

*When we go to Sydenham on 16<sup>th</sup> April, we will be lunching at the General Gordon Hotel, adjacent to the station. Major General Gordon was truly an amazing man and it is appropriate that something about him be recorded and attached with the Sydenham notes, particularly given his link with railways.*

*Ed Tonks has put together the following profile of him.*

Major General Charles George **Gordon**. – Ed Tonks March 2014

*British Army officer, administrator and great focus of nineteenth century British Imperial sentiment.*

-Born 28 January 1833 at Woolwich, London. Father was Major General Henry William Gordon.

-Attended Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. Commissioned in 1852.

-Saw action in the Crimea War of the 1850s.

-Gained enormous reputation in China during the 1860s as the leader of the “Ever Victorious Army”. Helped put down the Taiping Rebellion. Became known as “Chinese” Gordon.

-Entered service of Khedive (Viceroy of Egypt) in 1873 and later became Governor –General of the Sudan. Worked to put down revolts and to suppress slave trade. Resigned and returned to Europe in 1880.

-Sent to Sudan to protect British civilians in Khartoum against the revolt of the Mahdi. Over 2,000 civilians evacuated but Gordon stayed and siege of Khartoum began on 18 March 1884. British Government not keen to become involved but Gordon’s efforts

captured public attention and interest. Relief force finally advanced on Khartoum and arrived on 28 January 1885 only to find that the city had been captured and Gordon killed two days previously. (Two days before his 52rd birthday.)

**- News of Gordon's death led to an "unprecedented wave of public grief across Britain" and it's Empire.**

-Statues were erected in various places in England and across the Empire including Australia.

-The suburbs of Gordon in northern Sydney and Gordon Park in northern Brisbane were named after General Gordon, as was the former Shire of Gordon in the Australian state of Victoria.

-During 1886 the wooden paddle wheeler "General Gordon" was launched at Terrigal. This stern wheeler was purpose built to be a tourist vessel on the Hawkesbury River. However the vessel was almost immediately leased to the NSWGR to carry passengers between Gosford and Kangaroo Point on the Hawkesbury prior to the rail link and bridge being completed in 1889.

- The Khartoum Hotel at the former coal mining town of Kitchener located to the south of Cessnock in the Hunter Valley is another commemoration of Gordon's heroic actions and demise.

-Charlton Heston played Gordon in the 1966 epic film "Khartoum".

**However** one of the most distinctive and impressive memorials to the memory of Gordon is the large window that dominates the entrance hall and staircase of *Booolominbah*, the house designed by John Horbury Hunt for Frederick Robert White and built between 1886 and 1888. This fine house is now part of the University of New England in Armidale. The London firm of Lavers, Barraud and Westlake was commissioned, probably in 1900 to do this magnificent

window. The window contains seven scenes from Gordon's life, each given a year and a location;

**Woolwich.** In 1848 at the age of fifteen, Gordon entered the Royal Military Academy.

**Sebastopol.** During 1855 he served as an engineer at the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimea War.

**China.** During 1863 he commanded the "Ever Victorious Army" in China, earning him the name of "Chinese " Gordon.

**Gravesend.** By 1867 he had established a reputation as a Victorian hero. Gordon spent about six years in charge of new fortifications to defend the Thames. He was based at Gravesend and spent much of his time, energy and money trying to help the poor children of the area.

**Darfour.** In 1877 Gordon was made Governor-General of the vast region south of Egypt including the Sudan. At Darfour in the Sudan he had a dramatic confrontation with one of the main slave traders of the region.

**Khartoum.** The scene at Khartoum in 1885 shows Gordon in the moments before his death at the hands of the Mahdi's rebels. The pose of Gordon , calm and unarmed while trying to reason with his enemies, was the one which became central to the legend built up around his death. This image of Gordon's death was to endure and to have a great influence on British and World politics.

***This window is a must see when next in Armidale during week days.***