

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R055F

Name of Place: General Bridges' Grave

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: Mount Pleasant Road DUNTROON ACT 2600

Block Section of

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	RNE
Date of Listing:	1984	Level of Significance:	Territory
Citation Revision No:	3	Category:	Military Grave
Citation Revision Date:	November 03	Style:	Organic

Date of Design:	1916	Designer:	Walter Burley Griffin
Construction Period:	1920	Client/Owner/Lessee:	C of A
Date of Additions:		Builder:	

Statement of Significance

This simple, dignified monument is important for its symbolic, cultural and social associations and for its aesthetic characteristics which draw on the prevailing ideas for war memorials of the period. It is the grave of one of Australia's most historically important military figures, Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges, who played a key role in selecting the site for the Royal Military College, establishing the college and being the first commandant. His involvement in the First World War as Commander of the Australian Imperial Force is another aspect of his place in Australian history. The grave is important for its associations with him and with its architect, Walter Burley Griffin, who was the designer of Canberra. The grave is the only example in Canberra of a structure he designed.

Description

A simple, dignified monumental grave consisting of a low, polished granite slab with a two-tier base of rock-faced granite with a bronze sword set on the top of the slab. The grave is surrounded by an area of quartz pebbles bounded by a fence. The site on a ridge leading to Mount Pleasant overlooks the Royal Military College and the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Condition and Integrity

Good.

Background/History

The Royal Military College of Australia was established in 1911 under the direction of Brigadier-General Bridges with the objective of providing an officer training facility for the Australian Army. Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges (1861-1915) was born at Greenock, Scotland and was educated at Ryde, Isle of Wight and from 1871 at the Royal Naval School, New Cross, London. When his family migrated to Canada, he continued his education at Trinity College School, Port Hope. In 1877 he entered the Royal Military College of Canada at Kingston, but became the only Kingston cadet discharged for academic failure in an attempt to follow his parents to Australia, where he arrived in 1879. With the outbreak of the South African War, Bridges was selected for special service with the British Army.

Bridge's career was advanced in March 1902 when he became Assistant Quartermaster General, which gave him responsibility for military intelligence, the formulation of defence schemes and organisation of the forces.

Bridges was promoted to the rank of Colonel in October 1906 and was known for attempts to improve efficiency in the army.

The history of the Royal Military College commenced from the Federation of the six Australian colonies in January 1901. On 7 April 1902 the first Commander of the Australian Military Forces, Major General Sir Edward Hutton recommended that a military college be established along the lines of other military schools in the United States of America, Canada and England.

Nothing immediately resulted from this recommendation and in 1908 Colonel William Throsby Bridges, Australian Chief of Intelligence, put forward Hutton's suggestions, again unsuccessfully. The Defence Act of 1909, which introduced compulsory military training for home defence, also made provision for the establishment of a military college. Before the Defence Act was enacted the Government had invited Field Marshal Kitchener to visit Australia to advise it on the defence of the Commonwealth.

Among the recommendations of Kitchener's comprehensive report of 1910 was that a college should be established for the training of officers of the permanent military forces.

The Government then instructed Colonel William Throsby Bridges, who was then the Australian representative on the Imperial General Staff in London, to visit and report on military colleges in England, Canada and the United States with a view to setting up a college suited to Australian requirements. Colonel Bridges reported to the Minister of Defence, and soon afterwards his recommendation was accepted. He was given the task of founding the new college and on 30 May 1910 he was appointed to be its first Commandant with the rank of Brigadier-General.

On the 1 July 1910 Brigadier-General Bridges selected the site of Duntroon and on 1 October 1910 the Minister of Defence formally approved that site for the new college.

General Bridges served as Commandant of the College until he was called to serve in the First World War in May 1914, when he assumed the senior appointment as Inspector General. He was appointed Commander of the Australian Imperial Force, with the rank of Major-General, in August. In the Gallipoli landing in April 1915 his division was the first ashore on ANZAC Cove. On the morning of 15 May he was shot by a machine gun sniper in 'Monash Gully' near the headquarters of the 1st Light Horse Brigade. His wound became gangrenous and he died on route to Egypt on 18 May. He had been appointed Knight Commander of the Bath the previous day and was buried at Alexandria.

His body was later brought to Canberra for burial. After a service at St John's Church on 3 September 1915, the body was buried at Mount Pleasant Road above the Royal Military College Duntroon. The monumental structure over the grave was designed by Walter Burley Griffin in 1916, and completed in 1920.¹ Although Griffin planned Canberra in an international competition and had a successful career in planning and architecture in Australia between 1914 and 1935, this is the only example in Canberra of a structure he designed.

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

1. Philip Cox & Partners. *Royal Military College of Australia Duntroon, Conservation & Management Plan*, for Department of Housing & Construction, 1986.
2. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 7. University of Melbourne Press.

Other Information Sources