

**Mansfield Court Hotel**  
277 Mansfield Street



*Image: Charles Collins, 2015*

**Summary of heritage significance**

- The former Mansfield Court Hotel is a very good representative example of a timber Italianate Edwardian hotel. It is notable for its distinctive street façade with its tower and covered verandahs.
- The former Mansfield Court Hotel was built originally as a 'private' or temperance hotel. It has an historic association with both alcohol prohibition and the temperance movement – two parts of the most divisive social issues in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand. The building also has a long use as a private hotel and hostel, and has been owned both by private owners and the Government. It is now a halfway house, an important element of New Zealand social welfare network and health systems. It also has historical value as a building designed by James Bennie, a prominent Wellington architect from the period.
- This building is a local landmark as one of the largest and most ornate buildings on Mansfield Street.

District Plan:	Map 6, reference 202
Legal Description:	
Heritage Area:	N/A
HPT Listed:	Category II, reference 2907
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270. known pre-1900 human activity, sites of significance to Maori
Other Names:	Kensington House, Graham's Private Hotel
Key physical dates:	Built: 1905
Architect / Builder:	Architect: James Bennie
Former uses:	Commercial – temperance hotel
Current uses:	Residential – housing New Zealand
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone – SR 20199

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

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

Newtown was originally surveyed by the New Zealand Company in 1840 as part of the new settlement of Wellington. Newtown was farmland for its first few decades and only lightly settled. The relocation of Wellington Hospital and the extension of the tram system to the suburb in the 1880s spurred subdivision. Within 40 years, the suburb was effectively filled.<sup>2</sup>

The Mansfield Court Hotel was constructed in 1905 and originally opened as the Kensington Private Hotel, shortly after the electric tram was extended to Newtown Park. The building was designed by James Bennie, and built by W.G. Emeny for J. Fanning, and described on the original plan as a temperance hotel. The hotel is two-storeys, with a central portico and tower built into and over the front verandahs. These elements provide the main architectural interest in what is otherwise a plain and utilitarian building. The building is constructed with a light timber frame, and clad in rusticated weatherboards, on concrete foundations and piles; the roof was originally corrugated iron.

Temperance means moderation or abstinence from the use of alcohol, and the temperance movement arrived in New Zealand in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1893 voters could choose to reduce the number of liquor outlets in their electorate, or ban them altogether in referendums that were held every three years. Between 1894 and 1908, 12 out of 76 general electorates banned liquor sales (or went 'dry') and nearly 500 hotels lost their liquor licences. By 1910 it was almost impossible for a new hotel to gain a liquor licence.<sup>3</sup> 'Private' hotels and boarding houses were those which chose not to apply for, or could not obtain, a liquor licence. Some used this prohibition on liquor as an advertisement to attract "guests for whom abstinence from alcohol was a way of life."<sup>4</sup>

In 1949 the hotel was taken over by Kenneth Graham who renamed it Graham's Private Hotel. In 1952/53 it was acquired by the Post and Telegraph department which used the building as a hostel. It was by this time known as Kensington House. In 1964/65 the hostel had been suggested as accommodation for Victoria University students, but this did not go ahead,<sup>5</sup> and in 1965 the Wellington City Mission took over the building, also for use as a hostel, renaming it Walton House. It made considerable internal changes, to designs prepared by Strutron Group Architects. The hostel was established by Bruce Stewart and was strongly supported by then Mayor, Michael Fowler.

In 1978 the building reopened as a private Hotel and was again renamed, this time as the Mansfield Court Hotel.

<sup>1</sup> History adapted from Wellington City Council, '277 Mansfield Street', *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory: Non Residential Buildings 2001*, MANS1.

<sup>2</sup> Text extracted from Wellington City Council, *Newtown Central Shopping Centre Heritage Area, Riddiford Street, Constable Street, Rintoul Street*, October 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Christoffel. 'Liquor laws - The temperance influence', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 9-May-13

URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/liquor-laws/page-2>

<sup>4</sup> Paul Christoffel. 'Hotels and motels - Types of early hotels', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 13-Jul-12

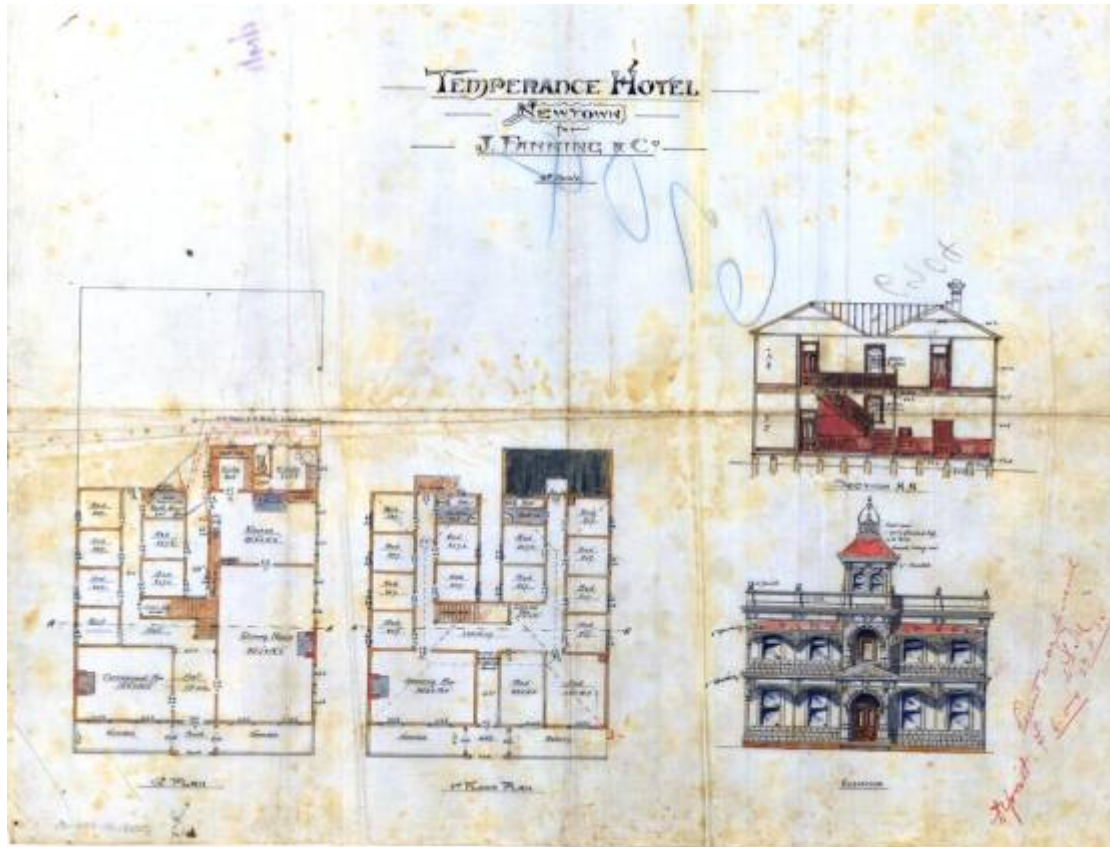
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/hotels-and-motels/page-3>

<sup>5</sup> 'Kensington House', Salient, Victoria University Student's Paper. Vol. 28, No. 1. 1965, accessed 29 July 2013, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Salient28011965-t1-body-d31.html>



The building is now owned by Housing New Zealand, and has been occupied since 1998 by Te Menenga Pai Charitable Trust, which offers 24 hour residential community support, and runs the building as a halfway house.

### 1.2 Timeline of modifications (original plans)



- 1905 Corner Horner Street and Mansfield Street [277 Mansfield Street], Temperance Hotel (00053:121:6704)
- 1966 277 Mansfield Street, out building alterations – hostel (00058:443:C18974)
- 1973 277 Mansfield Street, upgrade hostel (00058:889:C39491)
- 1978 277 Mansfield Street, upgrade residential building (00058:1153:C49696)
- 1989 277 Mansfield Street, garage (00059:310:E17979)
- 2010 277 Mansfield Street, upgrade the fire alarm system and evacuation routes (00078:3553:211199)

### 1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

## 1.4 Architect

### James Bennie<sup>6</sup>

James Bennie was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, immigrated to New Zealand in 1880 and settled in Brunnertown near Greymouth. In the early 1890s he attended the Working Men's College in Melbourne, Australia, where he studied under artist and architect Thomas Searell. On completion of his studies he returned to Greymouth and set up in practice as an architect. In 1903 Bennie moved to Wellington and went into practice with E C Farr before establishing his own practice in 1905. Some of Bennie's designs include the Albermarle Hotel, Wellington (1905), the Carnegie Library at Levin (1910), the Karori Methodist Church (1912), and the Oriental Bay Tea Kiosk (1912, demolished 1978). He designed a number of theatres including Kings (1910), Queens (1916), the Crown (1916) and Paramount (1917), all in Wellington and was also responsible for the design of many houses including the Wedge, Glenbervie Terrace (1906) and Bennie house, Salamanca road (1907) both in Wellington. He also had an interest in prefabricated house design. Bennie was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, founded in 1905, and was later elected a Fellow. He retired in 1935 and his son Malcolm took over the Wellington practice.

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture<sup>7</sup>

The Mansfield Court Hotel was constructed with a light timber frame, clad in rusticated weatherboard, on concrete foundations and piles, with the roof originally clad in corrugated iron. The building is two-storey, featuring a central portico and tower built onto (and over) the front verandahs. These elements provide the main architectural feature of the building in what is otherwise a plain and utilitarian building. The main entry is capped by a fretwork pediment above a round archway, giving emphasis to the entry. A similar arch on the first floor is capped by a cornice and the square tower above. The tower has a small hipped roof. The building was designed with a distinct Italianate touch, and was originally much more ornate than it appears today. Parapet decoration, a cast iron capping to the tower, and fretwork between the verandah posts has all been removed and the ground floor balustrade has been boarded over. Enough remains, however, to give an indication of the decorative quality of the original design.

Internal modifications carried out in 1965 to designs by Structon Group Architects included a new kitchen, sitting room, garage (with access from Horner Street), laundry and boiler room, as well as the refurbishment of the existing bedrooms.

### 2.2 Materials

- Timber framing
- Rusticated weatherboards
- Concrete foundations and piles
- Originally corrugated iron roofing

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<sup>6</sup> New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 'James Bennie', *Professional Biographies*, accessed 29 July 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Bennie,+James>

<sup>7</sup> History adapted from Wellington City Council, '277 Mansfield Street', *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory: Non Residential Buildings 2001*, MANS1.

### **2.3 Setting**

The Mansfield Court Hotel has provided accommodation in Newtown for over 90 years, serving many different parts of society and undergoing a number of different modifications to meet the changing needs and changing standards of accommodation. The Mansfield Street façade has had decorative features removed, but the form of the verandah and tower are intact, and give the building a marked visual appeal and add a great amount of visual interest to the streetscape.

### **3.0 Sources**

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. 'James Bennie'. *Professional Biographies*, accessed 29 July 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Bennie,+James>

Salient, Victoria University Student's Paper. Vol. 28, No. 1. 1965. Accessed 29 July 2013. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Salient28011965-t1-body-d31.html>

Wellington City Council. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory: Non Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council 2001

### **Wellington City Archive**

00053:121:6704  
00058:443:C18974  
00058:889:C39491  
00058:1153:C49696  
00059:310:E17979  
00078:3553:211199

## 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 Mansfield Court Hotel is a very good representative example of a timber Italianate Edwardian hotel. It is notable for its distinctive street façade with its tower and covered verandahs.

**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?*

This building is a local landmark as one of the largest and most ornate buildings on Mansfield Street.

**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?*

The former Mansfield Court Hotel was built originally as a 'private' or temperance hotel. It has an historic association with both alcohol prohibition and the temperance movement – two parts of the most divisive social issues in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand.

The building also has a long use as a private hotel and hostel, and has been owned both by private owners and the Government. It is now a halfway house, an important element of New Zealand social welfare network and health systems. It also has historical value as a building designed by James Bennie, a prominent Wellington architect from the period.

**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?*

Central City NZAA R27/270 and near sites of significance to Maori.

**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 contributes to a sense of place and continuity as a representative of a private hotel that has been in use as a hotel or hostel for over 90 years.

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

This building is a focus of community connection for the role that it plays in Wellington as a halfway house

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

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

The building is a locally rare example of a surviving Edwardian timber Italianate hotel.

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

This building is a representative example of an Edwardian timber commercial private hotel and as an example of James Bennies work. There are few similar buildings in Wellington.

***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?*

This building has had a number of modifications that have stripped some of the decorative qualities from the street façade. It retains original fabric and the general form of the building is intact, which gives this building authenticity and visual appeal. The interior has had significant alterations that match the changing uses it has been through to meet changing standards of accommodation.

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

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

This is a locally significant building that retains functional uses as well as retaining a significant amount of original material and authenticity. It has some local rarity value as an example of a timber Italianate Edwardian hotel.



## 4.0 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)		