

withed my ...  
until Lambert's death in 1930.

~~I travelled to Europe with E.A. Harvey.~~

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The association of travelling students from both Royal Art Soc & Julian Ashton's school brought together the ex students. I had been introduced by Ashton to a student E.A. Harvey who had booked to London by the same boat as I.

I was introduced to George Lambert <sup>ARA</sup> by Sydney Ure-Smith, who as President of the Society of Artists was responsible for the administration of the Travelling Scholarship, 1925. Lambert had won this Scholarship in 1900, then it had not been awarded until Roi de Mestre won it in 1925. My scholarship was the next awarded.

Lambert gave me a copy of the newly published Lambert book, and an introduction to his son Maurice, the sculptor, in London. I remember the words:

"To introduce the winner of the Travelling Scholarship, the damn thing that wrecked my life."

We hope that he will bring back a little of the something that made the ancients great, and make them laugh at you and me and even Mr Murch."

(would have been happy as a sheep farmer. PTO)

As the latest scholarship winner, I was invited to a Society of Artists dinner, where I met ~~Julian~~ Ashton, a past president of the Society.

"One of my boys is going to Europe shortly," he told me.

*This was E.A. Harvey*

I met <sup>him</sup> Harvey, and it turned out that he and I had, by coincidence, booked our passages on the same ship, and been put in the same cabin. Thus E.A. Harvey and I travelled out to Europe together in 1925. We had not met before then because of the rift between members of the R.A.S. and the Sydney Art School. After the voyage, we ~~would meet~~ met again in Italy, and were later both to work for Lambert.

After arriving in London, I was introduced by George Coates, a Melbourne portrait painter, to the Pre-Raphaelite Society. As a result of my contact with their lectures, when I visited Italy I went down to Assisi and Perugia to see the works of Giotto and his contemporary Primitives. I took this trip with D'Auvergne Boxall of Adelaide who, conceited about his linguistic skills, said he would buy the train tickets from Assisi to Perugia. He did so thus:

Boxall (a trifle nervously, to booking clerk): Due Bigletti per Assisi.

Clerk: Assisi?

Boxall: Si! Si!

Clerk (obviously thinking Boxall French): Assisi ici!

Boxall (understanding): Assisi ici?

Clerk: Si! Si!

Boxall: Oh! Due bigletti per Perugia.

Being a sculpture student Travelling Scholar, with less knowledge of painting, I found in the work of Giotto and his contemporaries the basis for building a knowledge of painting: I was to pursue this programme when I returned to Australia, with the encouragement of George Lambert.

I must say that in Italy I did not feel so removed by time from those old painters. In the cathedral church of Florence (the tower of which was designed by Giotto?), a notice was displayed:

"In order to avoid giving offence to God and His Holy Angels and for purposes of hygiene, please do not spit on the pavement."

*Michelangelo  
& Raphael*



In 1927-28 I was back in Sydney with an interest in painting established by my experiences in Europe, but more established in sculpture. I was asked by George Lambert to assist him with the Henry Lawson Memorial, and the Dead Soldier Memorial for St Marys

The studio of George Lambert A RA was a high-ceilinged stark, stone-built, disused ward of the military hospital at Randwick. On the first floor, it measured 60' x40' in area. A ten-foot slice across one end was allotted to kitchen and sleeping quarters. Stark discomfort, totally devoid of anything, characterized George Lambert.

Except on occasions when he returned from being over-dined, George shed his public flamboyant image. Within the studio, work assistants were addressed as Mr So-and-so, except for the small boy who swept up, who he addressed as Splinet. The charlady he regarded gently, always treasuring her name, Olive Broomhead.

It was easy to feel in the air George's familiar, Leonardo, of whom he always wanted to be worthy.

Looking back, this is a memory of the three years for which I have been for forty years constantly grateful.

Being George Lambert was a dramatic act by which he fronted up to a world for which he strutted his personal presentation.

He had been caught in an isolation as a youth, from a not easily identifiable homeland - but in his being were the genes of his late development.



1929  
- rejected

On my return to Sydney, after two years in Europe, I was asked by Lambert to assist him in his two sculpture works, the Henry Lawson memorial, and the Dead Soldier for St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

Lambert's studio was an unused ward of the Prince Henry Military Hospital at Randwick, a room 60' x 40' with a 12' ceiling, on the first floor of an old stone building originally built as a school. This was allotted to Lambert at an attractive and nominal rent of 5/- a week to facilitate the completion of his war record paintings in the early '20s.

To Lambert this room was his 'factory'. One end was partitioned austerey with painted corrugated iron (for when he wished to sleep in the studio.) *It was in this studio that Lambert started his first work in Sydney.*

In this studio the war could not be forgotten. Each day, it seemed, we saw them carry a body down to the morgue, a body defeated by tuberculosis and lungs burnt by poisonous gas ten years before. Inside the studio we were working on the memorial of the Dead Soldier.

Having met Lambert at a Society of Artists Dinner before I left for Europe, when I met him again on my return he asked me to come along to his studio to see the work in hand, the model for the Lawson Memorial. He needed a new assistant as the work had run into difficulties.

His last technical assistant had made the model 2" out of plumb, and didn't know how to set it right again.

Within ~~in~~ a year, the Soldier had been given its final finish of realistic textures changing to suit each part. As obedient hand, I brought about this effect, despite my private thoughts that the changes from cloth to leather, ~~wood~~, metal, ~~flesh~~ were overdone. But in the final bronze the general effect avoided the oily look which foundry finish so often imparts to blunt and bland unstated surfaces. The play of light and shade achieved by the careful surface textures kept the Dead Soldier alive in its dim setting in the Cathedral.

The War Museum loaned its casting expert to convert the soldier's clay to plaster. The A jelly, best cooking gelatine, was used as a flexible medium which could be pulled away from the mass of the model, the n reform itself about a cavity which was a true negative of the clay original. *The plaster was poured into this cavity*

\* *gave the model for the foundry.*



## Lambert's Studio MORNING RITUAL

### The Horse's Tail:

A plasticine pony, Sheba, stood on a bench near the studio door - several plasticine tails lay beside it.

The first of the staff to arrive in the morning chose a tail appropriate to the mood of the morning, a spritely tail, or a droopy tail. Should Lambert arrive, or if sleeping in, awaken first, he would choose the tail.

Olive Broomhead, the charlady would likely be the first arrival ( did she take part in choosing tail?)

Murch would arrive in his 1926 bullnosed Morris  
Snekkar in his 1926 special Buick sporting tourer  
Harvey from Drummoyne





## The Lawson Memorial

The Lawson Memorial was a contract won by competition.

I was called in at the stage when a small plasticine model 20" high needed to be scaled up to an 8' workable clay replica, a procedure familiar to me through similar engineering practices. ~~The previous assistant, attempting this task, had allowed~~ It was to do this that I entered George Lambert's workshop, which he liked to call 'the factory'. The previous assistant, attempting this procedure, had allowed the work to go 2" out of plumb, and had found himself unable to rectify the fault.

The continual increase of weight as the clay was built up weighed down the supporting metal framework. This unnoticed by the previous modeller, had permitted the statue to lean more than 2" out of its vertical plumbline. ~~To prevent this, he~~ and had found himself unable to rectify the fault. To prevent this lean developing, frequent checking of position pegs was essential. The early stages of work must (be slow enough) to permit the clay to stiffen about the iron and lead pipe armature, so that it may support its own weight.

This stage was arrived at within four weeks, and all measuring points established. Visual estimates then took over.

The Lawson figure was well advanced when Harvey joined the staff a year later. The swaggie, the seated second figure of the Lawson group, had to be started. This became Harvey's responsibility, while I was moved to work on the Soldier.



We cannot invest Lambert with ~~becoming~~ a reputation for becoming modesty. He was conceited, offensively so. But he knew exactly where he stood, at a high level. Higher than I at the time was aware.

A strange character often unduly arrogant in public, yet meticulously polite to his staff.

He discussed work with his assistants, accepted advice, and gave his time generously to student's enquiry. Often he said, "Pick my brain while you can, Mr Murch."

*etc of Masters.*  
In his ~~studies~~ studio, George Lambert, ARA, was as a Verrochio or Leonardo speaking to us apprentices, saying

"I am the last of the Masters, unless you ~~care to be~~ *care to be the one*

It took some thinking out, this mastership. Then I understood. The master-artist was ~~the~~ as the master-builder, or the master-plumber, the top authority in his field, not a sectional specialist.

*sketch*  
As we were diligent to do his work, so he did all he could to teach of his painting knowledge. He had fears for the future of painting.

"I am the last of the Masters," he said, "you ~~care to be~~ *care to be*."

By a Master he meant 'one accomplished in every aspect of his trade'. This dying out of Art may be a reality. (He may have had other intuitions.)

I felt when he died so suddenly with work unfinished into shadow ratherlike Elisha catching the falling cloak from Elijah borne aloft in the fiery chariot.

I was left with the plaster casting of the Henry Lawson Memorial to finish ready for the foundry.

