

# Historic Heritage Evaluation

## Olympus Apartments 280 Oriental Parade



Wellington City Council 2012

June 2021

Historic Heritage Evaluation	
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Cover image	Olympus Apartments, Wellington City Council, 2012

### Acknowledgements

The author is indebted to the work which has gone before in assessing the values and the history of the Olympus Apartments. In particular, Michael Kelly's research report for Wellington City Council in 2003.



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## Executive Summary

Olympus Apartments at 280 Oriental Parade was nominated by Wellington City Council for addition to the Wellington City Council Schedule of Historic Heritage Buildings. The following report includes research and an evaluation of the house against the Wellington City Council heritage assessment criteria. An evaluation of the apartment building's heritage values shows it to have **significant architectural** and **rarity** value, designed by an important architect, Edmund Anscombe.

The rise of the apartment building as an architectural type in Wellington began in the 1920s and the Oriental Bay area became a favoured location for these developments.<sup>1</sup>

Olympus Apartments were built for the Wilkinson Estate and designed by Edmund Anscombe. Edmund Anscombe was one of the most important figures to shape the architectural and urban fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand. He was important because of the prolific nature of his practice and the quality of his work, the range and the scale of his built and speculative projects, including the Centennial Exhibition Buildings in Wellington in 1939-40.

Anscombe dominated the design of privately-funded inner-city flats in Wellington city, designing art-deco/modernist apartments; Anscombe Flats, Belvedere, Hamilton Flats, Olympus, Linfield, Alberts Flats and Franconia.<sup>2</sup> Anscombe designed Olympus Apartments in 1934, with the permit application submitted and approved in 1937 and work completed in April 1939.

The principal architectural value of this building is its largely authentic appearance, both outside and in, with all four façades, some apartments and the main public spaces in near original condition. It has rarity value as a nearly intact example of Edmund Anscombe's work.

The building is **significant** in its immediate and broader settings, and it makes a **significant** contribution to those settings. It has **high** group value in the context of other 1930s and 1940s low-rise Oriental Bay apartment buildings as well as group value with Anscombe's other apartments.<sup>3</sup>

## Summary Statement of Significance

Olympus Apartments has **significant** architectural value in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region for its association with the Thematic Study of Wellington 2013 of A2.6C New Apartment Buildings and has **high** townscape value and **significant** group value. Designed by Edmund Anscombe, a celebrated Te Whānganui-a-Tara

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<sup>1</sup> Wellington City Council, "212 Oriental Parade - Anscombe Flats 1937 Report."

<sup>2</sup> McCarthy Christine, "Anscombe's Plans for Highrise Living."

<sup>3</sup> Council, "Olympus Apartments 280 Oriental Parade PFG Summary Report 2020."



Wellington architect of national importance, the apartments are designed in the Moderne style, for which he was highly regarded. They have **some** rarity value as a highly intact and fine example of his work as well as a fine example of the early first wave of Moderne style apartments in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region. The Olympus Apartments are recommended for inclusion on the District Plan Schedule of Historic Heritage Buildings.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the Olympus Apartments located at 280 Oriental Parade against Wellington City Council's criteria for inclusion on the District Plan Schedule of Historic Heritage Buildings.

The document has been prepared by New Zealand Heritage Properties for the Wellington City Council. It is intended solely for the use by Wellington City Council in accordance with the agreed scope of work.

## Scope

Values are considered against Wellington City Council's and Greater Wellington Regional Council's criteria for inclusion on the District Plan Heritage Schedule. The chronology of the site was pieced together using Wellington City Council summary reports and using primary sources such as *Papers Past*, Wellington City Council Archives, Alexander Turnbull Library, and Land Information NZ records.

This assessment is a desktop study and is based on documentary sources and images. As with any heritage assessment, there were several constraints experienced in the preparation of this report such as no site visit was undertaken. The interiors were not reviewed, other than from information determined through secondary sources and Council records. It should be noted that the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which converts *Papers Past* sources into digitised word-searchable text, creates some errors in translation. This limits a researcher's ability to accurately identify all contemporary information.

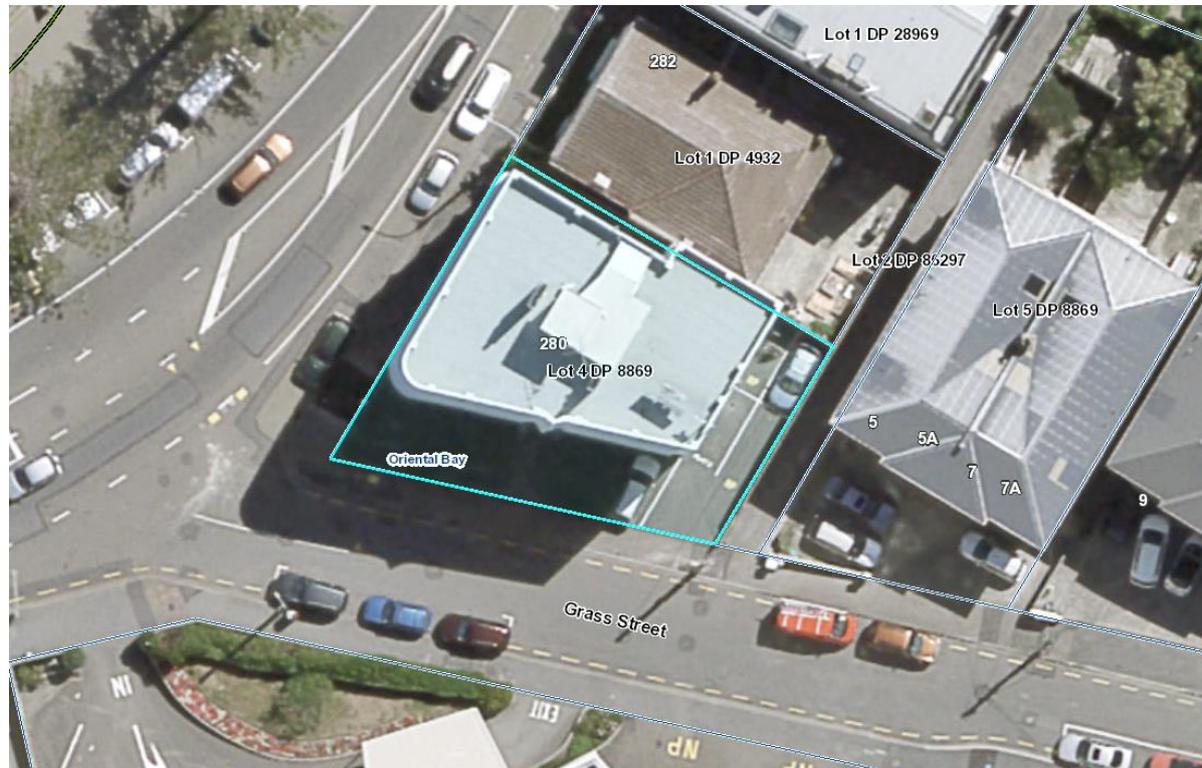


# Heritage Inventory Report

Site Detail	
Site address or address(es) and/or location	280 Oriental Parade
Property Name	Olympus Apartments
Other names	Olympus Flats
Legal Description(s) and Record of Title identifier(s), Deeds register and/or Gate notice information	Lot 4 DP 8869
NZTM grid reference	NZTM_E 1750449, NZTM_N 5427403
District Plan Reference Number	Not listed
Sites of significance to Māori	None
WCC Heritage Area	None
HNZPT listed	Not listed
HNZPT category	None
Archaeological site (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Section 6)	Central City archaeological site reference NZAA R27/270
New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site record number(s)	
Constructed	1939
Significant alterations or additions	None
Architect	Edmund Anscombe
Builder	A Lemmon
Former uses	Apartment Block
Current uses	Apartment Block
Earthquake-prone Building Status at the date of assessment.	



Extent: WCC Onemap, accessed June 2021.



## Historical Summary

### Land and Māori history

Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington's nearly circular harbour (about 10 kilometres in diameter) began as a shallow basin between two tilted land blocks. Repeated uplifting along the Wellington Fault raised the block on the western side, creating a cliff from Thorndon to the Hutt Valley. The block to the east tilted down towards the fault, creating a depression that later filled with water.<sup>4</sup> Matiu (Somes Island) and Mākaro (Ward Island) are the exposed peaks of a submerged ridge running parallel with the extensive ridges of Miramar Peninsula and Hataitai.<sup>5</sup>

Early Māori narratives tell that Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington harbour was

<sup>4</sup> Adkins, "The Great Harbour of Tara. Traditional Place Names and Sites of Wellington Harbour and Environs."

<sup>5</sup> Adkins.



originally a land-locked lake, home to two large taniwha. One taniwha, energetic Ngake, forged a passage from Te Awakairangi the Hutt River to the open sea, creating the entrance to the harbour. The second, Whataitai, following in Ngake's wake, became stranded with the outgoing tide and eventually died. Whataitai's spirit took the form of a bird, that flew to the top of the peak and cried farewell before departing to Ranginui – hence its name Tangi te keo.<sup>6</sup> The very top of Matairangi Mount Victoria is still known as Tangi te Keo. Over the years Whātaïtai's body turned to stone and today is known as Hataitai.<sup>7</sup>

The Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington area of Aotearoa New Zealand was said to have been first explored by Kupe. Kupe set off from his homeland Hawaiki in pursuit of a giant wheke/octopus. The pursuit led him to Aotearoa New Zealand, where he finally caught the creature in Raukawakawa Cook Strait<sup>8</sup>. In the landscape later known as Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington, he named rock formations near Cape Palliser Ngā Ra o Kupe (the sails of Kupe), Arapāoa, Mana, the islands Matiu (Somes Island) and Mākaro (Ward Island) before returning to Hawaiki.<sup>9</sup> These names were preserved as later iwi came to settle the land.

Mana whenua of the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region trace their origins to the subsequent arrival of the Kurahaupō waka. Some traditions name Whātonga as the captain of the waka. He later explored Te Ika a Maui the North Island from Māhia south, naming the harbour Te Whānganui-a-Tara, for his son Tara.<sup>10</sup> Descendants include Ngāi Tara, Rangitane, Muaupoko, Ngāti Apa and Ngāti Ira.<sup>11</sup>

The area around Te Whanganui-a-Tara was occupied for centuries by these various Māori groups.<sup>12</sup> Two tribes of Ngāi Tara (in the area from c1405-1650) and Ngāti Ira (in the area until 1829) amalgamated and became known as Ngāti Ira. Ngāti Ira were the inhabitants of Te Whanganui-a-Tara and its environs including Porirua and the area up to the Kāpiti Coast.<sup>13</sup> The principal chief of Ngāti Ira in the late 1810s, Whanake and his son Te Kekerengu both lived on the west coast of Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington near Porirua Harbour.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington City Libraries, "Te Aro Pa and Matairangi."

<sup>7</sup> Grace and Ministry of Education, "Ngake and Whātaïtai the Taniwha of Wellington Harbour." The site Tangi te keo, on the Matairangi Mount Victoria peak and ridgeline is a site of significance to Māori and recorded as M72 in the WCC District Plan.

<sup>8</sup> Greater Wellington Regional Council website [Māori history of the Greater Wellington region | Greater Wellington Regional Council \(gw.govt.nz\)](https://www.gw.govt.nz/māori-history-of-the-greater-wellington-region/) Accessed November 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Reid, "Muaūpoko - Early History"; Royal, "First Peoples in Māori Tradition - Kupe."

<sup>10</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, "Te Whanganui a Tara Me Ona Takiwa," 17–18.

<sup>11</sup> Love, "Te Āti Awa of Wellington"; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, "Research Report on Heritage Values Hannah Playhouse, Wellington."

<sup>12</sup> Report, "Te Whanganui A Tara Me Ona Takiwa - Report on the Wellington District."

<sup>13</sup> Murray, "A History of Tawa."



Incoming tribes from far to the north of Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington area began to push out Ngāti Ira, and they faced consistent pressure as an influx of people continued from western Waikato and Taranaki.<sup>14</sup> Many war parties and migration of other tribes, such as Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whatua, and Ngāti Toa, drove the last remaining Ngāti Ira out of the area.<sup>15</sup> Ngāti Toa and its allies defeated Ngāti Ira and gained ascendancy over the Kāpiti Coast in 1824, although some Ngāti Ira continued to live at Porirua.<sup>16</sup> By 1840, the groups holding customary rights within the Port Nicholson block were complex, with Te Āti Awa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Tama, and Ngāti Toa all claiming rights established through conquest, occupation, and use of resources. The wider Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region then and now hosted a number of iwi, including Te Āti Awa, Muaupoko, Rangitāne o Wairarapa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa (Ngāti Toarangatira), and Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai.<sup>17</sup>

It was in this complex setting that in 1839, the New Zealand Company chose Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington's Port Nicholson as the site for its first settlement of British immigrants. Their aim was to purchase land in the district for an English settlement.<sup>18</sup>

### **Oriental Bay**

Oriental Bay is sheltered from the south and named after the *Oriental*, one of the first New Zealand Company ships to bring settlers to the country, arriving in Wellington city in 1840. At that time, the Bay was described as a 'dreary-looking spot' with steep hills and a narrow rocky shore and was remote enough from the town centre to be used for farmland and as a quarantine station.<sup>19</sup>

Since the 1850s the shape of the inner harbour has been changed by reclaiming land from the sea. After the 1855 Wairarapa earthquake raised the beach, colonial settlement increased and by the 1880s, while still a stony beach with a few houses and boatsheds, the area had roading, a temporary light railway carrying fill from the Oriental Bay quarry to the Te Aro harbour reclamation, and whalers rendering whale blubber on the shore.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Report, "Te Whanganui A Tara Me Ona Takiwa - Report on the Wellington District."

<sup>15</sup> Murray, "A History of Tawa."

<sup>16</sup> Murray.

<sup>17</sup> "Brooklyn Wellington."

<sup>18</sup> Report, "Te Whanganui A Tara Me Ona Takiwa - Report on the Wellington District."

<sup>19</sup> Maclean, "Wellington Places - Southern Suburbs."

<sup>20</sup> Maclean.



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In the early 1900s, Oriental Bay became a fashionable address for the city's affluent. The Te Aro Baths were built in the early 1900s, the electric tramway to the bottom of Carlton Gore Road was constructed in 1904 – playing a pivotal role in Wellington city's suburban development and expansion – and by 1913 the Oriental Bay tea kiosk was a popular destination for residents and seaside excursions. The bay's iconic Norfolk pines were first planted in 1917, the first band rotunda was relocated to the beach's rocky promontory in 1919 and construction of the sea wall, an important early civil engineering structure designed to safeguard the city-side shoreline from the maritime environment, began in 1922.<sup>21</sup>

However, in the 1930s and 1940s, at the time of Anscombe's apartment building's construction, many of Oriental Bay's grand houses were converted into flats and boarding houses. By the 1990s it had once again become the abode of the wealthy. Many people live in apartments, which have replaced early wooden villas. Standing above the bay is the former St Gerard's Monastery, a Wellington city landmark.<sup>22</sup>

### **Olympus Apartments**

The following section provides the results of documentary research into the historical background of the Olympus Apartments. This research provides context and informs our understanding of the heritage values remaining in the structure.

The inter-war period was a rich time for Wellington city architecture. New architectural styles appeared, based partly on the past and with a look to the future. The Depression largely ended the 1920s building boom, but building activity never ceased, and a revival was sparked by the intervention of the government, which set about constructing large public buildings. Buildings got bigger as a result of new reinforced concrete construction techniques prompted in part by the experience of the 1931 Napier earthquake. Engineers studied Napier building damage and developed building guidelines and used concrete to make buildings safer. The inter-war period was also a response to new overseas styles - heavy decoration was shed and sleeker forms were favoured.<sup>23</sup>

Art Deco, the style most associated with the 1930s, arose from the 1925 Industrial and Decorative Arts Exhibition in Paris. Characterised by simplified ornamentation and an emphasis on geometrical decoration, the use of applied ornament created an image of modernity.

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<sup>21</sup> Maclean.

<sup>22</sup> Maclean.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, "Art Deco in the Capital Heritage Trail."



Moderne or Streamlined architecture was essentially a further refinement of Art Deco.<sup>24</sup> This period saw the emergence of “flats” and “apartments” as part of a new approach to architecture<sup>25</sup> and a new style of urban accommodation. Proponents of modernism described the flat as “a building type peculiar to our own era; without precedent in the architecture of the past”.<sup>26</sup> Apartment buildings and flats were seen. Decoration was all but abandoned and window space and practical construction improvements took precedence.<sup>27</sup>

Local newspapers appeared to promote the idea that flats designed on modern lines were to address the shortage of housing in Wellington city, which the newspapers expounded was the cause of houses being “converted into flats without the knowledge of the council” and causing “slumdom.”<sup>28</sup> It is within this context that Edmund Anscombe's foray into apartment building design, a phenomenon which appears to be confined to Wellington city and the 1930s, was established.<sup>29</sup>

Olympus Apartments were built for the Wilkinson Estate according to the building permit records; the names of the owners on the Certificate of Title at the time are Walter Bethune, David Wilkinson and Sydney Castle. Anscombe drew the plan for Olympus Apartments in 1934 with the permit application submitted and approved in 1937 and work completed in April 1939. The builder was A. Lemmon, and the estimated value of the work was £10,500. The property was transferred in September 1937, well before its completion, to Guardian Trust and Executors Co.

For the first 30 years of its existence, no transactions took place, so it is reasonable to assume that the flats were rented out. Several of the apartment's early occupants were longstanding; James and Edna Brown occupied a flat for 30 or more years, and Ruby Fagg, Walter Newall, the Pizer family and Alice Edmonds were also lengthy occupants.<sup>30</sup>

In 1971 the property was sold to Waitangi Trading Company and the following year each tenant was sold 1/8 of the building as their portion of the property, with separate leasehold titles issued for each portion. The terms of lease for each title are 999 years from 1971.

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<sup>24</sup> Kelly.

<sup>25</sup> McCarthy Christine, “Anscombe's Plans for Highrise Living.”

<sup>26</sup> McCarthy Christine.

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, “Art Deco in the Capital Heritage Trail.”

<sup>28</sup> McCarthy Christine, “Anscombe's Plans for Highrise Living.”

<sup>29</sup> McCarthy Christine.

<sup>30</sup> “Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building.”



## Photographs and Images

NA

## Chronologies and Timelines

### Timeline of events, including modifications

1934	Apartment Building designed by Edmund Anscombe.
1937	Apartment Building (Wellington City Council Archives, B16425) permit submitted and approved by Wellington City Council.
1939	Apartment Building completed.
2014	Seismic strengthening, including brick ties, removal and replacement of the brick lift shaft, fire improvements to the chimney and smoke doors (Wellington City Council Archives 312644).

### Occupation history

Multiple tenancies.

## Biographies

Edmund Anscombe was born on 8 February 1874 in Lindfield, Sussex, England, the son of Eliza Mason and her husband, Edmund Anscombe, a carpenter. The family emigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand when Edmund was seven months old. They settled in Ōtepoti Dunedin, where he later attended Caversham School. In 1888 Anscombe visited the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia, an experience that started a lifelong interest in the design of international exhibitions.

Anscombe served an apprenticeship as a carpenter at Waiwera South. There he met his future wife, Douglas Watt, whom he married in Kaihiku on 24 May 1898. In 1901 he left Aotearoa New Zealand to study architecture in the United States. It is



believed he studied by correspondence and supported himself as a builder—he was engaged in the construction of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St Louis, Missouri. The Beaux-Arts style, on which this exhibition was based, had a considerable influence on Anscombe's later designs.

In 1907 Anscombe returned to Ōtepoti Dunedin and in January 1908 won the design competition for the School of Mines building at the University of Otago. In the same year he became an associate of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. The success of the School of Mines building led to his appointment as architect to the University Council, a position he held until 1929. The five buildings he designed at the University all faithfully followed the style of Maxwell Bury's original two buildings. Together, the seven buildings constitute a major example of nineteenth century and early twentieth century Gothic architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In Otago, Anscombe gained commissions for several major buildings including Otago Girls' High School, Palmerston Town Hall, the Dunedin YMCA building, and churches of various denominations. He went into partnership with L D Coombs in 1913 and then with H McDowell Smith in 1914. The latter partnership continued in various forms through to the 1920s and received commissions from as far afield as Waihōpai Invercargill and Papaioea Palmerston North. One of note, undertaken by Anscombe, was for the 33-roomed Clifton homestead at Waiwera South in 1919. Anscombe also supervised the work on the Sarjeant Gallery, Whānganui, as his pupil Donald Hosie had won the competition to design the building in 1916 but was killed in the First World War.

In 1919 Anscombe published *Modern Industrial Development*, a pamphlet anticipating an era of great prosperity founded on a socialist approach to housing and industrial parks. His vision of commercial buildings with large flat roofs available for recreation purposes and for use as emergency hospitals was not realised until 1937, when he designed the Post and Telegraph Department offices in Herd Street, Wellington.

Anscombe was also able to advance his theories of industrial construction with the development in 1920 of cellular concrete blocks, marketed as the OK Dry Wall System. The blocks were used in the government housing scheme at Miramar, Wellington, and later in R & W H Symington and Company's factory in Papaioea Palmerston North, as well as being distributed in Australia.

Following a tour of Canada and the United States in 1922, Anscombe wrote to Ōtepoti Dunedin's *Evening Star* with a proposal to hold an international exhibition in the city. There was overwhelming public support for the project and Anscombe was appointed the official architect. The buildings he designed for the 1925–26



*New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition* were structured to an axial plan, terminated by a domed meeting hall. They were greatly influenced by the 1893 World Columbian Exposition, Chicago, and by the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

Anscombe left Ōtepoti Dunedin in 1929 and established a practice in Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington with an office in Heretaunga Hastings. He was much influenced by new developments in architecture, and his frequent overseas trips ensured he was always at the forefront of stylistic fashion. After he moved to Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington his design work became simpler, reflecting the industrial qualities he was writing of in 1919. He also designed several buildings in the Spanish Mission style. His more significant structures of the 1930s included the Wellington Show Association Stadium, the Hawke's Bay Farmers' and Westerman and Company's buildings in Hastings, and the Rotorua municipal building. He also designed several apartment blocks in Wellington city and the Disabled Servicemen's Vocational Training Centre, which was completed in 1943.

However, his most important work was the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition of 1939–40. The International Style conveyed by the structures at Rongotai, Wellington, was intended to reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's progressive approach to the world. As an architect of the exhibitions Anscombe had the ability and experience to put grand ideas into form. After the Centennial Exhibition he continued to promote various visionary schemes.

Anscombe was well-known in the architectural community, as much for his assertive nature as for his prolific designs. He liked to recount how he was dining in the Farmers' Building when the 1931 Hawke's Bay earthquake occurred, but, convinced that the architect should have complete faith in his work, he continued eating, undeterred by the violent shakes. Fortunately for Anscombe the building was one of the few that survived.

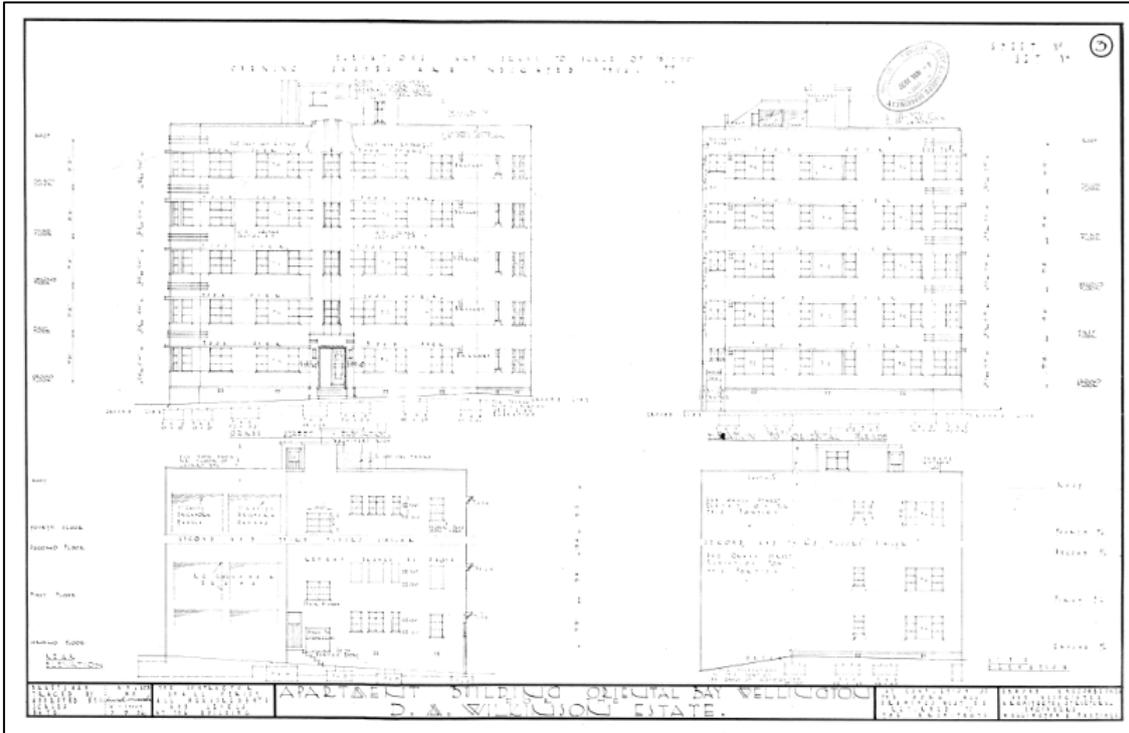
Anscombe also played golf and bowls and belonged to the Wellington Savage Club and the local beautifying society. He died in Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington on 9 October 1948, survived by two daughters.<sup>31</sup>

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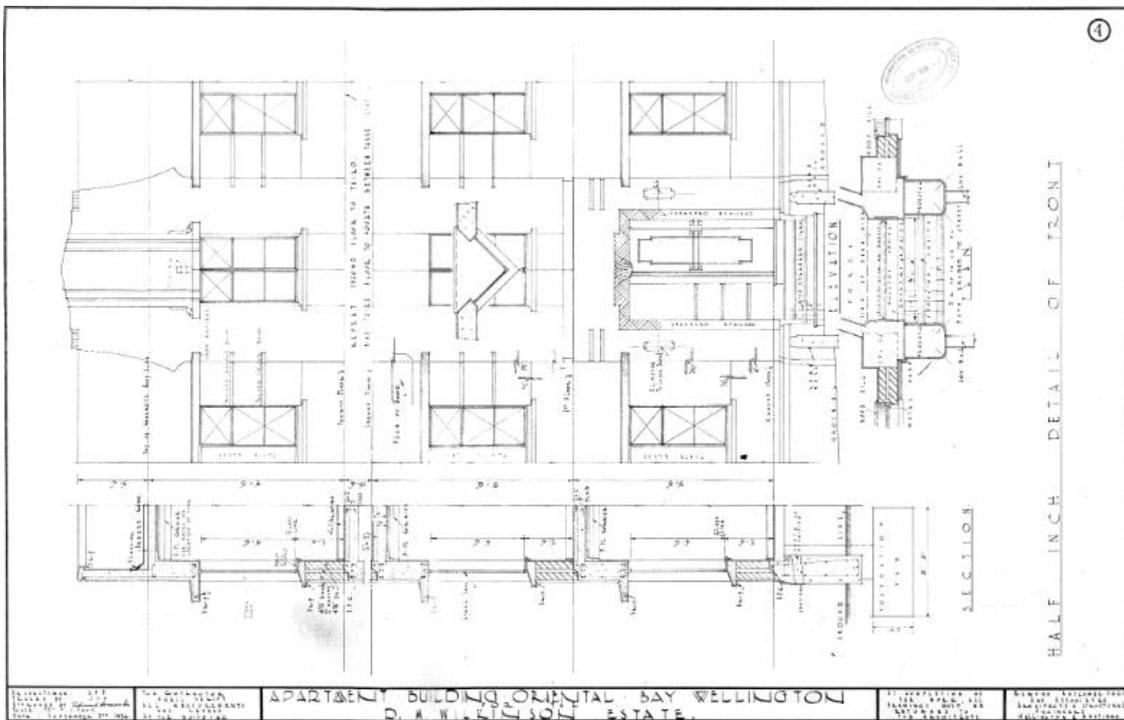
<sup>31</sup> Bowron, "Anscombe, Edmund."



# Plans and Elevations



Elevations of Olympus Apartments, 1937 B16425.32



Elevations of Olympus Apartments, 1937 B16425.33



Plan for a five-storey apartment block (the Olympus Apartments) with two flats on each floor, on the corner of Oriental Bay and Grass Street, Edmund Anscombe & Associates: Apartment building, Oriental Bay, for D. M. Wilkinson Estate. 9 September 1936, Pans-80-1243, 1244, Alexander Turnbull Library (not sighted).

## Physical Description

### Setting – geographical / physical context

Olympus Apartments are located at the northern end of Oriental Bay, which is a mixed environment of apartment towers, town-house developments, small blocks of flats, and single residential dwellings, mainly Victorian and Edwardian style wooden villas. All properties follow the sweep of the bay and rise up the hill to meet the houses of Matairangi Tangi Te Keo Mount Victoria. The bay is the pre-eminent feature of the area and is separated from the buildings by Oriental Parade and the massive concrete seawall that anchors the land-ward end of the beach.<sup>34</sup>

### Buildings or structures

Olympus Apartments is a four-storey reinforced concrete building containing eight apartments (two per floor) carefully designed to its prominent site on the corner of Grass Street and Oriental Parade. It displays the streamlined characteristic of Aotearoa New Zealand Moderne architecture, Anscombe's favoured style, although tempered with the distinctly Art Deco touches characteristic of his 1930s work.<sup>35</sup>

The building has two principal façades, lightly rendered over the base concrete, which meet at a large radiused corner to the street intersection; one façade is to Grass Street containing the front entrance, and the other is to Oriental Parade. The principal façades and the rounded corner are given a full Moderne treatment. The secondary elevations have been given lesser importance in the design and consequently are less decorated. The high pediment above the top storey conceals the roof deck beyond and more or less masks a substantial chimney which appears to have either been removed or modified as part of the 2014 works.

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<sup>32</sup> "Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building."

<sup>33</sup> "Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building."

<sup>34</sup> Council, "Olympus Apartments 280 Oriental Parade PFG Summary Report 2020."

<sup>35</sup> Council.



The building is divided into horizontal layers between a strong base and pediment line by prominent window-head ‘eyebrow’ mouldings which carry around the two main elevations. The projecting sills of the timber windows all fall to a consistent datum line below the ‘eyebrows’. The rounded corner is further enlivened with smaller projecting horizontal mouldings, set in groups of three between the windowsill line and the eyebrow line of the window below.<sup>36</sup>

Above the main entrance on the Grass Street elevation, is a triangular oriel window, a trademark Anscombe touch that can also be found on the Herd Street Post Office, Franconia and other buildings. It interrupts the strong horizontal lines generated by the eyebrow mouldings with a powerful vertical element, stretches to the top of the façade and finishes in a ziggurat, a key Art Deco motif. The horizontal lines are delicately marked around the other two façades by bands formed in the plaster render, positive from eyebrow line up to windowsill and recessed above to the next eyebrow line.<sup>37</sup>

The Moderne style continues within with curved walls and period finishes, although several minor changes have taken place. The front entrance, main spaces and lift remained largely in original condition at least until the 2014 seismic upgrade which saw the removal and replacement of the brick lift shaft. It is not known what effect this has had on the visual appearance of the lift.<sup>38</sup>

## Materials

- Reinforced Concrete
- Timber windows and joinery

## Archaeological sites

Not known.

## Setting – surroundings / site description

Olympus Apartments occupy almost the entirety of the prominent corner site except for a small service and parking area at the rear. The site also includes a small

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<sup>36</sup> “Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building.”

<sup>37</sup> Council, “Olympus Apartments 280 Oriental Parade PFG Summary Report 2020.”

<sup>38</sup> “Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building.”



garden with pohutukawa trees and low modern plantings to Grass Street. Its immediate neighbours include residential housing, and the distinctive high-rise Wharenui Apartments on the opposite corner of Grass Street. From Oriental Parade, Olympus Apartments are seen against the hills behind, which offer a rich green backdrop, scattered with houses.

The strong architectural form of the Olympus Apartments, in conjunction with the highly visible corner site and distinctive light blue colour scheme, gives it considerable townscape presence in this part of Oriental Bay and the building makes a strong positive contribution to its setting.<sup>39</sup>

### HNZPT Extent of List Entry

N/A

## Comparative Analysis Summary

The 1930s appear to be the only time that Anscombe designed multi-storey flats, namely Belvedere, Hamilton Flats, Olympus, Anscombe Flats, Alberts Flats, and Franconia. Most of the flats were built in the late 1930s (from 1936-1938). Many, such as Albert Flats and Anscombe Flats, were initially designed much earlier.

Comparing Olympus Apartments with other Anscombe apartment buildings shows many architectural similarities, as would be expected with the same architect. Two other Modernist apartment blocks designed by Anscombe are either on Heritage New Zealand's List or the WCC District Plan and all three of these apartment buildings are on corner sections.

Anscombe owned and designed the Anscombe Flats as early as 1934 and they were built in 1937, two years earlier than Olympus. Both are four-storeyed and in the Moderne, simple style with rounded walls or curved windows, and built of the same materials. Both buildings have had minor modifications over the decades. The main differences between the two buildings are there are two apartments to a floor in the Olympus Apartments, and one apartment per floor in the Anscombe Flats. The Anscombe Flats have a Category 2 listing with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and are scheduled on the Wellington City Council District Plan.

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<sup>39</sup> "Oriental Bay [276-280 Oriental Parade], Apartment Building."



Belvedere is another example of the streamlined Moderne style, designed by Anscombe. It is a poured in-situ concrete building and was constructed in 1937-1938. It features curved corners and a strong horizontal emphasis.<sup>40</sup> The interior walls are also characterised by curves, and being made of concrete, there have been relatively few changes, although the kitchens and bathrooms have been modernised. Joinery and fittings are original. It is a good example of high-density inner-city housing of the 1930s, and in particular one that made proper provision for the garaging of motor cars. The Belvedere building is Number 21/204 on the Wellington City Council District Plan.

Franconia, on Wellington city's The Terrace, was designed by Anscombe in 1938, as a six-storey residential apartment building again situated on a corner site. The building was constructed in reinforced concrete, cast in situ, and is in a Streamline Moderne style, with some stylised classical elements. Its transformation from apartments to commercial space is also representative of changes at this end of The Terrace from the 1960s. Like the Olympus Apartments, the exterior remains largely unmodified.<sup>41</sup> The Franconia (Former) Apartments are Number 17/452 on the Wellington City Council District Plan, and the complex has a Category 2 listing with Heritage NZ.<sup>42</sup>

Designed by Victor Smith, the Sunhaven Flats on Oriental Parade were built in 1939-40. The building does not use the rounded corners but does use flat reinforced concrete slab walls, projecting balconies with curved corners and rolled steel hand-railing railings, two lines of triangular oriel windows on the west-facing elevation; and the flat roof – all hallmarks of the Moderne design.<sup>43</sup> Both Olympus and Sunhaven were constructed by the same builder – A. Lemmon. There have only been alterations recorded on Flat 7 (1994) and Flat 3 (2006).

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<sup>40</sup> Wellington City Council, "Belvedere."

<sup>41</sup> Wellington City Council, "Franconia (Former)."

<sup>42</sup> Wellington City Council.

<sup>43</sup> Doyle Judith, "Take a Moderne Walk in Oriental Bay."



## Evaluation Criteria

**A. Historic values: these relate to the history of a place and how it demonstrates important historical themes, events, people or experiences.**

**(i) Themes: the place is associated with important themes in history or patterns of development.**

The rise of the apartment building in Wellington began in the 1920s and the Oriental Bay area became a favoured location for such developments in the 1930s. Olympus Apartments is **significant** as it was designed and built in the first wave of Moderne apartments in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington **region's** architectural history. These align with the theme of A2.6C New Apartment Buildings.

**(ii) Events: the place has an association with an important event or events in local, regional or national history.**

N/A

**(iii) People: the place is associated with the life or works of an individual, group or organisation that has made a significant contribution to the district, region or nation**

Olympus Apartments were designed by **significant** New Zealand architect Edmund Anscombe, an innovative, **nationally** significant, and successful architect who embraced Moderne architecture and designed some of his best buildings in the idiom.

**(iv) Social: the place is associated with everyday experiences from the past and contributes to our understanding of the culture and life of the district, region or nation.**

N/A



***B. Physical values: these values relate to the physical evidence present.***

***(i) Archaeological: there is potential for archaeological investigation to contribute new or important information about the human history of the district, region or nation.***

N/A

***(ii) Architectural: the place is notable for its style, design, form, scale, materials, ornamentation, period, craftsmanship or other architectural values***

The Olympus Apartments symbolise a time in Wellington’s development as a modern city, looking towards Internationalism and Modernism. The apartments are an **influential** example of the first wave of multi-storied apartments and “flats” in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region. The principal architectural value of this building is its largely authentic appearance, both outside and in, with all four façades, some apartments and the main public spaces in near original condition. The building contributes **significantly** to the architectural texture of the area and its form responds to its position in the landscape and its surroundings, especially for its place at the end of a view shaft upon approach from the city. It is a **highly intact** example of the Moderne style.

***(iii) Townscape: 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 strong architectural form of Olympus Apartments in conjunction with its highly visible corner site and distinctive blue colour scheme gives it **significant** townscape presence in this part of Oriental Bay; the building makes a strong positive contribution to its setting.



**(iv) Groups: The place is part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use.**

Anscombe designed six art-deco/Moderne apartments during this time: Three, Belvedere, Franconia and Anscombe Flats, are all recognised for their heritage significance with two being listed by Heritage NZ and two on the Wellington City Council District Plan. Olympus Apartments is a **fine** example of this group.

**(v) Surroundings: the setting or context of the place contributes to an appreciation and understanding of its character, history and/or development.**

Olympus Apartments hold a prominent position within its surroundings. They are located on a corner section at a point where Oriental Parade bends and follows the bay, standing as a beacon when travelling along the Parade from central Wellington. The elevations to Oriental Parade and Grass Street are **significant** contributors to the view shaft along the Parade from the city.

**(vi) Scientific: The area or place has the potential to provide scientific information about the history of the district or region**

N/A

**(vii) Technological: the place provides evidence of the history of technological development; and/or demonstrates innovation or important methods of construction or design; and/or contains unusual construction materials.**

N/A

**(viii) Integrity: the significant physical values of the place have been largely unmodified. This includes the retention of important modifications and/or additions from later periods.**



Olympus Apartments are a **highly intact** example and little alteration has been undertaken on the building since its original construction.

**(ix) Age: the place is particularly old in the context of human occupation of the Wellington region.**

Designed in 1934, Olympus Apartments is an **influential** example of the first wave of apartments and “flats” in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region.

**C. Social values: these values relate to the meanings that a place has for a particular community or communities.**

**(i) Sentiment: the place has strong or special associations with a particular cultural group or community for spiritual, political, social, religious, ethnic, national, symbolic or commemorative reasons.**

N/A

**(ii) Recognition: the place is held in high public esteem for its historic heritage values, or its contribution to the sense of identity of a community, to the extent that if it was damaged or destroyed it would cause a sense of loss.**

Olympus Apartments’ social value lies heavily in the sense of place the apartments provide in the townscape. The building’s prominent position within the landscape acts as an architectural marker when travelling from the city end of Oriental Parade. Its removal would cause a sense of loss.

**(iii) Sense of place/ continuity: the place provides evidence of cultural or historical continuity, or contributes to a sense of place for a community**

The Olympus Apartments have a strong sense of place within the Bay area and Oriental Parade itself. The building and its style provide evidence for the evolution of architectural styles and urban living in this area. The building contributes strongly to the sense of historical continuity in this area.



***D. Tangata whenua values: the place is sacred or important to Māori for spiritual, cultural or historical reasons.***

N/A

***E. Rarity: the place is unique or rare within the district or region.***

Olympus Apartments have rarity value as one of only four apartment buildings that have survived as **highly intact** examples of the noted **national** architect's work. The other three are already recognised for their heritage significance with two being listed by Heritage NZ and two on the Wellington City Council District Plan.

***F. Representativeness: the place is a good example of its type, era or class it represents.***

Olympus Apartments are a **fine** example of the early Moderne apartment design by Edmund Anscombe for which he was so highly regarded. It is an **influential and highly intact** example of his work and is **representative** of a period of increasing urban density with architecture responding to the need of more housing within the city. It is **representative** of the shift to new construction materials, simpler forms and building styles which allowed a greater number of people to live and work within the city.

## Recommendations

Olympus Apartments has **significant** architectural value in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington region for its association with the theme of A2.6C New Apartment Buildings and has high townscape value and **significant** group value. Designed by Edmund Anscombe, a **significant** Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington architect of national importance, the apartments are designed in the Moderne style for which he was so highly regarded. It has **rarity** value as a **highly intact and fine** example of his work as well as a **fine** example of the early first wave of Moderne style apartments in the Te Whānganui-a-Tara Wellington **region**. It is recommended for addition to the District Plan Schedule of Historic Heritage Buildings.



The scheduling should protect the outward form, scale, and materials of the building, particularly the façades to Oriental Parade and Grass Street and include reference to the form and material of the timber windows.

It is recommended that an advisory note be included on the authentic character of the interior and should encompass the full legal boundaries of the site.

### Heritage Assessment Criteria

This building has been assessed against the Evaluation Criteria and found to be significant in the following heritage values: A,B,C,E,F.

<b>A: Historic values</b>	Significant
(i) Themes	Y
(ii) Events	
(iii) People	Y
(iv) Social	
<b>B: Physical values</b>	Significant
(i) Archaeological	
(ii) Architectural	Y
(iii) Townscape	Y
(iv) Group	Y
(v) Surroundings	Y
(vi) Scientific	
(vii) Technological	
(viii) Integrity	Y
(ix) Age	Y
<b>C: Social values</b>	Significant
(i) Sentiment	
(ii) Recognition	Y
(iii) Sense of place	
<b>D: Tangata whenua values</b>	
<b>E: Rarity</b>	Significant
<b>F: Representativeness</b>	Significant

## Extent of the Place

The extent of place includes the land described as Lot 4 DP 8869, Wellington Land District, and the building known as Olympus Apartments thereon. It should encompass the building's exterior form, scale, and materials.

### Non-heritage fabric / exclusions



N/A

## Sources and References

- “262-264 Oriental Parade, 11 Flats.” Wellington: Wellington City Council Archives, B19416, 1939.
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- Bowron, Greg. “Anscombe, Edmund.” Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 2013. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4a17/anscombe-edmund>.
- Council, Wellington City. “Olympus Apartments 280 Oriental Parade PFG Summary Report 2020.” Wellington, 2020.
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- Kelly, M. “Art Deco in the Capital Heritage Trail.” Wellington: Wellington City Council, 2005. <https://wellington.govt.nz/-/media/recreation/enjoy-the-outdoors/walks-and-walkways/files/heritage-trails/artdeco.pdf>.
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- . “Belvedere.” Wellington: Wellington City Council, 2017.  
<https://www.wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/151-300/204-belvedere>.
- . “Franconia (Former).” Wellington: Wellington City Council, 2016.  
<https://wellingtoncityheritage.org.nz/buildings/451-600/452-former-franconia-house>.



# Appendices

Appendix 1 Comparative analysis

Appendix 2 Wellington Thematic Heritage Study 2013

Appendix 3 Records(s) of title, Deeds register and Gazette notice information



## Appendix 1 Comparative analysis

Anscombe Designed Apartments/Flats				
Place name	Address/location/NZTM	Heritage Listing or recognition of significance	Photographs	Analysis
Anscombe Flats	212 Oriental Parade, Wellington	<a href="https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1333">https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1333</a> Heritage NZ Listing 1333 Category 2 WCC District Plan 212	 <p><i>Anscombe Flats, Copyright Anscombe Ltd, taken by Kevin Campbell, 2009.<sup>44</sup></i></p>	Anscombe Flats is named for Edmund Anscombe. He bought the land in 1933, at the age of 60 and by then widowed, and planned to sell the apartments and live on the top floor. Anscombe designed the building in 1934 and it was completed in 1937 (two years earlier than Olympus). Anscombe lived there until his death in 1948. This is one of three celebrated apartment buildings he designed in Wellington. The Moderne style of the building is well demonstrated in the rounded corners and moulded window hoods. <sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> "Anscombe Flats."

<sup>45</sup> Kelly, "Art Deco in the Capital Heritage Trail."

				<p>Both the Anscombe and Olympus are four storeyed apartments, in the Moderne style with rounded walls or curved windows, built of the same materials. There are two apartments per floor at Olympus Apartments and one apartment per floor at Anscombe Flats. Both have had very little modifications since their original build.</p>
Belvedere	82 Majoribanks Street, Cnr Austin Street, Mt Victoria, Wellington	WCC District Plan 21/204	 <p><i>Image: WCC – Charles Collins, 2015<sup>46</sup></i></p>	<p>Belvedere is another example of the streamlined Moderne style, designed by Anscombe. It is a poured in-situ concrete building and was constructed in 1937–1938. It features curved corners and a strong horizontal emphasis.</p> <p>Like Olympus Apartments, it has each flat occupying the width of the building. The interior walls are also characterised by curves, and being made of concrete, there have been relatively few changes, although the</p>

<sup>46</sup> Wellington City Council, “Belvedere.”



				<p>kitchens and bathrooms have been modernised. Otherwise, other joinery and fittings are original.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>It is a good example of high-density inner-city housing of the 1930s, and in particular one that made proper provision for the garaging of motor cars.</p>
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<sup>47</sup> Wellington City Council.



<p>Franconia</p>	<p>136 The Terrace, Wellington</p>	<p><a href="https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1364">https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1364</a></p> <p>Heritage NZ Listing 1364 Category 2</p> <p>WCC District Plan 17/452</p>	 <p><i>Franconia (Former) Photo by Charles Collins, 2015, Wellington City Council.</i></p>	<p>Franconia, on The Terrace, Wellington, was designed by Anscombe in 1938, as a six-storey residential apartment building again situated on a corner site. The building was constructed in reinforced concrete, cast in-situ, and is in a Streamline Moderne style, with some stylised classical elements. Its transformation from apartments to commercial space is also representative of changes at this end of The Terrace from the 1960s. Like the Olympus Apartments, the exterior remains largely unmodified. The Franconia Apartments (former) are Number 17/452 on the Wellington City Council District Plan and the complex has a Category 2 listing with Heritage NZ.<sup>48</sup></p>
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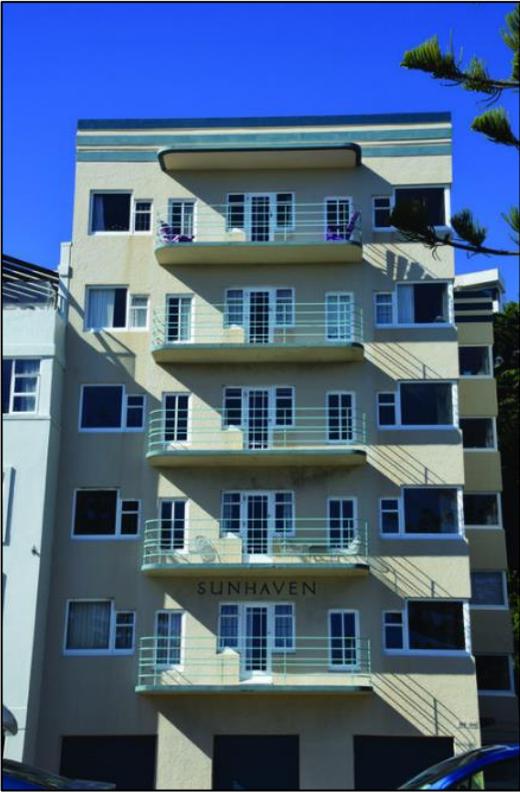
<sup>48</sup> Heritage New Zealand, "Franconia."





*Franconia (Former) Photo by Charles Collins, 2015, Wellington City Council.*



<p>Sunhaven Flats</p>	<p>262 Oriental Parade, Wellington</p>		 <p><i>Sunhaven Apartments</i><sup>49</sup></p>	<p>Sunhaven Flats were designed by architect Victor Smith for owner Stewart in 1939-40.<sup>50</sup> The builder was A Lemmon.</p> <p>This building features flat reinforced concrete slab walls; projecting balconies with curved corners and rolled steel hand-railing; triangular oriel windows on the west-facing elevation and the flat roof of the Moderne design.<sup>51</sup></p> <p>Both are four storeyed and in the Moderne, simple style with rounded walls or curved windows, built of the same materials.</p> <p>Both Olympus and Sunhaven were built by the same builder and have had minimal alterations over time.</p>
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<sup>49</sup> Doyle Judith, "Take a Moderne Walk in Oriental Bay."

<sup>50</sup> "262-264 Oriental Parade, 11 Flats."

<sup>51</sup> Doyle Judith, "Take a Moderne Walk in Oriental Bay."





## Appendix 2 Wellington Thematic Heritage Study 2013

Refer to the Wellington Thematic Heritage Study 2013

<https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/services/community-and-culture/heritage/files/thematic-heritage-study.pdf>

	Select the themes & subthemes which apply to the place	Yes / some (add explanation)
<b>A2.6</b>	<b>Return to city living/ apartment dwelling</b>	
A2.6C	New apartment buildings	Yes. The principal architectural value of this building is its largely authentic appearance, both outside and in, with all four façades, some apartments and the main public spaces in near original condition. It is the work of Edmund Anscombe, a major Wellington architect, and in the Moderne style for which he was so highly regarded. It has rarity value as a nearly intact example of his work.

## Appendix 3 Supplementary images



*Edmund Anscombe photographed in Dunedin with his entry in the design competition for Parliament buildings c 1911.<sup>52</sup>*



*3D Model of the Olympus Apartments,  
<https://3dwarehouse.sketchup.com/model/10ae0e646d517b0ec3db36d31b62142/Olympus-Building>*

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<sup>52</sup> "Edmund Anscombe."





*Judith Doyle, Bay View newsletter 71, May 2018*



# Appendix 4 Records(s) of title

CT WN347/222

**REGISTER**

NEW ZEALAND.

Reference: Land Transfer (Compulsory Registration of Titles) Act, 1924.  
Deeds Index. Vol. 1 Folio 426  
Application No. C. 4975  
Probates No. 127212 (234/1) and No. 127213 (234/7)



Register-book, Vol. 347, folio 222

**CERTIFICATE OF TITLE UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT.**  
**LIMITED AS TO TITLE.**

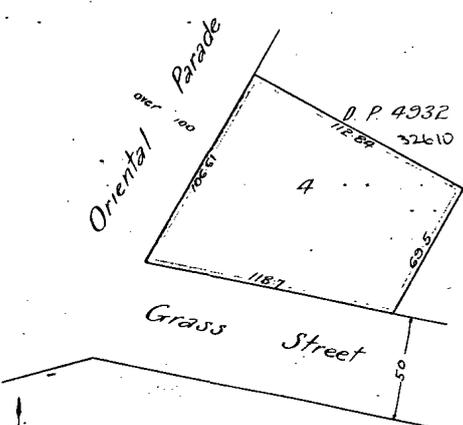
This Certificate, dated the Twenty-sixth day of March one thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine under the hand and seal of the District Land Registrar of the Land Registration District of WELLINGTON Witnesseth that WALTER ELLIS BETHUNE an Auctioneer DAVID NORMAN WILKINSON a Joiner and SYDNEY JACKSON CASTLE a Solicitor all of Wellington are

seised of an estate in fee-simple (subject to such reservations, restrictions, encumbrances, liens, and interests as are notified by memorial under written or endorsed hereon, subject also to any existing right of the Crown to take and lay off roads under the provisions of any Act of the General Assembly of New Zealand) in the land hereinafter described, as the same is delineated by the plan hereon bordered green, be the several admeasurements a little more or less, that is to say: All that parcel of land containing FIFTEEN AND NINE TENTHS PERCHES more or less, situate in the City of Wellington being part of Section 426 on the Public Map of the Town of Wellington and being also Lot 4 on Deposited Plan No. 8869.



  
 Assistant District Land Registrar.

Order in Council No. 625 exempting Grass Street from Section 117 of "The Public Works Act, 1908" SUBJECT to conditions as to building.



Area 0 0 15 3  
Scale 40 Links to an inch

EQUIVALENT METRIC AREA IS 462 m<sup>2</sup>

*Transmission 23514 to David Norman Wilkinson, and Sydney Jackson Castle, both, above named, as survivors. Entered 21<sup>st</sup> May 1929 at 11.39 am.*

*This Certificate is no longer limited as to Title - Entered 21<sup>st</sup> January 1929 at 11.39 am.*

*Mortgage 234288 David Norman Wilkinson and Sydney Jackson Castle to The South British European Staff Provident Fund Trust Board. Produced 21<sup>st</sup> June 1927 at 11.55 am.*

*Transmission 235158 David Norman Wilkinson and Sydney Jackson Castle to The Guardian Trust and Executors Company of New Zealand Limited. Produced 10<sup>th</sup> September 1927 at 11.55 am.*

*Mortgage 235205 to The Guardian Trust and Executors Company of New Zealand Limited to Amy Burgess Evans. Produced 19<sup>th</sup> November 1927 at 11.55 am.*

CONTINUED

