

Boat Sheds

Sheds 1, 2-13, 14-27 and 38-49 Clyde Quay Boat Harbour



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The three groups of the sheds have a strong historic association with both the development of the harbour itself and boating in Wellington city.
- Sheds 2-13 and 38-49 were the first buildings constructed on the newly formed boat harbour.
- The simple repeating forms have a powerful architectural presence which gives them high townscape value within the boat harbour and their early all-concrete construction gives them some technical interest.
- Together with the other buildings in the boat harbour they have very high group value.
- The sheds are of high amenity and social value to the members of the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

District Plan:	Sheds 1, 2-13: map 16, reference 458 Sheds 14-27: map 16, reference 459 Sheds 38-49: map 16, reference 462
Legal Description:	Section 1 SO 24076
Heritage Area:	Clyde Quay Boat Harbour
HPT Listed:	No
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown – c1905 reclaimed land
Key physical dates:	1905 (sheds 2-13, 38-49) 1909 (shed 1) 1922 (sheds 14-27)
Architect:	William Ferguson, Wellington Harbour Board Engineer
Former uses:	Boatsheds
Current uses:	Boatsheds
Earthquake Prone Status:	Yet to be assessed

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



Aerial view of the boat sheds. From left to right: sheds 1, 2-13, 14-27, 38-49 (Image: Google Maps)

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

From the inauguration of the boat harbour in 1905, the operation and occupation of moorings and sheds gave rise to the greatest interaction between 'boaties' and officialdom.² The creation of a harbour by the Wellington Harbour Board (WHB), completed in 1904, formed an ideal small boat anchorage close to the city. Boat sheds were not constructed initially as it was thought "...undesirable to build sheds on timber foundations over the water, as the ground would gradually shoal thereunder and become offensive and insanitary". The WHB applied to the Marine Department for permission to reclaim land for boatsheds, which duly took place.

Sheds 2-13, and 38-49

The concrete boat sheds were designed by the WHB Engineer and built in two sections, of 12 bays each, in 1905. Some 80 metres separated the two structures (sheds 2-13 and 38-49). Port Nicholson Yacht Club members, who had been based at Evans Bay, moved over to Clyde Quay and rented the sheds, to use as workshops and to house small boats and gear. Other clubs also took up sheds.

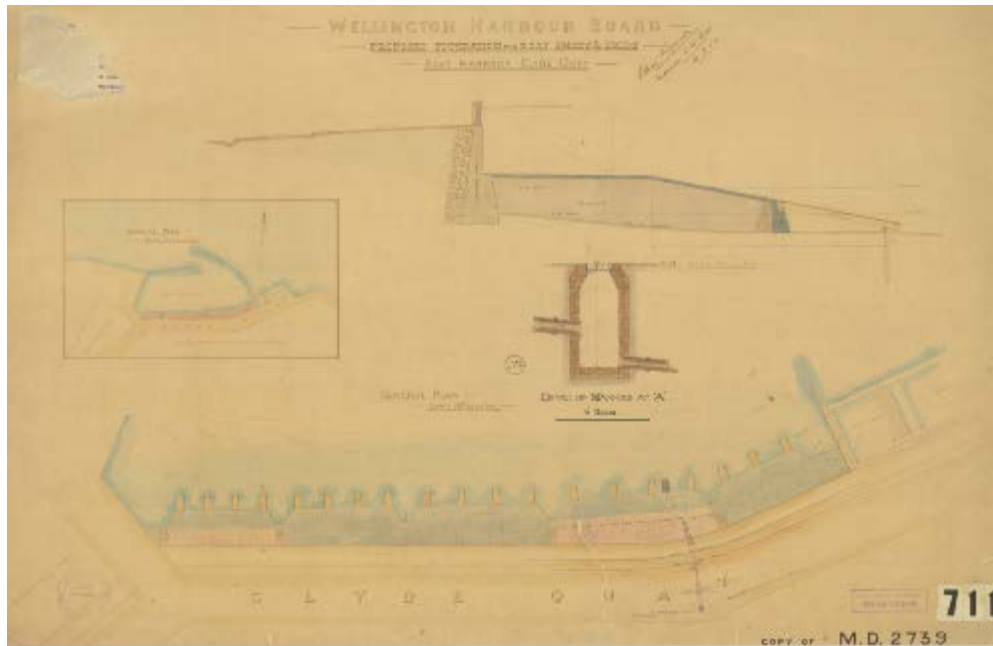
Initially however, getting tenants was not easy. The rent was expensive for the time. The number of boats in the harbour reflected the slow pickup during the early years of the harbour's existence. Yachting and motor launching were not cheap activities, although by no means exclusive pastimes. Many boat owners were men, and occasionally women, of more modest means, but some prominent names featured regularly in the schedule of occupants – motoring industry figures such as Maurice Manthel, and Bryan and Desmond Todd, noted architects A.H Mitchell and C.H Mitchell, and retailer L.V Martin.³

Eventually though, the sheds became highly sought after, and there was a long waiting list that endured challenges like fee increases. They have always been used for this purpose.

¹ History adapted from: Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 1, 2-13, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005); Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 14-27, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005); Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 38-49, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005);

² C. Cochran, 'Clyde Quay Boat Harbour Wellington Conservation Plan' (2005), p.4. The following information is derived from this source.

³ NB: These names are associated with the entire suite of boatsheds, rather than simply the first sheds.



Proposed foundation for boat sheds and skids. Sheds 2-13, 38-49 are in pink (WC Archives, 00237:6:7)

Shed 1

In 1909 the western most flight of stairs were removed, and a shed built on the triangular site (known today as shed 1) which housed a toilet.

Sheds 14-27

The increasing popularity of sailing and the fine location increased demand for the Clyde Quay moorings and, in 1922, a further 14 sheds were added, which maintained the appearance of the first sheds.

In World War II Clyde Quay was taken over as a base for American troops and some of the sheds were used for various purposes related to this. For instance a temporary second storey was built on top of sheds 38-49 in 1942 for troop accommodation. This was removed by the end of the war, and since this time the sheds have retained their original form.

After the war Clyde Quay was returned to civilian use. In 1945 timber partitions were built into sheds 38-49 to increase the lettable capacity of the boat sheds, so that each leaf of each of the double doors opens into a half size shed. The sheds continue to be used by club boat owners to this day.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1905 Sheds 2-13 and 38-49 constructed
- 1909 Shed 1 constructed as a toilet (western most shed)
- 1909 Boatsheds roofed with malthoid
- 1922 Sheds 14-27 constructed
- 1942 Temporary second storey built on sheds 38-49 (later removed)
- 1945 Timber partitions added to sheds 38-49

1.3 Occupation history

1905-present Rented by various tenants

1.4 Architect

William Ferguson (c1851-1935)

Chief Engineer, Wellington Harbour Board

William Ferguson was born in London and went on the study at Trinity College in Dublin.⁴ In Ireland he completed an apprenticeship with a mechanical engineer, and worked as a draftsman for another firm of Irish engineers. He eventually completed a MA and was, for a time, assistant to the Professor of Engineering at Trinity College.

In 1883 he travelled to New Zealand. In 1884 he was appointed engineer and secretary of the Wellington Harbour Board (WHB) and by 1885 was also the treasurer. He was extremely influential in the development and administration of the port. While maintaining his position with WHB, Ferguson also gave his services to other projects. He worked with the Wellington City Council several times, such as in 1887 regarding the Te Aro Reclamation, and in 1892 for a new city drainage scheme. In 1895 he was involved in the construction of Kelburn Park, acting as the honorary engineer. He was also involved with other Harbour Boards around the country, and in 1905 reported on harbour works in Auckland. Such was his skill and reputation that in 1907 the Premier of Victoria requested he visit Melbourne to report on the Melbourne Harbour Works.⁵

In 1908 Ferguson resigned from WHB to take up the post as managing director of the Wellington Gas Company (WGC). He remained a consulting engineer for WHB until 1913. In 1916 he left WGC and was appointed chairman of the National Efficiency Board, a war time creation. He stayed in this position for four years.

In 1890 he married Miss Mary Louisa Moorhouse, and together they survived the wreck of the *Wairarapa* in 1894. When he died in 1935 (aged 84) he was survived by one son, W.D. Ferguson of Kelburn.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Sheds 2-13, together with sheds 38-49, are the earliest buildings on the boat harbour.⁶ They are utilitarian structures, with no pretension of architectural greatness. Set on land reclaimed for the purpose, they are innovatively constructed entirely in concrete, with insitu floors, walls, roof trusses and roofs.

⁴ Unless otherwise referenced, this information is taken from: "Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXIX, Issue 145, 21 June 1935, Page 11

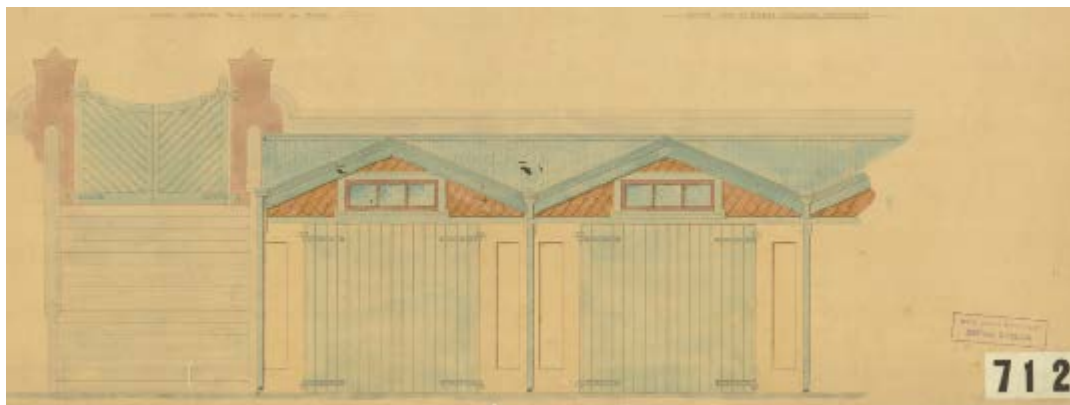
⁵ *Evening Post*, Volume LXXIV, Issue 149, 20 December 1907, Page 4

⁶ Taken directly from: Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 1, 2-13, vXI*.

Sheds 2-13

The sheds start at the south-western end of the boat harbour towards the former Clyde Quay Wharf. The original arrangement in this area had a flight of steps at the southern end of shed 2 and an empty space to the sea-wall at the western edge of the boat harbour. Around 1908, this space was infilled with, effectively, 1½ sheds which provided toilet facilities for the boat harbour; these were designed in a style complimentary to the adjoining boat sheds. The steps were removed and the space made into a curious ½-width shed, again in a complimentary style some time after 1910.

The sheds are all conjoined with party walls, a box gutter above each; each shed has a simple gable roof, over-clad with a sheet membrane, a glazed steel-framed light in 3 sections set in the gable and a pair of large timber doors hung on strap hinges, painted a pale blue. Recessed panels in the concrete wall faces between the doors, picked out in alternating red and orange colours against the white walls, create a strong rhythmic pattern to the elevations, however, the strongest feature is the striking pattern made by the row of gable roofs, particularly in the context of the other sheds. The sheds run right to the seawall at the edge of Oriental Parade and are separated from the adjoining group of sheds to the east with a concrete access stair rising up to the footpath above.



The front elevation of the boatsheds (detail from plans, WC Archives, 00237:6:8)

The original drawings show additional elaboration to the sheds in the form of shingles to the gable ends and rain-heads and downpipes at each box gutter; it is evident from inspection of early photographs that these features never got off the drawing board, presumably for cost reasons.

Sheds 38-49

Sheds 38-49 were built at the same time and to the same specifications as sheds 2-13.⁷ The sheds run right back to the seawall at the edge of Oriental Parade and are separated from the adjoining RPNYC building to the west and the Coene sheds to the east by concrete access stairs rising up to the footpath above.

In 1945 timber partitions were built in to sheds 38-49 to increase the lettable capacity of the boat sheds, so that each leaf of each of the double doors opens into a half size shed. In all other respects, these sheds match those numbered 2 to 13.

⁷ Taken directly from: Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 38-49, vXI*.



Sheds 38-49 (2005)

Sheds 14-27

These sheds, numbered 14 – 27, are utilitarian structures, with no more pretension of architectural greatness than their earlier (1905) predecessors.⁸ They are constructed entirely in concrete, with in-situ floors, walls, roof trusses and roofs, generally following the pattern of the earlier sheds, with some differences of detail – the barges are moulded concrete plaster and the openings to the lights above the doors are gently arched. The sheds are each divided longitudinally with a brick partition such that each door opens on to one storage area.

The sheds are all conjoined with party walls, a box gutter above each; each shed has a simple gable roof, over-clad with a sheet membrane, an arched opening set in the gable, originally screened off with wrought iron grillage – some remain in situ, but there are many improvised grilles, and a pair of large timber doors hung on strap hinges. The strongest feature is the striking pattern made by the row of 13 gable roofs, particularly in the context of the other sheds. As with the other sheds, the predominant colour scheme is powder-blue joinery against white walls.

At the east, this group of sheds abuts the former Te Aro Sailing Club sheds. The sheds run right back to the Oriental Parade seawall and are separated from the adjoining group of original sheds to the west with a concrete access stair rising to the footpath above.

⁸ Taken directly from: Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 14-27, vXI*.



Sheds 14-27 (2005)

2.2 Materials

The sheds are innovatively constructed entirely in concrete, with in-situ floors, walls, roof trusses and roofs. Each shed has a pair of large timber doors hung on strap hinges. Sheds 2-13 and 38-49 have a glazed steel-framed light in 3 sections set in the gable, while sheds 14-27 have an arched opening set in the gable, originally screened off with wrought iron grillage.

2.3 Setting

The Clyde Quay boat harbour is a distinctive and unique Wellington landmark, set on the inner harbour beneath the hills of Mount Victoria. Bounded by the Freyberg Pool to the east and the (now demolished) Overseas Passenger Terminal to the west, it is a notable heritage area for its unique and quite authentic collection of heritage buildings, structures and objects. Until recently, it was the only marina in the inner Wellington harbour.

3.0 Sources

Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 1, 2-13, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005)

Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 14-27, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005)

Russell Murray, *Clyde Quay Boat Harbour – Boat Sheds 38-49, vXI*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005)

Newspapers

“Obituary,” *Evening Post*, Volume CXIX, Issue 145, 21 June 1935, Page 11

Evening Post, Volume LXXIV, Issue 149, 20 December 1907, Page 4

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 boat sheds are a good representative example of semi-industrial municipal buildings. Their simple repeating forms give the row of sheds a powerful architectural presence. The sheds remain little changed since they were built, and for this retain a high level of architectural authenticity.

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 boat sheds are a distinctive landmark on Wellington's waterfront. They have high townscape value for their simple repeating forms which have a powerful architectural presence.

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 three groups of boat sheds have high group value for their association to each other, and to the collection of other heritage buildings within the Clyde Quay Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

The boat sheds have historic value for their connection with the Wellington Harbour Board, their occupation by American forces during WWII, and the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club.

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

The boat sheds have a strong historic association with both the development of the harbour itself and boating in Wellington city. Sheds 2-13 and 38-49 were the first buildings constructed on the newly formed boat harbour in 1905.

Scientific Value:

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

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?

The boat sheds have technical interest as an early example of all-concrete construction.

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 boat sheds have been in continuous use as boatsheds since 1905. They are an integral component of the heritage buildings, structures and objects that make up the Clyde Quay Boat Harbour Heritage Area. As such they contribute to the sense of place and continuity of the 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?*

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?*

Despite small changes over the years, the boat sheds remain largely intact with a high level of original building fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The boat sheds are of local importance, as they contribute to the Clyde Quay Boat Harbour Heritage Area.

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?	Y	Russell Murray reports
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan	Y	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

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*