Van Diemen's Land: insights from Patrick Coady Buckley's Journal of 1844', *The La Trobe Journal*, no.86, December, 2010, pp.23-36. Buckley's *Tarra Creek* run was next to Davis's *Coal Hole*. (Ed.)

19 *Port Phillip Herald*, 29 July 1843; Pullman, p.116.

20 Charles Joseph La Trobe, Memoranda of journeys, excursions and absences 1839-1854, MS H15604, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria. (See Fay Woodhouse, 'La Trobe in South Gippsland', *La Trobeana*, vol.4, no.1, April 2006, pp.3-7; and regarding coal, A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria before Separation*, Carlton South, The Miegunyah Press, 1996, p.250.)

21 Pullman, p.117, 121, 126.

22 Ibid, pp.120-122. 'The letter seems to have gone back and forth between different officials for it is endorsed in several places with their comment', p.120. The original is in VPRS 2877/P0000, Unit 1, Inward Registered Correspondence [Land Branch], letter 1847/48.

23 Francis Hales to J.W. Davis, 20 September and 5 December 1848, Davis Archive. Also Hales' diary note, 22 April 1848, Pullman, p.122.
(Note: Rev. Francis Hales sailed to the Port Phillip District with Bishop Charles Perry and his wife Frances, on the *Stag* in 1848. The Perrys became very good friends of Charles and Sophie La Trobe and lived at *Upper Jolimont* until *Bishopscourt* was built. Bishop Perry sent Rev. Hales on a four-month missionary tour of Gippsland in 1848. The Perrys lunched with the Davis family during their tour of Gippsland in 1849.)

24 Davis Archive; VPRS 74/P0000, Unit 1, Outward Letter Books to Local and Sydney, Lands Branch, Oct.1847 to Mar.1849, Series A, vol.2, letter 1849/70; Pullman pp.124-125.

25 Pullman, p.132.

26 Ibid, p.126.

27 Ibid, p.138.

28 Ibid, p.144.

Arthur O'Mullane MD: pioneer physician Port Phillip District

By Dr Walter Heale

Walter Heale is a retired renal physician, with a long-time interest in European history and art history. He is on the Heritage and Archives Committee of the Australian Medical Association Victoria, participating in their recent study of pioneer doctors and the establishment of the Port Phillip Medical Association, and the successor organisation the Victorian Medical Association. This led to an interest in the La Trobe era and indexing Inward Correspondence to La Trobe, 1839-1851, at Public Record Office Victoria.

Arthur O'Mullane arrived in Port Phillip about six weeks after Charles Joseph La Trobe in 1839. His life here was fruitful but relatively short. This is how he was described by the notable chronicler of Melbourne, Garryowen (Edmund Finn):

> Dr Arthur O'Mullane, after a short partnership with Barry Cotter, started for himself, and for some time had only a moderate practice; but he was a quiet, mild-mannered man, who patiently bided his time, and the time came when no practice in Melbourne exceeded his. He was the first physician to the Jews, thereby securing an advantage of no small account; on he went upward, until, professionally, there was not much further to go. He was a general favourite with his patients through his suavity and skill, and few men were so fortunate to number more private friends than he. When he died, many years ago, he was widely regretted; and some old colonists of the present day, when his name is mentioned, have always a good word for his memory.[1]

Arthur O'Mullane from Buttevant in County Cork, undertook his basic medical training in Dublin and proceeded to an MD in Glasgow and membership of the Royal College of Surgeons London (MRCS) in 1838. Graduates of that era were trained in

observational medicine, anatomy, obstetrics, smallpox vaccination, surgery, and botany as a background to providing apothecary services. Doctors coming to Melbourne from 1839 went on to practice in a range of disciplines, constrained by lack of knowledge and by therapies that were quite different from the accepted norm in the modern era. The bacterial basis of infectious diseases was still to be elucidated; x-rays were not discovered until 1896, whilst sulphonamides penicillin and streptomycin (the last for the treatment of tuberculosis) only became available in the 1930s and 1940s.

O'Mullane left Plymouth in mid-July 1839 as Surgeon Superintendent on the *William Metcalfe,* the first ship to carry bounty immigrants direct from Britain to Port Phillip. It arrived in Melbourne in mid-November. Among twenty-two cabin passengers were J.B. Were, his wife and two children, George Playne later president of the Port Phillip Medical Association, Reverend Yelverton Wilson with his wife and child, later of Portland, and Miss Maria Barber from Keyingham near Hull.[2] The ship was duly inspected by the local immigration board consisting of Assistant Colonial Surgeon Patrick Cussen, naval surgeon John Patterson, landing surveyor C.H. Le Souef and police magistrate William Lonsdale. They certified that the health and skills of the bounty passengers warranted payment of a £2,555 bounty to the promoter, John Marshall of London. Two passengers had to be revalidated by O'Mullane and the ship's captain in a letter to Governor Gipps on 27th December, following the ship's arrival in Sydney.[3] O'Mullane registered with the New South Wales Medical Board, arriving back in Melbourne in February 1840.[4]

Shortly after landing he joined the practice of Dr Barry Cotter,[5] the first doctor in the Port Phillip District. Cotter had arrived with Batman in 1835 as the Port Phillip Association's manager, then briefly held the colonial surgeon post, before commencing a clinical practice and establishing an apothecary business on the north-east corner of Collins and Queen Streets. Following O'Mullane's arrival Cotter retired from active practice, later selling his interest to O'Mullane. In March O'Mullane advertised his commencement of practice as a MRCS and accoucheur, stating 'as he intends devoting his whole time and energies to professional pursuits, he hopes to receive a share of public support'.[6]

In December O'Mullane married Maria Barber at St. James' Church in William Street in a ceremony conducted by Yelverton Wilson. From 1841 to 1845 they had five children including twins, the marriage and the births/baptisms being recorded in St James' parish register. The O'Mullanes originally lived in Little Collins Street, then in one of Melbourne's first three-storey houses at 24 Queen Street on the east side between Collins Street and Flinders Lane.[7] In 1852 the family moved to a house at 97 Bourke Street West, previously owned by Redmond Barry.[8]

Unknown artist
Dr Arthur O'Mullane, c.1850s
Watercolour and gouache on ivory
National Gallery of Victoria, 2007.712
The Warren Clark Bequest, 2007

Pioneer physician during the 1840s

O'Mullane was involved in a series of projects during the 1840s that established a formal base for medical practice in the Port Phillip District, he being one of nine physicians listed in Kerr's 1841 *Almanac*.[9] In 1841 with Doctors Myers, Thomas and Wilkie, he established a temporary twenty-bed hospital in a house made available by John Fawkner.[10] Its services were complemented in 1845 when the St James' Visiting Society hospital and orphan asylum was established in Chancery Lane to care for the destitute. The seven-bed hospital and asylum 'was assiduously attended by Dr O'Mullane' on a daily basis, and maintained a credit balance, partly through jurors and special constables contributing their fees and fines.[11] Five iron beds allocated by Charles La Trobe to the Society were ultimately re-allocated to the Melbourne Hospital when it opened.[12] From the mid-1840s O'Mullane was a member of the Hiram Masonic Lodge, having belonged to the Lodge of St John in Cork.[13]

In 1844 he was one of fifteen signatories on a successful petition to Governor Gipps, praying for the establishment of a Medical Board in Melbourne; his name duly appeared amongst the first local registrants gazetted in early 1845. He then joined a group of practitioners in May 1846 to form the Port Phillip Medical Association (PPMA), the forerunner of the present day AMA. The group formulated rules related to running the Association, introduced a scale of fees based on a patient's capacity to pay,

Stringer, Mason and Co., lithographer
Hospital, c.1850
Lithograph
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, H16995
The Melbourne Hospital, north-east corner of Lonsdale and Swanston Streets

and instituted clinical meetings. Each year the Association sent to London a list of books and journals to be purchased; their arrival was keenly awaited, and formed the basis of a Medical Library ultimately housed in the Board Room of the Melbourne Hospital. Keeping track of library loans became an issue, a task that was taken up by the Hospital's pharmacist.[14] The Association's scale of fees, based on an Aberdeen model, were printed and circulated to local practitioners in 1846. Examples of the fees were as follows:

	First Class	Second Class	Third Class
Physician consultation	£1 1 0	£0 10 6	
Vaccination	£0 10 6	£0 5 0	
Obstetric care	£5 5 0	£3 3 0	£1 1 0

In 1850 the fees were revised, and similarly printed and circulated.[15] O'Mullane meanwhile consolidated his private practice arrangements with a notice in the *Argus*:

> Surgeons Hall
>
> Dr O'Mullane will attend from ten to eleven A.M. and from six to seven P.M.
>
> Advice gratis to those whose circumstances require it.[16]

In March 1841 La Trobe chaired a meeting which resolved 'that the rapid increase of population in Melbourne and the surrounding country naturally involving a proportionate increase of cases of sickness, accident and distress, renders necessary the immediate establishment of a Public Hospital'. The foundation stone for the hospital was laid in 1846, and in mid-1847 the Board appointed the inaugural consultants: Doctors Hobson, Howitt and O'Mullane as physicians, and Messrs Campbell, Greeves and Thomas as surgeons.[17] All but Howitt placed statements of intent in the newspapers addressed to subscribers, O'Mullane highlighting his involvement with the pioneer hospitals.[18] In the event, no election by the subscribers was needed as the number of applicants equalled the available positions. With La Trobe as its patron, the hospital formally opened in March 1848. In the same month Hobson died of tuberculosis, replaced on election of the subscribers by the coroner Dr Wilmot.

In 1849 O'Mullane was the attending physician looking after Dr Patrick Cussen now Colonial Surgeon during his last and prolonged illness.[19] Cussen had been President of both the Medical Board and the PPMA, and visiting medical officer of the recently opened Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum. O'Mullane undertook the last responsibility in an acting capacity and became an executor of Cussen's will. O'Mullane thus completed a decade where he had been a pioneer in many clinical and organisational roles in the emerging medical services in the soon-to-be colony.

Senior professional in the 1850s

In November 1849 O'Mullane signed a petition to the Mayor and his medical colleague, Augustus Greeves, that expressed concern about a delay in introducing the Separation legislation. In July 1851 he attended the installation of La Trobe as Lieutenant-Governor of the new Colony of Victoria.[20] The following January the annual meeting of the Melbourne Hospital elected La Trobe as president, and published an annual report which described in detail the growth of services and capital expenditure, while also noting the resignation of Dr Howitt.[21] In 1853 O'Mullane also resigned as a hospital physician, like Howitt before him citing a busy workload.[22] He became a member of the Yarra Bend Asylum Board, a medical referee for the Victorian Insurance Company, and a member of the Medical Board. Over the following years he continued to be called as an expert witness at a number of coronial and other inquiries.

In 1854 he transferred his practice to his Bourke Street home in association with a partner Dr Black.[23] He advertised the arrival of serum for smallpox vaccination, and on a number of occasions for wet nurses, suggesting a continued involvement with obstetric care.[24] Over the decade he made charitable contributions to the Benevolent Home, the St James' Visiting Society, the Melbourne Hospital, and the new *Australian Medical Journal,* first published in Melbourne in 1856.[25] Overall, he followed a familiar career pathway of initially establishing a consultant and hospital practice, then becoming involved in a series of senior medical roles.

Family affairs and the impact of infectious disease

In 1852 O'Mullane subdivided seven acres in Prahran of what had become known as 'O'Mullane's paddock' into seventy-two lots for sale. In the process he insisted on the naming of Greville and Grattan Streets after two Irish patriots.[26] In succeeding years he put together a portfolio of investments including debentures, rental income and properties in Flinders, Bourke and Queen Streets, Melbourne, as well as at St Kilda and Braybrook.[27] The most notable building was the Port Phillip Club Hotel in Flinders Street opposite the railway station, which became the meeting place of many sporting bodies, including the Victorian Cricket Association and the Victorian Football League. It is now the site of an arcade.[28]

Henry Burn, 1807?-1884, artist
Stephenson's XI vs XVIII of Victoria New Year's Day, 1862
Watercolour
Melbourne Cricket Club Museum

About 1852 William Strutt painted a portrait of Maria O'Mullane with four of her children. It is the earliest Australian family portrait in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria.[29] Strutt also 'agreed with Mrs O'Mullane to teach her four children drawing at a rate of three guineas [three pounds and three shillings] per quarter; one lesson of one hour per week every Wednesday'.[30] A series of miniatures of the children and O'Mullane were also painted, together with a later one of Maria, which came into the possession of the

gallery in the years following the death in 1976 of O'Mullane's great-grandson (a descendant known to this author).[31] The group portrait and miniatures at the National Gallery of Victoria can be viewed online.[32]

The child missing from the portrait is Frederick who died in 1851 of an unknown cause, as recorded in the St Peter's church register; the family moved to Bourke Street West the year after his death.[33] The three brothers in the portrait attended Mr Gouge's preparatory school in La Trobe Street, near Swanston Street.[34] Jerimiah, the youngest died in 1856 of 'rheumatic gout' certified by his father. A likely modern interpretation would be rheumatic fever secondary to an antibiotic sensitive organism. Arthur junior and George, the two older brothers, proceeded to Melbourne Grammar School where both became cricket captains.[35] Afterwards they were skilled players of the recently invented game of Australian football. As a university student Arthur was a representative at a Queen's Birthday levée accompanied by George.[36]

George O'Mullane became a notable cricketer, playing for Victoria in 1862 against a touring English professional team, the first international cricket match in Australia.[37] It began on New Year's Day before an estimated attendance of about 25,000 people. His sporting career was later summed up: 'As a wicket keeper George O'Mullane was the very best this colony ever produced… with the bat he was a hard hitter. On the football ground he was always conspicuous for his terrific rushes and fine drop kicks. Altogether he was an excellent specimen of an athletic Victorian'.[38] He played cricket for Victoria against New South Wales, and captained the East Melbourne District team where he was noted for his strict discipline and loud appeals.[39]

In May 1863 Arthur O'Mullane attended a coronial inquiry as an expert witness, but then became ill and died of tuberculosis in October. A fortnight before his death, he signed with a feeble hand a will establishing a trust for the benefit of his wife and remaining children. The family moved to Wellington Terrace, East Melbourne, where in short order both remaining sons died of tuberculosis, leaving Maria and daughter Ann. In 1868 at the local Holy Trinity Church, Ann married William Garrard, who had been the second resident surgeon at the Melbourne Hospital, before becoming a consultant surgeon there.[40] The couple had seven children including twins, five of whom survived to adult life. In 1883 both parents died within nine days of each other, leaving five children from one to thirteen years. The following table summarises the family's illness and deaths:–

Name	Dates	Cause of Death	Age
Frederick O'Mullane*	1843-1851	Unknown: St. Peter's parish register	7
Jerimiah O'Mullane	1845-1856	Rheumatic gout (fever)	11
Arthur J. O'Mullane	1812-1863	Tuberculosis for 150 days	51
Arthur A. O'Mullane	1841-1865	Tuberculosis, exhaustion	23
George O'Mullane	1842-1866	Tuberculosis, pneumonia	24
Ann O'Mullane/Garrard*	1843-1883	Typhoid fever for 14 days	39
William Garrard	1825-1883	Acute peritonitis, 9 days after Ann	58
Maria Barber/O'Mullane	1811-1891	Senility debility – gangrene foot	80

Source: Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages *Twin

The care of the children passed to their grandmother, Maria O'Mullane, who had moved to Walpole Street in Kew, and in this she had the support of the legal firm of Smith and Emmerton. In 1910 the property assets of the 1863 trust were auctioned, the firm formerly of Chancery Lane continuing to provide ongoing legal advice to the O'Mullane/Garrard family for over a century.[41]

Imprint now and then

The imprint of Dr Arthur O'Mullane includes Greville and Grattan Streets, Prahran, the Port Phillip Arcade opposite Flinders Street Station, the National Gallery of Victoria in Federation Square, then along Birrarung Marr past the site of the old East Melbourne cricket ground on the corner of Jolimont Road and Wellington Parade South to the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum. It holds a picture of the 1862 international cricket match and a World War I memorial that includes O'Mullane's youngest grandson, 2nd Lieutenant Stanley Charles Garrard, a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club killed in 1915 at Fliers and buried at Ypres after serving in a British Army battalion. On the horizon to the far left of Gritten's view of Melbourne is St James' Old Cathedral, the O'Mullanes' original church. The church's foundation stone was laid by La Trobe on 9 November 1839, six days before Dr Arthur O'Mullane first arrived in Melbourne on the *William Metcalfe*.

Acknowledgements

The assistance of Janette Wells, Archivist St James' Old Cathedral, curators at the National Gallery of Victoria, and librarians at the Melbourne Cricket Club is acknowledged.

Endnotes

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2 Michael Cannon and Ian McFarlane eds., *Historical Records of Victoria, vol. 4: Communication Trade and Transport, 1836-39*, Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1985, pp.334, 349.

3 Ibid, pp.351-2

4 *Port Phillip Herald*, 14 February 1840.

5 Ibid, 28 February 1840.

6 Ibid, 24 March 1840.

7 Garryowen, p.35.

8 Jennifer Phipps, 'Portrait of Maria Elizabeth O'Mullane and her children', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, No.18, 1977, pp.53-55.

9 *Kerr's Melbourne Almanac & Port Phillip Directory for 1841*, compiled by William Kerr, Melbourne: Kerr and Holmes, 1841. Facsimile edition, Melbourne: Southwood Press, 1978, p.179.

10 Alan Gregory, *The Ever Open Door: a history of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, 1848-1998*, Melbourne: Hyland House, 1998, p.6.

11 Garryowen, p.252.

12 Public Records Office Victoria, VA 473 Superintendent, Port Phillip District, VPRS 19/P Inward Registered Correspondence, Unit 105, item 1848/997.

13 *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 December 1844.

14 *History of the Port Phillip Medical Association, Minute Book, 1846-1851*, Melbourne: AMA Victoria, 2013. (cd-rom available at State Library of Victoria)

15 *Rules and Regulations of the Port Phillip Medical Association, March 1850*, Melbourne: John Ferres, Printer, http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/246958, (accessed 31 August 2015).

16 *Argus*, 11 June 1847.

17 Gregory, pp.1-18. Annual reports: La Trobe as patron 1848-1849, 1851-1854.

18 *Argus*, 29 June 1847.

19 Ibid, 13 April 1849.

20 Ibid, 20 November 1849 (petition); 16 July 1851 (inauguration, in St Patrick's Hall).

21 Ibid, 29 January 1852.

22 Gregory, p.30.

23 *Argus*, 7 October 1854.

24 Ibid, 1 November 1852; 29 June 1855; 19 May 1856.

25 Ibid, 6 January 1856.

26 John Butler Cooper, *The History of Prahran: from its first settlement to a city*, revised edition, Melbourne: Modern Printing Co, 1924, p.24.

27 *Argus*, 27 August 1910.

28 Ibid, 28 September 1891; 22 September 1899.

29 Phipps, pp.53-55.

30 Terence Lane, 'The portrait of Maria Elizabeth O'Mullane and her children', *Gallery Magazine*, October-November 2000, pp.19-20.

31 Terence Lane, 'The O'Mullane Family', in *This Wondrous Land: colonial art on paper*, edited by Alisa Bunbury, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2011, pp.118-119.

32 www.ngv.vic.gov.au, then Collections: O'Mullane.

33 In 1852 the family moved to 97 Bourke Street West near to St Patrick's Hall and the Jewish Synagogue, to a house previously owned by Redmond Barry.

34 *Argus*, 8 October 1921.

35 J. Beacham Kiddle (ed.), *Liber Melburniensis 1848-1936: Melbourne Church of England Grammar School official history*, Melbourne: Robertson and Mullen 1937, p.156.

36 *Argus*, 27 May, 1863.

37 Ibid, 2 January 1862.

38 *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, 22 December 1866.

39 Alfred E Clarke, *East Melbourne Cricket Club: its history 1860 to 1910 jubilee year,* Melbourne: George Robertson and Company, [1910], p.20.

40 Phipps, p.54 (marriage); Gregory, pp. 30, 57 (Garrard).

41 *Argus*, 27August 1910 (property auction).

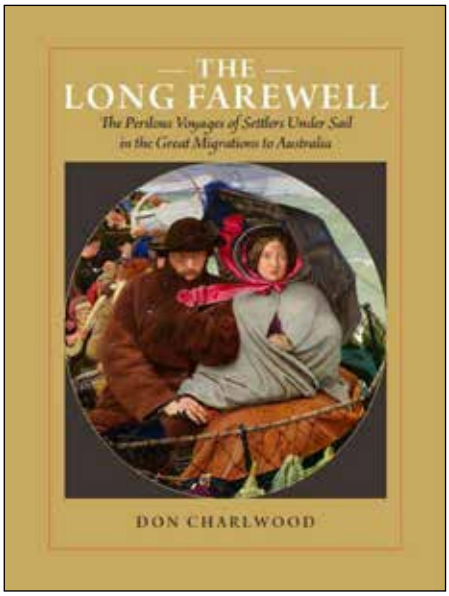
The Long Farewell: a book review

By Loreen Chambers

Loreen Chambers studied Fine Arts, History and Literature at the University of Melbourne and Education at Monash University, focusing on talent and disability. She went on to a lifetime of teaching English, Geography and History, specialising in modern European and Australian History. As Head of History at Lauriston Girls School, she taught both the VCE and the International Baccalaureate. In retirement, she is a member of many historical and cultural societies, and is currently on the editorial committee of the C J La Trobe Society. She has a particular interest in family history and in the British social and economic settings from which so many of the migrants to colonial Australia came.

Since Don Charlwood wrote his much-admired *The Long Farewell* in 1981,[1] it has been an invaluable resource for those researching the lives of shipboard immigrants voyaging to the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century. It has gone through three editions and two reprints, some less worthy, and now has been carefully reprinted in an improved design by Charlwood's daughters Doreen Burge and Sue Brown, who set up their family business Burgewood Books in Melbourne in 1997. The reprint edition is a superior production, not least in terms of the font. Three are used to differentiate the author's word from diary and contemporary entries, and also to usefully differentiate these from later sources. The format is spacious and many of the illustrations improved. One small regret is that the original hard cover has been replaced by a soft cover.

More importantly, the clarity of organisation of information and accessibility of sources of Charlwood's research is still very much in evidence. Twelve chapter headings ranging from 'The Perils' to 'Accommodation', 'Pastimes and Consolations' and so on provide a firm structure to book. In addition, there



is admirable attention to detail in the Index. For example, the entries under 'passengers named' and 'ships, names of' are invaluable for particular information relevant to family history researchers. More general Index headings such as 'navigation and aids to', 'drugs', 'religion and religious observance' and 'drinking water', 'deaths' and 'segregation' are equally useful. The bibliography is another good resource.

Charlwood's use of diaries,[2] as well as letters, recollections, newspapers, periodicals and other documents, provide pointers to the extensive holdings at the State Library of Victoria, the National Library, the Mitchell Library in New South Wales and the J.S. Battye Library in Western Australia. Furthermore, Charlwood has left his research notes to the State Library of Victoria.

But it is the diaries that are the most compelling feature of this account. Indeed, the treasure trove of 120 diaries that Charlwood has read affords the general reader of *The Long Farewell* great pleasure in simply reading history. It is these voices of the past that we hear most clearly in the book. Most settlers realised that this voyage was a momentous time in their lives. Those who could put pen to paper attempted to give utterance to feelings that ranged from hope and wonderment to fear and grief, but all knew the poignancy of that long farewell. How does one make sense of that time when an immigrant is passing from one world to the next? Louisa Meredith, a bride travelling first class to Sydney in 1839, was to become a writer and artist of great talent among other things and was able to give a sense of this when she wrote five years later:

> I do not know one thing that I **felt** so much as the loss of the North Star. Night after night I watched it, sinking lower- lower; the well-known 'Great Bear' that I had so gazed at even from a child, that it seemed like the face of an old friend, was fast going too; it was like parting from my own loved home-faces again… who might say that we should ever meet again? Those stars seemed a last link uniting us, but it was soon broken – they sunk beneath the horizon, and the new constellations of the southern hemisphere seemed to my partial eyes far less splendid.

The painter Ford Madox Brown attempted to sum up the mood of passengers as he bade farewell to his friend Thomas Woolner in 1852. In his painting, *The Last of England,*[3] the emigrant couple are well-educated and 'dignified', people who Madox Brown said are able 'to appreciate all they are giving up with the discomforts and humiliations incident to a vessel all one class'.[4] Like the diarist Louisa Meredith, the painting attempts to encapsulate the apprehension and tentative hopes of those who dared to cast out of sight the land of their birth. *The Last of England* is a powerful representation of an experience which resonates on the emotional level regardless of class.

However, as Charlwood lamented in 1981, we have so few diaries or letters from those who travelled steerage; nevertheless we can find glimpses from those who wrote in their cabins, just as we can glimpse the remarkable fellow passengers in the background of the Madox Brown painting.

One such cabin diarist was William Johnstone on the *Arab* who wrote in the aftermath of a storm:

> The between decks where the Emigrants were all stowed away (sometimes a man and his wife and two children in the one bed) were in a most horrible condition. The seas washed down the hatchways and the floor was a complete pond, many of the beds drenched through and through. In addition to these delights, with four or five exceptions, they were all violently seasick –some of the women fainting, and two going into convulsions – all calling out for Brandy,[5] which they had been told by the Emigrant Agent had been put on board for their use – but which they now found 'non est inventus'. The squall had come on so suddenly that their boxes were all adrift, flying about from one side to the other, with nearly 50 whining sick squalling children to complete their misery.

Ships surgeons are another group of witnesses who necessarily went among those in steerage and they provide sharp and telling observations of conditions. Dr W.H. Leigh, surgeon on the *South Australian* in 1839, described conditions as being little better than 'a slave-ship, during a voyage of so many thousand miles, and of four months duration'. As surgeon-superintendent on the *Ellora* bound for Sydney in 1883, Dr R. Scot Skirving, wrote of those on board:

> Unused to the sea, seasick, homesick, cold, wet, fearful and battened down, few aggregations of human wretchedness could be much greater than was to be found… in the close dark 'tween decks of an outward-bound emigrant ship. … [It] was horrid, even indecent for decent married people to be herded like beasts, with almost no privacy to dress or undress, and where, in the close and stuffy double beds they slept in, only a thin board separated each couple. … The ventilation was very poor, and in the tropics, with a temperature of 90°, the air was mephitic'.

When in calmer waters, however, food became a major focus of attention. John Mackenzie a cabin passenger was to write: '… there is never-ending cooking going on and a rush to the galley each for their own… like so many dogs in a kennel let out to get the food. I have a fine view of them from the poop, all spread over the deck, and divided into messes… children at every group whining to get shares'. Another passenger, writer and photographer Antoine Fauchery, put it somewhat sardonically:

> Each week our provisions allow us, and more than allow us, to have three or four meals a day if we see fit. In the morning, salted beef with dried potatoes; at noon, salt pork with rice; at two o'clock, dried potatoes with salted beef; at four, rice with salt pork. –Lord bless you, if we wanted it, we could at eight o'clock have both salted beef with potatoes and salt pork with rice!'

In the earlier years of immigration, calls at port enabled the settlers to have fresh food, such as pumpkins, bananas and oranges, if they could afford them. For shorter voyages during the gold rushes, government-chartered ships had to carry sufficient provisions for a non-stop voyage of 140 days, and under such constraints, provisions might run dangerously low.

However, if confronted by the conditions of steerage passengers, one has to consider their previous living conditions. Lowland Scots, the poor from the slums of England and Ireland or landless labourers from rural England knew terrible poverty, such as described by a reporter from the *Illustrated London News* writing of the famine years in Ireland: 'I saw the dying, the living, and the dead, lying indiscriminately on the same floor, without anything between them and the cold earth, save a few miserable rags upon them.[6] American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, who from 1853 to 1857 was US consul at Liverpool, recorded:

> Almost every day, I take walks about Liverpool; preferring the darker and dingier streets inhabited by the poorer classes. The scenes are very picturesque in their way; at every two or three steps, gin-shop; also filthy in clothes and person, ragged, pale, often afflicted with humors, women, nursing their babies at dirty bosoms; men haggard, drunken, care-worn, hopeless, but with a kind of patience… groups stand or sit talking together, around the door-steps, or in the descent of a cellar…'

Charlwood's chapter on Life At Home, therefore, is a potent reminder of the conditions that pushed the poor to take up the offer to emigrate.

Interestingly, we learn little in Charlwood's account of the reasons why those

in second and first class cabins migrated. Perhaps that should have been another chapter. It is clear, however, from those who study family history that the lure of gold was a powerful 'pull' factor to the better-off artisan and to the struggling lawyer. Given the laws of inheritance, and the gradual decline in income from the land, being a younger son was another reason to emigrate.

The Long Farewell is also full of the lighter moments of ship-board life. Mary Anne Bedford whose bunk had collapsed with the rocking of the ship wrote: 'We were just going to sleep when we were awakened by a person who slept close to us who was confined. We were all very much surprised as none of us knew anything about it. She had a baby boy. She was a married woman going out to her husband and he had been in Australia eight years.'

Charlwood's research is always interesting. He tells us that the livestock carried was astonishing: the *Sobraon* had on board three cows, ninety sheep, fifty large hogs, a number of suckling pigs and between 300 and 400 fowls, ducks and geese.[7] There are also good accounts of all the onboard activities – schooling, washing, sewing, cooking, religious observance, music making, bathing, dances, childbirth, not to mention the amorous dalliances that took place within the confines of the ship.

The Long Farewell was a labour of love carried out in Charlwood's retirement after his war service in Bomber Command as a navigator and later in Australian aviation. He became a prolific and very fine writer of many absorbing books[8] before he died in 2012 aged 96. *The Long Farewell* was last reprinted in 2005 and this 5th edition certainly does justice to his memory.

Don Charlwood, *The Long Farewell: the perilous voyages of settlers under sail in the great migrations to Australia,* 5th edition, Warrandyte, Vic.: Burgewood Books, 2015, 310 pages. Price $29.95.

PO Box 326, Warrandyte, 3113
Ph: 03 9844 2512.

Further reading

Patricia Tyron Macdonald, *Exiles and Emigrants: epic journeys to Australia in the Victorian era*, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2005.

Michael McGirr, 'Notable storyteller, compassionate yet unsentimental: Donald Ernest Cameron Charlwood, OAM [AM], navigator, air traffic controller, author ', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 2012 (available online).

Jane Sullivan, 'The Voyage of Nightmare: The Long Farewell, by Don Charlwood', *The Age*, 15 October 1981, p.11 (available online).

Endnotes

1 Published as *The Long Farewell: settlers under sail*, Ringwood: Allen Lane, 1981. Winner of the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards' Community Relations Commission Award in 1982.

2 A further three are reproduced in detail: Diary of John Fenwick, 1854; Diary of Fanny Davies, 1858; and Diary of Dr H.M. Lightoller, 1878.

3 As featured on the book's cover. The painter used himself and his wife as models – indeed, Madox Brown had considered emigration himself.

4 Patricia Tyron Macdonald, *Exiles and Emigrants: epic journeys to Australia in the Victorian era*, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2005, p.26. The painting *The Last of England* (1855), used on the front cover of the catalogue, was probably the most celebrated painting in the exhibition.

5 Brandy was often the only medicinal comfort for such passengers. One thinks of the medicine chest that people such as the La Trobe family took with them on such voyages.

6 Bridgetown, County Cork, February 1847, p.57.

7 Charlwood p.191. The *Sobraon* was a clipper ship which sailed between England and Australia in the last half of the nineteenth century.

8 A full list of Don Charlwood's other books are provided in this 5th edition.

The Virtuoso and the Count: La Trobe and Pourtalès with Washington Irving 1832

By Susan Priestley

Susan Priestley MA (Melb), RHSV Fellow and committee member of the La Trobe Society, is a practising historian with an interest in recovering lives and solving enigmas about people. Most recently she explored the life of the activist and feminist Henrietta Augusta Dugdale 1827-1918, published in 2011.

In July 2014, Susan took a chance opportunity during a family tour of the Hudson Valley to visit the Sleepy Hollow grave plot of America's first internationally acclaimed author, Washington Irving (1783-1859), whose renowned 'Legend of Sleepy Hollow' dates from 1820. Time did not allow a visit to the nearby Irving house Sunnyside, which expanded from a small cottage acquired in 1835, and was bequeathed as a museum, now promoted as a three-dimensional autobiography.[1] The visit prompted a reading of Irving's vividly evocative 'Tour of the Prairies', knowing that C J La Trobe and his youthful charge Count Albert de Pourtalès were among his companions. This paper seeks to distil the Irving account and offers comment on what is revealed about La Trobe's personality, attainments and subsequent career.

A *Tour on the Prairies*, published in 1835, is Washington Irving's account of an excursion in the autumn of 1832 through mid-west frontier country. He begins:

> [S]everal hundred miles beyond the Mississippi extends a vast tract… where there is neither to be seen the log house of the white man, nor the wigwam of the Indian. It consists of great grassy plains, interspersed with forests and groves and clumps of trees, and watered by the Arkansas, the grand Canadian, the Red River, and all their tributary streams. Over these fertile and verdant wastes still roam the Elk, the Buffalo, and the wild horse… These are the hunting grounds of the various tribes… the Osage, the Creek, the Delaware, and other tribes that have linked themselves with civilization, and live within the vicinity of the white settlements. Here resort also the Pawnees, the Comanches, and other fierce and as yet independent tribes, the nomads of the prairies… The region… forms a debatable ground of these warring… tribes. None of them presume to erect

> a permanent habitation… [H]unters and "braves" repair thither… during the season of game, throw up transient hunting camps… commit sad havoc among the innumerable herds that graze the prairies, and having loaded themselves with venison and Buffalo meat, warily retire from the dangerous neighbourhood.[2]

Irving had been invited on the excursion by a Connecticut man, Henry L. Ellsworth, one of three commissioners newly-appointed by President Andrew Jackson to help determine new tribal settlement areas under provisions of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, legislation that remains a matter of some historical contention. The commission included making contact with 'as yet independent tribes' in largely uncharted territory as far west as the Rockies. A generation earlier, at the request of President Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark's 'corps of discovery' had penetrated the Missouri River country upstream from St Louis.[3] Jackson's commissioners were to examine the country further south, with Ellsworth to be based at the Fort Gibson outpost in what is now Oklahoma State near its eastern border with Arkansas. The wooden compound on the Neosho or Grand River, now a museum site, had been set up about eight years previously.

Ellsworth had extended the invitation in the spring of 1832 at a chance meeting during a Lake Erie tour shortly after the famous author's return to America after seventeen years abroad. Included in the invitation were Irving's two companions, fellow passengers on the voyage back from Europe. They were readily persuaded to switch plans for touring the Canadian provinces to the excitement of the unknown Far West. 'Our little band', as Irving described their party, arrived at Fort Gibson early in October. Their journey had begun a month earlier, through Connecticut and Massachusetts to Lake Erie, by steamboat down the Ohio River to Louisville, then another west to St Louis on the Mississippi. Ellsworth had arranged to meet there with a local group assembled by Colonel A.P. Chouteau, from a pioneer French family of fur merchants and Indian traders over several generations.[4] The enlarged party, with baggage wagons and pack horses, followed the Missouri west to the frontier town of Independence, near modern Kansas City, before turning south to Fort Gibson. 'And here', wrote Irving,

> let me bear testimony to the merits of [our] worthy leader… a man in whom a course of legal practice and political life had not been able to vitiate an innate simplicity and benevolence of heart. The greater part of his days had been passed in the bosom of his family and the society of deacons, elders and select men on the peaceful banks of the Connecticut; when suddenly he had been called to mount his steed, shoulder his rifle and mingle among stark hunters, back woodsmen and naked savages, on the trackless wilds of the Far West.

Frederick Halpin, 1805-1880, engraver
Washington Irving, Sunnyside, Dec 15th 1851
Engraving, after a portrait by Charles Martin
Darlington Digital Library,
University of Pittsburgh

Others are then introduced:

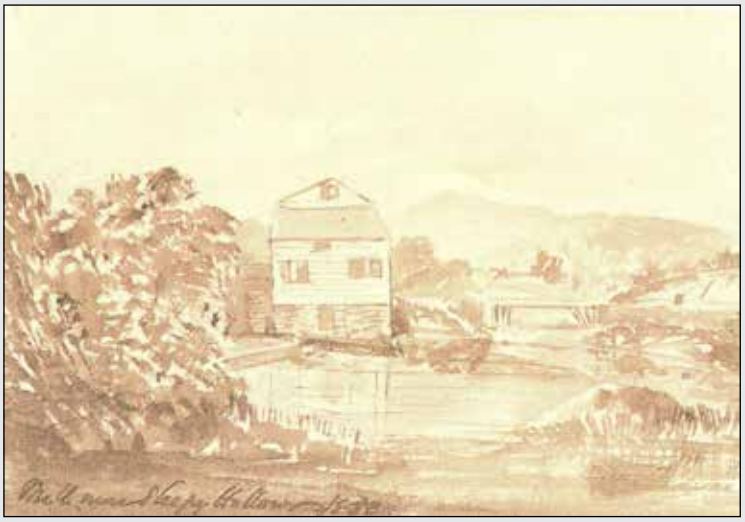
> Mr L– [Charles Joseph La Trobe], an Englishman by birth, but descended from foreign stock… had all the buoyancy and accommodating spirit of a native of the Continent. Having rambled over many countries he had become, to a certain degree, a citizen of the world, easily adapting himself to any change. He was a man of a thousand occupations; a botanist, a geologist, a hunter of beetles and butterflies, a musical amateur, a sketcher of no mean pretensions, in short a complete virtuoso; added to which he was an indefatigable, if not always a very successful sportsman. Never had a man more irons in the fire, and consequently never was a man more busy or more cheerful.
>
> My third fellow traveller… had accompanied the former from Europe… being apt… to give occasional perplexity and disquiet to his mentor. He was a young Swiss Count [Comte Albert-Alexandre de Pourtalès], scarce twenty one years of

age, full of talent and spirit, but galliard [*high-spirited*] in the extreme, and prone to every kind of wild adventure.

[As well as] my comrades, I must not pass over unnoticed a personage of inferior rank, but of all pervading and all prevalent importance: the squire, the groom, the cook, the tent man, in a word the factotum, and I may say the universal meddler and marplot [*spoiler, hinderer*] of our party. This was a little swarthy, meagre, wiry French Creole… familiarly dubbed Tonish… who had passed a scrambling life sometimes among white men… traders, missionaries and Indian agents… sometimes among Indians… mingling with the Osage hunters. We picked him up at St Louis, near which he had a small farm, an Indian wife and a brood of half blood children… He spoke a jargon of mingled French, English and Osage… [and] was, withal, a notorious braggart and a liar of the first water.

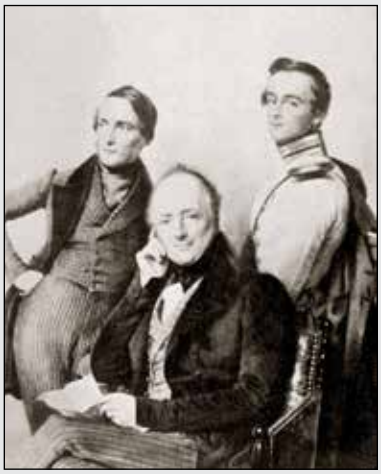
During the latter part of our [journey] we had pressed forward in hope of arriving… in time to accompany the Osage hunters on their autumnal visit to the Buffalo prairies. Indeed the imagination of the young Count had become completely excited... [T]he stories little Tonish told him of the Indian braves and Indian beauties, of hunting buffaloes and catching wild horses, had set him all agog for a dash into savage life. He was a bold and hard rider, and longed to be scouring the hunting grounds. It was amusing to hear his youthful anticipations… and still more amusing to listen to the gasconadings [*extravagant boasting*] of little Tonish, who volunteered to be his faithful squire in all his perilous undertakings.

On their arrival at Fort Gibson, Ellsworth found that a newly-raised 'company of mounted rangers or riflemen' had left three days earlier 'to make a wide exploring tour, from the Arkansas to the Red River, including a part of the Pawnee hunting grounds where no white men had as yet penetrated'. Since that 'very country' was intended for settlement by some of the tribes already 'linked to civilization', it was arranged that the Ellsworth/Chouteau group would meet up with the rangers and travel under their protection. La Trobe and Pourtalès had stopped off at an Osage settlement a little way from the fort, so



Charles Joseph La Trobe, 1801-1875, artist
Mill near Sleepy Hollow, 1833
Pencil and sepia wash on paper
Collection: National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Deposited on long-term loan in the Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

> We sent word to the young count and Mr L–… of our new plan and prospects, and invited them to accompany us. The Count, however, could not forego the delights he had promised himself in mingling with absolutely savage life. In reply he agreed to keep with us until we should come upon the trail of the Osage hunters,



Franz Krüger, 1797–1857, artist
Comte Frédéric de Pourtalès and his sons [1836]
Drawing
Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel
Albert-Alexander de Pourtalès, left, and his younger brother Guillaume, right

when it was his fixed resolve to strike off into the wilderness in pursuit of them; and his faithful mentor, though he grieved at the madness of the scheme was too staunch a friend to desert him… We found the Count and… the Virtuoso ready for the march… [and well] provided for hunting… having, in addition to the steeds which they used for travelling, others of prime quality which were to be led when on the march, and only to be mounted for the chase.[5]

Looking 'to procure another attendant' in addition to Tonish and the somewhat lazy Antoine, Ellsworth was recommended 'Pierre Beatte, a half breed of French and Osage parentage… acquainted with all parts of the country, having traversed it… both in hunting and war parties; …he would be of use both as guide and interpreter, and… was a first rate hunter'. Beatte proved to be a well-seasoned campaigner**:**

> Finding that he was in government employ, being engaged by the commissioner, he had drawn rations of flour and bacon, and put them up so as to be weatherproof. In addition to a horse for the road, and for ordinary service, he had another for hunting. This was a mixed breed like himself, being a cross of the domestic stock with the wild horse of the prairies; and a noble steed it was, of generous spirit, fine action and admirable bottom. He had taken care to have his horses well shod… [and] came prepared at all points for war and hunting: his rifle on his shoulder, his powder horn and bullet pouch at his side, his hunting knife stuck in his belt, and coils of cordage at his saddle bow, which we were told were lariats, or noosed cords, used in catching the wild horse. Thus equipped and provided, an Indian hunter on a prairie is like a cruiser on the ocean, perfectly independent of the world...; he can cast himself loose from every one, shape his own course, and take care of his own fortunes. I thought Beatte seemed to feel his independence, and to consider himself superior to us all… He maintained a half proud, half sullen look, and a great taciturnity… in perfect contrast to our vapouring, chattering, bustling little Frenchman… [who] seemed jealous of this newcomer.[6]

On the second day out, they met up with a mounted brave leading a farm horse that had wandered into an outlying Osage settlement. Its viciously ungrateful owner remained hostile, but the rest of the party was

> prepossessed in… favour [of] the youthful Osage; the young count especially… Nothing would suit but he must have [him] as a companion and squire… The youth was easily tempted, and, with the prospect of a safe range over the buffalo prairies and the promise of a new blanket, he turned his bridle, left the swamp and the encampment of his friends… and set off to follow the count in his wanderings… [The count indeed] seemed more enchanted than ever with the wild chivalry of the prairies, … talked of putting on Indian dress and adopting Indian habits during the time he hoped to pass with the Osages.

Albert-Alexander de Pourtalès, 1812–1861, artist
Pencillings by the way, 1832
Pencil sketch
Archives de l'Etat, Neuchâtel
La Trobe sketching on horseback

Later that day Beatte identified the tracks of the Osage hunters, so

> the young count and his companion prepared to take leave of us. The most experienced frontiers men in the troop remonstrated on the hazard of the undertaking. They were about to throw themselves loose in the wilderness, with no other guides, guards or attendants than a young ignorant half breed [Antoine] and a still younger Indian. They were embarrassed by a pack horse and two led horses, with which they would have to make their way through matted forests, and across rivers and morasses. The Osages and the Pawnees were at war and they might fall in with some warrior party of the latter…; besides, their small number and their valuable horses would form a great temptation to some of the straggling bands of Osages… who might rob them of their horses in the night, and leave them destitute and on foot in the midst of the prairies.
>
> Nothing however could restrain the romantic ardour of the Count… His travelling companion, of discreeter age, and calmer temperament, was convinced of the rashness of the enterprise, but he could not control the impetuous zeal of his youthful friend, and he was too loyal to leave him pursue his hazardous scheme alone. To our great regret… we saw them strike off on their haphazard expedition.

Hoping for a change of mind, the rest of the troop travelled on slowly and made camp mid afternoon. Not long afterwards 'we heard a halloo from a distance and beheld the young count and his party advancing through the forest. We welcomed them… with heartfelt satisfaction… A short experience had convinced them of the toil and difficulty'.[7]

The young brave remained with them for some days before slipping away, persuaded by wiser Osages of the danger of becoming a trophy capture of the Pawnees. In the interim, Irving took pleasure in observing him with the Count:

> Never was preux chevalier [*gallant knight*] better suited with an esquire. The Count was well mounted… a bold and graceful rider… fond of caracolling [*prancing*] his horse, and dashing about in the buoyancy of youthful spirits. His dress was a gay Indian hunting frock of dressed deer skin… dyed a beautiful purple and fancifully embroidered with silks of various colours… With this he wore leathern pantaloons and moccasins, a foraging cap and a double barrelled gun slung on a bandaleer athwart his back… quite a picturesque figure as he managed gracefully his spirited steed.
>
> The young Osage… behind him on his wild and beautifully mottled horse… decorated with crimson tufts of hair… rode with his finely shaped head and bust naked; his blanket being girt round his waist. He carried his rifle in one hand and managed his horse with the other, and seemed ready to dash off at a moment's warning with his youthful leader on any mad cap foray or scamper… [We all took] a great fancy to him from his handsome, frank and manly appearance, and the easy grace of his deportment. He was indeed a native born gentleman.[8]

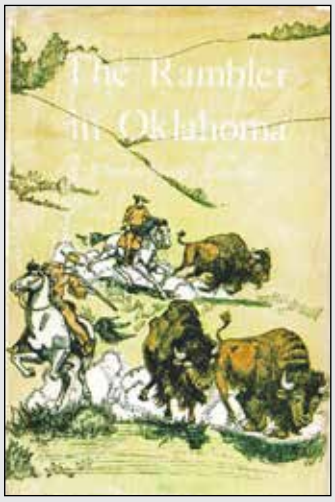
In the ensuing weeks, the expedition pressed on for about two hundred miles, finding

their way across rivers, through tangled forests, morass and ridged prairie, searching in vain for the Pawnee. Fresh rations were secured in hunting wildfowl, bear, elk, deer and on one occasion, to Irving's disgust, a skunk. A delicacy was honeycomb from wild bees. Capturing wild horses was a constant focus for Beatte, but the prime goal of the party was always the great buffalo of the prairie. When a herd was finally located, plans were made with great excitement for the following day. Two hours' ride south of the camp they emerged

> from the dreary belt of the "Cross Timber" and to our infinite delight beheld "The Great Prairie" stretching… before us. We could distinctly trace the meandering course of the Main Canadian and various smaller streams, by the strips of green forest that bordered them… There is always an expansion of feeling in looking upon these boundless and fertile wastes; but I was doubly conscious of it after emerging from our "close dungeon of innumerous boughs".

Spotting some wild horses, Beatte diverted to go after them**:**

> While we were waiting for his return we perceived two buffalo bulls descending a slope towards a stream which wound through a ravine fringed with trees. The young count and myself endeavoured to get near them under covert of the trees. They discovered us while we were yet three or four hundred yards off, and… retreated up the rising ground. We urged our horses across the ravine and gave chase. The immense weight of head and shoulders causes the buffalo to labour heavily up hill, but it accelerates the descent. We had the advantage, therefore, and gained rapidly upon the fugitives, though it was difficult to get our horses to approach them, their very scent inspiring them with terror. The Count, who had a double barrelled gun loaded with ball, fired but missed. The bulls now altered their course, and galloped downhill with headlong rapidity. As they ran in different directions we each singled one out and separated… [My] brace of veteran brass barrelled pistols which I had borrowed at Fort Gibson… had evidently seen some service. Pistols are very effective in buffalo hunting, as the hunter can ride up close to the animal and fire at it while at full speed; whereas the long heavy rifle… cannot be easily managed, nor discharged with accurate aim from horseback. My object, therefore, was to get within pistolshot… no very easy matter. I was well mounted, on a horse… that seemed eager for the chase… but the moment he came nearly parallel [with the buffalo] he would keep sheering off with… every symptom of aversion and alarm… Buffalo, when pressed close by a hunter, has an aspect the most diabolical. His two short black horns curve out of a huge frontlet of shaggy hair, his eyes glow like coals; his mouth is open, his tongue parched and drawn up into a half crescent, his tail is erect and the tufted end whisking about in the air… a perfect picture of mingled rage and terror… I urged my horse sufficiently near when taking aim… [but] to my chagrin both pistols missed fire… [T]he buffalo… turned with a sudden snort and rushed upon me. My horse wheeled about as if on a pivot, and made a convulsive spring… Three or four bounds… carried us out of reach of the enemy… [who] quickly resumed his flight.



Dustjacket of The Rambler in Oklahoma
Oklahoma City: Harlow, 1955
The book consists of six letters, XI-XVI, from La Trobe's The Rambler in North America

Another tilt proved just as fruitless with the buffalo ultimately half tumbling, half flinging itself down the steep crumbling cliff of a ravine, making pursuit too dangerous. The 'long, heedless gallop' had left Irving out of sight of his companions in

a lonely waste… of undulating swells of land, naked and uniform… The day too was overcast, so that I could not guide myself by the sun… [and had] to retrace the track my horse had made in coming... [sometimes invisible in] the parched herbage…

After pursuing my way for some time I descried a horseman on the edge of a distant hill and soon recognized him to be the Count. He had been equally unsuccessful with myself; we were shortly afterwards joined by the Virtuoso who, spectacles on nose, had made one or two ineffectual shots from horseback.

We determined not to seek the camp until we had made one more effort. Casting our eyes about… we descried a herd of buffalo about two miles distant, scattered apart and grazing quietly near a strip of trees and bushes… We now formed our plan to circumvent the herd, and by getting on the other side of them to hunt them in the direction where we knew our camp to be situated: otherwise the pursuit might… render it impossible… to find our way back before nightfall. Taking a wide circuit… we succeeded in getting round the herd without disturbing it. It consisted of about forty head, bulls, cows and calves. Separating to some distance, we now approached slowly in a parallel line… [The animals began] to move off quietly, stopping at every step or two to graze, when suddenly a bull that, unobserved by us had been taking his siesta under a clump of trees to our left, roused himself… and hastened to join his companion; …the game had taken the alarm. We quickened our pace, they broke into a gallop and now commenced a full chase.

As the ground was level they shouldered along with great speed, following each other in a line; two or three bulls bringing up the rear, the last of whom, from his enormous size and venerable frontlet and beard of sunburnt hair, looked like the patriarch of the herd… At length I succeeded [at getting my horse] within pistolshot, but was again balked by my pistols missing fire. My companions, whose horses were less fleet, and more way worn, could not overtake the herd; at length Mr L-, who was in the rear of the line and losing ground, levelled his double barrelled gun and fired a long raking shot. It struck a buffalo just above the loins, broke its back bone and brought it to the ground. He stopped and alighted to dispatch his prey… [So] borrowing his gun which yet had a charge… in it, I… again overtook the herd which was thundering along pursued by the Count. With my present weapon there was no need [to get] to close quarters; [so] galloping along parallel… I singled out a buffalo and by a fortunate shot brought it down… The ball had struck a vital part; it could not move… but lay… struggling in mortal agony, while the rest of the herd kept on their headlong career…

Dismounting I advanced to contemplate my victim. I am nothing of a sportsman: I had been prompted to this unwonted exploit by the magnitude of the game and the excitement of an adventurous chase. Now that the excitement was over I could not but look with commiseration upon the poor animal that lay struggling and bleeding at my feet… It seemed as if I had inflicted pain in proportion to the bulk of my victim… as if there were a hundred fold greater waste of life than there would have been in the destruction of an animal of [lesser] size… It now became an act of mercy to give him his quietus… To inflict a wound thus in cool blood I found a totally different thing from firing in the heat of the chase. Taking aim, however… my pistol for once proved true; the ball must have passed through the heart, for the animal gave one convulsive throe and expired.

While I stood meditating and moralizing over the wreck I had so wantonly produced… I was rejoined by… the Virtuoso, who, being a man of universal adroitness and withal more experienced and hardened in the gentle art of "venerie" [*hunting*] soon managed to carve out the tongue of the buffalo, and delivered it to me to bear back to the camp as a trophy.

Concern then turned to the whereabouts of the Count who had been 'long lost to view'. Evening was coming on and if they were to go after him, all traces might be lost in the gloom and themselves left 'too much bewildered' to find their way back to camp. The weary horses were therefore turned in that direction, with

Susan Priestley, photographer
Irving family grave plot, Tarrytown, N.Y., 2015
Photographed a week after Independence Day which explains the planted flags

Susan Priestley, photographer
Irving family plaque, Tarrytown, N.Y., 2015

plans for a search party if the Count had not returned. Night fell before they were anywhere close and they

> began to think of bivouacking under the lee of some thicket. We had implements to strike a light; there was plenty of wood at hand, and the tongues of our buffaloes would furnish us with a repast. Just as we were preparing to dismount we heard the report of a rifle, and shortly after the notes of a bugle calling up the night guard. Pushing forward in that direction the camp fires soon broke upon our sight, gleaming at a distance… among the thick groves of an alluvial bottom… [W]e found… a scene of rude hunters' revelry and wassail… [after] a grand day's sport in which all had taken part. Eight buffaloes had been killed. Roaring fires were blazing on every side; all hands were feasting on roasted joints, broiled marrow bones, and the juicy hump, far-famed among the epicures of the prairies. Right glad were we to dismount and partake of the sturdy cheer, for we had been on our weary horses since morning without tasting food.

On the following morning

> without any tidings of the Count [the party] began to feel uneasiness lest, having no compass to aid him he might perplex himself and wander in some opposite direction… [W]hat made us more anxious… was that he had no provisions with him, was totally unversed in "wood craft", and liable to fall into the hands of some lurking or straggling party of savages.

A party of volunteers set out on the search, with La Trobe and Irving leading them first to the buffalo carcasses of the previous day to find 'a legion of ravenous wolves… already gorging upon them'. At the place where Irving and the Count had separated, Beatte and Antoine

> immediately distinguished the track of his horse amidst the trampings of the buffalos, and set off at a round pace… for upwards of a mile when they came to where the herd had divided and run hither and thither… Here the track of the horses' hoofs wandered and doubled and often crossed each other... While we were… waiting until they should unravel the maze… Beatte suddenly gave a short Indian whoop or rather yelp, and pointed to… a horseman on the summit [of] a distant hill. "It is the Count!' cried Beatte, and set off at full gallop, followed by the whole company. In a few moments he checked his horse. Another figure on horseback had appeared on the brow of the hill.

Knowing that the Count had been alone, the horsemen's identity was hotly debated. The possibility that they were scouts from a party of Pawnees who had captured the count 'had an electric effect upon the little troop. In an instant every horse was at full speed… the young rangers [setting] up wild yelps of exultation at

the thought of having a brush with the Indians'. All were deflated on reaching the brow of the hill that the horsemen were from their own camp standing over a buffalo they had just killed.

Returning to the maze of tracks, Beatte and Antoine finally detected where the Count's track

> became single and separate, wandering here and there… but always tending in a direction opposite to that of the camp… [He had] evidently… endeavoured to find his way [back] but had become bewildered as the evening shades thickened… and had completely mistaken the points of the compass.

Irving described in awe their trackers' patient and meticulous methods, until finally

> after crossing a stream, in the crumbling banks of which the hooves of the horse were deeply dinted we came upon a high dry prairie, where… [not] a footprint was to be discerned, though they searched in every direction, and Beatte… coming to a pause, shook his head most despondingly.
>
> Just then a small herd of deer, roused from a neigbouring ravine came bounding by us. Beatte sprang from his horse, levelled his rifle and wounded one slightly, but without bringing it to the ground. The report of the rifle was almost immediately followed by a long halloo from a distance. We looked around but could see nothing. Another long halloo was heard and at length a horseman was descried emerging out of a skirt of forest. A single glance showed him to be the young count; there was a universal shout and scamper, every one setting off at full gallop to greet him. It was a joyful meeting to both parties, for much anxiety had been felt… on account of his youth and inexperience, and for his part, with all his love of adventure, he seemed right glad to be once more among friends.

***

La Trobe's less immediate, more reflective account of the excursion forms a significant part of *The Rambler in North America*,[9] which was published in the same year as Irving's Tour. John Barnes reviewed The Rambler in his 2003 article on La Trobe as traveller and writer. He enlarged the context of the relationship with Pourtalès and pointed up a likely element of competitiveness between La Trobe and Irving in pursuing a market for their books.[10] A more recent article by Dianne Reilly examined the whole three years in the North American continent, with appropriate relatively brief reference to the few months spent with Irving.[11]

The Irving distillation provided above offers a more intimate close-up view of the prairie tour, culminating in the buffalo hunt and Pourtalès' dramatic recovery from the wilderness. It has enlarged my appreciation of several aspects of La Trobe, some quite unexpected.

His expert horsemanship is made apparent, and so is his expertise in hunting culture and etiquette, 'universal adroitness' in Irving's words, that had plainly been absorbed in his youth. He shared in the exhilaration of the chase and did not shy from its bloodiness or the hard riding involved. Experience of self-sufficiency in the wild and the risks when seasonal nature was disregarded – food and forage were practically exhausted before they got back to Fort Gibson – were salutary lessons for his later exploratory rides in Victoria. On a psychological level, his subtle handling of the high-spirited Count would have afforded some insight into the complexities of parenting, although it is debatable how far he concurred with Irving's conclusion about the wild free athleticism enjoyed by the young rangers in camp:

> I can conceive of nothing more likely to set the youthful blood into a flow than a wild wood life… [in] a magnificent wilderness abounding with game and fruitful of adventure. We send our [American] youth abroad to grow luxurious and effeminate in Europe; it appears to me that a previous tour on the prairies would be more likely to produce that manliness, simplicity and self dependence most in unison with our political institutions.[12]

More grist to the mill in his future career as colonial administrator was adapting to the variety of personality and culture among the excursionists and others encountered in his journeying, and being able to observe firsthand the American government's implementation of a new 'native policy'.

La Trobe's *Rambler in North America* is fully appreciative of all the experience gained. It has a warm dedication**:**

> To
> Washington Irving, Esq.
> These volumes
> are
> inscribed,
> In token of affectionate esteem
> and remembrance,
> by
> The Author

The 'affectionate esteem' endured until Irving's death on 28 November 1859 at the family home in Tarrytown on the upper Hudson River. He was buried in the graveyard of the Old Dutch (Reformed) Church, which until the 20th century was the general burial place for the district now encompassing Tarrytown. My appreciation of Irving is focused on his fresh vivid portrayal of a slice in the life of Charles Joseph La Trobe.

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1 Website: http://www.hudsonvalley.org/historic-sites/washington-irvings-sunnyside (accessed 12 May 2015).

2 Collected in Washington Irving, *Three Western Narratives*, New York: Literary Classics of the United States Inc., 2004, pp.13-16 (accessible online).

3 The journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark have been published in many editions since 1806. 'A New Selection with an Introduction by John Bakeless', Mentor: Penguin Group, 1964, is the source used here.

4 Douglas A. Hurt, 'Chouteau Family', *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, http://www.okhistory.org/publications/encyclopediaonline (accessed 12 May 2015)**.**

5 Irving, pp.18, 21.

6 Ibid, pp.21-24.

7 Ibid, pp.29-31.

8 Ibid, pp.32-33, 36-37.

9 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *The Rambler in North America, 1832-1833*. London: R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside, 1835. Vol.1, pp.144-242 (accessible via the La Trobe Society website).

10 John Barnes, 'Hunting the Buffalo with Washington Irving', *The La Trobe Journal,* no.71, autumn 2003, pp.43-66 (accessible via the La Trobe Society website).

11 Dianne Reilly, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe: the rambler in North America', *La Trobeana*, vol.9, no.2, July 2010, pp.8-17 (available on the La Trobe Society website).

12 Irving, p.44.

La Trobe's Cottage Report

The Cottage reopened for weekly guided tours on Sunday 4 October, which was 176 years since Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived in Melbourne on Thursday 3 October 1839. Summer openings coordinated by Helen Botham will continue until the end of April.

On Saturday 11 July a small gathering of La Trobe Society members and Friends, who were donors to the servants' quarters roof appeal, celebrated with a glass of bubbles the nailing of the last shingle by Hallam Whittle of AC Roofing, who led the excellent team in replacing the roof. The appeal for the new roof was subscribed very quickly from members, in conjunction with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Martin Purslow, CEO of the National Trust in Victoria, thanked those present for their generosity.

The Cottage and the servants' quarters are now waterproof and safe from the ingress of possums and rodents. With the repairs carried out when the re-roofing was done, the Cottage is now in an excellent state. The fence that was erected a few years ago, and the work done by Sandi Pullman and her band of helpers in the surrounding gardens, has made La Trobe's Cottage a show piece.

All the volunteer guides, receptionists and garden volunteers have been offered complimentary membership of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage as a small thank-you for their much appreciated efforts.

John Drury OAM
Chair, Friends of La Trobe's Cottage

Forthcoming events

NOVEMBER

Saturday 7

Mini Book Sale – New and used books related to La Trobe
Time: 2.00 – 4.00 pm
Venue: Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne (adjacent to La Trobe's Cottage)

Wednesday 25

Cocktails at Parliament
Time: 6.00 – 8.00 pm
Venue: Federation Room, Parliament House, Melbourne
Speaker: Mr Murray Thompson MP
Topic: La Trobe: A Spring Street Perspective.
Refreshments
Admission: $65.00 per person

DECEMBER

Sunday 6

Service to mark the Anniversary of the Death of C J La Trobe
Time: 11.00 am
Venue: St Peter's Eastern Hill, 15 Gisborne Street, Melbourne
Refreshments

2016

MARCH

Sunday 20

La Trobe's Birthday Celebration
Time: 4.00 – 6.00 pm
Venue: Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne
Guest Speaker: Martin Green, Learning Manager, National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Topic: Heritage at Your Touch! The National Trust (Victoria) has recently introduced new approaches in education and museum exhibitions to engage visitors, students and the general public. These include using new 3D technology that maps spaces, including La Trobe's Cottage, in three dimensions.
Refreshments
Admission: $20.00 (members); $25.00 (non-members); $5.00 (children)

APRIL

Tuesday 12

Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Annual Lecture
Time: 6.30 – 8.00 pm
Venue: Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive, Melbourne
Speaker: Irene Kearsey, La Trobe Society member, La Trobe's Cottage volunteer and dedicated historian
Topic: La Trobe's First Immigrants: the 1839 Voyage of the *David Clark*
Admission: $15.00 (members); $20.00 (non-members)

JUNE

Tuesday 21

Joint La Trobe Society/RHSV AGL Shaw Lecture
Time: 6.30 – 8.00 pm
Venue: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Cnr William and A'Beckett Streets, Melbourne
Guest Speaker: Dr Marguerita Stephens, University of Melbourne Redmond Barry Fellow 2013
Topic: Protector William Thomas (tbc)

JULY

Friday 15

Melbourne Rare Book Week Lecture
Time: 6.30 – 8.30 pm
Venue: 401 Collins Street, Melbourne.
Admission: No charge

AUGUST

Wednesday 3

La Trobe Society Annual General Meeting and Dinner
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Lyceum Club, Ridgway Place, Melbourne

Back Issues

Back issues of La Trobeana are available on the Society's website, except for those published in the last twelve months.
The back issues may be accessed at www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html
They may be searched by keyword.

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
www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html.

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BACK COVER
La Trobe Family coat of arms

INSIDE FRONT COVER
Charles Joseph La Trobe's coat of arms, taken from his bookplate


"Qui la cèrca, la trova"