

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Belcher's Corner Building

Project File No: 1124

Address: 141-149 Ryrie Street Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1926

Integrity: Moderate-High

Significance Level: C (Local)

Photograph No: 03.15

Survey Date: March 2002



History

This site at 141-149 Ryrie Street, Geelong, on the north-west corner of Ryrie and Moorabool Streets, is located on Allotment no. 18, Section 35, of the Geelong Town Plan of 1858. This land was originally owned by W. Timms.

Construction of the building for owner Norman Belcher, auctioneer and estate agent, was commenced in the latter half of 1926 by the successful building tenderer, J.C. Taylor & Sons of Geelong. They had also built the adjacent Hopetoun Chambers 35 years earlier in 1891 for Norman's father, George F. Belcher. The project architect for the new building was I.G. Anderson, who had designed the Geelong West Town Hall in 1923. Although Anderson had originally envisaged a four-storey building, a less-preferred 3-storey option resulted, the first floor level being integrated with the Hopetoun building to form a uniform floorspace.

Constructed predominantly of masonry and concrete, with a roof structure covered in a pressed metal membrane, the building remains today essentially as original, except for the addition of an external steel staircase at the rear. The investment building has undergone many changes of ownership. First auctioned in 1938 to an unidentified buyer, the property was again sold in the mid 1970s to Martin Stuart Pty. Ltd. of 133 Nicholson Street,

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Footscray. This company retained the property for approximately 10 years until 1985, before it was sold to Danetha Pty. Ltd., 484 Glenhuntly Road, Elsternwick. A less than 50% occupancy rate and maintenance costs again forced the building onto the market in 1991.

Description

The site at 141-149 Ryrie Street, Geelong, is dominated by the former Belcher's Corner building, which forms an important landmark at this central, major intersection of Moorabool and Ryrie Streets. This building has visual connections with other significant corner buildings, notably the former T & G Building (1934), former Bank of New South Wales building (1938), and the former Mercantile Bank building (1888).

The two storey, rendered brick and concrete, conservative interwar modern Renaissance styled building, is characterised by regularly arranged first floor window bays which are given further Classical emphasis on the south (Ryrie Street) facade by the colonnade of square Corinthian pilasters. Above the pilasters and window is an entablature which reads "Belcher's Corner" on the Ryrie Street facade and "MCMXXI" on the Moorabool Street facade. The entablature is also adorned with roundels.

The first floor window openings are strikingly elongated to provide a prominent Renaissance composition. These steel framed 12 paned windows with hopper sashes are early, and have blind panels above. The panels outside the pilaster colonnade are embellished with decorative sculptural motifs.

The ground and first floors are separated by a plain band and slight projection of the ground floor facades. The ground floor has early three paned steel framed highlights above the cantilevered verandah with introduced signage. These highlights are punctuated by introduced air conditioning units and fans. The ground floor shopfronts have largely been altered, although the composition and form of some of the metal framed shopfronts with ingoes may be early. There is substantial inappropriate signage on the window shopfronts.

Surmounting the building is a broadly projecting cornice and a parapet, with alternating solid panels and void.

Internally, the upper floor largely retains its early office layout and detailing, including the corridor with its modern Renaissance timber joinery (architraves, doorheads, transoms and timber doors, and timber staircase).

Statement of Cultural Significance

The Belcher's Corner building, 141-149 Ryrie Street, Geelong, has significance as a legacy of the commercial developments in Geelong during the interwar (1920s-40s) period and particularly with Norman Belcher, a member of the prominent business family whose father George F. Belcher had built the adjacent Hopetoun Chambers building in 1891. Constructed in 1926 to a design by I.G. Anderson, the building has further significance for its landmark corner situation, with visual connections to other significant interwar and Victorian commercial buildings.

The Belcher's Corner building, 141-149 Ryrie Street, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. It demonstrates original design qualities of a conservative interwar modern Renaissance style. These qualities include the regularly arranged first floor window bays with a colonnade of square Corinthian pilasters on the Ryrie Street facade, entablature which reads "Belcher's Corner" on the Ryrie Street facade and "MCMXXI" on the Moorabool Street facade, entablature roundels, steel framed 12 paned first floor windows with hopper sashes and blind panels above (the panels outside the pilaster colonnade

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having decorative sculptural motifs), slight projection of the ground floor facades, three paned steel framed ground floor highlights, cantilevered verandah, shopfront composition and form, (including the metal framed shopfronts with ingoes), broadly projecting cornice and the parapets with alternating solid panels and voids. Internally, the significant features include the office layout and detailing, particularly the modern Renaissance timber joinery (architraves, doorheads, transoms and timber doors, and timber staircase).

The Belcher's Corner building also has a notable townscape relationship with three other prominent buildings forming the intersection of the two principal Geelong thoroughfares of Moorabool and Ryrie Streets. The building complements the architecture of the structures visually connected to it, notably the former T & G Building (1934), former Mercantile Bank (1888) and former Bank of New South Wales (1938).

The Belcher's Corner building, 141-149 Ryrie Street, is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with commercial developments in Geelong during the interwar (1920s-1940s) period. In particular, this building has associations with Norman Belcher, auctioneer and estate agent, who had the building constructed in 1926 to a design by I.G. Anderson, architect, the contractor being J.C. Taylor and Sons. Belcher was a member of a prominent and established family in Geelong, with his father, George F. Belcher, having built the neighbouring Hopetoun Chambers in 1891.

Overall, the Belcher's Corner building, 141-149 Ryrie Street, is of LOCAL significance.

References

M. Beraldo, 'Studio 4 Conservation Project - Belcher's Corner, unpublished manuscript, School of Architecture & Building, Deakin University, 1991.

Beraldo used the following sources:

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Geelong City Rate Book, Barwon Ward, 1938.

D. Rowe (Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd), 'Geelong West Town Hall: Heritage Report with Recommendations for Future Development', prepared for the Geelong Ethnic Communities Council, August-September 2001.

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