



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

THE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF 76-84 LAMBTON QUAY,  
WELLINGTON (SITE R27/157)

Pam Chester  
Victoria University  
Wellington

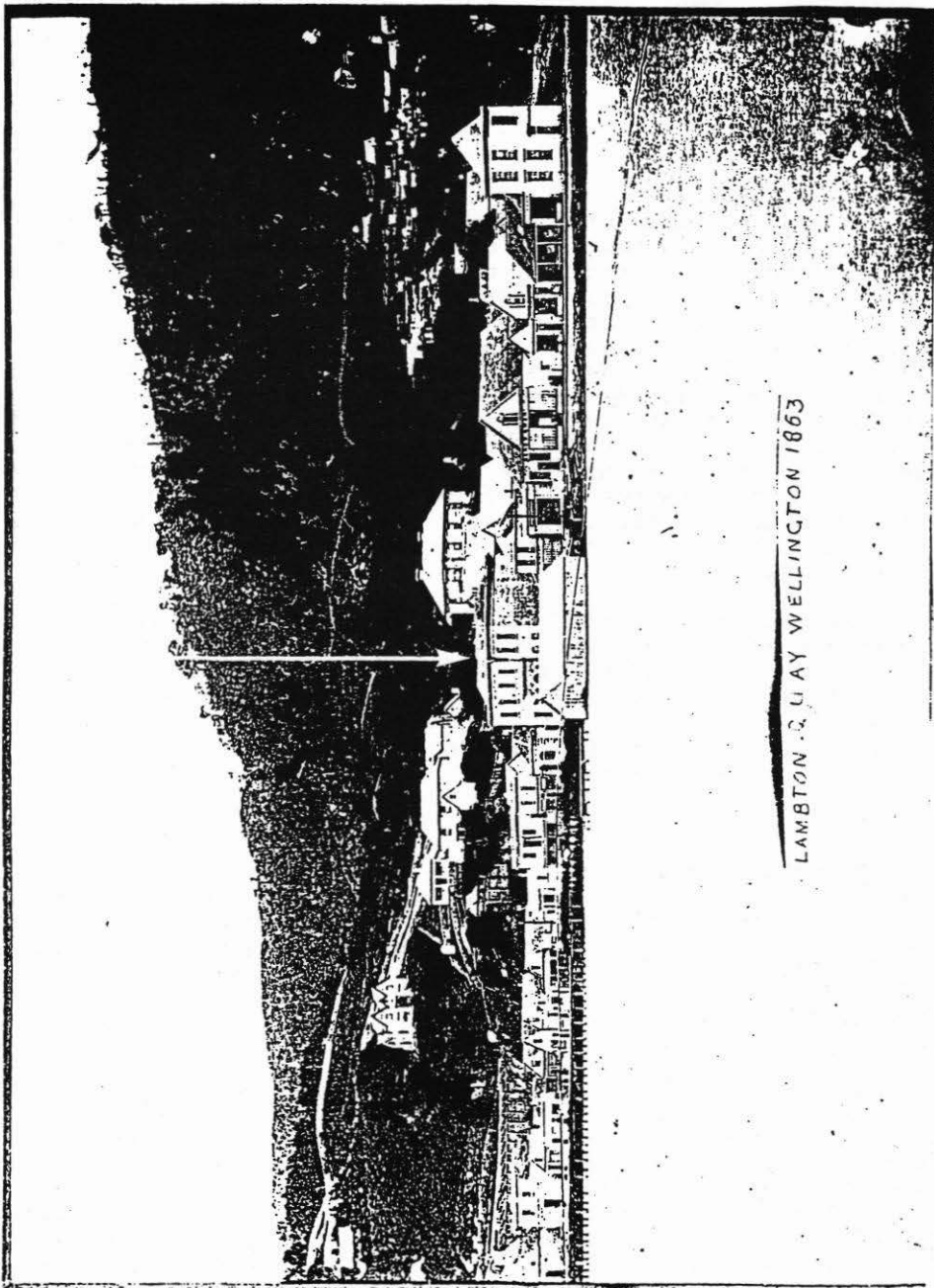
From 11 November 1987 to August 1988 an archaeological investigation was undertaken of a commercial demolition site, 76-84 Lambton Quay (recently the site of the Kingsway Bathroom and Flooring Centre plus other smaller businesses) in central Wellington. The investigation followed Mr Ian Wards's (Chairman of the Wellington Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust) suggestion that the site was of great historic significance. It could potentially reveal evidence of prehistoric Polynesian culture and colonial European settlement in Wellington. Following communication between Mr Wards and Mr Brian Sheppard, Directorate of Science and Research, Department of Conservation, arrangements were made with Mr Jim Carruthers, representing the developer of the property, Government Property Services, for an archaeological investigation.

Demolition had already taken place when the archaeological investigation began. Immediately prior to demolition in late 1987, two main buildings stood on the site. It was thought that the lower storey of the larger building (northern part of the site) was a remnant of a large prestigious two-storey building appearing in photographs since the 1860s and referred to in the literature since 1852 (Fig. 1) (Francis 1987).

History of site

The site was part of the Town Acres 490 and 491 sold by ballot in England in 1839 by the New Zealand Company. These two Town Acres were on the beach front in 1840 before the 1855 earthquake raised the land about a metre along this shoreline (Grant-Taylor 1974, Smith, Elders & Co. 1840, Ward 1928:57, 190). Reclamation opposite the site begun in 1875 increased the distance to the shoreline still further (Wellington Harbour Board 1936).

The first European building thought to have occupied the northern part of the site (part Town Acre 491) was the Wellington Hotel (often called Alzdorf's Hotel after the proprietor, Baron von Alzdorf) built by 1843 (Burgess List 1843, O'Sullivan 1977:26, Francis 1987). The first mass held by Wellington's first resident Roman Catholic priest, was held in a room of this hotel 5 February 1843. A congregation of about 100 attended (O'Sullivan 1977:26). This first hotel was a one storey building constructed of brick, clay and wood. It



LAMBTON QUAY WELLINGTON 1863

was badly damaged by the 1848 earthquake and officially reported as being removed (Collinson, Park, and St Hill 1849:65).

The next building, opened in 1852, was a much more substantial building, being double storied. This second building was constructed of the same materials as the first. However, it was much more strongly built, according to architects recommendations at that time, to minimize earthquake damage (Gore 1956:30, Grayland 1957:24, Ward 1928:161, Collinson, Park & Hill 1848). It was considered to be the finest hotel in Wellington at that time (Ward 1928:161) (Fig. 1). The first Prime Minister of New Zealand, Henry Sewell, stayed at the Wellington Hotel on several occasions e.g. March, April, September and October-November 1853 (McIntyre 1980:185-589 vol.1) and May 1854 (McIntyre 1980:12 vol.2). After staying in The Wellington Hotel, March 1853, Henry Sewell, wrote in his diary:

I and Elizabeth to the Hotel. There is now it seems only one, kept by a German Baron, a stout Germanic looking personage, by the name of Alsdorff, who figured originally as a leader of Wellington Fashions, but degenerated at last into the more profitable position of principal Hotel-keeper in the place. We found his house the most pretentious building we have yet seen in New Zealand - a Classical front with a Portico - it might be a respectable Town-Hall - quite new and raw, but apparently substantial, the rooms good, altogether a superior sort of place. They give us a comfortable little room with plastered walls and oilclothed floor, and a splendid looking glass fit for a London lodging house; but disfigured by an unlucky crack. There is an easy chair, and a magnificent fire-place in which we make capital wood fires. We have a clean decently furnished good sized bedroom; altogether the quarters are of a superior kind. The people are civil but there is but one solitary waiter. There is a Billiard

-----  
Opposite:

Figure 1. The Wellington Hotel 1863 (indicated by the arrow). This hotel was opened in 1852 with a ball attended by the Governor (Francis 1987). The far right building is on 'Brandons Corner' the corner of Lambton Quay and Bowen Streets before the Cenotaph was built. The Beehive location is midway up the right edge of the photograph.

During the early days of European settlement in Wellington this end of Lambton Quay was a fashionable part of town for business men and politicians and was the first location of some of the most important businesses in Wellington. (Alexander Turnbull Library).

room close to us and I am tantalised by the continual noise of balls knocking about. I long to be at play myself but am afraid of appearances. (McIntyre 1980:185 vol.I)

Also in 1853 there was some talk of buying the hotel for the Provincial Government. Henry Sewell thought that it was a wise plan as the hotel had "sufficiently good rooms for a Council Meeting" (McIntyre 1980:589 vol.I).

This second hotel was damaged in the 1855 earthquake, but it is uncertain, from historical records, if it was removed due to the damage. One eye witness reported that the walls were "all bulging", but implied that the building did not need to be pulled down. Commander Drury of H.M. sloop *Pandora*, on the other hand, gives the impression that the hotel was in ruin; "buried its owner in the partial ruin" (Drury 1855:92). The Baron was reported in the newspapers at that time as the only fatality of the earthquake. He was killed by one of his brick chimneys falling on him (*Australian & New Zealand Gazette* 2 June 1855:431, No. 188 New Series, London).

After the Baron's death this building continued to be used as a hotel for a few years, becoming the Criterion Family Hotel owned by John Martin and run by Charles Suisted (former licensee of the Barretts Hotel) (Bremner 1974). It was advertised in three languages, English, French, and German (*The New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian* 10 September 1859). Suisted was forced to abandon the hotel after spending 1000 pounds on alterations and decorations. The Wellington Club, a gentlemen's club, leased the land in the early 1860s, later purchasing it in 1867. It is thought that the club held meetings in this building before actually leasing the premises as both the Baron and his business neighbour, Nathaniel Levin were founding members of the club (*The New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* 18 December 1841, Vol II. No.99). The Duke of Edinburgh stayed at the Wellington Club in 1869 (*Dominion* 28th June 1962). Minor repairs, improvements and additions were done over the next few years and substantial additions were made in May 1874 by the Wellington Club (Francis 1987, Chester 1988b:plates 10-12).

The next longterm occupant of this building was the forerunner of Warnocks - today's chain of drapery stores. William George Adkin, Thomas Warnock, and Kate Eliza Kelly leased the land in June 1886 (Certificate of Title 26/299). The business flourished until 1900 when both Thomas Warnock's partners had left the business and branches that had been set up outside Wellington were closed down. By 1910 Mr Warnock decided he was unable to maintain his Lambton Quay premises due to lack of capital so the entire operation was moved to Wanganui. Warnock, Kelly, and Adkin made considerable changes

to the building, adding a verandah and making substantial alterations inside (Wanganui Newspapers Commemorative Supplement May 1986, Chester 1988b:plate 13).

The next longterm occupant was the forerunner to the Kingsway Carpet Centre, the most recent major occupant. Kingsway Ltd, auctioneers, first occupied the building in 1926 (Stone 1891-1945, Chester 1988b:appendix 8).

Fire damaged the building on several occasions, once requiring the removal of part of the second storey (Francis 1987, Chester 1988b:plate 14).

Less is known of the occupants and buildings of the narrower section to the south of the site (part Town Acre 490), but an 1847 photograph shows a building on the site (Davies 1847, Chester 1988b:plate 5) and in 1859 Charles Suisted bought 'The Tap' which was on this site from E.G. Wakefield (Deed of Conveyance 1859). At that time Suisted was running the Criterion Family Hotel (the former Wellington Hotel) next door. The occupants of this part of the site after 1891 were small businesses, such as pharmacies and stationers (Stone 1891-1945, Wise's N.Z. Post Office Directories 1946-1986, Chester 1988b:appendix 8). The most recent building on this part of the site was built in 1915 (Valuation New Zealand records).

### Archaeology

#### Excavation:

Initially only a limited amount of time was allowed for excavation so it was decided that exploratory trenches should be dug with a hydraulic digger. Three trenches, c. 1.5 m wide and 1-1.5 m deep, were dug running from the rear of the site towards the front. Excavation of the trenches was monitored and halted when cultural features appeared. Hand tools were used to excavate features. This method yielded much information on the general layout of the site in a very short time giving three sections through almost the entire length of the site.

Originally only 3 days were allowed for excavation. Although no prehistoric Polynesian remains were found, the richness of the European remains on the site was unexpected so the length of excavation time was extended. The total time spent on the site by an average of 3 people was 35 days. Many people assisted with the excavation, including volunteers, both professional archaeologists and amateurs, comprising members of the Wellington Regional Committee, N.Z. Historic Places Trust, the Wellington Archaeological Society

and the Wellington Antique Bottle Club. Government Property Services provided two labourers for some of that time.

### Features:

The oldest features found on the site were two brick cellars, two brick drains, a ditch drain, wooden piles and a barrel-lined longdrop toilet. These features probably all date to the middle of the 19th century. The brick features were made of bricks probably manufactured in the 1840s of clay from a Wellington source (Diamond pers. comm. 1988). One cellar, the wine cellar, probably belonged originally to Baron von Alzendorf's first hotel (Figure 2). The other cellar, the beer cellar, was probably originally built about the same time, but later lined with concrete.

The structure of the two cellars was quite different. One is thought to have been used for the storage of beer while the other was probably used predominantly for wine. There are several lines of evidence which suggest that the cellar on the southern side of the site was a beer cellar. When Charles Suisted purchased this building it was referred to as 'The Tap'. 'Tap' here probably refers to liquor drawn from a cask. 'The Tap' was probably a place for informal drinking. It was located on the edge of Lambton Quay pavement, an ideal situation for rolling beer barrels into a cellar. The cellar was completely enclosed so it must have had a hatch for entry, a typical style of entry for beer cellars. Parts of a beer barrel ramp were among the artefacts recovered from the fill as well as some very long boards of a type suitable for a hatch. A shallow drain encircling the cellar was similar to those in the cellar of New Zealand Lion Brewery in Wellington which dates to the last century.

The other cellar would have provided room for storage of alcoholic beverages for the Wellington Hotel. The Wellington Hotel is thought to have been much more prestigious than the building to the south and it probably served expensive imported liquor rather than beer. It is almost certain that an Austrian Baron, such as Alzendorf, would have imported liquor. Later Minifie, who was running the hotel on the site in 1862, advertised holding stocks of the "best ...liquors of every description" (*The Wellington Almanac* 1862:72). The cellar was built back from the street and had internal access via a stairway.

The bricks used to construct this cellar are stock hand moulded bricks. This method of making bricks pre-dates the use of pugmills which have been used in New Zealand since 1850, therefore it is thought that the bricks were made in the 1840s. In addition the thickness of the bricks is compatible



with the thickness of the early brick moulds brought from England at the time of settlement and not with the moulds produced later in New Zealand.

Two episodes of building are represented in the wine cellar: initially the original cellar to the east was built, later an addition to the west which includes a well. From the age of the bricks mentioned above, the initial cellar belonged to either the first hotel on the site, or the second, opened in 1852. However, there is no evidence that the lower storey of the hotel opened in 1852 was ever completely removed after the 1855 earthquake. It would follow, therefore, that the extension to the wine cellar was built following removal of the first building after the 1848 earthquake, and before 1852. Then the original cellar would have belonged to the first hotel, and the extension to the second, despite the relatively poor workmanship of the extension. An alternative is that the original cellar was constructed with either of the first two buildings, and the extension made while the second building was already in use, perhaps after damage from the 1855 earthquake.

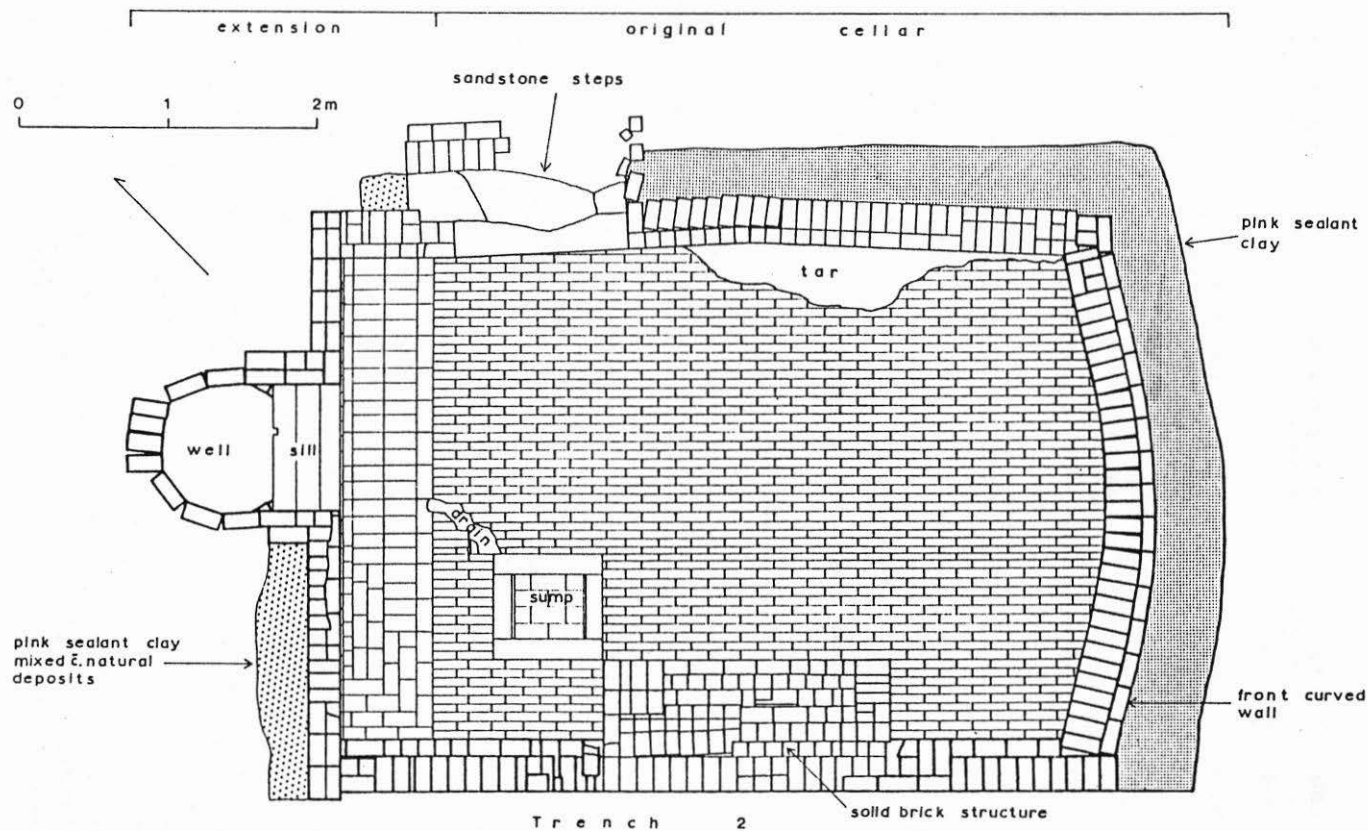
Sandstone steps imported from eastern Australia, probably Sydney, leading down into the cellar also support a very early date for the construction of the cellar. Building materials were usually imported at the beginning of European settlement, native materials being used later.

Both cellars appeared to have been intentionally filled in one episode. The wine cellar appears to have been filled mostly with building materials left over when alterations were made to the building above the cellar. The building material was mixed with other artefacts so the fill may have been taken from the backyard where left-over building material had been stockpiled. The matrix of the fill was a blue clay which occurs naturally on the site. The beer cellar was probably filled with the debris of the building above which was removed in 1914 after suffering a fire.

The three early drains recorded were probably all storm water drains. An open brick drain at the rear of the site probably carried water seepage from Kumutoto Stream (it flowed where Bowen Street now is) across the site from north to south. The ditch drain also at the rear of the site probably had a similar function. The other brick drain was covered. The upper bricks had been chipped into wedge shapes so that an enclosed drain could be formed. This drain ran from near the centre of the site seawards under Lambton Quay (Fig. 3).

The wooden (probably totara and jarrah) piles exposed on the western half of the site may have originally supported buildings behind Alzdorf's Hotel. Early photographs show a





## Opposite:

Figure 2. The wine cellar. The composition and form of the bricks of the cellar suggest that they were manufactured in the 1840s. The eastern end of the cellar was probably part of Baron von Alzendorf's first hotel built by 1843. The extension at the western end (rear) was probably added after the first hotel was removed, having been damaged in the 1848 earthquake.

The original cellar had a curved front. The northern wall was also slightly bowed. An orange puddling clay was placed around the perimeter to act as a sealant. The floor sloped to a sump near the western end. A small remnant of tar and sand remained on the floor near the northern wall. Tar was probably put on the floor for water proofing. Sand would have been sprinkled on the molten tar to create a non-slippery surface. The cellar contained a sloping solid brick structure on the southern wall, the function of which is uncertain. The two steps which lead down into the original cellar are of eastern Australian sandstone.

The extension on the western end of the cellar can be easily distinguished because the floor bricks were laid on their backs, not on their sides as in the original cellar. Some clay sealant was apparent but was mixed with natural deposits. The walls and floor of this extension were built of bricks from the original cellar, but different bricks were used to build the circular well. A shallow drain had been cut from the edge of the extension to the sump, probably to drain the extension floor which did not slope to the sump.

substantial building behind the front building in 1863 (Fig. 1). Other piles removed when the hydraulic digger was excavating trenches may have been associated with this structure as well as later additions to the front structure.

The long drop toilet, perhaps originally an unlined well, was probably lined with barrels to prevent the sides of the pit collapsing and perhaps to prevent pollution of the well in the wine cellar. The barrels were probably constructed for the transportation of light, delicate things such as glassware, crockery, or other dry goods.

The only other features found on the site were 20th century ceramic drains and a brick wall made of bricks manufactured, in the Miramar brickworks, Wellington, before 1940.

#### Artefacts:

Almost 3000 portable artefacts were collected. The varied assemblage included abundant bottle glass, ceramic sherds, wooden and metal building materials, as well as other items. The assemblage spans the period from European settlement to the present day, and reflects many of the known uses of the site. Dating of features was assisted by analysis of the artefacts, but it was not possible to definitely establish the precise age or place of manufacture of many of the artefacts. Those artefacts that were traced to their place of manufacture were mostly from England, although all the clay tobacco pipes with makers marks were from Scotland.

The assemblage of glass bottles recovered represents continuous casual disposal of bottles since early European settlement. The most abundant bottles are pharmaceutical bottles of the period contemporary with the occupation of the site by chemist shops, since 1927. These bottles (except perhaps a very few) did not originate from the Bowen Street Hospital which occupied the slope immediately to the rear of the site between 1914 and c. 1972. A large proportion of the pharmaceutical bottles recovered were returnable bottles dating to between 1930 and 1960. These bottles may have been discarded because they had become out-dated.

More of the dated alcoholic beverage bottles date to the 19th century than the 20th century. This is consistent with use of the site by hotels and a private club. The ratio of liquor bottles to beer was greater in the 19th century than in the 20th century, probably because beer was supplied in casks, especially to the beer cellar. Aerated and mineral water bottles are much less abundant, probably because they were returnable and reusable, and most date to the 20th century. All the aerated water bottles, except two, belonged to

Wellington bottling companies. 'Domestic' food and non-food bottles were also not very abundant. This is to be expected since it was a commercial site and not a domestic one. Of the domestic bottles dated, slightly more date to the 20th century than the 19th century.

Ceramic artefacts were widely distributed on the site. Of the pottery dated from manufacturers' marks more dates to the 19th century than to the 20th century (13:9). Although this dated pottery represents only a very small sample of the total assemblage, stylistically most of the pottery recovered dates to the Victorian period, well before 1921-26 when crockery importers had premises on the site. A large proportion of the pottery is tableware, including many heavy pieces, suggesting use in the hotels on the site. The oldest pieces of crockery date to the mid-19th century.

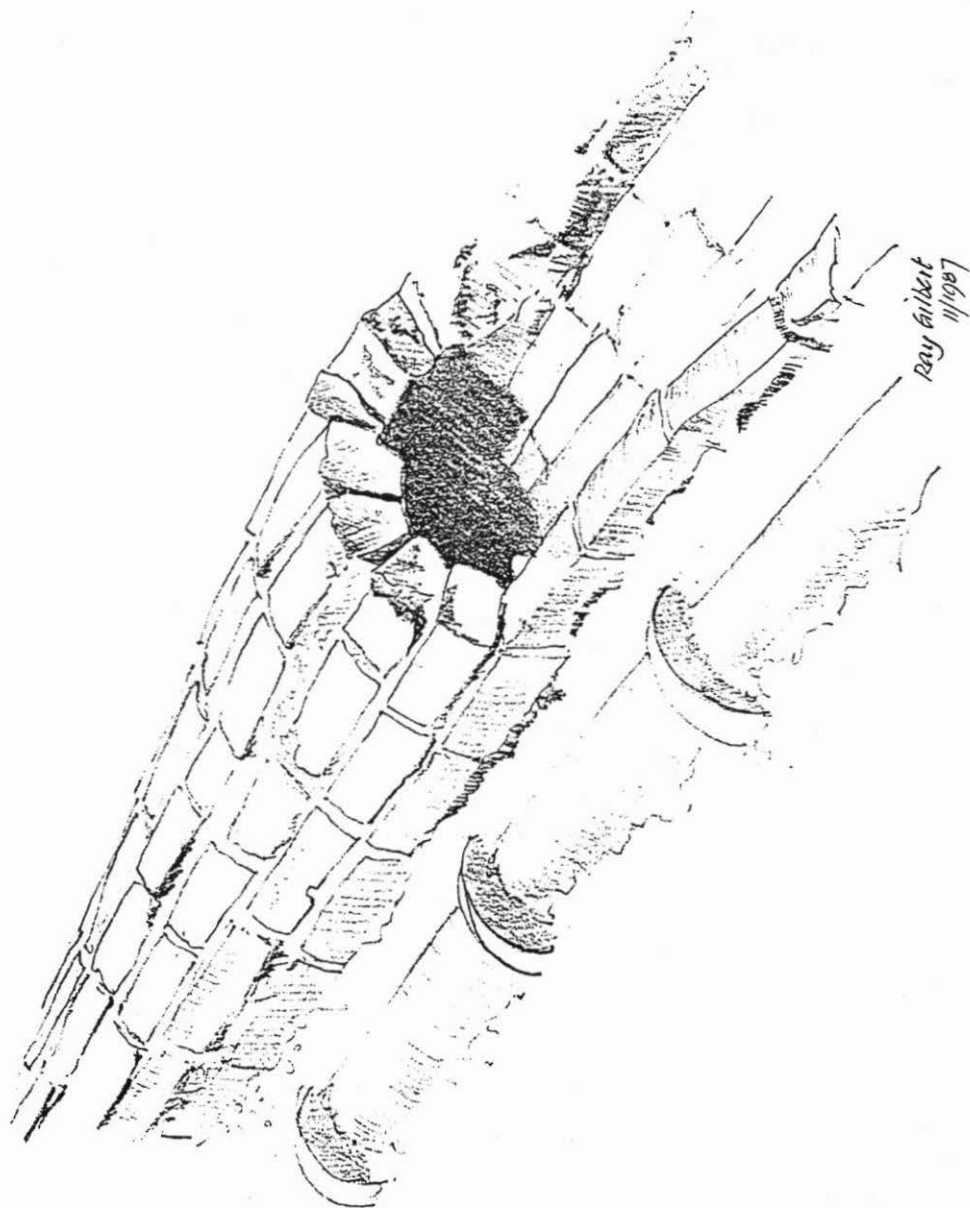
Of particular interest is the crockery of the Wellington Club which occupied the site from c. 1862-1875. The pottery was manufactured by the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company, and was a heavy durable earthenware made for hotel and domestic use from c. 1870 (Sandon 1978:9, 257-261). It had a red edge band and hairline and an enamel overglaze, similar to the crockery used by the Wellington Club today, but which is manufactured by Crown Lynn.

A wide variety of metal artefacts was recovered. Apart from building materials such as nails, brackets and conduits, these included such disparate objects as stove parts, cutlery, a metal belt, cookery utensils, a key, buttonhook and tools. The beer cellar contained many metal artefacts presumed to have derived from the private hotel which occupied this part of the site up to 1899. Most prominent of these were iron bedsteads of six different styles, including a half tester.

Wooden artefacts are primarily building material, either waste, or parts of demolished buildings. Most of the waste material was recovered from the wine cellar, and probably represents alterations to the building, perhaps when occupied by the original Warnocks drapery towards the end of the 19th century. Much of the demolition material was found in the beer cellar. Some of this material was charred, and almost certainly represents debris from the building demolished in 1914.

Some of the most recent artefacts recovered included building material, a plastic comb, and fragments of plastic grates from fluorescent light fittings.

The artefacts recovered represent a mixture of luxurious and more common items. Some of the ceramic ware, especially the porcelain and some of the earthenware, and the sterling



silver teaspoon represent more expensive types of artefacts. Many of the artefacts, however, would have been less expensive, and reflect the usual occupations of a downtown commercial site of the 19th and early 20th century in Wellington.

#### Documentation of the excavation:

A report including tables listing all the artefacts recovered has been prepared (Chester 1988b). The report also includes an account of the history of the site (including a report by Emma Francis commissioned by the Wellington Regional Committee of the Historic Places Trust), some historic documents such as Alzdorf's Will and eye-witness accounts of the 1848 and 1855 earthquakes in Wellington, colour photographs of all the artefacts deposited with the museum, as well as of the iron bedsteads and wooden piles, and some excellent sketches drawn by Ray Gilbert. Copies of the report have been deposited with the National Museum, Department of Conservation, Wellington Regional Committee of the HPT and Government Property Services.

All the artefacts deemed worth retaining (practically all, except the iron bedsteads, a fragmentary baby carriage, some wooden artefacts and a modern inspection plate) have been put into storage at the National Museum, Wellington, accompanied by a catalogue (Chester 1988a).

The bricks of the wine cellar have been removed by a bricklayer employed by Government Property Services and put into storage. Government Property Services intend rebuilding the cellar on the ground floor of the multistorey building currently under construction on the site, expected to be completed at the end of 1990.

#### Acknowledgements

Too many people assisted with the undertaking of this project to thank these people individually here. These people have been listed in the unpublished report. However, the author again wishes to express her gratitude for their help.

---

#### Opposite:

Figure 3. Sketch of 'old' brick and 'new' ceramic drain. On the right is the covered stormwater drain made of bricks manufactured in Wellington in the 1840s. The upper bricks have been chipped into wedge shapes. On the left is a 'modern' ceramic drain. These drains run under Lambton Quay. Drawn by Ray Gilbert.

# References

- Bremner, J. 1974. Charles Suisted. In G.J. Griffith (ed), The Advance Guard. Dunedin, Otago Daily Times, Series 2: 100-150.
- Burgess List for the Borough of Wellington for the year 1843.  
Held at the National Museum, Wellington.
- Chester, P.I. 1988a. Catalogue of artefacts from 76-84 Lambton Quay, Wellington, site R27/157 (Alzendorf's cellar). National Museum of New Zealand, Wellington.
- 1988b. The history and archaeology of Lambton Quay 76-84, Wellington, site R27/157. Copies held by Department of Conservation and National Museum of New Zealand, Wellington.
- Collinson, T.B., R. Park and H. St Hill 1848. Imperial Blue Books. New Zealand Native Affairs. Papers presented to the Houses by command of Her Majesty. November 1848. London, George Edward Eyre & William Spottis-Woode.
- 1849. Imperial Blue Books. New Zealand Native Affairs. Papers presented to the Houses by command of Her Majesty, July 1849. London, George Edward Eyre & William Spottis-Woode.
- Davies, W. 1847. Photograph held by Maritime Museum, Wellington Harbour Board.
- Drury, Captain 1855. Imperial Blue Books. New Zealand Native Affairs. Papers presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty. July 1860. London, George Edward Eyre & William Spottis-Woode.
- Francis, E. 1987. Provisional report on historical background, Nos 78-80 Lambton Quay. Report prepared for Wellington Regional Committee, N.Z. Historic Places Trust, November 1987.
- Gore, R. 1956. Levins. Wellington, Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd.
- Grant-Taylor, T.L. 1974. Working Report: Geology of Wellington Urban Area. Appendix 1 in Grant-Taylor, T.L., R.D. Adams, T. Hatherton, J.D.G. Milne R.D. Northey, and W.R. Stephenson, Microzoning for Earthquake Effects in Wellington. D.S.I.R. Bulletin 213.
- Grayland, E. 1957. New Zealand Disasters. Wellington, A.H. & A.W. Reed.



McIntyre, W.D. (ed) 1980. The Journal of Henry Sewell 1853-7.  
2 vols. Christchurch.

O'Sullivan, O.F.M. 1977. Apostle in Aotearoa. A biography of  
Father Jeremiah Joseph Purcell O'Reilly, O.F.M. Cap.  
Wellington's first Catholic pastor. Auckland, The Word  
Publishers Limited.

Sandon, H. 1978. Royal Worcester Porcelain from 1862 to the  
present day. London, Barrie & Jenkins Ltd.

Smith, Elders & Co. 1840. Plan of the town of Wellington Port  
Nicholson. The first and principal settlement of the  
New Zealand Company, 14 August 1840.

Stone, J. (ed.) 1891-1945. Stones Wellington, Hawkes Bay and  
Taranaki Commercial, Municipal and General Directory  
and New Zealand Annual. Wellington, City Printing  
Company.

*The Wellington Almanac* 1862. Wellington, McKenzie and Muir.

Ward, L. E. 1928. Early Wellington. Wellington,  
Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd.

Wellington Harbour Board (Map compiled and drawn by) 1936.  
Historical plans of reclamations in the Port of  
Wellington (Port Nicholson).

Wise's N.Z. Post Office Directories, 1946-1986. Auckland,  
Wises Publications Ltd.