5. Constraints and Opportunities

5.1. Introduction

The development of conservation policies is underpinned by the consideration of a range of constraints and opportunities for the future of General Bridges’ Grave, which can be divided into the following categories:

- constraints on, and opportunities for, use and development of the site arising from its significance;
- external constraints, including statutory constraints;
- requirements of the site managers; and
- the physical condition of the place.

5.2. Constraints Arising from Significance

The heritage significance of General Bridges’ Grave gives rise to a range of obligations and requirements, the most fundamental of which is the obligation to ensure that the heritage values of the place are conserved for present and future generations. The future conservation, development and ongoing management of the place should take account, as far as possible, of constraints arising from the identified heritage values of the site and its setting. Opportunities to retain, reinstate, and interpret these heritage values should also be investigated and implemented, particularly where they can be integrated into the daily use and ongoing care of the place.

5.2.1. Significance and Conservation

The significance of General Bridges’ Grave is outlined in detail in Section 4.0. The following is a brief summary of some significant aspects of the place:

- historical associations with World War I;
- associations with Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges;
- associations with the establishment of Australia’s first military college;
- rarity as the only permanent structure designed by Walter Burley Griffin in Canberra; and
- rarity as one of only two tombs of repatriated Australian soldiers from World War I.

The use and maintenance of General Bridges’ Grave should be based on the assessed levels of significance and levels of ‘Tolerance for Change’, as outlined in Section 4.0 of the HMP. Significant impacts on the site should only be permitted where:

- they make possible the recovery of aspects of greater heritage significance;
- they help ensure the security and viability of the place;
- there is no feasible alternative; and/or
- a full assessment of alternative options has been undertaken.
5.3. Constraints Arising from Condition of General Bridges’ Grave

General Bridges’ Grave is in fair condition, albeit with issues arising from its age and the condition of the granite. The immediate setting of the Grave (within the fence) is generally in good condition and is maintained by NCA staff. However, there is evidence of cracking and lichen growth to the concrete boundary. Further information on the condition of the Grave is provided in Section 7.0 of this HMP.

The wider setting of the Grave (including the carparking area and dirt areas) is in poor condition and is considered to be of low significance. This area does not complement the formality and reverence of the Grave area and the discontinuation of asphalt in the areas beside the Grave itself are visually intrusive to the Grave site and interrupt the flow of the wider setting. The use of the area as a turning circle for cars further detracts from its significance.

5.4. Constraints Arising from the Management Framework

Statutory constraints on General Bridges’ Grave arise from its listing on the CHL, its significance as part of the wider RMC Duntroon, and its location within a Designated Area of the National Capital Plan (NCP).

5.4.1. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

General Bridges’ Grave is a Commonwealth-owned and controlled site and is included on the CHL as a listed place individually and is also mentioned in the CHL citation for the RMC Duntroon Conservation Area. The Grave is therefore subject to the provisions of EPBC Act.

The EPBC Act requires places on the CHL to be managed according to established conservation principles. Schedule 7B of the EPBC Act Regulations sets out the Commonwealth Heritage management principles. The principles encourage the identification of a place’s heritage values, and their conservation and presentation through application of the best available skills and knowledge. They also encourage community (including Indigenous) involvement and co-operation between various levels of government. The EPBC Act requires Commonwealth agencies to prepare a management plan to protect and manage their CHL places, consistent with the Commonwealth Heritage management principles.

The EPBC Act also provides for the Minister responsible for administering the EPBC Act to accredit a management plan. Certain specified classes of action may be taken if approved in accordance with an accredited management plan, without requiring further approval. Where an action has potential to significantly impact the environment (which is broadly defined in the EPBC Act), advice must be sought to determine if a referral to the Minister responsible for administering the EPBC Act is required. Three outcomes of a referral are possible:

1. Action determined not to have a significant impact can go ahead.
2. Action can go ahead subject to conditions (which must be included in the referral) and a ‘Specified/Particular Manner’ finding is made.
3. Action is ‘controlled’, which means that further assessment is required before a decision can be made on whether it can go ahead. The Minister determines the level of assessment, which ranges from Preliminary Information through to a full Public Inquiry (refer to Part 7 of the Act for further information on assessment methods).
The Minister considers the information provided through the selected assessment level and determines if the action can go ahead and under what circumstances. The Minister can refuse an action at the end of this process if the environmental impacts cannot be appropriately managed.

5.4.2. Commonwealth Heritage Management Principles

Schedule 7B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* (Cwlth) sets out seven Commonwealth Heritage management principles. They encourage the identification of a place’s heritage values, and their conservation and presentation through the application of the best available skills and knowledge. They also encourage community involvement and cooperation between the various levels of government. General Bridges’ Grave should be managed in accordance with these principles.

The Commonwealth Heritage management principles are:

- The objective in managing Commonwealth Heritage places is to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit, to all generations, their Commonwealth Heritage values.

- The management of Commonwealth Heritage places should use the best available knowledge, skills and standards for those places, and include ongoing technical and community input to decisions and actions that may have a significant impact on Commonwealth Heritage values.

- The management of Commonwealth Heritage places should respect all heritage values of the place and seek to integrate, where appropriate, any Commonwealth, state, territory and local government responsibilities for those places.

- The management of Commonwealth heritage places should ensure that their use and presentation is consistent with the conservation of their Commonwealth Heritage values.

- The management of Commonwealth Heritage places should make timely and appropriate provision for community involvement, especially by people who:
  - have a particular interest in, or associations with, the place, and
  - may be affected by the management of the place.

- Indigenous people are the primary source of information on the value of their heritage. The active participation of Indigenous people in identification, assessment and management is integral to the effective protection of Indigenous heritage values.

5.4.3. Other Commonwealth Legislative Requirements and Codes

The following additional Commonwealth legislative requirements and codes are also of relevance for works, and compliance could impact its heritage values:

- *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* (OH&S Act);

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA Act); and

5.4.4. The National Capital Plan

The National Capital Plan (NCP) forms the strategic planning framework for Canberra and the ACT. In accordance with section 10 of the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988, the NCP sets out detailed conditions for planning design and development for Designated Areas. The NCA administers this plan for the management of Designated Areas.

A Designated Area is an area of land within the ACT which has special characteristics of the National Capital (including national institutions, the parliamentary triangle, etc) and falls under the jurisdiction of the NCP, rather than the ACT Government Planning legislation. RMC Duntroon (including General Bridges’ Grave) is included in the NCP as a Designated Area; the NCA requires works approvals for development proposals in ‘Designated Areas’.

Works approval includes the submission of a development application. In some cases, evidence of environmental clearance or approval from the Department responsible for the EPBC Act may be required, including a heritage impact assessment or referral documentation.

5.4.5. RMC Duntroon HMP (2009)

In 2009, GML prepared an HMP on behalf of Defence for the entirety of RMC Duntroon. This HMP was undertaken in line with the EPBC Act and includes policies and guidance for the management of the heritage values of the RMC Duntroon site. General Bridges’ Grave was assessed in this HMP project as part of the wider cultural landscape of RMC Duntroon. The policies in the RMC Duntroon HMP are overarching and refer the reader to the individual HMPs for site elements.

5.5. Site Manager’s Requirements

The requirements of the site managers, the NCA, for General Bridges’ Grave place further constraints on the site. On behalf of the NCA, consultation was undertaken with Natalie Broughton, Director of Planning, and Glen Thomas and Peter Pardy, Estate Management.

The main focus of this consultation was to identify issues faced by the NCA in the management of the site and to understand the day-to-day procedures for site maintenance. They specified the need for clear guidance on the maintenance and ongoing conservation of the Grave and its surrounds.

The Estate Management team specified that General Bridges’ Grave is considered low maintenance and that the site is attended to on a weekly basis by the Memorials Team (who service all National Memorials in the ACT) to maintain the area and remove any rubbish. The Estate Management Team also stated that as consecrated ground, the Grave site requires a high level of respect by maintenance teams and visitors.

5.6. Defence’s Requirements

A detailed response on the constraints placed on the site by Defence’s requirements has not been received. While RMC Duntroon is an open base, there are strict security measures in place to ensure the safety and privacy of the RMC Duntroon residents, especially senior personnel. Defence also uses the RMC Duntroon base for officer training and other military activities, such as parades and ceremonies.

The location of General Bridges’ Grave on General Bridges Drive poses a low risk to general security of the base. However, as consecrated ground, the security of the Grave is of utmost
importance. Any changes to the management or visitation levels at General Bridges’ Grave would need to be undertaken in close consultation with Defence and would need to respect Defence’s security and operational needs.

5.7. Other Stakeholder Interests

It is important to consider other key stakeholder interests in the management and conservation of General Bridges’ Grave. Key stakeholders include:

- veterans groups and their family and friends;
- the RSL;
- the Department of Defence;
- the RMC Duntroon Heritage Committee;
- the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Australia War Graves, Commonwealth War Graves Commission;
- the Walter Burley Griffin Society;
- the Australian War Memorial;
- the Australian Institute of Architects;
- the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects;
- the National Trust of Australia (ACT);
- ACT Heritage; and
- Department responsible for the EPBC Act.

These stakeholders may have strong social and associational connections with the Grave and should be included and encouraged to participate in its conservation and management.

Managing the interests and expectations of stakeholders is an integral part of the overall management of the site for the NCA, and conflicting stakeholder views on the appropriate maintenance, management and future of the Grave may exist.

5.8. Natural Heritage Values

While a natural heritage values assessment was not undertaken for this HMP, it is important to consider the recommendations from the RMC Duntroon HMP (undertaken for Defence) with regards to natural values.

The strong physical and visual connection between General Bridges’ Grave and the RMC Duntroon site below is highly significant, however it is essential to consider the delicate balance between the natural heritage values of the remnant grassy woodland community on the ridge of Mt Pleasant and the historic association and commemorative values of the Grave.¹

The RMC Duntroon HMP recommends that removal of indigenous canopy vegetation to provide or enhance viewlines should be avoided. However the potential removal of non-indigenous native species (ie: not part of remnant grassy woodlands) within the canopy could be considered if
undertaken with further ecological advice. The HMP also recommends avoiding the introduction of further plantings of non-indigenous species.  

5.9. Opportunities for General Bridges’ Grave

While there are several constraints applying to the site, these give rise to several opportunities for the future of General Bridges’ Grave as an important site in the ACT and in Australia.

5.9.1. Interpretation and Events

Interpretation of General Bridges’ Grave will aid recognition and understanding of the site’s interesting history, relevance and its heritage values. An Interpretation Plan/Strategy should also be developed for the ongoing delivery of interpretation of the site.

All efforts to further interpret the Grave should involve stakeholder participation such as veterans, the RSL, Defence, the Walter Burley Griffin Society, the Australian War Memorial and other stakeholders. Interpretive products should be focused on the key themes and stories relevant to the area such as:

- The life and work of Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges, his influence on RMC Duntroon and his significance in Australian history;
- The development of Duntroon under the order of Bridges, including collaboration between Bridges and Griffin on the buildings and landscape collaboration;
- The rarity of the repatriation of Bridges’ remains to Australia (the only instance during WWI) and generally the changing attitudes to commemoration and repatriation of war dead and the development and memorialisation of war graves and cemeteries;
- General information on Walter Burley Griffin and his contribution to the design of Canberra;
- The significance of the site to showcase the only permanent example of Walter Burley Griffin’s design in Canberra; and
- Griffin’s collaboration with Lady Edith Bridges (Bridges’ widow) and their aspirations for the simplicity and elegance of the Grave.

Interpretation messages should be strategically targeted at potential audiences, including veterans, their friends and families, school children, tourists and locals—providing a variety of experiences. Structural interpretive measures should also be easily removable/reversible.

As a significant site in military history, interpretation could involve linking with other heritage activities in the region, such as holding open days on special anniversaries, as part of heritage week and holding occasional educational visits. The Grave is currently part of one of the ACT Government’s Canberra Tracks initiative—Track 4, Cemeteries (Appendix E).

Relevant events related to the Griffins in Canberra, in consultation with the Walter Burley Griffin Society, could be investigated to further highlight the significance of the Grave.

Promotion of General Bridges’ Grave as a tourist destination could be developed through ACT Tourism and Visitor Centre initiatives, including brochures, magazine articles and other nationally distributed products engaging with Canberra’s local and interstate visitors.
While the Grave is located away from the main operational area of RMC Duntroon, any interpretation measures would need to respect the operational needs of Defence, the ongoing use of the area and the privacy of the nearby residents.

5.9.2. Enhancement of the Setting of General Bridges’ Grave

The current wider setting of General Bridges’ Grave is in poor condition and is visually intrusive to the heritage values of the area. There is an opportunity for enhancing this setting to be complementary to the Grave—including alteration to the dirt/gravel areas on all edges of the Grave, to differentiate pedestrian and vehicular access and enhance the visual appeal of the site.

The ground surface around the Grave could be enhanced with scoria or other loose gravel to unify the area and level the uneven surface. The asphalt to the front gate of the Grave should be removed to approximately 6m from the Grave and replaced with gravel to match the south, west and northern edges. This change would serve to clearly identify that vehicles are not permitted in the immediate vicinity of the Grave and create a neater and more conducive landscape for the Grave (See Figure 5.1/5.2).

Further attention should also be paid to the ‘sense of entry to the area’ and the redevelopment and replanting/rabbit proofing of the degraded ‘Bridges Anzac Grove’ of trees (planted in 1990), which is managed by Defence. Any major landscaping works would be subject to approval and impact assessment processes and should be undertaken in consultation with Defence.

The views from General Bridges’ Grave over RMC Duntroon are highly significant and are currently impeded by overgrowth of the native vegetation below. While the natural heritage values of the remnant grassy woodland on the ridge below the grave prevent removal of native remnant grassy woodland species, investigation could be undertaken to identify non-Indigenous natives which could be removed to ‘thin’ the canopy and potentially enhance views over RMC Duntroon.

5.9.3. Development Near General Bridges’ Grave

There are very limited opportunities for development within the setting of General Bridges’ Grave. The only development which should be permitted is small-scale installations to enhance interpretation and presentation of the area. Further development should not be permitted any closer to the Grave than the current building lines (of ADFA). All proposals for development should be subject to development approval and impact assessment processes, and be undertaken in consultation with Defence.
Figure 5.1  Current Landscape — showing asphalt and dirt/gravel areas. Not to scale. (Source: GML on Pip Giovanelli Plan, 2011)

Figure 5.2  Proposed Landscape Treatment — showing asphalt and dirt/gravel areas (Source: GML on Pip Giovaneli Plan, 2011)
5.10. Endnotes

1 Godden Mackay Logan 2009, RMC Duntroon Heritage Management Plan, report prepared for the Department of Defence.