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*TALK TO THE EAST MELBOURNE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BY NERIDA SAMSON  
ON WEDNESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2004*

I would like to thank the Committee of the East Melbourne Historical Society for giving me an opportunity to discuss with our Panel of Experts and you, the audience, the concept of moving Governor La Trobe's Cottage from the Domain back to East Melbourne and the Fitzroy Gardens, almost in sight of its original location in Jolimont. What remained of La Trobe's Cottage in 1959 was, in 1964, by the efforts of the owners of the site (Bedgood Shoes) and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in co-operation the Melbourne City Council, removed, re-erected and restored on the Kings Domain next to the Observatory. Those of you who remember Noel and Elizabeth Goss will know of the hard restoration work Elizabeth did at the cottage at that time. The return of La Trobe's Cottage forms an important part of a paper I submitted to the Melbourne City Council in May last year regarding East Melbourne/Jolimont being designated an Historic Tourist Precinct. I will give you a very brief background of my submission.

In June 2001 I wrote to Ray Tonkin at Heritage Victoria exploring the possibility of East Melbourne/Jolimont being listed as a Heritage Precinct following a precedent Heritage Victoria itself had set with St. Vincent's Place, Albert Park.

Ray replied in detail outlining the difficulties with such an idea and suggested that I approach Melbourne City Council through the mechanism of the Planning and Environment Act – alas to no avail – last year.

East Melbourne/Jolimont has a history, over the past 50 years, of residents struggling, with the Melbourne City Council and others, to retain its historic buildings and the ambience of the area. I considered that a little lateral thinking might be in order, and, thanks to John F Kennedy's memorable inauguration speech and, if you'll allow me to paraphrase a sentence from it, – ***Ask not what your Council can do for you but what you can do for your Council!***

So in May 2003, after considerable work including research on Sydney, Hobart and Fremantle, I submitted to Melbourne City Council a paper ***Our Past – a Part of our Future*** outlining my view that East Melbourne-Jolimont be designated as an Historic Residential Precinct to round-out Melbourne's already well-developed program for visitors to this city.

**As Washington has Georgetown and London has Chelsea, so Melbourne has East Melbourne.**

3.

Relatively few local, interstate or overseas visitors have discovered Melbourne's hidden treasure, an enclave within walking distance of Melbourne Town Hall, that encapsulates the early history, culture and development of what is Australia's second largest city – increasingly being restored to what it was considered from the 1850's onwards as a *“prime residential address for people whose business or profession was conducted in the city”* (National Trust quote)

One of the most important features of this new Historic Precinct was to be the return of **La Trobe's Cottage** from its present site on Dallas Brooks Drive in the Domain to the newly vacated space adjacent to Cook's Cottage once occupied by the MCC Plant Nursery and Depot in Fitzroy Gardens.

I believe this site offers a unique 'window of opportunity', which should not be missed, for Fitzroy Gardens to feature these charming and historic little buildings – fully furnished and with much La Trobe memorabilia - set in a contoured, Australian Native garden. Brian Carroll's *Early Melbourne Sketchbook* notes that botany was one of La Trobe's many talents and, I quote: *“unlike many other settlers, La Trobe surrounded his house with native trees and shrubs, which he always said were best for Australian conditions”*.

4.

Melbourne would gain not only an unusual historic site within its most visited gardens (Fitzroy Gardens) but a highly significant botanical and environmental asset, as well as a genuine visitors' venue, which could only benefit the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Not least, East Melbourne and Jolimont residents would embrace and welcome its return to the precinct.

Incorporated in my submission was, of course, a self-guided walk, starting in Spring Street, that took visitors past the Gold Museum at the old Treasury, through Treasury and Fitzroy Gardens, both Heritage listed, part of residential East Melbourne/Jolimont, The Johnston Collection, the MCG Sports Museum, via Birrarung Marr to Federation Square and the National Gallery etc. A true taste of Melbourne, today and yesterday, for the visitor. And all within walking distance of the Town Hall and major City hotels.

***No other city in Australia can offer such a convenient, compact and comprehensive package.***

As there are now no Ward Councillors to approach within the current Council structure, I initially saw Vince Haney, Director – Parks and Recreation in May last year to see if my plan of moving La Trobe's Cottage was workable. Rough plans were drawn and discussion held with Heritage Victoria and the National Trust and the initial results were 'favourable'.

5.

A quick study of brochures at the Visitors' Centre in Federation Square soon alerted me to the fact East Melbourne was simply not on the map – other than for a brochure of The Johnston Collection. There are walks in Carlton, North Melbourne etc. etc. but no-one has ever given a thought to East Melbourne, even though the original boundaries of the city, I understand, show Hoddle Street as the cut-off point, taking in, for example St Patrick St Peters' and the Victorian Arts Society.

The National Trust at one time had a walk which seemed to closely follow Winston Burchett's East Melbourne Walkabout and I know there is one other. But from Council's point of view, Melbourne stops at Spring Street. Unfortunately, our rates do not.

Helen Hardwick, Council's International Tourism Program Manager was more than equal to the task and finally, we now have Council's draft of a self-guided Visitors Walk through Treasury and Fitzroy Gardens and residential East Melbourne and also that other 'jewel in the crown', The Johnston Collection in Hotham Street. I have been advised that the draft walk has been sent to significant people in the tourism industry and that early comment is again favourable. (Incidentally, it might interest you to know that Melbourne is No. 3 on the international listing of conference venues.)

6.

So much for a brief run-down and up-date of my submission. The subject of the meeting tonight is the desirability of moving La Trobe's Cottage from Dallas Brooks Drive in the Domain where it is languishing and locating it in the vacated depot section of the Fitzroy Gardens. But before handing over to our Chairman of the evening there are a few points I hope our distinguished guests will be able to answer for me.

- Just what part of La Trobe's Cottage is original? Two different guides gave me two different answers on two different trips. One said "the dining room" the other said "the bedroom" The first one also said that when the cottage was moved from Jolimont it was stored by the Trust and that some of the original timbers were used to repair other properties which meant that, when the property was rebuilt, different or new timbers had to be used. The Trust on its notice outside the cottage acknowledges that the present building is not completely the original.
- In his comment in The Age on Friday February 6 National Trust Chief Executive Stephen Hare said the cottage is "fragile"- I ask our experts which part is "fragile" and needs this special attention.

7.

- The Trust guides at the Cottage on both occasions when I visited were most informative and enthusiastic. However, when it came to asking for brochures, or a history of La Trobe and the Cottage, no printed material was available. The guide managed to rummage in the desk in the entrance to find a State Library card with La Trobe's own watercolour of the cottage on it. Oh and by the way, on one visit they did not have a supply of adult admission tickets, and here is my \$2 child admission ticket!

With the Cottage open for visitors only 4 days a week between 11am and 4pm, in an isolated site which I had to ring The National Trust Office to find, I was very disturbed that such a small historic treasure was treated in so cavalier a fashion. I understand the Trust has financial difficulties, but La Trobe's Cottage in its current position, and minus publicity material is hardly going to recoup their fortunes.

I would be happy to answer any of your queries.

*Thank you, Mr Chairman*

## **La Trobe's Cottage**

**Proposed removal from the Domain to the vacated nursery depot in the Fitzroy Gardens: issues to be considered.**

**Sue Balderstone**

**Assistant Director, Heritage Victoria  
for the**

**East Melbourne Historical Society Inc. Panel Discussion at Clarendon Terrace  
18 February 2004.**

Both La Trobe's Cottage and the Fitzroy Gardens, including four of the nursery buildings are on the State Heritage Register – so a permit from the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria would be required in relation to both places.

This would involve a process of advertisement of the application, probably followed by an interested parties meeting, before the Executive Director made his decision.

Consequently I cannot pre-empt the decision by giving a yes or no view - but I can talk about the sorts of issues that would be considered in making the decision.

### **La Trobe's cottage.**

The cottage is owned by the National Trust and located on Crown Land, part of the Domain, managed by the MCC.

Only the main cottage is included on the Register, not the outbuildings. It was moved in the mid 1960s from its original site at Jolimont to a site in Birdwood Avenue, closer to the rear service entrance of Government House than it is now. The location was chosen after a lengthy search for a suitable site, which is well-detailed in Dr Lewis' Conservation Analysis of January 1994.

During the process it was largely reconstructed due to the previous period of deterioration and a gradual removal of its parts. The outbuildings were not registered- apparently because they are total reconstructions.

The cottage is considered to be significant because it has social, historic and scientific values.

It is registered because:

- It is associated with C J La Trobe, superintendent of the Port Phillip District from 1839 to 1851 and Lieutenant-Governor of the colony of Victoria from 1851-1854. Through him it is associated with the beginnings of Victoria's political infrastructure and social development and is a symbol of the early settlement of the State. (Historical values)
- It contains a small portion of authentic fabric, including one wall of the dining room building originally prefabricated by Manning of London in the late 1830s. (Scientific value)
- It is associated with the National Trust and the early stages of cultural heritage identification and protection in Victoria. (Social value)

The whole complex was moved again in 1998 to its current site in Dallas Brooks Drive because the redevelopment of part of the Former Melbourne Observatory site by the Royal Botanic Gardens required the land on which the cottage was located.

At that stage the main building had deteriorated again due to lack of sub floor ventilation causing damp and rot in the timber. The proposed relocation offered an opportunity for repairs and conservation works to be carried out. The cottage and outbuildings were removed in sections using a crane and the whole operation cost around \$200,000.

The current site was chosen because of its proximity to Government house and also to the villa then occupied by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. It was thought that when the latter moved to its new building as it now has, the villa and La Trobe's Cottage would be linked and perhaps used together as museum of 19<sup>th</sup> century interiors.

The 1995 Master Plan for the Domain Parklands in fact showed the cottage to be relocated to a site just outside the main front entrance to Government House. The Trust is recorded in that report (p. 38) as having observed that the cottage did not have the same profile as other Trust properties due to its then rather concealed position near the rear service entrance to Government House. However the Trust preferred it to be near Government House to enable joint tours of the two properties and assist in interpretation.

**The issues to be considered as set out in the Heritage Act in deciding whether it should be moved again are:**

- What effect would removal to the proposed new site have on the cultural heritage significance of the registered building?
- What effect would refusal have on the reasonable or economic use of the registered building, or cause undue financial hardship to the owner in relation to it?
- What do the submissions made in response to advertisement of the application say about the proposal?
- Any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the building that the Executive Director considers relevant.

**Effect on cultural heritage significance**

In relation to the first we need to go back to the reasons why the cottage is significant.

1. What effect would the proposal have on the association with La Trobe?

- It would bring the cottage back closer to its original location. But is the proposed location within the former Fitzroy Gardens nursery appropriate? The original location was on a south facing slope, within a 121/2 acre garden estate, with wide vistas across the river to lightly timbered rising ground. The cottage was oriented with the front façade facing south west, aligned parallel to the river and directly across from the topographical high point now crowned with the present Government House. It was sited in accordance with the principles used in setting out the country estates of the 18<sup>th</sup> century of creating vistas to natural or constructed features, principles that La Trobe is credited

(by Rex Swanson, Nigel Westbrook – *Tradition* #47, p.11, and others – Ray Wright?) with using to influence the siting of public buildings and parks in the city.

- So would removing the cottage to the Fitzroy Gardens Nursery site in fact enhance the association with La Trobe any more than does its current location? It would allow a partial garden to be recreated around it perhaps, but there are four registered buildings of much later date in the nursery that would be in close proximity, and there is no possibility of creating vistas from that site to the river and beyond.
- In bringing the cottage back to East Melbourne, if not Jolimont, would the status of La Trobe himself be better conveyed? At present his vice-regal status is conveyed though the proximity of the cottage to today's Government House.
- On the other hand, it could be argued that the fact the Crown Land that became the Fitzroy Gardens was set aside for that purpose by La Trobe in 1848 (Georgina Whitehead, *History of the Fitzroy Gardens*, March 1993, p.3. AGL Shaw, *Port Phillip Settlement* says 1849, p.216) makes location of his cottage there appropriate because it connects him with his enlightened governance as Superintendent.

2. What effect would it have on the authentic prefabricated parts of the building?

- Would relocation cause further loss of these? (Dr Miles Lewis is the expert)

3. What effect would it have on the association with the National Trust and the early conservation approaches in Victoria?

- Would relocation cause loss of fabric associated with the 1960s repairs and reconstruction?
- The sites close to the present Government House represent a National Trust view of the suitability of that connection to the status of La Trobe. Would relocation detract from the Trust's 1960s-1990s perception of the cottage's heritage value as an icon of Victoria's foundation?

### **Economic viability and financial hardship**

In relation to economic use and financial hardship – these are matters that have to be addressed by the National Trust. As mentioned previously, the Trust's concern about lack of profile for the cottage was noted in the Domain Parklands Master Plan of July 1995.

However the new visitor centre at the Shrine and the café and visitor's centre for the Royal Botanic Gardens, together with the Observatory tours represent a large tourist catchment. Could that perhaps be better exploited by the Trust than it currently is?

### **Submissions**

Should the National Trust decide to make an application to relocate the Cottage to the Nursery site it would be advertised and responses would be considered.

### **Any other relevant matters.**

The Executive Director's issue of a permit in 1998 to relocate the cottage to its current site indicates his previous acceptance of the Trust's belief that a location near Government house is appropriate. In reversing that view, the ED would need to

decide about the issues I have discussed, particularly in relation to the relevance of the proposed new site to the Cottage's association with La Trobe, given La Trobe's importance to Victoria's foundation history. In this case there is the added complication that the proposed new site is also registered under the Heritage Act.

### **The Fitzroy Gardens**

All of the Crown Land Reserve is registered, together with a number of buildings and objects including four buildings in the Nursery/Depot. These are the workshop building of 1922 to the east of the enclosure, the Propagator's cottage of 1928 and associated wall to the north-west of the enclosure and two glasshouses of the 1920s along the north side of the enclosure. If all the other buildings were demolished, there might be sufficient space to site at least the registered part of La Trobe's cottage on its original south west orientation and a garden. As far as I know, no-one has actually prepared a plan to see how it would fit, and given the social value of the cottage complex as a whole including its outbuildings, would it be acceptable to leave them out?

The Gardens are considered to be significant for historical, aesthetic, architectural, scientific (horticultural) and social values.

They are registered because:

- One of a ring of public reserves around Melbourne established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (by La Trobe) to provide respite and relaxation for its residents – in fact the flagship of a group of gardens which include the Flagstaff, Treasury, Carlton and Alexandra Gardens and the Domain.
- On a comparative basis, although in fact overlaid with later phases of landscape style, in particular that of the interwar period, they demonstrate well their 19<sup>th</sup> century origins (through the layout, tree species, ribbon border planting, sub-tropical plant material and a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings).
- The avenues of elms and other species, wide rolling lawns and vistas enhanced by garden structures and floral displays; the general topography that sets most of the gardens below street level; the sense of mystery and enclosure provided by the fern gully; the mound, lake and specimen trees all combine to give the gardens a strong aesthetic character.
- The trees and plants comprise an outstanding horticultural collection, of which the elms are becoming extremely rare components due to the spread of Dutch elm disease.
- From establishment in the 1860s the gardens have been the people's park in the city; a place of relaxation, recreation and entertainment where both adults and children find pleasure in the Conservatory displays and outdoor floral displays supplied from the Nursery, the Fairy Tree, Model Tudor Village and Cook's cottage, as well as in the landscape, horticulture, fountains, sculptures, trees and fern gully.

**The issues to be considered as set out in the Act in deciding whether La Trobe's cottage could be placed in the Nursery/Depot are the same as before; in this case applying to the Fitzroy Gardens and in particular the registered nursery buildings:**

- What effect would placing La Trobe's cottage in the Nursery have on the cultural heritage significance of the Fitzroy Gardens and the registered nursery buildings?
- What effect would refusal have on the reasonable or economic use of the Fitzroy Gardens and the registered nursery buildings, or cause undue financial hardship to the Melbourne City Council in relation to them?
- What do the submissions made in response to advertisement of the application say about the proposal?
- Any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the place that the Executive Director considers relevant.

#### **Effect on the cultural heritage significance of the Fitzroy Gardens**

Referring to the reasons why the Gardens are significant, it could be argued:

1. That the addition of La Trobe's Cottage would add to its character as a People's Park, providing one more interesting attraction for people to visit.
  - How would it fit in with the registered nursery buildings? Would the gardens become rather like an open air museum of disparate buildings – and would this upset the balance between aesthetic, horticultural and social values of the gardens?
2. That it would also enhance the connection of Melbourne's famous parks and gardens with La Trobe.
  - But how would that accord with La Trobe's apparent design principles? Would the proposed location demonstrate La Trobe's contribution to Melbourne and Victoria?

#### **Economic viability and financial hardship**

Economic use and financial hardship in relation to the Fitzroy Gardens are matters for the Melbourne City Council to consider.

The nursery/depot has existed in its current location in the south west corner of the gardens since 1900. The Public Consultation Report of November '94 on the Draft Master Plan for the Fitzroy Gardens (May 1994) indicated that the nursery should have a role in relation to the Conservatory displays, although the Council has apparently decided that it can service the gardens directly from a nursery off site. The Consultation Report also suggested locating the kiosk and marketing facilities there.

In fact the Draft Master Plan shows the nursery/depot to be reduced with the remaining area to be developed with further ponds and lake. The Propagator's house is shown as retained, but the glasshouses and workshop are not. The Conservation Analysis of the Fitzroy Gardens of December 1998 identified the Propagator's house as being of primary significance and the glasshouses and workshop as being of contributory significance. However all four are registered and would require a permit for removal.

So in order for the Draft Master Plan design to be implemented a case would need to be made that the heritage values of the gardens would not be adversely affected if the glasshouses and workshop were to be removed, or that it was necessary for the economic viability of the gardens.

Summing up – there are clearly many issues to consider. Should the National Trust make an application they would be fully canvassed.

## LA TROBE'S COTTAGE AND THE FITZROY GARDENS

Miles Lewis

18 February 2004

There is no good reason to move La Trobe's cottage to the Fitzroy Gardens.

I say this with all respect for Nerida Sampson's initiative in floating the proposal, and I am of course in absolute agreement with the idea that the conservation significance of this part of East Melbourne should be better recognised, and especially so if this would result in it being given better planning protection.

But I oppose the move on two grounds, first the welfare of the Fitzroy Gardens, and secondly the significance and integrity of the cottage itself.

### *Fitzroy Gardens*

To start with the Fitzroy Gardens. My vision for enhancing and recognising the significance of this area:

- does not include horse and buggy rides, which I regard as tacky and irrelevant
- does not include placing any more structures in the gardens, which are full of a strange and promiscuous mixture of buildings already.

It is a gross abuse of public gardens and parks to place buildings in them. When it was done in the past it was a mistake, but not a fatal one. When it is done now, in this age of economic rationalism, it is a very dangerous precedent. If La Trobe's cottage can go in the Fitzroy gardens this year, why not a re-creation of John Batman's house next year? Followed by a complete model of early Melbourne in 2006? An exhibition pavilion in 2007? And a ferris wheel in 2008?

Of course you can argue that La Trobe's Cottage is already in a public garden, but that's a bit different. It's been on the Domain, near where is now, for nearly half a century. Its presence there does not set a new precedent, and it is not close to or clashing with other buildings. It has become accepted where it is.

We also now accept, because they have been there a long time, the buildings and structures in the Fitzroy Gardens: the kiosk, the model village, the Fairy Tree,

Sinclair's Cottage, Cook's Cottage and the Conservatory. But even now I wish some of them were spaced further apart, because they look ridiculous in conjunction.

And I worry most of all about Cook's Cottage, which is largely a fake, or at least a nineteenth century rebuild. And I am as bemused as Cook himself would have been to find that its main function now is as a backdrop for Japanese weddings.

### ***La Trobe's Cottage***

Turning to look at the issue from the other direction, that of La Trobe's Cottage, I come to the same conclusion.

Firstly, the removal of buildings is generally unacceptable in conservation terms. The *Burra Charter* of Australia ICOMOS, which governs these matters, states in article 9.1:

The physical location of a *place* is part of its *cultural significance*. A building, work or other component of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival.

When the house was first moved to the Domain this was indeed the sole means of ensuring its survival, and the move was therefore warranted. When it was moved again more recently, that was not warranted, and moreover it was economic suicide. Had the Trust insisted on it remaining where it was, the Botanic Gardens entrance area would have been adjusted to allow for it, and it would have remained close to the route of the garden visitors instead of in its present obscure and forgotten location.

Now I have to say to you in all honesty that not much of the building is real anyway, so you might regard all this discussion of conservation principles as pedantic. The only original part of the building is the dining room, the square structure at one end. This was not prefabricated, but built by a local builder, George Beever, at the time when the cottage was put up. When the building was taken from Jolimont only this room was moved in one piece, and it apparently included two of the prefabricated panels where it had joined onto the original building. The room is of enormous importance, however, because it is the oldest surviving example of stud or balloon framing so far identified in the world, and has been recognised as such by Professor Paul Sprague, the American authority,

The rest of the house is a reconstruction based upon limited evidence, and as an example of prefabrication it is of no importance, because there are genuine buildings by the same manufacturer elsewhere in Australia. The kitchen buildings behind barely count even as a reconstruction, because they were based upon almost no evidence.

But in a way that makes the case even stronger. We are not looking at a *real* building being moved back to its site, or even back to something like its original environment. We are dealing with a *simulacrum* – a mock-up – which is valid only to the extent that it illustrates the original form.

Before the cottage was moved to the Domain in 1963 many sites were looked at, and the first proposal, in 1958, was the Fitzroy Gardens, near Cook's Cottage. Others included Wellington Parade, facing the MCG; outside the north gate of the Botanic Gardens; the grounds of the Observatory; the Flagstaff Gardens; and the vicinity of the Burke & Wills monument in Royal Park.

All those sites were rejected, and the National Trust in particular was concerned to create something like its original ambience, a prospect looking south-west across a park-like slope with scattered trees. The site in the Domain had that character, and even the present location has something of it.

Picture, by contrast, what it would be like in the Fitzroy Gardens, with the cottage planted in what is essentially a valley, with no prospect, and surrounded with large trees. Picture also the complex – not just the cottage but its enclosed front and back gardens, and the rather crudely mocked-up outbuildings, placed near the surviving buildings from the depot and within sight of the twee Cook's Cottage and the Baroque conservatory. It would be a joke.

### ***the future***

I don't want to leave this issue on a negative note. It is easy to criticise, and much harder to make positive suggestions, which is why I am grateful to Nerida for taking the initiative.

Your gardens should not be a sort of sideshow alley. They should be a peaceful retreat, a horticultural paradise, and an educational resource. Any change to the gardens should be gradual, but it should head in those directions.

One positive move already has been getting rid of the Council's garden depot.

Secondly I believe that all the genuine historic aspects of the gardens should be presented to the public. There needs to be an interpretation point displaying the original plans, old photographs, the early watercolours by Charles Norton, and other material. But of course this should NOT be another new structure. Probably it would best be housed in Sinclair's Cottage.

Thirdly, even those things that have been introduced into the gardens need to be interpreted to the highest standards. I was horrified to learn recently that a populist brochure was to be published for Cook's Cottage, replacing the scholarly work to which I contributed many years ago.

In major properties overseas, like those of the National Trust in Britain, you buy really substantial publications that tell you, if anything, *more* than you want, rather than less. That is part of the educational role of such places. The National Trust and the Council were at pains some years ago to re-restore and correct the cottage, and to provide it with a substantial interpretative brochure of that sort. I cannot understand why the present management should wish, or should be permitted, to reverse this enlightened approach.

Fourthly, everything in the Gardens should be properly maintained. The Model Village is generally in a poor state: I'm reluctant to suggest that it be removed, but something has to be done.

All these measures will help to maintain the quality of the gardens and the value of the visitor's experience. They will not *in themselves* bring about a change in government planning policy for East Melbourne. But they will at least be a step in the right direction.

***Nerida Samson:***

A person with a bubbly personality known to almost everyone in East Melbourne.  
Foundation member and Immediate Past President of the EMG, which this year celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so she must have joined as a child.  
A member of our own Society since its inception.  
However, Nerida tonight will express her own views, not those of the EMG or the EMHS  
Nerida intends to put forward a proposal concerning Latrobe's Cottage.

***Prof Miles Lewis:***

Miles has spoken to our Society before, but not about Latrobe's Cottage  
Miles is an architectural historian, and a Professor in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne  
Miles has written many books and articles on architecture, conservation and housing, and no doubt has much to offer in this discussion

***Professor AGL Shaw:***

Professor Alan Shaw's name, and also his initials AGL which always spring readily to my mind, must be known to every person in Australia with an interest in Australian history  
Like Professor Lewis his work has been extensive.  
Frankly, worthwhile biographies could be written about both of them  
Most relevant for present purposes is that Alan is a Past President of the Latrobe Society.

***Susan Balderstone:***

Susan is a conservation architect  
Presently Assistant Director for Strategic Support at Heritage Victoria  
She has been a member of many conservation councils and committees, and taught extensively in that area  
Susan has been an Adjunct Professor at Deakin University since 1996  
And, like our previous speakers, she has contributed a great deal to the community over a long period of years.

what personalities?  
which parts are fragile?  
Septor Hall of National Trust.  
Peter Stuthers

The catch-phrase for tonight's meeting, I think dreamed up by our secretary Sylvia Black, is "*Will Regal Pre-fab to Move?*"

Charles Joseph Latrobe, as is very well known, was Superintendent of the Port Phillip District and then Lieutenant Governor of Victoria from 1839 until 1854, a period covering 15 of the first 20 years of permanent settlement in Victoria. Obviously, huge changes took place all over Victoria during his period of office.

As is also well known, he brought a pre-fabricated cottage with him to Victoria. The cottage was erected at Jolimont, where I do remember visiting it many years ago, but now is located in King's Domain opposite the main entrance to the Botanic Gardens and near the present day Government House, where I visited it for the third or fourth time last weekend.

The main interest of our Society, of course, is the history of East Melbourne, and Latrobe, his wife and their cottage played a significant part in the history of East Melbourne.

*tonight's proposal*  
The East Melbourne Historical Society has not discussed in detail, and has not formed a view about, whether the cottage should be returned to Jolimont or to a place closer to Jolimont than its present location. Consequently, the purpose of tonight's meeting is to learn more about Latrobe's Cottage, and for our members to be better informed if its possible relocation becomes a serious and contentious public issue.

Our speakers tonight, whom I will introduce in more detail as we move through the evening, are:

Nerida Samson, a very long time resident of East Melbourne

Professor Miles Lewis, among other things an architectural historian

*very large* Professor AGL Shaw, likely to be known to everyone here as the author of ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> enormous number of books and articles about Australian history

Susan Balderstone, a conservation architect associated with Heritage Victoria

## COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

### PROFESSOR AGL SHAW (La Trobe Society)

Professor Shaw advised that he was in attendance to hear what people had to say. He intended to take what he had learned tonight back to the La Trobe Society chair Mr Rodney Davidson and the committee.

He said the purpose of the cottage when it was put up 30 years ago was as an object of interest to Melburnians and visitors, but he walks past the cottage about 3 times a week and never sees anyone there. An object of interest ought to be in a place where it is seen. He now understood the adjacent road was going to be closed. He asked what was the use of keeping up a monument that is not visible. He felt the cottage virtually useless unless it was hired for a function.

He accepted Miles Lewis objections to putting another building in Fitzroy gardens. Moving it would be expensive and liable to do damage. However money spent on its upkeep is wasted as an object if no one was visiting it.

### STEPHEN HARE (CEO, National Trust)

Stephen congratulated Nerida on putting up a debate.

He said that contextual history was fundamental for visitors to understand the site and that interpretation was a fundamental deficiency of the NT. La Trobe was fundamental to the foundation of Melb and deserves much more attention than he currently gets. Trust currently talking to the State Library of Victoria about this.

He supported the views of Miles Lewis and Susan Balderstone but said the first he had heard of the proposal was from Vince Hainey (MCC) about three months ago and that was the only involvement he had had.

He said that to move the cottage would be a contravention of basic principles of Trust. (Nerida Samson reminded him that it had been moved three times).

He wanted to correct a misconception that the Trust was in financial difficulties. This year the Trust had its first operating surplus. Funds raised from donations can now be segregated and go directly to mission related activities. The Trust does not have a maintenance backlog, rather the Trust has restoration, which is never in backlog because you do it progressively. To say the NT has financial difficulties is not true – "We always need funds for our restoration work".

The NT currently having a dialogue with MCC re the entrance to LaTrobe's cottage. The ACCA building was lost to the Trust when the Botanic Gardens said they would prefer to use the site.

"I think you can look for change in terms of the way LaTrobe's cottage is presented – how quickly will depend on Trust priorities. We have along way to go that is the challenge. There is no way we will move it."

### NERIDA SAMPSON

"I have been using the project as a means to try and do something about saving East Melbourne. It costs us so much money. I don't know how you go ahead trying to save an area like this when it is continually being bombarded by developers. We are not represented by Councillors any more. No body is there to listen. In the recent height level review, as most of the EMG know, the only people the MCC Planning Department referred to were the Hilton, Mercy and Freemasons. They did not consider the residents"

### MILES

"You must block streets to win the battle"

NERIDA SAMSON

"How does an area become a historic precinct." I did write to Ray Tonkin (Heritage Victoria) about this.

SUSAN BALDERSTONE

"I have not seen any letters so I don't know what they say."

NERIDA SAMSON

The gist of Ray Tonkin's reply was that St. Vincent's Place caused him so much trouble he didn't want another one.

SUSAN BALDERSTONE

"With a heritage precinct you are dealing with a lot of different owners and titles to be covered by the one registration and administratively it is a huge task to manage. **If you kept pushing it we would have to do it**".

STEPHEN HARE (CEO National Trust)

Stephen spoke about NT precinct classifications and cited Brunswick Street as an example. He said one of the things the NT was working on at the moment was looking at broader streetscapes to protect areas, but the NT would be knocking on Heritage Victoria's door in relation to that. He said East Melbourne was one area that has to be protected.

RESIDENT - EAST MELBOURNE (DELWYN)

Delwyn felt the cottage belonged to East Melbourne and asked how you created that link if it stays where it is.

SUSAN BALDERSTONE

Susan said that where it is now it is still on the same axis as it was previously and if that was to be interpreted at the house it gives a bit of ownership back to East Melbourne.

RESIDENT FROM JOLIMONT

Spoke about the lost opportunity of placing the cottage on the site of the Deaf and Dumb Society grounds because it was on a hill and closer to its original site. She was concerned that developers now had a permit and that the site is now denuded of trees.

FORMER NATIONAL TRUST PETER STRUTHERS

Peter explained he was the Trust Curator at the time the cottage was moved and that it had to move because of political pressure. It was sad that the idea that the Trust's colonial and La Trobe collections, many still in storage at the State Library of Victoria, could not have been moved to the air conditioned ACCA site for exhibit.

NERIDA SAMSON

"My document is a marketing document, not an historical/architectural one".

JULIA ARMOUR

Julia felt the buildings in the Fitzroy gardens enhance the gardens and that La Trobe's cottage, not being a high rise building, could be one of the secret gardens.