

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** ADAM LINDSAY GORDON MEMORIAL

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Glenelg Highway COLERAINE

**STUDY NUMBER:** 017

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF COLERAINE

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

On the north verge of the highway, 1.8 kilometres east of the Coleraine Post Office. It is near the intersection of the Glenelg Highway and Gordon Street.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial, plaque

**Image Date:** 31/01/03

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the memorial and all of the land in a 10m radius from the centre of the memorial.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The memorial is constructed from a local volcanic stone and takes the common form of a tapering cairn or crude obelisk which is 3.3m high and 1.1m square at the base. The stone is roughly faced and is dressed to a rock-face finish. A single pyramidal stone is set on the top to complete the cairn.

The text of the bronze plaque, in sans-serif capitals, reads "In memory of/Adam Lindsay Gordon/ the great Australian poet/who rode in the Great Western/Steeplechase, distance about four/miles, & crossed the road at this/point, first run in 1858./The great sportsman was a/contestant in this famous event/for five years, 1862-66./Concerning the race he wrote:/"On the fields of Coleraine there'll/be labour in vain/before the Great Western is ended./The nags will have toiled & the silks/will have soiled/and the rails will require to be mended."/Erected 1950.

The cairn is set on a low plinth of concrete and is surrounded by a concrete base at the corners of which are four concrete blocks. There are also timber posts painted white at each corner. The memorial is set within a row of *Pinus radiata*, probably planted at the time it was erected. The memorial is clearly viewed as vehicular traffic travels on the Glenelg Highway, both exiting and entering the township of Coleraine. It's setting is also related to the site of the steeplechase which crossed the Glenelg Highway at this point.

## HISTORY:

Adam Lindsay Gordon was one of the most famous poets and horsemen in Australia in the nineteenth century. He personified the Romantic spirit of the times. Born in the Azores in 1833, he migrated to South Australia in 1852 to join the Mounted Police. Gordon, who worked as a horsebreaker, lived in several places but he was associated in particular with Brighton, the seaside village near Melbourne and the South-East District of South Australia where he owned a cottage, called Dingley Dell and where his close friend and patron, John Riddoch lived. Gordon rode many times in the Great Western Steeplechase, a notoriously demanding horse race held annually over a shifting course around the town.

Kiddle (494) describes Coleraine as "before all else the place where the famous Great Western Steeplechase was run". Many of the regional towns held their own race meetings which attracted large crowds from across the Western District. Coleraine's Great Western Steeplechase, run over "the prettiest and fairest steeplechase course in all Australia" (ibid. 464) was made popular by Gordon and other well-known gentleman jockeys of the time, and "drew crowds from all over the country" (Ibid. 464). It is believed to be the oldest steeplechase race in Victoria, being first run in 1858. Gordon first entered the Great Western Steeplechase in 1862, and although he never won the race, he was placed second or third in each year from 1862 to 1865. On the same day in 1865 he won a Maiden Steeplechase over a shorter distance, after which he penned his well known poem "On the fields of Coleraine" (Byrne and Dean, 9). Other important colonial racing identities associated with the Steeplechase were Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh, Bob Learmonth and William Trainor (ibid, 10-11).

The monument was unveiled on 26th May 1950 by Mr H S Trangmar. The original bronze plaque was stolen from the cairn about 5 years later. A replacement plaque, bearing the same text, was installed following a public appeal for funds in Coleraine (pers. com. Stiglitch, M. 2002).

## THEMATIC CONTEXT:

THEME 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.1 Organising Recreation

8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sports

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8.11 Making Australian Folklore

8.11.1 Celebrating folk heroes

## **CONDITION:**

The bronze plaque is slightly corroded, there is cracking in the western face of the cairn and the concrete base is badly cracked, but otherwise the memorial is in good condition and retains a very high degree of integrity.

## **INTEGRITY:**

High

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The memorial to Adam Lindsay Gordon on the north side of the Glenelg Highway some two kilometres from the centre of Coleraine takes the form of a simple stone cairn. It is 3.3 metres high and 1.1 metres square at the base. A bronze plaque celebrates Gordon's reputation as a poet and a horseman and his connection with the famous Great Western Steeplechase, which crossed the Glenelg Highway in this location. The memorial was erected in 1950, and is clearly visible to vehicular traffic entering and exiting Coleraine. The designer of the monument is not known. It is in good condition and retains a very high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The memorial is of historical significance to the community of Coleraine and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The memorial is of historical significance as a monument to the important colonial figure, Adam Lindsay Gordon, one of Australia's most famous poets and horsemen. It has further significance as a marker of the course of the annual Great Western Steeplechase, an important colonial horse race. The memorial also has social historical significance as a reminder of the enthusiasm for racing among the affluent members of the growing township of Coleraine. Its prominent location is important as it represents the community's respect and affiliation with the famous poet and horseman Adam Lindsay Gordon; and the popularity of memorialising local heroes in the mid twentieth century.

## **COMPARISON:**

102 Major Mitchell Memorial, Turnbull Street, Coleraine  
298 Major Mitchell Memorial, Bundoran Lane, Glenthompson  
101 Major Mitchell Memorial, Parker Street, Dunkeld  
059 Henty Memorial, Glenelg Highway, Carapook

**ASSESSED BY:** tth

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

31/07/2001

## **EXISTING LISTINGS:**

## **HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

## **REFERENCES:**

Author	Title	Year Page
Alexander Sutherland	Victoria and Its Metropolis, Vol. 1	1888 498-500

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Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh	After many days: being the reminiscences of Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh	1918
L Byrne and M R Dean	A History of Coleraine Racing 1857-1985	1985 9-11
Leonie Kramer, in Pike, Douglas, gen. ed.	'Gordon, Adam Lindsay', in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 4	1969 267-9
Mardi Stiglich	personal communication September 2002	2002
Margaret Kiddle	Men of Yesterday	1961