

Wanganui Bowling Club



Location: 51 Nelson Street, Wanganui Central, Whanganui
Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga List Number: nil

Physical Description: The Bowling Club building is a two storied, brick building with a largely 'T' shaped plan. It has a symmetrical façade facing the bowling greens with a wide, shallow pitched, central gabled wall projecting towards the greens and flying gabled bays at 45 degrees on the south east and north east corners either side of the wide gable. The entry to the club building is through an arched opening between the angled and main gabled walls, with a corresponding arched opening on the opposite side behind which are the stairs. Originally the three arched openings on the ground floor of the projecting gable were open, but these have now been glazed, as has the once open verandah above. Behind the arched openings on the ground floor are the changing rooms and a bar, with a similar layout above.

Other known names:

Current Use: Bowling Club

Former Uses: Bowling Club

Heritage Status:

District Plan Class: Class C

Register Item Number:

346

Building Type:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional
- Agriculture
- Other

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological
- Cultural

Thematic Context

- Early Settlement
- Residential
- Industry
- Agricultural
- Commerce
- Transport
- Civic/Admin
- Health
- Education
- Religion
- Recreation
- Community
- Memorials
- Military

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Architectural Style: Queen Anne **Date of Construction:** 1913-14

Materials: Brick, timber joinery, pressed metal in the gables, timber weatherboards to the verandah, leaded coloured glass roundels, Marseille tile roofing.

Registered owner: Wanganui Bowling Club Inc.

Legal Description: (a) LOT 24 DP 34967
 (b) Rating Apportionment - Club House
 (c) Rating Apportionment - Balance Of Land

History: The Wanganui Bowling Club was formed in 1886 and relocated to this site in 1914. The key heritage feature among the club's facilities its substantial two-storey brick pavilion, was built at that time.

The *Wanganui Herald* of 17 December 1886 (p. 2) reported on the opening of the Wanganui Bowling Club's first green the previous evening. This was Wanganui's first real bowling green, although previously the game had been played on private lawns in the town. The lengthy account of the event, and the concert afterwards, indicates that a good future was anticipated for the club and its grounds.

However, by 1904, pressures had developed in terms of how to accommodate the increasing numbers of bowlers. John T. Stewart of Aramoho (the designer of Palmerston North, Feilding and other towns, and of major civil engineering projects) commented on this dilemma in a letter of apology for non-attendance to the Club's Annual Meeting (due to ill-health) that year. Stewart wrote that: *"Our club is getting about as numerous as the green will accommodate, and in view of the growing popularity of bowling in Wanganui, it may be suggested that the club might acquire an additional green with a view to increased membership. The chief difficulty is the site and getting the ground. Might I suggest the Collegiate School Estate, where perhaps a long lease of a suitable acre might be got."*

Stewart then went on to explain that this method would confine the club's outlay to only the formation of the new green, and that a small committee should be appointed to enquire into it. Considerable discussion followed the reading out of the letter at the meeting. The club then had 95 members, whereas there were only sufficient rinks for 56 people. One suggestion was that they limit membership to 100 people – and in the end the matter was to be held over until

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the following year.¹

The *Wanganui Herald* of 5th February 1914, described how the club's original pavilion had been doubled and then trebled in size, before having a second storey added, due to the increasing number of members.

When it was established, the Wanganui Bowling Club had been only the third such club in the North Island. Its original grounds were in St. Hill Street. As the game grew in popularity, other bowling clubs opened at St. John's Hill and Gonville. Finally, the St. Hill Street property grew so valuable due to its close proximity to the heart of town, that when a very good offer was made for the land, it was sold and the proceeds used to establish the new grounds and pavilion on the Nelson Street site.² Meanwhile, the new owner of the old St. Hill Street site, the Wanganui Club, proceeded with plans to build its own new "modern and commodious club-house" on the old bowling green. The old bowling green pavilion, however, found a new purpose as the accommodation for the engine and dynamo room (for providing electricity to the new building), the washhouse, and for the electrical gear.³

Just prior to this time, Wanganui Collegiate School, which J.T. Stewart had referred to in 1904 as a possible source of a new site, was undergoing its own transition. Between 1909 and 1914, it had undergone a complete change of buildings, the introduction of a boarding house system, "*a different style of Headmastership, and a Board self-conscious of its powers and authoritative in its exercise of them.*" The school board had only recently discovered that under the Church of England Trusts Act, 1913, it now had the "*power to grant leases without perpetual reference to the Supreme Court.*"⁴ *The Act had given trustees under the Act, the power to grant perpetually renewable "Glasgow Leases" – these being where land could be leased for a set period (for example, 21 years), and able to be renewed indefinitely. However "If the lessee does not renew the lease, the rights of the lessee revert to the lessor including all the improvements*

¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 July 1904, p. 2

² Unsourced newspaper clipping supplied by the Wanganui Bowling Club, but probably from the *Wanganui Herald*, and certainly published during the days immediately before the new grounds were officially opened – but after the first planned opening was rained out. Therefore most likely 2nd to 4th February 1914.

³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1 May 1914, p. 4, 26 February 1915, p. 3. Messrs. Hughes, Allomes and Tarrant also decorated this building.

⁴ A Sangster, *Pathway to Establishment: The history of Wanganui Collegiate School* (Wanganui, 1985), p. 67

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to the land with no compensation paid to the lessee.”⁵ However, the club grounds do not appear to have come under the Glasgow Lease system until 1933, when financial pressures resulting from the Great Depression impacted on the club.⁶

The approximately 1¼ acres of land selected for the new bowling club grounds had been Wanganui Collegiate’s cricket field. The land did not yet have a direct street access, although the Dublin Street extension and Nelson Street were in the process of being formed then. The land had once been a swamp, and was not yet served by the town’s drainage system. Thus it had required deep excavation to remove rubbish and logs, before the soil was built up again. The first green had been sown in August 1913, and the second one six weeks later. The cost of this work was £1,013.13.6, plus £136.7.10 for fencing and £67.14s for kerbing.⁷

The new pavilion was entrusted to two club members, architects Thos. H. Battle and Leopold J. Atkinson. The two-storey brick building that resulted, cost £1,272.13.0, along with a £78 architect’s fee. The job was put up for tender in September 1913⁸, and the successful contractors were fellow bowlers, Messrs. Ashwell & McAneny – who had previously built the assembly hall at Wanganui Girls’ College in 1910, and who rebuilt George & Kersley’s three-storey ‘The Economic’ clothing and drapery shop later in 1914.⁹

The new greens and pavilion were due to be officially opened on Saturday, 31st January 1914¹⁰, however, the event was rained out and they were finally opened on Thursday, 5th February 1914.¹¹ The following day, the local newspapers described in detail the event and the new pavilion. The pavilion occupied the quarter-acre of the property, while the two greens occupied the remaining acre, along with their surrounding walks and gardens. The pavilion is at one end of the property, with one green directly in front of it, and the other “beyond” it.

⁵ Scotland.com: ‘Glasgow Lease’ defined as a New Zealand term: <http://www.scotland.com/forums/history/17176-glasgow-lease.html>

⁶ Wanganui Bowling Club Inc., *Wanganui Bowling Club Inc: 100 years, 1886-1986* (Wanganui, 1986), p. 9

⁷ Wanganui Bowling Club Inc., *Wanganui Bowling Club Inc: 100 years, 1886-1986* (Wanganui, 1986), p. 8

⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10 September 1913, p. 7

⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 August 1910, p. 4; 20 January 1914, p. 4, 30 October 1914, p. 7 & 29 December 1919, p. 5(col. 1) showing their bowling activities.

¹⁰ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 January 1914, p. 7

¹¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6 February 1914, p. 3

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The *Wanganui Chronicle* of 6 February 1914 (p. 3) stated that: *"The imposing pavilion stands at the western end of the green, occupying a ground space of 2,600 square feet. It is constructed of brick, with an asbestos tiled roof, with an octagonal structure at each end, surmounted by two gables running at angles of 45 (degrees) to the main front, between which there is a spacious verandah with (a) balcony above, surmounted by a large gable, the latter adding greatly to the artistic effect of the whole. We must here compliment the designers on this part of the structure, and we can well understand the delightful times that will be spent here at the afternoon tea adjournment. The upper balcony and tea-room is reached by a set of spiral stairs, built of concrete; being of easy grade, one goes to the top without any apparent effort.*

"The tea-room or social hall at the top is a delightful room, 46ft. by 22 ft. It is finished with what might be called an open timber roof; the ceiling half way up the centre portion being flat, and the balance to the top of the wall sloping to the angle of the roof. The whole is panelled and coloured cream, with rimu facings. The walls are of terracotta colour, and the dado, about 5ft. high, formed of rimu. The windows are glazed with clear and Flemish glass of art tints. Adjoining this room there is a kitchen, with gas and water laid on, and a committee room, 15ft. by 12ft. The walls of the tea-room are decorated with pictures of teams of by-gone days, past victors, and guests of the club. Off the balcony there is a ladies' room. It is evident from this that it is the wish of the club to make this a rendezvous for the fair sex, who, whilst visiting the bowlers, will be able to view both the play on the green and the play on the Wanganui Lawn Tennis Club's courts adjoining.

"The dressing-room, 45ft. by 23ft., or locker room, is on the ground floor, immediately under the social room, and is fitted up with lockers for holding bowls, clothing, etc., accommodation being provided for the property of every member. The lockers have panelled doors, which lend an effect of wood panelling to the room, which is charming. The conveniences have not been overlooked, everything being completed in a most up-to-date style."

The various subcontractors were also named in the report. These were W. James (brick-laying and plastering), D. Gellatly (plumbing), J. Arnold (drains), and Hughes, Allomes and Tarrant (painters).

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The Club's President, Louis Cohen, had duly declared the new green open for play, in front of a "big muster of bowlers" and a "large number of ladies graced the proceedings with their presence." His sister, Miss Cohen, then "threw the first jack." The pavilion and greens were virtually debt free by the time of opening.¹²

Since that time, the building has been modernised and strengthened, with landscape windows, carpeted floors and lounge chairs replacing the previously open upper verandah. The lower arched windows have also been glazed. The kitchen and bar facilities had also been upgraded.

At least three publications have been written about the club at the time of its various milestones, including in 1946, 1961 and 1986. The club celebrated 125 years in existence in 2011¹³. In 2012, some local clubs are struggling due to falling memberships, with many members being elderly and no young ones taking their places. This has resulted in talk of amalgamating some of the clubs, there presently being some 17 clubs (with some 700 members) throughout the Wanganui region.¹⁴

Architect/Designer: Thos. H. Battle & Leopold J. Atkinson

History of changes:

Date Period: 1910s

Rarity / Special Features: The building is an unusual version of the Queen Anne style being symmetrical while still showing typical characteristics of dominant roof gables, faceted bay windows and wide overhanging eaves.

Integrity: The building has been modified over time and has lost its upper story open verandah as well as various internal modifications to the kitchen, bar and toilet area.

¹² *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6 February 1914, p. 3

¹³ Bowls, New Zealand: <http://www.bowlsnz.co.nz/news/article/2010/november/wanganui-bowling-club-celebrating-125-years-of-existence-in-2011/>

¹⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 14 February 2012: <http://www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/woes-coming-to-head-president/1271057/>

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Representativeness: Despite its unusual symmetrical form other representative elements of the Queen Anne style are exhibited in the building design and construction.

Context/Group Value: The building relocated to the present site in 1914 and has remained on site since that time.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: The membership of bowling clubs within the District has fallen off and as a result there may need to be amalgamations of clubs with the consequential loss of some facilities. It is unknown how any future amalgamation may affect the Wanganui Bowling Club. As a masonry building it may be vulnerable to earthquakes.

Summary of Significance:

Architectural Qualities

The building is an unusual version of the Queen Anne style being symmetrical while still showing typical characteristics of dominant roof flying gables, faceted bay windows and wide overhanging eaves. The building has been modified over time with the loss of the upper open verandah.

The building was designed by prominent local architect T.H. Battle.

Historic Qualities

The bowling club although it relocated to the present site in 1914 was the first bowling club with a purpose designed green in Wanganui. When it was established in 1886, the club was only the third to be established in the North Island. The history of the club is of greater historical value than the modified building and greens that it has occupied since 1914.

Cultural Qualities

The Club has been in existence since 1886 and has played an important role in the sporting life of the District.

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Reference Source:

Sangster, A. *Pathway to Establishment: The history of Wanganui Collegiate School* (Wanganui, 1985)

Wanganui Bowling Club Inc., *Wanganui Bowling Club Inc: 100 years, 1886-1986* (Wanganui, 1986). *Note that my copy is as unsourced photocopy of pages 8 and 9. However, these refer to events that occurred in 1976, thereby eliminating the older books.*

Also newspapers and online articles as referred to in the footnotes, and Wendy Pettigrew's Heritage Study file: 'Nelson1' held at the Wanganui District Council Archives.

Associated Pictures:



Wanganui Bowling Club Pavilion in 1936 (Source: Wanganui Bowling Club Inc.)

Date of Survey: 2012

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