



Clyde Quay Wharf and Apartments from the west, 2020.

Clyde Quay Wharf and Apartments

May 2020

1.0 Outline History

1.1. History

Work began on the Clyde Quay Wharf in 1907 and construction was completed in 1910. The wharf was planned as part of an on-going major expansion of the facilities at the port of Wellington by the Wellington Harbour Board (WHB).

The wharf was designed by the WHB engineer William Ferguson and the work was supervised, firstly, by acting engineer Eugene Cachemaille, who took over from Ferguson, and then James Marchbanks, who was appointed engineer in late 1908. Its location was chosen partly to screen areas of the harbour to the west (including a partially-built graving dock that was never completed) from strong winds and seas,¹ although easterlies are not a common Wellington wind.

Tenders were called in September 1907 but the four received were unacceptably high and fresh tenders were called the following month. The contract was awarded to John McLean and Son for a price of £30,755,² although a later report suggested a figure of £37,000 was set aside by the WHB.³ It was the first of the harbour's wharves constructed with reinforced concrete foundations – 196 piles with sprung ironbark fendering to allow it to be used in all weathers. The wharf was also fitted with a weighbridge, a gantry system for loading and discharging cargo and electric lighting.

There were problems with the construction, due largely to issues with the mixing of reinforcing and concrete and the need to allow the piles to properly cure for several months before driving.⁴ This delayed work, but it recommenced in early 1909 and the contract was completed on 20 May 1910. An approach road was then built and the wharf opened for use by the end of July 1910. The finished wharf was 173 metres long and 18 metres wide.

Originally intended to be used for unloading coal, Clyde Quay operated as a traditional finger wharf for most of its existence. However, due to its isolation from the rest of the port, it received relatively little cargo traffic and instead was utilised more by visiting warships.

¹ *Dominion*, 4 February 1908, p.4

² *Dominion*, 13 November 1907, p.7

³ *Poverty Bay Herald*, 10 July 1908, p.2

⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 17 August 1908, p.4

With future uses uncertain and with little traditional cargo likely to come its way, in March 1961 Clyde Quay Wharf was chosen by the WHB as the site of a new terminal for the departure and arrival of international travellers. Immigration to New Zealand gathered pace in the post-war period and, boosted by assisted migrants, it reached its peak during the late 1950s. At that time, the vast majority of these people arrived by ship. Wellington, as one of the country's major ports, received many of these immigrants, but reception facilities at the wharves in use – notably Aotea Quay or Queens Wharf – were regarded as wholly inadequate.

The Overseas Passenger Terminal (OPT) was designed by Wellington architects, Morton Calder Fowler and Styles, and built by Fletcher Construction for a cost of £1 million. Work began in 1962 with the removal of part of the old wharf and dredging of the approaches to take larger ships. The latter caused particular offence to local residents because it disturbed sewerage deposits on the seabed, with predictable results. A number of additional piles (this time in Australian hardwood) were installed as part of the widening and lengthening of the wharf. Parking facilities for the terminal were provided by taking over Post Office land in nearby Herd Street, necessitating the demolition of some buildings there.

The terminal was opened with much fanfare by Governor-General Sir Bernard Fergusson on 7 December 1964. Although it was to be used as a gateway to the country for immigrants, it had other purposes. It was intended as a boost to tourism by offering a proper facility for hosting cruise ships. It was also designed for use as a function centre.

The first ship to berth was the Shaw Savill Line's *Northern Star* on the morning of 8 December 1964 while the first function held there was the Rotary Club luncheon on 12 December 1964. The building was put to good use early in its life – 42 passenger vessels used the terminal in its first 10 months – although the large number of passengers at any one time over-extended its capacity and some ships were sent to makeshift facilities elsewhere in the port. Nearby residents complained about the noise and pollution emanating from the ships. But the days of the passenger ships were numbered and, within a few years of the terminal's opening, most people were coming to or leaving New Zealand by air. Cruise ships visits became infrequent and ceased to clash with social events. This allowed the OPT to become one of the city's busiest reception venues.

By the late 1970s, the Wellington Harbour Board was attempting to find a viable future use for the building. In conjunction with the James Cook Hotel company, it considered turning it into a hotel. However, up to 12 cruise ships

a year were still using the terminal and, after much debate, the Board decided against the idea, instead proposing a seafood restaurant.⁵ In the decades that followed, the building housed a variety of restaurants, exhibitions and boat stevedoring facilities. The wharf was occasionally used for fishing and coastal vessels on its eastern side. As part of a wider development of Chaffers Marina amenities on its western side, alterations were made to the interior in 1993 to accommodate ablution blocks and changing facilities.

By the mid-2000s, the Wellington City Council, which inherited the building after harbour boards were dis-established in 1989, was casting around for ways to rejuvenate the site. A proposal to develop the site into apartments was proposed by developers Willis Bond and accepted by the Council in 2007. In 2008, Willis Bond was granted a resource consent. The new building, designed by Athfield Architects, required the demolition of the OPT. Some parts of the old building were retained and reused, including the spire, four large wall mosaics designed by G V Hansen, some steelwork and some of the c.1909 reinforced concrete and 1964 timber piles.

In 2009, Waterfront Watch challenged the resource consent in the Environment Court but lost. Work began in November 2011 and the project was officially opened on 18 June 2014.⁶ The new structure required major modifications to the old wharf, including the sinking of some 200 piles, extensive cross bracing and construction of a carpark for 90 cars suspended underneath the wharf. The development also included several tenanted retail spaces.

Sources

Unless otherwise stated in the references, this history is based on:

Registration Report for a Historic Area (Draft), 'Wellington Wharves Historic Area (Volume II)', Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

Chronology, modifications

date	activity
1907	Tender for Clyde Quay Wharf won by John McLean and Son.
1910	Work on construction of wharf completed.
1962	Work begins on widening, lengthening and strengthening of Clyde Quay Wharf to accommodate the construction of the OPT, designed

⁵ Johnson, David 1996, *Wellington Harbour*, Wellington Maritime Museum Trust, Wellington p.460

⁶ *Dominion Post*, 19 June 2014

by Morton Calder Fowler and Styles.

1964 Overseas Passenger Terminal opened.

2012 Overseas Passenger Terminal demolished.

2014 Clyde Quay Wharf apartments opened.

2.0 Location

2.1. Map



WCC Local Maps

2.2. Ownership

Clyde Quay Wharf Apartments is situated on the Clyde Quay wharf, and is owned by a collection of Unit Title owners.

The legal description is Various units, DP 461811.

2.3. Listing

Not listed.

3.0 Physical Description

3.1. Setting

The Clyde Quay Wharf occupies a commanding harbour-edge site, adjoining other significant features of the inner harbour. These include the Freyberg Pool and Clyde Quay boat harbour to the east; Waitangi Park and the Chaffers Dock Apartments (formerly the Herd Street Post Office) to the south on the landward side, and the concentrated marina of yachts and launches in the Chaffers Marina that extends along the full length of the western side of the wharf. Beyond and further to the west, Te Papa is a prominent built landmark.

The hillside houses of Mt Victoria and St Gerard's Monastery and Chapel are part of its wider setting to the east.

As the only 'finger' wharf in this part of the harbour, it is a very prominent feature of the harbour edge, seen from many parts of the Wellington wharfage and inner city.

3.2. Clyde Quay Wharf

The Clyde Quay wharf has had three distinct phases in construction. The original structure from 1910 was based on reinforced concrete piles. The wharf was widened and lengthened to allow for the construction of the OPT in 1962-64, the piles for this work being in timber. Finally, it underwent major strengthening in 2012-14 as part of the work in constructing the new apartment building.

It is difficult today to ascertain what remains of the original wharf structure; certainly, none of it is visible from the wharf itself or from the accessible spaces below the deck of the wharf. As-built drawings of the 2012-14 work, if they exist, may help, as would an underwater inspection. The heavy timbers that form the outer extremity of the wharf appear to date from the work of 1962-64 (see photos 1 and 2).

The wharf itself supports a significant modern building, the Clyde Quay Wharf Apartments, designed by Athfield Architects. This is a major six-storey building, which makes unashamed acknowledgement of its harbour-edge location and of the 1960s purpose of the wharf as a berthing place for passenger and cruise liners. Nautical references include the long, low horizontal lines of the building, the stepped roof line, the 'spire' near the centre of the roof line, and the articulated prow and stern features. The prominent prow shape in particular, at the seaward end of the building, is strongly suggestive of a vessel cutting into the waves, while the open

promenade at first floor level replicates the spatial character of the decks of an ocean liner. It takes some of this inspiration from the OPT building, as indeed it takes some of the fabric: the spire is relocated from the OPT building, as were the four wall mosaics. It is a distinguished work of the early 21st century, by a nationally important architect.

It should also be noted that the wharf and building are a closely integrated structure, with basement spaces for carparking below the deck of the wharf and the foundations of the building and wharf closely integrated. The structure is considered to be one.

4.0 Evaluation of Significance

The assessment of significance that follows is based on the criteria in Policy 21 of the operative Regional Policy Statement (2013).

4.1. Historic Values

These relate to the history of a place and how it demonstrates important historical themes, events, people or experiences.

There is a vestigial link in the plan shape and orientation of the structure and the use of concrete piles to the original wharf, while a small amount of the fabric of the apartment building and its foundations has survived from earlier structures on the site. While the wharf structure has a layered and interesting history dating back some 110 years, albeit with fragments only of the original structure remaining, the apartment building that it supports is new with a very short history and it could not be judged to have historic value.

4.2. Physical Values

Architectural Values

The place is notable for its style, design, form, scale, materials, ornamentation, period, craftsmanship or other architectural values.

The apartment building has undoubted architectural value, for its form, details and spatial qualities; these are qualities of the early 21st century and are not relevant to an evaluation of heritage value. The architectural / aesthetic values of the wharf itself are low, and such as they are, reside in the robust, simple, weathered timbers of the 1960s on outer extremity of the wharf edge.

Technological Values

The place provides evidence of the history of technological development or demonstrates innovation or important methods of construction or design.

The structure of the wharf, in its three stages of growth (1910, 1962-64 and 2014-16), exhibits technological values in the design and construction of wharves first for heavy shipping and later for a modern apartment building. These values reside in the original concrete and later timber piling and sub-structure.

Integrity

The significant physical values of the place have been largely unmodified.

The place has a chequered history of major change and could not be said to be 'largely unmodified'.

Age

The place is particularly old in the context of human occupation of the Wellington region.

Some elements of both the wharf structure of 1910 wharf (concrete piles) and the OPT building of 1964 (in particular the four mosaic wall panels and the spire) still exist, but these elements constitute a very small part of the structure that exists today. Neither are particularly noteworthy for their age in the Wellington context.

Group or Townscape Values

The place is strongly associated with other natural or cultural features in the landscape or townscape, and/or contributes to the heritage values of a wider townscape or landscape setting, and/or it is a landmark.

The Clyde Quay Wharf and Apartment building is a strong element in a landscape of drama of hills, buildings, vessels and the sea. It contributes to this powerful, typically Wellington landscape / seascape as a prominent structure, of large size and strong, nautical form. It is part of a varied maritime landscape, of great visual interest.

4.3. Social Values

Sentiment

The place has strong or special associations with a particular cultural group or community.

Some current apartment owners may hold sentimental attachment to the place.

Recognition

The place is held in high public esteem for historic heritage values or contribution to the sense of identity of a community.

The OPT was a building with a very high profile and public esteem as a result of its location and use as a passenger terminal for immigrants arriving in New Zealand, and later as a functions venue. The current building (while a significant landmark) is not thought to be high in public esteem, although this may grow with time.

4.4. Surroundings

The setting or context of the place contributes to an appreciation and understanding of its character, history and/or development.

The setting of the place is one of drama and visual interest. While it has changed over time, the structure today benefits from the hills, buildings and most particularly the nautical environment that it is a part of today.

4.5. Rarity

The place is unique or rare within the district or region.

The wharf itself is rare only in the sense of the period of its use as a passenger terminal and social venue; there are other finger wharves that are both older and more authentic. The Clyde Quay Wharf Apartments is a rare building type to be found on a finger wharf, and no others exist in Wellington harbour.

4.6. Representativeness

The place is a good example of its type or era.

The structure is a good example of a finger wharf in the Wellington context, albeit one that is dominated by a large structure above the level of the deck; given its history of change, it cannot be considered to be a good example of any particular era.

5.0 Recommendation

The Clyde Quay Wharf and the associated Clyde Quay Wharf Apartments, considered together as a single inter-dependent structure, is of low heritage value since there is very little physical evidence of the original wharf of 1910, and little of the modifications of the 1960s. It therefore does not meet the criteria to sufficient degree to justify listing on the Greater Wellington Regional Plan.

6.0 Photographs



1 Heavy timber structure at the seaward end of the wharf, dating from the 1960s. Photo, June 2020.



2 Detail of the structural timbers under the seaward end of the wharf.
Photo, June 2020.