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**New International Selection**  
**Full Documentation Fiche 2003**

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**composed by national/regional working party of: New Zealand**

International working party for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: Parnell Baths  
source: Photographs by Lauren Speer  
date: 23 January 2014

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## 1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

### 1.1 Data for identification

current name: Parnell Baths

former/original/variant name: Parnell Swimming Pool

number and name of street: 158 St Stephens Avenue, Parnell; alternative address and main access via Judges Bay Road, Parnell.

town: Auckland

province/state: Auckland

post code: 1052

lot: Part Allotment 23 Section 2

country: New Zealand

Auckland Subdivision Parts

national topographical grid reference: n/a

Auckland Harbour Board Grants

current typology: Public swimming pool and changing rooms

former/original/variant typology: As current

comments on typology: The Baths were purpose built in 1958 to provide a recreational aquatic facility adjacent to Auckland's waterfront for the general public.

### 1.2 Status of protection

protected by: The Parnell Baths are scheduled by the Auckland Council in both the operative Auckland City District Plan – Isthmus Section 1999, and the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan 2013 (to be operative in approximately 2015/16).

grade: Category B (in both district plans)

date: 1999 (Auckland City District Plan - Isthmus Section); and 2013 (proposed Auckland Unitary Plan)

valid for: whole building, including the exterior and interior, and its surrounds.

remarks: Auckland City District Plan – Isthmus Section: Map reference B10-16.<sup>1</sup>

Auckland Proposed Unitary Plan: Schedule Number: 01708; Scheduled for historical significance and physical attributes.<sup>2</sup>

Note: Fort Resolution, an early European fortification, was located south of the Parnell Baths. The site is now registered as a protected archaeological site in Appendix 3a of the Auckland City District Plan – Isthmus Section along with recognition that it was an area of traditional Maori occupation. The site is scheduled for its significant historic/cultural, scientific/educational and visual amenity values. Map reference B10-17 pertains to this archaeological feature on Point Resolution, located between Judges

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<sup>1</sup> Auckland Council, 'Appendix 1: Schedule of Buildings, Objects, Heritage Properties or Places of Special Value and those subject to Heritage Orders', *Auckland Council District Plan Operative Auckland City – Isthmus Section 1999*, Accessed January 22, 2014, p. 8, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/district/App1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Auckland Council, 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places', *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*, Accessed January 22, 2014, p. 76, <http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendices%20PDF/Appendix%209/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Bay and Hobson Bay.<sup>3</sup> The fort's position has also been registered in the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan 2013 as a Category B protected archaeological site. The schedule refers to its concrete and metal remnants which are of historic, knowledge and aesthetic value. Site reference: R11\_1718; Schedule number: 01570.<sup>4</sup>

The Tamaki Drive cliff face, similarly located to the south and southwest of the Parnell Baths, has been registered as a protected geological feature in Appendix 3b of the Auckland City District Plan – Isthmus Section. The site has been scheduled for its scientific/educational and visual amenity values. A specific note is made in the register of the site's Parnell Grit geological formation within this cliff line (Map reference: B10-06).<sup>5</sup>

### 1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): Auckland's Waterfront including Judges Bay and Hobson Bay, Point Park, Point Resolution Bridge (2013), North Island main trunk railway (1927), and Tamaki Drive (1929).

visual relations: The Parnell Baths are situated at the base of Point Resolution, a headland located between Judges Bay and Hobson Bay. The Baths form part of the sea lagoon created in Judges Bay by the construction of both Tamaki Drive and the adjoining North Island main trunk railway line in the late 1920s.

The Baths face out towards the Waitemata Harbour. The Baths' distinctive modern pavilion with its vibrant exterior mural design at first floor level can be clearly seen from the harbour. The pavilion is nestled up against the cliff face. The pavilion's main entry is located on its north elevation, which overlooks the pools to the Waitemata Harbour and then on to Rangitoto Island.

The pavilion building has been designed to form part of the pedestrian walkway connection between the waterfront and Judges Bay. A newly rebuilt Point Resolution Bridge (2013) to the north-east of the Baths provides the key pedestrian link to the waterfront over Tamaki Drive from the Point Resolution headland and Judges Bay, the Parnell Baths, and the suburb of Parnell. This is an important link which serves commuters, local residents, Parnell Baths users, and people enjoying the inner-city waterfront area. This linkage has existed for almost a century.

functional relations: Construction and operation of public baths by the Auckland City Council was not uncommon by the time the Parnell Baths were built. The council's first public pools were the Hardinge Street Pools (1881), followed by the indoor Albert Street Pools (1886). The Parnell Baths was one of three public baths constructed by the Auckland City Council between 1912 and 1914. The first of these was the Shelly Beach Baths (1912), followed by the original Parnell Baths (1914), and then the Tepid

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<sup>3</sup> Auckland Council, 'Appendix 3a: Schedule of Archaeological Features', *Auckland Council District Plan Operative Auckland City – Isthmus Section 1999*, Accessed January 22, 2014, p. 4, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/district/App3A.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Auckland Council, 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places', *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*, Accessed January 22, 2014, p. 66,

<http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendices%20PDF/Appendix%2009/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Auckland Council, 'Appendix 3b: Schedule of Geological Features', *Auckland Council District Plan Operative Auckland City – Isthmus Section 1999*, Accessed January 22, 2014, p. 6, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/district/App3B.pdf>

Baths (1914).<sup>6</sup> These three baths all used sea saltwater when first built but today the Parnell Baths are one of only a few public saltwater pools using sea water in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. History of building(s) etc.

### 2.1 Chronology

commission or competition date: In 1951, the Auckland City Council initiated the comprehensive redevelopment of the 1914 Parnell Baths. The Baths had been operating for 35 years and had undergone various incremental changes but by 1951 they were greatly in need of an upgrade.

design period(s): Preliminary sketch plans: July 1951 – 1953

Final design and working drawings: September 1953 – February 1955

Specifications complete: September 1955

start of site work: Loan approved for the work by the Local Government Loans Board: June 1953

Stage One construction: August 1953 – November 1954

Stage Two building permit issued: 8 November 1955

Stage Two construction: April – October 1956

completion/inauguration: The building had no official opening however it may be considered complete with the installation of the murals designed for the north façade of the pavilion in early 1957.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: By 1900 swimming was a popular sport and leisure activity in New Zealand.<sup>9</sup> Such was the demand for public swimming pool facilities, that by the early 1900s the Auckland City Council had included the construction of public pools in its works programmes as a matter of importance to meet the expectations of the city's growing population.<sup>10</sup> This was facilitated by the setting up of a 1911 committee of representatives from both the Auckland Harbour Board and the City Council to decide on three sites required for the provision of new saltwater pools.<sup>11</sup> By doing this the Council recognised the need for better saltwater swimming facilities than it had previously provided, along with the need for safer and relatively more private places to swim than the surrounding beaches at a time when swimming was becoming popular, especially with women.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths, Judges Bay: Cultural Heritage Assessment', Conservation Plan, Auckland, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Skinner, 'T. K. Donner: The Architect', BArch research report, The University of Auckland, 1994, pp. 177-180.

<sup>9</sup> Sue Monk, 'Proud Aucklanders take the Plunge: Salt Water Swimming Baths in the Early Twentieth Century', MA research report, Massey University, 2002, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Graham W. A. Bush, *Decently and in Order: The Centennial History of the Auckland City Council*, (Auckland: Collins, 1971), p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Monk, 'Proud Aucklanders take the Plunge', p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> Monk, 'Proud Aucklanders take the Plunge', p. 18.

Consequently, following the commissioning of the Shelly Beach Baths in 1912 and the Tepid Baths in 1914, the Parnell Baths were officially opened to the public on 7 March 1914.<sup>13</sup> At the time the Parnell Baths were said to be the largest pools in the southern hemisphere, measuring 194 by 149 feet (just under 60m by 45m) with a volume of nearly 1 million gallons of sea water.<sup>14</sup> The Baths instantly became a popular aquatic amenity adjacent to the already renowned Judges Bay as a recreational hub.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike the indoor Tepid Baths, both the Parnell Baths and the Shelly Beach Baths were outdoor, coldwater pools. They were to be used during the summer months and to be closed during the winter. The initial design brief for the Parnell Baths included an unconcreted pool floor and rudimentary dressing sheds.<sup>16</sup>

Major reclamation work in the surrounding area of the pools was undertaken during the 1920s and 1930s. This allowed for the construction of Tamaki Drive and the North Island Main trunk railway line. In essence, Judges Bay became a sea lagoon as a result and the Baths were part of this formation. Auckland City was growing rapidly at this time, during which the Baths witnessed a series of minor changes. The pool floor was laid with concrete at a cost of £1,200; the north and west walls were built up by two feet; chlorinators were installed (1928); and filtration and chlorinated plants were installed by Candy Filters Ltd (1939).<sup>17</sup>

In 1945, the City Council moved the control of its public baths from its Works Department to its Health Committee. The latter was instrumental in introducing changes at Parnell in the late 1940s and the 1950s.<sup>18</sup> Discussion about the replacement of existing buildings at the Baths began as early as 1947.<sup>19</sup>

design brief: Design of the new pools at the Parnell Baths was initially contracted out by the Council to the architectural firm M.K and R.F Draffin in June 1950. The new Baths' design was to include a two-storey changing building and filter shed in the southwest corner of the site. However, the Draffin scheme was dismissed in March 1951 with the Architects' Department of the Council then taking over the design brief to modernise and upgrade the pools. Preliminary sketch plans of the first council scheme began in July 1951, entailing an ambitious £245,300 redevelopment, double what was ultimately spent on the project. A second scheme was prepared in December 1951 and this became the core of the final development. In September 1952, the Health Committee approved the scheme followed by the Local Government Loans Board approval of a £101,000 loan for the realisation of the design.<sup>20</sup> This design was further revised to reach its final form in 1953, comprising a two-level building along the base of the cliff, swimming clubrooms to the east of the pool, the filter building to the west of the pool, and the ramp entrance from the west, via Judges Bay. This is the scheme we see today.

building/construction: The construction process was divided into two stages. The first stage was undertaken during the winter season of 1954 and was completed in November of the same year. This stage included the reconstruction of the pool and the erection of a new building at the complex's west end to house the filtration plant as well as a café and sun deck. The work was carried out by Commercial Industries Ltd and Candy Filters (NZ) Ltd. A balance tank was installed on the north side

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<sup>13</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> David Pointon, *A Dip in the Clear, Blue Water: A History of Auckland City Swimming Baths & Pools*, (Auckland: Auckland City Council, 1984), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Pointon, *A Dip in the Clear, Blue Water*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 177.

of the site, enclosed by a timber deck. The total cost of the first stage was £62,000, exceeding the original estimate of £47,700.<sup>21</sup>

The second stage was constructed and completed in 1956. This stage complemented the new pool filtration plant with the demolition of the Baths' earlier buildings and their replacement with a new two-storey reinforced concrete building located at the base of the cliffs. The firms J. R. Humphries Ltd. and Scarborough Brothers undertook this work. The building permit had been issued the previous year on 8 November 1955. Preliminary cost estimates for the construction of this stage were calculated at £60,000.<sup>22</sup>

completed situation: The complex was completed in early 1957 with the installation of the Turkington murals on the north facade of the pavilion.

No official opening was held for these substantially upgraded and modernised Parnell Baths. In 1958 the Architects' Division of the Council was awarded the NZIA Gold Medal for the project. In April 1959, following this recognition at a national level, the Baths featured in an article on New Zealand architecture written by Nikolaus Pevsner and published in the British journal, the *Architectural Review*.<sup>23</sup>

original situation or character of site: In 1913 Auckland City Council acquired 23 acres of land in Judges Bay which spanned from Point Campbell in the west to Point Resolution in the east. This land included both the Sir John Logan Campbell and Gillies Estates. Prior to the purchase of this land, the local Borough Engineer, J. Roger, carried out an investigation of possible locations for the Parnell Baths and recommended the current site as part of this land purchase. The Parnell Baths were then built at the base of Point Resolution on the northeast flank of Judges Bay. Chosen for its central location and convenience between Auckland's highly populated central and eastern suburbs, the site was a sloping rock bed which was to be used for the base of the inter-tidal pools.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner/patron: Auckland City Council

architect(s): A. J. Dickson (Director of Works), Tibor K. Donner (chief architect, Auckland City Council), Ewen M. Wainscott (deputy chief architect and project architect, Auckland City Council), Ralph E. Wilkinson (architect, Auckland City Council), George Kenny (architect, Auckland City Council)

landscape/garden designer(s): n/a

other designer(s): James Turkington (artist) for the coloured glass mosaic wall murals

consulting engineer(s): Vern Coleman (senior structural engineer)

building contractor(s): First stage contractors: Commercial Industries Ltd, Candy Filters (NZ) Ltd

Second stage contractors: J. R. Humphries Ltd, Scarborough Brothers Ltd

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<sup>21</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', pp. 178-180.

<sup>22</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', pp. 178-180.

<sup>23</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 4.

Both the Council's chief architect, Tibor Donner, and his deputy, Ewen Wainscott, were officially assigned to the design of the Parnell Baths. As to who should be credited specifically with the design, there are differences in opinion. Trademark design elements, such as the open north face concourse of the pavilion and the mural design, are consistent with Donner's design approach. However, the key perspective drawing of the design scheme clearly states 'Designed by E. M. Wainscott'.<sup>25</sup> Wainscott's initials, E.M.W, also appear on the majority of the Council's 1957 engineers' drawings. These include: as 'drawn by' or 'checked by'. The drawings were then signed off by Donner as the City Architect.<sup>26</sup> Architectural historian Robin Skinner therefore suggests that it was likely to have been a shared authorship.<sup>27</sup>

Ralph Wilkinson and George Kenny must also be recognised in the design and construction. Wilkinson played a major role in preparing the perspective presentation drawings of the Baths as well as the engineering drawings. Kenny designed the steelwork and worked on the butterfly roof details.<sup>28</sup>

Tibor Karl Donner (1907-1993) was born in Hungary and grew up in Romania. His family moved to New Zealand when he was 21 years old. Unlike many of New Zealand's émigré architects, he studied architecture after his arrival here, at Auckland University College, rather than in Europe. Donner worked in private practice from 1932 to 1938; in the Public Works Department / Ministry of Works from 1938 to 1948, on both civilian and military/defence projects, including military hospitals; and for Auckland City Council from 1948 to 1967. It is in the latter capacity that he is best known, with key works including the Khyber Pump Station (1947), the Parnell Baths (1951-57), the Civic Building (1954-66) and Ellen Melville Hall (1958-62). His official title was chief architect (with lower case letters), working under the City Engineer.<sup>29</sup> Donner's own house and associated studio buildings in the west Auckland suburb of Titirangi (1947) are also much admired, partly as the site of his experiments with ceramic tiled building elements.<sup>30</sup>

Ewen Martin Wainscott (1920-1987) was born in Hamilton and grew up in Napier where he attended Napier Boys' High School. He studied architecture at Auckland University College, graduating in 1946. Before becoming a qualified architect Wainscott worked with a building contractor in 1936 and as a draughtsman for architecture firm E.A & L.G Williams in 1939, both in the Hawke's Bay. Wainscott travelled to London where he worked at the London County Council under Sir Robert Matthews in 1948 and then as chief assistant to Reginald H. Uren of Slater, Moberly & Uren Architects. In this capacity, Wainscott contributed significantly to the design of a large department store for John Lewis Ltd. and the high school in Holland Park. On returning to New Zealand, Wainscott worked as deputy chief architect of the Auckland City Council from 1950 to 1967 and became the council's chief architect from 1967, remaining in this position until his retirement in 1987.<sup>31</sup> It is as deputy chief architect and chief architect that Wainscott is best known, for his major contribution to the city's architectural opus including the Parnell Baths (NZIA Gold Medal 1958), Glen Innes Baths and Point Erin Baths (1964), as

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<sup>25</sup> ACC File 034, 'Parnell Baths – Restoration Stages 1-2', 2 September 1952 – 1956, Engineer Drawings. Auckland Council Archives, Auckland, NZ.

<sup>26</sup> ACC File 015, 'Drawings of the Parnell Baths, Judges Bay including site plan and floor plan', 1957, Part 7-10, Architects Drawings, Auckland Council Archives, Auckland, NZ.

<sup>27</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Robin Skinner, 'Disarticulated High Rise: The Auckland City Administration Building', *Habitus 2000* (conference), Perth, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> For information on the Donner House, Parnell Baths, Civic Building and Ellen Melville Hall, see Julia Gatley (ed), *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), pp. 47, 78, 117, 149.

<sup>31</sup> 'New Editorial Consultants – Wide Experience Will Augment Home and Building', *Home & Building*, April 1 1970, p. 7.

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well as the new Central Library (1968), the reconstruction of the City Art Gallery (1969), the New City Workshops (1969, NZIA Silver Medal), and his most outstanding work, the Aotea Centre (1990, NZIA Silver Medal). Wainscott's significant contribution to Auckland's civic architecture was recognised in 1987 when he was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire).<sup>32</sup> In tribute, architect Ian Reynolds wrote that Wainscott 'helped to create an enduring monument to his generation'.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name: Kenneth Cross

association: Kenneth Cross, the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, visited the Baths during his visit to New Zealand in 1956.<sup>34</sup>

name: Nikolaus Pevsner

association: Nikolaus Pevsner, English architectural critic and editor of the *Architectural Review*, followed the suggestion of the Architectural Centre in Wellington and visited the Parnell Baths during his visit to New Zealand in 1958. Pevsner published an article on the architecture of New Zealand the following year including a feature on the Baths.<sup>35</sup>

event: n/a

period: n/a

## 2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: major restoration

date(s): 2003

circumstances/ reasons for change: In 2003 the City Council undertook a major renovation of the pool complex.

effects of changes: The Parnell Baths' upgrading and refurbishment was undertaken by Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd for the Council. The redevelopment was significant. The works involved in this project encompassed: the restoration of the main building including reinstating the original detailing, spatial arrangement, colour schemes and materials as well as upgrading the bathroom and changing facilities; site works including gate and fence upgrades as well as the reforming of the main access entry ramp, paving surrounding the pools, flagpoles and shade canvases; pool redesign incorporating a new Peninsula Walkway spanning the length of the pool, which divided the children's pool area from the main pool, two heated spa pools, an in-pool playground, and conservation of the original fountain;

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<sup>32</sup> Ian Reynolds, 'Obituary: Ewen Martin Wainscott', *Architecture New Zealand Journal*, November/December 1987, p.25

<sup>33</sup> Reynolds, 'Obituary', p.25

<sup>34</sup> 'Parnell Swimming Pool: The N.Z.I.A Gold Medal Award 1957', *Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, Vol. 25, No. 4, May 1958, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 15.

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an extension to the plant building with the addition of a ground floor café wrapped in glazing, which adjoins the newly paved and grassed area, administration offices retrofitted on the upper floor as well as the construction of a sundeck; and the alteration of the staff and store building to provide new massage rooms.<sup>36</sup>

These changes reinstated the Baths' key heritage values by restoring the building to its earlier 1950s form while also increasing the functionality of the whole aquatic facility. This restoration project was awarded two Resene Colour awards, a Commercial Exterior award and an overall 'Grand Prix', in 2003.<sup>37</sup>

persons/organisations involved: Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd. (project architects) and the Auckland City Council.

type of change: repair and maintenance

date(s): 2010

circumstances/ reasons for change: treatment of pool leakage etc

effects of changes: The Parnell Baths were further conserved by Matthews & Matthews Architects in 2010. This project was predominantly for maintenance and repair. The 2010 works involved: the main pools being relined in concrete due to significant leakages of treated water into the harbour through cracks in the pool's concrete shell (partial retiling of the pools was also undertaken at this time); roof repairs were made to the main building including the replacement of the valley gutter, the addition of purlins and the modification of flashings; repainting of the complex, both the exterior and interior, in the 2003 colour scheme excluding the men's and women's changing rooms, and the reception area which were all upgraded and their colour schemes modified; and the original ceiling tiles were replaced with perforated ply acoustic tiles with the lighting fixtures updated.<sup>38</sup>

persons/organisations involved: Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd. (project architects), Aspec Construction Ltd. (main contractor) and the Auckland Council.

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<sup>36</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 17.

### 3. Description of building(s) etc.

#### 3.1 Site/building character

*Summarize main character and give notes on surviving site/building(s)/part(s) of area.*

*If a site: principle features and zones of influence; main elements in spatial composition.*

*If a building: main features, construction and materials.*

The Parnell Baths are located on the north-east flank of Judges Bay at the base of Point Resolution in Parnell. The Baths sit adjacent to Auckland's waterfront with views out towards Devonport and Rangitoto Island. They are contained within Judges Bay but are separated from the Waitemata Harbour by reclamation undertaken for both the North Island main trunk railway line into the Auckland's CBD as well as Tamaki Drive, both being constructed in the 1920s.

Like many other civic works completed by the Council at the time, the Parnell Baths are an example of international modernism. An ambitious and bold scheme, the Baths' design incorporates many modernist concepts in its 'rational modular planning approach; external articulation and expression of the functions within; and the use of new forms, materials and construction techniques'.<sup>39</sup> The project was intended to create a "Lido" atmosphere: [a] glamorous, modern, seafront bathing facility'.<sup>40</sup>

The Baths complex comprises two outdoor pools, two separate outdoor spa pools, an in-pool playground, a deck for lounging and sunbathing, a grassed area, and three buildings. The main 60m-long saltwater pool is separated from the children's playground, spa and pool area by the incorporation of a 'Peninsula Walkway'. This walkway extends from the east to the west side of the pool area and includes a second in-built spa pool to the east. A timber slat deck runs along the north edge of the main pool where the 1970s sun loungers sit in alignment to the pool. A grassed area to the west of the pools accommodates tables and chairs. The disposition of the buildings throughout the site, including the main pavilion building to the south, the plant room and cafeteria building to the west, and the lifeguard shed to the north-east, is consistent with the modernist emphasis on the rational, logical arrangement of space.<sup>41</sup>

Nestled up against the Parnell Cliffs, the striking 1950s two-storey modernist pavilion overlooks the pool and timber deck to the north. The building has a simple rectilinear form with a butterfly roof. The first floor is supported by concrete pilotis, with the ground floor recessed; this creates an illusion of the building floating at first floor level. The pilotis extend the full length of the building to support the cantilevered accessway on the north side, constructed of 6ft. 6in. (2m) concrete slabs, while providing a shaded colonnaded walkway at ground level. The pedestrian accessway provides a link from Judges Bay to the waterfront via the ramp access at Judges Bay and the Point Resolution pedestrian bridge over Tamaki Drive.

The main north elevation features a stylised mosaic mural designed by James Turkington in collaboration with the architect Tibor Donner. The mural is adjacent to the integrated pedestrian accessway, on both sides of the centrally located main entrance to the building at first floor level. The main entrance has glass panels to ceiling height. The abstract male and female swimmers in the mural were created with coloured chips of vitrolite scattered and pressed into cement on an asbestos backing sheet.<sup>42</sup> The two 15.6m by 1.8m sections of the mural comprise a number of 1.35m by 1.2m panels.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony and Jane Matthews, 'Parnell Baths', in Julia Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 65.

Timber screening at the end of the cantilevered accessway is also a key design element, creating interesting shadow patterns on these external walls.

Due to the site's restrictive natural topography, with the cliffs behind and the pool edge in front, the building has a narrow footprint with a length of 52m, a width of 10m and a total floor area of 1020m<sup>2</sup>. Loadbearing reinforced concrete has been used as the primary structural system. Concrete and brick wall panels divide the interiors, with these painted in a bold colour scheme including yellow, reds, greens, and blues. Metal roof construction over structural steel bents have been used to form the butterfly roof over the changing rooms, with windows placed along the sides to allow sunlight and ventilation. Flat concrete slab roof construction has been used in other areas.<sup>44</sup>

The main entry into the complex is at first floor level. This floor comprises a centrally located admissions desk with an internal stairwell behind; male and female changing rooms are on either side of the desk along with a swimwear shop to the west. Each changing area has a separate external staircase link to the pool area, located at the east and west ends of the building. The first aid room, a storeroom, office and communal lockers are located on the east side at ground level with a large meeting room to the west.

The main building is complemented by two others – the staff and store/equipment building to the east and the plant room and café building to the west. The single-storey staff and store building comprises the lifeguard staffroom and pool equipment storeroom and is constructed from brick with a metal roof carried on timber framing; it was part of the original 1958 scheme. Brick has been used on three of the four elevations (west, south and east). Attached to the south elevation is an outdoor wooden pergola with seating beneath. Large wooden doors provide access to the storeroom on the west elevation. The north elevation consists predominantly of glazing with a timber-framed door for access to the staffroom. A timber partition wall divides the two internal rooms.

The plant room and café building is predominantly two-storeyed and cubic shaped, and is part of the original design and development of 1954. The building is constructed from reinforced concrete. The large plant room roller door (accessed from the Judges Bay public car park) is painted red. Yellow ceiling panels have been used in the now extended café. This 2003 single storey café addition complements the older two-storey building, with an extended flat roof and the use of glazing for all three of its elevations.

### 3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: public swimming sports and recreational facility

comments: Since their original construction in 1914, the Parnell Baths have been open for use every summer season from late October until early April.

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<sup>43</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> 'Parnell Swimming Pool,' p. 102.

### 3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: Overall, the buildings and pools of the Parnell Baths facility appear to be in excellent condition, reflecting their major restoration and upgrade in 2003 and the more recent (2010) restoration, with both projects undertaken by Matthews and Matthews Architects Ltd for the Council. The pool complex is maintained and managed by the Council and continues to fulfil its function as a major outdoor summer swimming facility for the people of Auckland. Landscaping within the site has been well maintained for use by pool goers.

of surrounding area: The surrounding area has remained relatively unchanged since its 1958 development. In 2013, the newly rebuilt Point Resolution Bridge to the northeast of the Baths replaced the original 1927 pedestrian bridge. A Warren & Mahoney Architects design, the steel and concrete bridge spans 80 metres across Tamaki Drive to connect the Parnell Baths and the inner residential suburb of Parnell with the Waitemata Harbour waterfront.<sup>45</sup>

In 2011, the firm Reset Urban Design and Auckland Council redeveloped Judges Bay to become a public recreational park. Works in Judges Bay included 'the formation of a large-scale connection working with the existing contours to minimise excavation, using stormwater treatment to cleanse and reveal; creating a central bayside plaza; introducing opportunities for healthy activities by opening up engagement with the water; providing seating for events; relocating changing facilities to a central location'.<sup>46</sup> This redevelopment is complementary to the Parnell Baths as an additional aquatic facility and assists with the continuation of Judges Bay as a popular recreational area.

The Parnell Trust has created a podcast that is available for members of the public to download from its website. It takes one on a walking tour around Judges Bay, the Parnell Rose Gardens and the Baths, to learn about the area's history.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

*Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site*

Following the extensive and comprehensive refurbishment and upgrade projects of 2003 and 2010, the pools have recent and functioning seawater filtering systems and up-to-date bathroom, changing and cafe facilities.

Note: Because the Baths are scheduled as a Category B in the operative Isthmus Section of the Auckland City District Plan as well as the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan, resource consent would be required if additions, alterations or demolition was proposed.

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<sup>45</sup> Justine Harvey, 'Point Resolution Bridge', *Architecture New Zealand Journal*, vol. 6, 2013, pp. 64-68.

<sup>46</sup> Auckland Design Manual, 'Case Study: Judges Bay Reserve', Accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-for-places/parks/typologies/historic-heritage/case-studies/judges-bay-reserve>

<sup>47</sup> Parnell Trust, 'Heritage Walks about Central Auckland', Accessed 30 January 2013, <http://www.parnell.org.nz/Parnell-Trust-Heritage-Walks.htm#zone>

## 4. Evaluation

*Give the scientific reasons for selection for DOCOMOMO documentation*

### ***Intrinsic value***

#### **4.1 technical evaluation:**

Unlike most New Zealand pools, the Parnell Baths are saltwater pools, using sea water. Today they are a rare example of the use of seawater for public swimming pool facilities. However when they were first constructed in 1914 this type of facility was not uncommon in Auckland. The original construction of the pool was formed by a sea-wall to enclose a basin within Judges Bay that filled with tidal movements.<sup>48</sup> The pools today provides a range of aquatic activities from the training of competitive swimmers to recreational use by the public.

The scale of the pools required a large plant room to accommodate engineering and water services technology. Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd's conservation plan states that 'evidence exists of the large-scale mechanical plant and equipment needed for the scale of the facility together with evidence of the original pool structure'.<sup>49</sup>

The buildings constructed in the 1950s redevelopment are of technical interest for their innovative structural design using reinforced concrete construction. 'The use of fine cantilevered slabs for decks, walkways and roofs demonstrates reinforced concrete technology being pushed to structural limits'.<sup>50</sup> The reinforced concrete structural system is expressed clearly throughout the interior.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, the mural design by James Turkington in collaboration with Tibor Donner employs an innovative construction technique. Ground coloured vitrolite chips were scattered over a layer of soft white cement paste on top of an asbestos backing sheet to form the abstract male and female swimmers. The chips were pressed down into sections divided by metal strips moulded off the 1:1 scale drawing Donner had produced of the mural artwork; the metal strips were then removed.<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.2. social evaluation:**

Social changes which occurred at the turn of the twentieth century resulted in the transformation of swimming from a private segregated activity in which relatively few participated, into a popular one where males and females swim in the same facility at the same time and the public at large are able to enjoy swimming facilities at both local beaches and public swimming pools. The provision by the City Council of three saltwater pools in the early 1910s (Shelly Beach Baths, the Tepid Baths and the Parnell Baths) was an important step in achieving this transformation of recreational swimming patterns and enjoyment.

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<sup>48</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p.64.

<sup>49</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 34.

<sup>50</sup> Antony and Jane Matthews, 'Parnell Baths', p. 78.

<sup>51</sup> Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 'Parnell Baths', p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 65.

The major redevelopment of the Baths in the 1950s is emblematic of the confidence of Auckland City Council at the time: it is a landmark facility, bold and ambitious and a symbol of a progressive city and its council, at a time when Auckland was the fastest growing city in New Zealand.

The revitalisation of the pool in 2003 reinstated its 'Lido' atmosphere as a fashionable recreation facility where patrons can swim and sun themselves or enjoy a hot spa.

The Parnell Swimming Club was established at the time that the Baths were completed in 1914 and the Club celebrated its 100 year anniversary in 2014. This competitive swimming club is the second oldest in New Zealand following the Waitemata Swimming Club established in 1907. The club has produced many top performing swimmers, including Olympians Liz Coster and Debbie Tanner.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:**

The Parnell Baths are an important Auckland landmark. They can be viewed from Tamaki Drive and from out on the Waitemata Harbour. When it was built this complex, including the largest pool in Australasia (10m longer than an Olympic size pool), was an ambitious public baths scheme and part of a series of modernist public works developed by the Auckland City Council architects. The affluent and rapidly growing city of Auckland had an international outlook on design, as evidenced by the international modernist forms of the Parnell Baths.

The Parnell Baths were designed by the Auckland City Council's chief architect, Tibor Donner, and deputy chief architect, Ewen Wainscott; both were important architects in New Zealand during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Donner had a particular interest in materials and technology and experimented with glass embedded mosaic techniques, all clearly evident in the design, structure and detailing of the Parnell Baths. Donner appears to have been significantly influenced by mosaic works seen on several buildings at Mexico University during his world fact-finding tour of the 1950s; Skinner suggests that these were the likely stimulus for and influence upon the Baths' mural.<sup>54</sup>

#### ***Comparative significance***

#### **4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)**

The Parnell Baths are of significance as a rare example of sea saltwater baths in New Zealand and they are of considerable architectural merit. The Baths' integrated 1950s modern design provides an example of collaboration between an artist and an architect, with Turkington's mosaic panels constructed using with a technique proposed by Donner. The mosaics and the Baths are designed to be a visual landmark along Auckland's Waitemata Harbour waterfront, and an important focal point with the cliffs of Judges Bay behind them when viewed from the Waitemata Harbour.

The Parnell Baths' national significance has been recognised by its inclusion in *Long Live the Modern*, a book developed under the auspices of DOCOMOMO New Zealand and which identifies 180 of New

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<sup>53</sup> Parnell Swim Club, 'Parnell Centenary 2013', Accessed 28 January 2013, <http://www.sportsground.co.nz/swimparnell/89299/>

<sup>54</sup> Skinner, 'T. K. Donner', p. 64.

Zealand's best and most important extant modern buildings, sites and neighbourhoods.<sup>55</sup> Wellington's Freyberg Pool is also included.

#### **4.5 historic and reference values:**

The city of Auckland was substantially developed and modernised after World War II with the design of its first motorways in 1950 and their construction that decade; the design and construction of the Auckland Harbour Bridge from 1951 to 1959; and initiatives from 1951 to design and then build a downtown civic centre with its completion in the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> The Parnell Baths was one of these council-initiated projects that entailed a bold and ambitious redevelopment, designed in a post-war modernist language. The Baths' design was both a visual landmark and a symbol representing the progressive nature of the Auckland City Council and indeed the city itself.

The Parnell Baths are also of social significance. For 100 years, the pools have provided a recreational facility to Parnell residents as well as the wider Auckland community. Initially the pools were little more than a fenced off area with a seawall within which to swim. With their redevelopment in the 1950s, this sea saltwater facility has also come to provide a centre for residents to learn water skills, a unique training facility for Auckland's swimming clubs, particularly the Parnell Swimming Club.

The Parnell Baths reflect changing social attitudes during the early twentieth century, including attitudes towards gender and the body, and the emphasis placed on physical health. The Baths were designed and are used as a facility for both sexes and all members of the public.<sup>57</sup>

## **5. Documentation**

### **5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):**

Auckland Council Archives, 44-46 Lorne Street, Auckland 1010.

Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand.

### **5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):**

ACC File 034. 'Parnell Baths – Restoration Stages 1-2'. 2 September 1952 – 1956. Engineers Drawings. Auckland Council Archives, Auckland, NZ.

ACC File 015. 'Drawings of the Parnell Baths, Judges Bay including site plan and floor plan'. 1957. Part 7-10. Architects Drawings. Auckland Council Archives, Auckland, NZ.

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<sup>55</sup> Antony and Jane Matthews, 'Parnell Baths', p. 78.

<sup>56</sup> See Elizabeth Aitken Rose, 'Auckland's First Motorways' and 'Auckland Harbour Bridge', in Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern*, pp. 63, 91.

<sup>57</sup> For information on the social and cultural influences as well as civic enterprise that resulted in the development of the Parnell Baths in 1914, see Sue Monk, 'Proud Aucklanders take the Plunge: Salt Water Swimming Baths in the Early Twentieth Century', MA research report, Massey University, 2002.

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Auckland Council. 'Appendix 1: Schedule of Buildings, Objects, Heritage Properties or Places of Special Value and those subject to Heritage Orders'. *Auckland Council District Plan Operative Auckland City – Isthmus Section 1999*. Accessed January 22, 2014.  
<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/district/App1.pdf>

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places'. *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*. Accessed January 22, 2014.  
<http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendicies%20PDF/Appendix%209/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 3a: Schedule of Archaeological Features'. *Auckland Council District Plan Operative Auckland City – Isthmus Section 1999*. Accessed January 22, 2014.  
<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/district/App3A.pdf>

Auckland Council. 'Appendix 9: Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places'. *Proposed Auckland Council Unitary Plan – Schedule of Significant Historic Heritage Places – Part 1: Historic Heritage Places*. Accessed January 22, 2014.

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<http://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Images/September%202013%20version/Appendicies%20PDF/Appendix%209/Appendix%209%20-%20Schedule%20of%20significant%20historic%20heritage%20places%2020130913%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

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Monk, Sue and Joanna Boileau 'Parnell Baths Centenary Book'. Auckland: Waitemata Local Board, Auckland Council & Parnell Heritage. [Forthcoming]

### **5.3 visual material (state location/ address)**

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

Auckland Council Archives, 44 – 46 Lorne Street, Auckland 1010.

Archives New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand.

Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, Auckland.

recent photographs and survey drawings: n/a

film/video/other sources: n/a

### **5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier n/a**

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## 6. Fiche report

name of reporter: Lauren Speer c/- Dr Julia Gatley

address: c/o School of Architecture and Planning, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand

telephone: +64 (0)9 9234656

fax: n/a

e-mail: julia.gatley@auckland.ac.nz

date of report: February 2014

### **examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section**

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Ann McEwan

sign and date: 21 May 2015

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### **examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R**

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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