



La Trobeana

The Newsletter of the La Trobe Society of Australia

Grevillea La Trobeana Engraving by Edward La Trobe Bateman - La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2004

Joint RHSV/La Trobe Society AGL Shaw La Trobe Lecture

Tuesday 15 June, 5.30 pm at RHSV, A'Beckett Street, Melbourne.

Speaker: Mr Paul Fox 'The First Primrose from England: sentiment and reality in gardening, early Port Phillip'

Annual General Meeting

To be held on **Tuesday 24 August** at the National Trust (Victoria), Tasma Terrace, Melbourne at 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm. Our speaker will be Mr Peter Lovell, Director, Allom Lovell & Associates, who will give a talk on his family and the West Indies within the context of La Trobe's interest and time spent there. Refreshments provided.

Christmas Cocktails

Will be held again at University House on **Tuesday 7 December**, 6.30 – 8.30 pm. Mark your diary now!

The Hugenot Society of Australia:

The following is a message from Robert Nash, the President of the Hugenot Society of Australia::

The Hugenot Society of Australia welcomes anyone interested in the Hugenots and their history. We have regular talks in Sydney, and there will be at least two talks in Melbourne too in 2004. We also publish a newsletter, and offer advice to members on Hugenot family history research.

For more information log onto our website

<http://members.optushome.com.au/ozhug/>
or e-mail us on ozhug@optushome.com.au



Ferdinand Mueller and Charles La Trobe¹

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

¹ This article draws on the letters collected together by the Ferdinand von Mueller Correspondence Project. I am grateful to my project colleagues Sara Maroske and Helen Cohn for their suggestions and comments.

District who knew anything about the subject.² La Trobe had occasionally collected plant specimens on his various tours through the District that he sent to the herbarium at Neuchâtel in Switzerland. These specimens were examined by Carl Friedrich Meisner, Professor of Botany at Basel University and when describing plants collected in Australia by Ludwig Preiss he honoured La Trobe by dedicating a new genus of bush pea, *Latrobea*, to him.³

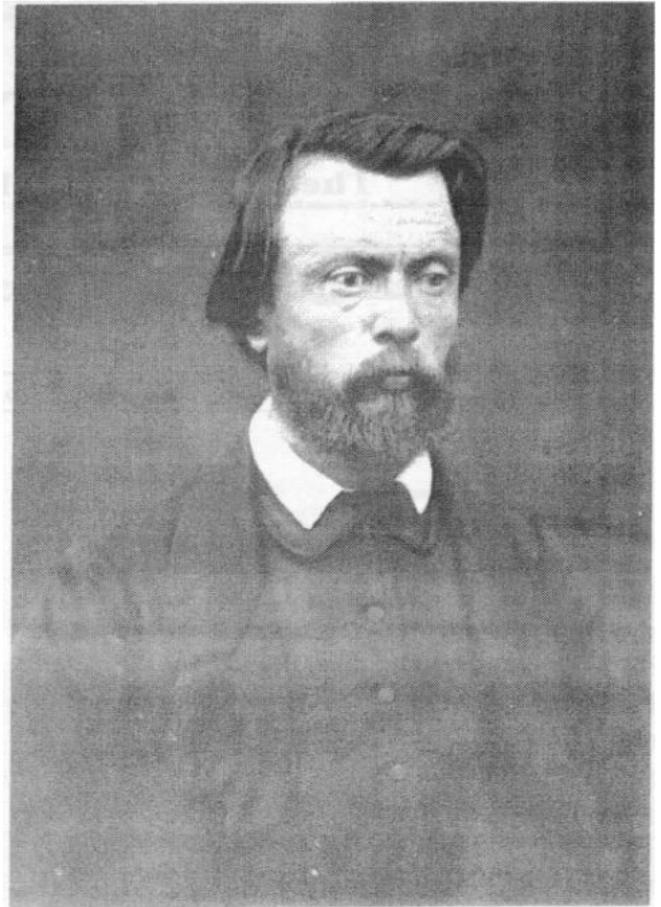
In July 1852 La Trobe had the opportunity to indulge his botanical interests as well as further the interests of the Colony. He received a letter from the well known English naturalist William Swainson, then in New South Wales, offering his services to undertake a botanical survey of the Colony for one year. La Trobe accepted this offer, but as it turned out the results of Swainson's work were very disappointing. Shortly after receiving this offer, La Trobe would have been surprised and pleased to meet a university-trained German botanist, Ferdinand Mueller, who carried a letter of introduction to La Trobe from the Adelaide merchant Francis Dutton. La Trobe mentioned Mueller in a letter to the Tasmanian naturalist Robert Gunn:

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

² Maroske, S. & Cohn, H. M., 1992, 'Such Ingenious Birds': Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria. *Muelleria* 7(4), p. 537.

³ Meisner, C. F., 1848, in Lehmann, J.G.C. (ed.), 1844-48, *Plantae preissianae...* (Meissner, Hamburg) 2 (2-3), p. 219. Species of this genus are endemic to Western Australia

⁴ Charles LaTrobe to Ronald Gunn, 8 October 1853, Gunn correspondence, Mitchell Library, Sydney. The description copied by Mueller is in the La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria. The acacia was *Acacia latrobei* Meisner in Lehmann (1844-5), vol. 1, p. 10. The specimen on which the description was based was collected by La Trobe in Port Phillip and sent to the Neuchâtel Herbarium. It is currently regarded as a synonym of *Acacia acinacea* Lindley.



Ferdinand Mueller, 1861.

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

Mueller had arrived in South Australia in December 1847. He was a qualified pharmacist, who had undertaken university studies in botany at Kiel University and made extensive botanical investigations in the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein where he lived. His parents and one sister had died of tuberculosis, so Mueller decided to take himself and his two surviving sisters to what he regarded as a healthier climate. He initially chose the island of Madeira,⁶ but shortly before departure he seems to have been persuaded, apparently by the Hamburg pharmacist and botanist Wilhelm Sonder, to go to South Australia instead. No doubt this

⁵ Maroske & Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 538; R.W. Home *et al.* (eds), 1998, *Regardsfully Yours: Selected correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller* (Lang, Bern), volume 1 1840-1859, pp. 138, 766, 767.

⁶ Mueller's Reisepass or passport No. 317, dated Altona, 8 July 1847, (Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Library) was filled out for Madeira, but then altered to Port Adelaide.

was because it would give Mueller the opportunity to pursue botany in an area that was still relatively unknown botanically and so had much to offer the botanical collector.

We know from family correspondence that Mueller never intended to stay in Australia. When his sisters were settled, it was his intention to return to Schleswig and purchase a pharmacy there using part of a family legacy. In 1849 his uncle was negotiating with the owner of the Husum pharmacy where Mueller had undertaken his apprenticeship with a view to Ferdinand taking it over. The outbreak of war between the Danish Government and the German speaking inhabitants of the two duchies was one reason that prevented his return.⁷ Another was probably money, given that he wanted to pursue his love of botany and to do that he needed to travel to collect plants. Collecting trips cost money and took him away from paid employment as a pharmacist in Adelaide. By 1851 he was sending part of his collections to Europe, where Sonder arranged their description and sale.⁸

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

might present itself - could have effected in the time & under the circumstances'.¹⁰

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

Mueller wrote extensive reports on his botanical findings during this first excursion which were avidly read by La Trobe. Mueller's first report, dated 27 June 1853, bears the annotation by La Trobe "Let me have all these reports from the outset".¹² In August 1853 Mueller proposed another trip through the western half of the colony and the Victorian Alps from which he returned in April 1854. On a third excursion undertaken after La Trobe had departed and Charles Hotham had taken over as the new Governor, Mueller ascended the Bogong Range discovering two high mountains. In his annual report he solicited 'His Excellency's permission to name the grandest of both Mt Hotham, and the second in height Mt Latrobe'. Unfortunately Mueller's compass bearings taken to locate these two mountains as well as other features named by him were inaccurate owing to the magnetic interference of basalt in the vicinity and his names were not used. Mueller's Mt Latrobe is now known as Mt Loch. Mt Hotham and Mt Latrobe did come into use, but applied to other features.¹³

None of Mueller's reports were addressed to La Trobe of course. As a proper public servant, all his correspondence was addressed to his immediate superior the Colonial Secretary, William Lonsdale, but all official reports were read by La Trobe as head of government and bear his initials that he had read them.¹⁴ Because of his interest, La Trobe also had copies made of some, if not all, of Mueller's reports which he retained for his

⁷ Voigt, J. & Sinkora, D.M., 1996, Ferdinand (von) Müller in Schleswig-Holstein, or: The making of a scientist and of a migrant. *Historical Records of Australian Science* 11(1), p. 28.

⁸ W. Sonder to Eduard Fenzl, 15 November 1852 (Archiv der Universität, Wien). The price for Mueller's plants was 8 Reichstalers per 100 specimens, a little over £1 Sterling.

⁹ *Melbourne Commercial Directory for 1853 p. 30.*

¹⁰ Home *et al. op. cit.* pp. 786-769

¹¹ Annotation by La Trobe on letter by Mueller, dated Alberton 10 May 1853, informing La Trobe that he had forwarded an account of his journey by ship and requesting a quiet place to commence his work of describing them during the winter months. Public Record of Victoria VPRS 3991, unit 408, letter 53/4945.

¹² R.W. Home *et al. op. cit.* p. 149.

¹³ Gillbank, L., 1992, Alpine botanical expeditions of Ferdinand Mueller. *Muelleria* 7(4), pp. 478, 481.

¹⁴ Home *et al. op. cit.* p. 149.

own use.¹⁵ A copy of Mueller's report of 5 September 1853 was sent by La Trobe to the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the comment that:

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

It is also clear from the correspondence and reports that though there is very little direct official correspondence between the two men, La Trobe and Mueller did meet and discuss Mueller's work and findings. One letter, written whilst Mueller was still in the field from Angus McMillan's property, Bushy Park, in Gippsland, was probably addressed to La Trobe personally because Mueller feared that La Trobe would have departed before Mueller's return and he would not have the opportunity to thank La Trobe. It runs as follows:

Bushy park, 14 March 1854

Sir

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

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

If my progress is not interrupted by unforeseen obstacles, I hope to increase during my next excursion to Mount Wellington and some other outskirts of the Australian alps my collections from this season to nearly 600 species, which, added to about 1000 phanerogamic and 200 cryptogamic plants of last year, would leave hardly more than 200 Victoria plants undiscovered, presuming that this colony possesses about 2000 really indigenous and well marked species.

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

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

His Excellency Governor La Trobe,
&c &c &c
Melbourne¹⁷

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

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

Melbourne bot. & zool
Garden 16 Aug 1859

My dear Mr LaTrobe

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

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

¹⁵ Copies held in La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

¹⁶ Home *et al. op. cit.*, p. 164.

¹⁷ La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

¹⁸ Home *et al. op. cit.*, p. 179, 185.

My work on the plants of Victoria, which you, much beloved Sir, so kindly & generously initiated, is now under the press and many beautiful illustrations for it are prepared. My multifarious duties do not render it possible to make much rapid progress with it, yet I hope, - si fata velint¹⁹ - to send you the first fascicle before the end of the year. Our mutual venerable friend, Sir William Hooker, takes in my labours as lively an interest as ever.

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

grateful
Ferd. Mueller
C.J. Latrobe Esq. C.B.
&c &c &c.²⁰

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

To Dr Ferdinand Müller
with kind regards
C.J. La Trobe
Nov 1859²¹

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

Thomas A. Darragh
Museum Victoria

References

L. Gilbank, 1992. *Alpine botanical expeditions of Ferdinand Mueller*. *Muelleria* 7(4), pp. 473-489.

¹⁹ If fate wishes.

²⁰ La Trobe papers, Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

²¹ This volume is held at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Library.

R. Home, A.M. Lucas, S. Maroske, D.M. Sinkora and J.H. Voigt (eds). *Regards Yours: Selected Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller. Volume 1: 1840-1859*, Bern, Lang, 1998.

S. Maroske & H. M. Cohn, 1992. 'Such ingenious Birds': *Ferdinand Mueller and William Swainson in Victoria*. *Muelleria* 7(4), pp. 529-553.

J.H. Voigt & D.M. Sinkora, 1996. Ferdinand (von) Müller in Schleswig-Holstein, or: The Making of a Scientist and of a Migrant. *Historical Records of Australian Science* 11(1), pp. 13-33.



Grevillea latrobei

Grevillea latrobei was first described by Carl Meissner (who previously spelled his name Meisner) in 1844. Born in Bern in 1800, Meissner spent several years in his youth studying in some of the great European centres of learning: Paris, Vienna and Göttingen. It was here that he earned his doctorate in medicine in 1824. From Germany he went to Geneva to study botany under one of the leading botanists of the time, Augustin de Candolle. In 1830 Meissner became Professor of Botany and director of the botanic gardens in Basel, which post he held until his retirement over 40 years later. His various publications, both books and journal articles, established him as one of the leading systematic botanists of his time.

The work in which Meissner published *Grevillea latrobei* was *Plantae preissiana*. This is one of the most important of the early works on the Australian flora. It contains the descriptions of thousands of plants new to science from the Swan River Colony in the southwest of Western Australia. These were the collections of Johann Ludwig Preiss. He had ventured to the Colony as a plant collector having advertised in Hamburg in 1837 for sponsors to underwrite his travels. In return for their support the sponsors would receive part of his collections as sets of specimens. Preiss arrived in the Colony in December 1838 and stayed for nearly four years. During that time he traveled widely, sometimes collecting in company with other botanical enthusiasts such as James Drummond and Georgiana Molloy.

When he arrived back in Hamburg Preiss had over 100,000 specimens of plants constituting about 2,800 different species. In addition, as was typical of naturalists at that period, he had many zoological specimens. His friend, Johann Lehmann, Professor of Natural History at the Gymnasium in Hamburg and Director of the Hamburg Botanic Garden, assumed the task of sorting the collection and distributing it to experts in the different plant groups. These experts included leading European botanists such as Joachim Steetz, Otto Sonder, Christian Nees von Esenbeck, Friedrich Miquel, Alexander Braun, Stephan Endlicher and Meissner. His task was to describe the families Leguminosae, Thymelaceae, Polygonaceae and Proteaceae. It was to this latter family that *Grevillea latrobei* belonged. As accounts of the plants were written, Lehmann as editor supervised the publication of Preiss's collections in the 2-volume *Plantae preissiana* (Hamburg, 1844-8). Some of Preiss's specimens are now part of the collections of the National Herbarium of Victoria. They were received in Melbourne during Ferdinand Mueller's time as Government Botanist, and came as part of the personal herbaria of Steetz and Sonder purchased by Mueller for the Victorian government collections.



Grevillea rosmarinifolia

Sources: Curtis's botanical magazine, (1872), plate 5971

There is no known connection between La Trobe and Preiss, and La Trobe never visited the Swan River Colony. Furthermore, *Grevillea latrobei* was a plant from the eastern part of Australia. So how did Meissner come to include this species in a work that is primarily about Western Australian plants?

In publishing a new description botanists usually note details of the specimen from which they worked, particularly the place at which it was collected and by whom. Meissner attached to the end of his Latin description of *Grevillea latrobei* the following: 'In colonia ad Portem Philippi legit cl. Latrobe! (Herb. Mus. Neocomens)'. That is, the specimen was collected by La Trobe in the Colony of Port Philip. More importantly, the specimen was in the Museum in Neuchâtel, only about 100 kilometres from Basel. It is hardly surprising to find that La Trobe had sent specimens to the museum in the town where he had spent several years as a young man. In all 21 species collected by La Trobe were published by Meissner in *Plantae preissiana*.

Naming plants after their collector was a common practice. It had the merit of publicly acknowledging the contribution of the collector to botanical science and was sometimes used to encourage the collector to greater efforts. Besides *Grevillea latrobei*, several of the species collected by La Trobe at Port Philip were named after him. Among them were *Zichya latrobei* and *Acacia latrobei*. Not many of these species still have the same name. There are several reasons why this might have happened.

One of the most important reasons has to do with the sheer volume of material flooding into Europe and Britain from Australia. Scientific communication was slow and not very sophisticated. It was hard for even the most rigorous of botanists to be familiar with everything that was being published. So two people were likely to publish the same plant with different names in ignorance of what the other person had done. In such instances the first name in print takes precedence. Unfortunately for Meissner, what he called *Acacia latrobei* had already been described with the name *Acacia acinaceae* by John Lindley in Thomas Mitchell's *Three expeditions into the interior of eastern Australia* (London, 1838). So Meissner's name had to give way to Lindley's. In the case of *Zichya latrobei*, it was judged by George Bentham in the *Flora australiensis* that the application of the generic name was in error. Here the specific name honoring La Trobe was retained. Hence *Zichya latrobei* became *Glycine latrobei*.

La Trobe's name has been attached to plants of which he was not the collector. Ferdinand Mueller made a practice of naming plants, not just after their

collectors, but also after people who were in positions of influence or had rendered assistance to him. It was La Trobe who appointed Mueller to the position of Government Botanist. In naming *Eremophila latrobei*, Mueller paid tribute to La Trobe's services to botany. It was, wrote Mueller, 'a noble species, well worthy of bearing the name of the excellent Charl. Jos. La Trobe, a great patron of Botany, and to whose love for science the botanical department under my administration owes its origin'. This was not an isolated instance of Mueller using La Trobe's name as a specific epithet. However, Mueller's names were as likely as Meissner's to suffer the fate of having been pre-empted. *Correa latrobeana* was described by Mueller from a specimen he collected on the Delatite River in March 1853, less than two months after his appointment. Unfortunately William Hooker had already named it *Correa lawrenciana*.

If you have been searching the native plant nurseries for *Grevillea latrobei* to plant in your garden, there is a good reason why you can't find it. It is now considered that it belongs in the highly variable species *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* as one of the named subspecies. So diverse is this species complex that some recognised variants carry the name of the districts where they are found, for instance the 'Lara form' and the 'Whipstick form'. To complicate matters further, it intergrades morphologically with *Grevillea lanigera* and hybridises with several other *Grevillea* species.

It is generally acknowledged by Australia's *Grevillea* experts that this species complex needs further study. *Grevillea latrobei* is now known as *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* subspecies *rosmarinifolia*.

Horticulturally speaking *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* and its many natural and cultivated varieties are highly popular and successful garden plants. Basic requirements are good drainage and sun to semi-shade. The plants tend to be frost-tolerant and able to withstand extended periods of no rain. They flower for many months generally over winter and are good for attracting native birds. Flowers vary in colour from reds and pinks to yellow. In habit the plants range from prostrate forms to shrubs reaching several metres in height. To retain the individual characteristics of named varieties propagation must be from cuttings or other vegetative means. *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* in its many varieties should be available in your favourite native plant nursery.

Helen M. Cohn
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

POST-SCRIPT for Melbourne Art Work 150 Years in the Making

The City of Melbourne, in conjunction with the NextWave Festival, sponsored a temporary public artwork commemorating 150 years since Melbourne's first Lieutenant-Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe, ended his term in office. La Trobe sailed back to England in the first week of May 1854, after presiding over Melbourne, first as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District from 1839, then as Lieutenant-Governor from 1851-54.

PostScript for Melbourne used the text of one of La Trobe's hand-written letters, itself 175 years old, into a larger-than-life installation at the Alexandra Gardens. La Trobe's own words were spray painted into extra-large lettering on the grass, using spray paint normally reserved for sport field line markings. It can be seen from Prince's Bridge.

The work is the creation of two Brisbane-based artists: sound and visual artist Luke Jaaniste, and theatre director and designer Nerida Jaaniste. **PostScript for Melbourne** was planned to exist for the length of the NextWave Festival, from 18 to 30 May, although rain may have washed some of it away before the end of May.



Luke Jaaniste painting the Alexandra Gardens with La Trobe's letter to Governor Gipps.

So how did the artists come up with the idea? Artist Luke Jaaniste said that he first visited Melbourne last year, and was instantly struck by the flowing landscape. 'Compared to Brisbane where I am based, and Sydney where my family came from, Melbourne City feels very spacious and atmospheric. It's a beautiful place to walk around, and I immediately began to think about what artwork we could create that engaged with the landscape.'



'Post-Script for Melbourne' seen from Princes Bridge

The NextWave Festival's theme this year was 'Unpopular Culture' and the artists began to think about graffiti - a cultural form that is both part of popular and youth cultures and often unpopular as well. 'We then started thinking about other unpopular text-base forms, and were lead to think about the dying art of letter writing. **Post-Script for Melbourne** is simply our mix of Melbourne's beautiful landscape with graffiti and the dying art of letter-writing!'



LEFT to RIGHT: Ariel Valent (arts officer, City of Melbourne), Joelene Schembri, (Events Manager, Parks & Recreation, City of Melbourne), Tristian Koenig (Associate Producer, visual arts, NextWave Festival), Luke and Nerida Jaaniste (co-creators).

Searching for old hand-written letters was the next step, which lead Luke and Nerida to the letters of Melbourne's first Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe. In this artwork, they felt the city's history was literally re-writing itself] 'As young people, it's amazing for us to consider the wealth of history in a place like Melbourne, and consider all the lives lived before us.'

The couple have already created several artworks where they have used public parklands as 'canvases' for artworks. In 2002 they spray-painted the shadows of trees at South Bank Parklands in Brisbane, and in 2003, created mini crop circles by planting grass seeds in various patterns around the Fortitude Valley in Brisbane.

The display took 22 man-hours to create, over Tuesday and Wednesday 18-19 May 2004. Tuesday in the drizzling rain! Wednesday in glorious sunshine!

The following is a transcript of part of the letter used in the installation:

Melbourne
19 October 1839

My dear Sir George,

The first scene of the first act of the drama is over. The welcome which the good people of this portion of your territories gave me, was as the papers would say 'enthusiastic': that is to say, the grave amongst them got up grave addresses & received grave answers - the gay made bon fires, put lights in their casements & fired off fowling pieces: & the lower class got jovially drunk & were fined all in my honor. ... The second scene has now commenced. The newspapers begin to give me a great deal of very excellent advice ... every man in the street thinks (as I must now have rested sufficiently from the fatigues of the voyage) that it would be both improper & impolitic to pass the door of my temporary office without stopping to do business with 'His Honor'.

... Official men have all some arrears of one kind or an-other to fetch up: having modestly kept them in the back ground till 'His Honor' should arrive: so that I am led to suppose that every body within the District thinks that he does the state good service in assailing me. ... They will soon find that the lemon has been squeezed so often that there is no longer any juice in it, & then I hope to have a quiet life. A quiet life it may be, but I have no idea that it will be an idle one. I am sure you will give me time to recollect myself & to get to understand my business, & then I will send you a full report of what is doing & what is to be done in this part of the Colony. ... Mrs. La Trobe is well, thank God, in the midst of all our discomfort & confusion for we have not yet been able to get in to our quarters. She requests me to present her kind regards to Lady Gipps to whom I beg to offer my respects.

My dear Sir George
Your very faithfully
Charles Jos. La Trobe





Views of the text of the letter from La Trobe to Gipps.

Extracts from Letter # 2, pp. 4-6, A G L Shaw (ed.), *Gipps-La Trobe Correspondence 1839-1846*, Melbourne University Press, 1989. ISBN 0 522 84388 3

Fay Woodhouse



JOLIMONT SQUARE REVISITED

In the same La Trobe letter used by the artists Luke and Nerida Jaaniste, dated 19 October 1839 to Governor Gipps, La Trobe outlined his arrangements for accommodation, and describes the land that he later purchased and that was named Jolimont

Melbourne Times
19 October 1839

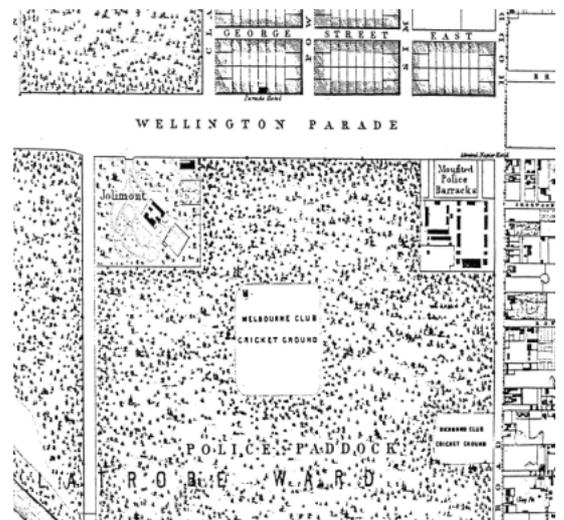
My dear Sir George,

... As to my own private arrangs. - they are soon stated. Upon my arrival here, I fixed upon a suitable spot in the Government paddock, next to that in which Capn L resides & took measures to put up my portable cottage & whatever offices were indispensably necessary. I know that I am there on sufferance & not of right, & that whenever circumstances may oblige you to tell me to remove I must do so at all risks. Nevertheless I have been obliged to spend so much even in putting up these

(temporary erections for such they must be

called) from the exorbitant price of labour (10/ to 14/ per diem) & materials, that this alone would make me unwilling to move for some time unless it were necessary. But, other considerations impel me to ask you to sanction my remaining where I am proposing to live, till the public good or other circumstances require my removal, & that is my utter inability to cope with the speculators, of this town in buying land within any reasonable distance, and my determination to seek from you no advantage or indulgence in selecting & purchasing what might suit me, beyond what you might accord to any other. Were there no land fever in the District, & were land selling in a natural way: plentiful as it is, there might have been no impropriety in my asking you to sanction my purchasing a given plot of ground conveniently situated at an evaluation: or to allow it to be put up to auction at one of the land sales that I might become the purchaser & none in your yielding [?] to my request. But as matters are, I can do neither with propriety and so little hope have I of procuring land at present within a few miles of the town at any reasonable rate, that I have taken measures to dispose of my permanent House which I expect daily from England, even before it arrives, as, to keep it warehoused here is out of the question ...

I believe the position I have chosen is not likely to interfere with anyone. The paddock is railed in, & is part of that reserve which was set apart by Sir Richard Bourke's orders for the use of Govt cattle & horses. The mounted police have their barrack in one corner of it & I have modestly placed my cottage & c near another.



Kearney Map 1855 showing the Government Paddock and Jolimont

Source: State Library of Victoria Map Collection

... I have written to you, my dear Sir George, sans façon, as I believe I have your permission, & as your uniform friendly & open intercourse with me in Sydney encourages me to do ... I do not wish to inflict a correspondence à la Robinson upon you (he has opened a terrible file fire upon me, of which more another opportunity) but shall have great pleasure in writing to you occasionally & am ever

My dear Sir George
Yours very faithfully
Charles Jos. La Trobe



Charles Joseph La Trobe: Photograph of engraving of Charles La Trobe; original engraved in 1851.
Source: State Library of Victoria Pictures Collection



Well, the site of La Trobe's first residence, now Jolimont Square, is no less expensive and sought after today as it was in La Trobe's time. People are still wanting to live there, so much so that the site is presently being redeveloped by Folkstone. Originally intending to construct 43 apartments in two four-storey towers, what is now being constructed are 19 double storey terrace-style town houses around the perimeter of the Square. What prompted such a dramatic change?

Concerns from local residents and the Melbourne City Council about heritage lead to much opposition, including the nomination of the site to the Victorian Heritage Register, as a tactic to stall, or preferably stop, development; endless meetings; protracted negotiations with all the stakeholders and a run through the full gamut of the planning process.

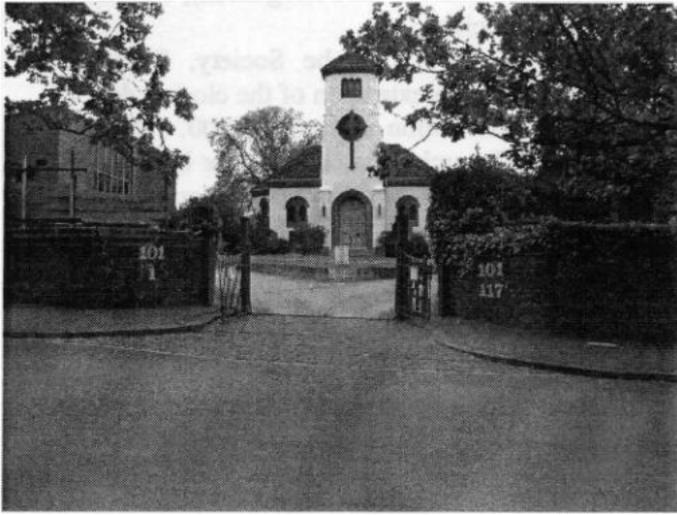
The proposal finally got up, in large part due to the willingness of Folkstone to be open and transparent and to listen, and to understand the heritage significance and imperatives for the site. What has been achieved, is a development which respects Palmer's layout and the central carriage drive, the internal garden onto which some of the new terraces face, and which has enabled some mature elms to be retained. The chapel, later built by the Adult Deaf Society is also been kept. The development might have started out 'on sufferance & not of right' but in the end it can be argued that it is a modern version of what La Trobe and Palmer probably had in mind back in 1857.

For the first time since 1857 when Palmer's development of the site first began, the ground of Jolimont has been cleared. All that remain on the site are the two residences, 'Mornington' built in 1869, 'Redcourt' built in 1904 and the Chapel, built in 1929-30. These photographs were taken in February 2004, when the later, predominantly 1950s buildings were demolished to begin construction of the new townhouses.

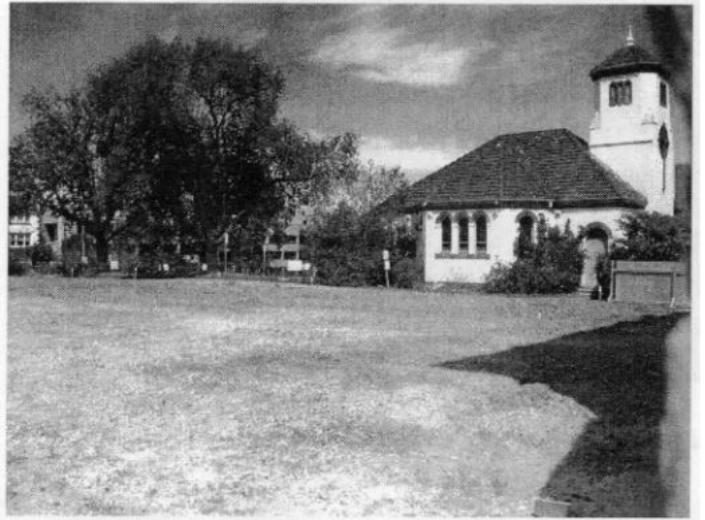
Robyn Riddett and Fay Woodhouse



Sir James Frederick Palmer (1803-71)
Image courtesy Parliament of Victoria Library



The Chapel, built 1929-30



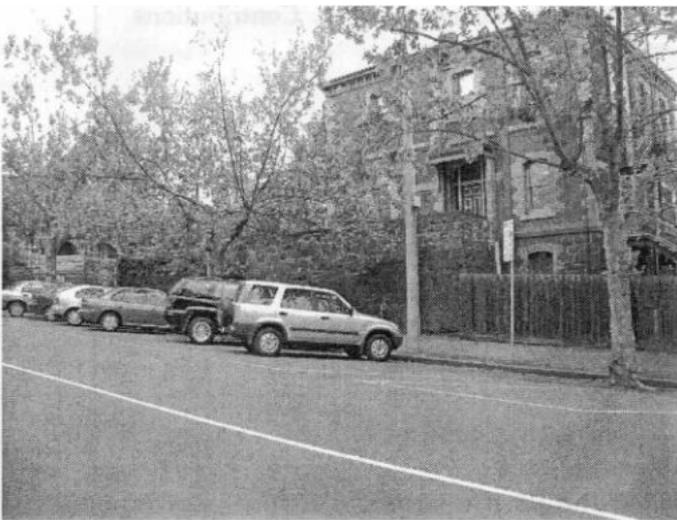
Rear of Chapel with view of carriage way and elm



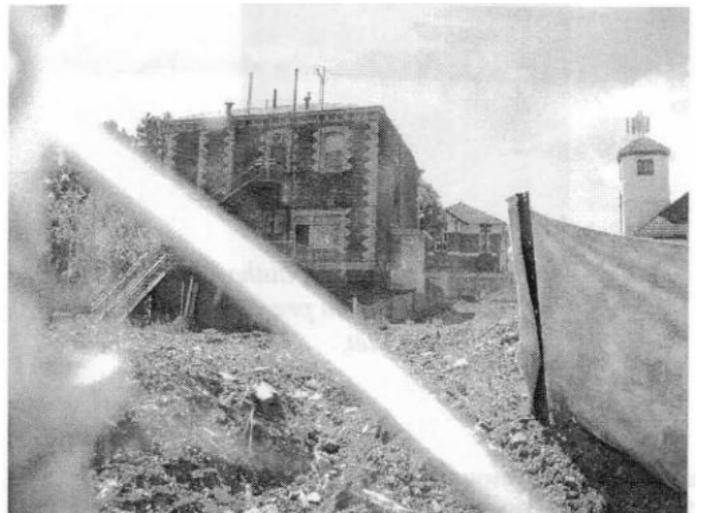
'Redcourt' from Wellington Parade South



View of the rear of 'Redcourt' showing elms and carriage way



'Morrington' from Wellington Parade South



Buildings around 'Morrington' demolished



La Trobe's 203rd Birthday celebrations at La Trobe Cottage, 20 March 2004

From left to right: Richard Heathcote, Vice-President; Dianne Reilly, Secretary; Susan Priestley, Vice President; and A GL Shaw, immediate Past President.

On Saturday 20 March, 2004, fifty Members and friends attended the evening picnic at La Trobe's Cottage to mark La Trobe's 203rd Birthday. Colonial music and dancing from the Melbourne Historic Folk Dance Society were a feature.



*Berres Hoddle Colville, author
Photograph reproduced from pre-publication pamphlet.*

This is the first biography of Robert Hoddle (1794-1881) and the man who became the first Surveyor General of Victoria.

This excellent and much needed biography was written by Berres Hoddle Colville (nee Mogensen), a member of the La Trobe Society. For members of the La Trobe Society, Berres is pleased to announce an extension of the closing date of the special pre-publication price of \$66.00. Until 30 June you can still purchase a copy of her book at the pre-publication price. So don't miss out on this fantastic offer.



Contributions of articles for the Newsletter are welcomed. They should be directed to the Hon. Editor, Dr Fay Woodhouse at:

fwoodhouse@allom-lovell.com.au

La Trobeana is the Newsletter of the La Trobe Society Inc. It appears three times per year, with news of forthcoming events, and reports of interest to the membership. Contributions are always welcome.

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