

# LA TROBEANA



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

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## A Word from the President

The 'Year of La Trobe' is going well and many further events are planned.

In particular, work is progressing on the statue of Charles Joseph La Trobe. The unveiling of the clay model of the statue on 9 August was a great event, attended by some 40 members of our Society. The appeal for funds to pay for it continues. If you have not already contributed, please be aware that there is still time, and that every little helps.

Unfortunately, while I was unable to attend the launch of the joint publication, *La Trobe's Jolimont: A Walk Round My Garden*, I understand the evening was well attended by members of the La Trobe Society and the Garden History Society. *La Trobe's Jolimont: A Walk Round My Garden* is an important and fine publication, reproducing for the first time in one publication all twenty-two drawings of Jolimont by La Trobe's cousin, Edward La Trobe Bateman.

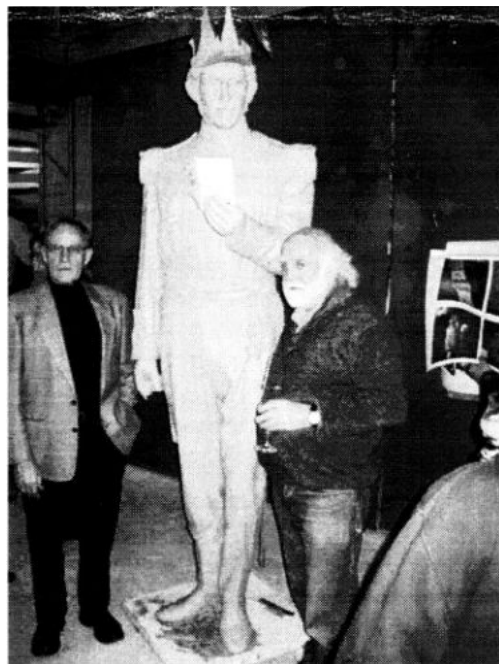
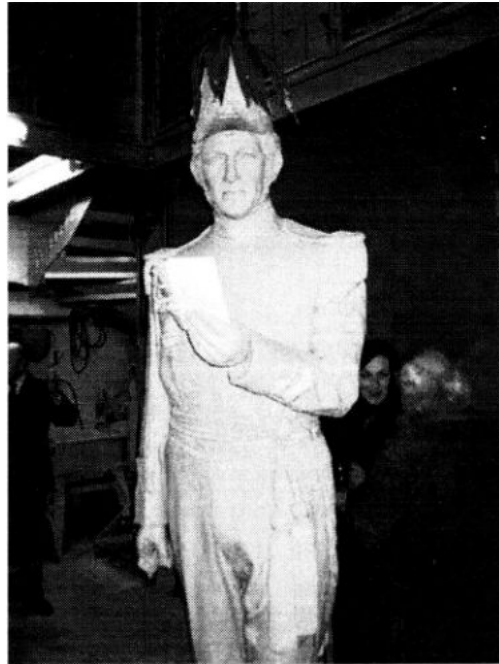
We are very proud of the new format of *La Trobeana*, an initiative taken to celebrate five years of the Society. This edition contains very stimulating reading which I know will be of great interest to members.

Rodney Davidson

## Review of Recent Events

### Viewing of La Trobe Statue

On Wednesday 9 August, 40 members of the Society and other guests enjoyed a fabulous evening meeting and talking to the sculptor, Peter Corlett, in his studio in North Fitzroy. Peter talked about his research into La Trobe's life as a way of getting to know his subject before embarking on the sculpture which is 1.3 life size.



Photos by Ian & Elizabeth Harley

## Forthcoming Events

### Touring Exhibition



The exhibition, *Charles Joseph La Trobe: A Sketcher of No Mean Pretensions, the Governor and the Artist* will tour Victoria from 4 September 2006 to 25 March 2007 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the National Trust in Victoria. The Exhibition will visit Swan Hill, Morwell, and Hamilton and will allow Victorians to view one of the National Trust's most significant, though rarely displayed collections.

The exhibition consists of 24 pen and ink and watercolour sketches created during La Trobe's travels in Italy, Switzerland, North America and Mexico. In addition, there are 19 works from Victoria and Tasmania completed during La Trobe's tenure as Superintendent of Port Phillip, and then as Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor. The exhibition is complemented by a selection of La Trobe's travel accounts, a life-sized portrait of La Trobe by Sir Francis Grant and various artifacts from La Trobe's cottage. The La Trobe Society's Honorary Secretary, Dianne Reilly, will give talks at each venue on 'La Trobe: "a sketcher of No Mean Pretensions".'

### La Trobe's Statue

The Statue Fund is almost fully subscribed, so if you wish to donate, now is the time. The clay sculpture is complete and the mould and wax image will be ready for the bronze statue to be cast by the end of August.

Unveiling by the Governor Professor David Kretser, AC, the La Trobe Society's patron, will take place on the forecourt of the State Library of Victoria on Tuesday 21 November 2006. Invitations will be sent out to members nearer the time.

### Annual General Meeting

The Society's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 29 August 2006 from 6.00 to 8.00 pm at Domain House, Dallas Brookes Drive, South Yarra.

Elections for the Committee will be held and a report will be tendered, outlining a proposed program for the next 5 years. Your input is of great value to our development and strengthens the Society for the future.

Dianne Reilly, Honorary  
Secretary

### Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are now due for all members except the new members who joined during 2006. Please forward your cheque with the completed form enclosed at your earliest convenience. The success and strength of the Society comes from the members, and the renewal of your membership will be greatly appreciated.

John Drury  
Honorary Treasurer

## Jolimont Two Generations On



Edward La Trobe Bateman, *La Trobe Cottage, Detached Cottage, Jolimont*

Source: La Trobe Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

The delightful evocation of family life and enjoyment which comes from Helen Botham's *La Trobe's Jolimont A Walk Round My Garden* brought to mind another account of family life at Jolimont in the late 1880s. Among the papers of [Jessie] Elaine Macdonald in the manuscript collection of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria [MS 000198] is her unpublished memoir 'Journalists' Daughter', written in 1944 when she was approaching sixty. Elaine Macdonald was the daughter of Donald Alaster Macdonald who emerged from an upbringing in rural Keilor to become a notable sports and war journalist and later nature writer. He has an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*. Her mother Jessie, the daughter of Rochester pioneer, Thomas Seward, also embarked on a journalistic career in Melbourne where like Donald she found work with the *Argus* newspaper.

The pair married on 23 February 1883 and their only child was born late in the following year. The birth and infancy were fraught with difficulty, which was partly eased and partly intensified by the young couple's lodgings with the Swards. In Elaine's words:

It was at this stage that Donald first displayed a talent - almost genius - for discovering picturesque, old-fashioned

houses of unparalleled inconvenience and discomfort. He loved their unconventionality and his wife and servant had to put up with the discomfort. Fate led him to Jolimont to the small cottage that had been part of La Trobe's Chalet. It was near the city, historical and picturesque. Also incredibly poky and inconvenient. Donald pounced on it with rapture. [p. 31]

The memoir gives Elaine's version of Melbourne's early history, and Jolimont's development into a charming suburb, later to be shocked by the building of the huge Fenton china warehouse in 1887. This is the background to glimpses of life in what I deduce was the 'Detached cottage' which La Trobe had transferred from Queenscliff in 1848 and set on the north eastern side of the main house [see Botham pp. 27-30]. Four decades later, the detached cottage was linked to the main house via a shared bathroom. The identity of the premises is strengthened by use of the name The Hermitage, and by Elaine's description of the Macdonalds' next home as 'Rosetta' in Agnes Street 'just opposite the main part of the La Trobes' cottage and Fenton's store', At the first subdivision of the La Trobe estate, Elaine writes that:

The Chalet - or Hermitage - had been bought by Mr Robert Moore, an old Canadian who lived there with his sister. It was from him that the Macdonalds rented 'Bishop Perry's Cottage' [sic] in the late 1880s. Solidly built of teak, it stood four square, with French doors opening on to a deep verandah. The rooms were absurdly small, the bedroom and the kitchen both opening from the living room, and a corner of the kitchen curtained off to make a sort of kennel for the servant. The two dwellings were connected by a bathroom that Mr Moore shared with us. Jessie's favourite nightmare was that she had forgotten to bolt the door from his house and that he had come in while she was under the



**Edward La Trobe Bateman, Front view of Jolimont**  
 Source: La Trobe Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

shower, or alternatively that she had charged in to find him there, clad only in his long white beard.

Like Adam and Eve before the Fall [we] lived surrounded by forbidden fruit. In our garden sheltered by the cliff-like face of Fenton's (now Bedgoods' store), apples, pears, cherries and quinces ripened, and it was 'old Robert's' peculiar fad that they must be left to rot upon the trees. 'Stuff and nonsense' said Jessie, and marking down in daylight fruit hidden under the leaves, she and our servant Grace gathered it at night. The fragrance of stewing quinces filled the air, [as] Jessie, smothering giggles, politely handed to Robert a withered little quince she had found on the grass. He nearly wept [saying forlornly] 'It is the only one that has come off the tree'. [pp. 3536]

The fruit trees may be residual evidence of what La Trobe described as the 'green courtyard' between the main house and the kitchen and servant's room. And despite the drawbacks, the cottage hosted some well-remembered occasions.

Donald gave dinner parties for his *Argus* friends. Jessie worked beside Grace in the kitchen [preparing] and serving the several courses until the course before the sweets, then nipped into the bathroom and bedroom, and in a marvelously short time emerged cool-looking, poised and beautifully dressed to take coffee with the guests. Then excusing herself gracefully, 'I know you men want to talk shop; she would retire

to drag off the dinner gown and help Grace tackle a mountain of washing-up in the wretched little kitchen. Her young husband was tremendously proud of her, it gave her a sense of triumph and all went happily. [p. 43]

For the child, playing 'happily' in the remnants of the La Trobe garden cast the strongest spell.

Over the summerhouse climbed a honeysuckle and grapevines whose gnarled trunks showed them to be as old as the cottage ... Like a sundial, my memory marked only sunny days at The Hermitage - warm waves of perfume from the honeysuckle; the cool shade of the verandah and the elms; the sweetness of a bunch of black muscatels from under the leaves where Old Robert would not miss it, and of the luscious stolen pears [p. 47, p. 48]

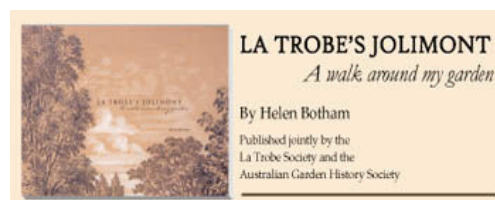
Such evidence of the senses is invaluable for enlivening our understanding of the world of Jolimont and its founding family.

Susan Priestley

## Books Books Books Books

The Society has three very new and interesting books available to members and friends.

### *La Trobe's Jolimont: A walk round my garden by Helen Botham*



Most Victorians are unaware that our first Lieutenant Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe, developed a beautiful garden around his 12 ½ acre Jolimont estate during the nearly 15 years he spent in Victoria.

This book, jointly published by the La Trobe Society and the Australian Garden History Society, takes the reader on a tour of the garden using twenty-two detailed drawings by Edward La Trobe Bateman completed in 1853-54.

The drawings, plotted on a map of the estate drawn in 1853, all held in the La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, give us a flavour of the little every-day matters of life at Jolimont in its hey-day.

Although the estate was subdivided after La Trobe returned to Europe in 1854, Bateman's drawings remain a delightful testament to the charm of this early Melbourne garden.

To purchase this book, please send your cheque for \$28.95 (members' price includes postage) to:

La Trobe Society, PO Box 65, Port Melbourne, 3207.

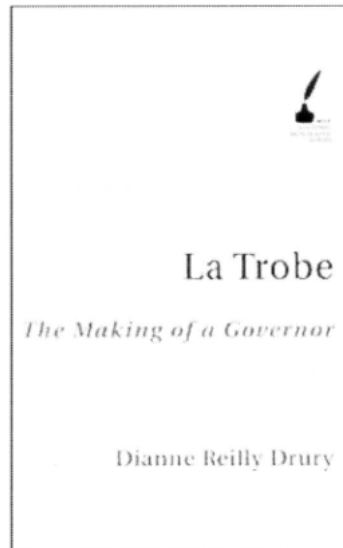
***From Jolimont to Yering***  
***by***  
***Ray Henderson***

This is history of the early wine industry in the Yarra Valley.

Sophie La Trobe was from Neuchatel in Switzerland and influenced a number of people from that area to immigrate to the Port Phillip District and plant the vines that helped make the Yarra Valley what it is today.

A lavish production with historical information and numerous images, this publication may be ordered from the La Trobe Society on the form enclosed.

The heavily discounted price for La Trobe Society members is \$100 each plus postage \$9.00.



***La Trobe: the Making of a Governor***  
***by***  
***Dianne Reilly***

Dianne Reilly's detailed work on key aspects of La Trobe's background and his administration of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales as Superintendent, and later as Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, has been published by Melbourne University Publishing.

To purchase a copy, please send your cheque for \$49.95 to Melbourne University Publishing, 187 Grattan Street, Carlton. Phone 9342 0300

**The Beginnings Of  
Education In The Port  
Phillip District**

It is generally thought that the first school in the newly established District of Port Phillip was one conducted for Aborigines by an Anglican missionary, George Langhorne, who had been appointed as the first 'Protector of Aborigines'. Langhorne had been sent down from Sydney late in 1836 by Governor Richard Bourke, to set up a mission for the Aboriginal population

away from the 'corrupting' influence of the new white settlement. The administrator, Captain William Lonsdale, set aside an 895 acre site on the south side of the Yarra River (in the location of the present Royal Botanic Gardens) for this purpose. A year later, Langhorne reported that a timber schoolhouse had been erected and eighteen children from the Warorong, Bonurong and Tonnurong tribes had been enrolled.

As for the children of the European settlers, some were taught by governesses like Caroline Newcombe, who educated the seven daughters of pioneer John Batman in their own home. One of the first public buildings erected in Melbourne was the 'Pioneers Church', built by public subscription in 1837 on land granted to the Church of England, to serve the needs of the various Protestant communities. Situated near the corner of Little Collins and Williams Streets, the plain rectangular, weatherboard structure, 'a mere wooden shell incapable of keeping out the cold', was used as a chapel on Sundays and a school throughout the week. An old ship's bell 'summoned children to their studies and worshippers to their devotions'. By 1838 the fifty-three children of mixed denominations were being taught by two male teachers. Soon afterwards the dour Bishop William Grant Broughton, on a visit from Sydney, caused considerable controversy in the community by declaring that in future the building would be used exclusively for Anglican purposes.



W F E Liardet, St James Church and School, the 'Pioneers Church', Melbourne  
Source: La Trobe Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

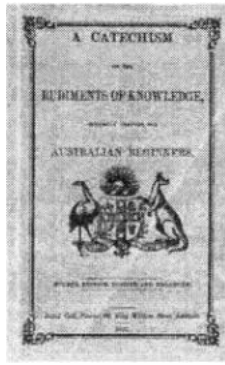
## Denominational Schools

With the arrival of the Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Congregational, Church of England, and Catholic clergy from the late 1830s, churches were erected and their buildings were used as Sunday schools on the Sabbath and for general instruction during the week. The Presbyterians, under Rev. James Forbes, erected a timber church and school in Collins St east on the site of the present Scots Church in 1839, where around 150 pupils were given instruction by schoolmasters, Robert Campbell and John McLure, with Forbes taking religious instruction. That same year Rev. Patrick Geoghegan, the first pastor of Melbourne's Roman Catholic community, opened St Francis Catholic Church, a small wooden building and schoolhouse on the corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Streets. Here Thomas Lynch and his wife Mary taught 110 pupils aged from three to thirteen 'the alphabet, spelling with and without meaning, reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, catechism and testament'.

The Church of England community continued using the Pioneers Church as a day school until St James Old Cathedral and school were opened in 1842 on the original site, at the corner of Collins and Williams Streets. James Dredge was the master of the first Wesleyan school, situated at the corner of Collins and Queens Streets, and when the new bluestone gothic church was opened in Lonsdale Street in 1858, it was accompanied by a two storeyed stone schoolhouse at the rear.

The church schools were administered by a Denominational Board in Melbourne which was composed of representatives of the various churches. Local communities in Melbourne and in country areas were expected to raise half the cost of their schoolhouse and furniture, with the government subsidising the remainder, and the





**Australian Catechism, 1861**  
Author's Collection

remuneration of the teacher. The teachers' meagre wages were supplemented by the families of their pupils who paid a small weekly fee of around one to three pence per week per child.

An attempt to overcome the difficulties of educating bush children was made in Buninyong by the sons of the early settler Thomas Learmonth, when they established an Anglican bush boarding school complete with male and female dormitories on their sheep station. By 1849 their school accommodated thirtyone boarders and twenty-two day scholars.

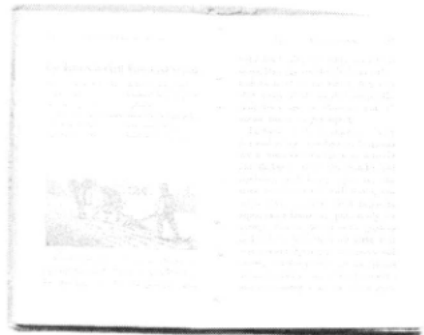
Besides church schools, there were several small independent private schools operating in early Melbourne. William Penny used a one-room wattle and daub hut as a school in Flinders Lane, and in a more palatial residence in Collins Street, Mr T H Braim taught boys mathematics and classics for six guineas a term, while his wife operated a ladies' boarding school that offered music, French and drawing for eighty guineas a year.

### **State Education**

The beginnings of state schooling (formerly known as National Schools) had been instituted in New South Wales in 1848 under Governor Charles FitzRoy, with the schools being subsidised by the government and administered by local school patrons responsible to the National Schools

Board in Sydney. A National system of secular schools similar to that operating in his native Ireland, was first suggested by Governor Bourke, in an endeavour to overcome religious bigotry by educating Catholic and Protestant children in 'mixed schools'.

When Victoria separated from New South Wales in July 1851, seven National schools educating 208 pupils had been operating in the colony. The administration, teacher training and school inspection methods were blueprints of those used by the Irish National System, and the textbooks and many of the writing materials used by Australian children were produced by the Irish Commissioners of National Education, and published in Ireland. To appease the churches, Governor FitzRoy had at the same time instituted a 'Denominational schools' system' for NSW, whose Board competed for public funds with the rival National Schools Board. As the churches had had a head start in the colony, the Denominational system initially had by far the larger number of schools under its control (74 in 1851, with a total of 4,999 pupils enrolled). School funding and staffing arrangements were the same as the Denominational system. During the Gold Rush years, both the Denominational and National Boards supplied heavy duty tents for schools in central Victoria, which were moved from goldfield to goldfield, as required.



One of the Irish National School texts used in early Australian schools  
Author's Collection



Page from a National School copybook  
Author's Collection

## The La Trobe Era

By the time Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived in Melbourne in 1839, the churches had largely assumed responsibility for education, and as a former tutor and teacher himself, he soon began to take a keen interest in the education of his constituents. La Trobe would have had some appreciation of missionary church schools as he had previously been sent to the West Indies by the British government to report on the state of education amongst the indigenous population.

One of La Trobe's first tasks as the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria was to appoint a recent arrival from England, Hugh Childers, to inspect and compile a report on all of the schools in the settled part of the new colony. Childers, barely twenty-three years of age at the time, undertook the task with relish, setting out in a horse-and-gig in January 1851 and returning five months later.

Altogether he reported on 135 Denominational, National and Private schools from the western district (Geelong to Portland), the Kilmore area and the existing suburbs of Melbourne. Although the school records he inspected indicated that 12,590 pupils were being taught in these schools, Childers estimated that only one-third of children were being educated in country towns, hardly any in the remote rural districts and barely one half in Melbourne.

His report also stated that only one-third of the schools he visited were of adequate size or structure; some were bark or slab huts, others were not floored or sealed and several had no windows. Less than ten percent of the teachers had been trained and in some schools the only reading materials were Bibles.

The recommendations in Childers' report were debated at length in the Legislative Council, with the outcome that dual Boards of Education (National and Denominational) were established, and £3,000 allotted to each for the first year.

Soon afterwards Childers was appointed the colony's Auditor General and given a seat on the new National Schools Board.

## Teacher Training

A modest teachers' training college attached to St James School in Williams Street had been provided by the Denominational Schools Board in 1851, so the National Board successfully lobbied the Government for one of its own.

By July of 1854, a lavish National Model and Training School had been built at the north end of Spring Street for a cost of £19,000. It opened with 324 pupils (rising to 1200 ten years later) and up to 50 male and female teachers in training were accommodated in its dormitories.



National Model and Training school, Melbourne, 1857,  
Engraver J Tingle.  
Source: La Trobe Pictures Collection. State Library of  
Victoria

## School Curriculum

The curriculum of these colonial schools centred around the 'three Rs', which were taught largely by rote, with teachers or monitors asking questions set out in the general knowledge catechisms (eg. science, geography) and the children chanting in unison the printed responses from memory. Reading was usually taught by the 'alphabetic' (letter names) or 'look and say' (whole word) methods, with the newer 'phonics' approach being viewed with some scepticism by many of the older teachers. (The 'whole language' verses 'phonics' debate continues to this day.) The second 'R' – Writing, referred to handwriting, spelling and grammar rather than written expression, and Arithmetic being mainly the complex calculation of whole numbers, fractions, money, and imperial weights and measures, involving the four processes (+ - x ÷) and reduction. As the majority of the National schools used the text books printed by the Irish Commissioners, any geography, history and nature study the children acquired related exclusively to the British Isles. The graded reading texts contained stories and poetry of a highly moralistic nature, some of which were drawn from passages of the Bible, the inclusion of which had been previously agreed on by both the Protestant and Catholic hierarchy in Dublin.

## Postscript

The dual system of National and Denominational schools continued for some ten years in Victoria. By 1861 the cost of maintaining two systems had become too expensive, so the Government decided to amalgamate them into a single Common Schools Board. Largely because of the secular nature of the new board (religious instruction being limited to out of schools hours), many of the more prosperous church schools opted out and became independent of government funds. This is the era when private

schools like Scotch and Wesley Colleges, were founded. With the passing of the 'compulsory, free and secular' Education Act of Victoria in 1872, funding for non-government schools was completely phased out. This forced the church-based common schools to either close or amalgamate into the state schools system, except for those in Catholic hands which were largely absorbed into the emerging Catholic Schools system, and which hastily began to recruit male and female clergy (particularly from England and Ireland) to staff them.

Government funding exclusive to state schools would continue until 'state aid' for non-government schools became a political issue in Australia in the 1960s, and consequently both state and federal governments were forced to capitulate. Given the growing proportion and influence of the non-government school sector today, it can be safely assumed that state aid is here to stay for many years to come.

Max Waugh

Dr Max Waugh is a member of the La Trobe Society and is a former lecturer in the History of Education at Deakin and Monash Universities.

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## By Popular Demand ...

Because of the interest among members in the two articles on La Trobe at Cape Otway and in Geelong in *La Trobeana* Vol. 4, No.1, April 2006, it seems appropriate to reproduce here two of the speeches made during the La Trobe Centenary Celebrations throughout the State in 1975. The organising committee was chaired by Sir John Holland, and included a number of eminent historians and parliamentarians.

The Centenary in 1975 commemorated the 100th anniversary of the death of Charles Joseph La Trobe on 4 December 1875 at the age of 74 in the village of Litlington in East Sussex. La Trobe was buried in the churchyard of St. Michael the Archangel where a tall white Celtic cross marks his grave.

### Unveiling Of A Commemorative Plaque At Cape Otway Lighthouse SIR JOHN HOLLAND

Three years ago the Government of Victoria established a policy of bringing more history to more people throughout the State. To assist in the implementation of this policy a committee called the History Advisory Council of Victoria was formed for the specific purpose of recognising significant historical events, and to make recommendations to the Premier as to which ones should be celebrated, how, by whom and when.

The first events which resulted from the deliberations of this Council were the La Trobe Centenary Commemorative activities of which the unveiling of the plaque at this lighthouse today will be a very important one.

A special organising committee was formed with representatives from city and provincial historical societies, the National Trust, La Trobe Library, State Historian, Science Museum, the Education Department, Premier's Department and a specialist in

public relations. It was my privilege to be appointed Chairman, and I must say what a stimulating experience it has been to receive such overwhelming support from so many people and organisations throughout the State.

This remarkable man to whose life and work we are paying tribute had such diverse interests that it gave our Committee very great scope indeed, for he was an administrator, author, artist, poet, botanist, naturalist, equestrian and explorer. Indeed the feats in locating this very lighthouse called for exploration skills and determination of a very high order. As well as heavy burdens of the administration of his territory, he had the difficulties of terrain, climate and remoteness.

In planning the activities our Committee wished to recognise the great diversity of interest and capabilities which La Trobe displayed, and events during the past fortnight have achieved this objective. They have included church services, an oration, public lectures, botanical displays, an art competition, sporting events, publication of the *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*,<sup>1</sup> displays of equipment of the La Trobe era and plans of the city of Melbourne as it was envisaged by him. There was also an essay competition, a reception at the McCrae Homestead, the naming of a reserve at Dromana, the unveiling of special historical plaques, and there will be another plaque to be unveiled at Geelong Botanical Gardens tomorrow. There were also several historical re-enactments and the final event tomorrow will be based on the 'Time Ball Tower' at Williamstown where a sail past of yachts has been organised to coincide with a closing ceremony at the Tower at which our present Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Young, will officiate. In order that there will be continuity of interest, there will be an annual award of a La Trobe Scientific Scholarship<sup>2</sup> and there will also be an Administration Award to be made annually to an individual in the Public

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<sup>1</sup>Blake, L.J. *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*. Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>If any reader knows of this scholarship, please advise the Editor.

Service to study administration overseas.<sup>3</sup> Then finally, as a permanent work, there will be a La Trobe Statue estimated to cost approximately \$50,000.00 which will be shared equally by the Government and private enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

One of the activities organised by the State Education Department has been an Essay Competition. What a very happy coincidence it is that the winner - Susan Barlow - is from the Lavers Hill School and we are all delighted that she is here today. I am sure you will all join me in our warmest congratulations. Her essay entitled 'Our Debt to Charles Joseph La Trobe' represents research and composition of a very high quality indeed.

The support we have received from the Heytesbury Society, the Department of Transport, the lighthouse staff and the Lavers High School has been first class. We are particularly grateful to Mr. Steveris, President of the Society, Mrs. Duruz, the Secretary, Mr. Baud, the Principal of Lavers High School, Mr. Don Walker, Lecturer, Architect and La Trobe scholar, Captain Head, Department of Transport, the Head Lighthouse Keeper Mr. McNeill who was unable to be with us today and the Deputy Keeper Mr. Scott.

Over the centuries lighthouses and rugged coasts have been intriguing subjects for poets and authors, and whenever I am near a lighthouse I somehow always feel nearer to history, and today is no exception. In this case it is not only history that has come from the sea, but thanks to the prodigious efforts of La Trobe, it is also history which has come from the land. It is indeed exciting to realise that 129 years ago La Trobe probably stood on this very spot where we are about to unveil this plaque to his memory today.

As a Civil Engineer who has spent a lifetime in construction, I can appreciate very well the problems which were encountered during the building of this lighthouse. The greatest

would have been logistics and remoteness. The basic materials of construction for both the tower and buildings were quarried from a site two or three hundred yards to the west, but all other materials, equipment, machinery and accommodation facilities had to be supplied from Melbourne. Imagine the difficulties associated with landing supplies on these rugged shores and transport across the Otways when there were not even bush tracks. But in spite of these problems, the tower was finally completed to a very high standard of craftsmanship.

Just imagine how La Trobe must have felt after the tragic loss of the *Cataraqui*<sup>5</sup> when he received those forthright instructions from Governor Gipps in Sydney, and when the Admiralty threatened to close the strait out here to shipping until the lighthouse was completed. He was so concerned with the loss of life, some 400 souls, that he made an immediate and epic journey to inspect the works and stimulate progress.

The project was completed in 1848 and its beacon has now been a source of comfort and guidance to mariners for over 127 years. How many ships and how many lives it has saved during that period no one will ever know.

The first Keeper of the lighthouse was one Captain Ford who tended the light in this remote and rugged location for thirty years, and today we are privileged to have with us Mrs. Gibbs who was a relative of this famous man. Her presence here brings added reality regarding the origins of this famous lighthouse and gives us all a sense of continuity.

It is most appropriate that there should be a permanent record at the Cape Otway Lighthouse of the tribute we have paid to a remarkable man and, in fulfilling this objective it is now my privilege to unveil this plaque. It is to honour the memory of the first Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and our first Lieutenant-Governor - Charles Joseph La Trobe.

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<sup>3</sup>If any reader knows of this award, please advise the Editor.

<sup>4</sup>It is interesting to note that a statue of La Trobe was proposed as long ago as 1975. Now, in 2006, this idea is coming to fruition.

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<sup>5</sup>The wreck of the *Cataraqui* occurred in Bass Strait off the south-western coast of King Island on 4 August 1845.



## Unveiling Of a Commemorative Plaque at Geelong

Address of historian L B J Blake

For a brief time this afternoon, let us try to recreate some of Charles Joseph La Trobe's associations with early Geelong.

Perhaps we should first remember that, when he arrived in 1839 with his wife Sophie, and his daughter, Agnes, he set up his headquarters in a prefabricated cottage at Jolimont which he named after his wife's birthplace<sup>1</sup> near Lake Neuchatel. In his household there lived also Madame Charlotte Pelet [sic]<sup>2</sup> and her daughter Rose, both from Switzerland.

Born of a talented family with strong interests in music, literature, painting and sketching, travel and religion, La Trobe himself was a Londoner. Of French descent, the La Trobes were of the Moravian faith and as a young man Charles taught at a Moravian Boys School near Manchester. By the time he reached Port Phillip as our first Superintendent, he had written four travel books on Europe, Mexico and North America,<sup>3</sup> and was the author of

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<sup>1</sup> Jolimont near Neuchatel in Switzerland is an estate which overlooks the Lake of Biene. Sophie and Charles Joseph La Trobe honeymooned there in 1835 when it was owned by the Pourtales family.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Pellet was the La Trobes' servant who had come to Melbourne from Neuchatel to join the family with her young daughter Rose.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Joseph La Trobe:

*The Alps/ock*, London: Seeley & Bumside, 1829

*The Pedes/rinll*, London: Seeley & Bumside, 1832

*The Rambler ill Nor/h America*, London: Seeley & Bumside, 1835

three reports on the education of emancipated slaves in the West Indies.<sup>4</sup>

La Trobe first visited Geelong on 14 February 1840, with local magistrate Nicholas Fenwick. He travelled on horseback, which he favoured, for he was a splendid horseman, loving nothing better than a hard ride across the plains. The travellers spent several hours wandering in the woods after passing Cowie's Creek, but finally found Corio, and Fisher's and Major Mercer's huts and tent.

Next day, La Trobe rode across these parklands with Dr Clarke to Point Henry. It is at this point we can try to recreate the picture. Forget about the double-breasted long tailed coat and the gloves. Try to see instead a lean muscular and tall horseman in opennecked shirt and narrow legged trousers and riding boots; he rode hatless, his hair tousled in the wind. The two horses would stir a cloud of seagulls as they crossed the samphire flats to Point Henry from where Geelong settlement first began.



Botanical Gardens, Geelong

Source: La Trobe Pictures Collection. State Library of Victoria

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*The Rambler in Mexico*, London: Seeley & Bumside, 1836.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Joseph La Trobe. House of Commons, Parliamentary Paper, *Reports on Negro Education*, Jamaica, 1837-38, Windward & Leeward Islands, 1837-38, British Guiana & Trinidad, 1839.

From the Point, where the tall-masted sailing ships would come crowding during the 1840s of the Western District squattocracy, La Trobe and Clarke had an exhilarating ride across the Bellarine Peninsula and thence to a cave beneath the cliffs of Point Lonsdale where Buckley, the wild white man, had lived. Buckley, once a soldier and pivot man of his company, now lived in Van Diemen's Land but his story, like that of La Trobe, is bound up with the history of Geelong, which men once called The Pivot.

La Trobe rode into the Western District with David Fisher to Mount Gellibrand and Lake Hesse on 17 February, then turned south to Buntingdale Aboriginal Mission station where the Reverend Benjamin Hurst and missionary Francis Tuckfield had established themselves by the Barwon River.

On a further visit to the Geelong area, on 23rd November, with Captain Lonsdale and Charles Tyers, he was camped by the Werribee River. Next morning, climbing by the north spur, he ascended Station Peak of the You Yangs and was much struck with the view, particularly towards the Great Plains. He could even discern Mt. Elephant<sup>5</sup> clearly. On the way down the mountain the party encountered a grass fire which raced with lightning rapidity across the plain.

Next January, 1841, he came again to Geelong. At that time, Captain Fyans<sup>6</sup> was living in his huts at Fyans Ford, though he had a new house being built

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<sup>5</sup> La Trobe painted a number of views of western Victoria which featured the Great Plains, Mt Elephant and the You Yangs.

<sup>6</sup> Foster Fyans (1790-1870) was an army captain who arrived at Port Phillip in 1837. He established himself on the Moorabool River at Fyansford and was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands at Portland in 1840. He was active in civic affairs in Geelong and district.

in Corio. Fenwick and his sister were living in a half-furnished cottage and tents in Corio. On this visit La Trobe went with a man named Oldman, 'a hanger-on of Fisher's', to Shortland's Bluff (which he later named Queenscliff), then around Swan Pond to Indented Head where Batman landed. They chased kangaroos through the thickly timbered country, and camped that night with a survey party; next morning they rode back to Geelong. During July he again visited the Buntingdale Mission and Geelong, returning to Melbourne by the steamer *Aphrasia*. And that month he appointed overlander Edward Bell as his *aide-de-camp*.

Sir George Gipps,<sup>7</sup> the Governor of New South Wales, of which colony Geelong was then a part, came to Port Phillip District and on 6 October La Trobe brought with him the official party to Geelong. He took Gipps to see Fyans Ford, the Barrabool Hills, and Corio. I suspect that, for La Trobe, the name Corio meant Geelong. The visit to the Barrabool Hills had a very far-reaching effect. In 1842, the Swiss vigneron, D L Pettavel and Frederick Brequet arrived from Neuchatel (Sophie La Trobe's home) and established the '*Neuchâtel*' vineyard in the Barrabool Hills.

Let's look a little more closely at the Swiss vine-growers. Pettavel and Brequet made their first wine in 1845. J H Dardel, who came from the same canton as Sophie La Trobe, established his *Paradise* vineyard at Batesford. Other Swiss growers were Belperroud, who created the famous *Berramongo* vineyard in the Barrabools; Frederick Marendaz and Charles Tetaz who settled at Waurn Ponds; and Victor Comu, Imer and Niffnecker. Their work

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<sup>7</sup> Rose Pellet was the daughter of La Trobe's housekeeper Charlotte Pellet.

with that of the French and German vigneron who also settled along the Moorabool and Barwon valleys, gave Geelong a new industry. Another Swiss, Frederick Amiet, who has his vineyard at Murgheboluc, married Rose Pelet [sic]<sup>8</sup> who grew up with the La Trobe children at Jolimont.

Geelong poet Mary Finnin has a poem about some of these men which is worth quoting:

Ghosts upon Moorabool's bastion  
bridge,  
Refreshed with ghostly wines,  
With Dardel dream of Paradise  
Among the Batesford vines.

There's Pettavel of Pollock's Ford,  
Brequet, and Belperroud,  
Fownes, Muhlebach, and Deppeler,  
Neuchatel's Victor Cornu.

They planted vines and trod the grape  
Out Berramong way;  
And settlers bringing down the wool  
Drank Junod's 'Cabernet'.

But vines and vigneron are gone  
To time's rich harvest home,  
With bullock drays and square-rigged  
ships;  
Now, only fancies come

Of Tétaz pouring wine for dukes  
In ghostly cellars cool,  
Of Dardel building Paradise  
Beside the Moorabool.

La Trobe had special interests in other parts of this district. He and Fenwick delighted in camping and fishing by the mouth of the Barwon River where, in company with Mr Learmonth, the Superintendent caught and cooked his first snapper over a campfire. His method of travel now was to send a relay horse to Greeves' Inn by the

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<sup>8</sup> Rose Pellet was the daughter of La Trobe's housekeeper Charlotte Pellet.

Werribee River; next morning he would ride 20 miles to have breakfast at the Inn, change horses and reach Geelong by 11 o'clock but, on more than one occasion, he made the entire return journey in one day.

By 1845, La Trobe had his own cottage at Shortland's Bluff, where the Fenwicks had formed a horse station and built huts the previous year. Fairfax Fenwick lived there and Nicholas often came from Geelong. La Trobe spent many weeks at the Bluff with his growing family (he had three children born in Melbourne). On Monday morning he would rise at 4 a.m., ride to Geelong, catch the steamer which left at 7 a.m., and be back in his Melbourne office in time for work. His three roomed cottage, with a verandah, stood on the north of the Bluff; there were also tents, a store hut and a working shed. While their father was away exploring Port Phillip District and getting to know its people, Sophie and the children enjoyed a beach holiday. Their neighbours in the late 1840s were the pilots who guided ships through the Rip.

Geelong, of course, was the starting point for many of La Trobe's journeys through the colony. His papers contain an extraordinary record of squatters whom he knew, of his interests in Aboriginal welfare, of the work of the Native Police under Captain Dana, and of the Crown Lands Commissioners, of the rough country inns, of such unusual sights as the wreck of the *Joanna*, the stranded mahogany ship,<sup>9</sup> the Lubras Cave and other unusual natural features, and of the plants and animals he found in this strange new environment.

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<sup>9</sup> La Trobe mentioned the 'Mahogany Ship' once in his diary of 'saw the stranded boat'. La Trobe Memoranda, Excursions and Absences, 10 May 1844.



There are some fascinating glimpses from entries in his diaries of a ride from Corio to Melbourne, for example: 'Day closing in early and terrible dark night on the plains with poor Blackey,<sup>10</sup> twelve hours on route'; and this heartfelt entry:

Blackey just in from grass, and overfed by a bad groom gets poorly cared for by Fyans all the evening and night, and dies of inflammation the following day ... a good horse and companion: had ridden him for eight years. Very much grieved. Buried him by the riverside.

And his comments on the social rounds included this entry: 'a very pleasant excursion with Thomson and his old Harrow school fellow, Adolphus Goldsmith. At Geelong we visited the Barrabool Hills and Wills vineyard. Dined at Fyans's Bellbird.'<sup>11</sup>

La Trobe moved his cottage from the Bluff to Jolimont in 1848. Next year he announced the names of members of the Provisional Council for the newly incorporated town of Geelong, making Foster Fyans acting Mayor. On 9 May 1850, the newly elected members of the Council chose Dr Thomson as the first Mayor. It was this Council which recommended to him that a 200 acre site be set aside at Geelong as a Botanic Gardens and La Trobe had the site reserved that year. Here is a description of these gardens forty years later was reported in the *Melbourne Age*:

The Botanical Gardens might, with greater propriety, have retained its original name of the 'Eastern Park'. For the 185 acres in this reserve, only about 7 acres are devoted to

botanical display, including of course, a conservatory and a fernery. This is a park pure and simple, the best in its way that I know of in the colony for it has not only grass, and trees, and shrubs, and footpaths but possesses nearly 4 miles of gravelled carriage drives. This is what Melbourne especially lacks ... This Geelong reserve is a noted place for school picnics, there being a 'Rotunda' with water laid on, for the convenience of such parties ... And the view of the bay and the surrounding mountains is the crowning joy of a fine day in these Botanical Gardens.<sup>12</sup>

In the previous year La Trobe had granted the site for the Geelong Hospital and laid the foundation stone for the first building. And his name was well known in the Town in La Trobe Terrace and La Trobe's Dam which we now call Johnston Park.

With the gold discoveries of 1851, all those problems La Trobe had encountered in the 1840s multiplied exceedingly, yet, despite the criticism of the many, La Trobe and his staff coped with the multitude. Although derided by some power-hungry, land-hungry men, and faced with all the turbulence of the gold rushes, he had the confidence of one with a personal vision of Victoria's future.

A man of the Enlightenment and a man with a deep and abiding sense of the importance of religion, he displayed a fine personal integrity and great humane qualities. Take the case of Trooper John Goldman found guilty of murder at Buninyong in 1852 and condemned to be executed at Geelong at

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<sup>10</sup> Blackey was La Trobe's favourite horse who died on 10 September 1847.

<sup>11</sup> La Trobe's diary entry, 10 September 1847.

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<sup>12</sup> *Age*, 15 June 1889.

8 a.m. on Monday 15 August 1853. Convinced of Goldman's innocence, schoolmaster Behan and clergyman Theodore Stretch persuaded a young coachman named Richard Illidge to ride to Melbourne on Sunday night, 14 August, to carry their appeal for clemency to La Trobe.

Illidge had a terrible ride. The evening mist turned to drenching rain that changed the track into a muddy mess and flooded creeks had to be forded in the dark. At Werribee he secured a fresh horse but, despite eight hours hard riding, he did not reach La Trobe until after midnight. The Lieutenant Governor agreed to commute Goldman's sentence to imprisonment. He gave Illidge an authority for the Sheriff, Foster Fyans, to stop the execution and Illidge an authority to procure a fresh horse from Kirk's Bazaar. Illidge rode with the wind and the rain through the darkness and reached Gallows Flat, where Fyans waited with the prisoner. He arrived at ten minutes to eight, in time to stop the hanging.

When I set out to study La Trobe's life, I realised it had much more to it however, than the events of his fourteen years as Superintendent, and from 1851 as Lieutenant-Governor.<sup>13</sup> I became a fossicker. That's a good Australian word, dating from La Trobe's time, and meaning one who walks around looking for gold.

I have been fossicking for gold of a different kind, seeking to identify those elements that were compounded in the personal vision of La Trobe. For *almost* a year now, I have *walked* about in this man's mind, delving into his thoughts, searching for his beliefs, examining his

interests and striving to glimpse the inner person.

La Trobe emerges as one whose mind was rich in imagination and creativity, a mind flashing with bright humour and eagerly receptive of new experiences and new ideas, a mind which, despite its daemonic restlessness, found ultimate contentment in his family and his garden, in his religious beliefs, in his books and travels, his writings and sketching, his delight in horsemanship and exploration, his *love* of the bushlands and seacoasts, his wonder and delight in the stark beauty of the Australian environment.

All these I found in my fossicking. I also found, that, from these, La Trobe, in the midst of turbulence grew an inner tranquility that sustained him through the long, tough, difficult years. The book, *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*,<sup>14</sup> published to mark the centenary of his death, reflects the events of those years but, more importantly, it enables one to glimpse the golden vision La Trobe once had for this country and to understand the tranquil heart of the first great Victorian.

With the unveiling of this memorial, Geelong makes its tribute to one who loved this city well.



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<sup>13</sup> La Trobe was, in fact, Superintendent for eleven years from 1839 to 1850, and Lieutenant-Governor for four years from 1851 to 1854.

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<sup>14</sup> L. J. Blake, (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne: Government of Victoria, 1975.