3. Understanding the Place—Physical Context

3.1. Introduction

A site and condition assessment of General Bridges’ Grave and its setting was undertaken by Amy Guthrie, Sarah Webeck and Pip Giovanelli on the 3 August 2011 at which time the area was assessed and recorded.

3.2 Setting

General Bridges’ Grave is set within an elevated clearing on the eastern hillside of Mount Pleasant. It is accessed via a slip-road exit to the south of General Bridges Drive and the wide bitumen driveway/carpark leads directly to the eastern perimeter of the fenced Grave site (Figure 3.1–3.2).

A concrete curbed gravel area surrounds the site on the southern, western and northern sides, currently used as a turning circle for vehicles. Beyond the road boundary, the site slopes away steeply to the south, and bluestone retaining walls support the northern and western sides of the clearing.

The surrounding area is thick with established native vegetation, with the exception of the slope to the southwest of General Bridges’ Grave, where two commemorative Aleppo Pines, propagated from the famous Gallipoli ‘Lone Pine’, were planted in 1993. A plaque notes that the pines were planted to acknowledge the service of the 71 graduates from RMC Duntroon who served at Gallipoli, 19 of whom were killed during the campaign (Figure 3.3–3.4).

At the entry to the east of the site, a grove of commemorative eucalypts were planted and are marked with a sign:

The Bridges ANZAC Grove. This Grove Commemorates the 75th anniversary of the landing by the Australian imperial force on the Gallipoli Peninsula 25 April 1915 and the 1990 remembrance pilgrimage. Weeping gums provided by Greening Australia as part of the one billion trees program 9 October 1990 (Figure 3.5)

The 2009 HMP for RMC Duntroon notes that it is likely that the original plantings of weeping gums failed and were replaced by *Eucalyptus mannifera* seedlings (the species currently on site), which are much less established than trees planted in 1990 would have been.\(^1\)

It is interesting to note also that in 1954 Parliament commented on there being signs of neglect around General Bridges’ Grave and instructed the removal of trees to reopen the viewlines to and from the Grave and RMC Duntroon.\(^2\) The carefully chosen elevated clearing was to provide expansive views to the south overlooking RMC Duntroon. However, now the thick vegetation means that the college below is barely visible, with only distant views out toward south Canberra (Figure 3.6).

Across General Bridges Drive to the north, views from the site overlook the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) toward Mount Ainslie.

3.3 Physical Description

General Bridges’ Grave is of a simple tiered design and the unassuming, modest nature of the site suits its intended purpose as a place of remembrance and appreciation. The formal, symmetrical
layout of the site is also reflective of the ceremonial nature and formality of the military college it overlooks.

The site itself comprises an outer concrete strip or dwarf wall supporting a low steel pipe railing. Two concrete posts on the eastern side support a steel gate (Figure 3.7). On the left-hand post a small plate acknowledges the architect of the site, reading ‘Consultant architect for the design and construction of this Grave was…Walter Burley Griffin’ (Figure 3.8). Another sign attached to the centre of the gate states ‘this is consecrated ground please remain outside the fence’ (Figure 3.9). Situated in front of the gate is a sloping concrete slab with an inlaid plaque providing a brief biography of the life of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges (Figure 3.10).

The surface within the outer perimeter wall is finished in loose variegated gravel and four pencil pine trees (Cupressus sempervirens) are planted in each corner, framing the site (Figure 3.11). A raised kerb wall formed by a single course of ashlar laid four-square sits centrally in the site. It is raised from the surrounding gravel by approximately 350mm and is constructed of granite blocks with a rusticated wall surface in combination with a gently domed and dressed top. The raised level defined by the granite blocks is covered in white quartz-like gravel.

In the centre of the raised gravel area is the Grave itself. Rusticated granite blocks support a highly polished granite gravestone, which has a gradual rise towards its centre, cut in the form of a low truncated pyramid. A bronze sword is mounted on a narrow dressed bed that sits proud of the main gravestone by about 12mm (Figure 3.12–13).

Gold engraved writing is featured along the length of both sides of the gravestone. The northern and southern sides state:

*Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges KCB CMG died on 18th May 1915 from wounds received at Gallipoli Peninsula whilst in command of the Australian Imperial Forces*

and:

*A gallant and erudite soldier, he was the first commandant of this college, where in recognition of faithful service his remains were publicly interred on third September 1915 (Figures 3.14–15)*

The overall condition of the site and its surroundings is good. For a detailed condition assessment of specific elements of the site, refer to Section 7.0 of this report.

### 3.4 Significant Views

The purpose of the Grave’s location was to provide for significant views of RMC Duntroon from the slopes of Mount Pleasant, a symbolic location for the college’s first commandant to oversee the site.

When the Grave was established in 1915, there were clear views over RMC Duntroon to the south and south-east with clear views of Canberra to the south-west. While overgrowth of vegetation is impeding clear views from the Grave over RMC Duntroon south-east, small glimpses are available in this direction through the trees, with marginally clearer views south (See Figure 3.16). Views south-west over Canberra are also significant from this vantage point.

### 3.5 Archaeological Potential

The site of the General Bridges’ Grave has been subject to some levelling and ground preparation. The walls and stone structure are likely to have some underpinning structure and the act of excavating a Grave will have impacted the original ground surface of the area.
The site of the Grave itself and its fenced area is considered to have no archaeological potential due to these disturbances.

Figure 3.1 Plan of General Bridges’ Grave (Source: Pip Giovanelli, 2011)

Figure 3.2 Approach to General Bridges’ Grave with wide bitumen driveway/carpark (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.3 Aleppo ‘Lone’ Pines, in the south eastern corner of the site (Source: GML 2011)
Figure 3.4 Plaque for the Lone Pines planted for the graduates from RMC Duntroon who fought at Gallipoli (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.5 ANZAC Memorial Grove located at the entry road to site (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.6 View south east through the thick vegetation over RMC Duntroon towards south Canberra (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.7 Entry gate to the fenced Grave site (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.8 Plaque acknowledging Walter Burley Griffin as the architect. (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.9 Sign on entry gate to Grave site area. (Source: GML 2011)
Figure 3.10 Plaque with biography of Major General Bridges (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.11 Pines located in each corner of the site contribute to the formal, ceremonial nature of the site (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.12 Detail of the granite stone Grave (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.13 Bronze sword on top of Grave (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.14 Southern view of Grave showing gold writing (Source: GML 2011)

Figure 3.15 Northern view of Grave showing gold writing (Source: GML 2011)
Figure 3.16 Significant views from General Bridges’ Grave (Source: GML on Google Plan.)

3.6 Endnotes

1 Godden Mackay Logan 2009, RMC Duntroon HMP, pg 49
2 Ibid, pg 55