

HMNZS Olphert

Cnr Buckle and Taranaki Street (211 Taranaki Street)

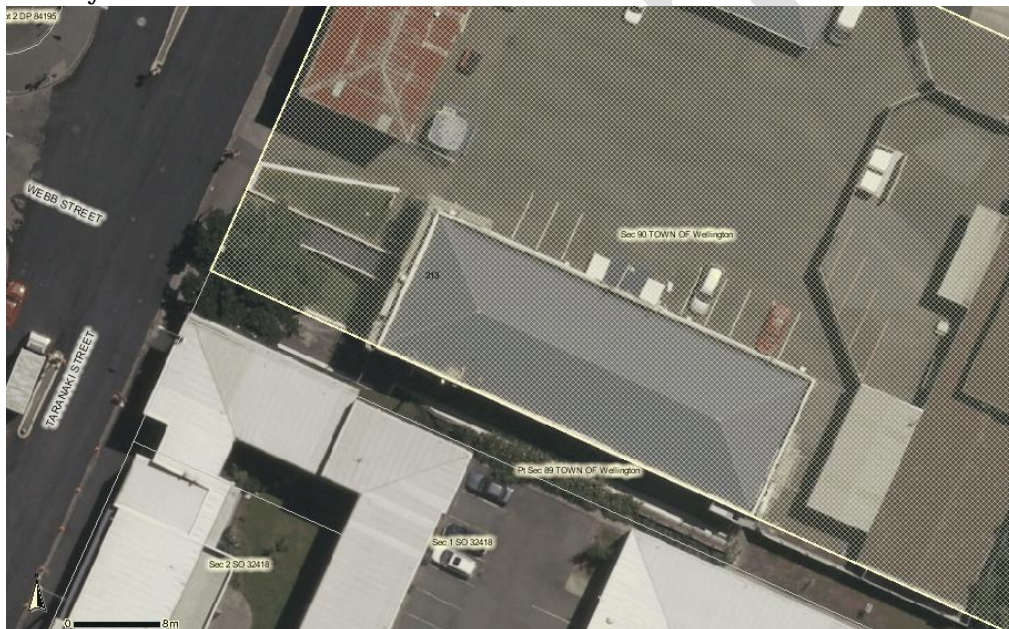


Summary of heritage significance

- HMNZS Olphert is a functional military building that is relatively plain in style, but which benefits from the influence of the Moderne and Art Deco architectural styles. The building is notable for its strong horizontal lines, for its regular pattern of rectangular windows, and for its simple rectangular plan-form. It is typical and representative of the austere public buildings that were built in the post Great Depression/WWII era.
- This building is of significant group value. The building is part of a group of military related structures on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets. This is the only surviving portion of Mt Cook land still owned by the New Zealand defence forces.
- This building has historic value due to its association with the Department of Defence as it became the headquarters of the Army's Defence Transport Services sometime during World War Two and continued to be used by the army following the war. In the late 1970s the building was referred to as the Home Command Building and was used by the Defence Services Transport Pool. It is currently home to the naval reserve and the Wellington branch of the Ex-Royal Naval men's Association continuing its connection with the military.

District Plan:	Map 12, 16, reference 425
Legal Description:	Sec 90 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	N/A
HPT Listed:	N/A
Archaeological Site:	Puke Ahu – Maori site of significance Pre 1900 building
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	ca. 1941
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Unknown, possibly Government Architect
Former uses:	Government – Defence
Current uses:	Government – Defence
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake prone SR 209500

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

HMNZS Olphert has historic significance for its association with home-front activities during World War Two, social significance for its present day role as a training facility associated with the Navy, and architectural value for its unusual blend of design features and styles. *HMNZS Olphert* appears to have been built some time in the mid 20th century, but little is known about it. Although there are no original plans available for this building, accessible information points to a likely construction date of 1941. Primary sources are, however, sparse and non-specific.

The area of Mount Cook has had a long military history prior to European settlement. This area has a long Maori history, and was the site of the Rangitaane Pa, and is now known as Puke ahu. The land surrounding the Pa was originally reserved for Maori as a part of the New Zealand Company's allocation of land to local iwi. This land was however, quickly appropriated for defence purposes and set aside by 1850. The strategic importance of this area was not lost on the settler population and thus Mount Cook is an area that also has a long historical association with the New Zealand military.

The first building on this site was a 'Permanent Artillery Barracks' which first appeared on an official map in 1882 but may have been built earlier.² By the early 20th century, the Department of Defence had built a complex of buildings on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets. In April 1940 the Quartermaster-General informed the Engineer-in-Chief of the PWD that:

... the War Cabinet has approved expenditure of £17,167 in connection with the re-arrangement and re-construction of Central District Headquarters, Buckle Street, Wellington. I shall be pleased if you will arrange for the work to be put in hand as soon as possible.³

This money was possibly used to demolish some of the older buildings on the site as well as to construct a new building. In 1942 the PWD invited tenders for painting what was called 'the new building', this is possibly a reference to what is known as *HMNZS Olphert* as it appears to have been built by that time. The PWD correspondence file has many references to 'the new building' throughout 1942 during which time a number of tradesmen – painters, plasterers, etc – were employed. This evidence suggests that it was constructed some time during 1941. The Second World War disrupted normal processes and procedures, which has been thought to have had an effect upon the paper trail for this building.

This building became the headquarters of the Army's Defence Transport Services sometime later during World War Two and continued to be used by the army following the war. In the late 1970s the building was referred to as the Home Command Building and was being used by the Defence Services Transport Pool, which eventually moved out in 1986.

¹ Based on Russell Murray. *HMNZS Olphert Building, Cnr of Buckle and Taranaki Streets*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005).

² Wellington City Council, "Former GOC Building," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), BUCK5.

³ W 1 23/32 Pt.2. Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

The *HMNZS Olphert*, a branch of the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve based in Wellington, moved into the building in 1978. Prior to this the *Olphert* had leased accommodation in Ghuznee Street, but rent increases forced the Navy to search for alternative premises. Following the move, some changes were made to the interior of the building and it was renamed the *HMNZS Olphert*. This building is home to the naval reserve and the Wellington branch of the Ex-Royal Naval men's Association.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

Not Assessed

1.3 Ownership history

Crown - New Zealand Defence Force

1.4 Occupation history

Crown - New Zealand Defence Force

1.5 Architect

Unknown – Possibly Government Architect

2.0 Physical description⁴

2.1 Architecture

The HMNZS Olphert is a substantial two-storey building located at the rear of the Defence complex on Buckle Street. This building is positioned on the site with clear space on all sides. It has four main elevations, with the north (with main entrance), and west (Taranaki Street entrance) being the most significant. The southern elevation is partly obscured by the adjoining student apartments, and the short east wall has the most of the visible external building services. The site slopes gently from east to west along the length of the building, which is set on a plinth that starts close to the ground at the east and finished around half a storey high at the west.

The building is made up of a rectangular plan, with rectangular elevations and section, relieved by a large hipped corrugated iron roof and low-key architectural details on the elevations. The walls are smooth plastered concrete, with horizontal bands formed in the plasterwork. The exterior joinery is timber with double hung windows with unequal sashes and substantial panelled doors to the main entrances.

The main architectural features are concentrated at the two principle entrances. Other elements of interest are the strong horizontal lines formed by the roof parapet and banding in the plasterwork and the completely regular and symmetric pattern of windows in the facades and generally symmetrical composition of the building. The windows are typically arranged in pairs and have a strong vertical proportion that contrasts with the horizontal lines of the building.

The main entrance of the building is approached from the north side of the building, with the central part of the façade being set slightly forward of the main building line

⁴ Based on Russell Murray. *HMNZS Olphert Building, Cnr of Buckle and Taranaki Streets*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005).

and projects slightly above the main parapet line to create a frame for the entrance. There is a central flagpole with a moulded boss projecting out from the façade, a triple window is set at the first floor level, and a G.R coat of arms is set into the façade above the entrance which is framed by a moulded plaster architrave.

The Taranaki Street façade is somewhat plain in comparison, its most notable feature is the broad stair in two flights that runs from the footpath to the main entrance. This entrance is set back in the façade and trimmed with a moulded plaster architrave; it features a pair of timber French doors with raised panels and glazed over lights. The entrance is flanked by double hung windows. At the first floor are three double hung windows, centred above the door and the two lower windows. At basement level casement windows are centred on the other windows.

Internally the layout of the building is original, but many of the surface finishes are modern. Prominent in the interior is a modern suspended mineral fibre tile ceiling that was installed to conceal structural earthquake strengthening elements.

The building is overall fairly plain in style with some visible influence of the Moderne and Art Deco architectural styles, which contrasts with the more conservative Edwardian joinery and opening proportions.

2.2 Materials

- Concrete
- Timber
- Corrugated Iron

2.3 Setting

The immediate setting of this building is a busy and prominent intersection although *HMNZS Olphert* is set at the back edge of the section. It is partially masked by the prominent brick General Army Headquarters that is sited on the true corner of Taranaki and Buckle Streets.

More broadly the setting of this building is the National War Memorial and Carillon which rises above the site. The Carillon is particularly dominant and the former National Art Gallery and Museum has a marked presence as well.

The wider setting is the southern part of Te Aro and the northern part of Mount Cook that supports a vast range of building types and uses.

3.0 Sources

Murray, Russell. *HMNZS Olphert Building, Cnr of Buckle and Taranaki Streets*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report. Prepared for Plan Change 53, 2005.

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

Archives New Zealand

W 1 23/32 Pt.2. Archives New Zealand.

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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?*

HMNZS Olphert is a functional military building that is relatively plain in style, but which benefits from the influence of the Moderne and Art Deco architectural styles. The building is notable for its strong horizontal lines, for its regular pattern of rectangular windows, and for its simple rectangular plan-form. It is typical and representative of the austere public buildings that were built in the post Great Depression/WWII era.

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 has some townscape value, but is set back from the street and partially masked by the more-prominent brick General Army Headquarters. The building is likely to benefit, to some extent, from the improvements to the landscape currently under construction at the nearby Memorial Park site (2014).

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?*

This building is of significant group value. The building is part of a group of military related structures on the corner of Buckle and Taranaki Streets. This is the only surviving portion of Mt Cook land still in defence hands. Together with the Former Defence Stores building to the west and the former Mt Cook Police Station (on the corner of Tory Street) this building is part of a complex that was once dominated by large brick structures. The building shares an historical connection with other sites on Mt Cook, including the former Dominion Museum and the vacant land opposite, once the site of the Army drill hall.

Historic Value:

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

This building has historic value due to its association with the Department of Defence as it became the headquarters of the Army's Defence Transport Services sometime during World War Two and continued to be used by the army following the war. In the late 1970s the building was referred to as the Home Command Building and was used by the Defence Services Transport Pool. It is currently home to the naval reserve and the Wellington branch of the Ex-Royal Naval men's Association continuing its connection with the military.

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

This building is associated with the New Zealand military and navy and World War II.

Scientific Value:

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

Puke Ahu – non listed Maori site of significance. 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 National War Memorial is the focus of the Nation's Anzac day commemorations. The buildings in the area around the newly-created 'Memorial Park' will come under public scrutiny during the upcoming events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War I. This defence force building is likely to increase in status, and in public esteem, as a result of these works and the subsequent public events.

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?*

The building should be considered in a wider context with past military uses of Mt Cook and with landmarks such as the National War Memorial Carillon.

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 should be considered in a wider context with other military structures on Mt Cook such as the Carillon which act as a reminder of Mt Cook's former military past. In this way it contributes to the overall sense of place.

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?*

This building is a good representative of a utilitarian military building from the post-Great Depression/World War II era.

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?*

As original plans cannot be seen it is difficult to ascertain the authenticity of this building. It would appear to have had few exterior modifications.

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 significant at a local level as a utilitarian military building. As a part of a group of related buildings its importance is increased, particularly within the wider context of the military, police, museum history of Mt Cook, and the nearby Carillon and National War Memorial - which act as a reminder of Mt Cook's former military past. As a part of this group it becomes of national importance, contributing to the continuation of the association between this area and the defence forces.

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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 Cyclopeda of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*