

State Heritage Areas of South Australia



Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial Obelisk

Bay Road, Mount Gambier

SHR 13901 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 29 June 1989

This tapered stone spire, erected in 1887, commemorates [Adam Lindsay Gordon](#) as both a poet and a competent horseman. It simply bears his name, and is located in the vicinity of his famous leap on horseback, in 1864, over a fence onto a narrow ledge above the Blue Lake, and back again. The foundation stone was laid by his friend, John Riddoch.

THE GORDON MEMORIAL – Mr W Thurston has shown us the plan of the memorial it is proposed to erect on the banks of the Blue Lake, in honour of the poet Gordon. The obelisk is of a very neat character, and has been designed by Mr E Mayne. The lower part of the base would be constructed of grey dolomite, and the upper part pink dolomite, while the shaft, which will be twelve feet in height will be made out of granite, grey dolomite, or Kapunda marble. Mr T Kelly will have the superintendence of the erection of the obelisk. Mr Thurston has received a donation of 5 pound from Mr John Riddoch, of Yallum, together with a promise to subscribe further if necessary; and one pound one shilling from Mr H Liston, of Adelaide, on behalf of his late sister, Miss Ellen Liston, of Marrabel, who was a great admirer of the gifted poet's works.

South East Star, 20 May 1887



Obelisk, April 2005



*A.L. Gordon Memorial 1936
Photo B 11650: State Library of SA*

Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870)

For many Gordon is regarded as Australia's greatest poet. He is the only Australian to be honoured with a place in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey (1934).

As a riotous youth his parents shipped him off from their Scottish estate to Adelaide in 1853. On arrival he signed up as a horse-breaker with the mounted police at Thebarton Barracks, before being posted to the south-east as a trooper. This proved an ideal posting for this unusual policeman who was often heard riding around the countryside, reciting verse.

After leaving the mounted police he continued to indulge both passions – horse-riding and poetry – and remained in the area. During this time he became a member of State Parliament and enhanced his reputation as a horseman with feats of daring like the famous Blue Lake Leap.

He later moved interstate, where financial setbacks and deepening depression caused him to commit suicide in his home at Brighton Beach, Melbourne in 1870.



*Gordon's Leap at the Blue Lake, Mount Gambier:
an artist's impression 1860
Photo B 18088: State Library of SA*

