



Booked: Warren Joel and Meleager. Picture: JON HARGEST

Statue of limitations for a marble marvel

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P OOR old Meleager, who occupies a place in Melbourne's history and who is about to go up for sale, wouldn't be happy in many back yards.

For one thing, the heroic figure from Greek mythology is over 2m tall. He was sculpted from solid marble in Rome in 1885 by noted Australian artist Charles Summers.

Meleager was plonked at the grand Nicholson St entrance to the Royal Exhibition Building for the International Exhibition of 1888.

The statue, along with one of a Greek slave by Summers, stayed there until 1951 when the pair were sold to a Mt Macedon collector.

But in 1983, on Ash Wednesday, a fire truck backed over Meleager's dog, which stands pluckily at his side, and broke its head off.

It's been glued back. But he's just not the same, cheery old Phyldeaux, I'm afraid.

According to legend, Meleager was the son of Ares, god of war. His

outstanding feat was to fight and kill the wild boar of Calydon.

He skinned it and offered the pelt to Atlanta, whom he fancied, and who was later turned into a lion. I forget why.

Anyway, Meleager's generosity offended his mum, Althaea, who threw the pelt into a fire and Meleager died, poor blighter.

And then, along comes this firetruck and nails his dog.

Leonard Joel director Warren Joel says it's unusual for major public statues to find their way into private collections.

"Those with as much history as this one rarely come on to the market," he said.

Joels have already sold the Summers statue of the slave — for \$77,000.

Meleager should bring around \$50,000 when he goes under the hammer at Leonard Joel, South Yarra, next Monday.

Shame about his dog though, eh?