

2.4 ...Adam Lindsey Gordon.....States with sticky fingers....the dangerous Murray Mouth...

... Letter about Burke...a lift by steamer to Menindie...

...Adam Lindsey Gordon.....

“C’mon young Andy, put your back into it,” shouted Captain Johnson.

It was very peaceful here at Wellington the *Albury* was shut down and the Barge was being unloaded. The only thing that disturbed the peace was the Captain.

“Here Andy take this note up to the Pub, and give it to the Publican. Cook wants some things so bring them back with you.”

I slowly walked across the small hill and up to the Pub that was just above where the punt docked.

“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.”

“Hmmm, does that synchronize.....”

A young man was sitting on a log under the wooden roof of the Pub verandah, staring vacantly, and repeating the words.

“Hello,” I said quite loudly.

“Oh! What? Who was that!” Sorry I was thinking out loud,” the young man said,” I was just trying to get the doggerel to rhyme.”

“What are you doing. My names Andy.”

“Hi Andy I’m Adam. I was just composing a bit of poetry and I don’t know if it makes sense.”

With that he stood up, stuffed the bit of paper and pencil into a jacket pocket, then took a pipe out of the other pocket.

“What do you do Andy,” he said.

“Oh I’m from that Paddle Steamer tied up just past that clump of trees.

“Oh, that must be good work. I’m waiting for a Station owner’s Overseer to take me back across the river in the ferry to where my horses and gear are, so that I can go to his Station and break in a few horses.”

With that a man arrived and said. “Hey fella, are you Adam Gordon the horse breaker?”



Rounding up the “Brumbies.”

“Adam Lindsey Gordon at your service Sir!” With that Adam stood up and started down the slope towards the river and the ferry. He was very tall and quite skinny, and was wearing cord riding trousers with leather leggings ties around his lower legs. A well used shirt with a shapeless jacket, and big floppy hat. He quickly put on a pair of wire rimmed glasses.

“Here Andy,” he said, calling me down and giving me a small square of folded paper,” this is a copy of a completed poem I have called THE SICK STOCKRIDER. If you have time, come and visit me at Mr. Morphett’s Station, it’s just a couple of miles from the river. You can give me a hand with the horses. Hooray.”



Maybe a " Sick Stockrider."

...States with sticky fingers....

Back on board the Paddle Steamer, I found out that several Steamers were due and the skippers were to have a talk about Customs duties that were getting expensive. Before the states of Victoria and South Australia had broken away from New South Wales in 1852/53 pastoralists and settlers had properties on either side of the big rivers and were able to freely move around with their stock.

When the State's borders were defined by the River Murray confusion arose and the bosses of each state tried to make money by charging a customs fee on some goods when the states invisible line was crossed.

Such as a Captain paying customs taxes at Albury in NSW, then paying further taxes at, Wodonga only 3 miles away in Victoria. Up to this time customs was only payable at sea ports, although I had heard that a brand new Customs house was being built in Goolwa. Confusing!



Customs Officials loved the variety of commodities to be taxed.

Captain Johnson, gave me the day and night off to go and see Adam. But I had to be aboard the Albury by 8 a.m. the next day.

What a great day that was. I took the dinghy rowed across the Murray, tied it up and walked the 2 miles to the Station. I could see Adam immediately he was riding a horse around a ring that was that was enclosed in timber posts and rails. The horse reared a bit, shied a bit and bucked a bit, but Adam hung on and kept quietly encouraging the horse to quiet down. I noticed he wasn't wearing his glasses. Quite a few other horses were in another enclosed ring.

"Hi youngster, glad you could come. How about pouring me a cup of tea from that warm billy on the fire?"

I quickly handed him a mug full after he tied up his panting horse.

'Aaah, that's better. I've already ridden and handled 7 horses only another 16 to go.'

"How many did you say," I gasped.

"Another 16. It will take me about another 8 hours. Some are easy, some are difficult to slowly break in. and of course I have to make the selection on which horses can be sold to the Indian Cavalry. They of course require a different outcome. Their owner would like as many as possible to sell to the army but I think several will just be drovers hacks or simply pull drays from what I have seen."

We sat on a couple of logs and he told me a little about his life.

When he arrived in Adelaide from England, his father had arranged that he would join the Police Force, but he immediately joined it as a mounted trooper and was posted to Penola. There he spent some time in the area. After a few years he resigned and travelled around breaking in horses. Down to Mt. Gambier, Port MacDonnell, across to Coleraine where he has watched the Great Western Steeplechase always hoping to get a mount, up to the Murray. All over the place.



"You know Andy, I'm very short sighted and when I'm riding horses it is too dangerous to have my glasses on, so I can only see about as far as my horses ears. So I have to watch its ears very intently to get signals about what's happening. I hear tell that a race club at Melbourne is planning to run a 2 mile race for a lot of money in about 2 years with no fences . Do you know anything about that?"



‘No I don’t, in fact I know very little about any horse or horse race,’ I replied.

“ Ah well. Listen to this, I have composed a couple of lines of poetry but I don’t know where to use it yet. How’s this....

“While behind, the hoof thunder is blended

With the whistling and Cracking of whips....”

“That’s what it’s like in a horse race, sound alright,” he asked. “Listen a bit more this is about the Steeplechase at Coleraine.

*On the fields of Colerain,
There’ll be labour in vain
Before the Great Western is ended
The nags will have toiled and the silks
Will have soiled
And the rails will require to be mended*



He actually raced over this fence.

I thought it was wonderful. How can people make up verses that tell a lot without a lot of words.

“That poetry about a shipwreck what was that all about?”I asked.



‘Well I was living at Port MacDonnell, and a sailing ship the Admella its way from Adelaide to Melbourne was wrecked on the shore, people were drowned ,it was a disaster. Anyway I rode a fairly green horse several miles over the countryside to a Telegraph station to alert the authorities.’

“Anyway,” he said chucking the dregs of his mug onto the ground, “you can help me by washing out the mouths of the horses I have handled, and giving them a small drink.”

Crikey that was hard dangerous work. The horses were all stirred up, and they stared at me with eyes rolling, constantly fidgeting and moving. It was dangerous. Thank heavens they did not have iron shoes on, if they kicked me.

Before day break the next day I found my way along to the bank of the Murray, rowed the dinghy back to the Paddle Steamer, told the Captain I was aboard, and went about my work.

...the dangerous Murray mouth...

“Hurry Andy, pay out the rope so the dinghy can be rowed to that sandbank,” the Captain shouted loudly.

I frantically payed out the anchor rope, as the fellow in the dinghy frantically pulled on the oars of the dinghy to reach the southern side of the entrance. Our Steamer the Ruby was loaded up and we were on our way to Melbourne but we were aground. The Captain knew it was a slack high tide here at the mouth, but a strong wind was blowing from the north east, so he decided to crib along the northern side of the entrance to counteract the wind. Unfortunately he went to close and we got stuck.



The Murray Mouth.

So our job was to bury an anchor in the sand on the southern shore and the Ruby would then use a steam winch to haul the stern from the northern bank.

“Hurry Hurry,” sang out the Captain urgently.

“Done sir,” I waved my arms to the Captain.

The winch quickly took in the slack rope, like a snake it suddenly got taut. Within a minute the stern of the *Ruby* started to move slowly at first then quicker.

“We are off!” sang out the Captain, “free the rope from the anchor and we will retrieve it Leave the anchor quickly now.”

The *Ruby* must have dug its way off the sand bank with the help of its twin screws as well as the anchored rope, and started to make its way out the entrance the sea area of Encounter Bay. I was having trouble untying the anchor rope, so I cut it with my knife. When I looked around the dinghy was several yards away being towed by the *Ruby*. I couldn't possibly swim fast enough to catch up.

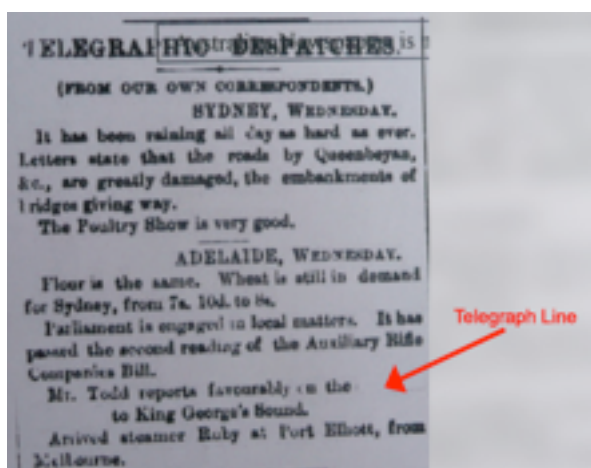
Captain King started to shout to me, “Andy grab the trailing rope and we will pull you on board and.....

It was no use the rope just slithered away. I was left behind on the southern shore of the entrance.

The *Ruby* just steamed out the entrance and turned to make its way to Melbourne. Oh well, the Port of Goolwa was only 3 miles away. I would walk to it and make contact with Captain Cadell's Agent and explain what happened.

As I stumbled my way along the sand dunes to Port Goolwa, I tried to remember what had happened to me after we left Wellington on the *P.S. Albury*.

On of Captain Cadell's boats was a Steam Lighter, with Twin Screws not Paddle's, called the *Ruby* that he had purchased in Melbourne. Its job was to carry cargo back and forth from Melbourne to Wentworth, beating the South Australian Governments Customs duties by unloading and loading only in Melbourne Victoria and Wentworth New South Wales. Her captain also later told me that the boat was not as maneuverable as the paddle Steamers in the narrower rivers.



Melbourne Argus 2nd August 1860

Captain Cadell was no stranger to the Murray entrance. His first Paddle Steamer the *Lady Julia* came from Sydney and sailed through the entrance.

Anyway Captain Cadell, in honoring his promise to my Father, had me transferred to the *Ruby* skippered by Captain James King.



Navigation marks at the Mouth of the Murray.

... Letter about Burke...

“Look Andy, it’s alright, at least you helped the *Ruby* not becoming a shipwreck,” the agent said.

“But what about Captain Cadell’s letter to the Royal Victorian Society that I was to personally hand to the President, when the *Ruby* docked in Melbourne?”

“I saw the letter,” the Agent replied,” and it only confirms Captain Cadell’s vote not to accept Captain Robert O’Hara Burke as Leader of the Expedition to find a way from Melbourne to the Top End of Australia, so that a Telegraph Line could be built to link Melbourne directly to the rest of the world and not having to go through Adelaide. I don’t think he liked the man when he met him at Beechworth some years ago, when Burke was officer in charge of the Police.”

“Yes but what about where he offered, free up the cost of 500 pounds, to transport a lot of the Expeditions supplies up the river Darling to Menindee?”

“Well you and I know that would save a great deal of transport problems with the Camels and Horse and Drays, particularly as Captain Cadell has a Store there. It would also mean that they were well equipped and in front of Mcdoull Stuarts expedition from Adelaide. But we can’t do anything. Anyway he has telegraphed the letter contents to the President of the Society in Melbourne.”

“Yes but how will I live?” I asked the Agent.

“Don’t worry, you can do jobs for my Clerk for a couple of days, By then I should be able to find you a job. How about working as a Railway Horse driver between here at Goolwa to Port Elliot?”

“Sounds alright. At least the horses won’t be as fierce as the ones my friend Adam was breaking in.”

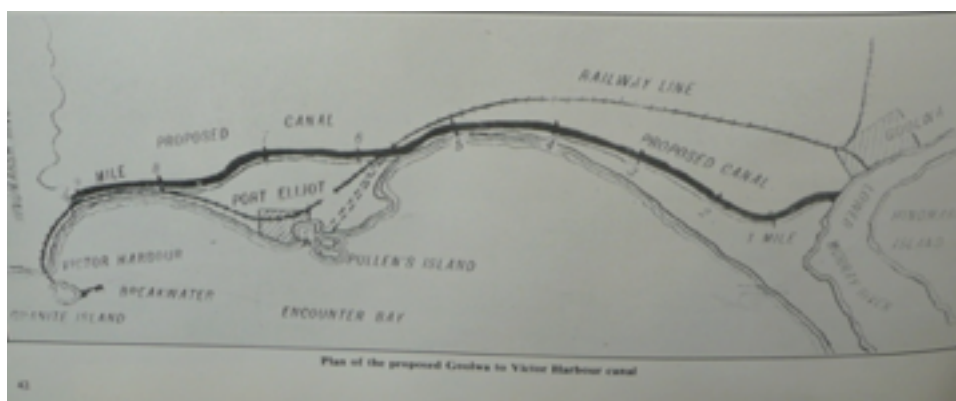
“Tell you what though; I have just heard that the railway to Port Elliot is to be extended to Victor Harbor, because Victor Harbor will be a lot safer for ships than Port Elliot where several ships have run aground. Port Elliot’s use is to be abandoned. I don’t think the canal idea is still being thought about, but the railway will be extended to Victor Harbor and they will require workers to construct the track. That could be a possibility?”



Horseshoe Bay, Port Elliot.

“I would much rather work on a Paddle Steamer Sir.”

“Well, if you want to leave your employment working for Captain Cadell I will give you a note for Captain Johnson, explaining the situation. He may give you a job on the Paddle Steamer *Moolgewanke*, that he has just bought in partnership with his friend Mr. Murphy.”



Canal or Rail Way Line Goolwa to Port Elliot to Victor Harbor?

...a lift by steamer to Menindie...

“Welcome on board young Andy. I thought I wouldn’t see you again when Captain Cadell arranged for you to join the *Ruby*, and sail to sea Ports around Australia. let’s introduce you to the PS and the crew. Then I can tell you what your job will be”

I was very fortunate that Captain Johnson liked me and my work on the other Paddle Steamers, so he hired me as a deck hand on the *Moolgewanke* to work for him and his partner, wherever the “Trade” took the boat on the river.

The *Moolgewanke* travelled up and down the Murray and Murrumbidgee river system for a month or two, delivering and picking up goods. It seemed that there were too many Paddle Steamers on the rivers making it difficult to make it pay.



Moolgewanke.

However one day Captain Johnson heard that there was a “fresh” amount of water coming from rains in the very top end of the river Darling system in Queensland, so he decided to go up the Darling at least as far as Menindee and service the Squatters and Pastoralists who hadn’t seen a Paddle Steamer for some time. Maybe sell them some tea, sugar and flour, leather goods. Some linen for the women folk, and maybe take aboard wool or skins for the markets.

One day we were at Tarcoola Station, upriver from Wentworth and fairly close to Menindee.

“What’s that noise Andy? Look at those dogs they are going berserk.”

Suddenly through the trees and bushes lining the river, we could see a horde of men and those strange looking Camels, appearing.



The Bourke and Wills Expedition. The horses were fearful of Camels.

“It must be Captain Burke’s expedition,” Captain Johnson shouted out loudly.

It was. Slowly the Camels and men spread out to form an encampment. A man who appeared to be their Leader, slowly approached the Moolgewanke, asking the whereabouts of the Captain.

During the remainder of the day and night I saw that Captain Johnson and Mr. Murphy had several conversations with the man who I thought was the Expeditions Leader, Captain Burke.

The following day, Captain Johnson called the crew together.

“Men, the people and animals you see on the bank are the forefront of the Royal Victorian Societies Expedition to find a route to the north of Australia, so that Telegraph communication is expedited and can be routed to Melbourne rather than go through Adelaide. It is led by Captain Burke.”

“It appears that the baggage trains pulled by horses are greatly overburdened and very slow. So slow that it is holding up the Expeditions progress. Captain Burke wished to proceed ahead to Menindee as quickly as possible to set up a major camp. He has asked us to load as many stores as possible aboard our Steamer when the others arrive and transport them up to Menindee, as you know about 100 miles upriver. The daily progress rate for the pack train is about 3 to 4 miles a day so we can save them about 20 to 25 days. At a nice profit.”



Very hard work.

Captain Burke held a conference with some of his team, to decide which stores should be discarded, that took considerable time. Mr. Wills, the surveyor, insisted that all of his instruments and necessary material had to accompany him.

To do that he asked Captain Johnson for a crew member to help him, Captain Johnson gave me that job. So I spent quite a few hours helping Mr. Wills. In some breaks, in the short time I worked for him, Mr. Wills asked me questions about my life, and told me some of his experiences. His Father was a Doctor from England and had bought shares in a Melbourne Gold Mining Company and decided to come out to Australia. Mr. Wills and his brothers, John and Thomas came to Australia first on their own and got jobs as shepherds at Deniliquin. When their Father came out William, Mr. Wills assisted his Father in Doctoring at Ballarat, because he had done courses at Guy's and Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

I must admit quite a few men were mended by Mr. Wills when word got around that he could Doctor. Mr. Wills, studied surveying and became an assistant at the Astronomical and Magnetical Observatories at Melbourne under Professor G. B. Neumayer. He was encouraged by Professor Neumayer, who was a member of the Exploration Committee of the Royal Society of Victoria to apply to join the Burke Expedition. This he did and was third in command.

When everything was done, and everyone was awaiting Mr. Burke's command. Mr. Wills told me that he hoped to be back in Melbourne before the first ever English Cricket team arrived in Melbourne to play some games against Australian Teams, so that he could attend. It seems that a lot of Publicans and other rich men eventually decided that they would not invite the author Mr. Charles Dickens to Australia to give reading of his books. They all reckoned they could make more money out of crowds watching the Cricket Matches. Mr. Wills explained some of the game to me. Interesting!

After all decisions had been made Captain Burke and some of his team took off to make a camp at Menindee, in preparation for the big effort to get to Cooper's Creek. Great piles of baggage and stores were strewn about in clumps. Under instruction from some of the Expeditions men, the carrying aboard and tying down commenced.

Great care had to be taken, to ensure that the winches and other equipment could be got to, because we had experienced a great deal of snags and overhanging branches on the way up. Captain Johnson reminded everyone of my experiences on the Grapple, and kind of promoted me to helping decide what should be done about the snags. I really think he was only kidding me along.

During the second afternoon of loading we all heard a Paddle Steamer whistle. It turned out to be one of Captain Cadell's boats making its way upstream from Captain Cadell's Store at Wentworth to Captain Cadell's Menindee Store. Maybe they would get there just as Captain Burke and party would arrive.

It seems a bit odd to me that Captain Cadell had made the offer to transport free some of the Expeditions goods to Menindee, and yet that is just what we are now doing in the Moolgewanke for a price.