

HERITAGE STATEMENT

68-76 MANCHESTER STREET – COMMERCIAL BUILDING



PHOTOGRAPHS 2008 – BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER SHOP FRONT RESTORATION (RIGHT)

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The building located at 68-76 Manchester Street is listed in the Christchurch City Plan as a Group 3 protected heritage item.

Cecil House was constructed in 1877 has been thought to be designed by local architects Samuel Farr. More recent research indicates that William Widdowson, a Christchurch builder and developer could be responsible for the design of the building. The building is located on the corner of Manchester and St Asaph Street and appears to have been constructed in two stages, with the north portion added later.

Widdowson owned the site from as early as 1862 and the property remained in the Widdowson family until 1943. The smaller two bay section of the building (68-68a Manchester Street) which is subject to this grant was subdivided from the rest of the site in 1943.

William Widdowson occupied part of the building until 1907 when he leased it out in its entirety. Nathan and Co. auctioneers occupied the building in 1880. Adam Curties & Co., well known cycle merchants occupied the building c1891. The two bay shop housed a tobacconist, Arthur Francis, from c1883-1912, and continued as a tobacconist's shop into the 1930s. The other little shop housed a confectioner in its early years, and from 1910, by bootmaker Albert Burmister.

A notable long term occupant (1943-1972) of the corner section of the building was A. R. Harris Ltd., major New Zealand importers and distributors of radios and electrical appliances. The company operated their manufacturing unit in the building until 1967. Motorcycle dealers Whiting & Waltho purchased the building from A R Harris. It was during their ownership in the 1970s that the parapets were removed. A small section of parapet remains over the service way between the two bay shop fronting Manchester Street and the section fronting the corner of Manchester and St Asaph Streets.

The two little shops at 68-68a Manchester Street become one with a literal hole in the wall and became the 'Hole in the Wall' restaurant. In more recent times the shops were used for garment manufacturing, retail or food outlets on the ground floor and a massage parlour upstairs.

The shop fronts at 68-68s Manchester Street were altered in the 1960s, however a significant portion of the original fabric remained in order to inform its recent reconstruction.

The shops are designed in the commercial classical style, with a regular spacing of paired arched windows, and classical architectural embellishment.

The building is designed in the style of commercial classicism that was popular with a number of buildings and other hotels constructed around this time, including the nearby Cecil House, a listed building in the City Plan. The restored shop front at 68-68s Manchester Street is one of a number of older shop fronts remaining in the Manchester Street area. Surviving intact shop fronts are now quite rare in the central city.

The corner location gives the building some visual prominence and landmark significance, and its site on Manchester Street continues to be a major traffic thoroughfare.

Archaeological significance is possible on this site as pre-1900 human activity is likely to have occurred. Therefore the site has potential to hold archaeological evidence.

REFERENCES:

CCC heritage files and plans

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