

## **Former Brickworks Wall**

Ira Street.



Image: Googlemaps 2013

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The former Brickworks Wall is an excellent example of brickwork; it is a well built and authentic example of brick wall construction.
- This low brick wall, found at the foot of the hill alongside Ira Street, is the only physical remnant of the brickworks that once occupied this part of Miramar. The wall is all that is now left of the Gasco (later Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co.) brickworks was a significant local industrial plant that produced bricks, pipes, and chimney pots, provided employment for many local people and provided materials for Wellington's construction and drain laying industries.
- The former brickworks wall contributes to a sense of place and continuity in Miramar as it is the only remnant of the former brickworks and a physical reminder of the hey-day of brick making in Wellington.

District Plan:	Map 7, reference 59
Legal Description:	Sec 1 SO 32335
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	-
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown – possible industrial archaeology associated with site
Other Names:	-
Key physical dates:	c.1925
Architect / Builder:	Unknown
Former uses:	Wall
Current uses:	Wall
Earthquake Prone Status:	Unknown at time of writing

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## **1.0 Outline History**

### **1.1 History<sup>1</sup>**

This low brick wall, found at the foot of the hill alongside Ira Street, is the only physical remnant of the brickworks that once occupied this part of Miramar. The wall is all that is now left of the Gasco (later Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co.) brickworks, which was a significant local industrial plant that produced bricks, pipes, and chimney pots, provided employment for many local people and provided materials for Wellington's construction and drain laying industries.

Gasco was originally formed to acquire land and brickworks that already occupied the site owned by the Wellington Gas Company (WGC). The manager of the (WGC) brickworks, J.R. Todd, was given the option to take over 14 acres of land in Ira Street, and the existing brick making plant. He approached other Wellington businessmen, including draper Douglas Patrick, and *Evening Post* owner Henry Blundell, and a company with a nominal capital of £40,000 was formed. The WGC plant was located at the company's gasworks on the western side of Miramar, and the Ira Street site was originally used as a source of clay. It is likely that it was used for this purpose around 1918, and it is unclear if the WGC had any buildings on the site.

Once operations had begun on the new site, Gasco erected a series of buildings. The most significant feature of the new brickworks was the tall chimney, which is visible in many historic images of Miramar. The brickworks chimney, as well as the nearby gasworks chimney,

By the late 1920s the country had an abundant supply of bricks, and at one point Fletcher construction, which owned two brickworks (in Auckland and Silverstream), were paid by the other brick makers not to make bricks. Fletchers at this time turned their attention to making hollow tiles and facing bricks and bought two plants in the United States to make the new products. These were instantly successful and very quickly Fletchers were in the position of being paid for making a hugely successful product.

This situation was unsustainable for the other brick manufacturers and, in an agreement, the Auckland brick manufacturers, including Fletchers, decided to form a conglomerate and the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co., as it became known was established. A similar arrangement was then made in Wellington which led to Gasco's operations becoming part of the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Col.

The amalgamated company went on to dominate brick production in the North Island for the next 30 years. Among the best known uses of the bricks made was the Wellington Railway Station, completed in 1937. While Gasco's bricks were characterised by the name of the company in a dimple on one side, or by the use of a stylised imprint on one side, the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co., effectively became a monopoly, and it appears did not imprint its bricks.

The brick works operated until 1968, closing due to re-zoning of the land from industrial to residential by the Wellington City Council. The Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co. considered taking legal action to have this decision reversed but was informed that any such action was unlikely to be successful. Though it was possible to continue making bricks under the new zoning, the decision was made to close the plant and build another in a less constrained location.

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<sup>1</sup> History adapted from: Russell Murray. *Former Brickworks Wall c.1925 – Ira Street*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005).

In order to realise the best price for the land, the company looked for a buyer to redevelop the land as a new residential subdivision.

The brickworks buildings were demolished between 1969 and 1970, and the felling of the chimney in particular was a major event as the brick structure did not go easily. The removal of the plant left a partially excavated, denuded hill behind and, to assist the housing development that followed, the remains were levelled and spoil pushed over where the plant had been. This considerably reduced the flat area alongside Ira Street but helped broaden the sub-dividable land above and left a steep slope adjacent to Ira Street. Of the brickworks, this brick wall is the only survivor of the earthworks, and is now the only tangible reminder of its existence.

This brick wall, while rather unassuming, is a physical link to the history of the area and the only remnant of Miramar's brick making past. It is in good condition with no significant cracking or subsidence and has technical value as a well built, authentic example of brick wall construction.

## **1.2 Timeline of modifications** (no original plans)

c.1925            Original construction

## **1.3 Ownership history**

Not Assessed

## **1.4 Occupation history**

Not Assessed

## **1.5 Architect**

**Unknown**

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

The Ira Street Brick Wall is constructed of fired clay bricks, 10 courses high, with two rows of bricks on edge (with bull nosed corners) on top. The bricks are laid in English Garden Wall bond, with a course of headers (bricks laid end on to the face of the wall) laid between every three courses of stretchers (bricks laid side on). There are rectangular weep holes placed at intervals along the bottom course, with several clay pipes protruding about halfway up the wall. The bricks are laid with a cement mortar, which is still in good condition, and the whole wall rests on a concrete foundation. The northern end of the wall is roughly finished, as approximately six metres of the wall has been demolished at this end; the southern end is cleanly finished, indicating that this was the original end of the wall. The wall is in good condition with no significant cracking or subsidence.

### **2.2 Materials**

- Brick
- Concrete
- Cement mortar

### **2.3 Setting**

The Ira Street Wall is located on the eastern side of Ira Street near to the Otaki Street intersection. It is now at the foot of a large bank surmounted by 1970s and 1980s housing. The bank is covered in low scrub and presents a verdant backdrop for the wall; the colour contrast emphasises the wall in the streetscape.

The wider setting is residential Miramar, a suburb developed in the 1920s and 1930s that has undergone significant development over the decades and now has a comprehensive selection of housing styles and development types from all eras.

### **3.0 Sources**

Murray, Russell. *Former Brickworks Wall c.1925 – Ira Street, Miramar*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005.

## 4.0 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 former Brickworks Wall is an excellent example of brickwork; it is a well built and authentic example of brick wall construction.

***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 former Brickworks Wall is locally significant and well known for its association with the former brickworks; it is a distinctive element of the streetscape and is situated on one of the suburb's busiest thoroughfares.

***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?

#### **Historic Value:**

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

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***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 risk of accidental discovery is unknown, but it is likely that there will be industrial archaeology associated with the site present in the area.

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

As there is little other evidence present of the brickworks history of the area, the former brickworks wall offers considerable opportunity for interpretation, so has significant educational value.

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

There is technical value in this as a well built, authentic, example of a brick wall. It remains in good and serviceable condition.

**Social Value:**

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

**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?*

**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 former brickworks wall contributes to a sense of place and continuity in Miramar as it is the only remnant of the former brickworks and a physical reminder of the hey-day of brick making in Wellington.

**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?*

As the bricks that this wall is built of came from the former brickworks, they have some rarity value as the only remnant of the works left in the area.

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

It is in good condition with no significant cracking or subsidence and has value as a well built and representative example of brick wall construction.

**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?*

Although part of the wall has been demolished, it retains significant original materials and has had few alterations made. It has authenticity of materials, craftsmanship, and design.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

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

This brick wall is of local significance; while rather unassuming, it is an authentic and physical link to the history of the area and the only remnant of Miramar's brick making past. It has aesthetic, historic, educational, technical, and social values.



## 5.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

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

### 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 Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*