



Newsletter No 52

25 October 2024

Our new season got off to a great start with fifty-five visitors attending for a tour on our Garden Day on 6 October. This followed a successful Open House event on 28 July, when 130 visitors attended. Lindy Golding wishes to thank the many volunteers who assisted on that day.

We welcome new volunteers Louise Bentley, Sue O'Brien and Karen Stewart. Louise is already taking her place on the Sunday roster as a receptionist, and Sue and Karen are shadowing tours now; we look forward to having them on our guide team. We thank Robyn Mullins for her years of service, and wish her all the best, as she decides to leave our team to enable her to spend more time with her family.

We are glad to report that the source of the damp and humidity in the Cottage has been found, and fixed. As reported in our Volunteers meeting on 5 September Rob Kercher, NTAV Assets Operations Manager, responded to a request from the CMT to investigate ongoing damp in the Cottage. He set up a meeting of City of Melbourne inspectors which led to the discovery of a leak at first thought to be from the fire sprinkler system but later found to be from a very old water pipe running under the Cottage. Myron McMurray, NTAV Maintenance Coordinator, coordinated arrangements with the City of Melbourne plumbers and their contractors, and that pipe was sealed off, thereby fixing the leak. We are told that the damp under the dining room will take some time to dry out, and the Team are finding the dehumidifier tanks in the drawing and dining rooms full most days. We are hoping the need for daily visits will reduce soon, and that mould growth is eliminated. We are most grateful to Rob and Myron for seeing this project through.

Rob has been working hard on our behalf on other matters:

-) Despite receiving a rejection of his request for the City of Melbourne to authorise the Shrine to allow us to park in their volunteers parking area, he will persevere.
-) He has arranged for the faulty light, which normally shines brightly overnight on the Cottage site but which has been inactive in recent weeks, to be repaired.
-) He is taking steps to have an old sign, which it seems has been in place just outside the Citywide Works yard down from the Cottage in Dallas Brooks Drive since it was moved there in 1998, removed. It's not clear on this photo but below the words 'First Government House, Former Residence of Lt. Governor Charles La Trobe C.B.' is written faintly 'Open daily 11.00a.m.-4.30p.m. Except on Fridays, Christmas Day & Anzac Day'. This is an interesting throw-back to when the Cottage was first reconstructed near the Botanic Gardens in 1964, when it was called 'First Government House' and it was at that time open six days a week!



As Neville Jarvis reported in our meeting last month, some interesting discoveries have been made about two items of furniture in the Cottage:

Members of the Australiana Society visited in July and they found a very faint original label on the smaller of the two ceremonial chairs which reveals that the chair is made of 'Myall wood', *Acacia homalophylla*, also known as Violet Wood, the same as the larger ceremonial chair, although they look rather different. This is of interest because La Trobe took a piece of Violet Wood to Sir William Hooker at Kew Botanic Gardens. It seems perhaps the maker of the chair may have given La Trobe an 'offcut' to take back to England.

Cottage Management Team					
Liaison	Helen Botham	0447 018224	Maintenance	Colin Mickleburgh	0423 114619
Curatorial	Neville Jarvis	0490 494009	Publicity	Helen Armstrong	0427 925616
Education /Events	Lindy Golding	0423 034632	Statistics	Neville Jarvis	0490 494009
Garden	Helen Botham	0447 018224	Volunteers	Helen Botham	0447 018224

As a result of some clever sleuthing by our volunteer Tim Gatehouse, it would now appear that La Trobe's bed may have been acquired by him during the six weeks he spent in Sydney prior to his arrival in Port Phillip in 1839. Tim found a photo of a bed very similar to La Trobe's, in *Horsley House* in Sydney, which was acquired in India in the 1830s. A large amount of furniture made in India found its way to Sydney in the early 1800s.



The bed, c.1830, at *Horsley House*, photographed in 1895, James Broadbent et al, *India, China, Australia: trade and society 1788-1850*



La Trobe's bed

The stuffed birds in the dining room are Californian quails, not 'partridges'.

A mounted section of the elm tree planted by La Trobe in the Botanic Gardens in 1851 has been placed in the central entrance to the servants' wing.

Helen Armstrong is pleased to report that the podcasts recorded by Peter Jewell over the past year are now online, see

<https://www.latrobesociety.org.au/la-trobes-cottage-podcasts>

The interviews are as follows: 1. Dr Dianne Reilly: La Trobe; 2. John Botham: The Cottage Buildings; 3. Neville Jarvis: Volunteering; 4. Helen Botham: The Garden; 5. Katie Potter: The Collection.

Please go to the link and listen to the interviews, which provide for the public an excellent summary of matters to do with La Trobe and his Cottage.

We are most grateful to Peter not only for initiating this project but also for his perseverance and good humour, and for conducting the interviews with such professionalism.



Coming Events:

Please note that our annual End-of-Year gathering will be held at the Cottage at lunch-time on Thursday 12 December. This is our traditional get-together, when we have a chance to meet other volunteers, and the NTAV staff we work with. We ask you to bring a plate of something sweet or savoury; the Friends will provide a little something to celebrate and soft drink.

You will have read in Kate Drummond's last Newsy Catch-Up that there is to be an End-of-Year gathering for all volunteers at Como on 22nd November – you are asked to RSVP by 15 November for catering purposes Kate.drummond@natrtrust.com.au

And on 5 December there is the International Volunteers Day Outing to Werribee Park Mansion. A wonderful program for the day has been planned and again you are asked to RSVP to Kate, particularly, by the end of this month, if you would be interested in taking advantage of the bus she is proposing to organise.

Looking forward to seeing you at one of these events, and especially our own gathering on 12 December.

Best wishes from the Cottage Management Team.