

## Hazel Court Apartment Building

4 Claremont Grove



Images: *Charles Collins, 2015*

### Summary of heritage significance

- The Hazel Court apartments are of architectural value as an important and representative example of New Zealand Modern medium rise residential design.
- The apartment building is an early example of private apartment construction, and reflects the changes that were occurring in New Zealand society at the time. The movement to urban living, having smaller/no families, and having single person households was developing, and this had a marked affect on domestic architecture. It marks the beginning of a trend that continues to this day.
- There is some technical value in the concrete construction of this building and for the early use of internal electric central heating.

District Plan:	Map 12, 16, reference 426 (apartment building and garages)
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 34302
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	-
Archaeological Site:	-
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1954-56
Architect / Builder:	Anthony Treadwell and Allan Wild
Former uses:	Residential – Apartment building
Current uses:	Residential – Apartment building
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone – SR 191630

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History<sup>1</sup>

Hazel Court is an important example of New Zealand Modern medium rise residential design. As an early example of private apartment construction, this building has rarity value, and can be seen as part of the beginning of a trend in residential design that continues to the present day.

This building is one of the first high rise apartment complexes constructed in New Zealand that was not specifically designed for state tenants. This kind of residential development arose during a time of discussion and debate around social and town planning issues connected with housing. The idea of apartments as a housing option had been around for some time. The first attempt to promote apartments came in 1938, when architect W. Robin Simpson published a pamphlet entitled *Workers' Housing – A Scheme for New Zealand*. Then, in the mid to late 1940s, organisations such as the Architecture Centre in Wellington, and the Architectural Group (The Group) in Auckland were expressing concerns about urban sprawl at the periphery of the suburbs, and the decaying urban slums in the centres. High rise apartments were presented as a solution to these problems.

By the mid 1950s, 65% of New Zealand households were composed of three persons or less, and in the light of this apartments were identified as a possible preference for a significant number of people. The construction of Hazel Court was the creation of Herbert Buck, a builder of Wellington. His company, H.J. Buck Properties Limited, acquired land in Claremont Grove in Mount Victoria, and commissioned architectural firm Treadwell and Wild to design the apartment block for the site. Wild was a founding member of the group, and both worked on the 'First House' a dwelling constructed by The Group on Auckland's North Shore in 1948.

Hazel Court was comprised of five storeys – the first three had five two-bedroom flats on each level, while the upper two levels contained ten maisonette flats. Each flat consisted of two bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and a spacious living area. The first three levels had small balconies, which overhung the private garden on the north face of the building. Twelve carport facilities were provided on the south side, which faced Claremont Grove. An electrical central heating system was installed throughout the building.

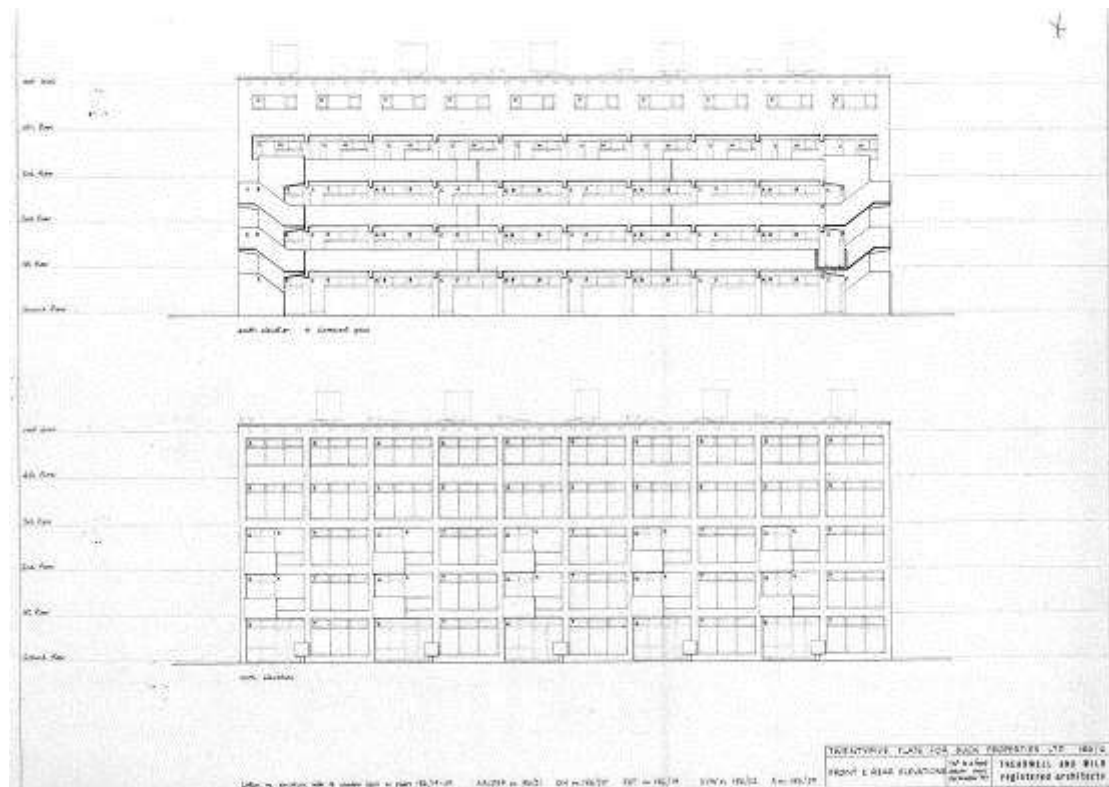
Buck properties retained ownership of the flats once they were completed, leasing them to individual tenants. The tenant make-up was varied and included students and professionals. The advertising materials for the apartments stressed the size of the second bedroom, stating that it was big enough for two or three single beds, but it is not known if many families occupied the flats.

Hazel Court was sold to Harvard Investments in 1972, and leasehold titles were then issued for each of the flats for a term of 999 years. Existing tenants were given the option of purchasing the leasehold on their flat. Aside from the conversion of the carports to garages in 1984, no significant alterations have been made to the building. It remains an authentic example of early high rise residential developments in New Zealand.

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<sup>1</sup> History based on: Russell Murray. *Hazel Court Apartments – 4 Claremont Grove*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005), 1-2.

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications (original plans)



- 1958 4 Claremont Grove, erect flats (00058:0:C2622)
- 1984 4 Claremont Grove, convert 12 carports to garage (00058:0:C66371)
- 2002 4 Claremont Grove, installation of type 2f manual fire alarm (00078:1346:88833)

## 1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

## 1.4 Architect

Anthony Treadwell and Allan Wild

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture<sup>2</sup>

Hazel Court is a distinctive early New Zealand Modern apartment block. It is five storeys high and constructed in concrete with a flat roof, and contains fifteen single storey flats and ten two storey “maisonettes”. It was originally designed as a rental block and has since changed to permanent apartment use.

The basic building design is a simple stacking of identical rectilinear volumes of flats and maisonettes (each with two bedrooms) into a grid of ten bays wide by five high. The lower three floors contain the single storey flats (each two bays wide and one high) and the top two floors the maisonettes (each one bay wide and two high).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

Although of a similar floor area and with equivalent facilities to the flats, the “maisonettes” were originally slightly better specified than the flats, presumably to attract a premium rental. The fit-out of the accommodation is technically interesting for an early use of electric central heating.

Facing north west the building is designed to attract and retain as much sun as possible with the north face substantially glazed and with little glazing on the southern, eastern, and western facades.

The north side of the building is expressed as an exposed grid, delineating the basic building module. The walls of each apartment are fully glazed – the maisonettes are glazed just behind the face line of the building, which provides a strong shadow line at each vertical wall, while the flats each have a recess in one bay and glazing carried out to the building face line in the other. The combination of grid glazing, set backs, recesses, and balconies, creates a balanced but lively and rhythmic composition for this façade.

The south elevation is the public face of the building and has an impressive composition. The most striking visual features are the four cantilevered balconies that give access to the flats and the dramatic cantilevered stairs that service them. The balconies are recessed out of the building creating a strong shadow line and pattern on the façade. Each flat and maisonette has an entrance door and slender horizontal high-level windows off the balcony. The top storey of the maisonettes comes out to the face line of the building and has a regular pattern of small windows along its length; this serves to anchor the top of the composition. This elevation is enhanced by a recent colour scheme which highlights the contrasting forms.

The principle entrance is a complex open concrete porch structure with a cast mural, casting, and cantilever roofs leading from the high end of Claremont Grove to a bridge which lets onto the first floor balcony. The use of the terrain leaves a maximum of two flights of stairs (the building has no elevators).

The flat roof at the top of the building is enlivened with five dramatically scaled cubic boxes that cap internal ventilation shafts rising through the building – these are prominent in the longer views of the building.

## **2.2 Materials**

Most of the original exterior fabric of the building remains, including the light timber joinery, although modern aluminium windows are evident in parts of the back elevation. The main building material is concrete.

## **2.3 Setting<sup>3</sup>**

The Hazel Court apartments are accessed from the rear along Claremont Grove, a narrow old right of way, formed as a road, which leads down the slope of Mount Victoria with many historic single houses on the southern side. It is bounded on the other three sides by adjoining residential properties and a cluster of similarly scaled apartment buildings in the area. A pedestrian walkway at the north follows a narrow right of way between houses to Majoribanks Street.

The nearby setting is characterised by the slope of the hillside which opens up to the north-west and allows wide views from the apartments at ground level. As the ground rises to the east, the site is overlooked by the Kingsgate Apartments and the adjoining houses.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 4.

Hazel Court is a significant presence in Claremont Grove but is difficult to see from the nearby streets – Majoribanks and Austin. The wider setting is the predominantly residential area of Mount Victoria which is densely packed with houses, apartments, and townhouses. Hazel Court does not particularly stand out from the street level in this wider setting and does not have much of an impact on the immediate streetscape, but it is very prominent in views from the nearby slopes of Mount Victoria, along with the other nearby apartment blocks, so is an important element in that view.

### **3.0 Sources**

Murray, Russell. *Hazel Court Apartments – 4 Claremont Grove*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005.

#### **Wellington City Archive**

- 1958 4 Claremont Grove, erect flats (00058:0:C2622)
- 1984 4 Claremont Grove, convert 12 carports to garage (00058:0:C66371)
- 2002 4 Claremont Grove, installation of type 2f manual fire alarm  
(00078:1346:88833)

## 4.0 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 Hazel Court apartments are of architectural value as an important and representative example of New Zealand Modern medium rise residential design.

**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?*

While not visible in the streetscape of its immediate setting, the Hazel Court apartments are of wider townscape value due to the part that it plays in the view from Mount Victoria and the city. The building provides visual interest to this view, contributing well to the character and sense of place of Wellington.

**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?*

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The Hazel Court apartment building was designed by two prominent New Zealand architects – former members of ‘The Group’ Anthony Treadwell and Allan Wild – and has historic value for this association.

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

The apartment building is an early example of private apartment construction, and reflects the changes that were occurring in New Zealand society at the time. The movement to urban living, having smaller/no families, and having single person households was developing, and this had a marked affect on domestic architecture. It marks the beginning of a trend that continues to this day.

#### **Scientific Value:**

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

**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?*

There is some technical value in the concrete construction of this building and for the early use of internal electric central heating.



**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?*

As this is one of the first high rise apartment buildings constructed in New Zealand that was not specifically designed for state tenants, it marks a change in the ways in which New Zealanders were developing in relation to families and the urban environment. This trend continues to this day, making this building an important indication of how long these changes have been occurring for. Its retention contributes significantly to a sense of place and continuity.

**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?*

There is some rarity value associated with this building as it is an early example of private high rise apartment construction and its early use of electric central heating.

**Representative:** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

This building is an important representative of New Zealand Modern residential design.

**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?*

This building remains in highly authentic condition and has had no significant/detrimental alterations since its construction.

**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 important at a local level for its historic associations, its architectural and aesthetic values, as a representative of early Modern residential design, for its authenticity, and for the contribution that it makes to the townscape and character of Wellington.

## 5.0 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*