
Mount Cook Police Station (Former)

13 Buckle Street



Mount Cook Police Station, Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The former Mt Cook Police Station is one of the country's most important historic buildings associated with policing. The building is notable for its plain form, and severe character, that is offset by a distinctive decorative scheme. Decorative elements include the distinctive arrow marks made by the prison brick-makers, the nationally-rare use of polychromatic glazed brick, and equally-rare use of a moulded rosette quoin detail.
- The former Mt Cook Police Station was one of three police stations opened in Wellington in 1894 to deal with the increasing pressures of a growing population. The former Station is primarily of historical importance due to its associations with the early Police Force in Wellington and New Zealand, the growth of Te Aro and Mount Cook, and the legacy of the former Mt Cook Gaol and brickworks that were sited close by (where the former National Art Gallery and Museum is).
- The building has significant technical and educational value for its use of high-quality 'prison' bricks. The survival of the distinctive mark (the arrow) of the prison brick-makers on many facing bricks is a significant feature.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 43 <i>(Including yard and retaining walls)</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 87064
Heritage Area:	N/A
HPT Listed:	Category 1, reference 1408
Archaeological Site:	Puke Ahu Pa – Maori site of significance. Pre 1900 building.
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Original construction: 1894
Architect / Builder:	Designer: Mr Weyburne Builder: Prison Department
Former uses:	Law enforcement – Police station, courthouse, gaol
Current uses:	Retail and Commercial - Offices
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone SR 222922

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History¹

History

The former Mount Cook Police Station, constructed in 1894, is one of New Zealand's most historic police buildings. In the 1880s Te Aro was the fastest growing district in Wellington, and possessed the crime rate to match. The plan to construct a police station in Mount Cook had originated as early as 1887. The building was designed by Mr Weybourne of the Public Works Department. Little is known about Mr Weybourne, other than that he was also acting clerk of works for a time, and that he passed away before construction of the police station was completed.

Unlike most other public buildings, which were generally built by the Public Works Department, the Prison Department undertook the construction of the new station. The prison department supplied labour from the local prisons, and prisoners from the Mt Cook gaol supplied the bricks for the construction. These bricks were incised with a distinctive broad arrow, and were used on the police station, and its yard boundary wall and retaining walls, as well as on the nearby Tasman Street Brick Wall WCC heritage object reference 16/54.

The Police Department took possession of the building when the building was completed in 1893, and held an official opening in 1894. The station is a stern two storey design built in polychromatic (multi-coloured) brickwork laid in an English bond pattern. A feature of the design was the black and white banding above and between the heads of the arched windows and main entrance door.

In 1898 a Royal Commission into police corruption and inadequate service recommended that a central station be established in Wellington to train new recruits, however, the Government were unwilling to spend money on a new facility. It was decided that the Mount Cook police station would be used for this purpose and the first recruits were received in December of 1898. In 1903 an addition was constructed to increase accommodation. 1903 also saw a number of cells constructed at the back of the yard. In 1905 another commission into the police force and conditions in Mount Cook found that the situation was not ideal for the recruits and duty men. A new purpose built facility was constructed in Newtown and the Mount Cook Station saw its last recruits in 1910. 1912 saw another extension added to the Police Station with the building of a two-storey addition to the rear to house a billiards room and accommodation upstairs.

By the 1930s it was the intention to demolish this building to provide land for the New National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum however, this did not occur as a suitable alternative site for the station could not be found. In the late 1930s the Museum established an interest in the building.

The station was finally closed in 1956 and the station staff was transferred to the Taranaki Street Station. It appears that the Museum had intended to take over the space at this time, but the Police continued to use it as their clothing store. In 1959 the first floor bathroom was demolished to make room for storage and a year later an electric hoist was installed. As the Museum's accommodation situation worsened the Board became even more insistent that they should be able to claim the building. The disagreement was not resolved until 1967 with the building of a new police station on

¹ History based on: Wellington City Council, "13 Buckle Streets," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), BUCK 13, and Helen McCracken, *Mount Cook Police Station (Former)*, (Historic Places Trust, unpublished registration report), 10 September, 2008.

Adelaide Road. The museum occupied the police station building until the 1990s when the construction of Te Papa occurred. While occupied by the museum, the 1912 addition was removed in a restoration that was carried out in collaboration with the Historic Places Trust. During the 1980s the building was strengthened against earthquakes by the Ministry of Works, and during the strengthening several internal walls on the second storey were removed. Following the occupancy by the Museum, the building was transferred to the Wellington Tenth Trust as part of the Puke Ahu/ Museum site. The land was then subdivided and the police station was sold to private investors. The building is currently used to house a number of stores and small businesses. The cellblocks and other structures are mostly unused today.



Carillon under construction. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/2-090208-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22912964>

1.1 Timeline of modifications (original plans held at archives New Zealand and could not be accessed – modifications based on NZHPT records)

1893	Original construction
1903	Building alterations and additions
1912	Building alterations and additions – two storey structure (now removed)
1956	Building modification
1959	Building modifications
1960	Building modifications
1975	Building modifications
1979	Building alterations – 1912 addition demolished
1986	Building modifications

1.2 Occupation history

Not assessed

1.3 Architect

Mr Weybourne of the Public Works Department.

2.0 Physical description²

2.1 Architecture

The former Mount Cook Police Station has been described in the past as a stern, no-nonsense, four square block, standing with uncompromising severity on a prominent site at the intersection of Tory and Tasman Streets. It is a two storey building, with a symmetrical main façade. The street frontage onto Buckle Street has five round arched openings on each floor, the unusual feature of the openings is the black and white glazed brick banding over and between the heads of each opening. This treatment helps to lift the façade from the commonplace and, when combined with the decorative quoins, creates a striking composition. It possesses a notably rare feature in the rosettes that have been placed on each alternate quoin.

The black and white banding is repeated at eave level with the lower black band projecting out from the main face. There is black and white brick banding above this that projects out even further. This decorative effect is an effective companion to the banding above the windows. The building is capped by a plain roof, originally clad in corrugated iron. The precision and craftsmanship of the brick construction is an outstanding feature of this building.

The interior features no grand spaces due most likely to its utilitarian purpose, but the geometric tile floor in the entry is of note, as is the generous balustrade and newel post to the Kauri main stair.

2.2 Materials

The former Mount Cook Police Station has been constructed in polychrome glazed brickwork laid in English Bond. Each header is stamped with a distinctive broad arrow which marked bricks made at the local Mt Cook gaol. The building stands on a plastered plinth levelled to match the road levels.

The windows and door is timber and the roofing was originally corrugated iron. The partitions are plastered brick with native timbers, and other interior materials include tile and Kauri finishes.

2.3 Setting

The former Mount Cook Police Station is a local landmark on its prominent corner site, adding a distinctive note to the character of the surrounding area. The building is located on the northern slopes of Mount Cook. The Station is visible from a number of different view shafts in the area due to its corner site (Tory, Tasman, and Buckle Streets).

This building is part of an area typified by character buildings. The National War Memorial and Carillion, as well as the former National Art Gallery and Museum are sited prominently to the east of the Station building.

² Wellington City Council, "13 Buckle Streets," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), BUCK 13

Sources

Alexander Turnbull Library. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/2-090208-G. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22912964>

McCracken, Helen. *Mount Cook Police Station (Former)*, Historic Places Trust, unpublished registration report. 10 September, 2008.

Wellington City Council, "13 Buckle Streets," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

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 Mt Cook Police Station is one of the country's most important historic buildings associated with policing. The building is notable for its plain form, and severe character, that is offset by a distinctive decorative scheme. Decorative elements include the distinctive arrow marks made by the prison brick-makers, the nationally-rare use of polychromatic glazed brick, and equally-rare use of a moulded rosette quoin detail.

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 Station building, and its associated brick yard-walls, have townscape value due to their siting on the prominent corner of Buckle and Tasman 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?

The building and its associated brick yard-walls have a strong stylistic and historic association with the adjoining Tasman Street Brick Wall (WCC Heritage Object ref 16/54).

Both the building and the brick walls are part of military, penal and museum history of Puke Ahu/ Mt Cook and can therefore be seen as a group along with the nearby National War Memorial and Carillion, and the former National Art Gallery and Museum.

Historic Value:

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

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

The former Mt Cook Police Station was one of three police stations opened in Wellington in 1894 to deal with the increasing pressures of a growing population. The former Station is primarily of historical importance due to its associations with the early Police Force in Wellington and New Zealand, the growth of Te Aro and Mount Cook, and the legacy of the former Mt Cook Gaol and brickworks that were sited close by (where the former National Art Gallery and Museum is).

Scientific Value:

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

Puke Ahu Pa – Maori site of significance. Pre 1900 building.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Together with the Tasman Street wall, the former Mt Cook Police station has significant potential for public education around the uses of the area in the past, prison brick-making, the police force in Wellington, and the changes that have occurred in the area over the past century.

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

This building is of some technical values as it demonstrates 19th and early 20th century brick construction and finishing techniques. Its decorative features, particularly the polychromatic brick, the quoin rosettes, and the distinctive arrow marks made by the prison brick-makers are distinctive and are a significant feature of the construction.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

This building is a significant landmark on a prominent intersection which adds significant character to the area. This building is well known to most people in the area, particularly for those who either live in the area or who drive past as part of a commute to the urban motorway.

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 former Station building contributes to a sense of place and continuity in the suburb of Mt Cook as it is an important physical reminder of the historical past of the Mount Cook area and its connections with the now demolished Mt Cook Gaol and brickworks.

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 former Mt Cook police station is an important historic building associated with policing and the gaol system in Wellington. It is one of the oldest existing purpose built police stations in New Zealand and a physical reminder of over a century of police and penal associations with this site and the area in general. The survival of the distinctive arrow marks of the prison brick makers adds to the significance of this building as this is an unusual feature – these bricks were used extensively in public buildings but the markings were often hidden so that the origins did not show.

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 former Mt Cook Police Station retains authenticity and integrity as it has had few modifications carried out that have negatively affected the building and retains a significant amount of original materials. A 1912 addition was removed during the 1979 refurbishment of the building but this has not negatively affected the building. The station was earthquake strengthened during a 1980 restoration.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

This building is local landmark situated on a prominent intersection and adds a distinctive note to the character of the area.

This building has been recognised as being of National importance as one of eight purpose built police buildings constructed prior to the turn of the century to deal with increases in the crime rate, three of which were situated in Wellington, this building has important ties to the police force in New Zealand and the expansion of Wellington, and in particular Te Aro. This building is the last physical remnant of over 130 years of police and penal associations with the Mt Cook and Te Aro areas and between 1896 and 1910 it operated as the site of New Zealand's police training centre. It has technical and architectural values for the craftsmanship that is seen in its design and finishing's, and as one of few buildings where the distinctive arrow marks of the Mt Cook Gaol bricks can be seen in situ.

3.0 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)		

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*