

**Commercial Building**  
14-16 Courtenay Place



Image: *Charles Collins, 2014*

**Summary of heritage significance**

- This commercial building has a well composed Edwardian facade in largely authentic condition.
- The building occupies a prominent corner site on the intersection of Courtenay Place and Blair Street and contributes to the streetscape and character of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.
- The building has a strong association with first the Bank of New South Wales and later Westpac whose combined occupancy spanned 62 years.

District Plan:	Map 26, Symbol 6
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 55915
Heritage Area:	Courtenay Place Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Not listed.
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Opera Bar & Café, The Establishment
Key physical dates:	1905
Architect / Builder:	1905: Architect: Unknown, Builder: James Trevor & Sons 1923 Alterations: Crichton and McKay, Builder: Fletcher Construction
Former uses:	Shops, Fishmonger, Butcher, Bank, Restaurant
Current uses:	Restaurant and Bar
Earthquake Prone Status:	124 Served, SR167329

Extent:



WCC Cityview 2012

## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

In 1905 this building was built by and for James Trevor and Sons Ltd.<sup>1</sup> It was designed as two shops in one building. One shop opened onto Courtenay Place and the other onto the corner with Blair Street. The original design was brick and incorporated two floors with a basement below pavement level, and a verandah that wrapped around the corner. The structure consisted of load-bearing masonry walls and the ground floor was concrete supported on 'railway rails', and the first floor and roof were timber-framed.<sup>2</sup>

Early occupants in the building sold meat and fish. Levin Meat & Cold Storage Co. Ltd., a butchery business managed by Herbert Richards, boasted that the shop was 'up-to-date', with 'a large and increasing clientele' who were daily served with 'the primest beef, mutton, and pork all of which is raised in the renowned fattening pastures of the Horowhenua'.<sup>3</sup> The shops were later occupied by fishmonger W.E. Apps & Co and butcher Ralph Philip.

In 1923 the Bank of New South Wales took over the occupancy of the building and carried out major alterations. They converted the ground floor into a banking chamber and built a new strong room in the basement. These alterations were designed by architects Crichton and McKay, and built by Fletcher Construction at a cost of £1,514. That same year Crichton and McKay and Fletcher Construction also undertook the construction of a four-storey warehouse in the adjacent space in Blair Street for the use of the bank.<sup>4</sup>

In 1985 the Commercial Bank of Australia and the Bank of New South Wales joined forces to become Westpac, and the bank continued to operate in the building under this new name until the mid-1980s. In total, the bank operated out of the building for 60 years.

In 2003 further additions and alterations were carried out to fit-out the ground and lower floor for the Opera Bar and Restaurant and the deck verandah was also upgraded.<sup>5</sup> The building is presently occupied by The Establishment Restaurant and Bar. (2012)

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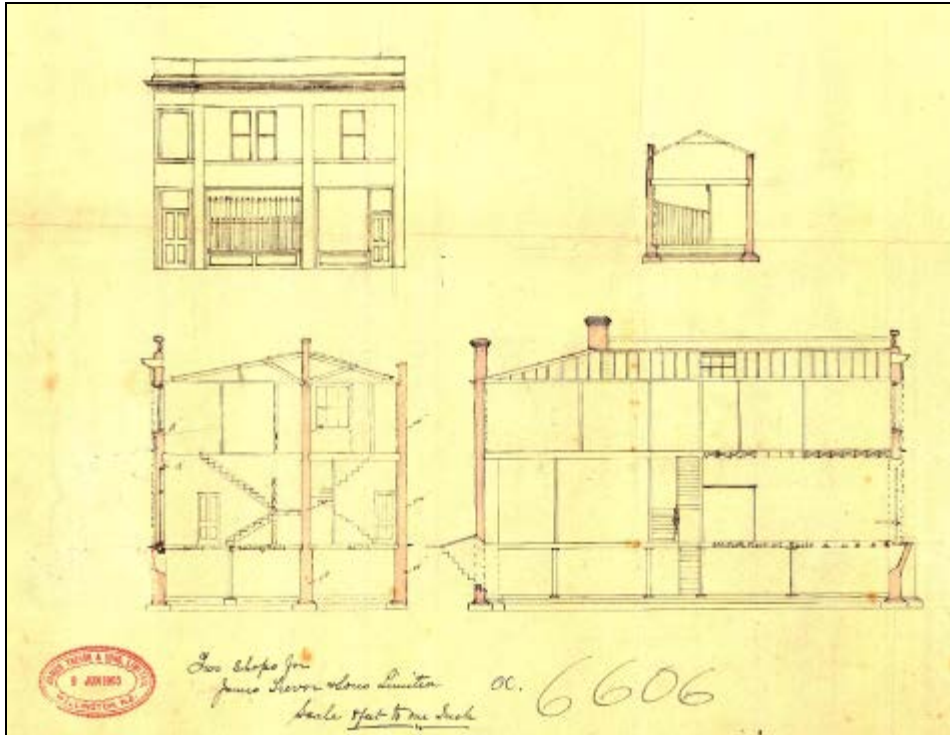
<sup>1</sup> "Blair Street [16-18 Courtenay Place], two brick shops", 28 June 1905, 00053:119:6606, Wellington City Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Wellington City Council, "Opera Restaurant", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT 4.

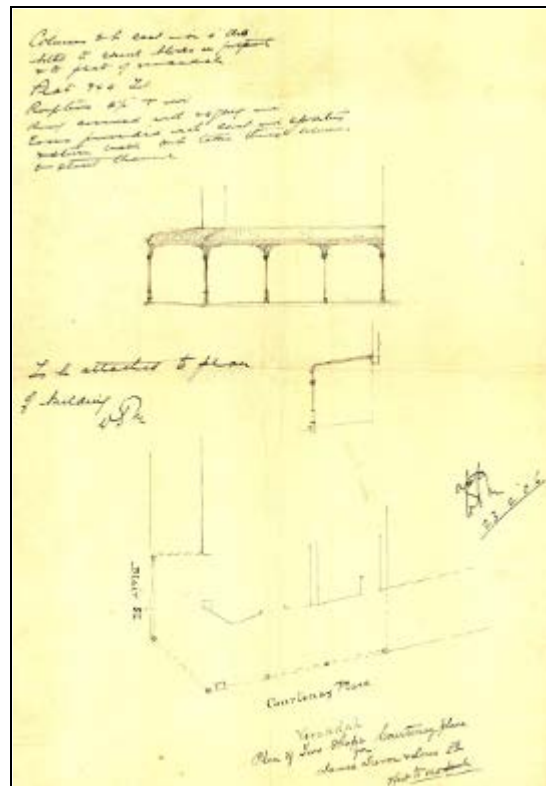
<sup>3</sup> "Levin Meat and Cold Storage Co. Ltd.", *Evening Post*, Volume LXXXI, Issue 25, 31 January 1911, Page 10.

<sup>4</sup> "27-29 Blair Street [16 Courtenay Place], warehouse", October 9, 1923, 00055:21:A2014, Wellington City Archives.

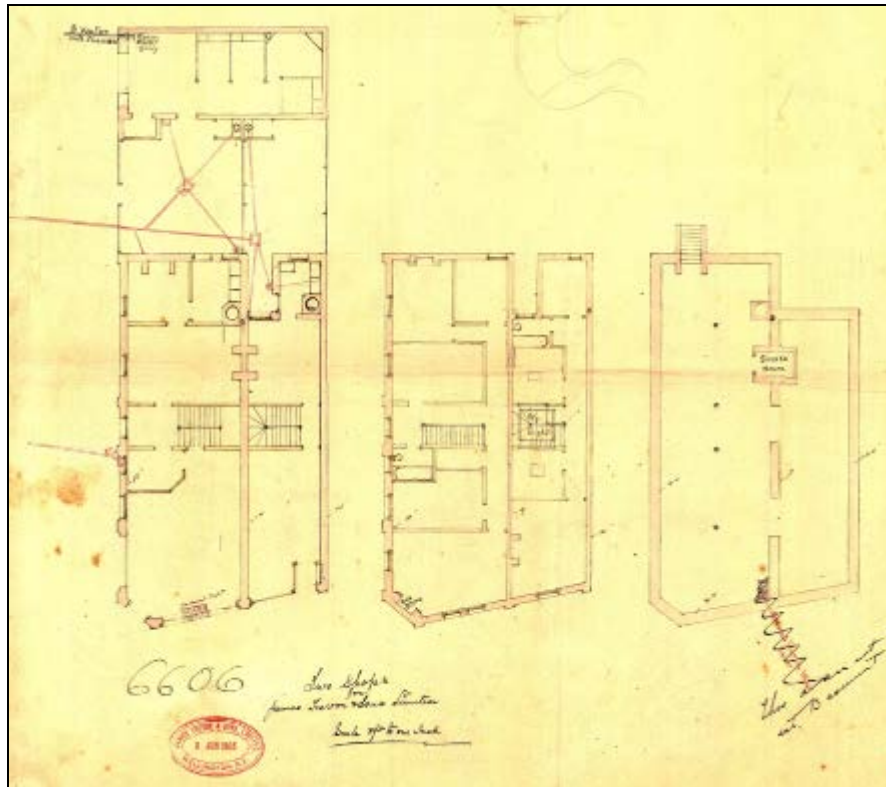
<sup>5</sup> "16 Courtenay Place, deck verandah upgrade. internal fitout to ground and lower floors for bar and restaurant - courtenay bar - PIM only", 2003, 00078:1808:106732, Wellington City Archives.



Floor plans, showing drainage, 1905. (00053:119:6606)



Verandah detail and site location, 1905. (00053:119:6606)



The building was designed to accommodate two stores - one opened onto Courtenay Place and the other opened onto the corner of Blair Street and Courtenay Place. The two storied building also had a basement. Plans, 1905. (00053:119:6606)



The building pictured in c.1911-12, with its original corner verandah. (2007:11:1)

## **1.2 Timeline of modifications**

- 1905 Building constructed by James Trevor & Sons– designed as two brick shops (00053:119:6606)
- 1923 Alterations to building to make it suitable for new occupants the Bank of New South Wales. Designed by Crichton and McKay and built by Fletcher Construction. The ground floor was converted for bank use and a new strong-room was constructed in the basement. (00055:16:A1569)
- 1934 Alterations. (00056:152:B13581)
- 1982 Restaurant alterations. (00058:0:C58192)
- 1993 Strengthening and fitout (bar, restaurant and two apartments). (00059:595:E26716)
- 2003 Additions and alterations, level 1, ground floor and basement. (00078:1545:107365)  
Deck verandah upgrade. internal fitout to ground and lower floors for bar and restaurant - courtenay bar. (00078:1808:106732)

## **1.3 Occupation history**

Levin Meat & Cold Storage Co. Ltd., Herbert Richards, manager (Stones 1910-11).

W. E. Apps & Co., fish monger, William Egbert (Stones 1915-16).

Philip Ralph, butcher (Stones 1915-16).

Bank of NSW (Stones 1925 - 1945; Wises 1950-1 to 1980).

Westpac Banking Corp. (Wises 1982-1985).

Cathay Restaurant & Cathay Trading Co. Ltd (Wises 1985 - 1990).

## **1.4 Architect**

The architect of the 1905 building is unknown.

The four-storey building built beside it (1923) was designed by architects Crichton and McKay.

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

The building at 16-18 Courtenay Place was originally designed in 1905 as two shops; one was on the corner and the other opened onto Courtenay Place. The building consisted of two storeys with a basement below pavement level, and a verandah that wrapped around the corner. When it was converted to a bank in 1923, an ancillary four storey warehouse was constructed in Blair Street in that year.

The structure consists of load-bearing masonry walls. The ground floor is concrete supported on 'railway rails', and the first floor and roof are timber-framed.

The original 1905 building is substantially intact, and makes good use of its prominent corner site. The corner entrance is particularly well executed and the patterns of round-headed windows, cornice and pilasters combine are all common elements of Edwardian commercial architecture. It is somewhat marred by the unfortunate addition of a large modern verandah cum balcony that breaks the otherwise strong vertical lines of the building, and most of the windows and external doors have been replaced, but the facades are otherwise substantially authentic.

The appearance of the adjacent four-storey utilitarian warehouse (1923) has been substantially altered by the installation of new balconies and modern window / door fenestration.

## **2.2 Materials**

### **Brick & Render**

The ground floor is concrete supported on 'railway rails', and the first floor and roof are timber-framed.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.3 Setting**

The building is located on the north side of Courtenay Place in the western end of the eastern block. To the immediate east of the building is the Westpac Bank building (1935). With the exception of the Zico Cafe, the buildings are of a comparable scale, although all are quite different in age and style.

More broadly, the northern side of Courtenay Place is characterised by its division into blocks, in contrast to the continuous street wall of the southern side, the more uniform scale of the buildings, and is particularly important for its close association with the important heritage precinct of Blair and Allen Streets. There are few modern buildings evident on this side of the street and it has a high level of authenticity in the streetscape.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### **3.0 Sources**

CT WN 126/90, Land Information New Zealand

CT WN 25B/60, Land Information New Zealand

CT WN 55C/998, Land Information New Zealand

Kelly, Michael and Russell Murray. *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

“Westpac New Zealand”, Accessed 23 October 2012.

<http://www.westpac.co.nz/who-we-are/about-westpac-new-zealand/our-history/>

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

#### **Newspapers**

“Levin Meat and Cold Storage Co. Ltd.”, *Evening Post*, Volume LXXXI, Issue 25, 31 January 1911, Page 10.

#### **Wellington City Archive**

“Blair Street [16-18 Courtenay Place], two brick shops”, 28 June 1905, 00053:119:6606, Wellington City Archives.

“27-29 Blair Street [16 Courtenay Place], warehouse”, October 9, 1923, 00055:21:A2014, Wellington City Archives.

“16 Courtenay Place, alterations”, December 24, 1934, 00056:152:B13581, Wellington City Archives.

“14-16 Courtenay Place [27-31 Blair Street], restaurant alterations”, January 31, 1982, 00058:0:C58192, Wellington City Archives.

“14-16 Courtenay Place [27-29 Blair Street], strengthening and fitout (bar, restaurant and two apartments)”, February 23, 1993, 00059:595:E26716, Wellington City Archives.

“16 Courtenay Place, additions and alterations, level 1, ground floor and basement”, 2003, 00078:1545:107365, Wellington City Archives.

“16 Courtenay Place, deck verandah upgrade. internal fitout to ground and lower floors for bar and restaurant - courtenay bar - PIM only”, 2003, 00078:1808:106732, 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?*

This commercial building is a nicely proportioned example of Edwardian architecture, and despite the verandah / balcony and other alterations it is in substantially authentic condition.

**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 makes good use of its prominent corner site and contributes to the character of the Courtenay Place streetscape.

**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. Most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which gives the group a certain coherence.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The building has a strong association with first the Bank of New South Wales and later Westpac whose combined occupancy spanned 62 years.

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

As a former bank, the building has a strong association with the facilitation of commercial development of Courtenay Place.

#### **Scientific Value:**

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

This building is included in the NZAA Central City Archaeological Area 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?*

This building is part of a group of commercial buildings on Courtenay Place which contribute to the sense of place or community 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?*

It is a representative example of the commercial architecture found in the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

***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 the addition of the verandah/balcony, the building is in substantially authentic condition.

***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)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

### Background research

#### WCC Permits

00053:1 19:6606	Blair Street [16-18 Courtenay Place], two brick shops	Owner and applicant: James Trevor and Sons Ltd. Notes: Known as Opera Restaurant. The permit consists of plans only. Because there is no other documentation there is no permit envelope.  Index to scanned plans: 1 Floor plans (showing drainage) 2 Front elevation and sections 3 Verandah	Building Permit/Consent	28 Jun 1905
00055:1 6:A1569	16 Courtenay Place, alteration to building	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Fletcher Construction Co. Application value: £1514	Building Permit/Consent	16 Jun 1923
00055:2 1:A2014	27-29 Blair Street [16 Courtenay Place], warehouse	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Fletcher Construction Co. Application value: £3940 Notes: Permit is for a three storey warehouse behind the Bank of New South Wales building. Note: Permit contains application, specifications, calculations, and structural	Building Permit/Consent	09 Oct 1923

		plans.  Index to scans: 1 Plans 2 Specifications (21 pages) 3 Calculations (5 pages)		
00056:1 52:B135 81	16 Courtenay Place, alterations	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Fletcher Construction Co. Application value: £1380	Building Permit/Cons ent	24 Dec 1934
00058:2 01:C919 3	27-31 Blair Street [16 Courtenay Place], building alterations	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Upton and Shearer. Application value: £300	Building Permit/Cons ent	20 Sep 1961
00058:3 91:C167 14	16 Courtenay Place [27- 31 Blair Street], building alterations	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Upton and Shearer. Application value: £460	Building Permit/Cons ent	24 Mar 1965
00058: 0:C5819 2	14-16 Courtenay Place [27- 31 Blair Street], restaurant alterations	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915, Part 27 and Part 26 DP 1302. Owner: A Wong. Builder: A Wong. Application value: \$3800. Notes: Permit is for the conversion of the ground and first floors of the bank and warehouse buildings into a restaurant. Address on microfiche is 14-16 Courtenay Place.	Building Permit/Cons ent Microfiche	31 Jan 1982
00059:0 :D2157	16 Courtenay Place [27- 29 Blair Street], flat	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915, Part 27 and Part 26 DP 1302. Owner: Cathay Trading Co. Applicant: Tom Young. Application value: \$15000. Address on microfiche: 14-16 Courtenay Place.	Building Permit/Cons ent Microfiche	15 Dec 1985
00059:5 95:E267 16	14-16 Courtenay Place [27- 29 Blair Street], strengtheni ng and fitout (bar, restaurant and two apartments )	Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Owner: Polcat Holdings Ltd. Applicant: Mike Davis. Project value: \$500,000. Notes: Known as Opera Bar.	Building Permit/Cons ent	23 Feb 1993
00078:1 545:107 365	16 Courtenay Place,	Owner: Ludlam Corporation Ltd. Applicant: Prime Building Compliance Wgtn Ltd. Legal description: Lot 1 DP 55915. Application	Building Permit/Cons ent	2003

	additions and alterations, level 1, ground floor and basement	value: \$275,000. Note: Deck verandah upgrade, internal fit-out to ground and lower floors for bar and restaurant.		
00078:1 808:106 732	16 Courtenay Place, deck verandah upgrade. internal fitout to ground and lower floors for bar and restaurant - courtenay bar - PIM only		Building Permit/Consent	2003

The above company commenced business in September, 1906, and with the aid of some of Levin's most progressive men at the head of affairs, has developed at a wonderful rate. Mr. H. J. Richards, the managing director, is one of the best-known public men in the district, and while he is a practical farmer his business knowledge admirably fits him for the supervision of this extensive butchery business. Associated with him on the directorate are Messrs. Thomas Bevan, F. G. Roe, James M'Leavey, and J. R. M'Donald. Shortly after commencing business at Levin the company purchased Mr. R. Wilkes's business in Courtenay-place, Wellington, which was carried on as a branch until August, 1910, when it was joined with Messrs. Dickinson Bros.' business, under the name of the Horowhenua Farmers' Meat Company, Ltd., but the former company still carry on business at Levin under its name of the Levin Meat and Cold Storage Company. This is under the capable management of Mr. F. Clarke, a recent arrival from Wellington City. Mr. R. D. Wallace, who has long been associated with the business, continues to carry out the secretarial duties. There is a staff of nine employed, and the company's delivery carts cover a very wide area, while at the up-to-date shop a large and increasing clientele are daily served with the primest beef, mutton, and pork, all of which is raised on the renowned fattening pastures of the Horowhenua county. Progress and quality are the company's watchwords, and to its already excellent plant it has recently had installed

a digester plant, for the purpose of dealing with the tallow in connection with their slaughtering premises, and intend to shortly put in an additional plant for manure-drying, etc.