



# THE WAYFARER

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

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## WILLIAM TRAINOR: GORDON'S LIFELONG ADMIRER

**W**illiam Trainor (c1841-1917), circus performer, horseman, jockey and publican was not only Adam Lindsay Gordon's first intimate friend in Australia, but his lifelong admirer. Such was Trainor's devotion to The Poet, that not only did he name his first born child Adam Lindsay Gordon Trainor, he purchased the adjoining grave so he would lie beside his idol in death. In Trainor we have much to be thankful for in saving poems that Gordon carelessly discarded as worthless. While residing at E. Kirby's home, *Wilmerdale* at Golden Square (Vic), Trainor was interviewed in June 1908 for the *Bendigo Advertiser*. Trainor related the story of his first meeting Gordon;

*"I came from America with Burton's circus in 1856, and we gave a performance at Penola. Being the 'star' rider in the crowd, I was going to ride the 'changeable' act. I don't know whether you've seen it. It is where a clown is thrown off a horse; a drunken man then enters the ring; that was me. I was ordered out of the ring by the ringmaster, who said I was not fit to ride. He then bundled me out of the ring, just as he did so the ser-*

*geant of the police, who was standing outside the ring, caught hold of me by the back of the neck. I had a muffler on, and he nearly choked me. It was a beautiful moonlight night. I can see it as plainly as I can see to-day. The sergeant took me along the road, and we met another policeman. The sergeant said to him, 'Lock this man up.' He then let me go, and the other man took charge of me. I said, 'I beg your pardon, but I am one of the performers.' He wouldn't believe me, and only laughed. 'Oh, I know all about that,' he said. But I then unbuttoned my coat, and showed him my riding costume, and spangles, and all that, and I said 'Look here, you must let me go back.' Well, if I live a hundred years I will never forget it. He was a tall fellow, and he stood upright, threw his head back, and started to laugh out loud. He then took*

*me back to the tent and let me go. That was my introduction to Gordon though I didn't know him till afterward. Then we went horsebreaking together, and became very friendly. I don't know why he took to me, because we were as opposite as the two poles in ability".*

(Source: *Bendigo Advertiser* 30 Jun 1908 p3)



(above) Crowd at the annual pilgrimage at Gordon's gravesite circa 1910-17. Trainor's grave can be seen to the left

## MEMBERS

Read the full article on the Members' Area on our website

[www.adamlindsaygordon.org](http://www.adamlindsaygordon.org)

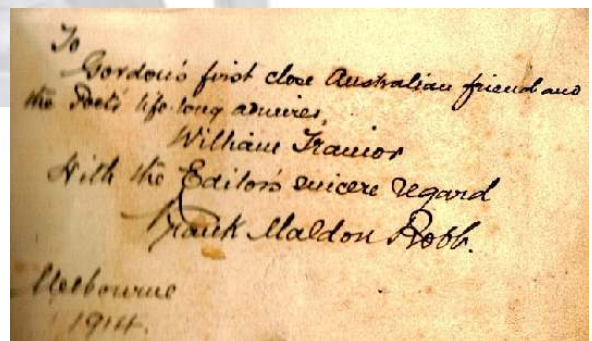
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"To Gordon's first close Australian friend and the Poet's life long admirer, William Trainor with the Editor's sincere regard Frank Maldon Robb Melbourne 1914" (photo courtesy John Devine).

## FRED MCCUBBIN: ART AND POETRY

The emerging national identity in the decades before Federation saw a fusion of art, literature and music inspired by the nation's pioneering past. Frederick McCubbin, one of Australia's most popular and recognisable artists was at the forefront of the emerging Australian impressionism of the 1880s and '90s. But very few are aware the extent of Adam Lindsay Gordon's influence and how his poetry inspired the works of Australia's famous artists. Paintings like "One Ray of Red Fire", "Above us the Great Grave

Sky" (Arthur Streeton); "Where the Wattle Blossoms Wave" (Charles Conder); "At the Falling of the Year" and "Whisperings in Wattle Boughs" (McCubbin) all derived their names from lines in Gordon's poems.

"Gordon's popular fame at the time points to an important element of the burgeoning rural mythology. Contemporary artists and their public often identified the figure of the typical Australian bushman with his image portrayed in Gordon's poetry or with the vague romanticized descriptions of the bushman in the illustrated

atlases and newspapers. At the Buonarrotti Club, Melbourne's artistic and literary society, a special Gordon evening was held on 14 August 1886, where a paper was read [by Miss Alice Brotherton] on 'The open air elements in Gordon's poems' and artists...exhibited studies illustrating Gordon's work". With artists regularly exhibiting works influenced by Gordon, by 1890, the Table Talk art critic noted that "the Gordon craze is becoming popular".

(Source: Astbury, L., "City Bushmen. The Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology" (1985); Table Talk 7 Mar 1890 p6)



(above) Frederick McCubbin (1855-1917)

Fred McCubbin, "Self-portrait" (c.1913), NGV, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1941

## FRANK MALDON ROBB: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AUSTRALIANS

**"He knew an Australian soldier leaving shortly for the front who declared that the only book he was taking with him was that of Adam Lindsay Gordon."**

Alexander Frank Maldon Robb was the editor of the 1912 Oxford edition of "Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon". In September 1918 as the Great War was drawing to its bloody conclusion, Robb was a guest speaker at the annual pilgrimage. His speech was recorded in detail in the journal *Advance Australia*;

"Recently a friend had passed on to him an American newspaper containing a long article from the city of 'kultur' [culture], Berlin. It referred to a lecture delivered by Professor Brantell who said that the German people should be taught the psychology of every race, especially that of the Eng-

lish. He thought for that purpose that German students should study Shakespeare, so that when they won the war—(Voices—"When!")—they would understand the English people whom they now regarded as their chief enemies...If Professor Brantell wanted to understand the psychology of Australians he could not do better than study the poetry of Adam Lindsay Gordon. (Applause). There was something in Gordon's writings that found its echo and response in Australian hearts, and that something had been translated into deeds. If time and age had permitted Gordon would have been one of the first volunteers, and he would

have loved to record the feats that the Australians had performed in Gallipoli and France. It was the spirit of Gordon that was fighting in France. Australians read Gordon's poems and they loved them, and no one could measure their influence. The soldier and the sailor read Gordon's poetry. He knew an Australian soldier leaving shortly for the front who declared that the only book he was taking with him was that of Adam Lindsay Gordon...In that world which would arise after the war the spirit of Gordon would have more scope and more power, and Australia would be indebted to him as she had never been before". (Source: *Advance Australia* 16 Sep 1918 p267-268)

**SAMUEL AND JOHN SIMMONDS: IMMORTALISING A POET**



(above) John Simmonds jnr who constructed Poet Gordon's monument at the Brighton General Cemetery in 1870 (Photo courtesy Brooke Simmonds)

**"The work, we may add, has been carried out to the complete satisfaction of the memorial committee by Mr. J. Simmonds, of this city..."**

The Simmonds family gravesite, near the highest point of the Cemetery, is not far from the Poet's monument at the Brighton General Cemetery. Two brothers—Samuel Pond (S.P.) and John jnr— were both involved with the burial and erection of Gordon's monument after his death. Until now, the question as to who erected the broken bluestone Doric monument remained unanswered;

*"The monument raised in memory of the late Adam Lindsay Gordon is now finished. It is erected over his remains in the picturesque cemetery of Brighton, and is placed in a conspicuous position by the main avenue, on a gently sloping rise, fanned by the sea-breeze, and looking towards the setting sun.*

*The monument, although unpretentious, is a handsome one, consisting of a massive bluestone base, diamond-hammered on all faces with boldly tooled margin drafts, and chamfer. Upon this base rests a finely rubbed bluestone pedestal, with handsomely moulded*

*plinth. Upon each face of the pedestal die a polished white marble tablet is affixed, bearing the inscriptions.*

*The lettering is very skilfully and clearly executed, while the inscriptions simply record the titles of the poet's works. From a moulded base, peculiar to that order, a fluted Doric column rises to the height of 10ft. 6in. above the ground. It is then broken off, to complete the sad picture of the poet's life, so rudely shattered by death in the day of its perfection and strength. The whole is finished with a tastefully-carved wreath of bay leaves, executed in white marble. All the bluestone used in the monument is very finely rubbed, and the contrast between it and the white marble sparingly introduced is very pleasing.*

*The work, we may add, has been carried out to the complete satisfaction of the memorial committee by Mr. J. Simmonds, of this city; and it is intended, when the funds are available, to enclose the monument with appropriate railings. For this*

*purpose about £30 will be needed, but as the colonies abound with those who can appreciate that rare blending of bodily and mental vigour—typical of Australia—seen in our poet's life, we do not doubt that this sum will be quickly forthcoming. We cannot fail to miss the well-known yellow and black on the field to-day of the bold-est of our steeplechase riders, and our greatest—we had almost said our—only national poet, and the chord touched in these concluding lines, written shortly before his death, may find an echo in the hearts of many who once enjoyed the sunshine of his friendship :—*

*A little season of love and laughter,  
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.  
Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,  
And the lover of light shall join the hater,  
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,  
And no one knoweth the loss or gain".*

(Source: The Australasian 15 Oct 1870 p490)



(above) Gordon's gravesite monument soon after it was erected in October 1870

**TOUR OF BRIGHTON GENERAL CEMETERY**

Throughout 2008, we plan to run a number of tours of the Brighton General Cemetery visiting the graves of Trainor, McCubbin, Robb and the Simmonds family as well as others with links to Gordon's story. To register your interest to attend the tour, visit our website [www.adamlindsaygordon.org/tours.htm](http://www.adamlindsaygordon.org/tours.htm). Cost is \$5.00 (non-members \$10.00) and includes refreshments and a tour guide (right).

**TOUR GUIDE**

- Edward John 'Taddy' Russell**  
Born in the Victorian goldfields, Russell was a prominent member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly. He was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.
- Alexander Francis 'Mick' Robb**  
A well-known figure in the Victorian goldfields, Robb was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon. He was a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.
- Frederick McCubbin**  
A prominent Victorian artist, McCubbin was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon. He was a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.
- Robert and Herbert Power**  
The Power family were prominent in the Victorian goldfields. Robert Power was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.
- George Hughes**  
A prominent Victorian figure, Hughes was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.
- Samuel Paul Simmonds**  
A prominent Victorian figure, Simmonds was a close friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon and was instrumental in the establishment of the Brighton General Cemetery. His grave is located near the entrance to the cemetery.

DE TE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Gordon's poem 'De Te' is a prophesy of his own death and reflects the melancholy in his writing.

A burning glass of burnish'd brass,  
The calm sea caught the noontide rays,  
And sunny slopes of golden grass  
And wastes of weed-flower seem to blaze.  
Beyond the shining silver-greys,  
Beyond the shades of denser bloom,  
The sky-line girt with glowing haze,  
The farthest faintest forest gloom,  
And the everlasting hills that loom.

We heard the sound beneath the mound,  
We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh—  
We had not sought for what we found—  
He lay as dead men only lie,  
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,  
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.  
The dumb brute that had seen him die,  
Close crouching, howl'd beside the head,  
Brute burial service o'er the dead.

The brow was rife with seams of strife—  
A lawless death made doubly plain  
The ravage of a reckless life ;  
The havoc of a hurricane  
Of passions through that breadth of brain,  
Like headlong horses that had run  
Riot, regardless of the rein—  
'Madman, he might have lived and done  
Better than most men,' whisper'd one.

The beams and blots that Heaven allots  
To every life with life begin.  
Fool! would you change the leopard's spots.  
Or blanch the Etheopian's skin ?  
What more could he have hoped to win,  
What better things have thought to gain,  
So shapen—so conceived in sin ?  
No life is wholly void and vain,  
Just and unjust share sun and rain.

[A full version of "De Te" can be viewed on our website  
[www.adamlindsaygordon.org/works\\_dete.htm](http://www.adamlindsaygordon.org/works_dete.htm)]

Our first AGM was held at The National Hotel, Coleraine on 13 October 2007 where members heard reports of the previous financial year from the President, Secretary and Treasurer. At the AGM, members elected the following persons as office bearers and ordinary committee members for the year ending 30 June 2008:

- President:** Allan Childs
  - Vice-President:** Viv. Sellers
  - Secretary:** John W. Adams
  - Treasurer:** Travis M. Sellers
  - Ordinary Committee Members:** Geoff Dening and Lorraine Day
- We welcome our new committee member, Lorraine Day for

her successful election. Lorraine is an avid researcher of Gordon as well as an experienced publisher and media officer.

The financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2007 shows that the group finished the year with 20 members and a profit of \$1,134.71. The Froth and & Bubble Day recorded a loss of \$260 due to the late withdraw of the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame from the event.

The reports, together with the financial statements, can be downloaded from the Members' Area of our website.

WE WERE WRONG

In our previous issue of *The Wayfarer* we incorrectly stated in the article "Adam Lindsay Gordon and his admirers" that "[Edward] Russell became the first President of the Gordon Memorial Committee (1910-24) a position he

held just before his death at the Sunbury Hospital for the Insane on 18 July 1925". This is incorrect. Russell last presided over the 1922 annual pilgrimage after which Charles R. Long became President sometime in 1922-23.

THE ADAM LINDSAY GORDON GRAVE RESTORATION APPEAL



Donations to The Adam Lindsay Gordon Grave Restoration Appeal continue to come in from all corners. The appeal aims to raise funds to restore and maintain in the years to come The Poet's monument at the Brighton General Cemetery (Vic). Launched on 24 June 2007, in just six months, the

Committee has raised \$2,047. The National Trust of SA (Penola Branch) generously donated \$250 which the Committee acknowledges with gratitude. We also thank Glen Clifford for his generous donation. Glen, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, is the current owner of *Yallum Park* near Penola (SA), the former

mansion of John Riddoch where Gordon spent time. We still have a considerable way to go to achieve our goal of \$10,000. Please consider making a donation today. For more information regarding the aim of the Appeal or how to make a donation, visit [www.adamlindsaygordon.org](http://www.adamlindsaygordon.org) and click on "Grave Appeal".