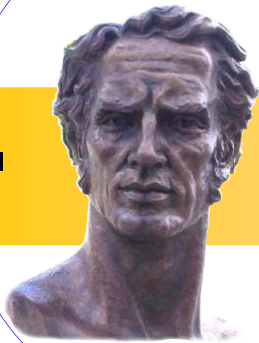




ISSUE 11 - SEPTEMBER 2009



THE WAYFARER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ADAM LINDSAY
GORDON COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE INC.

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ISSN 1834-4070
ISSN 1834-4089

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'RODE TO KILL HIMSELF': THE PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF WILLIAM BRAZENOR

Reminiscences of Adam Lindsay Gordon were few, but popularly reported in the press. Trainor, Stockdale, Vaughan and Locke all gave interesting insights into the Gordon they knew. The reminiscences of William Brazenor covers Gordon's time in Ballarat;

"Mr. William Brazenor, a well-known Ballarat identity...is one of the few men living who knew Adam Lindsay Gordon. The ill-fated poet's Ballarat days are not very fertile of anecdote in any of the published biographies of Gordon. Mr. Brazenor's reminiscences reveal him as a melancholy, hard-riding man, silent, except in the company of stable-lads, with whom he apparently talked about horses. Not a word about poetry ever fell from his lips, though it was suspected that he harboured the muse by two or three who rode with him in the hunt club

'He was a man,' said Mr. Brazenor, 'I never could make out. He was in no way a sociable man; far from it. He and Harry Mount were partners, and had their livery stables at Craig's Hotel. He was living round on the lake,

close to the showgrounds. Some of the old trees that were about his cottage are there still...

'Gordon was a reckless rider. We always used to say that he rode to break his neck. I remember on one occasion he rode for a jump at a corner of a fence, and had to pass between the rails and a big tree just at the take off. The mare he was riding, a black one, landed him in the road, and he broke some of his fingers...

'Gordon always gave me the idea that he had got out of his place in the world, and was mixing with people who were not of his class. He had the look of a man who had lost himself. He was tall, with very long legs, and used to sit with his head right over his horse's neck. And when he jumped he had a most peculiar habit of throwing himself back till his head almost touched his horse's flank. And that reminds me. I went out with him one day on a very clever horse I had, called Skylark. I talked to him on the way, but didn't get much out of him in reply. He was always like that—would ride silently

"Gordon always gave me the idea that he had got out of his place in the world, and was mixing with people who were not of his class. He had the look of a man who had lost himself"

(Continued on page 2)

REMEMBERING GORDON AND CLARKE

It awaits another issue of *The Wayfarer* on the exploits of Marcus Clarke and his partner in crime, Adam Lindsay Gordon. This article from *The Advertiser* is shows the enduring relationship the two literature giants had;

"Miss Marian Marcus Clarke, daughter of the novelist, visited Parliament House (Adelaide) on Tuesday afternoon, and was introduced to the Speaker (Hon. F. W. Coneybeer), who conducted the lady over the legislative halls. Miss Clarke, who was introduced to several members, was

greatly interested in being shown the corner in the old Assembly Chamber where the poet Adam Lindsay Gordon sat in the sixties, before he took up his residence in Melbourne, and became the friend of her father. Marcus Clarke made the acquaintance of the poet at the old Yorick Club (Melbourne). The novelist formed a warm affection for the poet, and they were much together. No one more deeply mourned Gordon's tragic end than Clarke, as was shown by the eloquent and sympathetic edition of his collected poems. The scenes of Gordon's

Parliamentary days were pointed out to Miss Clarke by Mr. Fred Johns, who is fortunate in having for publication among his biographical memoirs the manuscript of a sketch of Marcus Clarke specially written for the Australian biographer by George Gordon McCrae, and intimate of Australia's greatest novelist, and the last survivor of the notable Melbournian circle which made the beginnings of Australian literature in the sixties".

(Source: *The Advertiser* 31 May 1916 p6)



(above) Marcus Clarke in 1874 aged 28
(Courtesy www.abc.net.au)

'RODE TO KILL HIMSELF': THE PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF WILLIAM BRAZENOR...CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

"Well, we rode at a fence, and Gordon moved, as was his habit. The horse baulked, and shot sideways, and Gordon came over the fence by himself"

alongside you for miles. Gordon had called on me, and asked me to go out that morning, and, at his suggestion, we struck out over a new line of country for the hunt. After a while he asked me to change horses. I said that I would, my horse was a very light-mouthed horse. We changed saddles. My horse was very sensitive, and I always sat in the stirrups, never moving when he [Skylark] was taking a fence. Well, we rode at a fence, and Gordon moved, as was his habit. The horse baulked, and shot sideways, and Gordon came over the fence by himself. I rode up and asked him where he was hurt. He said, 'No, I'd rather a horse fell through a fence

than do a thing like that.' I was a bit angry. 'Damn it!' I said, 'he's a sensitive horse, and won't stand moving just as you are coming up.' Without a word, Gordon went back, unsaddled my horse, and I did the same with his. He got his saddle on quickly, and I took my time. Suddenly he was up and off. He came back at the fence, sitting perfectly upright, like a soldier, and, taking it, turned round at a gallop, and was out of my sight at once. I never saw him again that day.

'Yes; he was a fine rider; would ride anything, and force it at a fence. But he always seemed lost, poor, unfortunate fellow. There are only three of that hunt club now—Mr. Stephen Holgate, Mr. William

Leonard, and myself. I had the pack afterwards, and sold it to Mr. Chirnside, at Werribee. There were no foxes or hares in those days, and I remember 'blooding 'em with kangaroo rats until we got rabbits up from Geelong.'

After about two years in Ballarat, according to the recollections of Mr. Brazenor, two years in which he lost an infant daughter, Gordon went to Melbourne. 'I think he went to ride in the Steeplechase for Mr. Herbert Power, but I would not be sure of that. It may have been Mr. Power's brother. Some few months afterwards we heard of his end. I suppose he got tired of it all'.

(Source: *The Argus* 11 Oct 1913 p19)

ELIZABETH LAUDER AND GORDON'S WHIP



(above) Gordon's stockwhip
(Brighton Historical Society Inc.
Collection)

"The whip is still in an excellent state of preservation. It was made from the raw hide obtained from a wild bullock. Miss Bright (Mrs. Lauder) was always the custodian of the whip, as Gordon more frequently used a heavier one"

Readers will recall that Elizabeth Lauder nee Bright was responsible for planting two wattle trees at Gordon's grave and who also maintained the upkeep for many years. Lauder also had in her possession some Gordon relicts and their whereabouts are unknown;

"Saturday was the fortieth anniversary of the death of the Australian poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon. In connection with this fact it is interesting to note that an old colonist, Mrs. Lauder, residing at 3 Division-place, South Melbourne, is the possessor of a stockwhip which Gordon helped to make, and used, over 60 years ago. He was assisted in the making of the whip by John and Edward Bright, brothers of Mrs. Lauder, upon whose father's station in the Long Desert, South Australia, Gordon was employed, he being then

about 19 [sic] years of age. The whip is still in an excellent state of preservation. It was made from the raw hide obtained from a wild bullock. Miss Bright (Mrs. Lauder) was always the custodian of the whip, as Gordon more frequently used a heavier one.

To the Bright family Gordon confided why he came to leave Cotswold, England. He was attending a military college, and often took part in amateur race meetings. On one occasion his mount was made first favourite, and his fellow students, or many of them, had backed his horse. As the day of the races drew nigh, the animal's owner issued instructions that it was not to be taken out of the stable. Young Gordon was disappointed, and, listening to unwise counsel, took the horse from the stable, rode, and won the race. As he

dismounted the owner and a policeman were waiting for him. The incident ended in Gordon being sent out to South Australia. That Gordon considered that he was harshly treated is seen in those lines to his sister:-

"My parent bade me cross the flood,
My kindred frowned at me;
They say I have belied my blood,
And stained my pedigree.
But I must turn from those who chide,
And laugh at those who frown;
I cannot quench my stubborn pride.
Nor keep my spirit down."

Postscript: For someone who had great affection for Gordon, amazingly on her death on 14 April 1914, her remains were interred in the Springvale Necropolis—CofE "M" Sect 10 Grave 16.

(Source: *The Argus* 27 Jun 1910 p7 & 15 Apr 1914 p9)

A LONE VOICE: GORDON AND WESTMINSTER ABBEY

"Reasons why a memorial to Adam Lindsay Gordon should not be erected in Westminster Abbey were advanced yesterday by Rev. John Mackenzie, of Toorak. Mr. Mackenzie said that he regretted that the proposal had been made, because it would be misconstrued by nine out of 10 persons who visited the Abbey. It would be assumed that Gordon was the greatest Australian poet,

and that he was the real interpreter of the spirit of the nation. Gordon was not an Australian, either by birth or sentiment. He was a lonely exile in a land in which he could find no sure standing ground. Over everything he wrote there brooded a spirit of melancholy and frustration. In no sense could he be regarded as a great poet or a true representative of the Australian spirit. The

history of Australia was in many aspects an epic of heroism and sacrifice, but that epic would not be written until a greater poet than Gordon had arisen. There were already signs that Australian people were becoming conscious of the poverty of the literary ideals with which they had been satisfied before the Great War." (Source: *The Argus* 2 Aug 1933 p9)

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. will be visiting Westminster Abbey in late October to commemorate Gordon and plans are underway for a wreath laying service

POLICEMAN, HORSEMAN, POLITICIAN AND FRIEND

by Marilyn Crabbe who was the winner in The Adam Lindsay Gordon Open Prize for unpublished poets at the FAW National Literary Awards

I perched on high in Gordon's tree
And dreamed of times gone by
Of poets and princes and big JR
Who lived in the house nearby.

Gordon was a wild young man
A horseman to his bones
In policeman's garb upon fiery beast
He galloped the dusty roads.

Penola town was his rural haunt
The folk there knew his beat
At the whinny of steed and pound of hoof
Out of his path they would leap.

As State Trooper for two years he served
Then to horse breaking did aspire
The thrill of the steeplechase and steed
Raced in his blood and spurred his fire.

To set the laws for town and country
Young Adam folk did petition
Elected to their State Assembly
He represented his electorate with wisdom.

Striding the paths of North Terrace East
And the chambers of Parliament House
Old friend John Riddoch he did greet...
The hospitality of Yallum was extended.

While resting at Yallum Park homestead
Gazing o'er paddocks from a tall white gum
Adam plied his poetic pen
Bush ballads and rhyme to create.

The Sick Stockrider and Ride from the Wreck
Were all composed on high
Balanced among the blossom and leaves
Of that Gum 'neath the Yallum sky.

History records Gordon's rare skill
With pen and pencil and verse
Alas from those great heights
His life fell into decline
And an early death was his curse.

Adam Lindsay Gordon –
Policeman, horseman, politician and friend,
To whom our country owes much debt...
A poet and gentleman extraordinaire
Lost in such an untimely death.

So I perched on high in Gordon's tree
To dream of times gone by
And ponder why such a talented life
Lived so briefly 'neath the Yallum sky.

THE ADAM LINDSAY GORDON GRAVE RESTORATION APPEAL

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Grave Restoration Appeal is approaching the \$7,000 mark with our target in sight.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Appeal especially the following:

Anglesea and District Historical Society Inc. (\$50),
Bruce Dite (\$30), Chris Millard, John McMichan (\$25).



SS ADMELLA: 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The S.S. Admella was on her way from Adelaide to Melbourne with a complement of 113 passengers and crew when she was wrecked in the early hours of the 6 August 1859, 150 years ago, on an uncharted reef, now called Carpenters Reef near Millicent (SA). The ship was carrying a number of horses on their way to the Intercolonial race meeting in Melbourne. In the eight days that it took to complete the rescue, 89 people lost their lives

in raging seas with little food and no water.

The 150th Commemoration of the event is now over, but an excellent record of the catastrophe has been made on DVD by Brenton Manser and may be ordered at:

www.brentonmanser.com.au

The model depicted below was made with a grant from The Australian Maritime Museum by Mr. Jones of the Port MacDonnell district.



TOUR OF BRIGHTON GENERAL CEMETERY

Our final tour of the Brighton General Cemetery (Vic) for 2009 will be held on **Sunday 11 October at 10:30am**. 'Adam Lindsay Gordon: His Life and Beyond' is an insightful and informative tour featuring 11 subjects with links to the life and legacy of Gordon. **Bookings are essential.** Cost is \$5.00 (non-members \$10.00) and includes refreshments and a tour guide. For more information ring 03 5261 2899 or visit our website www.adamlindsaygordon.org/tours.htm.

*All proceeds goes towards
The Adam Lindsay Gordon Grave Restoration Appeal.*