



THE WAYFARER

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

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FROTH AND BUBBLE DAY

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. came alive on Saturday 24 June 2006 when Champions - Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame hosted the inaugural "Froth and Bubble Day" at Melbourne's Federation Square.

The event was the brain child of Gordon enthusiast and historian John W. Adams of Torquay (Vic), who first became inspired by Gordon in 1972. Many readers will be familiar with John as the painstaking Secretary of The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc.

In early 2006, John approached Champions with the idea to stage a froth and bubble event with the aim of raising Adam Lindsay Gordon's profile. And what better way than over the 'froth' of a cap-

puccino and children blowing 'bubbles'.

Hosted by Champions, this year's event coincided with Gordon's nomination for induction to the Australian Racing Hall of Fame. Over 100 people turned out for the day with the highlights including an entertaining Bernard Caleo dressed as Adam Lindsay Gordon, speeches by Prof. Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Geoff Denning and Dr. Helen Kinloch who launched her booklet "Adam Lindsay Gordon - Horseman and Poet".

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. plan to hold an annual "Froth and Bubble Day" each year on the anniversary of Gordon's death.

We acknowledge Champions and the help of Jackie Fenton for staging the successful event.



Adam Lindsay Gordon aka Bernard Caleo at the inaugural 'Froth and Bubble Day'



Jackie Fenton (second from right) entertaining the children

RESURRECTING INTEREST IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL POET

Since the height of Gordon's popularity in the 1930s, when he was revered around Australia, from the stockman to the solicitor alike, there has been a steady but slow declining interest shown in the Poet and his poetry.

Formed in February 2006, The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. brings together a group of dedicated enthusiasts all keen to raise the profile of Australia's national poet.

The Committee plans to organ-

ise events around Australia aimed at resurrecting interest in Gordon, his life and his literary reputation. More information about the aims of the Committee can be found inside or by visiting our website www.adamlindsaygordon.org.

INSIGHT: ADAM LINDSAY GORDON'S CORONIAL INQUEST

Following the tragic death of Adam Lindsay Gordon by his own hand in thick tea-tree scrub on the Brighton beach foreshore on the morning of 24 June 1870, the mechanisations of the law moved swiftly. Indeed, the following day, a coronial inquest was held in the morning before Samuel Candler and 12 jurors and in the afternoon, Gordon was laid to rest "with never stone or rail to fence" his bed.

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. have obtained a copy of Gordon's inquest. The first witness called was William Hugh Kelly (c1837-1900), the owner of the New Street (later 10 Lewis Street), Brighton home where Gordon and his wife Maggie rented a furnished room from. (Incidentally, Kelly was also a member of the Brighton Artillery Corps for which Gordon was issued with the service rifle he used to end his life). Kelly stated under oath that "he saw

[Gordon] from 9 up to 11 o'clock that night. He had been drinking before he came home...he took no more drink...he was excitable and rather quarrelsome". Kelly's testimony contradicts the many published accounts of Gordon's last night alive that state he went to bed early.

The second witness called was William Hawson, a fisherman who saw Gordon alive at 7:30am on that fateful day. Hawson passed Gordon near the Marine Hotel and nodded but Gordon took no notice. Hawson stated that Gordon "was quite sober. When I nodded I thought he had a curious look as though he was vexed. He had a rifle in his hand like the one produced. He was carrying it straight in his hand."

Next to testify was William P. Allen who, whilst looking for a cow found Gordon's body at 9:15am "in a very intricate part of the scrub quite out of view of any person". He reported the matter to

Senior Constable Michael O'Donnell at 10:00am and they both returned to the scene. O'Donnell gave the Coroner a graphic description of what confronted them. Found lying on his back with the rifle "lying between the legs with the butt between the feet with the muzzle upwards", O'Donnell believed Gordon "must have been in a sitting position". His hat contained a knife, pipe, tobacco and Gordon's last shilling with some papers of a private nature inside his clothes.

Finally, Dr. James P. Murray, to whom Gordon introduced the works of Swinburne, conducted a post-mortem examination and stated that Gordon "was totally unable to bear any spirituous liquor. A very small quantity maddened him immediately."

Candler was to return a verdict that Gordon "died from a gun shot wound inflicted by himself while of unsound mind".

(Source: PROV VPRS 24/P/O, Unit 241, 1870/542)

POEM 'DE TE'

We had not sought for that we found-
He lay as dead men only lie,
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,
Through the wild heath flowers,
white and red.

"Kelly's testimony contradicts the many published accounts of Gordon's last night alive that state he went to bed early".

MEMBERS

Read the full Coronial Inquest through the Members' Area on our website

www.adamlindsaygordon.org

GORDON'S GRAVE

This picture of Gordon's grave at the Brighton General Cemetery is taken from "Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia" (1912) by Douglas Sladen and Edith Humphries. On the right is the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) believed to have been

planted in 1884 from a £1 donation provided by Elizabeth Lauder. A second Golden Wattle can be seen at the rear of the grave behind a rose plant showing four flowers. At the base of the monument to the left is an English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) surrounding a circular metal bowl. Nearby at the front is a

Viola odorata and five flowers. Undated, the photo shows the grave of Alfred Weigall (CofE "U" 122) who died on 18 September 1888 and if one looks closely that of the de Crespigny family. It appears that the photo was taken in the mid-1890s. (Source: John Hawker, Horticulturalist)

Photo courtesy Allan Childs



Poet Gordon's grave at the Brighton General Cemetery circa mid-1890s

SA PARLIAMENT - MAIDEN SPEECH

On 31 March 1865, the new South Australian Parliament assembled for the first time albeit with one notable exception amongst the honourable members - Adam Lindsay Gordon MHA. When Gordon took his place in Parliament on 31 May, he rose to debate the annual leases amid cries of "New

Member!". It was to be his first speech. As Eileen Kaye noted, Gordon "never got over his stiff and hesitating manner, and he was incapable of sticking to his subject". Hansard noted Gordon's maiden speech:

"Mr GORDON said that it appeared to him that there were two questions to be considered-first, the amount

of evil, real or imaginary, which would accrue to the holders of present annual leases; and secondly, what amount of good, if any, would be reaped by the general public as a set-off to the losses of the lessees. Any person having the most superficial knowledge of pastoral affairs must see that disastrous conse-

MEMBERS

Members can read Gordon's maiden Parliamentary speech on our website

www.adamlindsaygordon.org

quences would fall upon the lessees if compelled to leave the land at a short notice." (Source: *The Australian* 28 Oct 1933 p4; *SA Hansard Debates* 31 May 1865 p361)

GORDON'S LEWIS STREET HOME FOUND!

"A man who is behind in his rent is not worth remembering" - Mayor of Brighton (Vic) speaking of Gordon in 1945.

The latest chapter of the remarkable story of the Lewis Street, Brighton home where Gordon spent the final period of his life comes the news that the remains have been found in Tynong North (Vic). In 1945, the home was condemned due to rising damp. Salvaged by Cyril Everard Goode (1907-83), some 20,000 bricks were carted from Brighton to Goode's Newport home, a task that took two years.

Here the bricks languished amid missed opportunities to have the home re-erected in Brighton. One scheme in 1968 pledged £12,000 to see the home located in Dendy Park. Goode died in 1983 and the bricks next surfaced at Gumbuya Park (Vic) until the early 1990s. At some point they changed hands where the present owner of the bricks was finally tracked down with the assistance of Fred Hillock (Vic) a keen researcher and

historian. The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. are thrilled at the news and we hope negotiations between the owner and an anonymous donor will see the home eventually re-erected.

MEMBERS

Members can read more about Cyril Goode in the article "Jigsaw Memorial" on our website

www.adamlindsaygordon.org

25 PRIORY STREET, CHELTENHAM

The footsteps of this home in Cheltenham (UK) holds special significance for all admirers of the Poet Gordon. It was in August 1853 that a young Adam Lindsay Gordon bid adieu to his family to head "across the trackless seas" to Australia never to return. The photo on the left was taken by Sue Rowbottom (UK) and notes a commemorative plaque on the en-

trance which Sue tells us was unveiled by the author and Gordon admirer Douglas Sladen on the centenary of Gordon's birth. It was at this home that Gordon wrote "An Exile's Farewell" before his departure. Priory Street was an elegant tree-lined thoroughfare not far from Cheltenham College where Gordon's father Captain Robert Gordon taught Indian languages.

Photo courtesy Sue Rowbottom



Plaque reads "Adam Lindsay / Gordon / 1833- 1870 / The Poet of / Australia / lived here / in boyhood".

Photo courtesy Allan Childs



"I see the same tall poplars stand / Beside the garden door" - "An Exile's Farewell"

FROM THE WRECK

One of Gordon's better known poems was "From the Wreck", a stirring account of his ride in aid of survivors of the SS 'Admella' which ran aground on the South Australian coast near Cape Northumberland on 6 August 1859. At the time, Gordon was horse-breaking in the district. Full of drama, the poem was inspired by Browning's "How they brought the news to Ghent".

'TURN out, boys'—'What's up with our super. to-night ?
The man's mad—Two hours to daybreak I'd swear—
Stark mad—why, there isn't a glimmer of light.'
'Take Bolingbroke, Alec, give Jack the young mare ;
Look sharp. A large vessel lies jamm'd on the reef,
And many on board still, and some wash'd on shore.
Ride straight with the news—they may send some relief
From the township ; and we—we can do little more.

You, Alec, you know the near cuts ; you can cross
'The Sugarloaf" ford with a scramble, I think ;
Don't spare the blood filly, nor yet the black horse ;
Should the wind rise, God help them ! the ship will soon sink.
Old Peter's away down the paddock, to drive
The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can—
A life and death matter ; so, lads, look alive.'
Half-dressed, in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,
Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon ;
'Be quick with these buckles, we've no time to waste ;'
'Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to some tune.'
'Make sure of the crossing-place ; strike the old track,
They've fenced off the new one ; look out for the holes
On the wombat hills.' 'Down with the slip rails ; stand back.'
'And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your souls.'

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,
In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak grew,
Between the tall gum-trees we gallop'd away—
We crashed through a brush fence, we splash'd through a
swamp—
We steered for the north near 'The Eaglehawk's Nest'—
We bore to the left, just beyond 'The Red Camp',
And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the west—

We cross'd a low range sickly scented with musk
From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,
And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light ;
And full on our left flash'd 'The Reedy Lagoon,'
And sharply 'The Sugarloaf' rear'd on our right.
A smother'd curse broke through the bushman's brown beard,
He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek
Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, 'Just what I fear'd ;
Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the creek.'

[A full version of "From the Wreck" can be viewed on our website
www.adamlindsaygordon.org/works_fromthewreck.htm]

AIMS OF THE ADAM LINDSAY GORDON
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE INC.

The aim of the Committee is to:

- Raise the profile of Adam Lindsay Gordon as Australia's national poet
- Facilitate events around Australia on the anniversary of Adam Lindsay Gordon's death
- Collate material on Adam Lindsay Gordon's life and works and make it available to researchers and admirers alike
- Undertake projects to perpetuate the memory of Adam Lindsay Gordon
- Do all such other things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the above purposes or any of them.

INCORPORATION

On 20 October 2006, The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee formally became an incorporated association under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic)* with the adoption of our Rules of Association. The elected committee members for 2006-2007 are:

President: Allan Childs (SA)
Vice-President: Vivienne Adams (Vic)
Secretary: John Adams (Vic)
Treasurer and Public Officer: Travis M. Sellers (Vic)
Ordinary Committee member: Geoff Denning (SA)
The Committee brings together a dedicated and enthusiastic team of Gordon admirers.

"KINDNESS in another's trouble, COURAGE in your own"

Did you enjoy *The Wayfarer*?

...then become a member of *The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. today!*

Adam Lindsay Gordon was revered by a generation of Australians, but today his literary reputation and popularity has declined.

By becoming a member, the benefits include a copy of *The Wayfarer* and access to the Members' Area of our website.

For more information about joining, visit our website
www.adamlindsaygordon.org/join.htm or ring
03 5261 2899.

"A shining soul with syllables of fire who sang the first great songs this land can claim" - Henry Kendall