

The former Truby King House

21 Manchester Terrace (AKA 120 Duncan Terrace)



Truby King House (Former)

Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The former Truby King house is a good representative example of an early 20th century house.
- The house sits within a group of buildings, structures and gardens associated with Sir Frederic and Lady Isabella King. These include the mausoleum where their remains are interred, the Truby King Park, the nearby Karitane Products Society Building and the former Karitane Hospital. All of which are sited on land that was at one time owned by King.
- The house has historic value for its association with Truby and Isabella King who were well known for their achievements in the improvement of the health of women and babies in New Zealand. The building was donated by Truby King for use by the Plunket Society, an institution that is currently New Zealand's largest provider of support services for the development, health and wellbeing of children under 5.

District Plan:	Map 6, reference 197/1
Legal Description:	Pt Lot 2 DP 12692 (CT WN47B/601), Wellington Land District
Heritage Area:	None 2013
HPT Listed:	Truby King (former) House - Historic Place Category 1 ref 4427 Truby King Historic Area ref 7040 Truby King Mausoleum – Historic Place Category 1 ref 4430
Archaeological Site:	Unknown risk
Other Names:	120 Duncan Terrace Rodrigo Road 21B Manchester Terrace, Melrose 21B Manchester Street, Melrose
Key physical dates:	House 1923-24 designed / constructed 1935 modified 1979 modified
Architect / Builder:	House Gray Young Morton and Young– Architects Wilson and Johnson – Builder
Former uses:	Private house & gardens Plunket Society offices
Current uses:	Commercial offices, public park
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 266491 Bdg StrengthInv status 'Yet to be Assessed' Jan 2013

Extent: CityView GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The former Truby King House was designed by the prominent Wellington architect William Gray Young in 1923 for the founders of the Plunket Society, Sir Truby and Lady Isabella King.¹

Frederic Truby King (1858 – 1938) was born and raised in New Plymouth and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh with postgraduate specialisations in mental and public health. He married Isabella Cockburn Millar in 1887 and the couple sailed for New Zealand in the same year. King was appointed medical superintendant of Seacliff Lunatic Asylum in 1889. Seacliff was the nation's largest farm asylum at that time and King went on to develop an enduring interest in plant and animal husbandry that is thought to have greatly influenced his later research on infant feeding and human nutrition.²

When the couple adopted their infant daughter, Mary, King became interested in the feeding regime for the child.³ This led in part to the establishment of the Society for the Promotion of the Health of Women and Children in May 1907, and the society was later renamed the Plunket Society after its first patron, Lady Victoria Plunket.

The Plunket movement was established to promote infant and maternal welfare and prevent infant mortality. Information on the care of children, including advice on feeding and domestic hygiene, was disseminated through clinics and by trained nurses who visited mothers in their homes. Ailing infants were taken to the King's holiday home in Karitane, near Dunedin, and this became the prototype for the many Karitane neonatal hospitals that were later constructed throughout New Zealand.

When King was in his mid-sixties and by then a famous New Zealander, he bought land on the slopes of Melrose and planned a complex of buildings. He first purchased the northernmost section of the site in 1922 and this allowed for the construction of the family home (1923- 24), but it seems likely that there was an arrangement with the owners of the adjoining section as the Karitane Products Society Building (1923 – 24) appears to have been built on this site ahead of its purchase in 1927. King also purchased a third site to the south east of the house and factory and this was almost immediately transferred to the Plunket Society as the location for a new Karitane Hospital that was constructed in 1927.⁴

The family home was designed as a single storey bungalow with a wide verandah along the north elevation. This was sheltered by a series of moveable mesh screens, most likely designed by King. King's study to the south-east of the building featured a large vertically sliding sash window that was operated by a winch. The window is likely to have been a later alteration as the original drawing shows the window as three casements. Early photographs show a telescope set up in front of this window that was presumably used to take advantage of the spectacular views over Wellington

¹ James Taylor, "Truby King House (former)", NZHPT website accessed January 2012, report last updated 2006 <http://www.historic.org.nz/theregister/registersearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=4427>

² WCC & Boffa Miskell Partners, "Truby King Park Conservation and Management Plan", unpublished conservation plan prepared for the WCC (1994), 6

³ Barbara Brookes. 'King, Frederic Truby - King, Frederic Truby', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2k8/king-frederic-truby>

⁴ See section 1.3 of this report for an overview of the complex ownership history of the site

harbour.⁵ King and gardener Dan Russell also designed the surrounding park grounds that included a much needed shelter belt of radiata pine, tennis courts, and rhododendron dell.⁶

In 1924 Isabella King's health began to deteriorate, and she died in 1927. She had been the mainstay behind Truby King's work, and was instrumental in the formation of the Plunket Society. She was an intelligent and well educated woman who had acted as King's secretary and wrote newspaper articles under the penname 'Hygeia' on the feeding and care of babies and infants. Truby King gradually withdrew from active medical work in the years after Isabella's death. He moved out of the house when it was effectively donated to the Plunket society in 1932, and it is likely that the society added the garage under the house in 1935 and converted bedrooms 1, 2 and the north-east corner of the verandah to form a large board-room at some time prior to 1938. The mesh screens on the verandah were also removed by this date.⁷

Although Plunket occupied the house at Mount Melrose, Truby King expressed a wish to be interred in the gardens after his death. Special legislation was passed in the *Reserves and Other Lands Disposal Act* of 1936 that would allow burial at the site of the existing pergola on high ground to the south of the house. The mausoleum foundations and vault were designed and constructed in 1936 and King returned to the house shortly before his death in 1938.⁸ When he died he was the first private citizen to be buried with full state honours. King was interred at Melrose alongside the remains of Isabella which were transferred from their original resting place in Porirua. The Plunket Society launched a national appeal for funds to erect a monument that was completed with government assistance in 1941.

The Public Trustee administered King's estate in the 1940s but, as the land and buildings were heavily mortgaged, it was not immediately apparent if the estate was in fact solvent. The only profitable part of Truby King's legacy had been the establishment of the Karitane Products Society that produced baby food and infant formula from the factory building at Mount Melrose and donated its profits to all the various Plunket Societies in New Zealand and beyond. The bequest of the Mt Melrose estate to the Wellington Branch of the Plunket Society was effectively funded by the Karitane Products Society that bought the mortgages on the property and donated the house and land, with a value of £3,000, in lieu of annual grants. It was intended that the house would then operate 'as an extension to the [nearby] Karitane Hospital,' but would be held on a separate title from the hospital.⁹ The three original lots of land that King had purchased in the 1920s were then subdivided to suit the topography of the site, and the locations of the Karitane Products Society factory, Truby King's house, the mausoleum and the Karitane Hospital.¹⁰

The house is said to have been commandeered by the army in WWII, and also used as a convalescent and nurses' home at some time in the 1960s. It was formally transferred from the Public Trustee to the Plunket Society in 1961 and was used as an

⁵ Study, Sir Frederic Truby King's house, Melrose, Wellington. Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: PAColl-6301-87. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23056283>

⁶ Chris Cochran, "Truby King House, Melrose, Wellington: Conservation Report" unpublished report prepared for the WCC as part of the "Truby King Park Management Plan" by Boffa Miskell Partners, Wellington (1992)

⁷ See photograph –Cochran (1992).

⁸ Michael Kelly, *Truby King Mausoleum: Truby King Park, Melrose, Conservation Plan*, unpublished report prepared for the WCC, 2006.

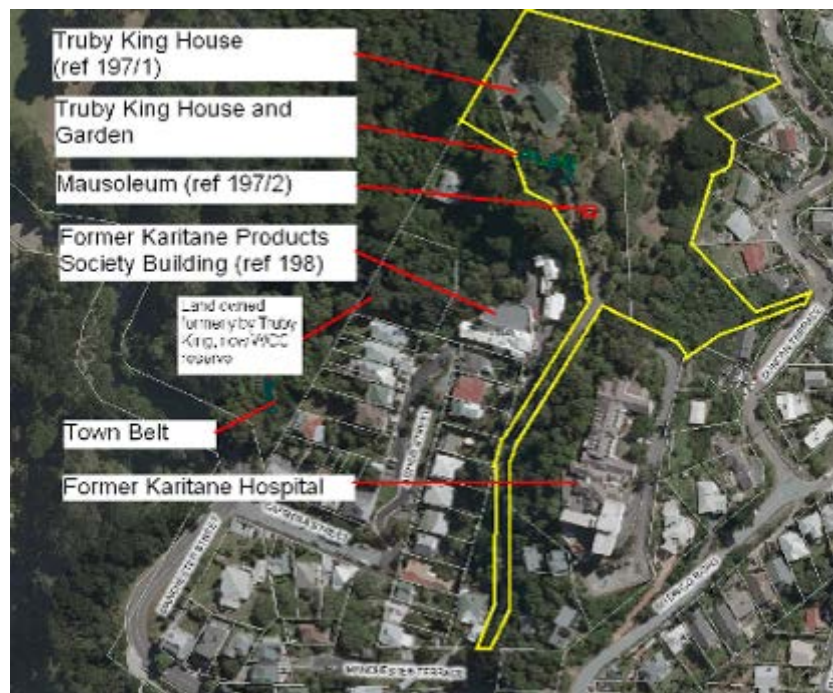
⁹ Letter from A.W. Blair to the City Solicitor dated 23 April 1940. WCC Archives ref TC 7/423; Evening Post, 26 October 1938, Page 18

¹⁰ DP 12692 (1944)

office for the Deputy Director of Nursing. A caretaker's flat was created in the service rooms at the south west of the building in 1979.¹¹

The Plunket Society faced financial difficulties in the 1970s and 80s, and there was public concern that the house, mausoleum and gardens would be sold and the land subdivided.¹² It was purchased by the Wellington City Council in 1991, and a draft management plan was created in 1991 – 92 following public consultation and research. The council then undertook a maintenance programme, and major works include fire safety alterations (1993 – 94), the installation of a new roof (2005),¹³ and the installation of a commercial kitchen (2008).¹⁴

Although the caretaker's flat was tenanted, the bulk of the house lay vacant for many years in the early to mid 1990s. The WCC undertook a feasibility study in 1997 to identify a potential use for the house and the preferred option was to upgrade the property for use as a multi-purpose venue that would incorporate a museum, café, information/interpretation centre and corporate seminar facility.¹⁵ This work has yet to be started and it is currently let to commercial tenants. The gardens including the Truby King Mausoleum, have been renamed Truby King Park and the grounds are open to the public.



Aerial photograph adapted to show the relationship between the Truby King House and Garden (now a WCC reserve with public access to the gardens), The Truby King Mausoleum, the former Karitane Products Society Building (now in residential use), the Former Karitane Hospital (now a conference centre) and the town belt.

¹¹ Taylor (2006)

¹² Taylor (2006)

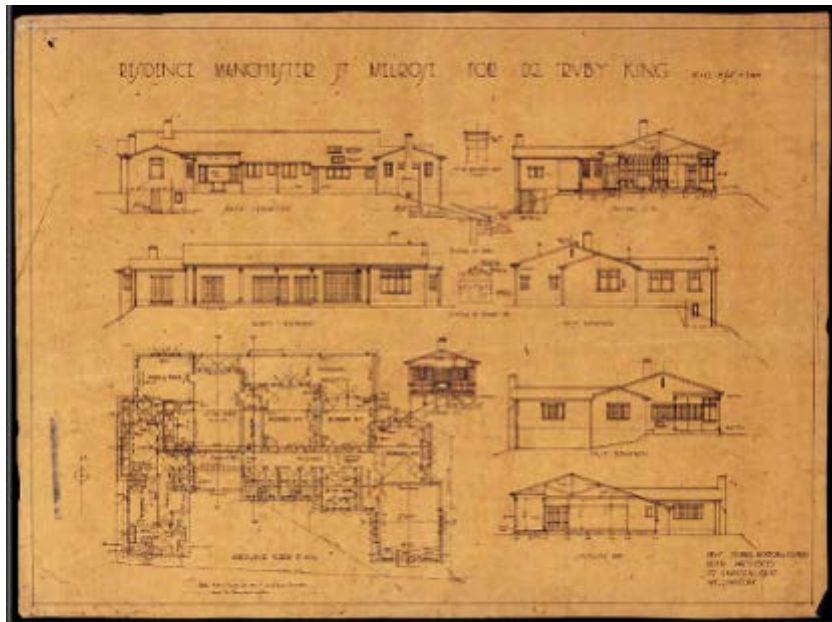
¹³ Taylor (2006)

¹⁴ SR 160928

¹⁵ Gary Bevin and Ray Sleeman "Truby King House, Mount Melrose, Wellington: Future Uses of Truby King House" unpublished report prepared for the WCC, Wellington (1997)



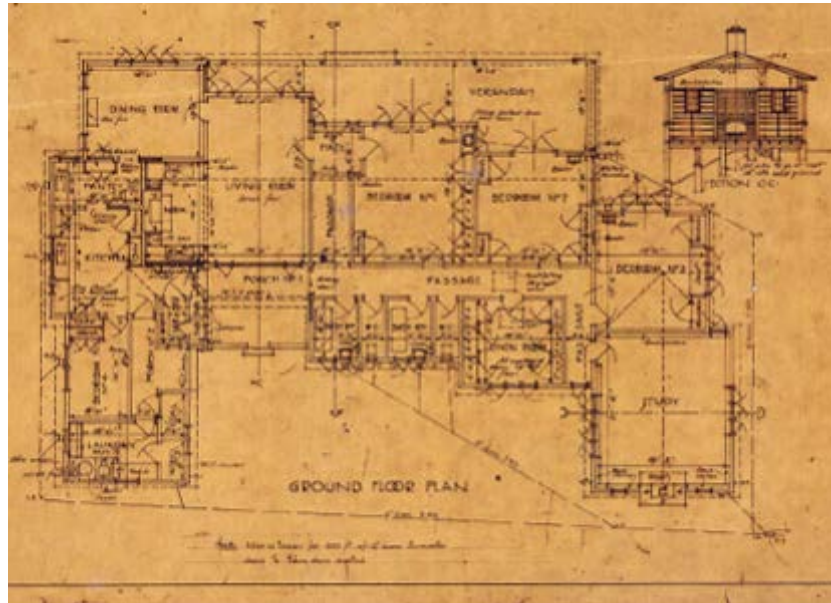
c.1939 Truby King's study ¹⁶



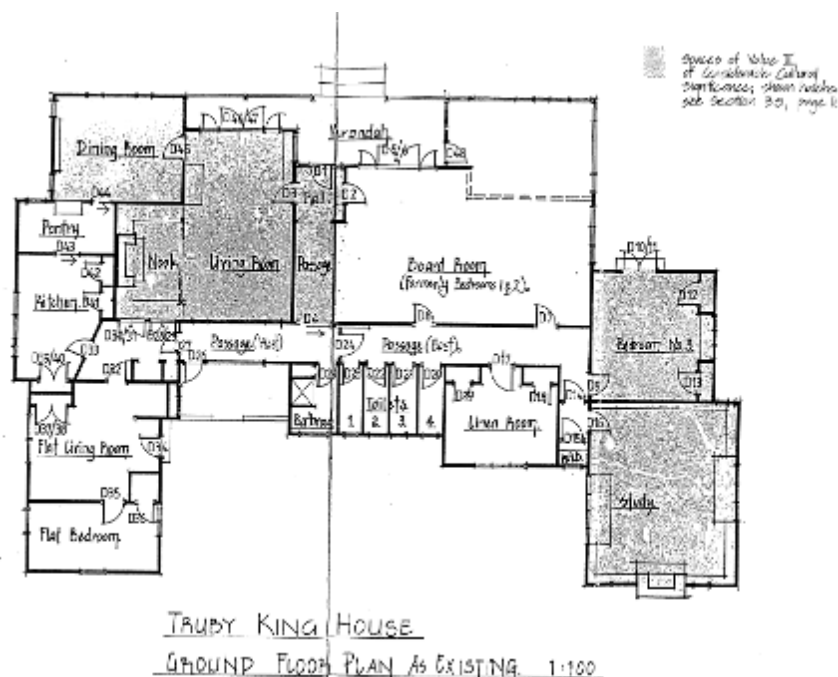
1923 plans, sections and elevations as proposed.¹⁷

¹⁶ Study, Sir Frederic Truby King's house, Melrose, Wellington. Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002)
:Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: PAColl-6301-87. Alexander
Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23056283>

¹⁷ WCC Archives ref 00055_21_A2027



Enlarged plan from original drawings as proposed.

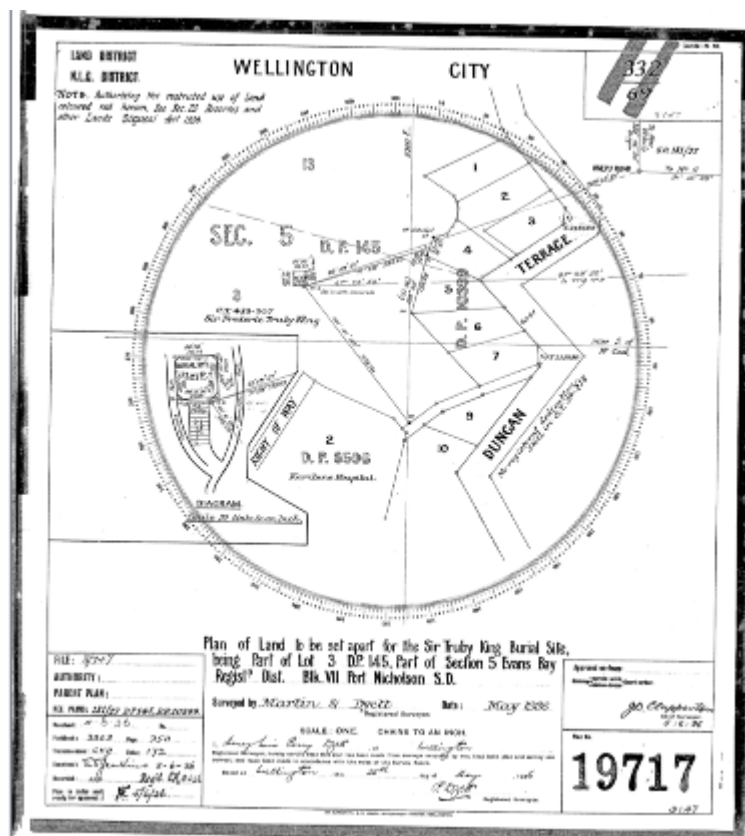


1993 plan as existing. Note that the original kitchen, bedroom 4 & laundry were converted to a caretaker's flat in the 1970s. The original bedrooms 1 & 2 and part of the verandah were converted to a large boardroom in the 1930s, and part of the rear (south) porch was enclosed to form a passageway.¹⁸

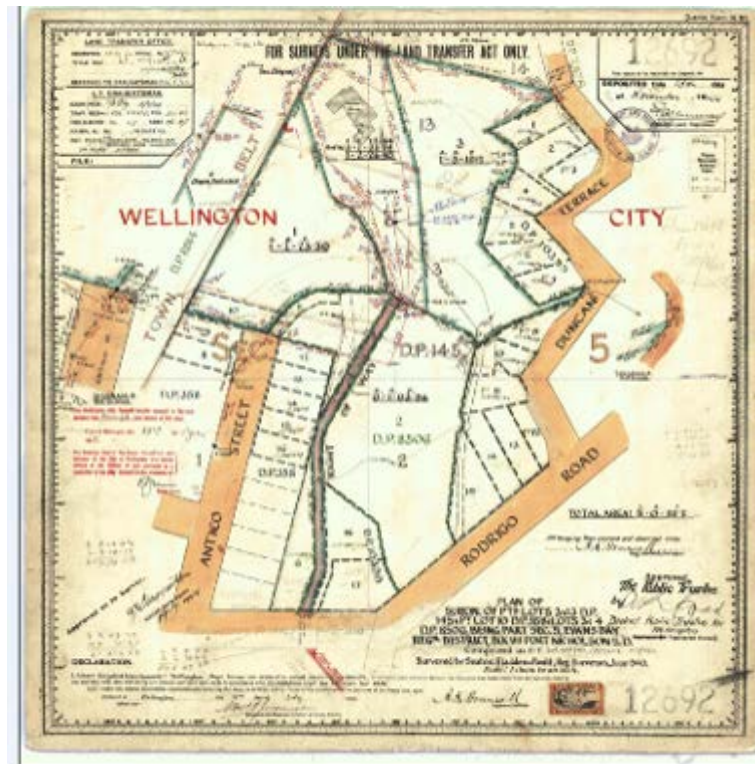
¹⁸ Bevin and Sleeman (1997)

1.2 Timeline

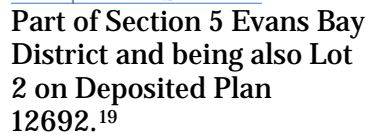
1923	Construction of the house
1932	The house was 'donated' to the Plunket Society (although a formal transfer of the property occurred in 1961)
1935	A garage was added under the west end of the house
1936	Mausoleum vaults constructed
1938	King returned briefly to the house before his death in 1938
Pre 1939	Bedrooms 1 & 2 were combined and a portion of the north verandah was filled in to form one large room
1941	Mausoleum decorative/memorial features added (assumed)
1944	Site boundaries finalised
1961	The house, gardens and monument transferred formally to the Plunket Society
1979	Caretaker's flat formed in the service rooms at the west end of the house. Other minor changes made by the Plunket Society
1989	Mount Melrose classified under section 35(b) of the Historic Places Act 1980
1991	The house and land purchased by the WCC from the Plunket Society
1993-4	Fire safety alterations
2005	new roof
2008	SR 160928 installation of a one way fire wall between the residential flat and future proposed function centre and installation of a new commercial kitchen.



SO19717 – Plan of Land to be set apart for the Sir Truby King burial site. Part of Lot 2 DP 145.



1944 - DP 12692 shows the plan of subdivision of Part Lots 3 and 13 DP 145 and Part Lot 10 DP 358 and Lots 3 & 4 DP 8506 that are all part of Section 5 Evans Bay Regional District, Block VII Port Nicholson SD.



²⁰ CT WN47B/601

Gray Young Morton and Young

William Gray Young, 1885-1962, was born in Oamaru. His family moved to Wellington where he was educated when he was a child. After leaving school he was articled to the Wellington architectural firm of Crighton and McKay. In 1906 he won a competition for the design of Knox College, Dunedin, and commenced practice on his own account shortly after.

During a career that spanned the next 60 years, Gray Young was a prominent and prolific architect, designing over 500 buildings in New Zealand. His major buildings include the Wellesley Club (1925) for which he was awarded the Gold Medal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1932; the Wellington and Christchurch Railway Stations (1936 and 1954 respectively); Scots College (1919); Phoenix Assurance Building (1930); and the Australian Mutual Provident Society Chambers (1950). At Victoria University, Wellington, he was responsible for the Stout (1930), Kirk (1938) and Easterfield (1957) buildings, as well as Weir House (1930).

Gray Young also gained recognition for his domestic work. He started designing houses at the age of 18 with a home for his father in Kelburn in 1903. His domestic buildings were in various styles including the English domestic revival, Californian bungalow, colonial revival and neo-Georgian. It is for houses in the Georgian style that he is best known. An excellent example is the first he built in this style, the Elliott House, which is still standing at 43 Kent Terrace.

Gray Young was elected a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1913, served on the executive committee from 1914 to 1935, and was President from 1935 to 1936. He was also elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Prior to World War I, Gray Young worked in collaboration with Stanley Fearn and Austin Quick, and a formal partnership was formed between Young and Fearn in 1922. In 1923 Fearn left the partnership and Gray Young was joined by his brother Jack and by Hubert Morton. The Gray Young, Morton and Young partnership lasted until 1951 when they were joined by Ian Calder. In 1959 Michael Fowler joined the partnership and in 1962, when Gray Young died, the firm was known as Gray Young, Morton, Young, Calder and Fowler. A descendent of this firm still operates in Wellington today.²¹

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Truby King House is a single storey, 1920s domestic residence. In its original form the house had an American colonial character, most particularly in the long verandah of the north elevation. The verandah was set under the slope of the main roof, supported by large square timber columns. The bedroom walls were punctuated by small-paned French doors that opened out onto the verandah. The character of the house was somewhat altered by the alterations that in-filled the verandah but this was an early alteration and is generally in keeping with the style of the house.

²¹ WCC Heritage Building Inventory (1999) ref Appendix III. Sources: *William Gray Young, Architect, 1885-1962*, Robert I. P. Vorstermans, Victoria University of Wellington, 1982.

The architecture, generally, is unpretentious – a plain weather-boarded structure with casement windows and a low-pitched galvanised mild steel roof. The plan form of the house is loose and pleasantly rambling. An entrance hall divides the house into two distinct areas. On the east side are the bedrooms (originally three) and a stud; there are ample service rooms with a linen storage room, two bathrooms (one of these is now two toilets) and two separate toilets. The west side of the house contained a formal living and dining room with timber paneling, also a kitchen, pantry, laundry and a fourth bedroom (presumably for a maid or servant). Two open porch areas in this part of the house are now enclosed.

Natural ventilation was provided via open porches to the south, and timber grilles were fitted above the doors to bedrooms 1 & 2 and the layout of the house made the most of natural light and of the panoramic views to the east and west. The spatial planning of the house is said to illustrate King's 'ideas about the importance of the environment on people's lives.'²²

King's study was located to the east of the house and was home to his personal library. A sliding window, perhaps a later addition, allowed for spectacular views. Parts of the operating winch that once operated the window can be seen in the cupboard in front of the window.

The use of the north verandah must have been limited to fine days since the exposure of the house to all winds was very great before the nearby trees reached maturity. Early photographs show sliding mesh screens that were arranged to deflect the wind without interfering too much with the views from inside. Again, these screens are not part of the architectural design and were apparently devised by King himself.

Generally the timber used in the house is rimu, both for the framing and the interior finishing. Matai was used for the bevel-back rough sawn weatherboarding, and the exterior trim and some flooring; jarrah was used for the flooring of the study and living room.

Note: this section is an updated version of section 2.3 of the 1992 Conservation Plan by Chris Cochran²³

2.2 Materials

Concrete footings

Brick chimneys with ash pits

Timber flooring, t&g wall linings to pantry, bathrooms, WCs, linen room, cupboards, laundry, meat safe, larder and to the wall behind the bookshelves in the study, t&g ceiling/soffit lining under the verandah.

Timber 'mock' panelling to the walls of the 'nooks', hall and the wall of the dining room that includes the gas-fire.

Fibrous plaster sheet finish generally to walls and ceilings

Timber structure with timber weatherboard cladding

Timber joinery (doors and windows etc.) & timber shelving to the study

Corrugated iron (or mild steel) roofing

²² Taylor (2006)

²³ Cochran, (1992), 8

2.3 Setting

The former Truby King House is set within Truby King Park, which is comprised of part of the gardens formerly owned by Sir Frederic and Lady Isabella King, along with the mausoleum that houses their remains. The park has an area of approximately 1.9 hectares, is open for public access and is owned by the WCC.

3.0 Sources

A.W. Blair, letter to the City Solicitor dated 23 April 1940. WCC Archives ref TC 7/423

Bevin, Gary and Ray Sleeman "Truby King House, Mount Melrose, Wellington: Future Uses of Truby King House" unpublished report prepared for the WCC, Wellington (1997)

Brookes, Barbara. 'King, Frederic Truby - King, Frederic Truby', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012

URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2k8/king-frederic-truby>

Cochran, Chris. "Truby King House, Melrose, Wellington: Conservation Report" unpublished report prepared for the WCC as part of the "Truby King Park Management Plan" by Boffa Miskell Partners, Wellington (1992), 8

CT vol.30 folio 189, ¹ CT vol.433 folio 136, CT vol.140 folio 23, CT vol. 383 folio 76, CT Vol 433 folio 207, CT A1/77, CT WN47B/601

DP 12692 (1944)

Kelly, Michael. *Truby King Mausoleum: Truby King Park, Melrose, Conservation Plan*, unpublished report prepared for the WCC, 2006.

Taylor, James. "Truby King House (former)", NZHPT website accessed January 2012, report last updated 2006

<http://www.historic.org.nz/theregister/registersearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=4427>

Study, Sir Frederic Truby King's house, Melrose, Wellington. Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: PAColl-6301-87. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23056283>

WCC Archives ref 00055_21_A2027

WCC & Boffa Miskell Partners, *Truby King Park Conservation Plan*, unpublished report prepared for the WCC, 1993.

WCC Heritage Building Inventory (1999) ref Appendix III. Sources: *William Gray Young, Architect, 1885-1962*, Robert I. P. Vorstermans, Victoria University of Wellington, 1982.

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 Truby King house is a good representative example of an early 20th century house.

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 house is sited on a ridge and is a prominent feature within the Truby King Park.

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 house sits within a group of buildings, structures and gardens associated with Sir Frederic and Lady Isabella King. These include the mausoleum where their remains are interred, the Truby King Park, the nearby Karitane Products Society Building and the former Karitane Hospital. All of which are sited on land that was at one time owned by King.

Historic Value:

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

The house has historic value for its association with Truby and Isabella King who were well known for their achievements in the improvement of the health of women and babies in New Zealand. The building was donated by King for use by the Plunket Society, an institution that is currently New Zealand's largest provider of support services for the development, health and wellbeing of children under 5.

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?

Unknown risk

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 building has public esteem for its association with Truby King and the Plunket Society. This can be seen by the public campaign that led to the acquisition of the site by the WCC in 1991 for use as a public park.

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 mausoleum contributes to the identity and sense of place of Truby King Park, a local amenity that was purchased after a long public campaign.

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?*

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 house has had few modern intrusive alterations or additions with the exception of the works to create the caretaker's flat in the 1970s.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The building and park have national significance for their association with the King family and as the place where Sir Frederic Truby King and Lady Isabella King were interred.

5.0Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

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

Background research