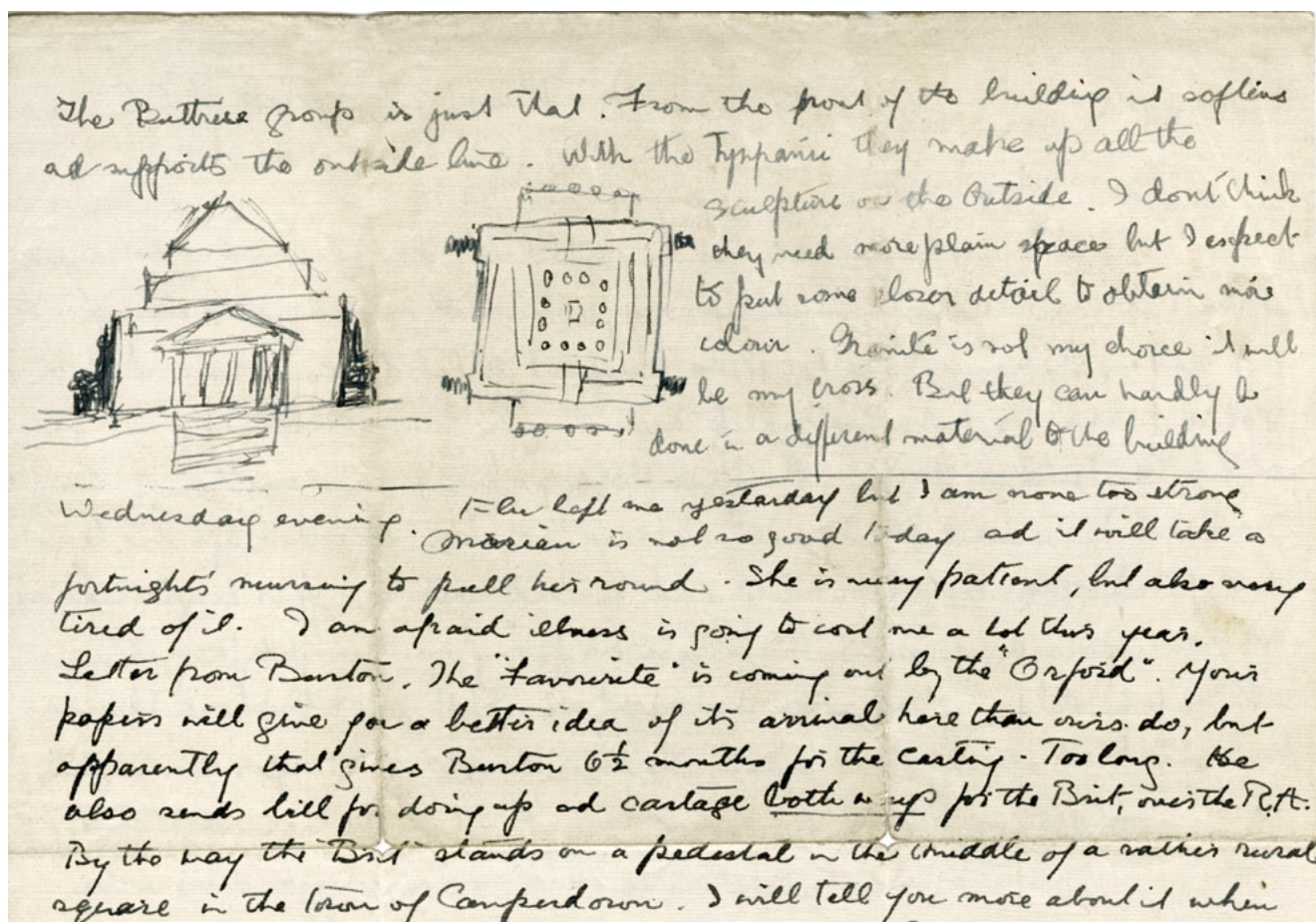


The Commemorative Sculpture of Paul Montford

Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne 6 July – 6 October 2007



Based on the papers of the sculptor Paul Montford (1868–1938), this exhibition sheds new light on the making of the sculpture for the National War Memorial of Victoria – the Shrine of Remembrance. Born in London in 1868, Montford emigrated to Australia in 1923. Responsible for many famous sculptures in the public spaces of Melbourne, his work on the Shrine was his most ambitious and controversial.

Letters and photographs that Montford sent to his family in Britain while he was working on the sculpture for the Shrine highlight the demands for commemoration by Australian communities during the inter-war years. They reveal new connections between works of art in Britain and Australia, explaining vividly the production and politics of making sculpture at this time. Significantly, they explain how the processes of making memorials were vested with deep significance either through the kinds of materials utilised, the symbolism of the design or the identity of the artists and craftsmen and women employed.

This essay by Catherine Moriarty is published by the University of Brighton to accompany the exhibition. As well as archival documents and photographs from Britain displayed in the very building to which they relate, the exhibition includes sculptures by Montford on loan from major national, state and regional collections in Australia.

Figure 1



University of Brighton



SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE
MELBOURNE



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4a



Figure 4b

Fig. 1

Letter from Montford to his brother
describing his work on the Shrine
September 1929

Fig. 2

Portrait of Paul Montford c.1900
cabinet card 16.5 x 10.6 cm
This portrait shows the sculptor
in front of his sculpture 'Storm
wave'. It was exhibited at the Royal
Academy in 1900.

Fig. 3

Figure of William Caxton for the
exterior of the Victoria & Albert
Museum, London 1909
black and white photographic print
of the plaster model
16 x 8 cm
Several sculptors were appointed
to decorate the façade of the
Victoria & Albert Museum by
its architect, Sir Aston Webb.
Montford designed the figures of
the goldsmith George Heriot and
the printer William Caxton. Plasters
of these figures were housed at the
Melbourne University Architectural
Atelier where Montford taught on
occasion.

Fig. 4a/4b

Wounded Soldier and Grieving
Mother for Croydon War Memorial
1921
plaster cast and clay model
photographic prints
15.2 x 10.6 cm

London

Paul Montford was born in 1868, in London. His father, Horace Montford, was a sculptor and taught at the Royal Academy schools. Paul studied at Lambeth School of Art and went on to join his father's classes. In 1891 he won the Royal Academy Gold Medal and travelling studentship.

Fig. 2

After travels in Europe where he was impressed by the monumental sculpture he encountered, especially in France, Montford went on to establish his reputation as an architectural sculptor. He worked on some important buildings of the period, the Northampton Institute and Battersea Town Hall, London with E W Mountford in 1896 and 1892; Cardiff City Hall for Lanchester & Richards in 1905; and the Victoria and Albert Museum with Sir Aston Webb, which opened in 1909. He also developed his skills in portraiture, a skill that was a mainstay of many sculptors' careers at this time and one that was to serve him well in Australia. The memorial to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in Westminster Abbey and a statue to him at Stirling are among Montford's most prestigious commissions.

Fig. 3

In 1914, Montford won a competition to design eight elaborate bronze figures to be arranged in pairs on the bridge over the River Kelvin in Glasgow. Montford was ready to exhibit two of his completed plasters at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1917 and three more in 1918, but hereafter the project suffered set backs. Increases in the price of bronze meant that Montford was seriously out of pocket since his fee was intended to cover casting costs. Instead of enjoying the rewards a commission on this scale might have brought about, his finances were in a perilous state. Though he received the commission for the Croydon War Memorial, unveiled in 1921, he was aware that many war memorial projects were being passed to younger sculptors who had seen active service. Concerned that opportunities for memorials and architectural sculpture were diminishing, he looked into the possibility of emigration.

Fig. 4



Figure 5

Fig. 5
Design for an ANZAC memorial
 1922/3
 pencil drawing 17 x 22.8 cm



Figure 6

Fig. 6
Maquette for the memorial to
ANZAC soldiers killed in Egypt,
Palestine and Syria to be erected
at Port Said (Desert Mounted
Corps Memorial) 1923
 photographic print
 31.2 x 25.5 cm
This was later cast in bronze and
acquired by the National Gallery of
Victoria through the Felton Bequest
in 1939.

Fig. 7
Paul Montford in Web Gilbert's
Melbourne studio at work on
the latter's design for the Desert
Mounted Corps Memorial 1925/6
 photographic print
 10.4 x 7.4 cm
Web Gilbert died suddenly in
October 1925, whereupon the
Department of Defence asked
Montford to continue the project.
To Montford's dismay, the
commission was then passed
to Sir Bertram Mackennal who
completed the memorial in his
studio in England just before his
death in 1931. The bronze was
unveiled at Port Said in November
1932. Destroyed in 1956 during
the Suez crisis, Ray Ewers was
commissioned to make a replica
which was erected in Albany,
Western Australia in 1964. Another
cast was then placed on ANZAC
Avenue, Canberra.

Emigration

In London, Paul Montford spotted a competition announcement placed by the Australian government inviting sculptors and architects to submit designs for a memorial to ANZAC soldiers killed in Egypt, Palestine and Syria that was to be erected at Port Said. On 10 November 1922 he wrote in his diary, 'To Australia House about competition, got particulars and am to hear about the feasibility of idea.' Montford decided to compete and early in 1923 he arrived in Melbourne with his model, optimistic about his chances. Though he did not win this competition, the judges favouring the design submitted by the Melbourne sculptor Charles Web Gilbert (1867–1925), Montford decided to stay in Australia with the hope that other work would come his way. Without the funds to establish a studio immediately he secured a teaching post at the Technical Institute in Geelong. His wife Marian, his two daughters, and his son Adrian who had been born in February while Paul was on his way to Australia, arrived in July. *Figs 5 and 6*

From his arrival in Melbourne, Paul wrote detailed letters to his older brother Louis in London. Louis was a stone carver and Paul was able to write at length and in detail about the work that occupied him and the difficulties he faced in re-establishing his career. Montford also wrote about his experiences of living in an unfamiliar country, about his young family, and matters from current affairs and the cost of living to education and health care. On 12 May 1923 he writes:

The prospects of sculpture are not too rosy – they have got into the way of doing without, this last ten or twenty years and need a bit of waking up. In this city there is no stone that can be carved – in Sydney there is, but it is very difficult to get any that is likely to last very long. Here it is all cement or Bronze, the one unsatisfactory and the other too dear – and difficult to get done. There are no bronze foundries here worth the name.

Later that year, Montford was asked by the architects Hudson & Wardrop to model the sculptural components of their design for the National War Memorial competition, and though they were awarded first prize, Montford had to find other ways to support his family until work on the Shrine began. He did not want to teach for long and made other attempts to make himself known. He exhibited with the Victorian Artists Society in 1923 and an exhibition of his work was held at Geelong Art Gallery in 1924.

Plans for the building of the Shrine had not advanced but in 1925 Montford decided to move from Geelong to the Melbourne suburb of Toorak. He had negotiated a manageable rent on a rambling colonial villa in poor repair and here he set up home and studio. In order to give up the teaching post he had decided that he needed to be near clients with the influence to place commissions but it took longer to re-establish himself than he had anticipated. In the meantime, with finances in a perilous state, Montford had no choice but to swallow his pride and assist his rival, Web Gilbert, with the modelling of the Port Said memorial.

Fig. 7

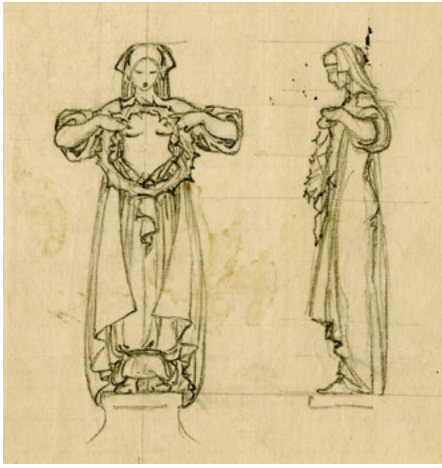


Figure 8a



Figure 8b



Figure 8c

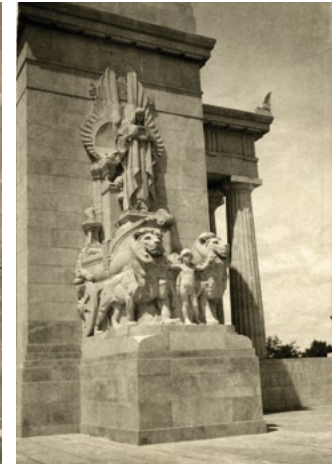


Figure 8d

Fig. 8

The transition of the buttress group 'Sacrifice' from initial sketch to clay model, then plaster and finally granite 1928–30

a. 16.6 x 19.4 cm (sketch)

b. 15 x 9.5 cm (clay)

c. 15 x 10.2 cm (plaster)

d. 11.5 x 7 cm (granite)

Montford wrote to his brother on 5 November 1928:

I have been on a ¹/₁₂ sketch today for the Buttress Groups and can see I shall quite enjoy myself. Being a build up of lions, child, boat, chair, throne, stool, figure, wings and garlands there is quite a nice lot to fit together in a pleasing assemblage.

An accomplished sculptor of portrait busts, Montford's talents were readily employed in Australia to commemorate politicians and eminent individuals in other walks of life. They were important markers of esteem commissioned by institutions eager to make public their credentials. In 1926, he sculpted portraits for the Provisional Parliament House in Canberra. Other important projects from this period include the Australian Club War Memorial, Sydney, the figure of Peter Pan now situated at Melbourne Zoo and the competition entry for the statue of Henry Lawson.

Building the Shrine

The competition for the National War Memorial of Victoria was announced in November 1922 and by July the following year, the judging committee had produced from a field of 83, a short list of six entrants who were asked to submit scale models of their designs for exhibition at the Melbourne Town Hall. It was at this point that Hudson and Wardrop contacted Paul Montford and asked him to model, in Plasticene, the sculptural details of their design.

For the winning architects, like many of their competitors, sculpture played an important part in their monumental scheme that was to honour the 114,000 Victorians who served in the First World War, of whom 19,000 did not return. Hudson described how he wanted to create a landmark that was visible from afar, even from the sea, like the Acropolis at Athens, but one that was physically removed from the daily life of the city. Situated high on the Domain with its stepped pyramidal roof, the Shrine was to reference ancient monumental precedents.

Hudson's main aim was to convey 'the true birth of a Australian tradition'. To this end, sculpture was incorporated at key points both outside and within the structure, acting as a vehicle to link the symbolism of the interior and the exterior. The original design included several sculptural elements that were later abandoned, primarily in order to stem rising costs. These were, four equestrians of Australian war leaders to be placed on a lower terrace around the memorial, and eight figurative 'sentinels' that were to guard the inner shrine representing Love, Peace, Courage, Integrity, Strength, Faith, Honour, and Brotherhood. The sculpture considered indispensable, and that which visitors see to this day, comprised the four exterior buttress groups representing Sacrifice, Patriotism, Justice, Freedom (later changed to Peace and Goodwill); the two tympanum friezes, The Call to Arms on the north façade, and The Homecoming on the south; and the twelve interior reliefs illustrating 'deeds of Australian valour'.

Montford's early involvement in the project and his developing friendship with Hudson gave him confidence that when the memorial came to be built he would be invited to realise the sculptural components. The small number of sculptors with comparable experience and standing within Melbourne, indeed Australia, must have contributed to his confidence. Badly needing the work, and the kind of sums such a large project would bring him, Montford regularly reported to his brother on latest developments, or lack of them. As it turned out, an incoming Labor state government during 1924 questioned the suitability of a monumental war memorial, believing that a utilitarian project would be of more worth. Lasting just four months in power, they had raised doubts as to what kind of memorial would be most appropriate, doubts that were exacerbated by a further change in government.



Figure 9

Fig. 9
Design for the north tympanum
 c.1929
 pencil on paper
 22.9 x 28.8 cm

Fig. 10
The façade of the Shrine from the
north 'The Call to Arms' c.1934
 photographic print
 15.2 x 19.2 cm



Figure 10

The new Country-National government preferred a victory arch to the Shrine, and the popularity of a temporary cenotaph outside the Parliament Building, that acted as a focus for ANZAC Day parades, had brought about a new scheme for a permanent structure in its place; an option that was favoured by members of the Returned Services League. Montford wrote to his brother Louis in May 1925:

If only that dashed Memorial was starting but Hudson reckons on starting about the end of next year! Not so long when you consider the time the Monument is to be up, but a hell of a time to wait, for me.

In 1927, on ANZAC Day, a rousing speech by General Monash reinvigorated enthusiasm for the scheme and on 11 November the foundation stone was laid. Montford was delighted that the project was moving forward.

He wrote to Louis on 5 August 1928:

The Nat Mem work will be coming on very soon – any week now, for my credentials have gone through the sub committee and with the arranging of finance which I talked over with Hudson on Friday, the next meeting of the committee should give orders for the contract to be drawn out. So after 4½ years wait there should be 4½ years work ahead.

The Shrine Sculpture

Although Montford was involved in the design of the Shrine sculpture from the very beginning, the years of delay meant that it was no longer a foregone conclusion that the commission would be his. Rather than approving Montford's involvement 'on the nod', the Shrine's Executive Sub-Committee demanded further discussion. There were two reasons for this and Montford had cause to be anxious. Firstly, cash flow problems meant that the sculpture was to be 'rolled-out'. The cost of the entire memorial was estimated at over £247,000 with the sculptural components alone amounting to £33,500. The buttress groups, costed at £15,000, were considered indispensable features and were to be carried out first, but the tympanum friezes and the inner relief panels were to come later when funds allowed. The designation of discrete sculptural tasks with their own budget meant that Montford's role was administered much like a sub-contractor, working on components, rather than, as Hudson later acknowledged, an artist collaborating closely with the architect, contributing vision as well as experience to the scheme as a whole.

More critically, the issue of Montford's suitability had been called into question, not in terms of skill, but rather in terms of his identity, for he was neither Australian nor an ex-serviceman. Since the competition five years earlier the difficulties of returned soldiers, soon exacerbated by the depression, had become a major political issue. They should, it was felt by many, be given priority in employment - in terms of the Shrine, this was seen as especially pertinent. While Montford would go on to receive the commission for the tympana, the Committee insisted that an Australian sculptor be engaged for the interior frieze. Lyndon Dadswell (1908–1986) was selected, to Montford's delight:

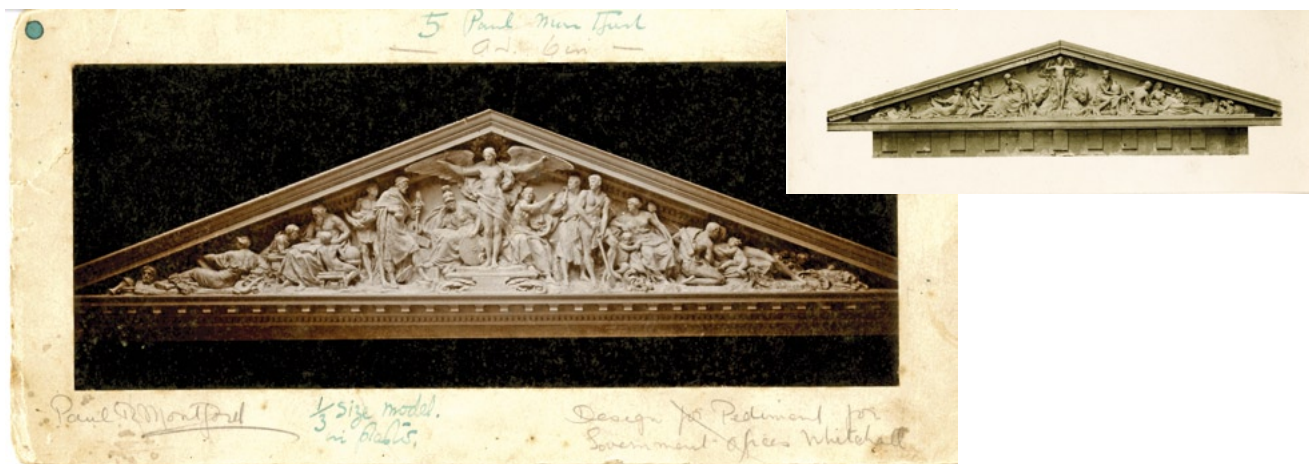


Figure 11a/11b (inset)

Fig. 11a
Design for pediment, 1/3 size
model in plaster, New Government
Offices, Whitehall 1899

photographic print

11.6 x 24.2 cm

Fig 11b (inset)
Design in plaster for the south
tympanum 'The Homecoming'
c.1930

photographic print

5.6 x 16.2 cm

Several of the ideas in the London relief would appear on the Shrine tympanum *The Homecoming*.

For example, the elderly seated philosopher teaching a young boy and a reclining female with a lute and accoutrements of the arts on the left hand side balanced by a kneeling man, woman and their child on the right hand side. The wings of the central figure in the London design become the branches of the tree behind the figure of Young Australia on the Melbourne relief, the balance of each figure and the placing of the feet are exactly the same.

...just when the Committee want an Aussie for the Shrine comes photos from a fellow of 21 at Sydney which seem to show him to be all I have been asking for!

Dadswell was appointed on a temporary basis, his first design was approved in July 1929, and his contract was extended. Montford took the younger sculptor under his wing and the two worked alongside each other at Bruce Street. Montford's designs for the buttress groups had been approved in May and work was underway on the full-scale models with his team of studio assistants.

Figs 8 a, b, c, d

Montford then set to work on the sculpture to be placed above the north and south entrances to the Shrine. Earlier projects, particularly his proposed pediment for the New Government Offices in Whitehall, London informed the Shrine tympana. Montford asked his youngest daughter, Bobbie, to pose for one of the figures on the left of the *Homecoming* frieze.

From pencil sketches and clay maquettes, to scale models, the finished sculptures were finally realised in granite on a monumental scale. The Melbourne stone carvers Messrs Hutching and Hamilton executed the full-sized buttress groups in Tynong granite. The tympana friezes were carved by the Melbourne building contractors Vaughan & Lodge.

Figs 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Later Commemorative Projects

Montford's involvement with the Shrine made him a local celebrity and demand for his sculpture grew. For the first time he had plenty of work on hand. He designed a vigorous bronze Britannia proffering her sword to the Dominions for the wealthy Western District town of Camperdown, unveiled in December 1929. For the citizens of the Melbourne suburb of Malvern, Montford returned to the idea of a pair of figures, an arrangement that he had employed at Kelvingrove and at Croydon. Carved in marble, the Malvern soldier wears AIF uniform and holds a slouch hat; Montford asked a local girl and baby to pose as models for 'the young mother'.

Fig. 14.

As well as these major memorials Montford was invited to make many portrait busts in these years, his subjects included politicians, businessmen, doctors and academics, including those associated with the Shrine; Frank Tate, Stanley Argyle, General Monash and Philip Hudson. Montford continued to exhibit his work at the Royal Academy in London and remained a member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors yet he was gradually accepted as Australia's own.

Fig. 15.

His best known Melbourne landmarks include the statue to Adam Lindsay Gordon, unveiled in 1932, the statue of Wesley in 1935, and that of Judge Higinbotham in 1936. Further afield, he designed the statue of W B Chaffey at Mildura, unveiled in 1929, and the statue of Senator Harry Lawson at Castlemaine, 1930.



Figure 12

Fig. 12
Seated figure for the south tympanum, 'The Homecoming'
 c.1932
 photographic print
 14.5 x 18.8 cm
 On the reverse Montford has written, 'one of Shrine Figures. Think you will like it. Bobbie sat for Head.' Bobbie was his youngest daughter.

Fig. 13
Montford with his studio team
 c.1930
 photographic print
 6.75 x 11 cm
 Paul Montford worked from the studio at his home in Bruce Street, Toorak. At his busiest, Paul employed several assistants who, depending on their abilities, helped him with modelling, carving, plaster casting, and the menial tasks that supported the making of sculpture; preparing clay, making packing cases, carting. This photograph shows the studio team sitting around Montford and his cockatoo. Left to right: Lyndon Dadswell; Stanley Hammond; Charles Oliver (behind); and Eric Patching.



Figure 13

Unveiling the Shrine

Throughout the period 1929-1934, the sculptural components of the Shrine were completed. Visitors called at the Bruce Street studio to see work in progress, Montford took his family to see the sculptures installed, and developments were reported in the press. Yet not everyone approved of Montford's designs. A scathing attack appeared in Stead's Review in December 1929. Criticism focused on the issue that the sculpture conveyed little about Australian wartime experience to an Australian audience.

Over 300,000 people were present to witness the dedication by the Duke of Gloucester on 11 November 1934. While Hudson was invited to sit with the dignitaries at the unveiling ceremony, Montford was not. He threatened to return his ticket, until his wife intervened. By this time his brother Louis had died and so there is no letter recounting the event, simply a brief note in a diary.

Shrine opened. Saw it and shook hands with the Dook. To Warrendite in aft: with Marian, Adrian & Bobby.

Paul Montford died in 1938 and his wife and family returned to Britain. Though he made a substantial contribution to the Melbourne cityscape, he is not widely known. His identity was always contentious and his work soon became unfashionable having little place in most histories of art in Australia. It is for this reason that few visitors to the Shrine might suspect that the sculpture above them is associated with memorials and statues elsewhere in Melbourne, in other parts of Australia, and on the other side of the world.

Fig. 16

You must certainly miss Mr Montford and really I can't quite believe that the man who was my only friend in Australia, is no longer there for me to ask advice. Australia's greatest artist. I am trying to follow in his footsteps, trying to "do" good sincere work, although I can't see myself ever producing such fine work, although I shall never stop trying.

Lyndon Dadswell to Marian Montford, 1938

No other sculptor has left his mark so definitely on the civic landscape in Melbourne as Paul Montford. ...no one can doubt the energy with which he helped give sculpture its rightful place in the scheme of things, civic and national.

Basil Burdett *Art in Australia*, 1 March 1938



Figure 14

Fig. 14
Malvern War Memorial
 (detail)
 1927–31
 digital file, 2005.

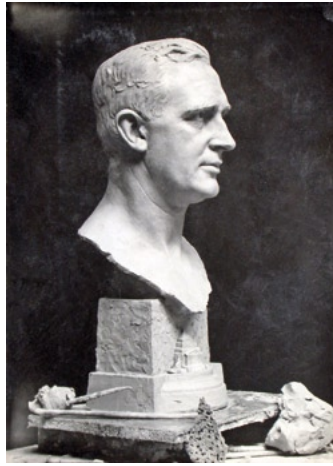


Figure 15

Fig 15.
Bust of Philip Hudson
 photographic print
 15.4 x 11.2 cm
 Having served with the AIF, and based in Melbourne, the architect Philip Hudson and his partner James Wardrop were popular winners of the National War Memorial competition in 1923. In addition to their collaboration on the Shrine, Montford assisted Hudson & Wardrop with their entry for the competition to design the memorial to Australians who died on the Western Front, at Villers Bretonneux; they were awarded second prize. Hudson also worked with Montford on the Malvern War Memorial.

Hudson later wrote:
My long and intimate association with Mr Montford has been one of great pleasure to me, and I feel that I can fully appreciate the masterly manner in which he performed his work. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the manner in which he performed the task I set him in successfully applying Sculptural Groups in the manner of buttresses to the East and West walls.

Montford's bust of Hudson with its miniature 'Shrine' on the pedestal was acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1958.

Fig. 16
Paul Montford outside Flinders Street station 1930s
 photographic print
 21.5 x 16.6 cm



Figure 16

Further Reading:

K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Melbourne, 1999.

C. Moriarty, "The Returned Soldiers bug": making the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne' in N. Saunders and P. Cornish (eds.) *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the First World War*, London, 2007.

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K. Scarlett, *Australian Sculptors*, Melbourne, 1980.

G. Sturgeon, *The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788–1975*, London, 1978.

J. Zimmer, 'Paul Raphael Montford' *Art and Australia*, vol. 28. no. 1, (1990).

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www.brighton.ac.uk/arts
www.shrine.org.au/

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Design by Graeme Dawes.