



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial displays a high degree of artistic excellence, particularly the bronze statue itself. (Criterion 1.2)

It displays landmark qualities, both from afar and when approached from Apex Drive and also by means of the views available from it. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial commemorates Australian and New Zealand soldiers who died in Egypt, Palestine and Syria during World War One. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial, dedicated to the memory of soldiers killed in action, is the focus of Albany's annual ANZAC services. As a national shrine the place is highly valued by the wider community. (Criterion 4.1)

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial contributes to the community's sense of place, not only by its landmark qualities, but also by its associations with Australian and New Zealand soldiers of World War One, many of whom departed from Albany to fight overseas. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

While War Memorials are not uncommon structures, this one is unique. In Albany, divisions of soldiers from New Zealand and across Australia were gathered together for the first time. From the harbour below *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial*, these soldiers sailed, with many never to return. The logistical and military role of Albany, the fate of the soldiers who sailed and the subsequent commemorative events combine in a fashion which is unique in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial is in a Inter War Stripped Classical style and representative of its type. (Criterion 6.1)

The sculpture, at once sobering and uplifting, represents an attitude to life, death and war that was typical of the society that produced it. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial is in good condition apart from stains on the granite masonry, caused by water running off the bronze statue on to the walls below, and also the washing off of accumulated dirt.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* is high. It was conceived as a memorial to honour those who gave themselves for their country, and it is used today for that purpose.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* is fair. Originally sited at Port Said, and badly damaged, the statue is a copy of the original. Substitution of damaged granite masonry has also occurred.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Sarah Stephenson BA. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial is situated on Mt Clarence. It was erected on this site on 11 October 1964.¹ It was originally erected at Port Said in 1932.² *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* is a 9 metre (30ft) bronze monument of an Australian trooper going to the aid of a New Zealander whose horse has been wounded.³

In 1827, Albany was established as a New South Wales military outpost under the command of Major Edmund Lockyer.⁴ In 1831, this military post was disbanded when Albany was transferred to the Western Australian command of Governor Stirling.⁵

Albany resumed its role as a military station with the construction of Albany Forts in 1893.⁶ In November 1914, the military presence expanded dramatically when many Australian and New Zealand mounted troops assembled in Albany, their last Australian post, before leaving for Egypt.⁷

On 4 August 1916, Brigadier General J R Royston, CMG, DSO, Commander of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade suggested that a memorial be erected at Port Said, in memory of Australian and New Zealand Mounted Troops who were killed in the Syria campaign.⁸

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial was funded by the Australian government, which contributed £10,000, the New Zealand government which donated £2,000 and the troops who contributed £5,400.⁹

In 1923, a design competition was launched. This was won by Mr P H Meldrum of Melbourne and C Webb Gilbert. Webb was awarded 200 guineas for his design.¹⁰ Architects commissioned to work on the memorial were Stevenson and Meldrum. Roberts won the contract to supply Gabo Island granite for the base and screen wall. Webb Gilbert died in October 1925, so Sir Bertram Mackennal completed the sculpture.¹¹

In 1927, the Egyptian Agency of the Imperial War Graves Commission commenced work on the foundations at Port Said, which were completed in 1932.¹² *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* was unveiled on 23 November 1932,

¹ *Weekend News*, 3 October 1964, p. 17.

² *ibid.*

³ Albany Local Library Collection, typescripts, date and source unknown.

⁴ Letter to Albany Town Clerk from Robert Stephens regarding the naming of Albany, 4 July 1960.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *Defense of the Sound*, PR8679, Battye.

⁷ *Weekend News*, 3 October 1964, p. 18.

⁸ Albany Local Library Collection, typescripts, date and source unknown.

⁹ *Weekend News*, 3 October 1964, p. 17.

¹⁰ Albany Local Library Collection, typescripts, date and source unknown.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

by the former Prime Minister of Australia, Hon William Morris Hughes KC, MP.¹³ The memorial was inscribed with the following:

The memorial is erected by their comrades and the governments of Australia and New Zealand in memory of the Members of the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles, the Imperial Camel Corps, who lost their lives in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, between 1916 and 1918.¹⁴

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial was damaged in the Suez Crisis on 26 December 1956.¹⁵ In 1959, the United Arab Republic agreed to ship the memorial back to Australia. Subsequently it arrived in Albany in March 1960.¹⁶

Howard Hartman, an Albany stonemason, was contracted to re-create the granite base. Raymond Ewers from Melbourne, was commissioned to re-cast the figures.¹⁷ In September 1962, the completed plaster cast was shipped to Genoa, Italy, for casting in bronze by the Battaglia Bros in Milan.¹⁸

In July 1964, the new statue arrived in Fremantle.¹⁹ The completed *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial*, situated on Mt Clarence, was unveiled by Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies at 2 pm on 11 October 1964.²⁰ The *Weekend News* reported:

Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies will officially unveil the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial on Mt Clarence, Albany, at 2.20 pm on Sunday, October 11. His party will arrive in Perth by air on Saturday and fly to Albany next day. Many ex-servicemen and others are expected to attend.²¹

The National Trust proposed to classify the *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* on 14 April 1970. This was due to its architectural, historical and social significance.²²

In June 1985, the bayonets, attached to the memorial were stolen by vandals. Mrs June Hodgson, Mayor of Albany, appealed to the public for their return.²³ The bayonets have since been returned.²⁴ The memorial is currently in excellent condition.²⁵

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial is a bronze sculpture on a granite masonry cenotaph, around which is a low granite semi-circular wall.

13 *Weekend News*, 3 October 1964, p.17.

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

16 Albany Local Library Collection, typescripts, date and source unknown.

17 *ibid.*

18 National Trust Assessment Form, 5 October 1970.

19 *ibid.*

20 *Weekend News*, 3 October 1964.

21 *ibid.*

22 National Trust Assessment Form, 5 October 1970.

23 *Great South News*, 12 June 1985.

24 Facsimile between Sarah Stephenson and Malcolm Trail on bayonets disappearance, 5 September 1995.

25 *ibid.*

Desert Mounted Corps Memorial is situated approximately 100 metres south west of the summit of Mount Clarence and due south of a bitumen carpark used for the disabled. Typically, the general public would approach *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* by Apex Drive, which approaches the memorial from the east and terminates at the main carpark approximately 200 metres east and about 20 metres below *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial*. From the carpark cement steps and a disabled access road lead up to the memorial. From about the last 20 steps, *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* comes into view; a square granite-clad column approximately six metres high and 2.5 metres wide each side, supporting a bronze statue approximately 3 metres high. At the top of the column and at the base of the statue is a thin plinth which appears to be made from bluestone. It varies in thickness so as to allow rainwater to run off to the southern and eastern sides. Consequently, these sides of the granite-clad column below have green water stains.

The granite-clad column has a slight entasis and sits on a plinth which is about 1.5 metres high and projects out from the column above by about 300 mm. The plinth sits on a granite base that is about three metres square.

In a semi-circle around the common focal point of the statue, column, plinth and base is a granite masonry wall, about one metre high when measured on the inside face. The granite blocks of the wall are approximately 900mm by 450 mm by 450mm wide and are laid in a stretcher bond. The top course of blocks have a cornice moulding and have a raked top so that rainwater is directed from the top of the wall to the inside face of the wall. This has led to the inner face of the wall having dark water stains. At the ends of the semi-circle, the wall is terminated by masonry piers which project past the wall face and are about 1.5 metres high.

The area within the semi-circular wall is paved in granite slabs which are about 700mm by 700mm square and about 40mm thick.

The style of the column, with its plinth and base and surrounding wall, is Inter-War Stripped Classical. The composition is perfectly symmetrical and static. The bronze statue, in contrast, is dynamic and asymmetrical. Both, however, are monumental and formal in quality. The statue portrays an Australian trooper going to the aid of a New Zealander whose horse has been wounded. The statue is orientated so that all four figures, which are about twice life size, face north. The figures are arranged in three sculptural masses as follows. The eastern figure is a horse that has just fallen and is kneeling on its hind legs attempting to get up. The central figure is the rider of the fallen horse. He is walking forward in a determined attitude. The third sculptural mass is that of a horseman on his rearing horse. The overall composition is such that one's eye is led from the kneeling hindquarters of the eastern horse, to the head of the central horseman, to the head of the mounted horseman (which is higher but relatively close to that of his companion), to the head of the rearing horse. The statue is full of dramatic power and tension and is finely executed.

The height of the granite column and the siting of the memorial make viewing of the statue difficult and the overall composition is best viewed from the northern side of the disabled persons' carpark about 50 metres north of the memorial.

Apart from the water stains previously mentioned, *Desert Mounted Corps Memorial* is in good condition.

13.3 REFERENCES