



ISSUE 29—MARCH 2014



# THE WAYFARER

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

**DINGLEY DELL 150TH ANNIVERSARY MARCH 1864—MARCH 2014**

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*A young man was walking along a country road when he saw a man attack two ladies. The youth went to their assistance, knocked the man down and escorted the two ladies home. He accepted an invitation to stay to supper and he lit a cigarette. Next day he missed his cigarette case, thought he had left it behind the previous night, and so returned to the house. He found it shut up and was told it had not been occupied for years. He entered and found the rooms heavy with dust, - but on the table was his cigarette case.*



**DINGLEY DELL COTTAGE 150 YEARS SINCE ITS PURCHASE BY ADAM LINDSAY GORDON**

**8TH MARCH 1864 TO 8TH MARCH 2014**

**Dingley Dell cottage, as it is today, is due to the tireless work of people, as individuals and in groups, who have preserved the cottage over the years as a fitting tribute to Australia's national poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon.**

**Dingley Dell Cottage Web Site:- <http://www.dingleydel.net/>**

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ARTICLES

ALLAN AND JENNY CHILDS

Through the efforts of Allan and Jenny Childs who established the gardens around the cottage grounds, in 1998 Dingley Dell received the Port MacDonnell Red Cross Award for gardens, and in 2001, the cottage received a High Commendation for its gardens into the annual Keep South Australia Beautiful awards.

For his dedicated efforts in restoring the cottage and the ongoing preservation of its history, Allan Childs received an Australia Day Citizen of the Year Award in 2001. Maintenance and preservation of the cottage and grounds is now their high priority.



*Mr. J.K. Moir (Gordon Lovers' Society)*

"Dingley Dell." was originally granted on July 10, 1861, to Peter Dowding Pranker. It was transferred by George Randall (Transfer No.7076) to Adam Lindsay Gordon, Gentleman, on March 8, 1864, and at the time the holding was "101 acres or thereabouts." The property changed hands, several times until it was purchased by George Frederick Madely (February 18, 1920), who sold it to the Minister Administrating the National Pleasure Resorts Act 1914 on February 17, 1922, at 3 p.m."

*The Register Adelaide, Friday 21 April 1911, page 6 (part)*

Dingley Dell seems to be regarded as just a house, as any other just-such-a-house might be; but some day somebody may realize that there may be money in it. A needed touch of romance and poetry would be added to the scenic attractions of this strangely beautiful district-in connection with the Tourist Bureau, if in no other way?— filled with Gordon reminders, and made an object of pilgrimage by visitors. It would be practically the first attraction of the kind provided in matter-of-fact Australia, and it would pay.

**A STEEPLECHASE OF THE OLDEN TIME MELBOURNE-1841.**

The following is from the versatile pen of "Pioneer," and appeared in the "Australasian" in the early part of the year: 1890. (Liardet's Beach is the original Port Melbourne).

"Jimmy Hunter" will be known to some of the old residents of the Warragul district:-

I saw Adam Lindsay Gordon ride out of the weighing-yard on Viking (last man as usual--it was a superstition of his) just before the start for the Steeplechase of the Melbourne Spring in the very dry year 1868. He finished in front of a big field, well up and wonderfully few mistakes, with Babbler second horse. Poor Lindsay Gordon!

I never spoke a word to him, or saw him, to my knowledge, before; and yet how many a pang of regret have I felt at his early death- the melancholy termination of an eventful life-the "unmerciful disaster" which quenched in gloom as well the light of genius as hopes glimmering ray faintly illumining the future.

Falling into a reverie as I gazed on the green-swarded river-meadow, so wondrously crowded, so strangely gay, with the foreign people that had filled the silent forest since my first knowledge of the small un aspiring settlement by the Yarra Basin.

I "summoned from the shadowy past" certain allied phantasmagoria. They are still informed with life, and rich with the weird coloring of memory that even growing age has no power to dim.

Here is one. It must be about the year 1841, on another spring morning that I am wending my way, without much enthusiasm, school wards, on horseback, as becomes an Australian, and in company with my father. We have crossed the green open space which in those days divided the distant suburb of Newtown, since Collingwood, from Melbourne.

We pass a house of some pretension, which lies thereaway, and, lo! from the gate rides forth a jolly, clean-shaved English country gentleman, as if on his way to covert. He is mounted on a coal-black stallion-thoroughbred, or "hail as is the same," in top condition, and from the silver bright curb-chain to the under spur-leather, from Archy's well-brushed mane and satin skin to Mr. Yaldwyn's faultless boots and well-worn "pink," horse and rider could not have been better turned out, had they been issued from the neighborhood of Blackwood itself.

"Where are you off to, Yaldwyn?" queried my energetic governor, more concerned with corner allotments, and Lord John Russell's prematurely free-selectoral land Act, than with recreations of any kind. "I didn't know that we had a pack of fox-hounds in the neighborhood."

"Hounds? no" returned the M.H.F., as to my juvenile adoring soul he seemed to be - "a creature much too bright and good, for human nature's daily food." "No such luck. But haven't you heard of the Steeplechase?"

"No indeed." This somewhat uninterestedly.

"Well, it comes off at 12 near Liardet's Beach, a good field. Some of the best men we have up. It will be something out of the common; fences stiff.

Let Jack come with me, I'll take care of him."

"Well, I don't know; you see, school-

"Oh! Do let me go," pleaded I, in a voice of such agonised entreaty that good-natured Mr. Yaldwyn burst out laughing, and my not over-stern parent capitulated.

"Well, thank you, perhaps he may as well. I'll call for him as I go home; afraid you'll find him rather a trouble."

What a change in life's programme. I am not going to school! I am actually going to see and behold a real Steeplechase. Do we ever forget the people who are kind and sympathetic in our youth- generous and regardful of our perhaps uninteresting boyhood? Never! The memory of substantial aid "on principle" may become faint and blurred by time; but the occasions of free spontaneous kindness, of which perhaps some half dozen occur between childhood and manhood are traced on our hearts, as with a graver of steel. They are fixed, eternal, immutable.

They will there remain till the dread sound of the last trump. And even then they will be among the very first readings from out the quivering proof which shall be unrolled as the angels print off the sad record of "the fever called living."

It was a glorious day. I recall it still. As we crossed the thickly timbered, half marshy waste which divided Melbourne from the roadstead, how brightly burst the blue waters of the bay upon our vision! Boyish as were all my feelings, I could realise the undeveloped state of the community, a flavor of recent discovery which pervaded all things.

It was the fashion to be cautious about getting lost in solitudes where now the predatory cabman seeks his prey, or the Arab (city) shrills his war cry.

After a quiet canter we arrived at an improvised course, on the shore of the loud sounding sea, within the territory of the clan Liardet. Not exactly on the beach, but on the heathery sandy rise hard by, had been erected the style of fencing which I am now enabled to state has from time immemorial commended itself to the Australian mind as suitable for steeplechase performances.

It is almost unnecessary to explain that the leaps consisted of three panels, each of stiff three-rails, with a trifle of brush at the flanks. But there were a good many of them spread over a couple of miles or so of unfair hunting country, and heats-shade of the admiral, heats! An immense crowd-say a couple of hundred people-had gathered there, and usual equine criticism was freely indulged in.

How many valiant souls of heroes are gone to Hades since that fair spring morn! The list of spectators would read like an obituary, if I were to tax my memory in that direction. "Hopping Jack" was there, of course, and Teddy Rowe. The squire and I were known of all men, and after brief greetings, I had leave and licence to exercise my sharp eyes and ears upon all matters equine and human, social and sentimental. Wonderful to relate, there was not the usual depressing time of delay.

Twelve o'clock was the hour stated, and very shortly afterwards out of a brush saddling paddock, to my intense delight, appeared the great and glorious performers. There were six or seven starters, all more or less favorably known over the flat or the sticks. Norman Roderick MacLeod-in whose immense whiskers there was then no tinge of grey-was in great force. (There was only one beard in all Australia at that time, on the face of a gentleman, almost officially known as "Beardie Rae," it

being asserted that he had taken an oath on the death of his sweetheart never to shave.) Norman backs, in a double sense, a varmint chestnut called The Barber, a stayer and performer over stiff leaps. I forget whether the late Dr. David Thomas rode his grey horse or no; I saw him do so in an impromptu cross-country match, after a picnic, about the same time and place, when he cannoned on to Lieutenant Cormick (50 Regiment) who thereby came down over the jump, horse and man, breaking his-- "Paddy" Cormick's--arm.

Let us hope the doctor mended it for him "free gracious." He was quite the man for both acts and deeds--the kindly, merry, hot-blooded Welshman, the skilful physician, the irrepressible humorist. Didn't he, on being twitted with carrying an ineffective pistol at the medical reunion, let fly and knock over the teapot therewith scandalising and scalding his astonished co-peers?

Didn't he write an address to constituency, signed Thomas Black.

Didn't he-but we shall never get the steeplechase run if I begin to chronicle the good old doctor's practical jokes and very keen-edged jests.

The favorite of the field was Una, a grand upstanding bay mare, a daughter of Highett s Forester, and therefore a grand daughter of the celebrated Tasmanian Little John. She and her money had been entrusted to Mr. Oliver Gourlay, a shortish squatting turfite. It may be that more than one of her descendants have stripped at Flemington since that day, and with any King -Alfred blood in their veins they should have carried weight and backers' money to some purpose. "A tower of strength with a promise of speed," she looked a winner all over as she drew up to the post, aristocratic and high-couraged amid the figedetty crossbred lot of competitors, some of which were not above a "prop or two" "when checked. The starter of the period, in that pre Watsonian era, got the seven or eight horses into line, and of course, with much dignity of demeanor. sent them away. Off at last! And pretty well up at the first fence, where there are a couple of baulks, but all well over and away presently without much harm or delay. But before the heat is over it becomes apparent that Una and her rider are not on good terms. He is not " the man for Galway," or something to that effect I gather from the criticisms which abound. He pulls her about too much. He won't let her go fast at her jumps. The mare baulks once, and nearly falls once. She loses the heat, which is won by The Barber. or another now extinct celebrity. I was deep in conversation--was it possible that a lady or two had ridden forth to watch the press of knights that morning?--when a sudden shout of "They're off!" " The mare against the field," roused my attention. I looked eagerly forth, and sailing in front of them all was Una, evidently navigated under new conditions, from the pace at which she was nearing the first leap. Had Mr. Gourlay hardened his heart with libations, or had much chaffing rendered him insane? Twenty miles an hour or thereabouts; the fence ahead, and the field astern. Yet the mare was well in hand, and as she drew nearer and nearer yet to the four feet nine of sincerest stringy bark,

looked all over confidence and ability to measure the distance. How she cleared the big leap without apparently altering her stride.

I can see now the rider's whip hand thrown up, as he swayed easily back in his saddle, when the mare struck, deer-like, the sandy turf with fore and hind hoofs, and was well away before another horse was within hail.

What a shout went up from every soul on the course, gentle and simple ! They were chiefly of the former persuasion overlancers, squatters, and the like !

Well done, Jimmy !" " That's the sort of thing, Alick !"

" How about the Garrison Cup ?" with other assertions and inquiries incomprehensible to me, resounded on all sides. Una disposed of every fence with the same apparent ease. The Barber, overpaced, gave Norman MacLeod a rattling fall. She won the heat easily, and I gallop over to witness a ruddy-faced, fair-haired stripling dismount at the stewards' order, smiling and almost blushing at the fervent congratulations which greet him on all sides.

The murder is out. Una's division had put up " Jimmy Hunter," well known to fame afterwards as the cadet of a family who had been winning steeplechases in the old country, almost in their school- boy days, and whose names have since become household words in many lands for matchless horsemanship and dare-devil courage.

A late " Australasian" tells me that my old friend Alick yet holds his own with the Melbourne hounds, and that forty years of colonial life has not tamed the heart of fire in him who so oft piloted to glory "The Flying Shingler."

The last heat was the merest repetition. Una made the pace too warm for her company, never touched a fence. and landed an easy winner. Jimmy Hunter and I were fated to be friends, and fellow- squatters in the green west country, in the years to come, but I never forgot the way he handled Una that day.

It may be that, as years and the handicapping of middle life (for he developed into a decided welter) rendered such feats inadvisable, he too looked back with a sigh of regret to one of his first Australian mounts in public, in that Steeplechase of the Olden Time.

*Warragul Guardian and Buln Buln and Narracan Shire Advocate (Warragul, Vic. : 1879 - 1894 Tuesday 25 October 1892 Page 3*

*With acknowledgement to NLA Trove Newspaper Archives*

**ANNUAL SPRING STREET GATHERING**

**Statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon**

**Unveiled 30 October 1932**

**All are invited to attend**

**Saturday June 21--2014**

**10.30 am at the  
Café Excello 99 Spring Street Melbourne**

**11.00am at the Statue across the road**

