

House – 49 College Street, Whanganui



Location: 49 College Street, College Estate, Whanganui

Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga

List Number: Nil

Physical Description: This two storied timber framed house is an excellent example of the neo-Georgian style. The house has the characteristic rectangular symmetrical plan form strict, low-pitched hipped roof with chimneys at either side. The central entry is emphasised by a Classical columned porch with hipped roof, while the eaves of the main roof have evenly distributed modillions. Windows are casement while either side of the front entry are small fixed pane windows.

The development of Neo-Georgian from the 1890s, particularly for domestic buildings, was popular in England but was also used in Australia and New Zealand from the First World War to the 1940s. Use of the style paralleled the Baroque of large public buildings, such as that used for Parliament Buildings. The desire for an architecture of a truly English character from an analysis of the works of Wren led architects such as English architect Norman Shaw to design English Renaissance houses in the 1880s. Ernest Newton and Mervyn Macartney, however are recognised as the architects who firmly established the

Register Item Number:

456

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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Neo-Georgian style in England and influenced use of the style in Empire. Earnest George's design for Holwell House, Hertfordshire was a significant design in the Neo-Georgian manner.

William Gray Young is credited with reviving the style in New Zealand in Elliott House at 43 Kent Terrace. This house was built in 1913 and won an architectural award from the Institute of Architects.

*"This Georgian Revival house with its sharp rectangular form and simple but carefully selected details was received with surprise and dislike when erected in 1913. It is a house of scholarly distinction, but the materials used for construction, brick, was alien to the traditional construction material, timber"*¹

Other known names:

Current Use: Dwelling house

Former Uses: Dwelling house

Heritage Status:

District Plan Class: B

Architectural Style: neo-Georgian

Date of Construction: c1921-22

Materials: Painted timber shiplap weatherboards, timber joinery, leaded windows, English plain tile roofing

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Lot 28 DP 33068

History: The earliest Certificate of Title sighted during this study relating to this house is WN 343/97, which was issued to the Whanganui College Board of Trustees in 1927. It covers a block of some six acres, consisting of 24 residential sections, bounded by Selwyn Street, Grey Street, Liverpool Street and College Street. This CT carried forward existing leases, including that of Jessie Knight and James Knight – for Lot 24 DP 368 (now 49 College Street) for a term of sixty years starting on 1st February 1915. The Knights were not identified during this study, and they were not recorded on the CT as they would be if they were a married couple.

While it is not clear when the Knights gave up this property – or if they built this house (which seems unlikely) - the 1925 *Wises' NZ Post Office Directory* lists its occupier as 'R.E.T. Hewat', a dentist. It adds that his surgery was at 11a Victoria

¹ Peter Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture*, 1991

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Avenue.

Robert Eric Tamlyn Hewat, who was born in 1896, was the son of Robert and Alice Mary Colwell Hewat of Oamaru. He was listed on the NZ Army Reserve rolls in 1916-17 (North Otago area), but did not apparently serve in the military. He was living in the Dunedin North electorate in 1919. In 1921, he married Keitha Dorothy Potter, only daughter of Major Frank Potter, of Otahuhu.²

The 1921 marriage possibly marks the timeframe when the Hewats moved to Wanganui. Certainly they were living there in July 1923 when 'R.E.T. Hewat' played in a golf match at the Belmont links between Wanganui and Manawatu teams.³

Certificate of Title WN 477/98, dated 1940, which covers Lot 24 DP 353 alone, carried forward (from the previous CT) Robert Eric Tamlyn Hewat's lease that had begun on 1st January 1934. His name appears on the Wanganui Electoral Rolls for 1928 and 1935, however, the 1938 and 1946 Rolls, list him as living the Patea electoral district. Note that the electorate boundaries have not been researched for this study, and, given Sir Roy Jack's electorate referred to below, the electorate boundaries, and not the Hewats' place of residence, may instead have changed. However, by the late 1940s Hewat lived in the Wellington area; then in the 1950s he lived in the Waikato, before living in the Remuera electorate in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴

In 1938, the *Evening Post* published an article describing some of his work. In this, "Dr. R.E.T. Hewat, (D.D.S. (N.Z.))" was described as having "carried out an investigation on this subject (dental decay in comparative situations), and in his published results he states definitely that the percentage of decayed teeth in school children was found to be higher than in orphanage children."⁵ This probably indicates some of the work he was involved with when living in

² Birth Registration: 1896/12921; Marriage Registration 1921/5420: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> ; *Auckland Star*, 16 November 1921, p. 10 (engagement); (Capt.) Francis Potter: http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/88666.detail?Ordinal=9&c_surname_search=potter&c_warconflict_search=%22world+war+i,+1914-1918%22 ; Robert Eric Tamlyn Hewat records on ancestry.com

³ *Hawera & Normanby Star*: 17 July 1923, p. 8

⁴ Robert Eric Tamlyn Hewat records on ancestry.com – based primarily on the various NZ Electoral Rolls. Search "Robert Eric Hewat" on <http://search.ancestry.com/>

⁵ *Evening Post*, 30 April 1938, p. 15

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Wanganui.

When the lease next came up for renewal in 1955, the new lessees were Maurice Anthony Hunter Fell and his wife Gladys Louise Fell. The point of transition was not noted in the CT sighted. Similarly, it was not noted when the Fells departed.

Lieutenant Maurice Anthony Hunter Fell (NZ Rifle Brigade, attached Royal Flying Corps) and Gladys Merton (of Christchurch) had married in England on 4 February 1918.⁶ Fell was a schoolteacher before the First World War, and had migrated to New Zealand in 1914 to teach at Christ's College in Christchurch. His new wife's father was headmaster of the Lower School at Christ's College, and in 1921 Maurice Fell replaced him in this role. Then in late 1926, he was appointed to become the first headmaster of St. George's Preparatory School (q.v.).⁷ Maurice Fell's lengthy period at the school (1927-1947) is covered in some detail in Peter London's book, *The St. George's Story*.⁸ It seems likely that the Fells bought this house around the time Maurice Fell retired from the school.

In 1974 a new Certificate of Title and Legal Description (Lot 28 DP 33068) were issued for this property. By this time Roy Emilé Jack, described as a solicitor, and his wife Frances Anne Jack had taken over the Fells' lease (they had possibly bought the house in 1969 when Frances Anne Jack was added to the CT under the Joint Family Homes Act, 1964). On the same date in 1974, ownership of the property was transferred from the Whanganui College Board of Trustees to the Jacks, with the lease also being merged at this time. In 1980, the property was transmitted to Frances Anne Jack as survivor.

Sir Roy Emilé Jack (1914-1977) had been elected to the Wanganui City Council in 1946, and then served as deputy Mayor from 1947 to 1955, at which time he withdrew from the Council. He had been elected a National Party Member of Parliament for the Patea electorate in 1954, and held the seat until his death in 1977. He served as deputy Speaker from 1961-1966, and as Speaker from

⁶ *Flight Magazine*, 21 February 1918: 'Married' column:

<http://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1918/1918%20-%200214.html> ; Also Fell, M.A.H.:
<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/70663.detail?keywords=Fell%20Maurice%20Anthony%20Hunter%20World%20War%20I,%201914-1918>

⁷ *Evening Post*, 9 November 1926, p. 11

⁸ Peter London, *The St. George's Story: An affectionate history of a very good Prep School and of those who made it so* (Wanganui, 1994), pp. 3, 29-78

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1967 until 1972, when he was appointed Minister of Justice and Attorney General. He held these portfolios until the change of government in 1972. He was re-elected Speaker after the return of the National Government in 1975. He was knighted in 1970 and died in his chambers in Parliament Buildings on Christmas Eve, 1977.⁹

In 1984, the property was transferred to Barrie Nelson Toms, described as a branch manager, and his wife Edith Toms. Then in 1995, it was transferred to the current owners, Glenn Nelson Toms, a sales representative of Wellington, and Tessa Louise Pudney, a hairdresser of Wanganui.

Bibliography

London, Peter, *The St. George's Story: An affectionate history of a very good Prep School and of those who made it so* (Wanganui, 1994).

Wises' NZ Post Office Directory, 1925.

Archival sources, newspaper articles and online sources as referred to in the text and footnotes.

Architect/Designer:

History of changes:

Date Period: ca 1921.

Rarity / Special Features: The house is a good example of the neo-Georgian style.

Integrity: The condition of the house was not inspected.

Representativeness: The house was designed using the characteristic forms, materials and planning of the neo-Georgian style.

Context/Group Value:

⁹ 'Sir Roy Emile Jack (1914-1977)' in *Biographies of Former and Current Speakers of the New Zealand House of Representatives*: <http://www.parliament.nz/NR/rdonlyres/72071165-4BE8-41F1-90C7-7C4C67DC8BC0/18727/formerspeakers3.pdf>

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Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: Being a timber house, it may be vulnerable to fire.

Summary of Significance:

Architectural Qualities

The house is an excellent example of the neo-Georgian style and has the characteristic rectangular symmetrical plan form, a low-pitched hipped roof with chimneys at either side and with a central entry, emphasised by a Classical columned porch with hipped roof. Other typical details include eaves of the main roof having evenly distributed modillions and casement windows.

Historic Qualities

The house is historically associated with R E T Hewat, who is likely to have had the house built, as well as other more recent owners, M AH Fell, the first headmaster of St George's Preparatory School, and Sir Roy Jack, Speaker of the House for five years from 1967 and a further two from 1975. Sir Roy Jack was also Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Technical Qualities

The house is constructed using typical materials and techniques for the period.

Cultural Qualities

The house has educational values as a good example of the neo-Georgian style.

Reference Source:

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

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