



THE WAYFARER

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

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FROTH AND BUBBLE DAY 2007

Planning for this year's "Froth and Bubble Day" is now in earnest and The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. is looking forward to a bigger and better event. According to Secretary John Adams, the event will build on the success of last year.

"Well over 50 members of the public attended and we are expecting many more this year", he said.

The highlight of this year's event will be an exhibition bringing together for the first time many Gordon relics from around Australia.

"The last exhibition held in 1983 at Caulfield was a small affair, and we are aiming to introduce Gordon to a wider audience", Mr Adams said.

After negotiations with Champions - Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame failed

to secure their support, the Committee are delighted to announce this year's event will be held at the home of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria on Sunday 24 June 2007 from 2:00pm.

"The Royal Historical Society of Victoria are to be commended for their support and we are very grateful", a delighted Mr Adams said.

For the first time, The Adam Lindsay Gordon Poetry Competition will be held with the winner receiving an Arabian horse statue thanks to Susan Pender who also lends her name to the prize.

"The competition will be fun and for something different, in the Universal Language of Esperanto", said Mr Adams.

More information on this year's "Froth and Bubble Day" can be seen on our website www.adamlindsaygordon.org.



Adam Lindsay Gordon aka Bernard Caleo will be back for this year's 'Froth and Bubble Day' is shown here speaking with John Adams (left) and Allan Childs

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RESTORING GORDON'S GRAVESITE MONUMENT

The Brighton General Cemetery (Vic) is the final resting place of not only the Poet himself, but many contemporaries and admirers. The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. is currently producing a walking tour of the Cemetery

aimed at bringing to life those who are intrinsically linked to the story of Gordon. Proceeds of the tour will go towards raising funds to restore Gordon's monument which the Committee are in the early stages of organising. A restoration is necessary to ensure the monu-

ment does not deteriorate to the extent it will become prohibitive to restore to its original condition. Work is being entrusted to Lodge Bros. and approved by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria Branch). Look out for the Appeal launch in the coming months.

REMINISCENCES OF HARRY STOCKDALE

GORDON SAYING

And sport's like life and life's like sport,
It ain't all skittles and beer.
*(Ye Warie Wayfarer, Fytte IV
In Utrumque Paratus)*

Harry Stockdale came to know Gordon whilst working on his uncle Edward's Lake Hawdon station (SA) in the 1860s. Writing his reminiscences decades later, Stockdale would describe Gordon as "the best and bravest man" he knew. His description of Gordon on a horse is well worth printing:

"Gordon was generally con-

sidered to be a most reckless horseman, though always admitted to be a good one. The man's nature was wholly daring, full of love of risk, and pride in achievement. This might have been recklessness in most people; but, to my way of thinking, it was not so with Gordon. This man was one of 10,000, and when he did his so-called 'reckless' feats he did them coolly, artistically, and well.

No flurry, no unnatural excitement, no nervous flurry. On the contrary, he would dismount and see to the rightness and tightness of girths and surcingle slowly and deliberately; then mount, and accomplish whatever he had set himself to do. He was the best all-round man about a horse I ever saw, either in Yorkshire or Australia". (Source: The Register 17 May 1919 p10)

ON THE TRAIL OF GORDON'S 'OTHER' BALLARAT HOME

The year was August 1867 when after a successful amateur race at Dowling Forest, Gordon made a rash decision to establish a livery stable at the rear of Craig's Hotel, Ballarat for the exorbitant rent of £8 per week. That he wasn't blessed with business acumen needed to successfully run an enterprise relying on credit only added to the tragic story of Gordon's life.

Gordon had not yet reached the financial desperation that marked his final years in Melbourne. He still had land holdings in South Australia which he mortgaged to raise £1,500. Eileen Kaye notes that "of this £1,500, it seems clear that he used only £500 to set himself up in Ballarat".

Gordon was still acutely aware of his responsibilities to provide for Maggie and daughter Annie who was born on 3 May.

Maggie and daughter were still in Robe (SA) and doing nicely when Gordon sent for them to join him in November. But Gordon knew Craig's Hotel was no place for a family. One can imagine Maggie refusing to live in a place of impurity; she was no prude but a woman of prudence.

It was overlooking the picturesque Wendouree Lake that Gordon furnished a six-room home with all the comforts. Yet biographers have focused on the romance surrounding the Craig's Hotel Cottage (relocated to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens in 1934) at the expense of the 'other' home. Indeed, the weatherboard villa on Wendouree Parade barely rates a mention much less the precise location which is curious given Gordon did not live at the livery stables "but may have rested there for some time" according to W. Park Low.

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. have been assiduously seeking information about the Wendouree villa and reveal a mystery that has alluded biographers and historians alike.

The vital clue as to the location lies in Eileen Kaye's much overlooked 1933 serial biography printed in *The Australasian*.

"Most of Gordon's residences have...disappeared. His villa at Glenelg is no more, his residence at Ballarat is merged in a convent. The stables have long since been converted into a neat garage".

But which convent—Mary's Mount on Sturt Street, or Nazerth House on Mill Street? That shall be the next chapter on the trail of Gordon's 'other' Ballarat home.

(Source: *The Advertiser* 10 Jun 1912 p2; *The Australasian* 25 Nov 1933 p4 & 23 Dec 1933 p4)

MEMBERS

Members can read Eileen Kaye's biography on the Members' Area of our website www.adamlindsaygordon.org

"But Gordon knew Craig's Hotel was no place for a family. One can imagine Maggie refusing to live in a place of impurity; she was no prude but a woman of prudence"

INSIGHT: IDENTIFYING THE REAL GORDON

Vidler, E. (ed), "Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial Volume" (1926)



A posthumous painting of Gordon in his final years from a description given by Geo. Gordon McCrae (courtesy Allan Childs)

"...the Holy Grail for Gordon biographers is the location of a photograph of the Poet in his final years in Victoria"

Australiana Research Collection, Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation



Possible photo of Gordon in his Ballarat Troop of Light Horse uniform after his promotion to Senior Sergeant in March 1868

Part from the whereabouts of Gordon's last project—'Penthesilea', the Holy Grail for Gordon biographers is the location of a photograph of the Poet in his final years in Victoria. The lack of photos showing the true Gordon has left a somewhat misleading impression on readers who have tended to rely on the clean-shaven version of Gordon as a member of Parliament. The first true photograph we have of Adam Lindsay Gordon was taken in 1863 just before his marriage. It shows the Poet as a young larrikin bachelor, unsure of himself with that devil-may-care fearless Gordon trait. His face is lean and straight, his neck long and narrow, and his 'cauliflower ears' are partially hidden behind his slanting hair.

It would be just seven more years before Gordon's death, and it would be hard to imagine a greatly changed man. We know from the many descriptions, sketches and paintings, notably Thomas Littlejohn's 1868 illustration of Gordon riding *Viking* that he was very tall (over 190cm) and lean. Gordon's beard is always shown as closely trimmed.

Writing to the author Douglas Sladen in January 1912, Geo. Gordon McCrae (1833-1927) lamented that;

"..I have never yet seen a picture of him that brought the real man before me...My

Gordon was a man with a hairy face—a kind of Esau—not shaved in patches, a bit of clean chin or cheek here, and a small allotment under hair here and there. No! He wore a not too long russet beard, with a moustache a little lighter in tone run into one...Gordon's eyes, none too large, were of a steely-grey, and lighted up to blue as he became excited in conversation, his nose straight, long, thin and pointed, his lips (what one saw of them) thin and determined, his forehead deeply lined and the crowsfeet at the corner of his eyes, carried at times much merriment in them. His figure and legs denoted a man who had spent much of his life in the saddle."

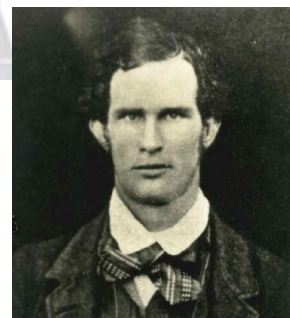
McCrae's description of Gordon was used many years later just before his death to produce a faithful posthumous painting of the Poet. Another contemporary, Sir Frank Madden (1847-1921) described Gordon as *"a long, lean man...he had sharp features, with bushy overhanging eyebrows, deeply-set eyes, with a very peculiar glitter—a somewhat ragged bearded completed a most uncommon face"*. We also have the account of Harry Stockdale who knew Gordon well in the '60s. He described Gordon as *"distinctively a good-looking man...in Victoria he wore his reddish beard. His hair was dark-brown, inclining to reddish"*.

Which makes it difficult to

accept the authenticity of two photos that purport to be of Gordon taken during his time in Victoria. At best they are doubtful. One of these, of Gordon in a military uniform shows a man of average height, well built with a wider and narrower forehead. The long dark beard is further indication of its doubtful authenticity. It is entirely out of character of an honourable English gentleman who remained a gentleman to the end. It is indeed rather un-Gordon like in every aspect.

The other photo, published more recently in the *Herald-Sun* newspaper during Gordon's nomination into the Racing Hall of Fame can also be seen in the late Ian McLaren's bibliography. This studio portrait shows Gordon, eyes expressionless with a full head of hair and half-beard. There is little similarity with either the posthumous painting nor the Gordon in 1863.

(Source: Humphris, E & Sladen, D., "Adam Lindsay Gordon and his friends in England and Australia" (1912) p438 & 456-57; *The Register* 17 May 1919 p10)



Gordon at the age of 30 when he married Maggie Park

Reproduced with permission Gold Museum, Ballarat

GORDON'S LEAP

This poem, published in "At the Sign of the Southern Cross" (1911) by Annie MacDonald features the story of Gordon's daring leap at the Blue Lake, Mt. Gambier (SA) in July 1864. The story was told to MacDonald by Gordon's faithful companion, William Trainor who is buried beside Gordon at the Brighton General Cemetery (Vic).

'I've ridden with Gordon many a time, he was a friend I shall not forget;
 Straight and strong, and true as steel; when I think of him, I see him yet.
 Firm and fearless he sat his horse, sat with a nonchalant, easy grace;
 He never troubled to open gates, there wasn't a fence he wouldn't face.
 The horses all seemed to know his hand, went where he took them with perfect trust,
 Ay, went where some of us men held back, for to ride with Gordon, jump you must.
 I recall some fences Gordon built, three of them, fashioned of stockyard rails,
 The highest of them was four foot six, sure death if the horse or rider quails;
 He called them Doubtful, Danger and Death; I've taken the first one when he led,
 But I watched him leap the other two, whilst I rode around the rails instead.
 "Why didn't you jump, old man?" he said, "it's not so stiff when you know the way."
 "I did clear Doubtful, you see," I said, "with Danger and Death I'll let you play."
 Steeplechase, hurdle and handicap, I've ridden with Gordon, side by side;
 He always rode fair, he rode to win, you couldn't buy Gordon if you tried.
 But the ride that I remember best was at Mt. Gambier in sixty-four;
 We started for a kangaroo hunt, Gordon myself, and a couple more;
 Gordon was riding a big, bay horse, a perfect jumper, his rider knew;
 His name, Red Lancer; our mounts were good, so over fences we fairly flew.
 Gordon was leading, he always was, he led us across stiff timber, too,
 And when we reached McDonald Bay Road, we slackened pace and a long breath drew,
 Thankful to feel that our bones were whole; we lit our pipes as we went our way,
 And smoked and talked of the wide we'd had, and how we'd followed the lead that day.
 The road, a saddle between two lakes, Blue Lake lay three hundred feet below;
 Down in the hollow on either side, a fence was placed, it was just to show
 That no thoroughfare existed there, for a ten-foot strip was all that lay
 Between the fence and the sheer-down cliff; nobody wanted to ride that way.

[A full version of "Gordon's Leap" can be viewed on our website www.adamlindsaygordon.org/secure/works_gordonsleap.htm]

RAISING FUNDS

Last month, the Committee wrote to all supporters and members seeking donations. At the time, the Committee's funds had reached a parlous state and without an urgent injection of funds, the group would be unable to meet its basic expenses due in the coming months. We are indebted to the many persons who gave generously but we still require further funds and are urging everyone to make that little extra effort. Committee mem-

bers are doing their bit and so far our bank balance is just under \$700. For a not-for-profit group like ours with the aim of commemorating a person far removed from today's society, raising funds and furthering the aims of the group is not without its challenges. Members can be assured that the Committee is deeply committed to seeing the success of the group in the years ahead and more importantly further the aims of the Committee while exercising financial prudence.

NEW MEMBERS

The Committee welcomes the following new members who have joined since January:

Brighton Historical Society Inc., Henry Broadbent, Constance Browne, Jenny Childs, Lorraine Day, John Delaney, Gold Museum Ballarat, Carol Lutz, Margaret Muller, Susan Pender, Derek Wood QC and Wilbur Wright OAM.

We need many more members to enable us to advance the aims of the group. Our presence and ability to obtain grants is dependent on having a strong membership base. If you know someone with an interest in Adam Lindsay Gordon, then why not introduce them to the group? A membership form can be downloaded from our website.

WE WERE WRONG

In our previous issue of *The Wayfarer* we incorrectly stated that Gordon's father was Captain Robert Gordon. Our thanks to Lorraine Day for correctly pointing out that Adam Durnford Gordon is indeed the father of Lindsay. Lorraine is the author of "Gordon of Dingley Dell. The life of Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870)" who generously

provided the Committee with a copy of her excellent book. Lorraine tells us that a second and revised edition of the book is planned. With its focus on *Dingley Dell*, we highly recommend Lorraine's book as one of the best of the modern day biographies on Gordon. Keep your eye out for the anticipated release.