

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 90**

FORMER BEATH'S DEPARTMENT STORE - in respect of the following features only: [a] The Cashel Street facade above the veranda level [including the parapet, the multi paned windows above the veranda level] and being approximately 18.8 metres from the northwest corner of the site. [b] The Colombo Street facade above the veranda level [including the parapet, the multi paned windows above the veranda level] being approximately 24 metres in length from the northwest corner of the site and the 1933 building facade return on the south end [being approximately 1.5 metres in length]. [c] The existing [1933] street veranda on Cashel and Colombo Streets including the diagonal metal supports, decorative copper fascias, metal soffit linings and decorative 'flower' bosses. [d] The "Starmart" Colombo Street shop front being the bronzed metal sections, diagonally intersected fan light, the decorative metal panels and metal framed exterior light. [e] The 2 metal display cases on the granite faced columns. - **682-690 COLOMBO STREET, 146, 146 (A & B), 148 CASHEL STREET, CHRISTCHURCH**



PHOTOGRAPH: M. VAIR-PIOVA, 05/12/2014

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.

The former Beath's Department Store has high historical and social significance as a reminder of a company that was a major feature of the Christchurch retail landscape for more than 120 years, and located in this building for over half a century. The building also represents the central role that department stores played in the day-to-day life of the city through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The business that became Beath's had its origins in men's outfitters and drapers Kirby & Co, founded by Oscar Kirby in Cashel Street in 1860. Kirby took George Low Beath into partnership in 1866. After Kirby's death in 1868, George Beath took his brother-in-law Frank Malcolm into partnership, and the small men's outfitters diversified into women's wear. By the time Malcolm retired in 1896, Beath's had become one of the largest department stores in New Zealand. After Beath himself retired in 1901, G. L. Beath & Co was reconstituted as a limited liability company. The business continued to prosper through the early and mid-twentieth century. Known for the quality of its goods and service, Beath's found its niche in the Christchurch market place as a mid-level retailer – below Ballantyne's but above Hay's and Farmer's. The store evolved over time to reflect trends and the public's changing tastes – for example opening a coffee shop, record bar and New Zealand's first self service toy shop in the basement in 1960. The city's many department stores (more than a dozen in the peak period of the mid-twentieth 20th century) once dominated retailing in the city – as such stores did across the western world – and their owners, managers and directors were amongst Christchurch's leading citizens. In January 1954 the elaborate Beath's tearoom, regarded as the city's finest, was selected as the venue for a series of civic banquets to welcome the young Queen Elizabeth and her consort.

The societal changes and economic challenges of the 1970s and 1980s however spelt the end of many established retailers and their traditional modes of retail. In this respect Beath's was no exception, and went into relative decline in its latter years. In 1977 G. L. Beath & Co merged with neighbouring retailer DIC (The Drapery and General Importing Co.) in the Beath's building as DIC Beath's, later shortened to just DIC. In 1987 Dunedin-based retailer Arthur Barnett Ltd took over DIC. A decade later the Arthur Barnett store shifted into revamped premises next door. The landmark former Beath's store was redeveloped in 1999-2000 as *The Crossing*, a mix of shops, foodcourt, *Discovery* school and bus interchange.

The building sustained moderate damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011, and remains vacant. Prior to the earthquakes, a number of buildings relating to historic department store type retailing remained in the city. Of these only Beath's, Ballantyne's, and part of the facades of Farmers' and AJ White's are still extant.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.

The former Beath's Department Store has cultural significance as a reminder of the central place of department stores in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Christchurch retailing, and the role they consequently had in influencing taste and habits. As large and hierarchical workplaces, the stores also had their particular staff cultures, with their own rituals and celebrations.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.

The former Beath's Department Store has high architectural and aesthetic significance as a substantial inter-war Stripped Georgian Revival commercial building by the prominent Christchurch architectural practice of A. & S. Luttrell (Luttrell Brothers). Its significance has been elevated since the Canterbury Earthquakes as it remains one of few pre-war commercial buildings in the central city.

Beath's expanded, rebuilt and refurbished its premises on many occasions between 1860 and the late 1970s to reflect its requirements and aspirations. In 1878 the store built one of Christchurch's earliest three-storey commercial buildings on its Cashel Street site. At the turn of the century the firm expanded into a new building to the east. Then in 1915 the 1878 building was replaced with a landmark six-storey structure, incorporating the latest retail concepts from overseas including a lift, a top-floor tearoom and a roof garden.

By the late 1920s the directors of Beath's had decided that the jumble of buildings that accommodated their business no longer effectively met their requirements. In 1927 they purchased the block of old buildings (including the A1 Hotel) between the existing department store and Colombo Street with the intention of carrying out a large-scale redevelopment. In October 1929 it was announced that a very large five or six storey building was to be built across the wider site. The Great Depression intervened however, and what eventually transpired was a scaled-back version of the original concept, with only three floors and the earlier Beath's buildings still standing. The redevelopment had been completed by mid 1933.

The long-established firm of Luttrell Brothers, designers of the new Beath's store, had been at the forefront of commercial architecture in the city since the Edwardian period. One of the young architects charged with executing the Beath's commission, Jack Hollis, was sent to the United States to research the latest innovations in department store design. The building he and colleague Alan Manson subsequently produced for Beath's reflected Hollis's American experiences in both planning and ornamentation. Particularly novel was the large open, easily adaptable, floor plate. In terms of style, the architects decided upon a simplified Georgian Revival for the prestigious commission. The Georgian Revival had been introduced to Christchurch by architects such as Wood and Guthrie in the years following WWI and appealed particularly to the conservative establishment as it provided the geometric functionality desired of modern architecture without sacrificing historical precedent. In Christchurch however, employment of the style was limited primarily to domestic design. Consequently, with the possible exception of Cecil Wood's 1926 Cook and Ross building in Victoria Square, Beath's would prove to be much the largest commercial example of Georgian Revival in the city. It may also have been the only occasion that the practise executed a building in this style. Beath's proved to be one of the last commissions by the firm, which was wound up following Sydney Luttrell's death in 1932. The central city was once rich with Luttrell Brothers commercial buildings; since the earthquakes however, only two or three (including Beath's) remain.

As the store façade exhibits a characteristically Georgian simplicity, the defining feature of the building is its Georgian-style multi-paned fenestration - which provides the large block with rhythm and verticality. On the shorter Cashel Street elevation, the vertical bands of windows are evenly spaced; along the longer Colombo Street elevation they are grouped into three sets of three. As both façades step into the chamfered corner, there are two bands of narrower windows. All window bands are crowned with vermiculated keystones and a parapet frieze with a rose motif; between the bands and the diagonally-glazed shop top-lights

is a similar frieze featuring lion-head bosses that anchor the canopy struts. The rose frieze is reiterated in copper on the canopy fascia. Below the canopy, the original shop front (which remains only in part) featured the typical Art Deco materials of bronzed metal and polished stone.

Internally, the most significant surviving features are a red and white marble stair, and the Georgian-style plaster ceilings, supported on square columns with Art Deco-style acanthus capitals. When the building opened, one of its major features was a vast green and gold panelled tearoom that occupied most of the first floor and could seat more than five hundred. This was demolished in 1957 to provide more retail space.

When the earlier Beath's building to the east was eventually demolished in 1973, the 1933 building was extended by several bays in a modern interpretation of the original design. This was in turn demolished in the 1999-2000 *Crossing* redevelopment, which also saw significant internal alteration to the interior of the 1933 building, and the addition of two floors and an air-bridge.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.

The former Beath's Department Store has high craftsmanship significance for the quality of its surviving decorative features, particularly the plaster ceilings, the canopy detail, and the bronzed metal and granite shopfronts. These typical interwar commercial finishes are a rarity in Christchurch since the earthquakes.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.

The former Beath's Department Store has contextual significance on its site as part of a wider inner-city retail context. The building is sited on a prominent corner (known for decades as Beath's Corner) at the intersection of what was Christchurch's main transport artery – Colombo Street – and the traditionally prime retail precinct of Cashel and High Streets. The building has particular contextual significance in relation to the interwar façade to the south and the Edwardian façade to the east – both of which were historically part of the Beath's complex - and to Ballantyne's department store across the road, the only traditional department store still operating in the central city. The Beath's building is located on a large parcel which also includes a modern building to the east. As not only one of the few remaining heritage buildings in the central city, but also one of the few substantial buildings remaining, the profile of the Beath's building has increased since the earthquakes. It therefore has considerable landmark significance.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social

historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.

The former Beath's Department Store is of archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred prior to 1900. The store is located in an area which contained commercial activity from the earliest period of European settlement. The A1 Hotel was a feature of the site from 1857 until it was demolished to make way for the construction of the Beath's building.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The former Beath's Department Store has high overall heritage significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The building has historical and social significance as a reminder of a significant retailer in the city and of the central role that department stores once played in the city's retail environment. The building has cultural significance as a reminder of the role that department stores played in developing popular taste and habits, and also of the large and distinctive workplaces that each provided. The building has high architectural and aesthetic significance as an important inter-war Georgian Revival building designed by the prominent Christchurch architectural practise of Luttrell Brothers. The building was one of the last by the firm, and is now one of the last remaining of the firm's once substantial portfolio in the city. The building has high craftsmanship significance for the use of materials and the quality of its detail and finish. The building has contextual significance in relation to the other remaining Beath's façades, and to the historic retail precinct of Cashel and High Streets which also includes neighbouring Ballantyne's. The former Beath's Department Store is of archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred prior to 1900.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage File *680-694 Colombo St - Beaths*

Beaths Centennial 1860-1960 Beath & Co Ltd, 1960.

Historic place # 3094 – Heritage NZ List
<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details?id=3094>

Ann McEwan *The Architecture of A.E. and E.S. Luttrell in Tasmania and New Zealand* MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1988.

REPORT FINALISED: 09/02/2015, 30/03/2017

PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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