

## Two Houses

32a & 34 Wigan Street



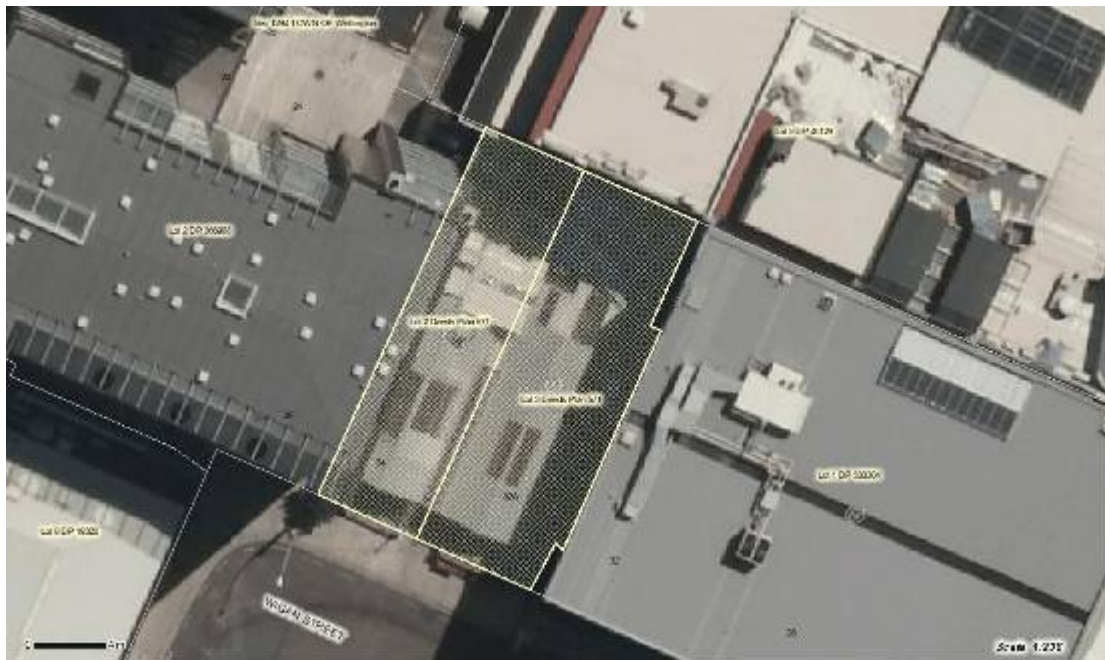
Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

### Summary of heritage significance

- 32a & 34 Wigan Street are representative examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> century workers' dwellings that were once the predominant building type in urban Te Aro.
- These cottages have had relatively uneventful histories that are typical of residential dwellings in urban Wellington. They are associated with the early settlement and development of Cuba Street and Wellington, with the slum clearance/light-industrial redevelopment of Te Aro, and with the area's subsequent gentrification. They have now been adapted for commercial use as a restaurant/bar.
- These cottages are much-modified, but the exteriors in particular retain much of their original built fabric. They have authenticity of style, craftsmanship, and materials.

<b>District Plan:</b>	32a – Map 16, reference 341/2 34 – Map 16, reference 341/3
<b>Legal Description:</b>	32a – lot 2 Deeds Plan 571 34 – Lot 2 Deeds Plan 571
<b>Heritage Area:</b>	-
<b>HPT Listed:</b>	-
<b>Archaeological Site:</b>	NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270
<b>Other Names:</b>	Havana Bar
<b>Key physical dates:</b>	Built: 1887-88
<b>Architect / Builder:</b>	Unknown
<b>Former uses:</b>	Residential
<b>Current uses:</b>	Commercial
<b>Earthquake Prone Status:</b>	Not EQP – 32a SR 191518 Not EQP – 34 SR 191519

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

These two diminutive single storey cottages are found on Wigan Street, adjacent to the Cuba Street Heritage Area. They are relatively typical of the working class housing that was once the predominant building type in this part of urban Te Aro.

Te Aro flats have long history of occupation and development, and the harbour, shoreline, wetlands and surrounding areas supported several settlements including Te Aro Kainga and the Puke-ahu Pa. The area was subdivided in 1840 by the New Zealand Company's Chief Surveyor Captain William Mein Smith, and the acquisition of this land – most particularly the subdivision of Te Aro Kainga – was one of many controversial actions of the New Zealand Company in Wellington.<sup>1</sup>

The 1855 earthquake uplifted the land around Wellington Harbour by 1 – 2 metres and drained the Te Aro swamp.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Te Aro was a densely populated city-fringe suburb, predominated by working class housing.<sup>3</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the area was considered overcrowded,<sup>4</sup> and this led in part to the popularity of the new suburbs that soon developed with the introduction of the electric tram network. Te Aro fell into decline and by at least the 1930s, had been declared a slum and proposed for redevelopment.<sup>5</sup> Some of this redevelopment was for factories and light industry.

It appears that these two cottages on Wigan Street were constructed in 1887-1888 and were owned by Robb Somerville, who was also the proprietor of the Victoria Hotel on Abel Smith Street.<sup>6</sup> These cottages are relatively typical of many workers' dwellings or speculative housing that was built prior to the turn of the century.

In more recent years the area around Wigan Street has changed, if not gentrified. The cottages now abut the south (rear) of the Victoria University Faculty of Architecture and Design (and the similarly large-scale Comfort/Quality Hotel development). The street is otherwise lined with a mix of light-industrial buildings, along with an inner-city church, and a boutique cinema. The two cottages are surprising survivors in an otherwise redeveloped townscape, albeit in a much altered form.

The cottages are now best known as the 'Havana Bar'. The Havana Coffee Works (associated with Midnight Espresso on Cuba Street) purchased 34 Wigan Street in 1991, as premises for their coffee roasting machinery. At that time the adjacent property at No.32a was owned by Charlie Fittes, a local personality who claimed to have been born and raised in the small workers' cottage. Havana Coffee Works purchased 32a in 1995, and in 2003 opened Havana Bar in collaboration with the owners of Fidel's Café (another well-known Cuba Street café).

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Maclean. 'Wellington region - Creation stories and landscape', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 13-Jul-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/wellington-region/page-2>

<sup>3</sup> History adapted from information in: "Heritage Building – 32 Wigan Street", 2003, 1041-06-WIG32, Wellington City Council Records.

<sup>4</sup> Overcrowded Wellington. *Timaru Herald*, 28 May 1904, Page 3

<sup>5</sup> TE ARO FLAT *Evening Post*, 30 August 1930, Page 10

<sup>6</sup> 'Advertisements', *Evening Post*, 9 July 1869, page 4, accessed 11 November 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP18690709.2.13.6&srpos=20&e=-----10--11----0Robb+Somerville+Wellington-->

In 2009 Havana Coffee moved its operations to Tory Street, and the Havana Bar converted the old coffee roasting premises into a restaurant/bar.<sup>7</sup>

The buildings have been adapted to suit their new purpose, first as a coffee roasting factory, and then as a restaurant bar. The most notable alterations include the addition, adaptation (and subsequent part-removal) of roof-top extract plant; the addition of a glazed 'porch' roof between the two buildings; and the adaptation of the front windows – first into a loading dock for No.34, and then into various windows and French doors.

### **1.2 Timeline of modifications** (original plans cannot be accessed)

- 2001 32a Wigan Street, repile (00078:891:78356)
- 2002 32a Wigan Street, internal alteration (00078:933:90073)
- 2010 34 Wigan Street, fit out to existing cafe install new kitchen and reconfigure seating arrangements, installation of new manual fire alarm and additional kitchen prep area to mezzanine (00078:3904:216828)

### **1.3 Occupation history**

Not assessed

### **1.4 Architect**

Unknown

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

The cottages were constructed in timber, with rusticated weatherboards, and gable roofs. The gable of no. 32a is in-filled with timber shingles which extend as a small awning over the doorway and front window. This feature is not seen on no. 34. The style of architecture is simple and there is no extravagance or unnecessary ornamentation.

### **2.2 Materials**

- Rusticated weatherboards
- Corrugated iron roofing

### **2.3 Setting**

These single storey timber cottages are located on Wigan Street, a small side road off Cuba Street and Abel Smith Street. The cottages are now overshadowed by a number of multi-storey commercial and apartment buildings, and developments have severely compromised the heritage setting of the cottages. That being said they do add visual interest to the street, and remain a physical reminder of the residential history of the street.

---

<sup>7</sup> Havana Bar, Eventfinda website accessed March 2014 <http://www.eventfinder.co.nz/venue/havana-bar-wellington>; WCA 00078:933:90073; 00078:3904:216828.

## **Sources**

“Heritage building – 32 Wigan Street”. 2003. 1041-06-WIG32, Wellington City Council Records.

## **Wellington City Archive**

- 2001 32a Wigan Street, repile (00078:891:78356)
- 2002 32a Wigan Street, internal alteration (00078:933:90073)
- 2010 34 Wigan Street, fit out to existing cafe install new kitchen and reconfigure seating arrangements, installation of new manual fire alarm and additional kitchen prep area to mezzanine (00078:3904:216828)

## 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?*

32a & 34 Wigan Street are representative examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> century workers' dwellings that were once the predominant building type in urban Te Aro.

**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 pair of diminutive cottages are local landmarks and stand in contrast to the neighbouring early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century medium scale light-industrial buildings, and more recent modern higher-rise education, hotel and residential developments on Wigan 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 two cottages have some group value as a near-matching pair.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

These cottages have had relatively uneventful histories that are typical of residential dwellings in urban Wellington. They are associated with the early settlement and development of Cuba Street and Wellington, with the slum clearance/light-industrial redevelopment of Te Aro, and with the area's subsequent gentrification. They have now been adapted for commercial use as a restaurant/bar.

**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?*

These buildings are included in the NZAA Central City Archaeological site R27/270 and were constructed pre 1900.

**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?*

These cottages are reminder of old Te Aro – a working class enclave at the fringe of the city. Their survival contributes to the sense of place and continuity of Te Aro and Wellington.

***Sentiment/Connection:*** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The buildings may be a focus of some community sentiment and connection as the premises for the popular Havana Bar since 2003.

***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?*

These cottages are good representative examples of simple early dwellings built in materials and using techniques common to the period. They have had typical (if uneventful) histories as residential buildings that have now been adapted to a new commercial purpose.

***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?*

These cottages are much-modified, but the exteriors in particular retain much of their original built fabric. They have authenticity of style, craftsmanship, and materials.

***Local/Regional/National/International***

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

These cottages are locally significant for their architectural, and townscape values, their historic associations, their archaeological values.

### 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*