
Charles Web Gilbert Sculpture

Location

293 Royal Parade PARKVILLE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

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Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 162160

Property Number

Veterans Description for Public

Charles Web Gilbert (1867-1925) was an important sculptor of Australian First World War memorials. He produced several sculptures for the Australian War Memorial, such as *Bomb Thrower* and *Stretcher-bearers*. In 1923, Gilbert resigned from his position as head sculptor to pursue other commissions for memorials. His memorials include one of a soldier aiding a wounded comrade, which was made originally for the British Medical Association in East Melbourne. It now stands outside the Australian Medical Association office at 293 Royal Parade, Parkville, and lists the doctors who enlisted in the First World War.

Gilbert was born at Cockatoo near Maryborough moving to Melbourne aged 9, he worked in a cafe and then as a cook at Parer's Hotel. He attended the National Gallery of Victoria drawing school in 1888, but was a self-taught sculptor, beginning working in marble and then eventually in bronze. He set up a studio and foundry at 59 Gore Street, Fitzroy, in 1908.

In 1914, aged 47, Gilbert planned to travel to Paris, but when war broke out he went instead to London, where he spent some time working in a munitions factory. It was here that he met fellow sculptor Wallace Anderson. Lieutenant Anderson, from Geelong, had served in France with 23rd Battalion before posted to the Australian War Records Section as a Museums Officer. Anderson convinced Gilbert to join the Australian War Records Section as a sculptor, which he did in December 1918. Gilbert, Anderson and Leslie Bowles travelled through France making studies and models of battlefields and significant sites to inform the design and construction of the dioramas they were to later make for the Australian War Memorial.

Gilbert returned to Australia in 1920 and completed the 2nd Division monument, which was afterwards unveiled at Mont St. Quentin in the presence of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who had been the supreme commander of the Allied armies during the war. Depicting a digger bayoneting a German in the Second World War.

Gilbert's other works include *Helping Hand* at the Shepparton War Memorial, and *Over the Top*, which stands behind A Block at Victoria Barracks, and appears to be the sculpture that stood outside the offices of the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures. He also made the Matthew Flinders sculpture outside St Paul's Cathedral and his larger-than-life sculpture Bomber is the stunning memorial at Broken Hill.

Gilbert died in 1925 at the age of 57 from heart problems exacerbated by his physically demanding life - he used to make his own clay moulds- the middle of constructing a major memorial sculpture to the Desert Mounted Corps. In 1923, he had won a competition to design the memorial in remembrance of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought at Port Said in Egypt from 1916 to 1918. After his death, several other sculptors, including Paul Montford and Bertram Mackennal, completed the memorial. It was destroyed in the 1950s, but its power may be seen in the similar sculpture at Albany in Western Australia.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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