

# LA TROBEANA



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

Vol. 6, No. 2, June 2007

ISSN 1447-4026

## ***La Trobeana***

Journal of the La Trobe Society of Australia Inc.  
Vol. 6, No. 2, June 2007

ISSN 1447-4026

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## FRONT COVER

Thomas Woolner, 1825-1892, sculptor.

Charles Joseph La Trobe

1853, diam. 24.0 cm. Bronze portrait medallion showing the left profile of Charles Joseph La Trobe.

Signature and date incised in bronze 1.n. T. Woolner. Sc. 1853:/M La Trobe, Charles Joseph, 1801-1875

Accessioned 1894

La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

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# A Word from the President

Welcome to the second edition of *La Trobeana* for 2007. You will notice the upgrading of the design and production of the journal, and we thank Minuteman Press for assistance with this important aspect of our journal; we hope you enjoy the new format. We are pleased to be publishing three excellent articles written by members of the Society, two of which are especially for this Journal. We are delighted to be the first to publish the groundbreaking research by Marita Hargraves whose article 'C J La Trobe's Season in Van Diemen's Land' investigates La Trobe's time as acting Lieutenant-Governor in Tasmania from late 1846 to early 1847. Lawyer and academic, John Waugh's article, 'A Monstrous Anomaly: La Trobe and the Legislature' examines La Trobe's influence on the first Victorian Legislative Council. By popular demand, we are also publishing the talk given at last year's Christmas Cocktails by Caroline Clemente, on 'La Trobe's Summer: Diversions, Excursions and Seasonal Celebrations'. Finally, our Secretary, Dr Dianne Reilly, in her capacity as La Trobe Librarian at the State Library of Victoria, was recently honoured to address a graduation ceremony at La Trobe University, and that address, which provides a context for La Trobe's work to the university audience, is reprinted in full in this edition.

Since our last edition, the work of the La Trobe Society has continued apace. A number of events planned for 2007 aim at increasing the La Trobe Society's profile for its significant work in the community.

First and foremost is the awarding of the inaugural La Trobe Society Fellowship. We are delighted by the choice of the State Library's independent judging panel of Dr Frances Thiele. She will investigate 'Edward Stone Parker and the Aboriginal People of the Mt Macedon District: a case study of Superintendent

La Trobe's management of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate'. On a personal note, my family and I are proud and delighted to be associated with the sponsorship of this Fellowship.

As you will see, the joint La Trobe Society/Royal Historical Society Annual A G L Shaw Lecture will be held later this month, and we are pleased to welcome Dr Robert Kenny who will speak on the subject of 'The Moravian Charles Joseph La Trobe' on Tuesday 26 June, at the Royal Historical Society. Other events are in preparation, including the Annual General Meeting to be held in September and our Christmas Cocktails which will this year be held at the Australian Club with member Michael Bond as our host.

Our Treasurer, John Drury, makes the point in his article that we should encourage our friends and associates to become members of this Society, and I wholeheartedly support this initiative. I, too, encourage you to think of businesses and individuals who may wish to sponsor events or even provide an annual amount for future Fellowships. There is a great deal of work to be done, and I believe the members of our Society will embrace all opportunities to promote the work of the Society which in turn educates Victorians to the significance of the work carried out by La Trobe during his time in Victoria.

With all best wishes  
Rodney Davidson

# Inaugural La Trobe Society Fellowship Award 2007 – 2008



Dr. Frances Thiele

It is with great pleasure that we announce the winner of the inaugural La Trobe Society Fellowship. It is Dr Frances Thiele whose project is 'Edward Stone Parker and the Aboriginal People of the Mt. Macedon District, a case study of Superintendent La Trobe's management of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate.'

The La Trobe Society Fellowship, inaugurated this year, is for a period of six months with a stipend of \$25,000. Funding for the Fellowship is provided by the La Trobe Society, through the **generosity of the Rodney Davidson Family**. It is awarded for historical research in the period of La Trobe's tenure as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and later as Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Victoria (1839 – 1854). Like the State Library's Creative Fellowships, the recipient has the use of a study at the State Library

and additional access to the collections. Selection of the successful applicant was made by the recommendation of the Writers and Readers Committee to the Library Board of Victoria.

Frances is not new to the State Library, having worked there as Field Historian some years ago. Her project will focus on La Trobe's administration and his dealings with the Indigenous population. In 1837 Lord Glenelg, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, established the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate and appointed George Augustus Robinson as Chief Protector. Later the same year he nominated four Assistant Protectors to work directly with Aboriginal people in large regional districts. One of these men was Edward Stone Parker, a Methodist preacher given responsibility for Aboriginal people in the Mount Macedon (or Loddon) District northwest of Melbourne. Only a few months later in 1838, the British Government decided that Charles Joseph La Trobe was the right man to take up the post of Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. One of La Trobe's important duties was to oversee the Protectorate System created by a liberal-minded Government, reviewing the effect of colonisation on Aboriginal people throughout the world. This study will use Parker's Mount Macedon Protectorate district as a case study to examine how La Trobe managed the competing interests of the British and Colonial Governments and the needs of the Protectors who witnessed the disastrous effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people but held diverse views on day-to-day race relations.

An Honorary Research Associate in the School of Historical and European Studies at La Trobe University, Frances has delivered numerous papers at history conferences and has published widely. Among her many talents, she is an accomplished harpist whose next public performance will be in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Melbourne City Opera Orchestra.

## A Word from the Treasurer

The inaugural La Trobe Society Fellowship, sponsored with the generosity of the Rodney Davidson Family, has been awarded to Dr Frances Thiele. The title of her project is 'Edward Stone Parker and the Aboriginal People of the Mt. Macedon District, a case study of Superintendent La Trobe's management of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate'.

In our last *La Trobeana* issue, I requested members to put forward names of any industry or company that they consider could be approached for future sponsorship of a La Trobe Society annual Fellowship. Please keep this in mind to ensure future success of this worthwhile project.

The Society received a request from the Geelong Branch of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) to assist in restoration of the grave of Charlotte Pellet in the Inverleigh Cemetery. Charlotte Pellet was the housekeeper for many years at Jolimont, having come from the Montmollion family home in Neuchâtel with her daughter Rose to support the La Trobe family. The Committee agreed to advance the amount of \$400.00 as requested to this project.

As members of the La Trobe Society, we are dedicated to perpetuating the awareness of La Trobe and his vision for Melbourne and Victoria. We have achieved so much in our five years of existence, but need to increase membership for the future of the Society. Please try and influence interested people to become members.

John Drury  
Honorary Treasurer

## La Trobe's 206th Birthday Celebration

### 20 March 2007

Over 40 members and friends attended the informal twilight picnic at La Trobe Cottage on 20 March to celebrate the birthday of the first Lieutenant-Governor. This was an opportunity to visit the tiny residence and to imagine what it must have been like in those pioneering days to live on the outskirts of an embryonic city.

Guest speaker was Martin Purslow, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer, of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Mr Purslow was recently the conservation manager for the National Trust and has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the CEO's position. He is a former chief executive of the Paxton Trust in Scotland, a position which included the management of invaluable collections from the National Galleries of Scotland. Mr Purslow has also acted as CEO of the Bexley Heritage Trust, an independent charitable fund, where he directed the restoration and opening by the Queen of Danson House, described by English Heritage as 'the most significant building at risk in London'. He has also been active in heritage tourism development in the UK, and Chairman for the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2005 in recognition of his work in the UK for heritage and the arts.

As conservation manager, Mr Purslow developed an intimate understanding of the cultural and heritage issues facing the National Trust here in Victoria, and is confident that there is the will and expertise locally to succeed. He is well aware of the responsibilities the Trust has for such an historic building as La Trobe's Cottage, and he outlined plans for a stronger focus on this residence. His plans encompassed cooperative activities with both the administration of the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Melbourne City Council in the installation of informative signage about the Cottage and its grounds, as so well documented by Society members, John and Helen Botham.

Mr Purslow concluded his remarks with the hope that La Trobe Society members become involved in future activities promoting this heritage site.

## Forthcoming Events

*La Trobe Society/Royal Historical Society of Victoria Annual A G L Shaw Lecture*  
*Speaker: Dr Robert Kenny 'The Moravian Charles Joseph La Trobe'*

Tuesday 26 June  
6.00 for 6.30 pm

Venue: Royal Historical Society of Victoria  
239 A'Beckett Street Melbourne  
Bookings: (03) 9328 9288  
Cost: \$5.00 members, \$ 10.00 non-members (refreshments served)

Robert Kenny is a Fellow of the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, where he was recipient of the 2006 Peter Blazey Fellowship for the soon to be published work, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*, when it was in manuscript form. He has published several volumes of poetry and fiction, and articles on literature, religious history, and the history of science. He has a PhD in history from La Trobe University, where he is also an Associate.

Dr Kenny's La Trobe Society/Royal Historical Society of Victoria Annual A G L Shaw Lecture will concentrate on Charles Joseph La Trobe's Moravian background, and will, we are sure, shed light on this aspect of La Trobe's life which was fundamental in the shaping of his faith and his work ethic.

### *July*

A stimulating event is being planned, and notices will be sent to Members in advance.

### *September*

#### *Annual General Meeting*

Venue to be advised.

### *December*

#### *Christmas Cocktails* – Australian Club

Date to be announced.

# A Monstrous Anomaly: La Trobe and the Legislature

by John Waugh

*John Waugh teaches legal history and constitutional law at the University of Melbourne. He is currently writing a history of the Melbourne Law School.*

Among the many burdens that Charles La Trobe had to cope with in his last few years in Melbourne, one of the heaviest was handling the colony's Legislative Council. During his twelve years as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, before Victoria's separation from New South Wales in 1851, the only local political forum was the Melbourne municipal council. It could take an interest in wider issues such as separation, but its powers were strictly limited. The Legislative Council in Sydney had power over Port Phillip, but distance dampened its interest and greatly hindered participation by people south of the Murray.

From 1851, Victoria had its own legislature, and the way it worked in La Trobe's time was almost guaranteed to cause him headaches. Two-thirds of its members were elected, making it the centre of politics in the new colony, although not everyone could vote (only men could enrol, and ownership or occupation of property of a certain value was a prerequisite). La Trobe himself chose the other third of its members, but the power this gave him was a mixed blessing. He needed to find appointees who would pledge themselves to support him, despite the hostility his government often faced in the Council; turnover was high, and willing, capable nominees became hard to find.

The nub of La Trobe's problem with the Council was constitutional. He was appointed by the British government and had to follow its instructions, but when he needed permission to spend money, or proposed any changes in the colony's laws, he had to turn to the Legislative Council, which might or might not agree. If it did not, he was stuck in the middle, between the authority of London (to which he owed his job) and the opinion of the legislature. It was this bind that Henry Chapman was thinking of when he called the system that

operated until the new parliament began in 1856 'a monstrous anomaly'.

To govern a colony under such a system was difficult even in peaceable times, as successive governors of New South Wales found in the 1840s, particularly when they confronted the vexed question of pastoralists' land tenure. In the turmoil of the Victorian gold rushes, when the government was under maximum strain, even a more politically adept administrator than La Trobe would have run into trouble.

His relations with Victoria's embryo parliamentarians were particularly fraught in the early years of the rushes, 1851–53. Two flash-points illustrate their often unhappy story: revenue from the gold-fields, and the influx of ex-convicts. Somehow, La Trobe's administration had suddenly to provide roads, docks and other public works for a vastly increased population. The cost was huge; who would pay? The gold-fields contributed through the unpopular licence-fee, but agitation against it began early and was soon felt in the legislature, even though no electorates were created to represent the gold-fields until 1855.

The burden on the miners could be reduced by imposing an export duty on gold, but Dianne Reilly Drury has described how, partly through the government's clumsiness and partly through the intransigence of the groups on whom some of the redistributed tax burden would have fallen, the Council rejected the new measure. An opportunity to defuse the anger that the licence-fee provoked had been lost.

The other collision arose from a law-and-order campaign that stirred deep fears among Victorians feeling threatened by the disorder and social upheaval of the rushes. Crime rose; gold-seekers flooded in from all directions, among them ex-convicts from Van Diemen's Land, where transportation from Britain was only just being wound up. With a well-judged mix of populism and defence of social order, the Legislative Council proposed to secure Victoria's borders with a new law under which not only escaped convicts entering the colony, but even those



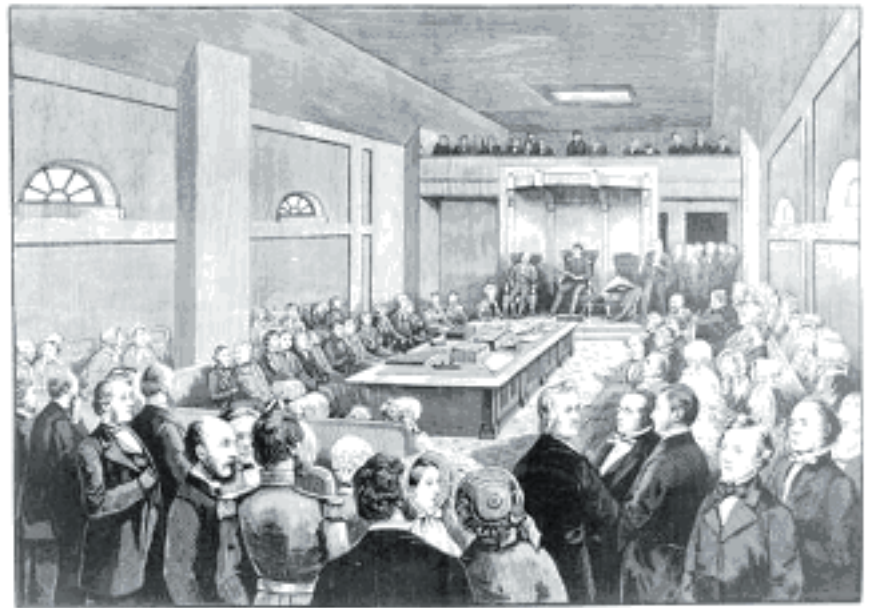


St Patrick's Hall, the First Legislative House in Victoria, 1852.

Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

The First Legislative Council of Victoria, 13th November 1851, from an enlarged photograph by Mr Noone of a sketch taken at the time by Mr Strutt, 1887

Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.



released under conditional pardons, would face gaol and expropriation of their property.

When the Council passed the bill, despite the government's opposition, La Trobe was caught between the powerful public support for the bill and the predictable censure of his superiors in London of this interference with the royal prerogative of mercy. He bowed to local pressure, assenting to the bill and sending it to Britain, where it was vetoed under the royal power of disallowance. When La Trobe was notified, he judged that public feeling still ran too high for him to proclaim the disallowance of the act.

Not everything went badly between La Trobe and his legislators, of course. Ray Wright's fine history of the early Legislative Council, *A Blended House*, documents not only their conflicts, but also their legislative successes, and the smoother working of their relationship after the first few years.

Their interests began to converge, as the old Port Phillipians circled their wagons against the newcomers of the 1850s, entrenching their power by creating an impregnable and plutocratic upper house in the new constitution framed by the Council in 1853–54.

La Trobe must nevertheless have felt some relief when he saw the last of the Legislative Council on his departure in 1854. It remained to vex his successor, Charles Hotham, but the 'monstrous anomaly' ended with the inauguration of self-government and the new parliament in 1855–56. Mighty conflicts between the two houses of parliament lay in the future, but at least the framework of government would no longer guarantee disagreement between the legislature and the Queen's unfortunate representatives.

# La Trobe's Summer: Diversions, Excursions and Seasonal Celebrations

*The following article is the text of the talk given by Society member, Caroline Clemente, at the 2006 La Trobe Society Christmas Cocktails held at the Melbourne Club on 11 December, 2006.*

When I was trying to come up with a festive subject for this occasion, a series of letters from Charles La Trobe and his wife, Sophie, to their daughter sprang to mind. In April, 1845, eight-year-old Agnes had been sent from Melbourne to her relatives in Switzerland to be educated. Her parents' letters date from that time until 1853 when La Trobe resigned and sent his family back to Europe, 15 months prior to his own return. This correspondence is fascinating for its revelations of the family's private life and their personal experiences in the early colony. It occurred to me that the La Trobes' Christmas celebrations and summers in the Port Phillip District might make a suitably seasonal bill of fare for our end-of-year function.

As 2006 is the year of La Trobe, the venue of the Society's Christmas party was chosen to mark his connection with the Melbourne Club. La Trobe accepted an unvoted offer of membership in October, 1844, only a month or so after the Club moved to its second rented clubhouse (later the Port Phillip Bank) on the south side of Collins Street, between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets (*Figure 4*).<sup>1</sup> In 1852, the year after Victoria's separation from New South Wales, the recently appointed Lieutenant-Governor was invited to become the Club's patron and his subscription cheque was duly returned to him. This seemed an appropriate place to begin our investigation into his customary Christmas celebrations. Sadly, few records from the Club's earliest years have survived and there are no descriptions of Christmas festivities dating from the years of La Trobe's membership.<sup>2</sup> However, on Christmas Day, 1862, Captain Frederick Standish,

a bachelor and Club resident, noted with relish in his diary: 'Dined off an excellent turkey and plum pudding at the Club'.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Police Commissioner Standish was a black sheep who arrived in the colony in 1852 under a false identity, having disgraced himself and his family name at home. This worldly, aristocratic Irishman was a good judge of horseflesh and devoted to the pleasures of the table, both gourmet and gambling. However, the universal British love of plum pudding may well have been the only taste that he and La Trobe shared. Imbued with nineteenth century Romantic sensibility and Christian values – 'a scholar and a gentleman' as Richard Howitt put it – La Trobe was a devoted family man who undoubtedly preferred to spend Christmas at home and in his much loved garden at Jolimont.<sup>4</sup>

George Gilbert's View of Jolimont of around 1843-44 with Sophie La Trobe and two little girls at play in the manicured garden, evokes the atmosphere of domestic order and tranquillity contentedly described by La Trobe in 1840: 'Small as our establishment is, I assure you there is not a more comfortable, well-regulated and more lasting one in this part of the world within or without'.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to Agnes Louisa (born 1837), the La Trobe family consisted of two younger daughters, Eleanora Sophia (born 1842), known as Nelly, and Mary Cecilia (born 1843), called Cécile. This trio, charmingly referred to by Governor Gipps as La Trobe's 'three graces', was joined in 1845 after Agnes's departure, by a last child and only son, Charles Albert. Charley's birth on Christmas morning was joyfully announced to Agnes by her father who wrote to her only an hour after the event. In the same letter, he mentioned

a children's party with a Christmas tree held the previous evening, similar to one they had given two years earlier in 1843. Dr Marguerite Hancock alluded to this annual Christmas Eve party in her talk on the life of Sophie La Trobe to the La Trobe Society last year. As she pointed out, the Christmas tree was a Swiss custom that the La Trobes had introduced to Melbourne. Popular in northern Europe countries, the Christmas tree was imported to the English court by the German Prince Albert in 1841 but was unknown outside royal circles until some years later. In 1848, the Christmas issue of the *Illustrated London News* published an illustration of the royal family gathered around a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle with the comment: 'As the Christmas Tree is more of a German than English custom, we present our readers with the following sketch which will throw light upon the festive purposes for which they are employed in Germany'.<sup>9</sup> So at the Empire's outer edge, Melbourne's own little first family initiated a custom which caught on in Britain only some years later, and proved so popular that it become an inseparable part of the traditional English Christmas.

As a perfectionist, Sophie La Trobe inevitably worried about obtaining a suitable Christmas tree. As she explained to Agnes, '... it is very difficult to find a tree of any kind and still more to find a good one and a fir tree as I should wish to have'.<sup>10</sup> According to Swiss custom, the La Trobes' Christmas tree would have been decorated with small bead hangings and bright paper baskets holding cakes and bonbons with an angel at the top of the tree. Lighted wax tapers in protective wooden holders would have been set on the branches to represent the stars in the night sky with presents for children piled underneath. Sophie La Trobe described their Christmas Eve party of 1848 to Agnes:

It went off very well and the little people were very happy and delighted ... All the children had an abundance of bonbons, such as they are here. They are very poor though, compared to Switzerland. Each child had a present from Charley who himself and his sisters

had hardly any. There is no one here to give them presents, and what Papa and Maman give they do not consider as such. Today [New Year's Day] we gave them the little girls each a book and Charley a little charrette [barrow or wagon] with which he is very much delighted for today at least.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Switzerland, the English custom at that time was to exchange presents on New Year's Day, not on Christmas Day, and only between family members and close friends. Christmas Day itself was almost universally kept as a day of religious observance.<sup>12</sup>

The guest list at the La Trobes' Christmas Eve party was exclusive but not in any snobbish sense. It consisted of children of their closest personal friends and faithful family servants. From the beginning, the children of the much respected future Colonial Secretary, Captain Lonsdale, were invited along with those of Dr Godfrey Howitt, the family physician, as well as Rose Pellet, the small daughter of the La Trobes' devoted Swiss housekeeper and Agnes's companion from the time they were both three years old. Later the guest list grew and included the children of a former servant, Mary Anne, then married to the Cape Otway lighthouse keeper.<sup>13</sup> By 1850, Sophie La Trobe was beginning to worry about how to safely accommodate so many young children in their small house.<sup>14</sup>

After Christmas, successful family holidays were spent in the early 1840s at Shortlands Bluff which La Trobe later renamed Queenscliff. There the La Trobes erected a small wooden cottage in 1845 where Sophie and the children spent 10 weeks, visited by La Trobe whenever he could get away. However, the journey back to the office was long and arduous, requiring La Trobe to leave at 4.00 o'clock in the morning, ride for 3 hours to Geelong and catch the 7.00 a.m. ferry so as to arrive at the office on time. In 1848, the Queenscliff cottage was removed and set up in a corner of the garden at Jolimont where it served as a school room for the children.<sup>15</sup> On a visit to Shortlands Bluff after his wife and children had left the colony at the end of

February, 1853, La Trobe was poignantly reminded of those past happy summers. As he wrote to Sophie:

I cannot forget that the last time I was here, it was with you my darling, and my dear children, and my heart is *un peu gris*...My dear wife yesterday and today I see you at every turn – on the beach, on the hill, at the Lighthouse, on the set of our pretty cottage – the children run way down the steep pathway to their sand, calling out Papa! Papa!...In fact the [Joli]mont itself is not more full of recollections – and perhaps these are the more vivid because I have had some of my pleasantest days in Victoria with you.<sup>16</sup>

There was no gazetted annual leave for La Trobe and he and Governor Gipps exchanged letters of business on Christmas Day.<sup>17</sup> The only escapes from the job were the obligatory tours of inspection and discovery of the territory under his administration.<sup>18</sup> These excursions provided much needed recreation for La Trobe. He felt refreshed by the change of scene, revitalized by

physical exercise and relieved of the unrelenting mental strain and burden of office. And no one was better equipped to execute such duties. As a seasoned explorer and amateur geologist and botanist, he was an informed and keenly interested observer. Furthermore, being an accomplished landscape artist and inspired by a Romantic vision of nature, La Trobe was fully alive to the beauty, drama and novelty of the terrain he traversed.<sup>19</sup>

Two summer expeditions are described in La Trobe's letters to Agnes. The first dating from December, 1847, is accompanied by a little sketch and a typically humorous account of his adventures. These took place during a short trip to Gippsland, not via the coast road but along the foot of mountains and through thick forests:<sup>20</sup>

I only had to sleep out in the scrub two nights. Just one was rather disagreeable as a sudden thunderstorm broke on us and prevented us reaching the station where we had intended to pass the night - and the ground being flooded, I had to sit up in a tree in the forest all night like an opossum or cockatoo without anything to eat. However, it did us no harm.<sup>21</sup>

A number of La Trobe's excursions such as those to Cape Otway, had an important impact on the development of the colony. He made three attempts to reach the Cape through impenetrable bush between 1845 and 1846 with the aim of establishing a lighthouse. This was crucial to prevent further shipwrecks in the treacherous Bass Strait waters such



W F E Liardet, *Superintendent La Trobe's House*, 187  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

Edward La Trobe Bateman, *View from the Rockery*  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria



as the *Cataraqui* disaster of 1845 that cost nearly 400 lives.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the summer of 1849, La Trobe wrote to Agnes:

I have been absent from home... about 3 weeks on an excursion to the westward... The first to the Cape [Otway] was a little more adventurous than ordinary as I could not get through the great forests on horseback, but had to walk for three days to the Cape then fight my way five days through terrible scrub along the coast and over the mountains till I could get to the camp where my horses which had gone round were waiting for us. For eight days I never had my clothes off - except to bathe in the sea - and, of course, slept amongst the bushes without any shelter; and having taken too little provision, we were pretty well starved and had to eat coarse shellfish - and the scrub was so thick that we could never see before us, and could scarcely sometimes advance a mile in an hour and that was a continual struggle and both skin and clothes of course suffered... The last day but one we had to take refuge down on the margin of the sea, at the foot of the great cliffs of Moonlight Heads for the blacks who were waiting with our horses at the camp, had carelessly set fire to the bush in advance of us, and the whole country was in a blaze and a terrible hot wind carried the smoke and fire directly upon our track. However, being in safety, however hungry, it was satisfactory to know that the fire, once passed, would clear away some of the impediments in our way. And so it was, for the next day, as soon as we had scaled the cliffs and got upon the burned ground, we advanced with comparatively little difficulty and soon reached the camp. My object in making this journey was to inspect the beautiful Lighthouse which has been built here since I first explored the Cape in 1845-6. It is a magnificent work - a revolving light of 21 (twenty one burners) seen nearly 30 miles at sea - and is a great blessing to the mariners in the Straits.<sup>23</sup>

Another important source of diversion and recreation for La Trobe was his garden; it was his pride and joy. Liardet's charming view of Jolimont in its garden setting was recreated many years later from the artist's memory (Figure 4). According to Hugh McCrae, a notorious embroiderer of the truth, 'La Trobe nipped rosebuds and solved governmental difficulties at the same

time'.<sup>24</sup> It is pleasing to think that the Garden State originated with the founder of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Melbourne's first real governor, Charles La Trobe, together with a small coterie of close friends and associates such as Georgiana McCrae, Dr Godfrey Howitt, Justice Redmond Barry and other like-minded enthusiasts.

When he decided to resign, La Trobe commissioned a series of souvenir views of his beloved house and garden from his cousin, Edward La Trobe Bateman.<sup>25</sup> A cultured man of rare taste and refinement, La Trobe's choice was impeccable since Bateman was one of the most outstanding graphic artists and designers of his time. Appointed by La Trobe in 1853, the first Government Botanist and Director of the Botanic Gardens, Ferdinand von Mueller, was an exacting critic who described Bateman as a splendid botanical artist. The Jolimont garden, preserved with photographic clarity in Bateman's superlative pencil drawings, often figures in La Trobe's letters to his daughter. In the summer of 1848, he wrote:

This spring the garden was most beautiful - full of flowers and the verandah so full of fine geraniums and cactus of various kinds in full flower that everyone said it was worth coming to see... I think the only important addition I have made to my garden is a pretty rockery for the sake of various rock plants which I got from Sydney and cacti, etc. This has succeeded very well and is ornamental... There a few shady trees and I have had built a seat under them. It is not quite as high as the house roof but perhaps 10 feet above the ground.

The accompanying sketch was annotated: 'Here you have a picture of it and Charlie coming to frighten Nelly and Cecile with a big stick...!' The same letter contains a characteristically wry aside on the realities of family life: '[Charlie] is full of life and spirits like his sisters... I am sorry to say however what between love and teasing, he and his sisters often quarrel and scratch and pull hair and fight like little weasels.'<sup>26</sup>

For Agnes's delicate Swiss mother, Christmas in the Melbourne summer was a trying experience, as she

wrote in December, 1850: 'They are all three much delighted at the idea of having a Christmas tree on Christmas Eve...and just now the weather has been so hot and suffocating that it makes me shrink from the very thought of it. However, we will do it if we can do it well in any way'.<sup>27</sup> Her description of the summer of 1851 could equally apply to the current summer of 2006-7, 155 years later:

The heat and drought are so bad this year especially the last that it is becoming quite dreadful – added to that bush fires, that have destroyed a great deal of property and even loss of lives and if the rain does not come soon, it will be very bad for the country. All the creeks and waterholes are drying so fast and numbers of cattle are dying from want of water. Besides the dry weather we have unusually strong and high winds which blow the dust around in clouds and whirlwinds...<sup>28</sup>

'In this wretched gold country', as Sophie La Trobe called it in January, 1852, the effects of the gold rush were being fully realised.<sup>29</sup> The following month, La Trobe reported: 'Jolimont is looking very dry and burned up, but still pretty from the number of trees – but we live in difficult times, and are still but indifferently supplied with servants. We have no butler – and only a makeshift of a gardener'.<sup>30</sup> However, no hint of gold fever disturbs the peace of Bateman's Jolimont scene where the La Trobe children (from left to right, Charley, Cécile and Nelly) enjoy the flourishing, sunlit garden. They were probably unaware of the honour done them since with few exceptions – chiefly of children, of whom he was very fond – Bateman rarely portrayed the human figure. They may well have known at that time, however, that this would be their last summer in the Port Phillip District. Bateman had arrived in Melbourne on 25 October, 1852, and La Trobe sent his resignation to the Colonial Office on 31 December of that year. The succession of events suggests that this particular drawing may have been executed earlier than the rest of the Jolimont series, probably sometime between November, 1852, and 25 February, 1853, when Sophie and the

La Trobe children departed for Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Since the La Trobe family's final Christmas and summer in Melbourne a great deal has, of course, radically changed. But much that is recognizable still remains: Swiss Christmas trees with presents for children, English turkey and plum pudding, Peninsula seaside holidays, bushfires and drought and farmers and gardeners all praying for rain. '*Plus ça change*', as Sophie La Trobe might well remark if she could see us now.

Caroline Clemente  
December, 2006

- 1 By the time of Liardet's painting of 1875, it had become the Port Phillip Bank. The third and current clubhouse at 36 Collins Street was not built and occupied until 1859.
- 2 Information and copies of correspondence relating to La Trobe's membership were kindly supplied by Ian Morrison, Melbourne Club archivist.
- 3 I am grateful to Paul de Serville for this reference.
- 4 Howitt, *Impressions of Australia Felix*, p. 119.
- 5 C.J. La Trobe to his sister, Charlotte La Trobe, 2 March 1840; La Trobe Papers, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, H5279, Box 650/15.
- 6 Governor Sir George Gipps (1791-1847), having sent his only son back to Eton, sympathized with the La Trobes' distress over parting with Agnes and confided that he and Lady Gipps had greatly hoped, in vain, for a daughter of their own; from Gipps to La Trobe, Letters 103, 202, 322 in Shaw, (ed.), *The Gipps-La Trobe Correspondence*, pp. 124, 218, 327.
- 7 C.J. La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 25 December, 1845; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS13354, Box 3, Folder 27.
- 8 Hancock, "The Life of Sophie La Trobe", in *La Trobeana*, April 2006, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 13.
- 9 "The Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle" in *Illustrated London News*, Christmas Supplement, London, 1848, p. 410.
- 10 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 15 December, 1850; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 11 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 1 January, 1849; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS13354, Box 3, Folder 27.
- 12 Stapleton, and McDonald, *Christmas in the Colonies*, p. 45.
- 13 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 1 January, 1849; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS13354, Box 3, Folder 27.
- 14 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 15 December, 1850; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 15 Known as Upper Jolimont, it later housed the newly arrived Bishop of Melbourne, Charles Perry, and his wife, Frances, while Bishop's Court in East Melbourne was being built. It was then rented to Hugh Eardley Childers, the future Colonial Treasurer, who occupied it with his wife and young family during La Trobe's last period at Jolimont.
- 16 C.J. La Trobe to Sophie La Trobe, 28 October, 1853 in Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, pp. 44-45.
- 17 See dates of the published correspondence in Shaw (ed.), *The Gipps-La Trobe Correspondence*, p. xxvi ff.
- 18 Over 90 such tours are listed in Reilly Drury, *La Trobe: the making of a Governor*, pp. 263-66.
- 19 The first 3 articles by Alsop, Reilly and Woodhouse in a series on "La Trobe's Journeys of Exploration of the Port Phillip District", were introduced in *La Trobeana*, Vol. 4, No.1, April, 2006.
- 20 La Trobe's first journey to establish a route to South Gippsland in February, 1845, is discussed by Woodhouse, "La Trobe in South Gippsland", in *La Trobeana*, pp. 3-7.
- 21 C.J. La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 29 January, 1849, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Folder 27, Box 3.
- 22 The first of his 3 journeys are examined by Reilly, "La Trobe's Discovery of Cape Otway", in *La Trobeana*, pp. 10-12.
- 23 C.J. La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 26 March, 1849, La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 24 McCrae (ed.), *Georgiana's Journal*, p. 72.
- 25 This series is reproduced in its entirety in Botham, *La Trobe's Jolimont*.
- 26 C.J. La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 29 January, 1848; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Folder 27, Box 3.
- 27 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 15 December, 1850; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 28 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 28 February, 1851; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 29 Sophie La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 23 January, 1852; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 30 C.J. La Trobe to Agnes La Trobe, 28 February, 1852; La Trobe Neuchâtel Archives, La Trobe Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 13354, Box 3, Folder 28.
- 31 The dating of the rest of the 21 Jolimont drawings between July and September, 1853, is discussed by Botham, *La Trobe's Jolimont*, p. 14, based on information in Neale, 'Illuminating Nature', p. 79.

# C J La Trobe's Season in Van Diemen's Land

Comptroller-General of Convicts had all the power, responsibility and

## By Marita Hargraves

*Marita Hargraves is a Tasmanian whose work since 1997 has included positions in Melbourne in both the public and private sectors.*

*Although she had often visited the Tasmanian town named after La Trobe, her interest grew in his wider connections with the island and his long-term enthusiasm with its natural history when she was researching her book *Inducements and Agents: German, Northern European and Scandinavian Recruitment to Tasmania 1855-1887*. This interest was further extended through her membership of the La Trobe Society, and she thought it time to write a commentary on C J La Trobe's Tasmanian connections.*

## Background

By 1846, British Secretary of State, William Ewart Gladstone,<sup>1</sup> had lost faith in the administrative abilities of Sir John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (VDL),<sup>2</sup> finding fault in many areas, but particularly in relation to convict management and reporting. Although in his first year Sir John visited all the convict stations, he determined that his role as Governor was to 'remove any impediments to the success of the Probation System' and that the

accountability with respect to the welfare of the convicts.<sup>3</sup> The Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, Francis Russell Nixon,<sup>4</sup> believed that the Lieutenant-Governor had invaded the 'privileges of the Church and the rights of the Episcopate' particularly in the religious instruction of convicts, and Nixon lobbied to have the relevant legal framework changed;<sup>5</sup> others in England and in the colony were speaking openly about moral turpitude and 'abominable crimes' amongst the convicts; and rumours circulated about Sir John's relationships with women.<sup>6</sup> It was in this context that Gladstone decided to replace him after learning of the Constitutional crisis caused by the resignation of the 'Patriotic Six', country members of the Legislative Council, in protest at Sir John's attempts to increase levies and taxes to offset the shortfall in funds provided by the British Government for the operation of the convict system.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Joseph La Trobe, who had served as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District from 1839, longer than most of the Lieutenant-Governors or Governors in Britain's Southern hemisphere colonies, was considered for the appointment to replace Eardley-Wilmot. Instead, Gladstone chose William Denison to replace Sir John, and set about elevating Denison to a

C J La Trobe, (not signed) *Bridgewater on the Derwent*,  
December 1846

Source: La Trobe Picture Collection,  
State Library of Victoria







C J La Trobe, (not signed) *Mr Bicheno's New Town*, January 1847  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

knighthood.<sup>8</sup> The original notice of his recall did not reach Sir John until mid-October, but a copy of Gladstone's despatch of April 1846 arrived in late September 1846, and he also received a 'secret' letter from Gladstone. In a surprising move, the colony read about Eardley-Wilmot's dismissal and La Trobe's temporary appointment as Administrator of VDL in the newspapers in late September 1846.<sup>9</sup>

### First Weeks in Van Diemen's Land

Gladstone's despatch of 7 May 1846 appointing La Trobe arrived in Melbourne via Hobart Town about a month after La Trobe went to Sydney to visit the recently arrived Governor Charles FitzRoy.<sup>10</sup> According to La Trobe, he found the 7 May despatch when he returned from Sydney on 6 October. The inference from both his later recollections and his first despatch from VDL is that this was the first he knew of the appointment. On 26 September 1846, Sir John indicated that he had heard by rumour that La Trobe was already on his way.<sup>11</sup>

La Trobe left Sydney on the steamer the *Shamrock* on 1 October 1846, arranged for William Lonsdale to act as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District in his absence,<sup>12</sup> collected his family and household from Melbourne and left on the *Shamrock* on 6 October. They arrived at George Town on the morning of 9 October and stayed that night at the Government Cottage in Launceston. On 12 October they headed south and arrived in Hobart on Tuesday 13 October. La Trobe took the oath of office that same afternoon. On 14 October, he wrote from Government House Hobart (at that time in Macquarie Street) a rather

unctuous despatch to Gladstone:

At this early date I do not venture to offer you further information than that now conveyed. I would beg you to receive the assurance that I shall apply all my powers to the faithful discharge of the duties which Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to place in my hands for a season. It is satisfactory to me to find that the Estimates of the coming year have been duly passed by the Legislative Council, and that there appears no very pressing reason for the resumption of the sittings of that body for some time to come. This circumstance may at the very outset, enable me to command sufficient leisure to visit the several districts of the island, and to institute those personal observations and inquiries, without which I should scarcely feel myself in a position to form a correct judgment upon the various important points affecting the welfare and happiness of every class of Her Majesty's subjects in this Colony, which have been urged upon my immediate attention, or naturally fall under my consideration.<sup>13</sup>

Gladstone required La Trobe to keep the administration of the colony operating until the new Lieutenant-Governor arrived to replace him; and, more importantly, to prepare a report on the state of the convict system. La Trobe's investigative and writing styles supported the kind of qualitative reports that the Government was seeking, rather than just the statistical reports prepared by the former Comptroller-General of Convicts (Matthew Forster)<sup>14</sup> which had been forwarded with minimal narrative by Sir John. Gladstone gave later instructions in his despatch of 16 May 1846 regarding the deterioration of the convicts' moral condition after their arrival in Van Diemen's Land, and recommended the organisation of new probation gangs to be composed exclusively of convicts recently arrived

from England.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike in the year Eardley-Wilmot replaced Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Franklin,<sup>16</sup> when he arrived to find Government House fully occupied, Eardley-Wilmot vacated Government House and was in residence up the River Derwent at the Government Cottage, New Norfolk, before La Trobe reached Hobart Town. Following La Trobe's arrival, Sir John spent the next few months trying to justify his administrative actions, for which he was accused of inefficiency, as well as gathering support to scotch the rumours about his personal life. This strategy was adopted in an attempt to prove that his dismissal was unjustified. Despite some later allegations of meanness towards him,<sup>17</sup> La Trobe seems to have treated his predecessor with administrative correctness and some personal sympathy, ensuring that the deference due to him because of his former status

was still shown. He refused to forward to the Secretary of State views from various people on the Probation System until and unless the writers removed 'personal and offensive reflections on Her Majesty's late Secretary of State [Lord Stanley] and late Lieutenant-Governor [Eardley-Wilmot].'<sup>18</sup> La Trobe regularly enquired after Sir John's health when he became ill, and attempted to resolve the financial arrangements so that he could leave the colony. However, La Trobe did not go out of his way to support him by publicly by showing him the kind of friendship that he showed Sir John Franklin when he had been dismissed, and La Trobe had journeyed with him through various parts of the Port Phillip district.<sup>19</sup>

One problem between Sir John and the Colonial Office could not be resolved easily. On 14 October, Sir John requested Colonial Secretary, James Ebenezer Bicheno:<sup>20</sup>

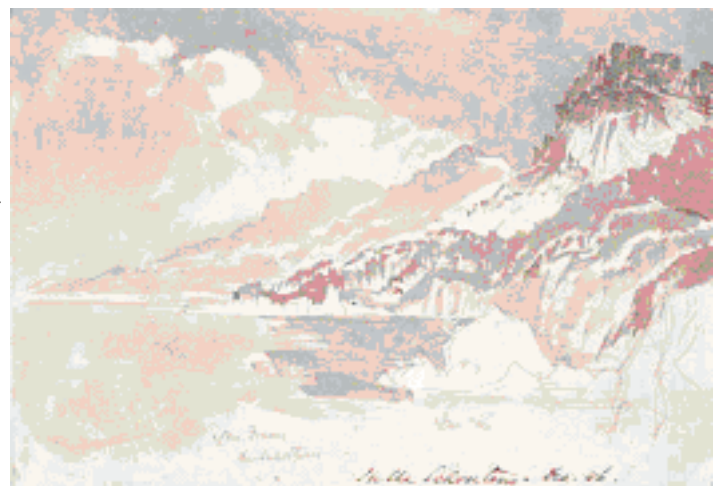
to move the Lieutenant-Governor, to sign a warrant for my Passage Money (£800) and for the Salary due to me. This application is similar to the one made to me through you by Sir J. Franklyn [sic] in 1843, and which by your advice I immediately granted.<sup>21</sup>

La Trobe declined his request, citing *Rules and Regulations for Her Majesty's Colonial Service, 1843*, namely 'that they must not be drawn without the previous sanction of the Secretary of State.' Sir John obtained advice from various legal officers that it had surely



C J La Trobe (not signed) *Church at Port Arthur*, February 1847  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

C J La Trobe (not signed) *In the Schoutens*, December 1846  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria



not been intended that a departing Governor must wait 12 to 18 months at the seat of his former authority until the sanction of the Secretary of State could be obtained for the payment to which he was entitled. Nonetheless, La Trobe felt compelled to apply the rule and pointed out to Sir John that Sir John Franklin 'in fact drew a Bill of Exchange on the Lords of the Treasury and negotiated it through the Van Diemen's Land Bank as a private transaction.' La Trobe then sought advice from Sydney and found that Sir George Gipps had also not been paid the allowance because of the same interpretation of Lord Stanley's *Rules*.<sup>22</sup> He forwarded Sir John's request to the Secretary for State. Months later, Gladstone's successor, Earl Grey, wrote to La Trobe's successor, Sir William Denison, officially approving the payment of the allowance to Sir John and endorsing the correctness of La Trobe's interpretation.<sup>23</sup> By this time, however, Sir John had died.<sup>24</sup>

The Administrator's office work required routine processing of correspondence regarding the convict system, reporting receipt or deaths of convicts, recommending Conditional Pardons, and sending to the British Government statistical returns on the convict establishment. He dealt with questions relating to the quality of food for the prisoners, stating that he could personally attest to its excellent quality and preparation, he took steps to ensure that Gladstone's instruction regarding the separation of newly arrived prisoners was carried out, and he reported extensively on an outbreak on Norfolk Island and the subsequent executions of prisoners involved in that episode.<sup>25</sup> His other administrative tasks included dealing with poor performance of government officials; forwarding petitions from the Baptist and Presbyterian churches wishing to be exempt from the Letters Patent issued to the Bishop of Tasmania; forwarding his opinions on options for the construction of lighthouses; dealing with requests for appointments to government positions; forwarding the Estimates of Expenditure (the budget for the Colony); considering

complaints in relation to land purchases and grants; and approving leave of key officials. La Trobe was a busy man.

After the initial enthusiasm for his appointment, the local newspapers found nothing of substance to record about La Trobe's actions for some time. The *Cornwall Chronicle* was so pressed for news that on 21 November 1846, it reported 'Mr La Trobe's First Public Act':

The Administrator ... has commenced his administration in right good earnest; the gentleman spent several weeks looking around; [then] broke the lethargy with supply of a stamper to the Launceston Post Office which allows 'V.R. postage 2d or 4d' to be stamped on items to be mailed – but did nothing about the insane practice of closing the office during the sorting of the Hobart Town Mail.<sup>27</sup>

During his first few weeks in office, La Trobe did a desktop audit of the convict system, calling for existing reports. He familiarised himself with the organisational structure, reported issues, and geography of the distribution of convicts throughout the island and prepared for the field trips that he had promised Gladstone. He also met key figures in the government service and VDL society. With the Legislative Council prorogued, and the Estimates passed, he had plenty of time to pursue the main task of his appointment, the review of the convict probation system. Minister, editor, historian and anti-transportationist, John West, claimed that 'Mr. Latrobe never met the Legislative Council; and his government being limited to the established routine, left nothing to record.'<sup>28</sup> La Trobe did make sure in his travels to meet as many Legislative Councillors individually as he could.

### Convict Station Inspection Tours

La Trobe selected two men to accompany him on a programme of inspections of the convict punishment, invalid, probation and hiring stations: They were Lieutenant George Henry

Courtenay, at this time Superintendent of the Deloraine probation station, and Dr John Meyer, the Assistant Colonial Surgeon in charge of H.M. Lunatic Asylum at New Norfolk.<sup>29</sup> Courtenay had been employed on a Committee of Enquiry into the VDL Education System for 3 months in 1845, as had Meyer, a general practitioner in Port Phillip who arrived in VDL late January 1844 and was initially appointed to the probation station at Jerusalem (the area is now called Colebrook), and then was made a House Surgeon at New Norfolk in 1845. These selections drew criticism from the press which accused La Trobe of creating sinecures and claimed his team would only report positively on the system of which they were part.<sup>30</sup>

La Trobe focussed on two points for his enquiry: first, he investigated the real character of the arrangements made to carry out the principles of the convict probation system, and secondly, how far the probation system, as implemented in VDL, 'really adapted to answer the important ends proposed. He concentrated his time on the first point, 'insomuch as whatever might be the result of the latter investigation no time ought to be lost in checking abuse, if such existed; and of introducing improved arrangements, wherever practicable'.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from his initial visits to the prisons and probation stations in the Hobart area, after the arrival from England of the new Comptroller-General of Convicts, Dr John Stephen Hampton,<sup>32</sup> La Trobe began a series of forays to many of the settled areas of the colony, reviewing probation stations, restructuring as he went, admonishing, dismissing or transferring incumbents. His report states or infers that he visited 34 stations, depots or other locations under the control of the Comptroller-General of Convicts and visited or detailed 16 locations under the control of the Inspector-General of Roads and Bridges where convicts were working.<sup>33</sup> The route that he took, according to his *Memoranda*, provided the opportunity to visit more than that, and, in some cases

he relied on the reports of others. He did not, however, visit Norfolk Island nor the recently re-opened station at Macquarie Harbour, which he ordered again to be closed, based on 'intelligence ... as to the general state of morals amongst the Passholders employed there in cutting timber in detached parties in situations beyond all control.'<sup>34</sup>

Demonstrating neither fear nor favour, despite the press railing against his summary dismissals and accusing him of requiring convict station officers to be married or to get married quickly, he endorsed the transfer of William Gunn, the brother of his friend and correspondent Ronald Campbell Gunn, who had been Superintendent of the Prisoners' Barracks in Hobart for 21 years. William Gunn was transferred to the equivalent position in Launceston because the incumbent, Captain Arthur Gardiner, had been removed 'by direction of His Excellency.'<sup>35</sup> Ronald Gunn's association with La Trobe over the years before and after La Trobe's spell in VDL centred on shared scientific and natural history interests. However, Gunn had considerable experience in positions of authority over convicts in VDL; he had been Assistant Superintendent of Convicts at Launceston, Police Magistrate at Circular Head, and worked with the Board of Assignment of Convicts before becoming Sir John Franklin's Private Secretary and Clerk to the Councils. His presence on at least one of the probation station inspection trips to the North-East and Falmouth would have been extremely useful to La Trobe, as well as further cementing their personal friendship.

La Trobe took the night mail from Hobart Town and received a guard of honour on arrival in Launceston on 4 November. He then 'visited Westbury, Deloraine and the whole of Norfolk Plains [by which he probably meant Longford to Cressy] and then returned to Launceston'.<sup>36</sup> He wrote that on 5 November his party 'slept at Quamby',<sup>37</sup> which was owned by Richard Dry, a Legislative Councillor and one of the 'Patriotic Six'.<sup>38</sup>

On 6 November, having inspected the relevant locations in that city, the party left Launceston again and seem to have gone to Deloraine and then to Longford where they stayed until Sunday 8 November.<sup>39</sup> On 9 November they went to Cleveland, then turned east from the Midlands road and travelled to Avoca on the South Esk River where he recalled that they probably slept at the house of Matthew Franks.<sup>40</sup> They then went along the Break O'Day Plains to 'Old Grants. Tullogorum.' James Grant Senior owned the property called *Tullochgorum*. He and his wife made a memorable impression on La Trobe who referred to them in a letter many years later to Gunn.<sup>41</sup> Meyer and Gunn, he recalled, were with him for at least part of this trip. They went down the newly-completed St Mary's Pass, built by convict labour, to the tiny settlement at the would-be port of Falmouth, and back. Returning through the Break O'Day Plains (the Fingal Valley), they lunched at *Killymoon* property, with their host Frederick Louis von Stieglitz, recently appointed as a Legislative Councillor to replace one of the 'Patriotic Six',<sup>42</sup> then left for the Campbell Town in the Midlands on 10 November, arriving after dark. La Trobe wrote: 'Next to Kermode. Ross. Hob. T.'<sup>43</sup> William Kermode of *Mona Vale* was another of the 'Patriotic Six'. He recorded La Trobe's visit in a letter to John Jeffcott, assessing him as an 'affable and sensible man'.<sup>44</sup> La Trobe 'stumbled across' Kermode many years later in England.<sup>45</sup>

The November trips to the North and North-East/East Coast cost La Trobe over £51 which he claimed in a memorandum to the VDL Colonial Secretary on 18 November 1846.<sup>46</sup>

In early December 1846, he travelled mainly by boat to Tasman's Peninsula, to inspect Port Arthur and its satellite stations, accompanied by Courtney, Meyer and Hampton. They visited probation stations in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Huon areas south of Hobart between 7-18 December.<sup>47</sup> From 19-21 December they were at the East Coast stations. He wrote:

I gather that the 20th I was on Maria Island, the 21st that I visited the Schouten Isd whence I proceeded to Oyster Bay – Swan Port stay - in evg to the Merediths & thence to Rocky Hills station & thence to Prossers Bay [now called Orford] - & returned overland by Richmond to Hobart Town.<sup>48</sup>

In 1860, La Trobe wrote to George Courtenay, requesting details from his records or recollections to help him reconstruct his time on the island. Courtenay could not find the detail as he had 'burnt [his] life' but his second letter in response to La Trobe's has been quoted as it contains some colourful anecdotes about La Trobe. Courtenay had 'a vivid recollection of my climb up the rocks [at the Schoutens] and of finding that His Excellency had consumed all the beer while I was bathing'.

In assessing his time as Lieutenant-Governor, Manning Clark described La Trobe as, among other things, a 'man who was inclined to decide whether to visit a house by the number of pretty girls he would meet'.<sup>49</sup> This part of his analysis seems to be based primarily on Courtenay's recollection of a visit to Waterloo Point (the area later named Swansea). There they went to the house of the Magistrate, William T Noyes. In the evening La Trobe went to see George Meredith 'because he had some pretty daughters'.<sup>50</sup> It is much more likely that Noyes strongly recommended he visit the Merediths, just as Lieutenant-Governors had before him and Denison did after him, as it would have been expected that the Lieutenant-Governor or Administrator should understand the views of the biggest landowning family in the district. Dry, Grant, and Kermode would likely have recommended he speak with Meredith, who had a great deal of experience with convicts. George was widowed and his three youngest daughters were living with him at *Cambria*. La Trobe, whose family was in Hobart, would not have allowed any suggestion of irregular behaviour to taint his short stewardship and ruin his future prospects – his predecessor was, after

all, in Hobart at that very time trying to defend himself against unsubstantiated allegations of womanising and being fond of very young women.<sup>51</sup> La Trobe used the phrase ‘pretty children’ when recording a visit with Powlett to a family in 1843.<sup>52</sup> He may have used that description about the Meredith family, or his companions may have teased him because the three daughters still living at home were young teenagers, and Courtenay’s barrack-room humour linked this with Sir John’s alleged predilections. This anecdote was delivered as the last in Courtenay’s letter, like a punch line or running joke. Other amusing incidents



C J La Trobe (not signed) *Off Fluted Cape*, February 1847  
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

and in-joke phrases from the November trips were remembered with affection by La Trobe in his 1864 letter to Gunn.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from accepting an invitation or following Noyes’ recommendation, La Trobe would have been interested to meet George Meredith because of his extended family connections. For example, George’s son, Charles, was the Police Magistrate at Port Sorell. George’s wife, Louisa Anne Meredith, was a well-known author, artist, social commentator and natural historian whose account of their time in New South Wales was being published by La Trobe and Sir John Franklin’s mutual friend, John Murray. Sir John’s nephew, Lieutenant Joseph Henry Kay,<sup>54</sup> had married one of George Meredith’s daughters, Maria, at Swansea, Tasmania, the year before La Trobe arrived in

VDL.<sup>55</sup> La Trobe would have met his brother, William Pordern Kay, at the time Government Architect, when he accompanied the Franklins to Port Phillip in 1843 and managed their arrangements for departure to England from there.<sup>56</sup> Lieutenant Kay had been left behind by Captains Ross and Crozier in 1840 to set up the Rossbank Observatory for which Sir John Franklin provided materials and the labour of 200 convicts on a site near the Government Gardens. He was an original member of the select Tasmanian Society established by Franklin, and La Trobe was a ‘Corresponding Member’. Soon after La Trobe’s return to Melbourne, Lieutenant Kay wrote to him introducing his brother-in-law, John Meredith, and asked La Trobe to aid him with information or assistance in assessing options ‘in the way of squatting’. The tone of the letter indicates familiarity:

I need not say that I shall esteem anything which it may be in your power to do, as a great favour. You will I am sure pardon my boldness, because you are equally sensible with myself of the great advantage which introduction may frequently be, to a stranger visiting a new country for the first time particularly when that introduction is given to anyone holding office of great authority.

La Trobe made at least two other official inspection tours: ‘one to Broadmarsh and the other to Jerusalem – one more before the end of the year completing the general survey of the Probation Stations in the Colony.’<sup>58</sup> He probably also visited *New Norfolk*, *Dromedary*, *The Woolpack* and *Hamilton* stations on the Broadmarsh tour or on a separate trip to New Norfolk when he may also have called on Sir John. He continued to receive bad press in Hobart for transferring William Gunn:

Mr Gunn’s removal ... shows, if nothing else, a carelessness of the wishes of the townspeople bordering on contempt. Considering how great the interest we have in the subject, and how little he had or

is likely to have; and contrasting the opportunities of forming a judgment enjoyed by him and us - he might have paid a little deference to our wishes; at least so far as to leave matters *in statu* for the few days he is likely to enjoy authority. But this would be doing nothing, not, except some changes were made, would there be any apparent result from his scampering inquiries throughout the colony. He is active enough, but by what we can learn, the good of the colony would be better consulted by his sitting quiet and receiving his eleven guineas a day, until the Governor arrives.<sup>59</sup>

### Final Days in Van Diemen's Land

On 25 January 1847 the *Windermere* arrived with Sir William Denison who was sworn in as Lieutenant-Governor the following day. La Trobe 'vacated Govt. H[ouse]. & in 3 days he [Denison] was in possession'.<sup>60</sup> La Trobe's family moved to New Norfolk, staying at the *Bush Inn*, and he went to stay with Bicheno at New Town, to work on his report on the convict system. He sketched Bicheno's house during this time.<sup>61</sup> Sir John died on 3 February and was buried on 10 February 1847. Both La Trobe and Sir William attended the funeral.<sup>62</sup>

Leaving Hobart on the schooner *Mary* on 13 February, La Trobe inspected Port Arthur again on his way home. After a rough voyage, during which his daughter fell and broke her collarbone, La Trobe resumed his position as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District on 25 February 1847:

reporting the re-entering the previous day' by this Superintendent on his duties, having been relieved in the Administration of Van Diemen's Land by the arrival of Sir William Denison.<sup>63</sup>

### La Trobe's Report on the Convict System

On 31 May 1847, La Trobe completed his report and sent it to England.<sup>64</sup> It arrived at a key point in a long period of debate and publication of views from

a wide range of commentators on the convict transportation concept and its implementation. The views of former Lieutenant-Governor Arthur, Bishop Nixon, and many others who were in England at that time as well as many from Van Diemen's Land and other colonies had been printed, circulated and debated.<sup>65</sup>

Under the first, earlier, so-called Assignment System, on arrival in the colony prisoners were immediately assigned, depending on their skills and known character, to Government works or to private masters who needed labour and were willing to house and feed them. This system aided the colonists develop their land quickly and gave convicts the chance to settle into a district while working off their sentence. The system operating in Sir John's and La Trobe's time was the Probation System which had been implemented between 1840 and 1842.<sup>66</sup> Under this regime, all convicts were initially ranked equally, assigned in gangs to public works, and had to prove their worth to progress through the various classes of prisoner until they earned limited independence as Passholders. The next step was to obtain their Ticket of Leave with the prospect of a Conditional Pardon in due course and ideally a full pardon.<sup>67</sup>

La Trobe's research and inspections led him to conclude that the previous convict Assignment System had failed, less from the unsoundness of its first principles, than from the careless and objectionable manner in which many of the details were implemented. He wrote:

Of the abuses that were fostered under [the Assignment system], and of the very questionable results in many respects, there can be very little doubt. My belief is, nevertheless, that it was based upon more natural and therefore sounder and better principles than that which has succeeded it. It, at least, from the moment of landing included every prisoner who had either the strength of mind to aim at a restoration of character, or pliancy to suffer himself to be, within the social

circle, and continued him within the scope and influence of its rules and affections.<sup>68</sup>

The Probation System, in which convicts were congregated on arrival in gangs, was begun 'under a far more general conviction of its importance of the interests at stake; with what was considered improved machinery, and ... with apparent general attention to the performance of duty on the part of the agents, and less liability to abuse'. Yet it failed, La Trobe wrote 'and perhaps in its results produces a small amount of general good, and a far greater weight of positive evil than its predecessor'.

La Trobe believed that, with the imposition of judicious checks on the treatment of the prisoners, and with fixed wages, the Assignment System would have been found to be the best that could possibly have been devised. He wrote '... [but] whether found defective in principle or not, the Probation System has not, and could not have a fair chance in the Colony'. The island had not been prepared for the large number of convicts who were poured into it; the economic downturn made it difficult for colonists to employ probationers, when eligible to rank as a Passholder; and thirdly, new instructions from the British Government forbade the employment of prisoners gratuitously upon works of purely local or colonial advantage and consequently increased their cost. He considered the Probation System to have increased the chances of unnatural crimes being committed, particularly when convicts were working with little supervision in gangs in the bush. He lambasted the quality and expectations of the system's officers sent from 'home' and the quality of medical and religious officers. In many cases, they took the offered situations 'because nothing better could be had' and unhesitatingly embraced the first opportunity of 'quitting a revolting and degrading employment.' This would continue to impede the successful operation of the probation system.

La Trobe's friend, Ronald Gunn, supported the continuation of transportation. La Trobe did not, though he admitted that he could not see a short-term solution to the need for labour in the developing colony. Earl Grey considered La Trobe's report to be important; though it did not support the Government's position, it had to be considered seriously.<sup>69</sup> Contemporary commentators such as John West and later historians such as Joan Ritchie have complimented La Trobe on the thoroughness of his research and the way the report was written. In West's words:

The despatch of Mr La Trobe fully corroborated the common report. His honest discrimination was worthy his high reputation for integrity. Nothing the reader has perused will be unsustained by his more elaborate analysis - which may be expressed in one sentence - as illustrating both the high-wrought theory and the mischievous practice of the probation department: - 'In spite of all the superior arrangements of the system, vice of every description is to be met with on every hand; not as an isolated spot, but as a pervading stain.'<sup>71</sup>

## Recreation in Van Diemen's Land

La Trobe did find some time for recreation and social pleasures in VDL, though the occasions were generally linked with work. Although he was unable to visit some parts of the island that he had hoped to, on 16 January 1847 he 'viewed the fossil tree' at Macquarie's Plains near New Norfolk, and before 17 January climbed Mount Wellington.<sup>72</sup> These trips may have been side-tours from his main visits to convict stations. He also found time to do some sketches and to act as Patron at public events.

Even though the images La Trobe sketched or painted in Van Diemen's Land, which are held in the State Library of Victoria have been published, it appears that no images from his extensive first round of visits in the



Hobart vicinity and then to the North and North-East of the colony have been found.<sup>73</sup> Art historian, Victoria Hammond, has suggested some valid possible reasons for him not producing any.<sup>74</sup> However, on balance, it is hard to imagine that La Trobe, the persistent observer, would have lived in Hobart for a month and not sketched either the harbour, the mountains visible from the city, the residence of the Governor, the Magnetic Observatory and the Government Gardens, or the natural and built environment that attracted other artists of the day. Is it really likely that he would have visited the isolated homesteads and probation stations situated in some of the most visually appealing landscapes on the island in November 1846 and not made some hurried sketches? What if the sketches are simply missing or misattributed?

Consider the work attributed to Bishop Nixon, labelled *Fingal*.<sup>75</sup> The orthodox sketching style of La Trobe is similar to that of several other observers of that time who also did not sign their work. *Fingal*, the unfinished image, looks very like some that La Trobe did while in Tasmania and the positioning and lettering of the title is very like La Trobe's and less typical of other sketches by Nixon or those copied by his second wife, Anna Maria, who sent them back to England. The Nixon labels tend to feature block lettering rather than cursive script and those that do have a cursive script label vary in angle and style of certain letters. The *Fingal* sketch shows the property *Tullochgorum* which La Trobe visited. La Trobe produced a wide range of sketch sizes in 1846–47. The size of the *Fingal* sketch is similar to others that are known to be by La Trobe, for example, *Bridgewater on the Derwent, Dec 1846*, and also the sketch of Mt Wellington [1847?] held by the State Library of Victoria.<sup>76</sup>

The Royal Hobart Regatta is based on sailing events on the River Derwent. It was inaugurated by Sir John Franklin in 1838 and continues to this day, though it is now held annually in February. On Regatta Day, 1 December 1846, La Trobe

held a garden party for 200 people in the Government Gardens. The *Hobart Town Courier* reported that the Administrator 'seemed fully to enter into the excitement of the occasion, and ... expressed himself in glowing terms on the spirit and animation of the proceedings'. It continued:

His Excellency contributed very materially towards enhancing the pleasures of the day by inviting his friends and a large circle of ladies and gentlemen to a *déjeuner à la fourchette*, laid in a large and commodious room temporarily erected and tastefully fitted for the purpose. It was most agreeably situated just within the garden by the river. ... Late in the afternoon, the tables having been promptly removed, the company amused themselves with dancing.

His Excellency Mr Latrobe, before leaving the ground, expressed to some of the members of the committee the high satisfaction which he had experienced, not only from the general arrangements of the regatta and the enjoyment which pervaded the whole scene, but with the orderly and decorous behaviour which had characterised the mirth of the crowd of visitors throughout the day.

His Excellency said, that although he should not, in all probability, be here himself to witness another regatta, he desired to place at the disposal of the committee a boat, to be built at his expense, to be given as a prize at the next anniversary regatta.<sup>77</sup>

La Trobe kept his promise. One year later, on 1 December 1847, the Tenth Anniversary Regatta was held 'to celebrate the first discovery of this island, in 1642, by Tasman, the distinguished Dutch navigator'. The *Hobart Courier* described the event as follows:

At half-past nine the flotilla started from the wharf in the rear of Government House. His Excellency, Lady Denison and family, Captain

Denison, and the Private Secretary were in the Government barge. The fine band of the 96th followed in the long-boat belonging to *H.M.S. Anson*,<sup>78</sup> towing 'the prize boat', given by C.J. Latrobe, Esq., late Administrator of the Government... The Tasman Prize [was] for five-oared whaleboats, to pull round the flag boat off Cornelian Bay, then down the river round the flag boat moored off Montagu's point, and back to the place of starting. ... This was one of the most interesting races of the day and one upon which very considerable sums changed hands. The betting was almost entirely between the *Pacific* and the *Lady Denison*, from the known experience of Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Chase – who have severally earned a high reputation as successful and skilful whalers. Both had picked crews – men of enduring strength and known good bottom... After a very hard struggle the *Pacific* came in first by several lengths. The prize boat, built for sea service, and a fine model, constructed by Messrs. Risby, was brought in front of the grand stand ... Sir William Denison awarded the boat plus twenty sovereigns added to Captain Gardiner.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

John West's assessment of La Trobe's time in VDL was generally complimentary:

During his short stay as 'administrator' he was employed in a careful scrutiny of the probation department. In performing this difficult duty he displayed exemplary activity and decision. He resolved to remove every officer chargeable with incapacity or neglect, and thus many were dismissed. This promptitude exposed him to imputations of harshness; but although it is probable he did not wholly escape errors of judgment, the chief acts of his administration were amply vindicated by the facts he saw. The opinions he expressed sustained the colonial impressions respecting the convict system. While he suggested many improvements in its details, he

concurred with the general wish for its extinction.<sup>80</sup>

Some administrators, when given temporary appointments, do the bare minimum, being careful not to make courageous decisions or controversial ones that may count against them. Others seize the chance to show what they can do and do what they see as the right and necessary thing. La Trobe's season in VDL was one of considerable action, despite his authority being undermined in the first weeks by the announcement of his successor's appointment and the presence of his predecessor. Sir William Denison's impression of La Trobe's work in VDL was very positive, appreciating that he had 'done an immense deal which would have fallen on my shoulders. He is a most invaluable public servant, and has done his duty here well and manfully. I only hope I may be able to follow in his steps'.<sup>81</sup>

While his work for Tasmania is commemorated by the pretty and intact 19th century town of Latrobe [sic], situated inland from Devonport on the North West Coast of the island, it may be stated with certitude that, despite the magnitude of the difficulties which faced him during his four months administration of VDL, La Trobe acquitted himself satisfactorily, both in the eyes of the Colonial Office and on his own account.

## Marita Hargraves

- 1 W E Gladstone (1809-1898) was Secretary of State for the Colonies Dec 1845–Jul 1846; he was succeeded by Earl Grey. P R Eldershaw, *Guide to the Public Records of Tasmania: Section Two: Governor's Office*, Hobart, Archives Office of Tasmania, 1958, reprinted 2000.
- 2 Sir John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot was Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land from August 1843 until La Trobe took the oath on 13 October 1846. (Eldershaw, *ibid.*)
- 3 Wilmot to Gladstone, 26 Sep 1846 (Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT): GO 33/56, pp. 422-451)
- 4 Bishop of Tasmania from July 1843 to 19 August 1863. See W. R. Barrett, 'Nixon, Francis Russell (1803-1879)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp. 285-288.
- 5 Nixon to Woodcock (possibly his father-in-law, Charles Woodcock), 18 Jan 1845. (Norah Nixon: *The Pioneer Bishop in Van Diemen's Land 1843-1863: Letters and Memories of Francis Russell Nixon*, D.D. First Bishop of Tasmania, Hobart, Walch & Sons, 1953, p. 48.)
- 6 Michael Roe, 'Eardley-Wilmot, Sir John Eardley (1783-1847)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp. 345-348.
- 7 At that time, many merchants and landowners went bankrupt, there was much unemployment, while the English government was sending more and more convicts to Van Diemen's Land and the cost of maintaining them had to be borne partly by the colony. To raise funds, Wilmot proposed a tax on tea and sugar. When this was brought before the Council, the six nominated members refused to agree to it and resigned. The old cry of 'no taxation without representation' was raised again and the Patriotic Six, as they were called, became the heroes of the day. The six were Charles Swanston, Michael Fenton, Richard Dry, Thomas Gregson, William Kermode and John Kerr. J.R. Skemp: *Tasmania Yesterday and Today*. Melbourne, Macmillan and Co., 1959, p.128.
- 8 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 25 Nov 1846, p. 912, quoted in *London Mail* 24 Aug 1846: 'The Queen has conferred the honour of knighthood upon Captain W T Denison of the Royal Engineers, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land'.
- 9 See, for example, the Launceston paper, *Cornwall Chronicle* of 26 September, p. 742.
- 10 Charles Joseph La Trobe, *Australia. Memoranda of Journeys, Excursions & Absences 1839-1854*, p 230. State Library of Victoria (SLV): MSM 541, Box 79/5.
- 11 AOT: GO 33/56 (Film No. Z480).
- 12 *Sydney Chronicle*, 14 October 1846 (*Government Gazette*).
- 13 AOT: GO 33/56 (Film No. Z480-Z481).
- 14 Forster died in January 1846; Hampton was selected in England to replace him.
- 15 This despatch was printed in the *Cornwall Chronicle* 9 December 1846 p. 1 c 3.
- 16 Sir John Franklin was Lieutenant-Governor of VDL 6 January 1837–21 Aug 1843, Eldershaw, *op cit.*
- 17 La Trobe 'objected to Sir John-Wilmot occupying the cottage of the Private Secretary, and countermanded the vegetables from that portion of the Government Garden, which had been cropped at Sir John-Wilmot's own expense', *Hobart Town Courier*, Saturday Morning, 14 June 1851.
- 18 AOT: GO 53/5 pp. 145-147.
- 19 La Trobe, *Memoranda*, *op cit.*, p. 218.
- 20 Bicheno was Colonial Secretary 20 April 1842 - 25 Feb 1851, P R Eldershaw: *Guide to the Public Records of Tasmania*, Section One: Colonial Secretary's Office. Hobart, Archives Office of Tasmania, 1957, revised 1988.
- 21 AOT: GO 33/56 pp. 938-939.
- 22 AOT: GO 33/56, pp. 965-968.
- 23 AOT: GO 1/56 pp 227-228; also his Despatches numbered 16, 26, 35.
- 24 Sir John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot died on 3 February 1847.

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- 25 AOT: GO 33, 8 December 1846; see also his Report AOT: GO 33/60.
- 26 See AOT: Governor's Office correspondence.
- 27 Cornwall Chronicle, p. 902.
- 28 West (1809-73) was an Independent (Congregational) minister in Launceston. He and his associates established the Launceston Examiner newspaper. He helped found a Mechanics' Institute, a General Cemetery and an Immigration Society in Launceston, the London Agency Association to promote colonial interest, and the Hobart Town High School, promoted the first inter-colonial political association, the Anti-Transportation League, wrote seventeen essays discussing Federation, and was the first official editor of the Sydney Morning Herald. See John West: History of Tasmania. Vol. 1. Launceston, Henry Dowling, 1852. Reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1966. p. 261. Patricia Ratcliff, 'John West', The Companion to Tasmanian History, edited by Alison Alexander, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2005, pp. 383-384.
- 29 After La Trobe's departure, Courtenay was transferred to be Superintendent of the Salt Water River station and in 1848 he was given the role of Superintendent at Port Arthur and later was made a Visiting Magistrate there. He married in Hobart in 1852, with Meyer as one of the witnesses, and returned to England with his family in 1854. In 1846 Meyer was appointed a Justice of the Peace and later promoted to the rank of Colonial Surgeon. He was the Medical Officer in Charge of H. M. Lunatic Asylum for many years, leaving for England in 1854. At the time of his 1860 correspondence with La Trobe, Courtenay was Chairman of Committee, Treasurer, and Captain of the Volunteers in Dawlish, Worcester. Lady Devon was to be one of the godmothers of his youngest child; Mrs Meyer was to be the other godmother. (AOT: Wayn Index; Kerr's Melbourne Directory, Melbourne, Kerr and Holmes; RGD birth, death and marriage records; Anna Maria Nixon to 'Echo' 22 January 1844, in Nixon, op cit, p. 18; HTG, 1845, p. 254; HTG 1846, p. 104; SLV: H15622).
- 30 See, for example, Colonial Times, 4 December 1846.
- 31 C J La Trobe to the Right Honorable Earl Gray, H. M. Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, despatch dated 31 May 1847. AOT: GO 33/60. See also Ian Brand, The Convict Probation System: Van Diemen's Land 1839-1854, edited by and with commentary from M.N. Sprod, Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 1990, p. 109.
- 32 Dr John Stephen Hampton (1810?-1869), was a naval surgeon promoted surgeon-superintendent in March 1843, having filled several assignments in convict transports sailing to Van Diemen's Land. In May 1846 he was appointed Comptroller-General of Convicts in VDL, starting in Hobart Town 28 October. Although Hampton's service was acknowledged by Lieutenant-Governor Denison and the Colonial Office to have been vigorous and enlightened, he was almost arrested for contempt and was accused of having engaged in corrupt practices, namely the employment of convict labour for personal profit. In 1857 he was placed on half-pay and granted two years leave to go to Canada on urgent private affairs. Despite the controversy, Hampton was appointed Governor of Western Australia on 28 February 1862. His six year term coincided with the last phase of convict transportation to that colony. He died at Hastings, England. Peter Boyce, 'Hampton, John Stephen (1810?-1869)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp. 508-509.
- 33 AOT: GO 33/60 p. 1311 and following.
- 34 C J La Trobe, Report, Enclosure No. 5, AOT: GO 33/60, pp 1468-1531. Also in Brand, op cit, p. 156.
- 35 J S Hampton to C J La Trobe, 3 Feb 1847. Hampton's report is printed in Brand, op cit, pp. 161-162; CJ La Trobe's explanation for this action are on pp. 164-165.
- 36 La Trobe, Memoranda, p. 231.
- 37 La Trobe, Memoranda, p. 231.
- 38 A. D. Baker: The Life and Times of Sir Richard Dry: Eminent Tasmanian Statesman; First Native-born Premier, and Speaker of the House of Assembly in the Parliament of Tasmania 1815-1869, Hobart, Oldham, Beddome & Meredith Pty Ltd, 1951.
- 39 HTC 7 November quoting Launceston Advertiser of 5 November 1846.
- 40 La Trobe, Memoranda, pp. 231, 343. Franks was the Visiting Magistrate for the St Mary's Pass probation station, Brand, op cit, p. 268. See also Tim McManus: Thanks to Providence: A History of Falmouth, Tasmania and its People, self-published, Launceston, 1993, p. 64.
- 41 Letter from London dated 19 January 1864 published in L.J. Blake: Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe. Victoriana Series No. 1. Melbourne, Government Printer, 1975, pp. 57-58.

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- 42 Frederick Lewis [or Louis] von Stieglitz (1803-1866) was born in Ireland, the eldest of 6 brothers of a family of Bavarian descent who were all early VDL or Port Phillip settlers. All except Henry Lewis returned to Ireland to live out their days. Frederick Lewis assumed the title of Baron on his return to Ireland. K. R. Von Stieglitz, 'Von Stieglitz, Frederick Lewis (1803 - 1866)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 2*, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp. 556-557.
- 43 La Trobe, Memoranda, pp. 230-231, 243.
- 44 High Bailiff of Castletown, Isle of Man. SLV: MS 8737; AGCP M723. Letter dated 19 Dec 1846. William Kermode (1780-1852), merchant, company director and settler, was born at Port Erin, Isle of Man. Kermode made several voyages to VDL and Sydney in 1819 to 1821. He was granted 3000 acres near Ross and bought another 2000 acres. Despite early bankruptcy, through mismanagement by his Sydney agents, he built up the property which he called 'Mona Vale'. In 1828, Kermode became involved in a threatened duel with his agent and Governor Arthur refused him any further concessions. Two years later Kermode signed the protest against Arthur's restrictions on the press and was soon charged with harbouring runaway prisoners. Kermode had better relations with Sir John Franklin who appointed him a member of the Legislative Council in 1842. He was one of the Patriotic Six who walked out in October 1845, was reappointed in 1848, but again resigned. E. J. Cameron, 'Kermode, William (1780-1852)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 2*, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp. 49-50.
- 45 La Trobe to Gunn, 19 Jan 1864 published in Blake, op cit, pp. 57-8.
- 46 AOT: GO 53/5 p 157, 18 Nov 1846.
- 47 La Trobe, Memoranda, p. 343; also Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and sketches/ introduced by Dianne Reilly; notes by Victoria Hammond. Melbourne: State Library of Victoria: Tarcoola Press: National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1999, pp. 195, 196 and 199.
- 48 La Trobe, Memoranda, pp. 343 and 345.
- 49 C. M. H. Clark: *A History of Australia Vol III: The Beginning of an Australian Civilization 1824-1851*, Melbourne University Press, 1973 reprinted 1988, p. 118.
- 50 George Courtenay to C. J. La Trobe, 11 February and 9 March 1860, SLV: H15622 and H15623.
- 51 For a defence of Sir John, see Louisa Anne Meredith: *My Home in Tasmania During a Residence of Nine Years*, volume two, London, John Murray, 1852, pp. 202-4.
- 52 La Trobe, Memoranda, December 1843, p. 219.
- 53 La Trobe to Gunn 19 January 1864, in Blake, op cit, p. 57.
- 54 J. H. Kay (1815-1875) was a naval officer and a respected scientist, who was elected a fellow of the Royal Society on 26 February 1846. The Admiralty financed the magnetic observatory in Hobart set up by Kay and Captain James Clark Ross, so Kay remained in naval service. He was promoted Commander in 1849. The Kays returned to England in 1853 after the cost of the Rossbank Observatory was transferred to the Colonial Government and the Observatory closed in 1854. He was then appointed private secretary to La Trobe's successor in Victoria, Sir Charles Hotham, travelling with the Hotham's from England and arriving in Port Phillip in June 1854. He soon became Clerk to the Executive Council (1855-75). He continued to contribute to science and was appointed one of the first two Honorary members of the Philosophical Society of Victoria in 1855. Promoted Captain on the retired list in 1865, he died at South Yarra, Melbourne. Ronald Green, 'Kay, Joseph Henry (1815-1875)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 2*, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 34; *Science and the Making of Victoria: Histories and views of the Royal Society of Victoria from its inception to the present day, and its role supporting science and technology in Victoria*, compiled by the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, Melbourne, 2001 and published at [www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au), p. 12; Julian Holland, 'Getting Results', *Australian Meteorologist*, No. 16, Feb 1999, pp 5-6; PROV: VPRS 7666 Fiche 69; AOT: CSO correspondence on the Observatory.
- 55 Kay's aunt, Eleanor Anne Porden, was Franklin's first wife. See Kathleen Fitzpatrick: *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania, 1837-1843*, Melbourne University Press, 1949, for more detail about her.
- 56 W. P. Kay arrived with the Franklins, La Trobe met their ship, the Flying Fish, with a 13-gun salute on 9 Dec 1843 and Kay returned on the same vessel on 22 Dec 1843. (AOT: Free Arrivals index).
- 57 AOT: NS 123/1/127 24 March 1847.
- 58 La Trobe, Memoranda, p. 345.

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- 59 Cornwall Chronicle, 6 Jan 1847 - reporting extract from Hobart Town Advertiser.
- 60 La Trobe, Memoranda, p 345; see also La Trobe to Gunn 29 January 1847 in Blake, op cit, p. 21.
- 61 Reilly, Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches, p. 213.
- 62 Hobart Town Gazette (HTG) 1846 p. 174.
- 63 Charles Joseph La Trobe to the Colonial Secretary, Sydney, 26 February 1847 (SLV: MSM 541: Memorandum Box 79/1).
- 64 AOT: GO 33/60.
- 65 See, for example, Sir George Arthur's Defence of transportation: in reply to the remarks of the Archbishop of Dublin in his second letter to Earl Grey (1835); Francis Russell Nixon, Transportation: Copy of a communication upon the subject addressed to Earl Grey by the Lord Bishop of Tasmania, printed by order of the House of Commons, 28 July 1847 and reprinted 1 November 1848 by Henry Dowling, Launceston; Memoir of proceedings taken by the colonists in connexion with the proposed cessation of transportation to Van Diemen's Land, Launceston: Jonathan Stammers Waddel, 1847; Jacob Lackland's Common sense: an enquiry into the influence of transportation on the colony of Van Diemen's Land, Launceston: Henry Dowling, 1847.
- 66 Ian Brand: Penal Peninsula: Port Arthur and its Outstations 1827-1898, Regal Publications, Launceston [1989], pp. 57-58.
- 67 For a description of how the system worked from a settler's point of view, see James Fenton: Bushlife in Tasmania, 1891 reprinted by Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, [undated], pp. 45-47.
- 68 C. J. La Trobe's report to Grey, in Ian Brand, The Convict Probation System, op cit, pp 119-125, and 130.
- 69 A full copy of La Trobe's report can be found in Ian Brand's book.
- 70 Joan Ritchie, 'Charles Joseph La Trobe in Van Diemen's Land, 1846'. Tasmanian Historical Research Association. Papers and Proceedings. Vol. 23, no. 1, March, 1976.
- 71 West, op cit, vol. 2, p. 316.
- 72 La Trobe, Memoranda, op cit, p. 345.
- 73 Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes & Sketches, op cit.
- 74 Victoria Hammond: 'Present Position Exile', Island, No. 76, Summer 1999, pp. 95-104.
- 75 Fingal is in the collection of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart.
- 76 La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Accession number H92.360.
- 77 Hobart Town Courier, 5 December 1846, p. 2
- 78 The Anson was a prison ship, holding nearly 700 women convicts on probation.
- 79 Hobart Town Courier, 4 December 1847. The winner is described variously as 'Mr. Gardiner', 'Captain Gardiner' and 'Captain Gardner'.
- 80 West, op cit, vol. 1, p 261
- 81 Denison to his mother, Mrs. Charlotte Denison, 26 January 1847. Varieties of Vice-Regal Life, op cit, p. 23.

# La Trobe University – Occasional Address

by Dr Dianne Reilly

*La Trobe Society Secretary, Dr Dianne Reilly, was recently greatly honoured to be asked to deliver, in her capacity as La Trobe Librarian, State Library of Victoria an Occasional Address to the graduating students of La Trobe University. This graduation ceremony as held on Friday 27 April, and the following article is the text of the address given by Dr Reilly.*

## Foundations for the Future

Chancellor, Mrs Sylvia Walton, Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Roger Parish, Members of the Academic Staff, Graduands and their Parents and Families, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to be here this evening, and to have the opportunity to speak at a very special event in the University's calendar in this, the 40th anniversary year of La Trobe University.

The formal end of any academic course of study brings with it a powerful mix of emotions and feelings – certainly, a great sense of achievement and pride, but also a sense of relief, and a sense of regret, too, as a highly significant phase of your life is completed. This is without doubt the case when the academic institution involved is as distinguished and highly regarded as La Trobe University.

All of you who are to graduate this evening – and your parents and families – have much to be proud of, as does the University itself and all those associated with this occasion.

This is a time to celebrate all that you have achieved, to enjoy your success, and now, to look forward to an exciting future with new confidence and assurance.

I congratulate you on your fine achievement.

Australia has a proud history of education, and Victoria continues to be at the forefront of all that is creative and innovative.

Charles Joseph La Trobe, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria and the pioneering administrator after whom this University is named, had much to do with the establishment of the foundations of an excellent education system in this state, and of so many of the cultural institutions, such as the Mechanics' Institute – now the Melbourne Athenaeum, the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, the Philosophical Society – now the Royal Society of Victoria, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, which we take for granted today.

On his arrival in Melbourne in 1839, as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, La Trobe wrote to his friend in London, the publisher James Murray:

You, my dear Sir, have never been transported 16,000 miles from civilization ... I have called our present position Exile ... Society here is ... in its infancy. The arts and sciences are unborn.<sup>1</sup>

He was, seemingly, in deep shock after his initial encounter with Melbourne and its inhabitants. It was all so alien to him after the cultural experiences of day-to-day life in Europe. However, he perceived his mission at Port Phillip, based on his strongly-held Moravian faith, as directing the settlers onto the road to salvation, by educating them in all that was worthy.

His positive philosophy was that religion and education were inextricably linked, and in the 19th century, this was a viewpoint shared by the British Government. As early as 1837, when he was carrying out a mission in the West Indies, he had recommended to the Colonial Office a system of free and

compulsory education for children of all classes. For La Trobe, education was the key to the future, and it was the right of all human beings to grasp this key, 'the gift of education.'

As the representative of the British Crown in Port Phillip, he firmly believed that it was his role to bring civilisation to those Europeans and the Indigenous people who lived here. His long-term vision for the colony was that it should be not only a religious but a highly-educated community, well versed in the arts and sciences. In his view, this would result in a better organised social system, leading naturally to harmony among the population in general. By 1854 when he left the colony, he could look back on an extraordinary catalogue of achievements.

He, and others, had worked tirelessly for the establishment of Victoria's first University, the University of Melbourne, believing that a university was an essential amenity of a civilised country. Thanks to the efforts of La Trobe and Redmond Barry, Melbourne was one of the first cities in the world to enjoy a state-supported, truly free public library, now the State Library of Victoria. Such a concept fitted so perfectly with La Trobe's Moravian principles of education, whether at a university or through the volumes contained in an excellent library. As a result of his positive actions, the foundation stones for both institutions were laid on the same day in 1854, just after La Trobe had left Australia.

The creation of a sound university system in Victoria in subsequent years, and the flourishing State Library of Victoria today are evidence of his great vision for those who were to live in the Victoria of the future, and who would take full advantage of access to the information resources of the world.

As you well know, libraries of the 21st century are fundamental in promoting 'the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works.'<sup>2</sup> They are an essential

ingredient to a thriving culture, economy and democracy. With their commitment to literacy, information literacy and life-long learning, 'librarians have gone from being mediators to educators... with an integrated role in the delivery of education.'<sup>3</sup> Libraries and learning are synonymous.

As Professor Margaret Gardner, Vice-Chancellor of RMIT University, has stated in a discussion about 21st century libraries: 'While the physical space remains important for conserving certain collections, increasingly the virtual world ensures that the omni-presence of the ... library in the learning community is a vital presence.'<sup>4</sup> Reflecting this, the La Trobe University Library - the Borchardt Library - is committed to achieving the highest standards in the provision of information resources and services in order to advance the teaching, learning and research of the University.

'Universities are places for testing new ideas, where we sometimes turn things on their head so we can gain a new perspective.'<sup>5</sup> These are the words of well-known Australian sculptor Charles Robb. How truly this has been demonstrated in La Trobe University's latest sculptural acquisition – the controversial upside-down statue of Charles Joseph La Trobe, known as 'Landmark'.

The Chancellor has described this work of art as a 'unique take' on Victoria's first Lieutenant Governor. The work is challenging, complex, contemporary, and encourages dialogue: all qualities synonymous with a university. It now looks down on Science Drive – reminding La Trobe students that there is more than one way of looking at things. While standing on his head on a University campus may not have been an epitaph La Trobe would have sought for himself,<sup>6</sup> the sculptor says he meant it as a compliment:



I wanted to set up a dialogue around this notion of the Antipodean, and the more I read about La Trobe, the more I realized he was very much the enlightened gentleman ... I became fascinated with his vision.<sup>7</sup>

This new art acquisition is in line with the philosophy of La Trobe University which seeks to teach its students in all disciplines to discover, question and continue an active and productive dialogue, not only while they are here, but long after they have gone.

Whether portrayed standing on his head here on campus at La Trobe University, or impressively in bronze reading the Separation document in Peter Corlett's statue on the forecourt of the State Library, these two modern public sculptures of Victoria's visionary administrator and namesake of this University serve to remind us that La Trobe's long-term plan for Victoria as 'a highly-educated community well versed in the arts and sciences' is relevant still for Victorians today.

La Trobe's foresight for Victoria has been of enormous benefit to all who live in this state. Universities and libraries are, as Germaine Greer has said: 'reservoirs of strength, grace and wit, reminders of order, calm and continuity, lakes of mental energy'<sup>8</sup> where your own visions can be created and developed. As the late, great Ella Fitzgerald once said: 'It isn't where you came from, it's where you're going that counts... Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do.'<sup>9</sup> Libraries and universities are there for us all as a resource throughout our lives.

Once again, let me congratulate each and every one of you on your wonderful achievement in successfully completing such hard-won degrees.

You have achieved much already, but I am sure that your greatest and most lasting achievements are yet to come.

I wish you every success in the future.

- 1 Charles Joseph La Trobe to John Murray, 15 December 1840, John Murray Archives, London.
- 2 Australian Library and Information Association. ALIA Core Values, 2001. [www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2001/corevalues.html](http://www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2001/corevalues.html)
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Professor Margaret Gardner, 'Libraries of the 21st Century Symposium', 23 February 2006, State Library of Victoria. Transcript. [www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/events/2006/symposium/learning/gardner.html](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/events/2006/symposium/learning/gardner.html)
- 5 La Trobe University web site. [www.latrobe.edu.au/bulletin/anniversary5.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/bulletin/anniversary5.html)
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 State Library of Victoria, 'Dome Words'.

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