Newport Chambers
48 Courtenay Place

Summary of heritage significance

- Newport Chambers is a good representative example of an Art Deco-style commercial building. It is notable for its bold central three-storey oriel window and the fine geometric brickwork cladding to the spandrels and parapet which gives it a distinct Art Deco character.
- The building is part of an important group of heritage buildings which together form the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.
- The building has had an uneventful history that is typical and representative of many of its neighbours on Courtenay Place. It was owned by a relatively successful Wellington family, and probably owes its appearance to the interest of both its owner and builder in the Silverstream Brick and Tile Co. Ltd. It is part of the commercial growth of Wellington, and was probably one of the last buildings constructed in Courtenay Place before the Depression of the 1930s.
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<th><strong>District Plan:</strong></th>
<th>Map 16, Symbol Ref 65/2</th>
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<td><strong>Other Names:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Key physical dates:</strong></td>
<td>1930</td>
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</table>
| **Architect / Builder:** | Architect: Crichton, McKay & Haughton
Builder: Jones & Cameron |
| **Former uses:** | Shops and offices, accommodation. |
| **Current uses:** | Shops and offices. |
| **Earthquake Prone Status:** | 124 Served (SR174182) |

**Extent:** Cityview GIS 2012
1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

Newport Chambers was built for the estate of ‘the late T.R Jones’ in 1930. Thomas Raymond Jones had been a partner in Palliser and Jones, the building contractors that built the break-waters at Timaru, Oamaru and Napier. He died in 1918, and the Courtenay Place site was, in fact, owned by his sons Thomas Raymond (who managed the Silverstream Brick Company at the time of this father’s death) and Henry (Harry) John, who was a partner in Jones and Cameron building contractors. The building was designed by Crichton, McKay and Haughton, and built by Jones and Cameron at an estimated cost of £14,284.

The Silverstream Brick Company was one of the largest brickworks in the district. It was listed in 1919 as the Silverstream Brick and Tile Co. Ltd and the major shareholders were John Cameron (presumably of Jones and Cameron) and its manager, T.R Jones. It merged in 1929 and eventually came under the aegis of the Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd that controlled most of the brick and pipe production in the North Island. Newport Chambers was built just after the various brickwork company mergers, and its distinctive decorative brick façade may well reflect both Cameron and T.R Jones’ interest in the production and use of brick. The building was built with high quality materials and with a high level of workmanship. It remained in the Jones family for the next 44 years.

The Trustees of the NZ District of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society purchased the property from the Jones family in 1974. This Catholic benefit society which first arose among Irish immigrants in Australia, spread to New Zealand in 1869. It raised, administered and distributed funds to support Catholic families suffering economic and social hardship, and provided support and companionship.

The building was occupied by an assortment of Wellington clubs and groups and commercial businesses. The ‘Wellington Younger Set’ celebrated the opening of their clubrooms in the building in April 1936. The Evening Post reported ‘the dance-room, with its excellent floor and modern mural panels, looked very bright’ and a fencing demonstration was held and a dainty supper provided. Later tenants were a varied group, who included Miss Dorothy Spink’s Music Studio, Thomas’ Tobacconist and Zodiac Printing.

There were two fires in the building’s early history. The first occurred just four years after it had opened, when an electric amplifier overheated in the dance studio and...
caused minor damage. The 1941 fire was more significant but although the fire ‘generated enough heat to lift the plaster off the concrete walls’, there was no structural damage to the building.

Today the building is still in commercial and office use. The fenestration scheme above verandah level appears to have survived until after c.2001, but the windows have been replaced recently in aluminium.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1930 Built. (00056:98:B9136)
1956 Shop alterations undertaken by builder: L G Knotts. (00056:542:B39972)
    Business alterations. (00059:309:E17941)
1995 Signage alterations. (00061:55:11642)
    Alterations to the ground floor for a Sushi Bar. (00061:70:12096)
    Entry foyer upgrade. (00061:166:15335)
1997 Office partitioning and new kitchen, Level 1. (00078:58:28286)
    New shop front. (00078:587:34102)
2000 Fire reinstatement and minor alterations to restaurant. (00078:598:66271)
2001 Signage under the verandah. (00078:604:74479)
2004 Internal fit-out and new toilets, ground floor (00078:1404:119194)

1.3 Occupation history


1.4 Architect

Crichton, McKay & Haughton

(William Crichton (1862-1928), James Hector McKay (d. 1944), Vivian Haughton (1891-1956)) William Crichton was born in England in 1862. He trained as an architect before immigrating to New Zealand in 1879. Upon his arrival he joined the Colonial Architects Office. In 1891 he established his own architectural firm and later, in 1901, joined with James Hector McKay to form the firm Crichton and McKay. (McKay had previously been in partnership with Robert Roy MacGregor from 1898-1901.) With the addition of Vivian Haughton in the 1920s the firm became Crichton, McKay & Haughton. In 1935 Haughton went into partnership with William McKeon (1896-1973). In 1952 Haughton established Haughton and Sons, which was later joined by Lindsay Mair, the son of the former government architect John Mair. Following Haughton’s death in 1956, the firm became Haughton and Mair. Eventually, by the 1980s, it became Bulleyment Fortune architects. Crichton, McKay and Haughton were a prominent architectural firm in the 1920s and were responsible for a number of Wellington’s commercial buildings such as the Huddart Parker Building (1923), the Dominion Building (1926-1927), as well as a number of domestic residences.17

Jones & Cameron – Builder

Henry Jones and John Cameron were partners in Jones and Cameron builders from about 1910 to 1936. They built many notable Wellington buildings including Elliot House (43 Kent Terrace, 1913, Category I historic place, no.1377), the Colmar Brunton Building (182 Wakefield Street, 1927) and Newport Chambers (1930). They also built and part-owned Braemar (32 the Terrace in 1925, Category II historic place, no.1341).18

16 “48 Courtenay Place, alterations, ground floor”, 2 May 1995, 00061:70:12096, Wellington City Archives.
2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

This is a four storey concrete frame building with non-structural brick cladding to the street elevation. It is notable for its bold central three-storey oriel window and the fine geometric brickwork to the spandrels and parapet which gives it a distinct Art Deco character. The spandrel panels and the parapet have a geometric pattern of bricks, with rows of headers and soldiers which subtly frame and enliven elements of the facade. (Similar patterning can be seen on a facade 20 years older than this one - McDonalds at 11 - 13 Courtenay Place.) Window surrounds and the strong central feature of the three storey high bay window, are finished in cream coloured plasterwork, forming a contrast with the rich chocolate red of the bricks. The building is a strong element in the townscape, particularly because of the originality, colour and patterning of the facade.

The shop-fronts have been much altered (although the original plans do survive), but the fenestration above verandah level survived until some time after c.2001. These windows have, unfortunately, since been replaced with an unsympathetic scheme of aluminium windows. The parapet has been somewhat disfigured by poorly conceived repairs that appear to have been carried out in either a light coloured grout, or sealant.

Despite these changes that building remains a very good example of the commercial architecture of the time, designed by an important Wellington architectural practice.19

2.2 Materials

Concrete foundations, floor slabs and frame.
Brick cladding to street façade with rendered details
Modern (post c.2001) aluminium fenestration (originally steel windows generally with oak or ‘Queensland Maple’ for shop-front frames & doors)
‘Malthoid’ roofing on lightweight concrete screed laid to falls over concrete slab.

2.3 Setting

The Newport Chambers Building is located in a block of buildings on the northern side of Courtenay Place. This block of four is bounded by Allen and Tory Streets. The Chambers Building is the most distinguished building of the four, but it is part of a block that is varied in height, architectural style and age. As a group they contribute to the architectural interest of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area, a space bustling with eateries and various shops.

3.0 References

CT WN 419/186, Land Information New Zealand


**Newspapers**


**Wellington City Archives**


“48 Courtenay Place, shop alterations”, 23 Jul 1956, 00056:542:B39972, Wellington City Archives.


“48 Courtenay Place, alterations, ground floor”, 02 May 1995, 00061:70:12096, Wellington City Archives.


“48 Courtenay Place, office partitioning and new kitchen, level 1”, 1997, 00078:58:28286, Wellington City Archives.

“48 Courtenay Place, fire reinstatement and minor alterations to restaurant”, 2000, 00078:598:66271, Wellington City Archives.


“48 Courtenay Place, internal fit-out and new toilets, ground floor”, 2004, 00078:1404:119194, Wellington City Archives.
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?

Newport Chambers is a good representative example of an Art Deco-style commercial building. It is notable for its bold central three-storey oriel window and the fine geometric brickwork cladding to the spandrels and parapet which gives it a distinct Art Deco character.

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?

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 building is part of an important group of heritage buildings which together form the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Although most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20th century, there are significant differences in age and style among some of the buildings in this group.

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

It was designed by Crichton, McKay & Haughton, an important Wellington architectural firm.

The building has associations with the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, who owned the building from 1974 to 1985.

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

The building has had an uneventful history that is typical and representative of many of its neighbours on Courtenay Place. It was owned by a relatively successful Wellington family, and probably owes its appearance to the interest of both its owner and builder in the Silverstream Brick and Tile Co. Ltd. It is part of the commercial growth of Wellington, and was probably one of the last buildings constructed in Courtenay Place before the Depression of the 1930s.

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

There was pre-1900 human activity on this site. Although some of the sites have been altered by rebuilding or landscaping or sub-divisional change, there is archaeological value in the immediate surrounds.

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?

**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?

This building is part of a group of commercial buildings on Courtenay Place which contribute to the sense of place and continuity of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

**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 Newport Chambers building is a good example of 1930s commercial architecture.

**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 building has retained much of its authentic/original built fabric including with the exception of the fenestration at all levels.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

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

Research checklist (desktop)

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Background research

WCC Permits

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<tr>
<td>00078:58:28286</td>
<td>48 Courtenay Place, office partitioning and new kitchen, level 1</td>
<td>Building name: Korea House. Owner: Maria Chang. Applicant: IT Communications Ltd. Legal Description: Lot 3 DP 3892, Lot 2 and 3 DP 672 [Part lot 1 A plan 493]. Application Value: $70,000.</td>
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<td>00078:587:34102</td>
<td>48 Courtenay Place, new shop front</td>
<td>Sushi Catch Bar</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>00078:604:74479</td>
<td>48 Courtenay Place, under verandah signage</td>
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Plan of drainage, foundation and ground floor of the Shops and Offices for the Jones Estate Building, 1929. (00056:98:B9136)

Plan of the first floor, upper floor and roof plan of the Shops and Offices for the Jones Estate Building, 1929. (00056:98:B9136)