

## **The Moorings**

31 Glenbervie Terrace



The Moorings, 31 Glenbervie Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington (Photo: WCC, c.1995)

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The Moorings has architectural significance as the design of John Sydney Swan, one of Wellington's more important architects. The building's architecture is notable in itself as an interesting manifestation of Swan's style and fascination with the sea.
- The Moorings is historically important for two main reasons. Firstly, it was the home of the John S. Swan and his family. Secondly, The Moorings was at the centre of the resistance against the encroachment of the motorway on the Glenbervie Terrace and Ascot Street area.
- The Moorings is an important contributor to a sense of place and continuity in Thorndon. In a suburb teeming with history, The Moorings is a heritage building of special character and adds another layer of interest to Thorndon's heritage landscape. It also adds to a sense of continuity for the area, being built in 1905, and surviving the motorway encroachment in the 1960s.
- The Moorings has provided a home to a large number of tenants, especially since it became a boarding house in the 1930s. It is still one of the more renowned flats in Wellington, and holds cultural value as a home for Wellingtonians.

District Plan:	Map 18, reference 134
Legal Description:	Lots 1 & 2 Deeds Plan 5 & Pt Secs 520 521 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	No – but it is part of the Residential ‘E’ Zone
HPT Listed:	Historic Place Category 1, register number 1437
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	1905: Construction
Architect / Builder:	John Sydney Swan
Former uses:	Residential
Current uses:	Residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	Outside Earthquake Policy (SR 269289)

### Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## **1.0 Outline History**

### **1.1 History**

John Sydney Swan purchased the site of the Moorings on Glenbervie Terrace in 1905. The land was originally granted to Edward Toomath in 1873, and it changed hands several times before coming to Swan's possession.<sup>1</sup> Swan moved quickly with the site, designing and constructing his family home that same year. John Swan died in 1936 and the house passed to his two sons, John Sydney and Cyril Robert Valentine. It was leased as a boarding house until it was sold, in 1964.

In 1965 the owners undertook a major restoration of the home. In 1966 a motorway proclamation was issued and ten nearby houses were demolished by the Ministry of Works. The owners of The Moorings resisted this and as a result house is the largest and most prominent building left in this part of the Thorndon residential E-zone.

John Sydney Swan had a passion for the sea and this can be seen in the design of The Moorings, with its various nautical references. The house was essentially a grandiose gesture to his nautical inclinations. Swan was the Commodore of the Port Nicholson Yacht Club for a number of years, and a firm devotee of visiting sailing ships. He used to run up the flag on a ship's arrival, and subsequently invite the captain back to The Moorings. Swan also owned on the world's largest collections of photographs of ships.<sup>2</sup>

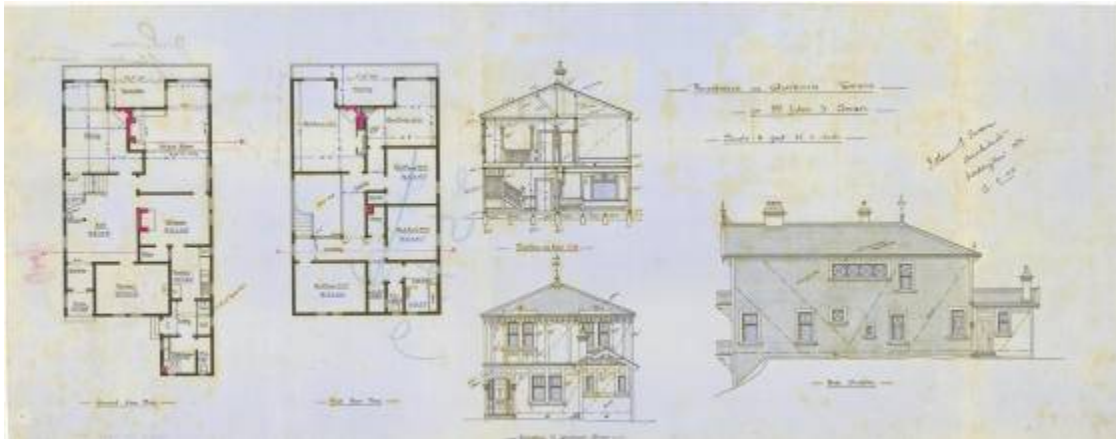
This building is a monument to one of Wellington's leading architects, and effectively demonstrates a freedom of design often associated with his houses. Swan's personal passion for the sea was a driving force in the theme explored in this design - without the constraints of a client's brief.

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<sup>1</sup> NZHPT, 'The Moorings: 31 Glenbervie Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington', last accessed September 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1437>

<sup>2</sup> NZHPT, 'The Moorings: 31 Glenbervie Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington', last accessed September 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1437>

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications



Residence on Glenbervie Terrace for Mr John S. Swan (Wellington City Council Archive File 00053:0:6496)

- 1905 31 Glenbervie Terrace, dwelling 00053:0:6496
- 1906 31 Glenbervie Terrace, additions to dwelling 00053:131:7330
- 1926 31 Glenbervie Terrace, additions to dwelling 00056:19:B1873;
- c.1920s Verandah added to south elevation (later glazed). Wash-house entry altered. Third storey added to west portion of house, later divided into four bedrooms
- c.1930s Addition of ballroom (now games room) to east side
- 1994 31 Glenbervie Terrace, drain 00060:137:5036

## 1.3 Occupation history

- 1905-c.1936 Swan family
- c.1936-current Boarding house/various tenants

## 1.4 Architect

The NZHPT entry on John Sydney Swan reads<sup>3</sup>:

Swan (1874-1936) practised architecture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He formed part of the last group of architects to follow the traditional Gothic and Classical styles. He was articled to Frederick de Jersey Clere, working with Clere on many major designs such as the Wellington Rowing Club building (then known as the Naval Artillery Boat Shed, 1894) as well as smaller provincial buildings such as the Church of the Good Shepherd, Tinui. The firm was known as Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond and was one of the most prominent architectural practices in Wellington. From 1901 to 1906 Swan was in partnership with Clere, practising on his own account from 1907. The first major design produced by Swan in this new practice was the Karori Crematorium (1907) which served to establish his architectural identity separate from Clere.

<sup>3</sup> 'Swan, John Sydney – Architect', NZHPT, last accessed September 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Swan,+John+Sydney>

During his long and varied career Swan produced a large and wide range of work, including a number of banks for the National Bank such as the head office building in Wellington (1907), educational buildings for the Wellington Technical College with William Gray Young (1922), and a number of major buildings for the Catholic Church including St Gerard's Church, Mt Victoria (1910), Sacred Heart Convent (later Erskine College), Island Bay (1909), and Wanganui Convent (1912). He was an architect of imagination as evidenced by the design of his own house 'The Moorings', Glenbervie Terrace (1905).

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

#### **Interior Style:**

The interior style is Edwardian popular in many houses after the turn of the century, and the interior retains most of its original fabric, decoration and layout. Only the kitchen has been modernised, while the rest of the house remain relatively untouched. It is unusual to find a house of such size and grandeur that retains its original interior features, but this house is a fine example of Edwardian design and planning, built by a prominent Wellington architect for his Family. There have been additions to the house, such as a third level on top of the main house and a 'games room' added below the main house. Features of the interior include original wallpapers, dados, frieze, fireplaces, staircase and hall, bathrooms, doors, architraves and skirtings, pressed metal frieze, and some original light fittings.

#### **Interior Planning:**

The Moorings is designed in a grand Edwardian manner, with two storied galleried halls, and large rooms. In the original plans the entrance to the building is along one side and opens up into a large entrance hall, with stairway and gallery, and from here there are doors to a large study, living room, kitchen and nursery. Along the first floor gallery there are 5 large bedrooms, and a bathroom and WC. The large games-room was added after the original house was built - although very much in the same style, the entrance to this hall is from the living room, where steps lead down to a gallery around two sides of the hall, and further steps lead into the hall itself. Features of the planning of the house include, built in wardrobes, indoor bathrooms and WC's, inglenooks, and generous space in each room.

### **2.2 Materials**

Timber

## 2.3 Setting

Perched on the eastern side of the rise that runs separates the southern end of Tinakori Road and the city, The Moorings overlooks a rather desperate part of Wellington. What once would have been a spectacular view across the south-eastern corner of Thorndon now has a motorway running through it; the raised flyover not far off from house height. Still, the view across to the Parliamentary precinct, with the harbour in the background is still special, and one that John Sydney Swan must have enjoyed in his time also.

The Moorings sits within the boundaries of Residential 'E' Zone. The zone is centred around the streets of Glenbervie Terrace, Ascot Street, Sydney Street West, and Parliament Street, the E Zone is a heritage preservation mechanism implemented by Wellington City Council in 1973 after lobbying from the Thorndon Society, a heritage enthusiast group.<sup>4</sup> The Moorings is perhaps the most impressive building within the E Zone.

## 3.0 Sources

Land Information New Zealand. CT13/33

Wellington City Council Archive Files: 00053:0:6496

\_\_\_\_\_. 00053:131:7330

\_\_\_\_\_. 00056:19:B1873

Black, Jane, Michael Kelly, and Chris Cochran. 'Thorndon Heritage Project'. Report prepared for the Wellington City Council, December 2008

Cochran, Chris. 'The Moorings'. Proposal for Classification, Buildings Classification Committee Report. New Zealand Historic Places Trust. August 1987

Doyle, Eugene. 'A House Divided'. Wellington City Magazine. September 1986

McGill, David. 'The Fall and Rise of Thorndon'. Alexander Turnbull Library. Wellington City History Newspaper Articles, Vol. 7, p. 181

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. 'The Moorings: 31 Glenbervie Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington'. Last accessed September 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1437>

\_\_\_\_\_. 'Swan, John Sydney – Architect'. Last accessed September 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Swan,+John+Sydney>

Richmond, Mary-Jane. 'Lease of Life, 31 Glenbervie Terrace'. Independent Herald, 20 May 1975

Wellington City Council. 'Heritage Inventory – 1995'.

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<sup>4</sup> Jane Black, Michael Kelly, and Chris Cochran, 'Thorndon Heritage Project', report prepared for the Wellington City Council, December 2008, p 35

## Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### **Cultural heritage values**

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

**Architectural:** *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Moorings has architectural significance as the design of John Sydney Swan, one of Wellington's more important architects. The building's architecture is notable in itself as an interesting manifestation of Swan's style and fascination with the sea.

**Townscape:** *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The Moorings is a Thorndon landmark. Visible from a number of streets and vantage points, not to mention its large scale, the house is an important structure in the Thorndon townscape.

**Group:** *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

The Moorings is part of the Thorndon heritage protection area Residential 'E' Zone.

#### **Historic Value:**

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The Moorings is historically important for two main reasons. Firstly, it was the home of the John S. Swan and his family. Secondly, The Moorings was at the centre of the resistance against the encroachment of the motorway on the Glenbervie Terrace and Ascot Street area.

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

#### **Scientific Value:**

**Archaeological:** *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

The archaeological risk of The Moorings is unknown.

**Educational:** *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

#### **Social Value:**

**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

The Moorings is held in high public esteem. Though the motorway debate was almost fifty years ago, the house still serves as a symbol against the motorway encroachment.



***Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:*** Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?

The Moorings has provided a home to a large number of tenants in its times, especially since it became a boarding house in the 1930s. It is still one of the more renowned flats in Wellington, and holds cultural value as a home for Wellingtonians.

***Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:***

*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?  
Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

The Moorings is an important contributor to a sense of place and continuity in Thorndon. In a suburb teeming with history, The Moorings is a heritage building of special character and adds another layer of interest to Thorndon's heritage landscape. It also adds to a sense of continuity for the area, being built in 1905, and surviving the motorway encroachment in the 1960s.

***Sentiment/Connection:*** Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

***Rare:*** Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?

***Representative:*** Is the item a good example of the class it represents?

The Moorings is a very good example of a large inner city Edwardian residence of the early twentieth century. The Moorings is also a good representative of John Swan's work.

***Authentic:*** Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?

The Moorings has retained a very high level of authenticity, both interior and exterior.

***Local/Regional/National/International***

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

The Moorings is important at a local level.



## 4.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	N	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	N	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files	N	
Conservation Plan	N	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

### Background research

*Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:*

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopaedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*



Moorings interior