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# Paul Montford - Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial



B7261 Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial

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## Location

Gordon Reserve (Formerly known as Fountain Reserve or Spring Street Gardens),, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002 - Property No B7261

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

National

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2252

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 11, 2005

What is significant? This is a statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon, an eminent and colourful poet and horseman who had made Australia his home. The work is by Paul Montford, a respected sculptor who also had settled in Australia. It was created in 1930?1931, some 60 years after Gordon's death, the money being raised by public subscription. The statue was placed on the site previously occupied by the Eight Hour Monument and was unveiled in 1932.

How is it significant? The statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon is significant for aesthetic and historic reasons at

National level.

Why is it significant? The statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon is significant for aesthetic reasons, being Paul Montford's finest portrait. A model for the work was exhibited at the Royal Academy and won the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of British Sculptors in 1934. The work is placed to advantage in a small garden with the State's two most important civic buildings on either side, being Parliament House and the Old Treasury Building. The statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon is significant for historic reasons, representing one of Australia's finest poets and most colourful characters, and (to date) Australia's only poet to have a memorial in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey (by Kathleen Hilton Young). Sturgeon describes Gordon as 'the paramount representative of that brief efflorescence in Australian literature of a genuinely national ethos' [Sturgeon, p.88]. Gordon's writing displays local colour and an independent outlook. Although Australia is a country that commemorates very few writers in sculpture, Gordon is also the subject of a bronze bust outside the cottage in Ballarat in which he lived; this was made by Wallace Anderson in 1940 and unveiled 26 October 1941. The cottage was moved to the Wendouree Gardens, Ballarat in 1934 and classified by the National Trust (Victoria) at Local level [B1359]; it is open to the public. Gordon's house, Dingley Dell, near Port MacDonald in South Australia, is also open to the public as a museum.

Classified:08/09/2004

Hermes Number 71603

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The bronze of Adam Lindsay Gordon is modest in scale, placed on a sandstone pedestal that is plain apart from some small acanthus leaf decoration at each upper corner. The figure sits on a plain chair. While the face shows a brooding introspection, the pose is informal and relaxed: Gordon twists to his left; his right leg crossed over his left, with his right hand - holding a pencil - resting on his right thigh. The figure's left arm is over the chair back, holding a slim book, a finger marking his place, while he gazes into the distance apparently absorbed in creating another poem. Even the book has some loose leaves, or perhaps there are some pages of notes that protrude. Gordon is dressed informally in shirt sleeves (rolled up), a loose bow neck-tie, and riding boots, with saddle, bridle and high-crowned cabbage-tree hat beneath the chair and jacket thrown over the seat. Perhaps emphasising Gordon's carefree attitude, there is a button missing from the right sleeve of the jacket. Although the figure gives the impression of being no more than life-size, the work intrudes into the viewer's space by a foot and part of the harness that protrude over the edge of the base. At the time of the unveiling, some had commented that too much attention had been paid to the horseman and not enough to the poet. However, Montford maintained that the boots and riding breeches were the fashion of Gordon's time and were included in the only description Montford had been able to find of Gordon; Montford also found the saddle helped fill an awkward gap under the chair [Scarlett, p.453]. The base of the bronze carries the artist's signature and the foundry mark: Chiuozzi, Napoli. The pedestal carries various inscriptions which are set out in Appendix 1. The pedestal is also incised with Gordon's family coat of arms. The sculpture is 147 cm high. The pedestal is 142 cm high and 200 cm wide.

## Intactness

The work appears to be in good condition. Conservation was carried out during the first half of 1994, the work being repositioned on its pedestal on 30 June. It had been cleaned of pollutive salts, organic growth and copper stains. The work was done by the Victorian Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Material Inc (a full report is in the Melbourne City Council file).

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>