

The former CBA Building
328-330 Lambton Quay



The CBA Building (centre), 328-330 Lambton Quay
(Image: *Charles Collins*)

Summary of heritage significance

- The former CBA Building is a good representative example of an interwar commercial building that was designed in a Stripped Classical 'Chicago' style. It is a particularly competent example of the work of prominent local architects – Clere & Clere – who are now perhaps better known for their ecclesiastic projects.
- The former Commercial Bank of Australia was one of the many banks established in New Zealand in the 19th or early 20th century - this building was the C.B.A's New Zealand head-office for 40 years. It is one of a group of head-office buildings that were built at the southern-end of Lambton Quay in the 1930s. It has a historic association with both the early physical development of Wellington, the establishment of the city's financial centre and the development of Wellington as the country's financial and corporate capital.
- The building contributes to the BNZ/Head Office Heritage Area

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| District Plan: | Map 17, reference 190.2 |
| Legal Description: | Lot 1 DP 2827 |
| Heritage Area: | BNZ /Head Offices Heritage Area |
| HPT Listed: | Historic Place Category 2 – Register number 1346 South Lambton Quay Historic Area (HPT) |
| Archaeological Site: | Central City NZAA R27/270 |
| Other Names: | GBL House Telegroup House (current name) |
| Key physical dates: | 1936 |
| Architect / Builder: | Clere and Clere |
| Former uses: | Retail and commercial |
| Current uses: | Retail and commercial |
| Earthquake Prone Status: | Not Earthquake Prone (SR 163804) |

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The C.B.A Building was built for the Commercial Bank of Australia in 1936, and was its New Zealand head-office. It is one of a row of very fine 1930s' head office buildings that were built for insurance companies and banks on this part of southern Lambton Quay.

The site is known to have been occupied in 1844 with the construction of St Andrews - the first Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. This church was replaced in 1866 and the original church was dragged over the road to what became the corner of Lambton Quay and Hunter Street. It eventually became part of the Central Hotel and was only demolished in 1939. The 1866 church was replaced in 1878 by a building for the Colonial Bank of New Zealand. This building occupied both 328 and 326 Lambton Quay until the construction of this building in 1936 for the C.B.A

The Commercial Bank of Australia was founded in Melbourne in 1866, with the intention of providing credit for small traders, farmers, etc.¹ It later expanded to acquire the Australian and European Bank in 1879. The C.B.A. was one of 15 banks forced to close for a time in April 1893 during the great economic depression of the late 19th century. It commenced operations in New Zealand in 1912, at Featherston Street, Wellington.²

In 1914, the C.B.A. purchased one half of the 1878 Colonial Bank of New Zealand building. This building was divided into two parts by a party wall, of which the south portion was occupied by the bank. The north part had been leased by South British Insurance Ltd from the 1880s.³ C.B.A. demolished their half of the building in 1934⁴, two years before South British demolished the other.

The present building was designed by Clere & Clere, with seismic design by engineer A.T.H. Hatchison. The principal contractor was Fletcher Construction.⁵ The main feature of the building was a large banking chamber, now used for retail purposes. The building opened in 1936.

The building was originally partly occupied by tenants, but this was soon to change. Many of the head-office responsibilities were delegated to the Wellington office, and with an increase in workload came an increase in staff numbers, and an increased requirement for office space. The bank gradually took over the rest of the building and by the late 1960s there were no tenants left.⁶ By 1969 the bank had even outgrown its purpose built office building. Larger premises were sought and the C.B.A. lodged an application with the Wellington City Council to demolish their building and the South British building, and to develop the larger site. Agreement was given in 1971 but the option was never pursued.

In 1982, a merger with the Bank of New South Wales created the Westpac Bank,⁷ and this led to the disappearance of the name C.B.A. from the commercial scene in New

¹ Bank Officers. Guild 1935, Banking in New Zealand, Moore and Burton, Wellington p.108

² Dawe C.E. and C.S. 1986, Banking, Inside and Out, Westpac Banking Corporation, Wellington, p.91

³ Photo 108181/2, .Wellington Streets, Lambton Quay., Photographic Collection, ATL

⁴ Dawe, p.93

⁵ Wellington District Committee NZHPT, Research File - Commercial Bank of Australia building, Lambton Quay

⁶ Wises Post Office Directories 1936-1996 - a scan of selected directories between those years

⁷ Dawe, p.84

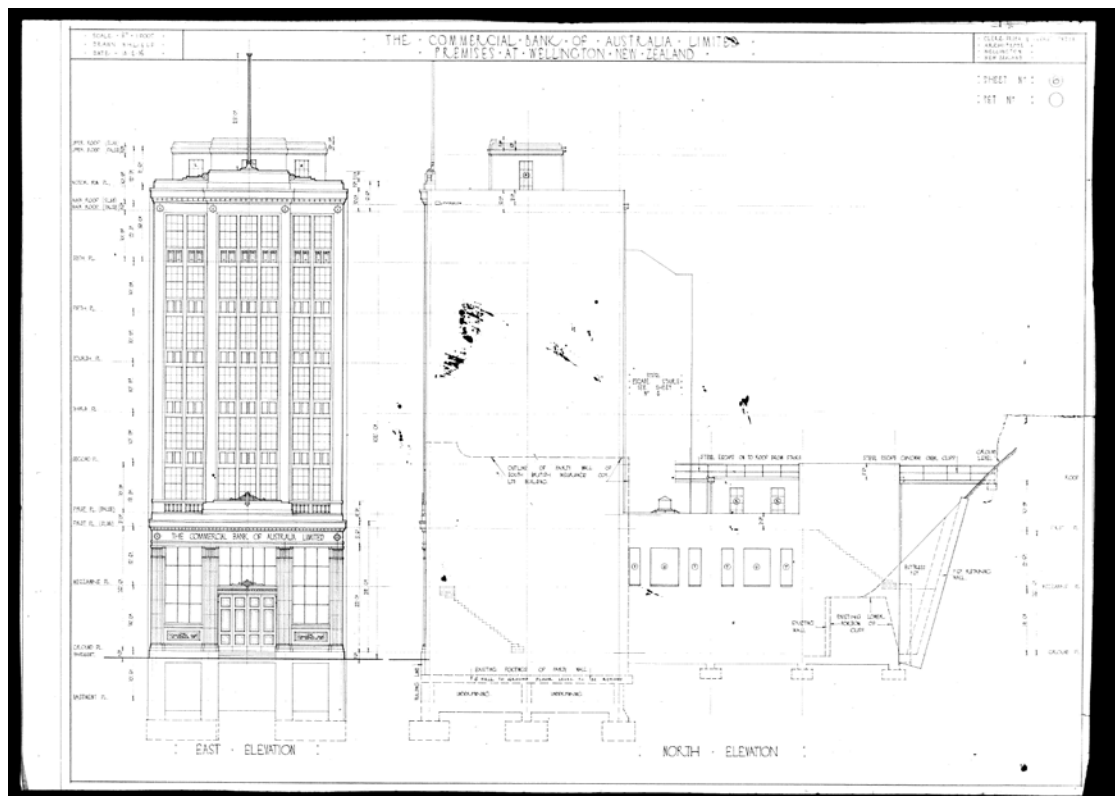
Zealand. The following year the building was sold to the Prudential Insurance, who had purchased the South British building the previous year. In the late 1990s a developer applied for consent to demolish all three Prudential owned buildings and replace them with a single tall tower. This was opposed by the NZHPT, provoked a public outcry, and was finally resolved by the Environment Court. The tower was never built. The C.B.A building was subsequently sold to the Heritage Property Group Ltd - a company that specialised in restoring old buildings – but that has since gone into voluntary liquidation. The company credited an increase in insurance premiums after the Canterbury Earthquakes (2010-11), the 'global financial crisis,' and fears that the government would lift minimum seismic standards above the current 34% of new building standards as reasons for the decision to cease trading.⁸

The former CBA Building's heritage value is predominantly tied to its group and townscape value. It has historical value as the New Zealand head-office of the Commercial Bank of Australia for forty years, and architectural value as the work of the prolific Wellington architects Clere and Clere. Its main heritage value, however, stems from its position in the commercial building precinct at the southern end of Lambton Quay, centred around Stewart Dawson's corner and the BNZ Banking Complex.

Along with Stewart Dawson building, the other heritage items in this precinct include the CBA's neighbours the Prudential Building and the South British Insurance Building, the MLC Building across the road, and Plimmer's Arcade and Steps nearby. Many of these buildings were erected in the interwar period, and their continued existence makes a strong contribution to the townscape value of Lambton Quay.

⁸ Hank Schouten, Heritage property firm calls in the liquidators, Dominion Post, 14/11/2013

1.2 Timeline of modifications



1935 – Plan as Proposed⁹ WCC Archive File 00056:159:B14100
Construction: c.1936

- 1935 Additions - Retaining wall constructed at rear of building (00056: 156: B13861)
- 1956 Alterations – Extension of lift room (00058: 3: C122)
- 1965 Alterations – Internal alterations and alteration to ground floor lobby/entrance (00058: 410: C17524)
- 1977 Alterations – Upgrade of interior: removal of timber partitions, removal of plaster ornamentation, demolition of concrete walls, removal of carpets, removal of some doors and windows, removal of floor finished to the main stair up to the mezzanine level, removal of signs and plaques, upgrade to street verandah, addition of sliding doors (0058: 1088: C47092)
- 1983 Alterations to ground floor and stairways (00058: 0: C63104)
- 1987 Shop entry alterations (00059: 69: D5532)
- 1988 Alterations – Office fit out (00059: 242: D11068)
- 1989 Alterations – Installation of partitions on fifth floor (00059: 412: E21016)

1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

⁹ WCC Archive File 00056:159:B14100

1.4 Architect

Clere and Clere

The Historic Places Trust entry for Frederick de Jersey Clare reads¹⁰:

Clere (1856-1952) was born in Lancashire, the son of an Anglican clergyman, and was articled to Edmund Scott, an ecclesiastical architect of Brighton. He then became chief assistant to R J Withers, a London architect. Clere came to New Zealand in 1877, practising first in Feilding and then in Wanganui. He later came to Wellington and practised there for 58 years. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1886 and held office for 50 years as one of four honorary secretaries in the Empire. In 1883 he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church; he designed more than 100 churches while he held this position. Clere was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction; the outstanding example of his work with this material is the Church of St Mary of the Angels (1922), Wellington. As well as being pre-eminent in church design, Clere was responsible for many domestic and commercial buildings including Wellington's Harbour Board Offices and Bond Store (1891) and Overton in Marton. Clere was also involved in the design of large woolsheds in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa. He was active in the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and served on their council for many years. He was a member of the Wellington City Council until 1895, and from 1900 a member of the Wellington Diocesan Synod and the General Synod. He was also a member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts.

1 Kent Terrace was designed by Clere and Clere, the architectural practice Frederick ran with his son, Herbert. The practice was responsible for the design of many notable Wellington buildings, including:

- 1928-29: All Saints Church, Abbott Street, corner Kenya Street Ngaio, 21 / 378
- Amp Society Building, 86-89 Customhouse Quay, (NZHPT Category I), (WCC 17 / 96)
- CBA Building, 328-330 Lambton Quay, Wellington (NZHPT Category II) (WCC 19 / 190/2)
- All Saints Church (Anglican and Methodist), 94 Hamilton Road, Hataitai, (Category II) (WCC 6 / 220)
- Old St Paul's Cathedral, (Additions to) 34 Mulgrave Street, Thorndon, (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 18 / 221)
- Our Lady Star of the Sea Convent Chapel (Catholic), 16 Fettes Crescent, Seatoun (NZHPT Category II) (WCC 7 / 120)
- St Andrew's on the Terrace. 28-30 The Terrace (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 17 / 288/1)
- St Gerard's Monastery, (additions to) 73-75 Hawker Street, Mt Victoria (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 12 / 143 and 144)
- St Mary of the Angels Church (Catholic), 17-27 Boulcott Street (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 17 / 35)

¹⁰ Historic Places Trust, "Fredrick de Jersey Clere", *Professional Biographies*, accessed January 29, 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Cler e.+Frederick+De+Jersey>. See also Susan Maclean, 'Clere, Frederick de Jersey - Clere, Frederick de Jersey', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30 October 2012, last accessed May 2013, at <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c22/clere-frederick-de-jersey>

- Wellington Harbour Board Head Office and Bond Store, 2-3 Jervois Quay (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 17 / 160)
- Wellington Harbour Board Wharf Office Building (Shed 7), Jervois Quay (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 17 / 161)
- Wellington Rowing Club Building Taranaki Street Wharf (NZHPT Category I) (WCC 17 / 284)
- Brandon House, 20 Brandon Street (WCC 17 / 38)
- St John's Church, corner of Bassett and Ironside Roads, Johnsonville (WCC 23 / 364)
- Chinese Mission Hall, 40-46 Frederick Street (WCC 16 / 124)
- St Mary's College Main Building, 15 Guildford Terrace (WCC 18 / 138) (NZHPT Category II)
- St Mary's Anglican Church, 168-170 Karori Road (NZHPT Category II), (WCC 11 / 170)
- Bats Theatre, 1 Kent Terrace (WCC 12, 16 / 436)
- Kelburn Chambers, 280 – 284 Lambton Quay (NZHPT Category II), (WCC 17 / 188)
- St Matthias Church, Makara (NZHPT Category II), (WCC 9 / 196)
- Fire Station Apartments, 12-14 Murphy Street (NZHPT Category II) (WCC 18 / 225)

Frederick de Jersey Clere died in Wellington in 1952, at the age of 96. He had only retired from architecture four years earlier, at 92. He is highly regarded for marrying European styles to New Zealand conditions.¹¹

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The former CBA (now Telegroup House) is an eight-storey steel framed building. It is in the Chicago style of base, shaft and capital. The base is formed by two-storey high Classical, fluted columns supporting a frieze with dentils. The windows in the six storeys above are arranged with three in the central bay and a pair on either side. The flanking bays are slightly recessed from the central section. The windows are all square headed and are separated horizontally in each bay with a thin mullion and vertically with a moulded spandrel panel. The spandrel panels between the windows have Art Deco style relief designs. A frieze with dentils, matching that at second floor level, finishes the top of the building. Above the level of the verandah the façade is unaltered from the original, but the modern angled glass verandah detracts somewhat from views of the building from the street.

The former CBA building is harmoniously proportioned and together with the other buildings in the group makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of Lambton Quay and to the values of the heritage area.

¹¹ Susan Maclean, 'Clere, Frederick de Jersey - Clere, Frederick de Jersey', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30 October 2012, last accessed May 2013, at <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c22/clere-frederick-de-jersey>

Many of the interior spaces have been modified over time to suit changing uses, although remnants of original finishes remain in some spaces. The most interesting space was the original two storey high banking chamber at ground level; this has now been filled in for office space. The staircase retains its original timber handrail and wrought iron balustrade.

2.2 Materials

- Steel frames encased in concrete
- Granite base
- Terracotta faced façade till first floor windows; plaster façade above

2.3 Setting

The Prudential Building (1934 - WCC 17/ 190.3), the CBA Building (1936 – WCC 17/190.2) and the South British Insurance Building (1936 – WCC 17/190.1) form a terrace of similar Art Deco / Chicago styled buildings. These three buildings, along with the fine MLC Building (1939-40) give prominence to the intersection between Hunter Street and Lambton Quay.

The buildings are all part of the BNZ / Head Office Heritage Area. This Heritage Area incorporates several groups of heritage buildings that together form one of the most significant and highly regarded streetscapes in New Zealand. The area mainly occupies land reclaimed between 1857 and 1863, but it also includes a part of the city, a stretch of southern Lambton Quay, that has been permanently settled since 1840.¹²

The centre-piece is the block containing the former BNZ buildings – four buildings associated with the Bank of New Zealand, only one of which was built by the BNZ, plus the MLC Building. The area also includes a significant cluster of late Victorian / Edwardian commercial buildings around the Stewart Dawson's Corner, a row of very fine 1930s' head offices built for insurance companies and banks on Lambton Quay and one of the finest 20th century buildings in Wellington – the AMP building on Customhouse Quay.

The oldest of the buildings is the former National Mutual Life building (1883), later incorporated into the BNZ complex, on the corner of Hunter St and Customhouse Quay. The most recent buildings are modern structures on Lambton Quay, although they are not considered contributors to the area. In between is a collection of buildings that offer a broad and interesting sweep through a range of architectural eras, incorporating a variety of styles and materials.

The heritage area is nationally significant for its association with both the early physical development of Wellington, the establishment of the city's financial centre and the development of Wellington as the country's financial and corporate capital.

¹² Repeats Kelly, 2006

3.0 Sources

Bank Officers' Guild. Banking in New Zealand. Wellington: Moore and Burton, 1935

Dawe C.E. and C.S. Banking, Inside and Out. Wellington: Westpac Banking Corporation, 1986

Maclean, Susan. 'Clere, Frederick de Jersey - Clere, Frederick de Jersey'. From the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Updated 30 October 2012, last accessed May 2013, at <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c22/clere-frederick-de-jersey>

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. "Fredrick de Jersey Clere". *Professional Biographies*. Accessed January 29, 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Clere,+Frederick+De+Jersey>

_____. Submissions and Evidence on Behalf of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, in respect of Prudential Assurance Company of New Zealand Ltd Resource Consent Application Under Section 88 of the Resource Management Act 1991 to Demolish the Facades of Three Heritage Item Buildings and Develop the Site for Office, Retail, and Commercial Activities Together with Servicing, Parking and Ancillary Facilities. Unpublished, c.1997-1998.

Photo 108181/2. Wellington Streets, Lambton Quay. Photographic Collection, ATL

Wellington City Council. WCC Archive File 00056:159:B14100

Wellington District Committee NZHPT. Research File - Commercial Bank of Australia building, Lambton Quay

Wises Post Office Directories 1936-1996

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 CBA Building is a good representative example of an interwar commercial building that was designed in a Stripped Classical 'Chicago' style. It is a particularly competent example of the work of prominent local architects – Clere & Clere – who are now perhaps better known for their ecclesiastic design work.

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 CBA Building, the South British Insurance Building and the Prudential Assurance Building form a terrace of similar Art Deco / Chicago styled buildings that date from the mid 1930s. These three stylistically similar former head-office buildings, along with the fine MLC Building, give prominence to the intersection between Hunter Street and Lambton Quay.

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 former CBA is one of a group of head-office buildings that were erected in Wellington in the 1930s in the area around the southern end of Lambton Quay. These form part of the BNZ/Head Offices Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

The former Commercial Bank of Australia was one of the many banks established in New Zealand in the 19th or early 20th century - this building was the C.B.A's New Zealand head-office for 40 years.

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

It is one of a group of head-office buildings that were built at the southern-end of Lambton Quay in the 1930s. It has a historic association with both the early physical development of Wellington, the establishment of the city's financial centre and the development of Wellington as the country's financial and corporate capital.

Scientific Value:

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

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA 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?*

The building is likely to be held in high public esteem and this can be seen by the public campaign to 'save' the building from demolition in the 1990s.

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 CBA building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions over the past 80+ years (with the notable exception of the shop-fronts and verandah) and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the streetscape. The building's use as a former head-office and its contribution to the BNZ/Head Offices Heritage Area is pertinent to Wellington's identity as country's financial and corporate capital.

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?*

The former CBA is a good example a commercial building built in the Stripped Classical 'Chicago' style.

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?*

While the interior spaces have been extensively modified the building's façade is relatively unaltered from the original state (with the notable exception of the shop-fronts and verandah).

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The former CBA Building is important at a local level.

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) | | |