

## Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



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### EBBETT'S BUILDING

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Photo: K Pascall, August 2012

#### LOCATION:

*Street and Number:* 127 Queen Street East

*City / Town:* Hastings

*Region:* Hawke's Bay

#### LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

*Legal Description:* Lots 15 & 16 DP 2795

*Certificates of Title (includes Registry):* HB A4/908, Hawke's Bay Registry

## **SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

### *Architectural Value:*

Ebbett's Building has modest architectural value, it being a plain functional two-storey building. The decorative feature of the door surround in the centre of the ground floor gives the building a focus and a presence in the streetscape.

There is more important aesthetic value in the townscape quality of the building, as it is a contributing structure to an impressive group of compatible buildings along the north side of Queen Street East. These buildings are uniformly of two and three stories, built to the street boundary, and of consistent scale although varying style. It is part of one of the best groups of period buildings in the city.

### *Historic Value:*

Ebbett's Building is historically significant for its association with three important owner / occupiers. It was built for George Ebbett, a successful solicitor and mayor of Hastings, who owned the building until his death in 1954. The building has been owned since 1979 by Seajay Securities and occupied from that time by Esam and Cushing. Both of these companies are at least partly owned by Sir Selwyn Cushing, a prominent New Zealand business leader. Sandwiched between these two owners was Federated Farmers, with firstly its national office and then Hawke's Bay branch owning the building. Federated Farmers is the single most important farmer advocacy organisation in New Zealand.

### *Cultural Value:*

The association of the building with Esam Cushing and Co. and Sir Selwyn Cushing gives the building some prominence, and the firm's staff and clients will also have a connection to the building. The building on the corner of Karamu Street and Queen Street East, which is also occupied by Esam Cushing and Co., is a more prominent structure and it is likely that that building may link with its neighbour.

## **HISTORY:**

Ebbett's Building was built in 1935 for George Ebbett (1872-1954), solicitor and former borough councillor and Mayor of Hastings. It replaced an earlier building that was presumably destroyed by the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931. The building was designed by Hastings architects Davies and Phillips, who designed many buildings in the wake of the earthquake, some of them in association with local architect Albert Garnett. The builder is not known.

George Ebbett bought the property in April 1922. He also owned the neighbouring building (125 Queen Street East), which was occupied by his legal practice, Ebbett and Gifford.<sup>1</sup> Ebbett joined a local law office after school and studied law by correspondence. He was admitted to the bar in 1896. Ebbett was in practice on his own until he went into partnership with Donald Banks. In 1920 the firm became Ebbett and Gifford, when he joined Ernest Gifford in partnership. Ebbett was a Borough Councillor from 1913-15, and Mayor from 1919-1921. He was still practising law at the time of his death in 1954. He was a collector of books and artefacts and a philanthropist.<sup>2</sup>

After its construction, the Ebbett's Building was used by a number of occupants. It is not clear if Ebbett's law firm occupied the building itself. As noted above, the firm was listed

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<sup>1</sup> Wise's New Zealand post office directory, 1920 and 1925

<sup>2</sup> www.hastingsdc.govt.nz/Libraries/reference\_Ebbett.htm

in street directories as an occupant of 125 Queen Street East, but for a period the building at 127 was known as Ebbett's Building.<sup>3</sup> In 1934 no less than 11 occupants are listed at 127, which seems an unlikely number given the size of the building. Six years later, the number was down to six, including two accounting firms, the National Creditmen's Association, a long-standing occupant, the Hawke's Bay Jockey Club, and the Hawke's Bay Hunt Club.<sup>4</sup> Later occupants included the the National Creditmen's Association, Redstone and Co., manufacturer's representative, and Tabley and Davis, accountants.

After Ebbett's death the building was purchased by Federated Farmers,<sup>5</sup> who kept a meeting room in the building.<sup>6</sup> In November 1964, it was transferred to Federated Farmers' Hawke's Bay branch. Since May 1979, the building has been owned by Seajay Securities Limited.<sup>7</sup> This company, formed in 1971, is owned by members of the Cushing family, including Sir Selwyn Cushing. In 1960, when he was just 24 years old, Cushing became a principal in the firm that later became Esam Cushing and Co.<sup>8</sup> Together with Stan Esam, he gave his name to the firm which has occupied the building since the late 1970s. Sir Selwyn Cushing is a successful Hawke's Bay businessman with many commercial interests. In addition, he has held major positions on public organisations and companies, including chairing the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Brierley Investments and Air New Zealand.

The building's interior has undergone a number of changes. In 1957, Federated Farmers made alterations and built a toilet. Another toilet was added in 1961, and in 1965 there was an application to make more internal changes. In 1969, Federated Farmers made major changes to the interior, including the entire refitting of the main office.<sup>9</sup> In 1980 a building consent was issued for more alterations to the layout of the ground floor, presumably for new occupants Esam Cushing and Co.<sup>10</sup> These changes were designed by Drake Linwood Draughting. In November 2001, Hastings District Council made a façade enhancement grant available for the redecoration of the building's exterior.<sup>11</sup>

## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

*Architect:* Davies & Phillips (Harold Davies, Eric Phillips)

*Date of Construction:* 1935

*Construction Details:* Reinforced concrete structure. The architectural drawings for this building are not available, so details of the structure are not known.

*Description:* The Ebbett's Building is a modest two-storey commercial structure. It is simply arranged with a central doorway flanked by wide windows on either side; the floor above reflects this arrangement with a narrow central window above the door.

The door surround gives the building a presence in the street, the surround standing proud of the wall surface with a stepped profile and a band of geometric decoration. Above the first floor windows there are bands of a chevron-like motif, and at parapet level small supporting decorative features. Wall surfaces are otherwise plain. The front door

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<sup>3</sup> Reginald Tabley, accountant, advertised themselves as occupants of Ebbetts Building in 1946. (See *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1946)

<sup>4</sup> *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1940

<sup>5</sup> Certificate of title 6/152, Land Information New Zealand, Hastings

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 1960

<sup>7</sup> Certificate of title A4/908, Land Information New Zealand, Hastings

<sup>8</sup> 'Good Corporate Citizen' in [www.hbrc.govt.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=fJrZv%2FeXXQg%3D&tabid=337&mid=1813](http://www.hbrc.govt.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=fJrZv%2FeXXQg%3D&tabid=337&mid=1813)

<sup>9</sup> See Permits 3789, R1216, 15663, 53521, Hastings District Council

<sup>10</sup> Hastings District Council information file.

<sup>11</sup> Hastings District Council information file.

**Ebbett's Building, 127 Queen Street East, Hastings**

Inventory Number 7; Property ID: 21315; TRIM Reference: 21315#002#0006  
Draft: 20 June 2007, Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran; Final Audit November 2012

and offices inside have seen major changes, so that little of period interest exists. The first floor was not inspected.

**ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:**

Element	Significance
Front elevation	Aesthetic

**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:**

Certificates of title 6/152 and A4/908, Land Information New Zealand, Hastings.

Hastings District Council file information.

New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12009-774

Permits 3789, R1216, 15663, 53521, Hastings District Council

*Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, H Wises & Co, Dunedin, Eastbourne Street, Eastbourne Street East, Russell Street, vols 1916 to 1959-60.

[www.hastingsdc.govt.nz/Libraries/reference\\_Ebbett.htm](http://www.hastingsdc.govt.nz/Libraries/reference_Ebbett.htm)

**OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:**

*NZHPT Registration Number:* Prior to an audit of the Register in 2004, the NZHPT understood that Ebbett's Building was classified C under section 35(1) c of the Historic Places Act 1980 (as Esam Cushing Building) by the NZHPT Board at a meeting held on 7 April 1983. The place was given Register Number: 1081

*The transitional provisions of section 114 of the Historic Places Act 1993 deemed that all buildings classified C or D under the 1980 Act become Category II historic places. The place was therefore thought to be a Category II historic place.*

The audit of the Register indicated that there is no confirmation of registration in the NZHPT Board Minutes for this registration. The registration is therefore invalid.<sup>12</sup>

*District Plan Listing:* Ebbett's Building is not currently listed in the Hastings District Plan.

*New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993:* This site has been identified as a potential archaeological site under Section 2 of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993.

**ARCHIVE PLAN(S):**

Hastings District Council does not hold the original plan for this building.

<sup>12</sup> As at September 2007 the Central Region of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust is in the process of remedying these deficiencies. Please contact NZHPT for further information.