

**AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT**

**ROBERT LOWE**

**Papers, 1819-96**

**Reel M398**

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Robert Lowe (1811-1892), Viscount Sherbrooke, was born at Bingham, Nottinghamshire, the son of the Reverend Robert Lowe and his wife Ellen. He was educated at Winchester College and University College, Oxford. In 1836 he married Georgiana Orred. He was a private tutor at Oxford and in 1840 studied law at Lincolns Inn, London. He practised at the London Bar, but in 1842 he decided to emigrate to New South Wales.

Lowe and his wife arrived in Sydney in October 1842 and he was immediately admitted to practise at the New South Wales Supreme Court. Problems with his eyesight caused him to stop working, but in October 1843 he resumed his legal practice. In the same month Sir George Gipps appointed him a member of the Legislative Council. He was soon recognised as one of the outstanding speakers in the Council and his fame spread when he defended John Knatchbull in a murder case in 1844. In that year, he fell out with Gipps and resigned from the Council. He launched the weekly journal, *The Atlas*, which pushed for responsible government and colonial control of waste lands. In 1845 he returned to the Legislative Council. He opposed the renewal of convict transportation, but he lost popular support by supporting the bounty immigration bill. Georgiana Lowe was in poor health and in January 1850 the Lowes left Sydney and returned to England.

Lowe was a leader writer for *The Times* and in 1852 was elected to the House of Commons. He held a number of posts in the Liberal ministries led by Lord Palmerston and W.E. Gladstone: vice-president of the Board of Trade (1855-58), vice-president of the Committee of the Council of Education (1859-64), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1869-73) and Home Secretary (1873-74). In 1880 he was raised to the peerage as Viscount Sherbrooke.

Georgiana Lowe died in 1884 and in the following year Lowe married Caroline Sneyd. He had no children and his peerage became extinct.

Elizabeth Agnes Lowe (1809-1860) was a sister of Robert Lowe.

Anne Sherbrooke (d. 1847) was the wife of William Sherbrooke (d. 1831) of Oxtan Hall, Southwell. He was the brother of General Sir John Coape Sherbrooke (1764-1830), whose wife Katherina was the aunt of Robert Lowe. Following Anne Sherbrooke's death, her husband's estates passed to Robert Lowe's older brother, Henry Porter Lowe (1810-1887), who assumed the name Sherbrooke.

## ROBERT LOWE

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#### Letters of Robert and Georgina Lowe, 1840-49

1. Georgina Lowe [Oxford] to Anne Sherbrooke (Southwell, Nottinghamshire), [9 Jan. 1840]: thanks for present; Robert's dislike of his present occupation; his enjoyment of law; Georgina looks forward to his becoming a great man; paintings; painters William Harriott and Samuel Prout.
2. Georgina Lowe to her aunt, n.d.: decision of Robert to emigrate to Sydney and practise as a barrister; believes he might make £1200 in the first year; the Bar very crowded in England.
3. Georgina Lowe ( Parramatta) to Anne Sherbrooke, n.d.: arrival in Sydney; legal acquaintances; kindness of Sir George and Lady Gipps; prospective home in Macquarie Street; wages and prices; Sydney Harbour; buildings in town reminiscent of Leamington or Cheltenham; a ride through the bush.
- 4(a) Cover of a letter to Agnes Lowe, Bingham, Nottinghamshire.
- 4(b) Georgina Lowe to Agnes Lowe, n.d.: a visit to Mr Aspinall; Robert's problems with his eyesight; they hope to return to England in a few years with a competency.
5. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 11 Dec. 1842: Robert's success at the Sydney Bar; his eyes have improved since arrival in Sydney; his work for James Norton; his new chambers; not yet settled in house in Macquarie Street; many 'polished' people in Sydney; Lady Gipps. (crossed)
6. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 28 May [1843]: a ball at Government House; dismal apprehensions concerning the state of the colony; prices; depreciation of property; imprudent action of Denison brothers in purchasing extensive land in Hunter Valley.
7. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 21 July 1843: a journey from Parramatta to Bathurst; crossing the Blue Mountains; the Macquarie Plains; 'in these wild places one spot is so much like another that I have little inducement to sketch'; breakdown of the carriage near Mt Lambie; John Palmer; Sir George and Lady Gipps. (crossed)
8. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 8 Nov. 1843: appointment of Robert to the Legislative Council; Richard Windeyer 'a violent clever barrister'; Sir George Gipps's high opinion of Robert; need to protect his eyes from too much reading; economic depression in the colony.

9. Georgina Lowe to Agnes Lowe, 20 Nov. 1843: Robert has resumed his profession; the state of his eyes; Georgina is 'Robert's clerk and reader'; forwards newspapers reporting Robert's speeches; jealousies arising from his appointment to the Legislative Council; drawings.
10. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Agnes Lowe, 22 Dec. [1843]: drawings; English news; Robert's health; his speech on free trade.
11. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 24 Dec. [1843]: widespread praise of Robert's abilities; economic conditions; climate; meeting with Capt. Robert Fitzroy and Mrs Fitzroy; New Zealand 'a hopeless failure'; beauty of Sydney Harbour.
12. Georgina Lowe to Agnes Lowe, 28 Jan. [1844]: John Knatchbull murder case; wages of servants; visit to George Macleay at Brownlow Hill; Australian birds.
13. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 28 Feb. 1844: improvement in Robert's health; Robert's role as defence counsel in the Knatchbull Case; despatch of drawings and seeds; import of Chinese silks and satins; economic conditions; 'no property is of any real value except in Sydney'; recent immigrants have found employment at moderate wages; country can never pay for immigrants.
- 14(a) Robert Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 15 Aug. 1844: sympathy on her great loss [Robert's godmother]; no practice at the Bar on account of the universal ruin which has overtaken the colony; report on lands; intends to resign from Legislative Council.
- 14(b) Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 1 Sept. [1844]: sympathy on her loss; planned trip to Port Macquarie; petition to British Government to recall Sir George Gipps.
15. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Rev. William Whitley (Winsford, Cheshire), 20 July 1845: Robert said to be the best public speaker in the legislature; whole weight of the Government is opposed to him; colonial society is unprincipled; investments; William Macleay.
16. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 11 Dec. [1845]: legacy of Mrs Coape; Robert retained by the owners of wharves in dispute with the Government; Robert urged to return to England; Bank of Australia case; newspaper attacks on Robert; unpopularity of Sir George Gipps; high price of wool; Jamieson children [children of Ellen Jamieson, murdered by John Knatchbull].
17. Georgina Lowe to Mrs Sherbrooke, 12 Sept. 1846: new house; splendid views from drawing room; Robert's earnings; Jamieson children; popularity of Sir Charles FitzRoy; Georgina only visits a few families 'of the most intimate acquaintance'.
18. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Anne Sherbrooke, 3 Oct. [1846]: enjoyment of her garden; Sir Charles and Lady Mary FitzRoy; seeds collected on Leichhardt's expedition; sure-footed horses of Sydney; wealth and propriety of former convict Margaret Catchpole; behaviour of many old

convicts; immigrants are worthless and indolent, the lowest and worst of the Irish Catholic population.

19. Robert Lowe (Sydney) to Rev. R. Michell (Oxford), 30 Nov. 1846: his progress at the Sydney Bar; seeks assistance on behalf of William C. Wentworth; his son, W.C. Wentworth, at Trinity College, Cambridge, has damaged his health through debts and dissipation.
20. Georgina Lowe (Sydney) to Rev. William Whitley, 4 May 1849: investments; possibility of Robert entering politics in England; Georgina's poor health; improvement in Robert's eyesight.

### **Miscellanea**

- 1(a) Code of laws instituted by the Lowes, 1819 (ms, 4pp). Compiled by Robert Lowe at the age of seven.
- 1(b) Notes of Oxford Union debates in which Robert Lowe took part, 1831. (11pp)
- 1(c) Verse beginning with words 'Two men of fame'. (1p)
- 1(d) Martyn Threlfall. Bronte House: home of Viscount Sherbrooke. [*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 Sept. 1924]
2. Exercise book containing obituaries and other newspaper cuttings concerning Robert Lowe, political affairs and subjects of general interest, c. 1887-93.
3. Joseph Chamberlain to Lady Sherbrooke, 28 July 1896: reminiscences of Robert Lowe.