



# THE WAYFARER

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



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**CONDEMNING A NATIONAL TREASURE** 2

**HEARTBREAK AND TRAGIC IRONY: THE END OF A DREAM** 3

**SACRED SQUARES**

**SACRED SQUARES: THE LAST HOME OF A POET... CONTINUED** 4

**THE ADAM LINDSAY GORDON GRAVE RESTORATION APPEAL** 4

## SACRED SQUARES: THE LAST HOME OF A POET

Six decades have passed since the last home of Poet Adam Lindsay Gordon was condemned by the former Brighton City Council as being unfit for habitation. Back in 1946-47 when the Lewis Street, Brighton home was within reach of the ruthless wrecker's ball, it was saved by Cyril Everard Goode, (1907-82), bush battler, poet and Gordon admirer. All 25,000 bricks and residue material were individually marked and carted from Brighton to Goode's Newport home where they remained. Goode's dream to have the home re-erected as a memorial came up against local opposition from the Brighton bourgeois, decline in interest in the Poet, and an indifferent Council, best summed up by the Mayor of the day who told Goode "a man (Gordon) who is behind in his rent is not worth remembering". So the decades passed and Goode's dream turned to disappointment. And while age may have wearied Goode, the years did not condemn his sense of history and admiration of the Poet and he tenaciously battled on until just before his death, he donated the remnants of the

home to businessman Ron Rado. As Goode was to learn painfully, preserving history is all about timing.

Not soon after the formation of The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc., through the efforts of Fred Silcock and many years of searching by our President, Allan Childs, the bricks were finally located in secluded bush, stacked on decaying pallets. Over the next two years, with the best of intentions, the Committee tried to involve the Bayside City Council (which covers the Brighton locality) in an attempt to save the bricks. After all, the bricks were made from a quarry in the local area and being over 140 years of age, were a valuable piece of history worth preserving.

Unlike modern bricks made by shaping clay and water then hardened by drying and firing, the remnants of the six-room home are not so durable. Many are crumbling from a combination of being exposed to the elements for so long and the high sandy content of the handmade bricks. Very few still retain Goode's ingenious markings. To see the bricks languishing and to

*(Continued on page 4)*



(above) One of the marked bricks from the Lewis Street, Brighton home of Adam Lindsay Gordon



(above) The 'sacred squares' stacked on decaying pallets where they have been for the last two decades



(above) Bluestone blocks believed to have been part of the home

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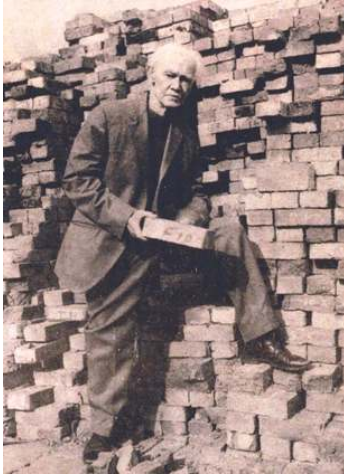
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CONDEMNING A NATIONAL TREASURE



(above) Cyril Goode at his Elizabeth Street, Newport home holding brick "F10" of the Lewis Street home

**"Cyril Goode remembers a Brighton Mayor of the 1940s poking him in the chest and saying: 'Do you realise this man was behind in his rent?' "**

DID YOU KNOW?

Cyril Goode not only salvaged all 25,000 bricks, but also the ironstone foundation blocks cut from Red Bluff at Elwood, the original doors, windows and mantelpieces, Oregon beams used in the ceilings and floors, and the original rafters and joists

One of the earliest articles on the plight of Lewis Street home was published in *The Herald* on 9 November 1946. The Lewis Street home had yet to be dismantled by Goode, and it was hoped the home could be turned into a museum;

*"If any philanthropic or literary society or patron in Melbourne is prepared to advance the funds for repairs and maintenance, Brighton City Council has no objection to the last home of Adam Lindsay Gordon being preserved as the poet's memorial.*

*But this house in Lewis Street, Brighton, can be saved and used only as a museum. It cannot be inhabited.*

*The Town Clerk of Brighton (Mr H C Ferguson) said today that more than once in the past few years the house had been condemned as unfit for habitation.*

*The final decision was made by the Housing Commission about nine months ago.*

*But at least it has clearly emerged from correspondence and telephone calls since the story of Gordon's condemned cottage was published in *The Herald* last Saturday, that public interest in the first national poet is waxing rather than waning with years.*

*Artists have been seen at*

*work in Lewis Street...and even the stretcher on which it is said the dead poet was carried from the beach to Middle Brighton, has been presented to the Knight Grand Cheese of the Bread and Cheese Club (Mr J K Moir) for preservation.*

*Another fact which strikes many Gordon-lovers, however is why more strenuous efforts were not made years ago to save the house...why so many protesting voices are being raised now the walls are being reduced.*

*Actually, efforts to save it were made in January 1941, by the president of the Australian Literary Society (Dr Booth) but they failed through lack of public support. Three years later – in February, 1944 – the cottage was inspected by the (Royal) Historical Society of Victoria with a view to purchasing it as a memorial, but the scheme fell through because it was thought the house was too far gone.*

*Others – including the secretary of the Gordon Memorial Society (Mr G J McKay) argue that if Gordon was worthy of a bust in Westminster Abbey it is reasonable to ask that the humble villa in Lewis Street be preserved on its present site or, like Cook's cottage, be re-erected elsewhere as a permanent Melbourne monument to join the statue in Spring Street and Gordon's hitching-post in*

*New Street, Brighton.*

*Some point out that but for a Herald campaign last year and an advance of funds by the Licensed Victuallers' Association, the old hitching-post would have been allowed to crumble away.*

*Mr McKay said that apparently the present owner of the cottage (Mr Cyril Goode) told the Brighton City Council he was prepared to live in the house and keep it as a Gordon museum, or, if forbidden to occupy it, to build and live in a shack in the neglected garden.*

*When told again that the house was unfit for an occupant, he decided to remove it brick by brick.*

*The town clerk of Brighton (Mr Ferguson) said today that his council was obliged to accept the decision of the housing authorities but, as far as he knew, it would raise no objection if – even at this late hour – the cottage were restored and preserved solely as a museum.*

*Whatever happens to the remaining walls there is bound to be some discussion on the subject tomorrow when Gordon-lovers meet on their pilgrimage at the Gordon statue in Spring Street, city".*

*(Source: The Herald 9 Nov 1946 p11)*



HEARTBREAK AND TRAGIC IRONY: THE END OF A DREAM



(above) A dapper looking Cyril Goode  
(Source: [www.lib.monash.edu.au/exhibitions/portraits/54port.jpg](http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/exhibitions/portraits/54port.jpg))

**"It is a tragic irony that only weeks after the last brick went, Mr Goode collapsed and died on about the same spot as the cottage stood for almost 40 years."**



(above) Number 10 Lewis Street, Brighton, the last home of Adam Lindsay Gordon  
(Photo courtesy of the Bayside Library Service. Creator Bayside City Council)

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. hold many articles on the saga of the Lewis Street home. This extract from *The Herald* was printed in 1983;

*"In the sunset of his life, Cyril E. Goode had only one ambition: to rebuild the cottage of Australian Poet Adam Lindsay Gordon. As a young man Mr Goode, who idolised the poet, set about the task. Mr Goode's plan was to rebuild the cottage in which Gordon spent the last 14 months of his life near its original site in Brighton.*

*Mr Goode himself a poet and ballad writer began cleaning and numbering the 25,000 bricks and itemising every other part. Now 36 years later the cottage lies fragmented on a property at Dandenong a monument to petty bickering and indecision. Cyril E Goode is dead and his dream to see the cottage rebuilt as a tribute to the hero he never met died with him. For Mr Goode who died last Christmas Day at 74, the venture was little more than a cruel fantasy.*

*Late last year workmen removed the cottage and trucked it to an industrial estate at Dandenong. It is a tragic irony that only weeks after the last brick went, Mr Goode collapsed and died on about the same spot as the cottage stood for almost 40 years. Mrs Goode, a writer of children's books, died three months later. Mr Goode's battle to restore the cottage began in earnest almost 20*

*years ago when he asked Brighton Council for a site. Brighton Historical Society started a trust fund with \$1,000 interest-free loan. More than \$12,000 was raised by public subscription, but the project never got off the ground. Mr Goode, the 1963 winner of the Litchfield prize for poetry and the author of 14 books never disguised his contempt for Brighton Council, which he accused of "dithering". Brighton, he declared, was no longer worthy of Gordon's cottage. He then tried to give the cottage to several other suburban councils, but again without success.*

*Publicity elevated the issue to a controversy and last year Mr Goode gave the cottage to Dandenong businessman Mr Ron Rado on the condition that he would not "dither". Eighteen months ago, Mr Goode said "I'm disappointed the council has not had the foresight to see the value of this cottage to the nation. "I'm upset because they have been so foolish". Most of his barbs were directed at people now on the council. Mr Rado said that he had a copy of architects' plans commissioned by Mr Goode. "In any other country they try to preserve every bit of history. The only reason that I got involved was because nobody else wanted to do anything else about it." Mr and Mrs Goode's only child, Mrs Cathy Culbard, said of her father, "To be honest he was quite eccentric and a real character. At the end I think he was just worn out. Mum was very sick*

*and he had looked after her for a couple of years." Mrs Culbard said she remembered as a child wheeling bricks in a pram to a cartage contractor's truck, as her parents dismantled Gordon's house.*

*The president of the Brighton Historical Society, Mr Wallace Landells said: "He was a man with a dream. We at the society did everything to realise that dream. But, unfortunately, the cards were stacked against us because of the apathy of some past councillors..."*

*On May 5, 1981, Mr Goode took me into the backyard where he lovingly ran his hands along the bricks that made up his dream. He told of his struggle with Brighton Council, of vandals pelting his home with rocks, of obscene phone calls, of his wife's failing health. I can recall his greatest fear that, should he die, the cottage would be dumped in a tip. That's why he sought the publicity. I can remember Mr Goode taking me into his dank cellar, where he entertained me for hours with stories of the bush, where he showed me countless trinkets he had collected over the years, and where he asked me for help to restore Gordon's cottage. I remember the tears in his eyes as he talked about his frustration. Then he recited one of Gordon's best-known verses:*

*Kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own."*  
(Source: *The Herald* 1 July 1983 p13)

SACRED SQUARES

by Cyril Everard Goode (1907-82).

I will regret to see the sacred squares,  
And perpendiculars of this old shrine,  
Be levelled down to please the whims of mayors,  
Or councillors who never penned a line.

Ah well, it ever was the world's sad tale,  
To let fools change our finest gold for dross;  
To give buffoons the power to desolate.  
And those who follow on the grieve the loss!

In this strong cottage Gordon lived and wrote,  
"Bush Ballads" and his well-known sporting rhymes,  
That thousands still throughout Australia quote...  
His fame is voiced abroad in distant climes.

This was our best-loved shrine, naught can atone,  
Such wanton crimes, it should have stood like stone!

Have an interest in the cemeteries?

Australian Federation of Cemetery Friends Inc.

A new not-for-profit national body has been formed comprising members who share a common interest in the history, preservation, restoration and promotion of cemeteries and burial grounds around Australia.

To learn more about the Federation, visit [www.afocf.org](http://www.afocf.org), email [info@afocf.org](mailto:info@afocf.org) or write to us at PO BOX 293, KEW VIC 3101.

Individual membership from just \$15 per annum!

TOUR OF BRIGHTON GENERAL CEMETERY

Our first tour of the Brighton General Cemetery (Vic) for 2009 will be held on **Sunday 15 March 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](http://www.adamlindsaygordon.org/tours.htm).

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

SACRED SQUARES: THE LAST HOME OF A POET...CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

hear the owner keen to see them go would move even the most pedestrian observer. But how does a small Committee as ours write the final happy chapter in the sorry saga and save the bricks? Plan, plead and preserve.

The plan is to re-pack the bricks onto new pallets for transportation to *Dingley Dell*, the former Port MacDonnell, South Australian home of Gordon. At *Dingley Dell*, they will be initially stored and at a later stage, put to good use within the park surrounds. The main thing is that the bricks are safe, secure and under the control of The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. The bricks that are marked – a small portion –

will be sold to the public (and at a discount to members) allowing Gordon admirers around the world to own an authentic piece of memorabilia.

To make the plan a reality, a fair amount of pleading will be required. Urgent funds and volunteers will be required without the luxury of time on our side.

There can only be so many chapters in a story until the end is nigh and clearly the writing is on the wall. Which means a great deal of perseverance will be required at this crucial stage with the bricks under threat of being lost for all time. If we can preserve where others have failed, we just might be able to write the final chapter and realise Cyril Goode's dream in some way.

THE ADAM LINDSAY GORDON GRAVE RESTORATION APPEAL

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Grave Restoration Appeal continues its march towards the target of \$10,000 with the sum currently at \$5,763. Our thanks to the following people for their generous donations:

Glen Clifford, Michelle Johnson (\$50), Deborah Hogan, Doreen Pennell (\$40), Stephen Barnham, Peter Mortensen (\$30).

