

New Zealand Automobile Association (Former)

29-37 Taranaki Street



Image: Charles Collins, 2015

Summary of heritage significance

- The former New Zealand Automobile Association Building is a good representative example of a mid-sized commercial building built in a confident Art Deco style.
- This building is associated with the development and subdivision of Courtenay place between 1840 and 1880 and with the Te Aro Pa, which it is at least partially sited upon. It is of historic value for its association with the New Zealand Automobile Association between 1923 and 1994.
- The building is part of a row of three heritage buildings that provide visual interest and character to the eastern side of the old 'Taranaki Street Extension'

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 280 <i>Front facade</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 3 DP 87370
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	-
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270, Te Aro Pa Archaeological site R27/154
Other Names:	-
Key physical dates:	Built: 1924
Architect / Builder:	Builder: P.C. Watt
Former uses:	Commercial
Current uses:	Commercial and residential – Retail and apartments
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not EQP – SR 258068

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building, originally constructed in 1924 for New Zealand Automobile Ltd by builder P.C. Watt, has now been adapted to house apartments and commercial premises.

The early development of Taranaki Street is historically associated with the settlement of Te Aro and the growth of Courtenay Place. The land was originally subdivided in 1840 by the New Zealand Company's Chief Surveyor Captain William Mein Smith. At this time the five acres of land that were to become Manners and Taranaki streets and Courtenay Place, were occupied by Te Aro Pa.¹ By 1835 the pa was occupied by Ngati Haumia (of Taranaki iwi), Ngati Tupaia (of Ngati Ruanui iwi) and their Te Atiawa kin.² The acquisition of Te Aro Pa, and its subsequent subdivision, was one of many controversial actions of the New Zealand Company in Wellington.³ In the 1870s any unsold land at Te Aro Pa was purchased by the Provincial Government so that Taranaki Street could be extended to the harbour.

The site at 31-37 Taranaki Street had a number of different owners between 1840 and the 1920s, and appears to have been occupied by a row of buildings by at least 1892.⁴ In 1923 it was sold to the New Zealand Automobile Association, which had this building constructed in 1924. The builder was P.C. Watt, and the application value was £9000. Although the original drawings show a strongly modelled Classical building - complete with rustication and quoins, giant-order columns, and a deeply modelled parapet with pediments over the two end bays – the building that survives today has a restrained palette of stylised Art Deco ornamentation. It is likely to have been built as a somewhat simplified version of the original design – but the reasons for this area unknown.

The Automobile Association (although under several iterations of the name) were the owners and primary occupants of the building, but space was also leased for offices throughout the time that the Automobile Association was in the building.⁵ The Automobile Association sold the building in 1994 to Adept Enterprises Limited. The building was altered to house apartments and commercial tenancies, and has since been divided into unit titles.

In 2005 the adjacent c.1908 commercial building at 39-43 Taranaki Street was demolished to make way for a new apartment building. Work on site was halted when foundation work for the new building uncovered the remains of Te Aro Pa.

¹ 'Te Aro Pa and Mataurangi: Maori Sites of Te Whanganui a Tara' Wellington City Council Libraries' website accessed March 2014 <http://www.wcl.govt.nz/maori/wellington/ngawaahiaro.html>

² Peter Kerr, 'Downtown Discovery' NZHPT website accessed March 2014 http://www.historic.org.nz/publications/heritagenzmagazine/heritagenz2008/hnz08-downtowndiscovery.aspx?sc_lang=en

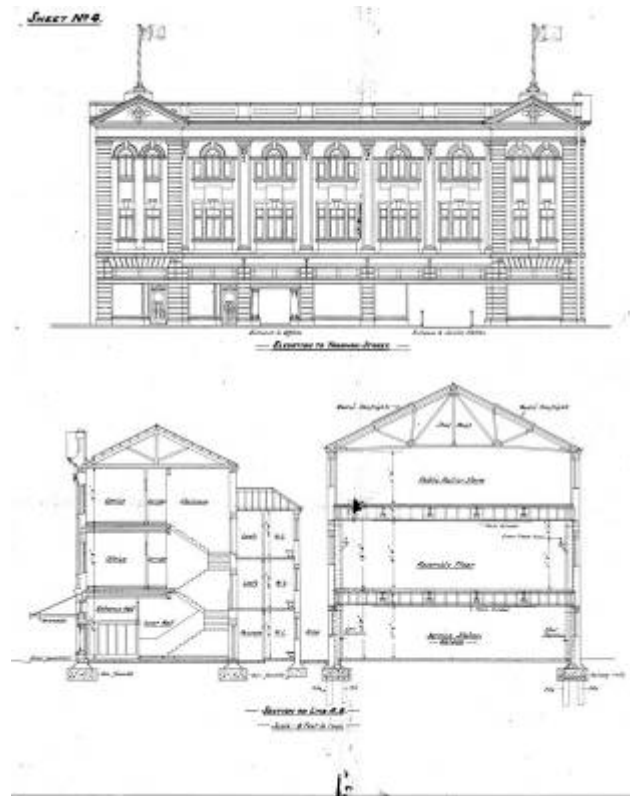
³ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 5-7.

⁴ Thomas Ward Map 1892

⁵ 'Advertisements', Evening Post, 10 March 1941, Page 3, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19410310.2.11.5&srpos=4&e=-1935-----10--1----ONew+Zealand+Automobiles+Taranaki+Street-->

The plans for the new apartment building were amended - the planned two-storey basement was omitted so that the archaeology could be preserved on site, and in return the developer was permitted to extend the apartment building in height by two additional floors. The remains of the pa are now publically accessible in glass-encased displays.⁶ The area around the old Taranaki Street Extension must now be considered as high-risk for archaeological discovery.

1.2 Timeline of modifications (original plans)



- 1924 31-37 Taranaki Street, erect building (00055:30:A2837)
- 1934 31-37 Taranaki Street, boiler houses (00056:146:B13140)
- 1935 Wakefield Street and Taranaki Street [31-37 Taranaki Street], extend boiler house (00056:157:B13980)
- 1951 31-37 Taranaki Street, mezzanine floor (00056:416:B31952)
- 1971 31-37 Taranaki Street, reinstate lift house (00058:745:C33711)

1.3 Occupation history

1923-1994 New Zealand Automobile Association
 Number of residential and commercial tenancies since this time

⁶ Peter Kerr, 'Downtown Discovery' NZHPT website accessed March 2014
http://www.historic.org.nz/publications/heritagenzmagazine/heritagenz2008/hnz08-downtowndiscovery.aspx?sc_lang=en

1.4 Architect

Unknown

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is a 1920s mixed-use building that was designed with a ground floor 'service station', and first floor 'assembly rooms', offices, and warehouse/storage. It was built in the transition period between Classicism and Modernism – and the original drawings show a distinctively Edwardian Baroque Classical style building with rustication, giant-order columns, and pediments. The building that survives today is overtly Art Deco, with Classical motifs and decorative elements that have been so simplified and stylised, that have been reduced to a pattern of geometric shapes. The building is a very good example of Art Deco and features an interesting use of layering and relief – particularly the window heads and keystones, and at the level of the parapet.

2.2 Materials – Based on original plans

- Steel beams
- Concrete
- Fibrolite asbestos roofing sheets
- Brick party wall

2.3 Setting

31 – 37 Taranaki Street is located on the Taranaki Street Extension – a wide six-lane road that is one of the key transport routes through the east of the city. It is part of a group of five buildings that make up the eastern 'street-wall' on Taranaki Street between Wakefield Street and Courtenay Place. These buildings are the fine two-storey Manthel Motors Building (1913 - WCC ref 16/377) on the corner of Wakefield and Taranaki Streets, the old Police Station (WCC ref 16/278), the Automobile Association Building, a new 12-storey apartment building that preserves a part of Te Aro Pa in its subfloor, and 'Molly Malones' on the corner of Taranaki and Courtenay Place. The street-wall of two to three storey early 20th century rendered masonry buildings is only broken by the modern apartment block that rather towers over its diminutive neighbours.

3.0 Sources

Evening Post. 10 March 1941, Page 3. <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19410310.2.11.5&srpos=4&e=---1935-----10--1---0New+Zealand+Automobiles+Taranaki+Street-->

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

Wellington City Archive

- 1924 31-37 Taranaki Street, erect building (00055:30:A2837)
- 1934 31-37 Taranaki Street, boiler houses (00056:146:B13140)
- 1935 Wakefield Street and Taranaki Street [31-37 Taranaki Street], extend boiler house (00056:157:B13980)
- 1951 31-37 Taranaki Street, mezzanine floor (00056:416:B31952)
- 1971 31-37 Taranaki Street, reinstate lift house (00058:745:C33711)

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 New Zealand Automobile Association Building is a good representative example of a mid-sized commercial building built in a confident Art Deco style.

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 building is part of a row of three heritage buildings that provide visual interest and character to the eastern side of the old 'Taranaki Street Extension'.

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 one of a row of three brick masonry heritage buildings on Taranaki Street that share a similar construction date, history of use and scale. Its two northern neighbours are the two-storey Taranaki Street Police Station (1914 WCC ref 16/278) and the Manthel Motors Building (1913 - WCC ref 16/377) on the corner of Wakefield and Taranaki Streets.

Historic Value:

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

This building is associated with the development and subdivision of Courtenay place between 1840 and 1880 and with the Te Aro Pa, which it is at least partially sited upon. It is of historic value for its association with the New Zealand Automobile Association between 1923 and 1994.

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

Scientific Value:

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

This building is associated with two known archaeological sites:

- NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270, sites of significance to Maori – Te Aro Pa R27/15

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?*

The building has had few intrusive modern additions or alterations in the past 90+ years and contributes to the sense of place and identity of Taranaki Street.

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?*

The exterior of this building retains significant original materials and appears to have had few modifications above the ground floor level. It has a high level of exterior authenticity in design, craftsmanship, materials, and setting. The interior has been altered for use as apartments and retains less authenticity than the exterior.

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 due to its architectural qualities, the connection that it has to the history of Wellington, the contribution that it makes to the present character of Wellington, its townscape values, and its historical associations.

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)		

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*