

Former AMP Building
86 Customhouse Quay



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The former AMP Building is a particularly fine example of an inter-war office building designed in a Classical style. It is notable for the quality of its design, workmanship and materials, particularly the external and internal stone cladding made up of marble, sandstone, granite (and terracotta). The building retains some significant interior spaces including the barrel vaulted entrance and double-height 'General Office' area.
- The former AMP Building is one of a group of heritage buildings that make up the BNZ/ Head Offices Heritage Area.
- The site has a 130 year association with the NZ head office of the Australian Mutual Provident Society; an important financial institution and once the biggest life-insurer in Australasia. The AMP built three consecutive buildings on this site and occupied this building in the years between 1928 and 2009.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 96 <i>(Southern and eastern facades, plastered timber barrelled vaulted entrance way, the Grand Space containing the marble columns and doorway).</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 81539
Heritage Area:	BNZ Head Office Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Historic Place Category 1 209 South Lambton Quay Historic Area
Archaeological Site:	Pre 1900 reclaimed land Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	1925 - 28
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Clere and Clere Builder: Harsford and Mills & Co.
Former uses:	Insurance Co. NZ head office
Current uses:	Tenanted office building
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR188119 , Bdg StrengthInv, Bldg - AMP Society Building -, NOT Earthquake Prone

Extent: Cityview GIS



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The Australian Mutual Provident Society was founded in Sydney in 1849. It first entered the New Zealand market in 1854 but its Wellington office was not established until 1871. The society grew very quickly and became one of the biggest life insurance companies in Australasia. By 1877 it had built a handsome two-storey Classical timber building, the first on this site.¹ There were just 12 staff at this time.² It was soon followed by a masonry building of similar size in 1897. Within a short period this was considered too small and planning began for a new head office.

Clere and Clere drew up plans for a new, much more substantial building in 1925. Construction took three years and the contractors were Harsford and Mills³, who were also responsible for construction of the DIC building. No expense was spared, with Italian marble, Australian sandstone and New Zealand granite used in the building's construction. The building was the first to be constructed to the (then) new height limit of 102 feet or 31 metres, and this was made possible with the use of steel framing and reinforced concrete as construction materials. The building is one of the first to employ a distinctive corporate style; the Wellington building was a scaled-down version of the AMP Society's other head offices in Australia and Britain. Before the present era of branding and mass media this was a successful way of advertising a company and conveying a common corporate identity.⁴

A large annexe, called AMP Chambers, was built on an adjacent site at the corner of Hunter and Featherston streets in 1952 and this was refurbished in the 1980s. This refurbishment coincided with a decision to refurbish (rather than demolish) the earlier c.1928 AMP Building. Although much of the internal layout and appearance was completely altered, including the filling in of an internal light-well, the main facade was sensitively restored.⁵ Work was completed in 1983 and it was one of the first examples in Wellington of a company actively choosing to retain a building rather than building anew. The same year the Historic Places Trust supported AMP when it sought dispensation from a WCC by-law that required a verandah around the building.⁶ The appeal was successful and to this day the AMP remains one of a select number of inner-city buildings without a verandah.

The demutualisation of AMP in 1998 transformed it into one of New Zealand's biggest listed companies. The building was refurbished in 2006 and sold in 2009 to a private overseas investor for \$29.6million.⁷ The building exterior was repaired in c.2010 and works included replacement of damaged sandstone and terracotta cladding elements, cleaning and re-pointing, repairs to the large white statue that stands on the roof at then south east corner.⁸ The building appears to be currently (2013) tenanted by various government departments including part of the Ministry of

¹'Statement of evidence', William Toomath for Wellington City Council, Appeal No. TCP 1033/89, WCC (1990)

² See ATL image 81979½ "Wellington Businesses – AMP"

³ Roorda T. 1983 "They don't have to come down" in *New Zealand Historic Places*

⁴ Michael Kelly et al, 'BNZ / Head Office Heritage Area report' unpublished heritage report for DPC 48, 2006

⁵ NZHPT Field Record Form, AMP Society Building

⁶ Ibid.

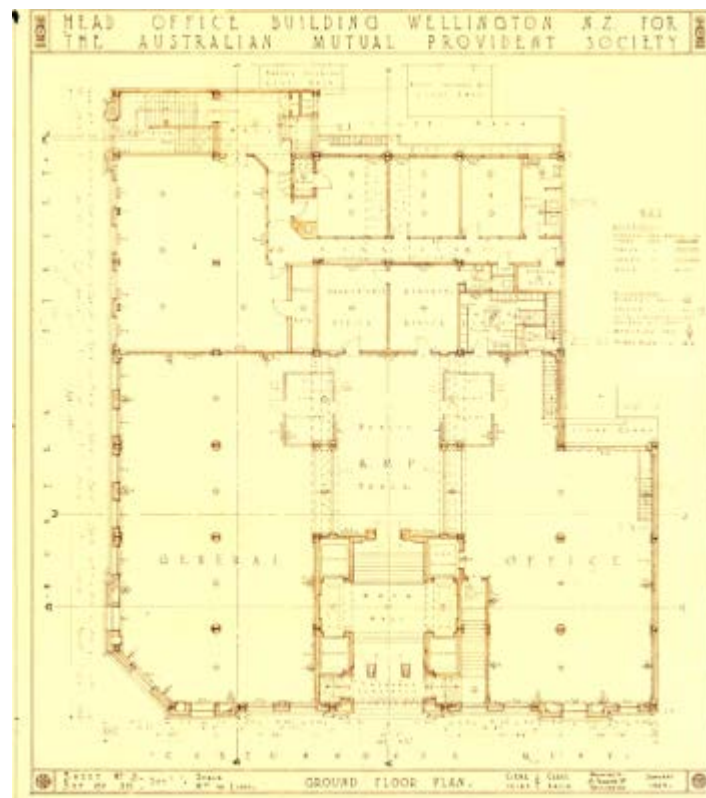
⁷ 'End of an Era for ex-AMP offices' Colliers International website updated 24 August 2009, viewed 07/2013 <http://www.colliers.co.nz/News/2009/August/End-of-an-era-for-ex-AMP-offices-284/>

⁸ 'AMP Building Restoration, Wellington,' Stephenson and Turner website accessed July 2013 <http://stephensonturner.com/project/amp-building-wellington>

Building, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), part of the Ministry of Justice, and Sport NZ (a crown entity aka SPARC).⁹



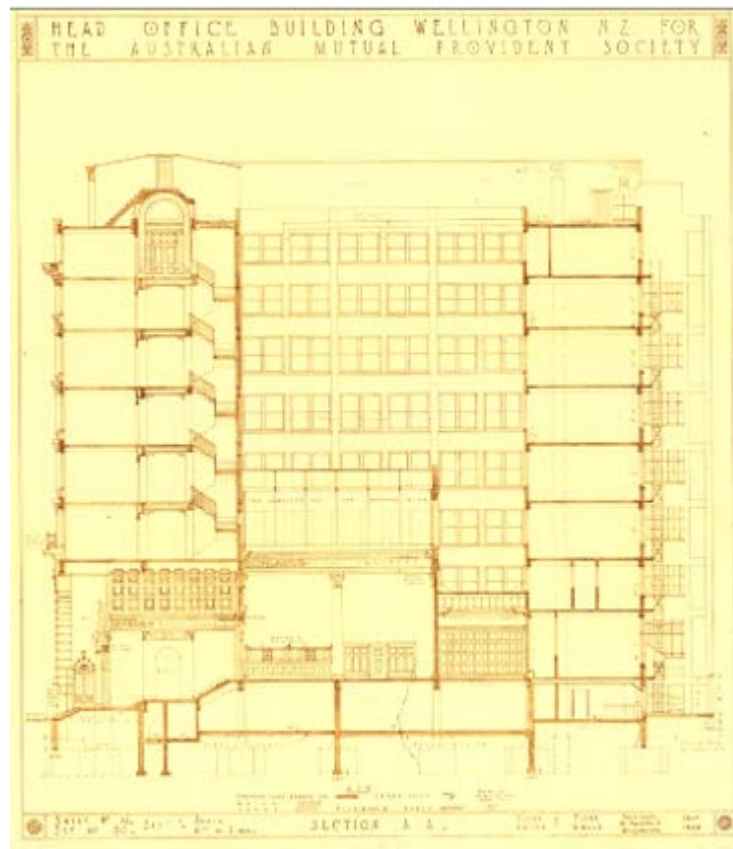
c.1893 Previous AMP Society Building, Customhouse Quay, Wellington.¹⁰



1925 Ground floor plan as proposed

⁹ This is an updated version of the WCC Heritage Inventory 2001 ref CUST2

¹⁰ F W Niven & Co. :J B Innes; Lysaght's galvanised corrugated iron; Australian Mutual Provident Society; T Shields, tailor [ca 1893]. F W Niven & Co.: View of Wellington N Z from hydraulic tower railway wharf, 1893. F W Niven & Co. [lith] Ballarat, [Victoria, ca 1893]. Ref: D-002-006-003. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22642316>



1925 section through the building from east to west – note the light-well at the centre of the building and the lantern light over the ground floor insurance hall (General Office).



c.2010 Repairs to the statuary¹¹

¹¹ Stevenson and Turner website

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1952	AMP Chambers built at the corner of Featherston and Hunter streets
1965	Mezzanine added to part of ground floor general office area (C17629)
1980 - 83	Major structural strengthening works, new stairs, light-well in-filled (C59090).
2005	Proposal to remove three link bridges between 1 Grey Street, 86 Customhouse Quay and 187 Featherston Street . SR129832 , aBLDG CONSENT, Removal of 3 link bridges between 3 buildings - 1 Grey St (Optimation House), 86 Customhouse Quay (AMP Building, 187 Featherston St (AMP Chambers) and make good exterior wall, Completed
2009	SR 147534, a BLDG CONSENT, 3.2 Major Project - AMP Building - Basement, Ground floor and Mezzanine - Reconfiguration of existing services back to original open plan area. (Note: The mezzanine in the General Office was rebuilt at this time)
c.2010	External repairs and cleaning.

1.3 Architect

CLERE, Frederick de Jersey, 1856-1952

Frederick Jersey de Clere was born in Lancashire, the son of an Anglican clergyman, and spent his youth in Tickenham, Somersetshire. He was taught drawing by M.R. Hagreen, head architectural drawing master at South Kensington. Clere was articulated to Edmund Scott, an ecclesiastical architect of Brighton. While with Scott he would almost certainly have observed at close hand the architect's early use of concrete in the construction of two Brighton churches, St Bartholomew's and St James'. Once articulated he joined Robert Jewell Withers a London architect, and a follower of the Ecclesiologists, Clere became his chief assistant and joined the Architectural Association in London.

Clere arrived in New Zealand in 1877, practising first in Feilding and then in Wanganui. He later came to Wellington and practised there for 58 years. He was elected an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1882 and a Fellow in 1886. He held office for 50 years as one of five honorary secretaries in the Empire. In 1883 he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church, a position he held for most of his professional life.

Clere was also a member of the Concrete Institute of London and an enthusiastic advocate of its building properties. He was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction in New Zealand but it took him some time after his arrival in the country to put his ideas into practice. His first Ferro-concrete ecclesiastical design was the Anglican Church of St Mary of the Virgin, Karori (1911). He followed this with St Matthew's Anglican Church, Hastings (1913) the first Gothic church built in concrete. St Mary of the Angels (1922) is the most outstanding example of this oeuvre and certainly his best known church. Another fine design is the brick All Saints Church, Palmerston North (1911). Arguably Clere's best church design was a large Gothic reinforced concrete Anglican cathedral for Wellington city (1917), but it never left the drawing board.

As well as being pre-eminent in church design, Clere was responsible for many domestic and commercial buildings among the best known of which are the Harbour Board and Bond Store, Wellington (1891), the Wellington Harbour Board Buildings

and, in association with his son, the Renaissance-styled AMP head office (1928). Clere was also involved in the design of large woolsheds in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa.

Clere was active in the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and served on their council for many years. He was a member of the Wellington Anglican Diocesan Synod and the General Synod. He was also a member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. Clere practised on his own and in association with other architects, including his son.¹²

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The principal former AMP building is one of the most dignified in the city. Completed in 1928 to the design of Clere & Clere, it stands an imposing eight stories tall on its corner site with major elevations to both Hunter Street and Customhouse Quay; the main entrance is on the latter. It is as notable for the very fine materials and craftsmanship employed in its construction, including the distinctive rusticated ashlar sandstone to the façades (laid over a steel primary structure) and the marble cladding in the entrance, as it is for its quality of design.

The building is composed as an Italian *palazzo* with a double-height base (which is made up of a half-basement above the footpath with a generous double-height first storey set above that), trimmed with a stylised Doric entablature with a cornice supported on tri-glyphs, and a five-storey trunk which is divided from the top floor with a heavy Corinthian cornice with prominent consoles. Above this, the top floor is finished with a simple parapet line. With the exception of the vaulted main entrance, the openings to the building are all square headed. They are enlivened on the trunk of the building by a variety of pediments and ornamentation – flat pediments on brackets to the first floor, triangular pediments to the second, semi-circular pediments to the third and flat pediments to the fourth, bas-relief panels between the windows at the fifth and with recessed architraves at the top floor.

The main façades are articulated about a bevelled corner which rises to the carved pediment sculpture group on top of the parapet featuring the motto of the AMP “*Amicus Certus in Re Dicerta*” (“a certain friend in uncertain times”) and the legend “Established 1849”. This group features three adult figures, a child and an owl.

The main entrance, on Customhouse Quay, is the finest remaining in the city. It is a double-height barrel vault with deep coffering which rises over marble walls and steps and ornamental bronze work. Recent alterations have replaced a poorly detailed 1960s aluminium glazed weather-screen across the entrance with a modern frameless glass screen and most of the original fabric in this area remains in place and visible to the public.

While internal alterations, including the mezzanine division of the first floor, have somewhat reduced the overall heritage value of the building, the exterior remains highly authentic and the impressive entry is almost intact. This building is a major contributor to the streetscape on both of the adjoining streets and in the longer view north from the intersection of Lambton Quay and Willis Street.

¹² WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL HERITAGE BUILDING INVENTORY 1999 APPENDIX III. Sources: N.Z. Building Progress; July, Dec. 1913; Aug., Sept., Oct., 1917; April 1922, NZHPT Glossary

The later AMP Chambers building, built in 1952 on the corner of Hunter Street and Featherston Street, is not of particular heritage significance although it has an important association with this building. It shows a carefully balanced composition, with an interesting concave bevel in the facades at the street corner drawing attention to a retail entrance.

The building is drawn to line with the earlier AMP from the top down. The upper floors align visually but become progressively de-synchronised as the building nears the street, a consequence of the disparity in inter-floor heights between the buildings. A strong projecting cornice, line divides the roof-top floor, presumably a later addition, from the top floor of the building itself. The top floor is heavily glazed and the base of the glazing forms another strong horizontal line that aligns with the principal cornice on the older building. The two façades are arranged with a central symmetry and focus with a large panel, subdivided horizontally by a beam line, of windows separated horizontally by mullions in two widths and vertically by bronze spandrel panels. This bay is flanked either side by a plain wall panel with regularly spaced small windows. The bottom part of the façade has a clumsy modern verandah.¹³

2.2 Materials

- Sydney Sandstone, granite and terracotta cladding on a concrete-encased steel frame structure.
- Steel windows
- Marble cladding to entrance hall and entrance stairs

2.3 Setting

The building is part of the BNZ Head Office Heritage Area. The former AMP Building's nearest neighbour at 187 Featherston Street, AMP Chambers (1952), is considered a non-heritage building for the purpose of Rule 21B.2.2, but has an important association with the earlier 1928 AMP Building and is sympathetic in form and scale.

The former AMP Building is located directly opposite the group of four former BNZ banking buildings (No.1 1901, No.2 1904, No.3 1885, No.4 1903) set on the triangular block between Lambton Quay, and Hunter and Featherston Streets, and these buildings are considered to be the centrepiece of the Heritage Area.¹⁴

The former AMP Building is a local landmark at the busy intersection of Hunter and Featherston Streets and is visible from the city's 'Golden Mile' (Lambton Quay and Willis Street) and the Wellington waterfront.

¹³ Updated version of Kelly (2006)

¹⁴ Kelly (2006)

3.0 Sources

'AMP Building Restoration, Wellington,' Stephenson and Turner website accessed July 2013 <http://stephensonturner.com/project/amp-building-wellington>

'End of an Era for ex-AMP offices' Colliers International website updated 24 August 2009, viewed 07/2013 <http://www.colliers.co.nz/News/2009/August/End-of-an-era-for-ex-AMP-offices-284/>

F W Niven & Co. :J B Innes; Lysaght's galvanised corrugated iron; Australian Mutual Provident Society; T Shields, tailor [ca 1893]. F W Niven & Co. :View of Wellington N Z from hydraulic tower railway wharf, 1893. F W Niven & Co. [lith] Ballarat, [Victoria, ca 1893]. Ref: D-002-006-003. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22642316>

Kelly, Michael et al, 'BNZ / Head Office Heritage Area report' unpublished heritage report for DPC 48, 2006

N.Z. Building Progress; July, Dec. 1913; Aug., Sept., Oct., 1917; April 1922

NZHPT Field Record Form, AMP Society Building

NZHPT Glossary

Roorda T. "They don't have to come down" in *New Zealand Historic Places* 1983

Toomath, William. 'Statement of evidence' for Wellington City Council, Appeal No. TCP 1033/89, WCC (1990)

Alexander Turnbull Library image 81979½ "Wellington Businesses – AMP"

Wellington City Council Heritage Building Inventory 1999 Appendix III

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 AMP Building is a particularly fine example of an inter-war office building designed in a Classical style. It is notable for the quality of its design, workmanship and materials, particularly the external and internal stone cladding made up of marble, sandstone, granite (and terracotta). The building retains some significant interior spaces including the barrel vaulted entrance and double-height 'General Office' area.

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 building is a local landmark on the corner of Hunter Street and Customhouse Quay.

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 former AMP Building is one of a group of heritage buildings that make up the BNZ Head Offices Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

The site has a 120 year association with the NZ head office of the Australian Mutual Provident Society; an important financial institution and once the biggest life-insurer in Australasia. The AMP built three consecutive buildings on this site and occupied this building in the years between 1928 and 2009.

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?*

Pre 1900 reclaimed land, Central City NZAA R27/270

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?

The building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions over the past 80 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the BNZ/Head Office 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?*

The building is a particularly good example of an inter-war commercial office building, and is one of the last large buildings to be built in a 'correct' Classical style.

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

The building is a good representative example of an inter-war office building.

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 retains much of its original built fabric and has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The building is of regional significance for its contribution to the BNZ/Head Office Heritage Area, for the quality of its design, materials and workmanship and for its long-term use as the NZ head office of AMP Insurance.

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	none	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	none	
Plan change?	DPC 48	
Heritage Area Report	yes	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan	none	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	y	