

Westpac Building

10-12 Courtenay Place



Photo: Charles Collins, 2015

Summary of heritage significance

- The building is a fine example of commercial Art Deco architecture.
- The facade is in authentic condition with the steel windows, verandah and decoration reading today as they do on the original drawings.
- The ground floor has been in continuous use as a bank since 1976, while prior to that, the building was occupied by Turnbull and Jones, an important electrical supplies company.
- It contributes to the streetscape of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| District Plan: | Map 16, Symbol 62 (<i>front façade – first floor and above</i>) |
| Legal Description: | Pt Lot 1 DP 8572 |
| Heritage Area: | Courtenay Place Heritage Area |
| HPT Listed: | Not listed. |
| Archaeological Site: | Central City NZAA R27/270 |
| Other Names: | |
| Key physical dates: | 1936 |
| Architect / Builder: | Architect: Prouse & Wilson, Builder: A.V. Swanson |
| Former uses: | Offices, Shop, Bank |
| Current uses: | Bank, Offices |
| Earthquake Prone Status: | SR167332 (Posted) |

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



WCC Cityview 2012

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The Westpac Building was designed in 1936 by architects Prouse and Wilson as a shop and office building for Mrs Margaret Winifred Powley,¹ an Auckland widow. It replaced two 60 year old timber buildings that had previously been earmarked for a tramway ticket office in 1927.²

The builder was A. V. Swanson, the estimated cost £5,959 and the permit was issued in January 1936. The original drawings show the name of the first tenants, Turnbull and Jones, on the facade. Turnbull and Jones was a long standing and highly successful company, which manufactured, imported and supplied electrical goods and equipment. Founded in 1899 by electrical engineers Robert Jones and Robert Turnbull (brother of bibliophile and benefactor Alexander Turnbull³), the firm had its head office in Wellington, with branches in other centres.

The company already had premises on Blair Street, and the Courtenay Place property abutted this. Provision was made in the building for a showroom on the first ground floor and offices on the other floors. Of added interest was the decision to make 'the foundations and walls...of sufficient strength to take another two storeys when the addition is deemed necessary.'⁴

Turnbull and Jones was bought by Cory-Wright and Salmon in 1984, but it had already vacated its Courtenay Place building in 1976, when it was bought by the Bank of New South Wales, now Westpac New Zealand, Houghton and Mair Architects, designed a conversion of the building for the bank. The ground floor became the banking chamber, with staff facilities on the two floors above.⁵ The bank sold the property to private investors in 1999 and in more recent years the first and second story offices have been let to small businesses.

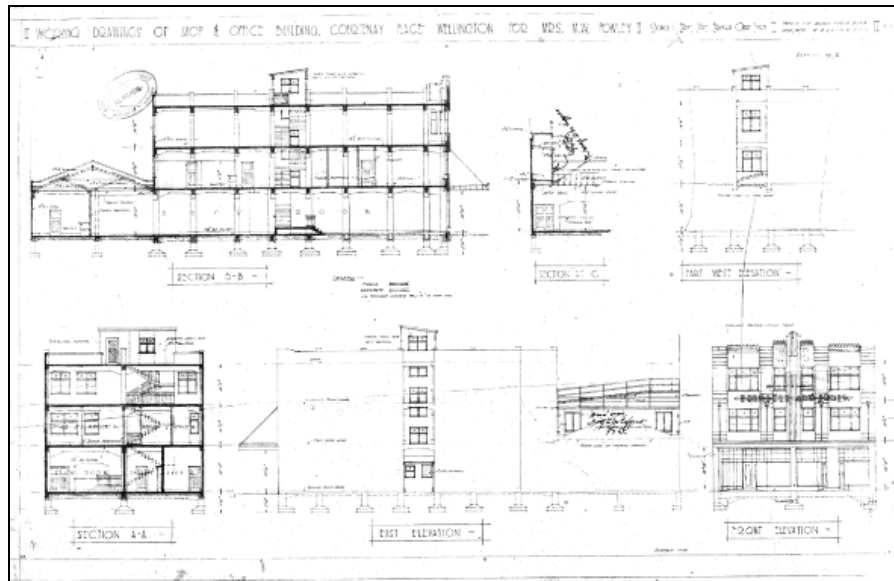
¹ "Deaths", *Auckland Star*, Volume LXXIV, Issue 196, 19 August 1943, Page 1.

² "Courtenay Place: Subway to Reduce Danger", *Evening Post*, Volume CXIII, Issue 32, 8 February 1927, Page 10.

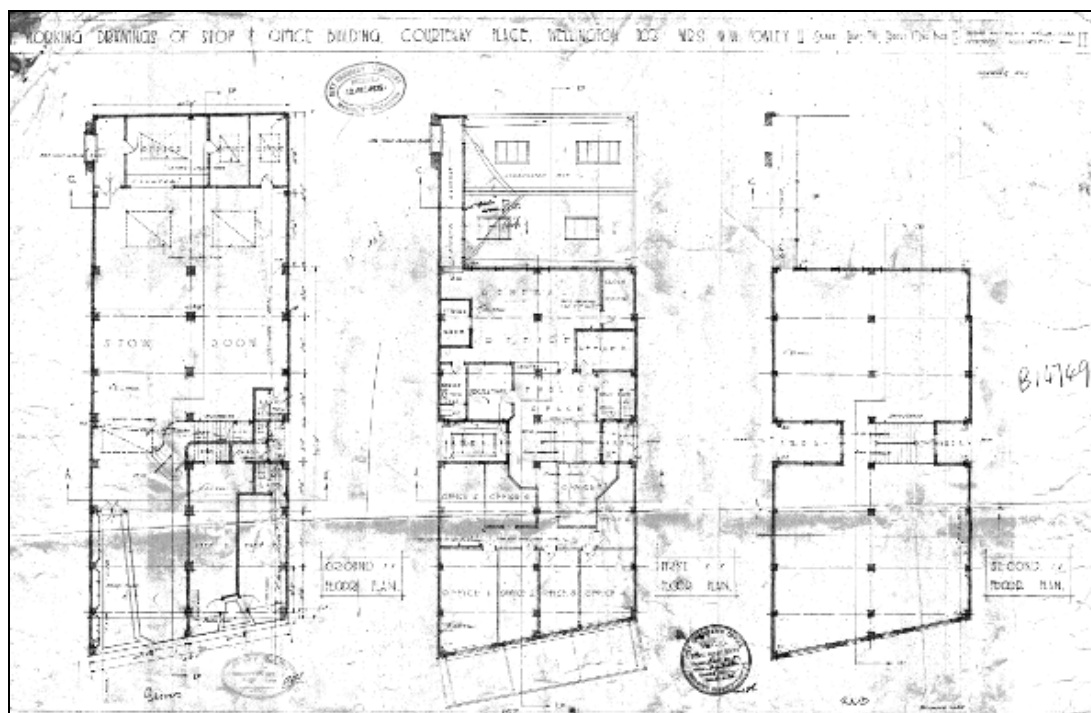
³ J. E. Traue. "Turnbull, Alexander Horsburgh – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated September 1, 1910, accessed July 14, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t53/1>

⁴ "New City Building", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 8, 10 January 1936, Page 8.

⁵ Wellington City Council, "Westpac Trust Building", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT 1.



Shop and Office building, original plans, 1936. (00056:166:B14749)



Original plans of ground, first and second floors, 1936. (00056:166:B14749)



A crowd gathered outside Turnbull & Jones building to watch a cooking demonstration, c.1940.
(K.E. Niven Collection, 1940, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa)

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1936 Building built. (00056:166:B14749)
- 1959 Building alterations. (00058:108:C5250)
- 1977 Converted to Branch bank & offices. Haughton & Mair Architects designed the conversion. (00058:1104:C47746)
- 1991 Business additions and alterations to ground floor and level 1. (00059:490:E23509) Sign erected. (00040:11:E682531)
- 1992 Office building partitions. (00059:588:E26553)
- 1998 Sign erected. (00078:1260:40599)
- 2000 Internal alterations, ground floor. (00078:440:61621)
- 2003 New and replacement signs. (00078:1043:99315)
- 2004 Bank branch fit-out, ground floor. (00078:1504:121064)

1.3 Occupation history

- 1936 - Turnbull & Jones, electrical engineers.⁶
- 1976- Bank of New South Wales.⁷
- 1989 - Westpac Banking Corp.⁸

1.4 Architect

This building was designed by Wellington architects Prouse & Wilson.

William John Prouse came from a timber merchant's family. Although receiving no formal architectural training, Prouse practised as an architect in Wellington for 46 years, and was one of the first to use steel frame construction in New Zealand.

⁶ Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

He established the partnership of Hoggard and Prouse with John Hoggard in about 1907. They were joined by William Henry Gummer (1884–1966) in 1913 and the three were admitted to the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1914; Prouse as an Associate, Hoggard and Gummer as Fellows. The firm was responsible for many public buildings throughout New Zealand including Brittain's Building (1909), the State Fire Insurance Building (1919) both in Wellington.

The Hoggard, Prouse and Gummer partnership was dissolved in 1921, and William Prouse went on to design the Majestic Theatre (1928) in Wellington (now demolished); the Hotel St George, Wellington (1930). Prouse went into practice with Norman Wilson in circa 1932 and the partnership designed several Art Deco style buildings including the Masonic Hotel, Napier (1932), and 10-14 Courtenay Place, Wellington (1936).⁹

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is a very good example of the Art Deco style, with decorative elements applied to an otherwise utilitarian three storey concrete facade. The composition is dominated by a fluted element rising from the verandah through two floors to form the central feature of the stepped parapet. Panels of horizontal and vertical flutes form an interesting geometric pattern with this central feature and the windows.

Construction is reinforced concrete for all structural elements, foundations, columns and beams, walls, floors and roof. The decorative finish to the Courtenay Place facade was executed in coloured plaster, and is now painted. However, the facade is otherwise in authentic condition with the steel windows, verandah and decoration reading today exactly as they do on the original drawings.¹⁰

2.2 Materials

Concrete foundations/walls, iron and concrete roofing, cement render.

2.3 Setting

The building is located on the north side of Courtenay Place in the middle of the eastern block. To the immediate west is the Edwardian Classicism of the Establishment Bar (1905), while to the east is the single-storey Zico Cafe (1955) and the Brutalist Hannah Playhouse (1974). 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.

⁹ Julia Gatley. "Wilson, Francis Gordon – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated September 1, 2010, accessed 14 July 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/1>

¹⁰ Wellington City Council, "Westpac Trust Building"

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 building is a fine example of commercial Art Deco architecture.

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 a contribution 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 collection of buildings that comprise the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Although most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20th century, there are significant differences in age and styles among some of the buildings.

Historic Value:

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

The building was designed by architects Prouse & Wilson. William Prouse was an architect of some note, particularly in his partnerships with William Gummer and John Hoggard.

The building was built for and occupied by Turnbull & Jones, an important firm of electrical suppliers for 40 years, and has been a branch of Westpac Bank (and its predecessors) for an even longer period of time .

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

The building is associated with the commercial development of Courtenay Place.

The building – more particularly its ground floor – has had just two contiguous uses since 1936.

Scientific Value:

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

There was pre-1900 human activity on this site. Although some of the sites have been altered by rebuilding or landscaping or subdivisional change, there is archaeological value in the immediate surrounds.

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 and continuity 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 representative of the commercial buildings in the Courtenay Place Heritage Area built in the 1930s.

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 facade is in authentic condition with the steel windows, verandah and decoration reading today as they do on the original drawings.

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 of local importance for its contribution to the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

3.0 Sources

CT WN 340/216, Land Information New Zealand

CTWN723/19, Land Information New Zealand

Gatley, Julia. "Wilson, Francis Gordon – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Updated September 1, 1910. Accessed 14 July 2012. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w36/1>

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

Traue, J.E. "Turnbull, Alexander Horsburgh – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Updated September 1, 1910. Accessed July 14, 2012. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t53/1>

Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

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

Newspapers

"Courtenay Place: Subway to Reduce Danger", *Evening Post*, Volume CXIII, Issue 32, 8 February 1927.

"Deaths", *Auckland Star*, Volume LXXIV, Issue 196, 19 August 1943.

"New City Building", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 8, 10 January 1936.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

| Source | Y/N | Comments |
|--|-----|----------|
| 1995 Heritage Inventory | Y | |
| 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory | Y | |
| 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 | 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

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|-------------------|---|--|-------------------------|-------------|
| 00056:166:B14749 | 12 Courtenay Place, premises | Owner: Mr N W Powley. Builder: A N Swanson. Legal description: Part Section 225 Town of Wellington, Lot 1 DP 8572. Application value: £5,959. | Building Permit/Consent | 06 Jan 1936 |
| 00058:108:C5250 | 12-14 Courtenay Place, building alterations | Owner: Turnbull and Jones. Builder: J B Wrigley. Legal description: Part DP 8572. Application value: £4,250. | Building Permit/Consent | 19 Aug 1959 |
| 00058:1104:C47746 | 12-14 Courtenay Place, convert to branch bank and offices | Owner: Bank of New South Wales. Builder: Zip Commercial Interiors. Legal description: Part DP 8572. Application value: \$179,000. | Building Permit/Consent | 14 Jul 1977 |
| 00059:490:E23509 | 10-14 Courtenay Place, business additions | Owner: Westpac Properties. Builder: Westpac Properties. Architect: Athfield Architects Ltd. Legal description: Part Lot 1 DP 8572. Application value: \$160,000. | Building Permit/Consent | 1991 |

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|-------------------|---|--|-------------------------|-------------|
| | and alterations, ground floor and level 1 | | | |
| 00040:11:E682531 | 10 Courtenay Place, sign | Owner: Westpac Bank Ltd. Applicant: General Signs Industries Ltd. Legal description: DP 8572. Application value: \$2,750. | Building Permit/Consent | 29 Nov 1991 |
| 00059:588:E26553 | 10 Courtenay Place, office building partitions | Owner: Westpac Properties Ltd. Legal description: Part DP 8572. Application value: \$55,000. | Building Permit/Consent | 1992 |
| 00078:1260:40599 | 10 Courtenay Place, sign | Owner: Westpac Properties NZ Ltd. Applicant: Lexicon Systems Limited. Legal Description: Pt DP 8572. Application Value: \$6,650. | Building Permit/Consent | 1998 |
| 00078:440:61621 | 10-14 Courtenay Place, internal alterations, ground floor | Owner: Westpac Trust. Applicant: 3D Creative. Legal description: Part DP 8572. Application value: \$45,000. | Building Permit/Consent | 2000 |
| 00078:1043:99315 | 10 Courtenay Place, Westpac Bank, new and replacement signs | | Building Permit/Consent | 2003 |
| 00078:1504:121064 | 12 Courtenay Place, bank branch fit-out, ground floor | Owner: DLM Family Trust. Applicant: Interact Architects and Designers. Legal description: Part Lot 1 DP 8572. Application value: \$85,000. | Building Permit/Consent | 2004 |