

Historic Heritage Evaluation

Ceramic House (former)
3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn

July 2021



Historic Heritage Evaluation

Prepared by the Auckland Council Heritage Unit

David Bade, Specialist – Built Heritage
Final, July 2021

Cover image: The front (northern) elevation of Ceramic House (former) (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020).

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1. Executive summary

Ceramic House (former), at 3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn, was evaluated after a public nomination was received in December 2019. Following an initial appraisal, David Bade (Specialist – Built Heritage) determined the building to be a high priority for evaluation as the place appeared likely to meet the threshold for scheduling. It had previously been suggested for scheduling in a New Lynn Town Centre heritage impact report by Dave Pearson Architects in 2009 but the place was not formally nominated at that time.

Ceramic House (former) is located on the western edge of the commercial centre of New Lynn. It was designed in 1967 by renowned architect Neville Price and opened in 1969 as the headquarters of Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd (best known for its Crown Lynn brand).

Ceramic House (former) is recommended to be scheduled as a category A historic heritage place.

Statement of significance

Ceramic House (former), located at 3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn, was built as the headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd in 1969 at the peak of its success when it was the largest pottery company in the southern hemisphere. It has considerable and outstanding heritage significance for its historical, technological, knowledge, aesthetic, context values and physical attributes values.

Crown Lynn, which became the main brand of the company, was an important part of New Zealand's industrial design history, especially with its successes introducing uniquely New Zealand designs and products to an international market. By the 1960s, Crown Lynn pottery was in 60 per cent of New Zealand households and Queen Elizabeth II, on her visit to New Zealand in 1963, visited the Crown Lynn factory, further increasing its status. As its headquarters, Ceramic House embodies this important company.

The building was built to showcase the company's market dominance – including highlighting its products and accommodating a new computer, a technology which was just coming into use by large businesses in New Zealand. Designed by renowned architect, Neville Price, Ceramic House is a three-storey dodecagon (12-sided) shape building with reinforced brick fins separating bays of glazing. The design was groundbreaking in its day, with its use of glazed internal and external walls and having one of, if not the first, glass-walled lifts in New Zealand.

In addition, it was one of the first buildings in Auckland to be specifically built to accommodate and display a computer. This association with the early use of computers in New Zealand gives the building further significance. From 1960 New Zealand's largest businesses and government departments began to explore the use of computers. As a large business, Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd followed this trend, installing an ICT 1901 model computer – the first of its kind in the country. The architect, Neville Price, spent several days observing various computers in Auckland, studying their operation and how data flowed from one area to another.

As a result, he realised a central core was required, where data could radiate to and from. Hence, the design of the 12-sided building with peripheral offices and a central core to house the computer. Computers soon became much smaller and ubiquitous, making bespoke computer buildings unnecessary. Ceramic House (former) therefore is a rare example where a computer defined the form and function of a building.

Ceramic House (former) is significant as a notable work of Neville Price. Price began his architectural practice in 1966 and at one stage had the largest architectural firm in the country. Price notes that the building marked an “exciting point in my career”, as following his design of Ceramic House he began to be commissioned to produce commercial and residential buildings across the city. Neville Price is best-known for the West Plaza building in central Auckland, completed in 1974, which was awarded an Enduring Award by the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 2005. In 2006, *Metro* magazine placed Price at number 21 on its list of the top 25 Aucklanders to have shaped the city. Ceramic House, as his first commercial building, can be seen as a steppingstone towards his most notable design. Price left New Zealand to work in America in 1980, leaving behind a selection of distinctive buildings.

The building also has a strong association with Sir Tom Clark, one of New Zealand’s leading twentieth-century industrialists and the driving force behind Crown Lynn pottery. He retired in 1993 after 62 years of continuous service as director and an employee. Clark had his office in the building and also played an important role in the design of the building alongside Price.

Ceramic House (former) is located on a corner site on the western edge of the main commercial centre of New Lynn. It has significance as a prominent three-storey landmark in New Lynn. At the time, it was described in newspaper articles as ‘One of the most striking buildings in West Auckland’, ‘an arresting landmark in New Lynn’, and ‘it could also become something of a landmark in New Zealand architecture.’

The building stands as a reminder of the long history of New Lynn’s clay industry which developed from the 1860s, reaching its height in the 1960s, before declining in the 1970s and 1980s, and finally ceasing in 2015. Designed to highlight the products of the company, the building’s distinctive brick reminds passers-by of New Lynn’s long clay industry history, of which little remains.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to consider the place located at 3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn, against the criteria for evaluation of historic heritage in the Regional Policy Statement (**RPS**) section (B5.2.2 Policies) of the Auckland Unitary Plan (**AUP**).

The document has been prepared by David Bade, Specialist – Built Heritage, Heritage Unit, Auckland Council. It is solely for the use of Auckland Council for the purpose it is intended in accordance with the agreed scope of work.

3. Identification

Site address(es) and/or location	3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn
Legal description(s) and Record of Title identifier(s), Deeds register and/or Gazette notice information	LOT 1 DP 161309
NZTM grid reference	1749740.41 5913840.74
New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangi Kōrero details	Not on the New Zealand Heritage List
Archaeological site (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act [HNZPTA] 2014, Section 6)	The fabric of the place is not known to predate 1900 and has no identified archaeological values relating to this period
Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) reference(s)	3619
New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site record number(s)	None

4. Scope

This evaluation is based on information available or able to be sourced at the time of writing. Information was gained from Research West archives (Auckland Libraries), the Special Collections of the University of Auckland, Kura Heritage Collections Online and other online research. Additional research may yield new information.

The evaluation is based on historical research and does not address current structural integrity, safety, condition, a systematic assessment of archaeological values, or Mana Whenua values.

A site visit was undertaken on 18 March 2020 to view the exterior of the building from the public realm. The interior was not viewed. A request was made to the owner to view the interior in April 2021, with a follow-up letter in June 2021, but no response was received.

5. Historical summary

In this section, a historical summary of Ceramic House is provided as well as a background on Sir Tom Clark, the visionary behind the headquarters, and the architect, Neville Price.

In Appendix 1, a general history of the New Lynn clay industry and a short history of early computers in businesses in New Zealand is provided.

Ceramic House

Ceramic House was built as the headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd in 1969. At this time, the company was at the peak of its success and was the largest pottery company in the southern hemisphere. The building has been known as a number of names over the years – Ceramic House¹ (the name given by the company), Computer Centre² (the name given in newspapers and articles after the novelty of the computer) and Ceramco House (after the name change of the company).³ Current photographs are shown in Appendix 2 and historic photographs are shown in Appendix 3.

The design brief

In the 1960s, at the height of their business, Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd extended beyond the New Zealand market to include Australia, South East Asia, Japan and the USA. To meet this expansion, the company decided to build a new main headquarters in New Lynn for their executive and administrative staff, close to their main site of manufacturing operations.⁴ The expected cost of the building was \$250,000 (approximately \$4.65m in present-day terms).⁵ In addition, the building was to house a new ICT 1901 computer.⁶ The computer was from the United Kingdom and was one of the latest and most sophisticated computers available at the time, with only

¹ *Western Leader* (18 March 1969); Computer opens in New Lynn. What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand. 'Ceramic House' Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

² Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

³ Thomas & Co (2003). Thomas & Co relocate to Landmark Building, Client News Letter: Christmas 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.thomas.co.nz/co3/news/200312.jsp>.

⁴ 'Striking new building planned for central administration: To house computer'. (1968) Magazine clipping (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Unknown. (1967) 'New Computer/Administration Building to be constructed...': Home and Building 1967. From the Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand. *Western Leader* (18 March 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

two like it in the southern hemisphere.⁷ It was also one of the smallest systems available.⁸

Tom Clark, the head of Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd, commissioned architect Neville Price to design the headquarters in 1967. Clark had met Price in Wellington while motor racing.⁹ The brief for the building was that it had to be constructed using the company's products, emphasising their materials, and had to accommodate the ICT computer and administrative executives.¹⁰

In a 2013 tour of the building, Neville Price talked about the design of the building, and how it was the brainchild of both himself and Tom Clark:¹¹

"It was an exciting point in my career. Tom Clark was the driving force behind the whole thing. He was the one who gave the inspiration and leadership on getting us going.

"Tom Clark called me one day... and said: 'Look we have got this newfangled machine, it is called a computer. It is the way of the future.' Tom was always forward thinking. [He continued:] 'We want to put this in a new house here... I want a building that looks like this. I want a building for the future.'

"Originally it was [going to be] a one storey building. But then they got talking and because of their expansion they decided 'why not have our main administration here'. So that is when this building grew: Tom on the top floor and the directors, then the accounts divisions underneath, and of course the computer."

In order to fit the computer, Price had to design the building to be in a circular shape (a dodecagon) – so it could function with peripheral offices and people moving to and from a central point (Figure 1 and Figure 2).¹² In personal communication with Neville Price in April 2021, Price states:

"As you noted Ceramco were at their peak, and the building design brief was to display their modern approach to their business and to show off their products. The new computer installation was the catalyst, and then dictated the layout."

A 1967 *Home and Building* article describes this process:

'To begin with, architect Neville Price was given a layout based on conventional squares, showing the exact sizes of rooms required and size of all equipment to be installed. To familiarise himself with the actual working requirements of a computer Mr Price then spent several days on a survey of various computers in the city, studying

⁷ 'Striking new building planned for central administration: To house computer'. (1968) Magazine clipping (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140). *Western Leader* (1968, June 4). Six weeks to go. West Auckland Research Centre Collection (New Lynn Bricks and Pottery - Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Co), Auckland Libraries, Auckland New Zealand.

⁸ Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

⁹ Eagles, J. (1973), Business before beauty for this architect, *The Sunday Herald*, July 22 1973.

¹⁰ Unknown. (1967) 'New Computer/Administration Building to be constructed...': *Home and Building* 1967. From the Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

¹¹ The tour occurred on Saturday 14 December 2013 and was organised by Kenny Willis, Lopdell House Arts/Events coordinator. It was recorded by Carolyn Skelton (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

¹² Eagles, J. (1973), Business before beauty for this architect, *Sunday Herald*, July 22 1973.

*their essential operations and how data flows from one area to another. What was needed, he decided, was a central core where data could radiate out to the various departments and back with a minimum of movement and time loss.*¹³

A 1973 *Sunday Herald* article stated that Ceramic House set the pattern for other computer centres overseas.¹⁴

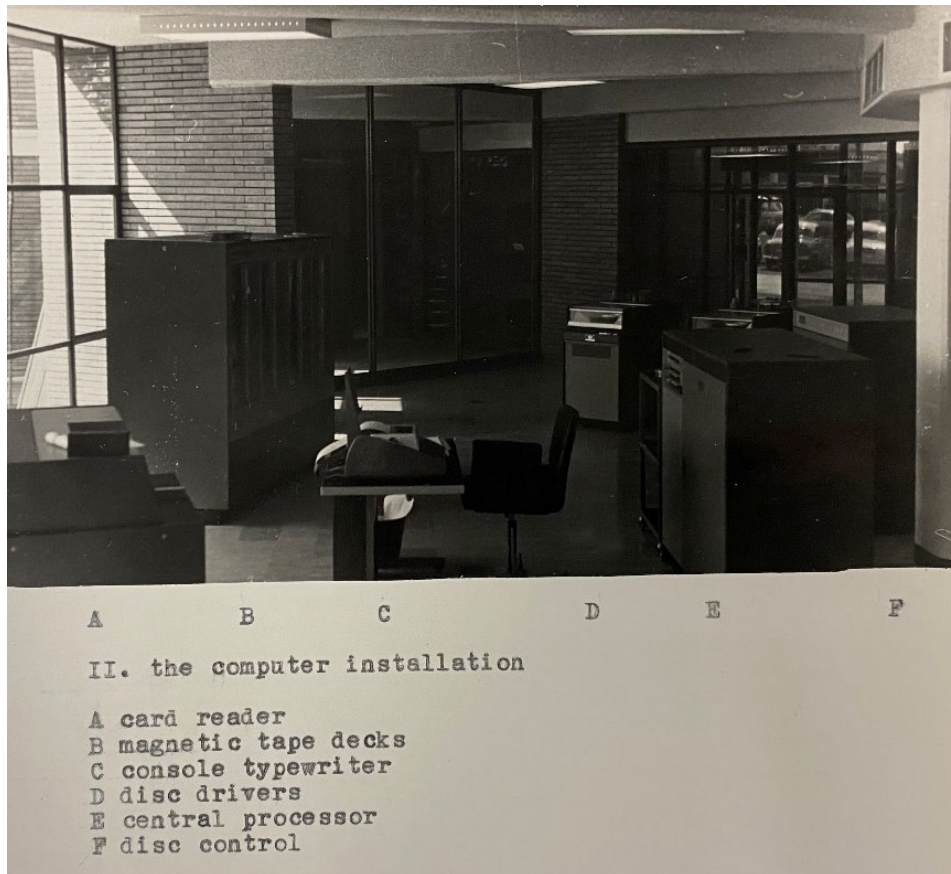


Figure 1. The layout of the computer installation in Ceramic House.¹⁵

The computer was used for all aspects of accounting, sales analytics and ordering, production control and scientific research.¹⁶ In a *Western Leader* article, Eric Mancer, systems controller for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investment Ltd, explained how the computer would be used:

*“With the computer we will be able to work out how many of each product to make at what time, and how to service each market economically – including the domestic market. This is not always easy when you are dealing with a great variety of products and a considerable number of markets. There are a lot of factors involved which we feel are best handled by a computer.”*¹⁷

¹³ Unknown. (1967) ‘New Computer/Administration Building to be constructed...’: Home and Building 1967. From the Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand, p. 12-13.

¹⁴ Eagles, J. (1973), Business before beauty for this architect, *The Sunday Herald*, July 22 1973.

¹⁵ Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd, New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

¹⁶ *Western Leader* (March 18 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The computer ran 24 hours a day, being used by Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd for ten hours and the rest of the time by International Computers (NZ) Ltd, who leased the computer to use as a bureau machine.¹⁸ The government had issued a directive that computers should be put to maximum use and that they should be made available to other firms (however, it was likely this was not widely followed).¹⁹ The machine was programmed and operated by six staff and occupied most the ground floor.²⁰

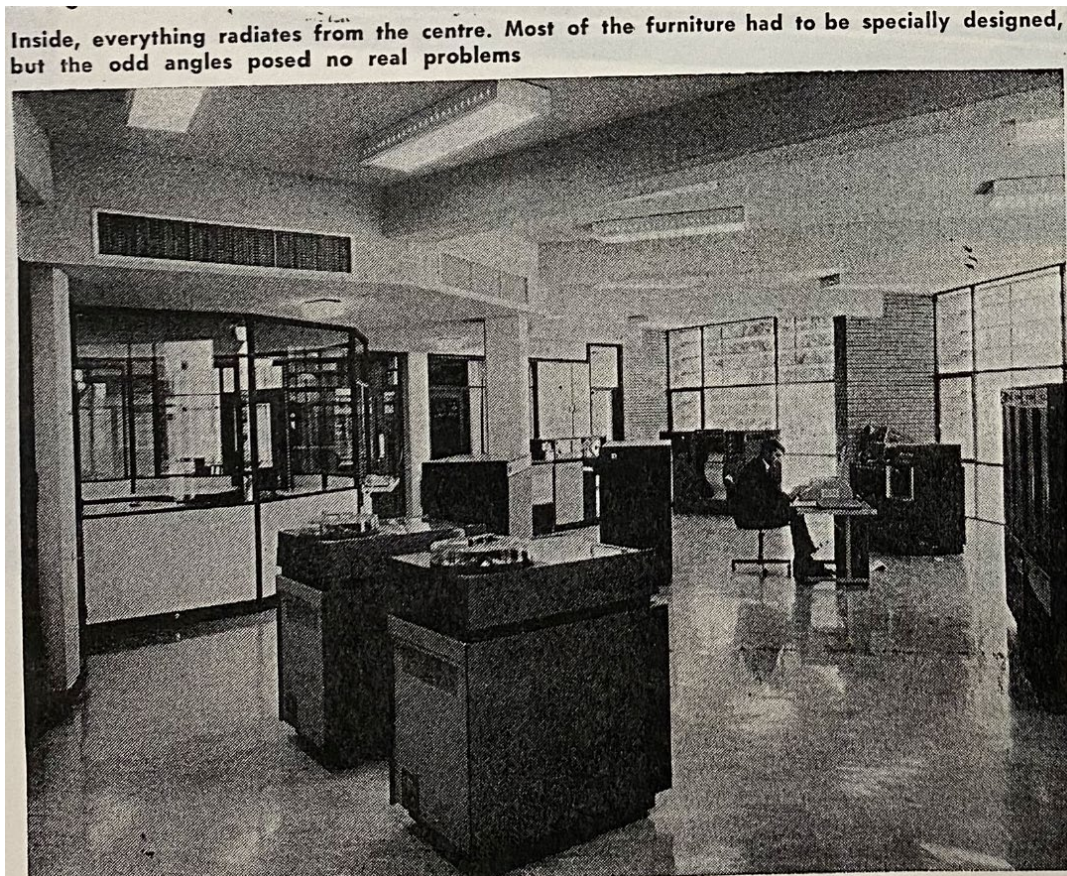


Figure 2. The interior, shortly after it was constructed.²¹

Design and special features

Built by contractors John Calder Ltd, the distinctive three-storey, 12-fin design was ground-breaking in its day (Figure 3). The general design of the building is described in detail in a 1969 article in *Building Progress*²²:

'The basic structure of Ceramic House is reinforced brick masonry with a system of vertical fins or blades. Under this concept the maximum glass area has been possible and full advantage taken of light and views... Here you see the key to the pattern of the whole dodecagon (12-sided) structure. The bricks are essentially boxing for the 12 reinforced concrete blade walls and six central columns which carry the building.'

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

²² Ibid

'The main entry, under a timber-lined canopy and over a basement garden of rectangular pools and pebble plantings, leads directly into a vestibule. From there can be seen the computer work-flow radiating from the document control centre, and the large computer room itself with all [its] impressive equipment. The manager's office to the left has all operation within view and so has the programmer's office next door...'

'Stahlton floor system has been used throughout the building, converted directly with vinyl tiles; Gibraltar board with sprayed finish has been used for all suspended ceilings; elsewhere Whisper has been sprayed to the underside of the Stahlton floor; Cunic partitions have been used on both ground and top floors for office divisions, some with full-length glass and others using half glass, half teak veneer.'

The plans for the building are shown in Appendix 6.

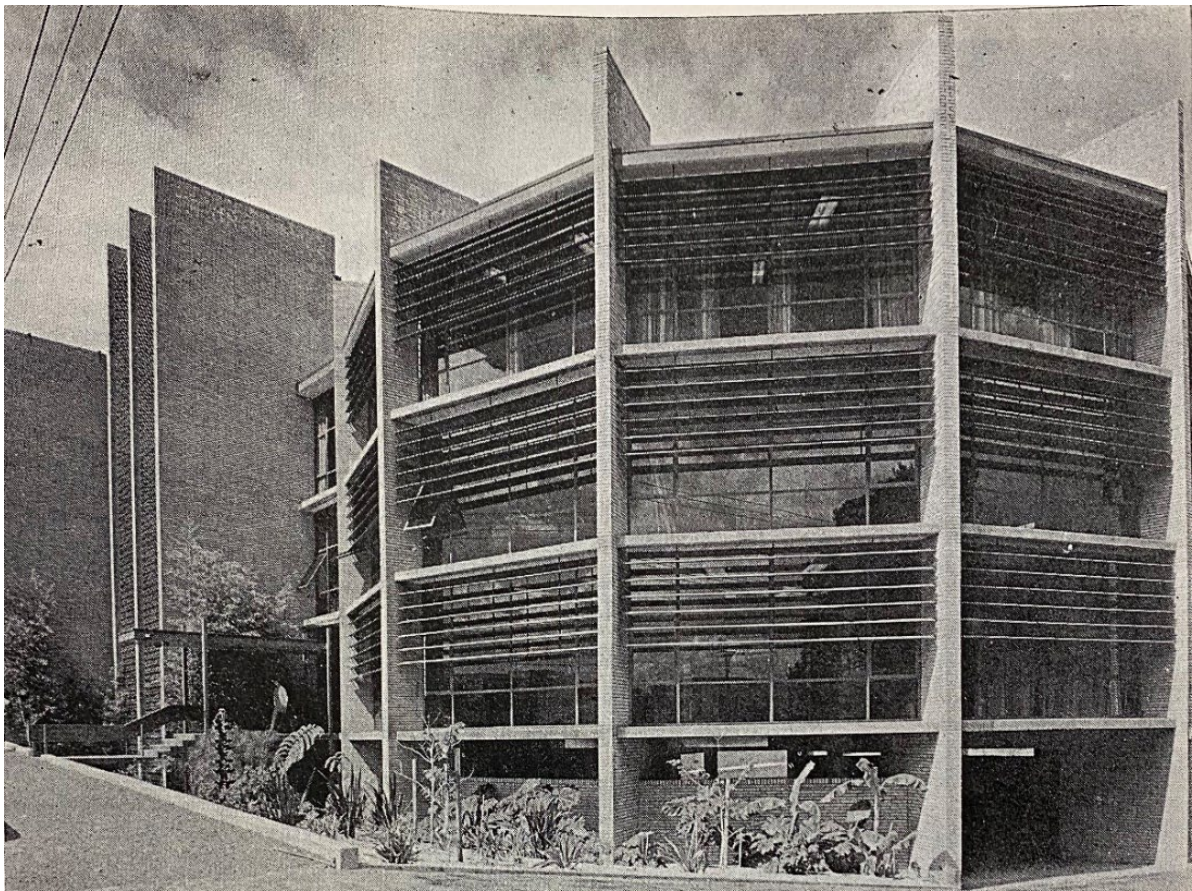


Figure 3. The building shortly after it was built.²³

²³ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

Reaction to the building

The building was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Overseas trade, J. R. Marshall on 19 March 1969.²⁴ During the opening, Marshall presented Crown Lynn with an award for outstanding effort in the export field (Figure 4).²⁵



Figure 4. A plaque was awarded to Tom Clark on the opening of building. The plaque was designed to mimic the design of the building.²⁶

Praise was given to the innovative design of the building in reports on the building (Figure 5 and Figure 6):

‘One of the most striking buildings in West Auckland.’²⁷

‘Already an arresting landmark in New Lynn, Auckland, where the road north swings away from the shopping centre and heads for Kelston, Ceramic House, the new computer building designed for Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Investments [former name of Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd] is so arresting it could also become something of a landmark in New Zealand architecture.’²⁸

²⁴ ‘Ceramic House’ Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand. *Western Leader* (18 March 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

²⁵ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.

²⁶ Newspaper clipping (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

²⁷ *Western Leader* (18 March 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

²⁸ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

'The design is modern and attractive; it is also extremely workable – which is more to the point. "Absolutely perfect." Says Mr Eric Mancer, manager of the computer section, "spot on."' ²⁹



Figure 5. Newspaper clipping showing the completed building. ³⁰

The computer, in particular, gained a lot of attention:

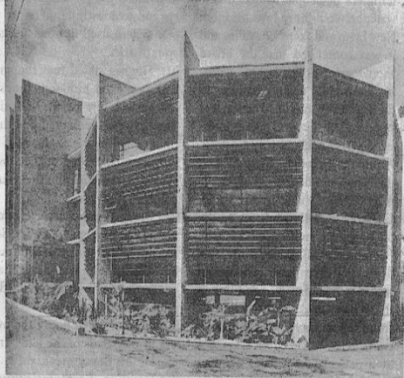
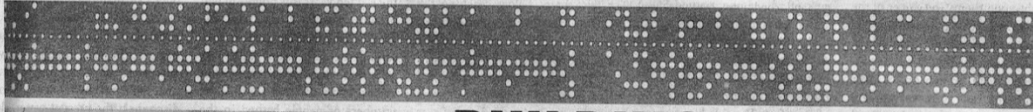
'Computer a first for New Zealand – A computer capable of, among other things, reading 2000 names and addresses a second, has been installed in Ceramic House, the new New Lynn headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd. The ICL [also known as ICT] 1901 computer with magnetic disc unit is the first of its type to be installed in New Zealand. It will be used... for all aspects of accounting, sales analysts and ordering, production control and scientific research. Use of the computer will aid Crown Lynn Potteries in its expanding export campaign.' ³¹

²⁹ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand, p.13-14.

³⁰ 'Imaginative use of products in new administration centre' (1969). Newspaper clipping from a powerpoint presentation given on a tour of the building on Saturday 14 December 2013 and was organised by Kenny Willis, Lopdell House Arts/Events coordinator. It was recorded by Carolyn Skelton (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

³¹ *Western Leader* (March 18 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

COMPUTER OPENS IN NEW LYNN



BUILDING HAS MANY UNIQUE FEATURES

One of the most striking buildings in West Auckland is Ceramic House, the new administrative and computer centre for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd, which will be opened tomorrow by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Industry and Commerce, the Rt Hon J. R. Marshall.

Ceramic House, the new administrative centre by Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd, which will be opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. J. R. Marshall tomorrow.

company's new ICL 1901 computer," said Mr Price. Before planning anything he discussed with Mr Eric Mancer, systems controller for Consolidated Brick and Pipe, the pattern of work as it came into the computer bureau.

One fact soon emerged - that all information passed back and forward through the document control centre at least three times in its passage from the outside world to the computer. "As the control centre was obviously the most important focal point, we put it in the middle of the building, and arranged all other functions around it,"

said Mr Price, Mr Mancer says the centre is perfect to work in. "It's so practical," he said. The two floors above the computer centre are the administrative offices. "We placed the board room in the centre, symbolically acknowledging that this is the hub of the whole industry," said the architect.

The board room is completely walled with plate glass, with ceiling to floor curtains. Executive offices for Consolidated Brick and Pipe and Crown Lynn Potteries, are situated around the perimeter. "The working of the building, especially the computer is clear to

anyone in the street since the outside walls, and many of the inside ones, are plate glass." One reason for the plate glass was to show the computer to the public. "It cost so much, and is a fascinating and complex machine, why shouldn't everyone see it at work?" asked the architect.

"The building is supported by 12 reinforced brick masonry blades and six central columns. "We chose this construction to use the client's products and also because bricks are very attractive, permanent, and economical". Western Leader, March 18th, 1969.



Figure 6. Opening of the building from the *Western Leader* 18 March 1969.³²

Headquarters for 30 years

Ceramic House remained the headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd (and Ceramco, as the business was later named in 1974) for 30 years. It is unknown what happened to the original computer, as it would have become dated after a few years. The Ceramco Ltd annual reports (from 1978, 1980-81 and 1984-85) do not mention the computer. Following the demise of Ceramco, in September 1989 all of the assets, including the headquarters building, were sold to GBH Porcelain of Malaysia.³³ They held on to the building until March 1993 when it was purchased by the New Zealand Association for the Deaf for \$975,000. In 1988, the partitioning of the first floor was altered for NZI Life who were leasing the floor.³⁴ The top floor of the building was leased by the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

³² *Western Leader* (18 March 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Auckland Council files, PR2012_0002617_002 - PLANS A1 - ABA-1988-7309 PARTITIONING.

to Animals Incorporated in 1993.³⁵ It was later sold to New Zealand Serviced Penthouses Ltd in November 1999 for \$930,000.³⁶

Dereliction and refurbishment

From 2001 to 2003, the building was left vacant and fell into dereliction.³⁷ By early 2003, the building had become vandalised and taken over by squatters – windows were smashed, graffiti appeared on the building and rubbish was dumped in the garage (Figure 7).³⁸

In January 2003, Bob Harvey, the former mayor of Waitakere City, wrote a letter to the *Western Leader* about the poor state of the building, prompting the council to send the building owner an abatement notice to clean up the property by 28 January with a threat of legal action.³⁹ During the year, Waitakere City Council staff and the owners at the time, New Zealand Serviced Penthouses Ltd, met and the company spent \$4,000 on graffiti removal and steps to prevent further damage.⁴⁰ The building was then put up for sale and the building was bought in September 2003 by New Lynn Professional Services (1991) Limited for \$1,200,000.⁴¹ It began to be refurbished in October 2003, with New Lynn-based barristers and solicitors Thomas and Co moving into the building in December 2003 and then moving to the top floor in January 2004.⁴² In November 2004, a Lone Star restaurant was opened on the ground floor.⁴³



Figure 7. The building in January 2003 showing its derelict state.⁴⁴

³⁵ Auckland Council files, C2012/9889/001 - RE CERAMIC HOUSE – HAZARDS.

³⁶ QV website. 3 Totara Avenue. Accessed from: <https://www.qv.co.nz/property/3-totara-avenue-new-lynn-auckland-0600/1614216>.

³⁷ Dave Pearson Architects. (2009a). New Lynn Town Centre: A heritage assessment - prepared for the Waitakere City Council. Auckland, New Zealand: Dave Pearson Architects Limited.

³⁸ *Western Leader*, 2003-01-14, p.1. Community fears eyesore takeover (WNI-AAA-1812).

³⁹ *Western Leader*, 2003-01-21, p. 1. Mayor angry over state of building (WNI-AAA-1870)

⁴⁰ *Western Leader*, 2003-10-16, p. 7. Revamp greets new tenants. (WNI-AAA-4554)

⁴¹ QV website. 3 Totara Avenue. Accessed from: <https://www.qv.co.nz/property/3-totara-avenue-new-lynn-auckland-0600/1614216>.

⁴² Thomas & Co (2003). Client News Letter – Christmas 2003. Accessed from: <https://www.thomas.co.nz/co3/news/200312.jsp>.

⁴³ *Western Leader* (2004-11-18) Lone Star Cafe & Bar opens in New Lynn.

⁴⁴ *Western Leader*, 2003-01-14, p.1. Community fears eyesore takeover (WNI-AAA-1812).

Although not protected as a heritage building, at the pre-application meeting for the proposal to turn the ground floor into a Lone Star restaurant, it was noted that the building is 'considered an important and significant building in the New Lynn town centre due to its architectural and landmark qualities.' As a result, an initial proposal to entirely face the new outdoor decking area in schist rock was redesigned to use brick on the lower support structure to match the cladding of the building. An all-weather canopy over the footpath was also not considered for this reason.⁴⁵

The building remains in New Lynn Professional Services (1991) Limited ownership.⁴⁶ The Lone Star Restaurant is on the ground floor, while the other two floors are tenanted by Thomas & Co lawyers, Wine-Searcher, and the Keystone Advice Group (Level 2).

Ceramic House (former) was noted in the New Lynn Urban Plan (2010-2030) as a 'statement to the flamboyant architectural style of the time' and identified as a landmark building.⁴⁷

Ceramic House (former) was celebrated through Veronica Herber's (a New Zealand sculpture artist) installation in 2013/14, which invited passers-by to engage with the building with interactive paper art that would interact with the "extraordinary" ceramic pipe facade of the building.⁴⁸

The building remains an important feature of New Lynn. A Heritage Assessment of the New Lynn Town Centre in 2009 described the building as a 'prominent and distinctive structure' of 'imaginative design' making a 'primary contribution to the heritage character of New Lynn.'⁴⁹ It also had previously been suggested for heritage scheduling in a heritage impact report by Dave Pearson Architects in 2009.⁵⁰

Sir Tom Clark, industrialist

Sir Tom Clark was one of New Zealand's leading twentieth-century industrialists and visionaries. His main legacy lies in his contribution to New Zealand's industrial development through the Crown Lynn Pottery (later Ceramco).

His Clark forebearers had started a brick and drainage pipe business in Hobsonville, Auckland, in the mid-nineteenth century. At the age of 14, Tom Clark was withdrawn from school by his father, Thomas Clark (senior), and began to work in his father's Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Company as labourer, digging clay, loading, firing and unloading kilns. At 21 he gained experience as deputy manager of the company's

⁴⁵ Auckland Council files, PR2012_0002634_004 - LUC-2004-1356 PROPOSED RESTAURANT - LUC-2004-1356 PROPOSED RESTAURANT.

⁴⁶ Open Corporates (2020). New Lynn Professional Services (1991) limited. Accessed from: <https://opencorporates.com/companies/nz/504827>.

⁴⁷ Waitakere City Council (2010). *New Lynn Urban Plan 2010-2030*, accessed from: <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/place-based-plans/docsnewlynnurbanplan/new-lynn-urban-plan-2010-part-1.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Rundle, D. (2014). *Site Unseen: Veronica Herber* [book flyer]. Auckland, New Zealand: Lopdell House Gallery, accessed from: <https://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/Veronica%20Herber%20Catalogue.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Dave Pearson Architects (2009a). *New Lynn Town Centre: A Heritage Assessment*. Auckland.

⁵⁰ Dave Pearson Architects (2009b). *New Lynn Town Centre Proposed Changes: Heritage Impact Statement*. Auckland.

Kamo factory, before returning to the company's pipe plant in New Lynn as assistant general manager. The business had moved from Hobsonville to New Lynn in 1925.

Clark took over the business from his father in the late 1930s and diversified the business to pioneer the mass production of tableware in New Zealand. Clark was innovative and visionary:

*'Clark worked hard to overcome his customers' suspicion of locally made crockery, placing potters at the wheel to demonstrate their work at shows. The winning entries in annual design awards were incorporated in new lines of dinnerware. He introduced factory tours in 1961, and encouraged inventive shop displays (such as resting a Mini on four Crown Lynn cups in 1964). His masterstroke was Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Crown Lynn factory in 1963. Suddenly Crown Lynn pottery was in demand.'*⁵¹

The business became New Zealand's largest pottery company and the brand, Crown Lynn, became a national icon. As Crown Lynn became one of New Zealand's leading manufacturing export earners, Clark imported one of the country's first computers to keep track of sales. Exports extended to Canada and the USA; and dinnerware went to the Australian armed forces, Air New Zealand, British Airways and Qantas. Locally, the company supplied crockery to many government departments. By 1969, 60 per cent of New Zealand households were buying Crown Lynn ware. A year later – with kilns going night and day – 700 workers were producing 10 million pieces a year.⁵²

Tom Clark was knighted in 1985 for services to manufacturing, export, sport (yachting) and the community. He retired in 1993 after 62 years of continuous service as director and an employee of Crown Lynn.

Tom Clark died in Auckland on 14 June 2005, aged 88.

Neville Price, architect

Neville Price is a renowned architect, best-known for the late-modern West Plaza building in Albert Street in central Auckland. Built in 1974, the building gained many awards, including an Award of Merit from the Association of Consulting Engineers in 1975; a New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) Local Award (2004) and an Enduring Award by the NZIA in 2005.⁵³ West Plaza is also recognised in the Auckland Unitary Plan, as it is included in Schedule 14.1 Schedule of Historic Heritage as a category B place (ID 01923).

Neville Price became a successful architect by an unusual route.⁵⁴ Coming from a creative and talented background, he was designing and making furniture by the age of sixteen. On leaving school he worked his way through a variety of jobs including advertising and pick and shovel work, meanwhile continuing to design and build boats and furniture for friends.

⁵¹ McClure, M (2019). 'Clark, Thomas Edwin', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, accessed from: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/6c6/clark-thomas-edwin>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Devon Park Apartments (2013). Devon Park Apartments. Retrieved from: <https://www.devonparkauckland.co.nz/history>.

⁵⁴ Most of the following description of Prices' career is from: Salmond Reed Architects 2007. West Plaza Draft Conservation Plan. Prepared for Buckingham Group. (Unless otherwise stated)

Following interest expressed in the two-storey house he built for his mother, he set up as a house designer/unregistered architect. After designing numerous dwellings, Price decided it was time to undertake some more serious study. He travelled to the United States where he had family contacts and was soon employed in an architectural practice, in California, where he met many of the state's leading architects. Impressed by the buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe, Price crossed America studying their work and attending university lectures.

In London and Europe, he personally examined new multi-storey building design and techniques then, after seven months away, he returned to New Zealand armed with as much knowledge as a graduate student. Moving to Auckland in 1963, Neville Price built a house and opened an office in Takapuna. His first high-rise design was for the Devon Park apartment complex at Stanley Point, built in 1964.

In 1965, new legislation on the registration of architects required him to sit an examination which he passed. Subsequently, he was accepted as an associate in the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

Price set up his architectural practice in 1966 and at one stage had the largest architectural practice in New Zealand.⁵⁵ In the late 1960s and early 1970s Price designed a number of buildings across the city, including the Devon Park apartments at Stanley Point (1967); Ceramic House in New Lynn (1967); Minnehaha townhouses (Takapuna) (1968); UDC House, corner of Albert and Wyndham Street (1970); an office block at 82 Symonds Street, Grafton (1970); and the Manukau City Council building (1970).⁵⁶ By the mid-1970s, he had designed four central city office blocks, three hotels, three shopping centres and seven blocks of town houses.⁵⁷ In the book *Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand*, the office block (designed 1970) on Symonds Street was noted as the 'first circular office building in the country'.⁵⁸ However, there is some doubt to this claim as Ceramic House was built earlier and could also claim this feat.

Until 1980 he was based in Auckland but also designed buildings in the South Pacific. His partnerships included: Neville Price and Associates; Price Adams Dodd; and Price Mitchell Associates (Sydney).⁵⁹ In 1980 he moved to the United States after accepting an invitation to master plan and produce conceptual designs for development projects in San Francisco, which led to further work in the area.⁶⁰ In 2006, *Metro* magazine placed Price at number 21 on its list of the top 25 Aucklanders to have shaped the city.⁶¹ He returned to New Zealand around 2006, but is currently based in California where he continues to work as an architect, including some designs in Auckland.⁶²

⁵⁵ Young, V. (2014). NZPI: A Q&A with architect Neville Price, *National Business Review* 3 May 2014. Accessed from: <https://www.nbr.co.nz/article/nzpi-neville-price-dc-p-155332>.

⁵⁶ Neville H Price + Associates Architects (2020). Portfolio. Accessed from: <http://www.nevilleprice.com/portfolio/>.

⁵⁷ Eagles, J. (1973), Business before beauty for this architect, *The Sunday Herald*, July 22 1973.

⁵⁸ Hodgson, T. (1990). *Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand*, Grantham House, Wellington, p. 76.

⁵⁹ Salmond Reed Architects 2007. West Plaza Draft Conservation Plan. Prepared for Buckingham Group.

⁶⁰ Walsh, J. (2010). Spanish White, *Urbis* – December 2010 (Issue 59). Accessed from: <https://urbismagazine.com/articles/spanish-white/>.

⁶¹ Metro Magazine (2006). The Metro 25 Shapers of Auckland, Metro Magazine Anniversary issue: May 2006.

⁶² Neville H Price + Associates Architects (2020). Accessed from: <http://www.nevilleprice.com/>.

Primarily a design architect, Price’s work is known for its sculptural qualities, the expression of structural elements and for its innovative and cost-effective solutions for difficult sites. ⁶³

6. Physical description

Site visit

David Bade (Specialist – Built Heritage, Auckland Council) visited the property and examined the exterior of the building on 18 March 2020.

Place location

Ceramic House (former) is located at 3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn. The building is shown with an “X” (Figure 8 and Figure 9). Current photographs are shown in Appendix 2 and historical aerial photographs are shown in Appendix 4.

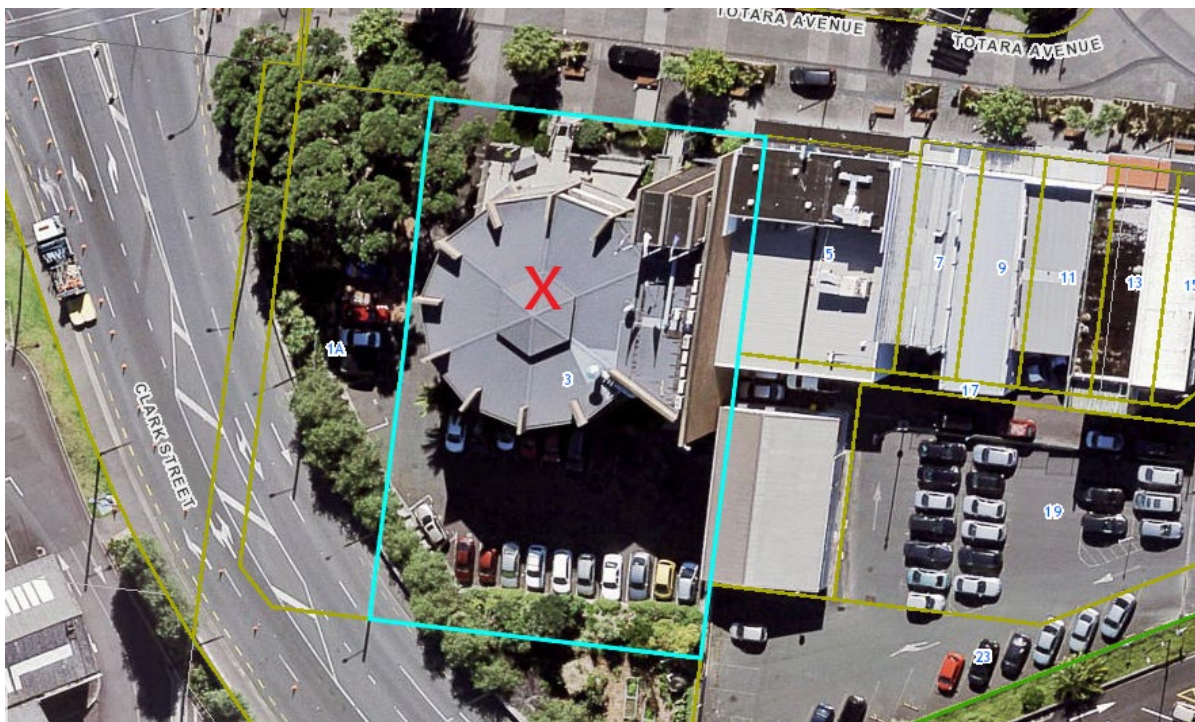


Figure 8 Aerial photograph of the property.

⁶³ Salmond Reed Architects 2007. West Plaza Draft Conservation Plan. Prepared for Buckingham Group.



Figure 9. Aerial photograph of the vicinity of Ceramic House.

Geographical/physical context

The Ceramic House (former) building is located on the western edge of the commercial centre of New Lynn (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Great North Road is the main road of New Lynn. Lynn Mall, the main shopping centre, is the large white-roofed building in north-east of the aerial photograph above (Figure 9). Street names (circled in Figure 9) stand as reminders of the clay works industry in New Lynn: Clark Street (named after Sir Tom Clark, the former Director of Ceramco), Ambrico Place (a shortened name of the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Company), and Crown Lynn Place (named after the main brand of the company). The main factory was in the block indicated with the arrow. Todd Triangle Reserve (between Totara Avenue and Great North Road) is situated in front (north) of the building and has public artwork relating to the clay industry history of New Lynn (Figure 12).



Figure 10. Photo taken looking westward down Great North Road, showing the building (red arrow). (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020)



Figure 11. Photo taken looking eastward down Great North Road, showing the building (red arrow). (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020)



Figure 12. A photo showing the park between Totara Avenue and Great North Road with public art relating to the clay industry history of New Lynn. A protected pohutukawa tree is located on the right. (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020)

Site description

Ceramic House (former) is located on a 1,681 square metre lot. The building covers the front portion (north), with car parking in the rear (south). A large pohutukawa tree to the north-west of the property is protected in the Notable Tree Overlay of the Auckland Unitary Plan (ID 1891) (Figure 15). A large phoenix palm is located in front of the building on the corner of Totara Avenue and Great North Road (Figure 13). The site has a gentle slope from north-east to south-west.



Figure 13. The front façade of the building, showing the large phoenix palm on the right and Todd Triangle Reserve in front of the building. (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020)

Description (exterior or surface features)

Ceramic House (former) is a late-Modernist style building, designed in 1967 by renowned architect Neville Price and opened in 1969. It consists of three storeys plus a basement and a side (eastern) lift and stair chamber which is a storey higher than the main building.

The building is a dodecagon (12-sided) with a series of reinforced brick fins separating bays of glazing. Ceramic pipes have been used to create a screen to the stairwell and lifts. Solar screens above each glazed bay help shade light. The building is approximately 28 metres wide and 28 metres long. Figure 14 shows the main features of the building.

The design brief was to create a building to showcase the products of Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd as well as their new computer. The reinforced brick of the building and the ceramic pipes screening the stairwell and lift chamber are the most obvious ways their products were shown, but they were also seen in door handles, toilet roll holders and carborundum floor tiles on the stairs. These features were unable to be viewed, however the stahlton/carborundum tiles on the stairs were described in the 2013 audio-recording of a tour to the building.



Figure 14. Annotated image showing the key features of the building: brick fins (A), glazed bays between fins (B), solar screens over the windows (C), and the stair/lift well with ceramic pipes (D). (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020)

The circular-like dodecagon shape of the building was both practical and symbolic. It symbolised both the computer discs which were used by the new computer, and also

the ceramic plates and saucers produced by the company. Glass was used on the outside walls, and many of the inside ones, to make it look ‘modern’ and to show the computer to the public. The glass-walled lift was one of the first, if not the first, in New Zealand.

In order to accommodate the computer, Price had to design the building to be in a circular-like shape – so it could function with peripheral offices and people moving to and from a central point. The computer was located on the ground floor.

The landscaping around the building was designed by Andrew Geddes, a Titirangi landscape consultant. It was one of the first landscaping works he completed, as he started his consultancy in July 1967, and finished in August 1998.⁶⁴ The landscape plan is shown in Appendix 6. The landscaping was designed to complement the building and to have aesthetic appeal for passers-by.⁶⁵



Figure 15. The protected pohutukawa tree to the north-west of the building (David Bade, Auckland Council, 18/3/2020).

⁶⁴ New Zealand Company Directory (2020). Andrew Geddes & Associates Limited, accessed from: <https://www.nzwao.com/companies/andrew-geddes-associates-limited/>.

⁶⁵ *Western Leader* (March 18 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

Special features of the building include:

- Use of glass

The outside walls, and many of the inside ones, are glass, which was unusual for office buildings at the time (Figure 16). One reason for its use was to show the computer to the public. “It cost so much and is a fascinating and complex machine, why shouldn’t everyone see it at work?” asked the architect.’⁶⁶



Figure 16. The interior of the building showing the use of interior glass walls.⁶⁷

The glass-walled lift was purportedly the first one in New Zealand.⁶⁸ Neville Price confirms this claim.⁶⁹ However, this is difficult to prove. It is likely to have been one of the first in New Zealand, however. It was certainly a novel idea at the time: ‘This is an idea that might well be used more often, most lifts being quite claustrophobic’.⁷⁰

- Use of the company’s products

Part of the brief for the building was to showcase the products of the company to highlight their versatility and suitability for all types of buildings.⁷¹ The reinforced brick of the building is the most obvious, but there was also the stahlton (clay) floor system (unable to be viewed as part of this evaluation, but described in the audio-recorded 2013 tour of the building), glazed ceramic solar screens, carborundum

⁶⁶ *Western Leader* (18 March 1969) Computer opens in New Lynn.

⁶⁷ Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

⁶⁸ ‘Ceramic House’ Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand. Thomas & Co (2003). Thomas & Co relocate to Landmark Building, Client News Letter: Christmas 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.thomas.co.nz/co3/news/200312.jsp>.

⁶⁹ Neville Price, Personal Communication, April 2021.

⁷⁰ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand, p. 14.

⁷¹ ‘Striking new building planned for central administration: To house computer’. (1968) Magazine clipping (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

(an extremely hard ceramic) floor tiles on the stairs (Figure 18 and Figure 19).⁷² Ceramic door handles and toilet roll holders were also used. A tile mural inside was designed by Jenkins from Crown Lynn, and purportedly still remains in the building (Figure 17).⁷³ This was not able to be viewed as part of this evaluation, but it was described in the audio-recorded 2013 tour of the building.



Figure 17. The tile mural inside was designed by Jenkins from Crown Lynn (Gregory Smith, Lost Property – Auckland’s Alternative Modernist Architecture and History).

⁷² What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services. Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.

⁷³ The tour occurred on Saturday 14 December 2013 and was organised by Kenny Willis, Lopdell House Arts/Events coordinator. It was recorded by Carolyn Skelton (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

Neville Price explained the use of products with the design of the building:

“When we built the building, we wanted to display its products. Of course there was the brick which was the basic component, but then we went on to other ceramics... hence the screen on the outside and the actual design of the building came from a plate and matched with computer discs.”⁷⁴



Figure 18. Interior of the building showing the ceramic screen and the carborundum floor tiles on the stairs (all products of the company).⁷⁵

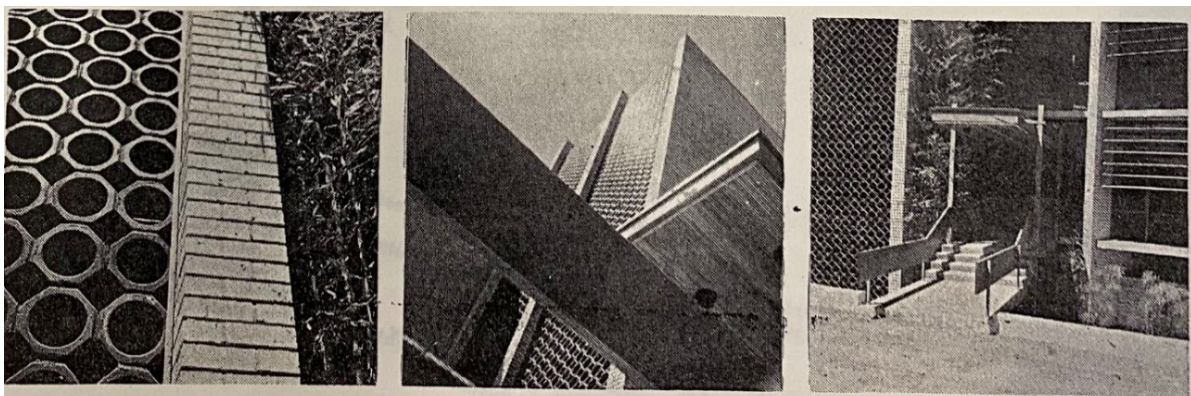


Figure 19. Some images of the exterior of the building shortly after its construction.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services.

⁷⁶ 'Ceramic House' Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

- Solar screens

Another distinctive feature of the building are the glazed ceramic solar screens over the windows of the exterior of the building (Figure 20). They were to provide shade from the sun, privacy for people using the lifts or stairs, and also to showcase a product of the company. ⁷⁷

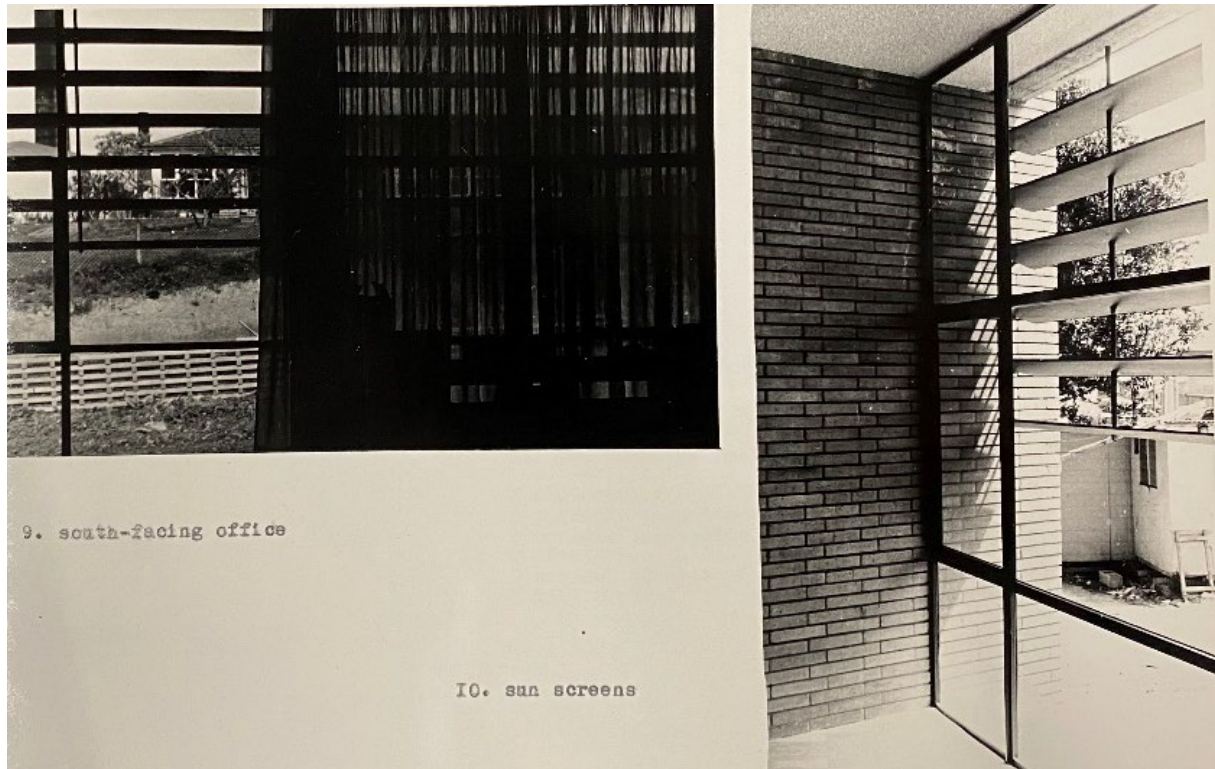


Figure 20. An interior view of the solar screens. ⁷⁸

In a *Building Progress* article from 1969, Price describes the unusual architecture of the building:

“This type of construction is not used extensively in New Zealand at present,” says Mr Price as a final word, “but I think it has wonderful possibilities”. ⁷⁹

Description (interior or known sub-surface features)

The interior was unable to be viewed as part of this evaluation. However, the interior was able to be assessed, based on an audio-recorded of a tour of the building in 2013, interior images from Auckland Library (from 2013), interiors images from Google streetview (from 2017) and Auckland Council plans.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Algie, W. W. (1968). Computer centre and administration building for Consolidated Brick Investments Ltd., New Lynn, Auckland: building report. Auckland, New Zealand: Neville H. Price & Associates. Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand.

⁷⁹ What has six columns twelve sides and wonderful possibilities. (1969, May). *Building Progress*, pp.12-14 [newspaper clipping]. Sheppard Collection (Neville Price, P946n), Architecture Archive, Special Collections, University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services, Auckland, New Zealand, p. 14.

Although there have been some alterations and modifications, important internal features remain, such as:

- the exposed internal brick fins (which also protrude outwards from the building)
- the concrete structural beams on the ground floor ceiling which outline the previous partitioning of the floor which housed the computer (the central core with peripheral offices)
- the internal exposed brick walls
- the stahlton-tiled stairwell
- the glass-walled lift
- the wooden floor on the ground floor
- the mural

Summary of key modifications

Generally, the building appears as constructed. There have been no additions to the building. However, alterations have been made to the ground floor for a fit-out for the Lone Star restaurant in 2004. Alterations have also been made to the partitioning of the interior (based on plans as interior was unable to be viewed).

In January 1977 toilet alterations were made on the first floor (see Appendix 6). In 1988, the partitioning of the first floor was altered for NZI Life who were leasing the floor.⁸⁰

The most significant changes the building has experienced are a result of altering the ground floor for use as a Lone Star restaurant. The alteration plans are shown in Appendix 6. A 71.5m² deck (including new entry stairs) and a new (universally accessible) entry way were added at ground level. Three bays on the ground floor (facing the road) were replaced with timber joinery. New landscaping was done in front of the building (with the re-commissioning of an existing pond), while the landscaped areas to the rear of the site were retained. Internally, the ground floor was fitted out as a restaurant with a bar, kitchen and seating areas.

External modifications are indicated in Figure 21. See Appendix 2 for further photographs showing modifications.

Exterior modifications:

- An entranceway to the ground floor has been added so people can now enter the ground floor from the middle of the building (as opposed to the left of the building when first designed) (done in 2004) (See Appendix 2 and 6)
- The steps of the original entrance have been removed to now be a ramp
- Three bays of fenestration on the ground floor have been changed for use as a restaurant (done in 2004) (See Appendix 2 and 6)
- A deck has been constructed for the front ground floor portion of the building (done in 2004) (See Appendix 2 and 6)
- The basement has been filled in under the new deck protruding out from the ground floor (done in 2004) (See Appendix 2 and 6)

⁸⁰ Auckland Council files, PR2012_0002617_002 - PLANS A1 - ABA-1988-7309 PARTITIONING.

- The solar panels are no longer six louvres, three louvres remain (prior to 2003) (See Appendix 2)
- Flag poles have been added to the building (attached to the brick fins above the lift/stair well (Figure 21).
- A “Lone Star” sign has been added to the front entrance of the building.
- A rear metal air vent has been added from the ground to top storey.

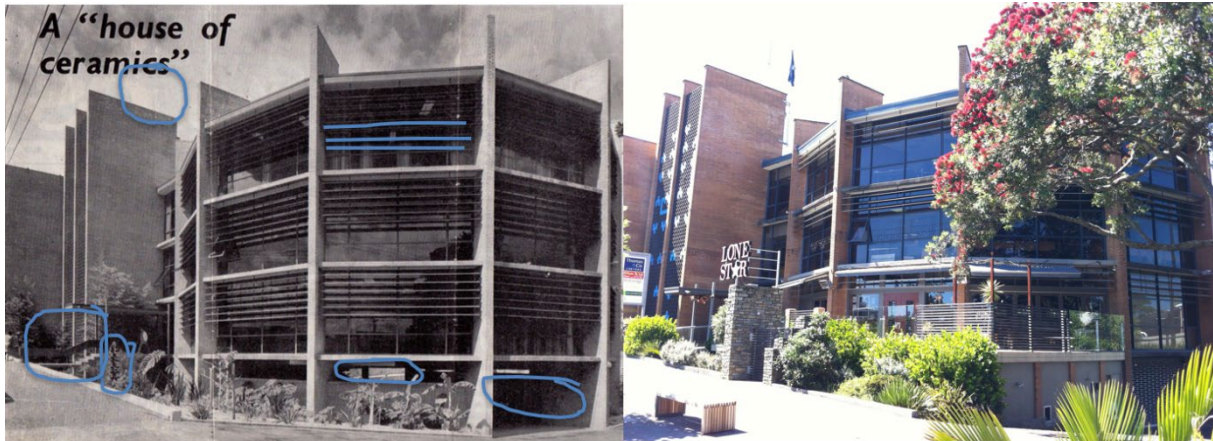


Figure 21. Annotated image showing changes to the building since its construction.⁸¹ As can be seen in both images, the windows could be opened out close to the fins. This shows that the fenestration design has not changed in the upper two floors.

Interior modifications:

The interior was unable to be viewed as part of this evaluation. However, the following modifications have been identified through internal photographs from 2013, 2017, a recording of a tour of the building in 2013 and council plans. See Appendix 2 for photos.

The ground floor has had the following alterations, based on Auckland Council plans:

- Internal walls/partitions have been removed for an open restaurant dining area (2004)
- The former staff/lunch room has been converted to a kitchen (2004)
- The toilets have been modified (1977 and 2004)

It is clear that internal partitioning and glass walls has been removed from the floors, as well as many of the fittings (such as the ceramic door knobs and taps).

⁸¹ Annotated slide from a PowerPoint presentation given on a tour of the building on Saturday 14 December 2013 and was organised by Kenny Willis, Lopdell House Arts/Events coordinator (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection OH-1140).

Summary of key features

Exterior:

- 12 reinforced brick fins
- Fully glazed bays with aluminium awning windows
- Glazed solar screens above the windows
- Four-storey stairwell/lift
- Circular/dodecagon form
- Brick cladding
- Ceramic pipe screens to lift
- Original ground floor entrance

Interior⁸²:

- Exposed internal brick fins
- Central core with peripheral offices layout
- Glass-walled lift
- Stahlton-tiled stairwell
- Mural

7. Comparative analysis

The purpose of this section is to examine the significance of Ceramic House in relation to other similar or related buildings. When considering Ceramic House within the locality or region, several comparisons can be made. The most relevant of these include places related to the New Lynn brick-making industry, buildings designed by Neville Price in Auckland, and buildings which accommodated early computers in Auckland.

The full lists are included in Appendix 5.

It is important to note that although effort has gone into making the lists as accurate as possible, they may not be exhaustive. Further research may yield further information.

Places related to the New Lynn brick-making and pottery industry

Ceramic House (former) is one of only two remaining standing buildings relating to the New Lynn brick-making and pottery industry. The other remaining building is the Ambrico Kiln. It is highly significant for this reason, and also for being the main headquarters of the company, built during the height of this industry. See Appendix 5 for the full list.

Neville Price-designed buildings in Auckland

Ceramic House (former) is significant within Neville Price's body of work. It was the first commercial building he designed and was one the first he designed in Auckland. Price is best-known for West Plaza, a commercial building in central Auckland, built in

⁸² These features are based on audio recording of a 2013 tour of the building, Auckland Council plans, interior images from 2013 from the Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection (OH-1140) and Google streetview interior images from 2019. Appendix 2 for photos.

1974, which was awarded an Enduring Award by the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 2005. Ceramic House can be seen as a steppingstone towards his most notable design. See Appendix 5 for the full list.

Early computer buildings in Auckland

Ceramic House (former) is significant for housing an early computer in Auckland. Ceramic House was one of the first buildings in Auckland to be specifically built to accommodate an early computer. Computers soon became much smaller and ubiquitous, making bespoke computer buildings unnecessary. Ceramic House (former) therefore is a rare example where a computer defined the form and function of a building. The comparative analysis list identifies buildings that were specifically built to house computers in the late-1960s and early-1970s. See Appendix 5 for the full list.

This comparative analysis demonstrates the significance of Ceramic House (former) as a rare physical reminder of the ceramic industry in New Lynn and a computer building. The analysis also demonstrates the style of the building being part of the evolution of Price's work.

8. Significance criteria

(a) Historical

The place reflects important or representative aspects of national, regional or local history, or is associated with an important event, person, group of people or idea or early period of settlement within New Zealand, the region or locality.

Ceramic House (former) was built as the headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd in 1969 at the peak of its success when it was the largest pottery company in the southern hemisphere. The building and company were of such significance to the New Zealand economy that it was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Overseas trade, J. R. Marshall. Over 10 million pieces of pottery were produced every year in the late 1960s and Crown Lynn pottery, which was the main brand of the company, was in over half of New Zealand households, and exported to the United States, Australia and Canada during this time. The building was built to showcase this industry dominance, including highlighting its products and accommodating a computer, which were only starting to be used by large businesses in New Zealand. The company played a vital part in the economy and social fabric of West Auckland and New Lynn in particular. It also formed an important part of New Zealand's industrial design history, especially its successes with introducing uniquely New Zealand designs and products to an international market. As its headquarters, Ceramic House has strong significance as part of this important company.

The building is associated with the early use of business computers in New Zealand. From 1960 New Zealand's largest businesses and government departments began to explore the use of computers, including Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd, which installed an ICT 1901 model computer in Ceramic House – the first of its type in the country.

Ceramic House (former) as the former headquarters of Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd also represents the long history of New Lynn's clay industry which developed from the 1860s, reaching its height in the 1960s, before declining in the 1970s and 1980s, and finally ceasing in 2015. Ceramic House has historical significance as one of only two remaining standing buildings related to this industry.

The building also has a strong association with Sir Tom Clark, one of New Zealand's leading twentieth-century industrialists and visionaries and the driving force behind Crown Lynn pottery. He retired in 1993 after 62 years of continuous service as director and an employee. Clark had his office in the building and also provided the impetus for the design of the building, working alongside the architect, Neville Price.

*Ceramic House (former) has **outstanding** historical significance to the Auckland region.*

(b) Social

The place has a strong or special association with, or is held in high esteem by, a particular community or cultural group for its symbolic, spiritual, commemorative, traditional or other cultural value.

There is a lot of public interest in the history of brick and pottery industry of New Lynn. The New Lynn Protection Society was formed to protect and conserve New Lynn's Historic and Character Houses, Brick Architecture and Brick Heritage. They run an active Facebook page. The Portage Ceramics Trust was set up in 2005 in New Lynn to purchase a large private collection of ceramics and pottery-making equipment relating to Crown Lynn Potteries. Although these two societies do not directly link to Ceramic House, they highlight the public esteem towards the pottery and brick-making history of New Lynn, of which the headquarters of the main company, Ceramic House, was integral.

The importance of the building to New Lynn was shown in 2003 when the building was saved from dereliction with the help of the Waitakere City Council and the direct involvement of Mayor Bob Harvey. The building's iconic status to the local community is also evident in the New Lynn Urban Plan (2010-2030), which identified the building as a landmark.

This building's social value is also evident in its involvement in local art and events. Ceramic House (former) was celebrated through New Zealand sculpture artist Veronica Herber's installation in 2003. During the installation, the building also had a public tour involving the architect Neville Price. Such community activities suggest a recognition of memories made among the community with this building, creating a sense of place and community.

*Ceramic House (former) has **considerable** social significance to the local area.*

(c) Mana Whenua

The place has a strong or special association with, or is held in high esteem by, Mana Whenua for its symbolic, spiritual, commemorative, traditional or other cultural value.

Information about the history of the place and research undertaken for this evaluation has not revealed any Mana Whenua value relating to the Ceramic House (former).

*Ceramic House (former) has **no known** Mana Whenua value.*

(d) Knowledge

The place has potential to provide knowledge through archaeological or other scientific or scholarly study, or to contribute to an understanding of the cultural or natural history of New Zealand, the region, or locality.

Specifically designed to accommodate and display an early computer, this building can enhance public understanding of the operation of early computers. The building was designed to be a circular-like dodecagon so it could function with peripheral offices and people moving to and from a central point (the computer). Computers in the 1960s were giant and expensive machines which soon became much smaller and ubiquitous. As noted in the comparative analysis, few buildings remain (or were even built) which were specifically designed to house a computer. As such, there is high potential for public education.

The location of the reserve in front of the building, and the fact that it already features sculptures dedicated to the brick-making industry, provides the potential for public education about the brick and pottery industry in New Lynn. The building could also feature in a heritage trail.

*Ceramic House (former) has **considerable** knowledge significance to the Auckland region.*

(e) Technology

The place demonstrates technical accomplishment, innovation or achievement in its structure, construction, components or use of materials.

Ceramic House (former) includes design features which were unusual at its time of construction, but have now become common, such as the use of internal and external walls of glazing. Although much of this internal glazing has been removed, it retains one of, if not the first, glass-walled lifts in New Zealand. The bays of glazing enabled the computer on the ground floor to be showcased to the public. This was significant because it showed the financial success and forward-thinking approach of the company.

The use of the company's material for the design also demonstrates technical innovation. The architect's brief was to design the building to showcase the products of the Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd as well as its new computer. The reinforced brick of the building and the ceramic pipes screening the stairwell and lift chamber are the most obvious ways the products were shown, but they are also used in other ways, such as door handles and carborundum floor tiles on the stairs. By using their own products they were using locally-sourced and locally-manufactured materials while also demonstrating how they could be used both conventionally (bricks) and

innovatively (pipe work screen). Few other business headquarters would have been purpose-built to display the products of their business.

*Ceramic House (former) has **considerable** technological significance to the Auckland region.*

(f) Physical attributes

The place is a notable or representative example of:

- (i) a type, design or style;*
- (ii) a method of construction, craftsmanship or use of materials; or*
- (iii) the work of a notable architect, designer, engineer or builder.*

Ceramic House (former) – the distinctive three-storey dodecagon (12-sided) building with reinforced brick fins separating bays of glazing – is an intact late-Modernist-style building, notable as the work of renowned architect Neville Price. Although some alterations have been made, particularly to the ground floor exterior and interior for use as a restaurant, this has not impacted greatly on the form and physical attributes of the building.

Price began his architectural practice in 1966 and at one stage had the largest architectural firm in the country. Price notes that the building marked an “exciting point in my career” as he began to be commissioned to produce commercial and residential buildings across the city. Neville Price is best-known for the West Plaza building in central Auckland, completed in 1974, which was awarded an Enduring Award by the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 2005. In 2006, *Metro* magazine placed Price at number 21 on its list of the top 25 Aucklanders to have shaped the city. Ceramic House can be seen as a steppingstone towards his most notable design, as his first commercial building. Price left New Zealand to work in America in 1980, leaving a selection of distinctive buildings, with Ceramic House his first commercial building.

Of great significance to the building is the bespoke computer-centred design to accommodate a new ICT 1901 model computer. At the time there were only two computers like it in the southern hemisphere, and this was the first one installed in New Zealand. The architect, Neville Price, spent several days observing various computers in the city, studying their essential operations and how data flowed from one area to another. As a result, he realised a central core where data could radiate to and from was required. Hence, the design of the 12-sided building with peripheral offices and a central core.

Computers soon became much smaller and ubiquitous, making bespoke computer buildings unnecessary. Ceramic House (former) therefore is a rare example where a computer defined the form and function of a building. The computer was located on the ground floor, and although alterations have been made to the floor (internally and externally) for use as a restaurant, the original design of the core with peripheral offices can still be read through the internal exposed brick fins and concrete ceiling beams.

*Ceramic House (former) has **outstanding** value for its physical attributes to the Auckland region.*

(g) Aesthetic

The place is notable or distinctive for its aesthetic, visual, or landmark qualities.

Ceramic House (former) is located on a corner site on the western edge of the main commercial centre of New Lynn. It is a prominent three-storey landmark in New Lynn. At the time, it was described in newspaper articles as ‘One of the most striking buildings in West Auckland’, ‘an arresting landmark in New Lynn’, and ‘it could also become something of a landmark in New Zealand architecture.’

Designed to highlight the products of the company, the building’s distinctive brick reminds passers-by of New Lynn’s long clay industry history. It is not only an outstanding piece of Modernist architecture, but also a manifestation of the company’s mission statement – it overtly and intentionally displays their financial success and their forward-thinking policies in a building which was essentially an advertisement to their own products.

*Ceramic House (former) has **considerable** aesthetic significance to the local New Lynn area.*

(h) Context

The place contributes to or is associated with a wider historical or cultural context, streetscape, townscape, landscape or setting.

All that remains of New Lynn’s clay industry history are the Ambrico kiln (with likely sub-surface archaeological features), archaeological remains of a circular draught kiln under a car park at 7 Clark Street, and Ceramic House (former), the company headquarters. Reminders of the history also include public sculptures and names on road signs (such as Ambrico Place, Clark Street, and Crown Lynn Place).

More widely, the New Lynn brick-making and pottery industry is also linked to other hubs around Auckland, such as Freeman’s Bay and Hobsonville, which still have remnants of this history.

In addition, Ceramic House (former) also fits within a wider context of Neville Price-designed commercial buildings that show an evolution of style, including the office block at 82 Symonds Street, Grafton and his acclaimed West Plaza commercial building in the Auckland CBD.

*Ceramic House (former) has **considerable** context significance to the local area.*

9. Statement of significance

Ceramic House (former), located at 3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn, was built as the headquarters for Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd in 1969 at the peak of its success when it was the largest pottery company in the southern hemisphere. It has considerable and outstanding heritage significance for its historical, technological, knowledge, aesthetic, context values and physical attributes.

Crown Lynn, which became the main brand of the company, was an important part of New Zealand's industrial design history, especially with its successes introducing uniquely New Zealand designs and products to an international market. By the 1960s, Crown Lynn pottery was in 60 per cent of New Zealand households and Queen Elizabeth II, on her visit to New Zealand in 1963, visited the Crown Lynn factory, further increasing its status. As its headquarters, Ceramic House embodies this important company.

The building was built to showcase the company's market dominance – including highlighting its products and accommodating a new computer, a technology which was just coming into use by large businesses in New Zealand. Designed by renowned architect, Neville Price, Ceramic House is a three-storey dodecagon (12-sided) shape building with reinforced brick fins separating bays of glazing. The design was groundbreaking in its day, with its use of glazed internal and external walls and having one of the first, if not the first, glass-walled lifts in New Zealand.

In addition, it was one of the first buildings in Auckland to be specifically built to accommodate and display a computer. This association with the early use of computers in New Zealand gives the building further significance. From 1960 New Zealand's largest businesses and government departments began to explore the use of computers. As a large business, Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd followed this trend, installing an ICT 1901 model computer – the first of its kind in the country. The architect, Neville Price, spent several days observing various computers in Auckland, studying their operation and how data flowed from one area to another. As a result, he realised a central core was required, where data could radiate to and from. Hence, the design of the 12-sided building with peripheral offices and a central core to house the computer. Computers soon became much smaller and ubiquitous, making bespoke computer buildings unnecessary. Ceramic House (former) therefore is a rare example where a computer defined the form and function of a building.

Ceramic House (former) is significant as a notable work of Neville Price. Price began his architectural practice in 1966 and at one stage had the largest architectural firm in the country. Price notes that the building marked an “exciting point in my career”, as following his design of Ceramic House he began to be commissioned to produce commercial and residential buildings across the city. Neville Price is best-known for the West Plaza building in central Auckland, completed in 1974, which was awarded an Enduring Award by the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 2005. In 2006, *Metro* magazine placed Price at number 21 on its list of the top 25 Aucklanders to have shaped the city. Ceramic House, as his first commercial building, can be seen as a steppingstone towards his most notable design. Price left New Zealand to work in America in 1980, leaving behind a selection of distinctive buildings.

The building also has a strong association with Sir Tom Clark, one of New Zealand's leading twentieth-century industrialists and the driving force behind Crown Lynn pottery. He retired in 1993 after 62 years of continuous service as director and an employee. Clark had his office in the building and also played an important role in the design of the building alongside Price.

Ceramic House (former) is located on a corner site on the western edge of the main commercial centre of New Lynn. It has significance as a prominent three-storey

landmark in New Lynn. At the time, it was described in newspaper articles as ‘One of the most striking buildings in West Auckland’, ‘an arresting landmark in New Lynn’, and ‘it could also become something of a landmark in New Zealand architecture.’

The building stands as a reminder of the long history of New Lynn’s clay industry which developed from the 1860s, reaching its height in the 1960s, before declining in the 1970s and 1980s, and finally ceasing in 2015. Designed to highlight the products of the company, the building’s distinctive brick reminds passers-by of New Lynn’s long clay industry history, of which little remains.

10. Extent of place

The extent of place is the area that contains the historic heritage values of the place and any area that is relevant to an understanding of the function, meaning and relationships of these values.

Figure 22 shows the recommended extent of place for Ceramic House (former). This area includes the whole building, the landscaping on the property, as well as the footpath in front of the building. It is important to include the footpath in order to protect the visual connection between the building and the public realm. Ceramic House (former) was specifically designed to be a landmark building and to showcase the products of the company (most obviously the re-enforced brick structure and the ceramic pipes masking the stair and lift well) and its new computer (a status symbol of the time). The bays of glazing enabled the computer on the ground floor to be showcased to passers-by, demonstrating the success and forward-thinking approach of the company. It is important to protect this relationship as it remains a prominent three-storey landmark in New Lynn, and, despite some modification to the ground floor, the public can still see inside the building from the footpath.

In addition, protecting the relationship between the building and the footpath maintains the link to the reserve in front of the building which features a number of public art pieces relating to the brick-making industry.

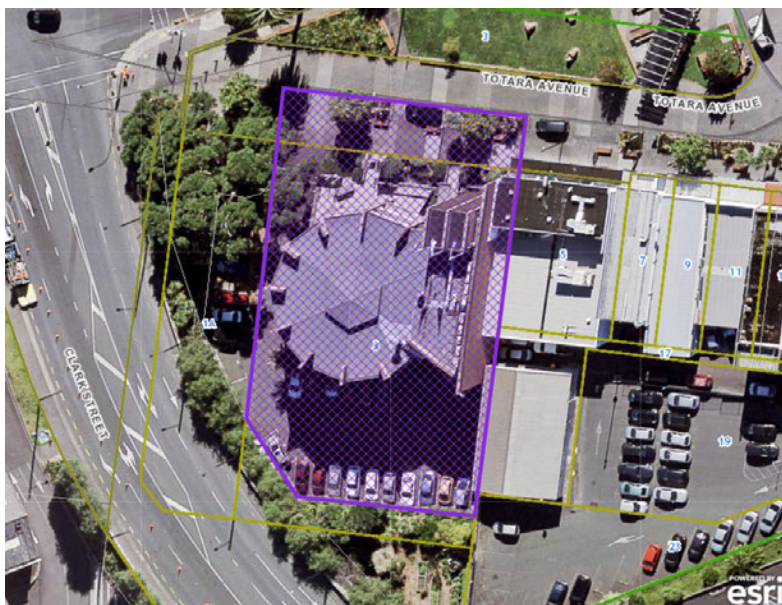
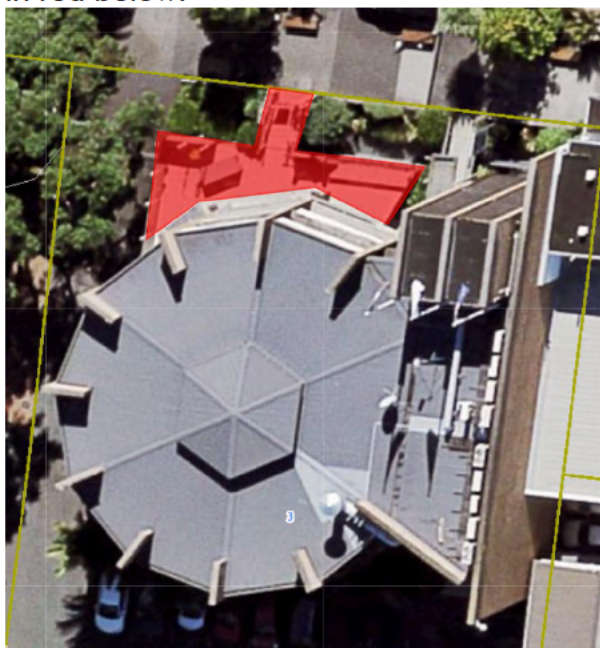


Figure 22. The proposed historic heritage extent of place for Ceramic House (former).

Exclusions

- The external ground floor deck to the building (added in 2004), as highlighted in red below:



- The ground floor kitchen and toilets (created in 2004)

Primary features

- The primary feature is the Ceramic House (former) building.

11. Recommendations

Based on the preceding evaluation, Ceramic House meets the threshold for a Category A Historic Heritage Place.

12. Table of historic heritage values

Significance Criteria (A-H)	Value (Not Applicable/None, Little, Moderate, Considerable, Outstanding)	Geographic context (Not Applicable, Local, Regional, National, International)
A- Historical	Outstanding	Regional
B- Social	Considerable	Local
C- Mana Whenua	No known	Not applicable
D- Knowledge	Considerable	Regional
E- Technology	Considerable	Regional
F- Physical attributes	Outstanding	Regional
G- Aesthetic	Considerable	Local
H- Context	Considerable	Local

13. Overall significance

Place Name and/or Description	Ceramic House (former)
Verified Location	3 Totara Avenue, New Lynn
Verified Legal Description	LOT 1 DP 161309
Category	A
Primary Feature(s)	Ceramic House
Heritage Values	A, B, D, E, F, G, H
Exclusions	External ground floor deck and steps to the building; ground floor toilet and kitchen
Additional Controls for Archaeological Sites or Features	
Place of Māori Interest or Significance	

Author: David Bade, Specialist – Built Heritage, July 2021

Peer reviewer: Rebecca Freeman, Senior Specialist Historic Heritage, June 2021.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1 Supplementary historic research

The New Lynn clay industry

Early clay industry in New Lynn (1860s-1910s)

Bricks were first made in Auckland in the 1840s in brickyards in Freemans Bay. The industry relied on extensive deposits of clay laid down during the Pleistocene period about one million years ago.⁸³ By the 1860s, many of the clay deposits in central Auckland had been exhausted and this led to the establishment of a number of smaller brickworks in the outskirts of the town where deposits of fine clay could be found.⁸⁴ Within a short time, West Auckland and the Whau River area, in particular, became the new centre of brick making. The area had all the necessities for a brickworks: clay was plentiful and the finished merchandise could be easily transported to the Auckland market by scow. The earliest brick yard on the Whau River was that of Dr Daniel Pollen (established in 1852 on the east bank of the river). John Malam, who had previously worked with Pollen, established his own works in 1861 on the western side of the river, followed by the Laurie Brothers in 1863.⁸⁵

By 1870, there were 16 brickworks in West Auckland with 13 of these being sited on the Whau River, including those owned by Ramsden, Archibald and Thomas.⁸⁶ Eventually, some 39 brick and pottery works would be established in West Auckland, 23 of which were around New Lynn and the Whau River. The Whau continued to thrive through the 1880s as an area for pottery manufacturing.⁸⁷ The New Lynn area became synonymous with pottery and ceramic products.⁸⁸ The population of New Lynn grew rapidly as an industrial centre, spurred by the expansion of the Western rail line in 1881.⁸⁹

The Gardner Brothers and Parker clay pits provided significant reserves from 1902, where they manufactured pipes and bricks. Across Rankin Road from them, Thompson and Gardner set up a brickyard in Thompson's former orchard, sold in 1905 to Albert Crum and Hugo Friedlander, setting up the New Zealand Brick, Tile and Pottery Company.⁹⁰

⁸³ *New Zealand Herald* (2001). Bay's building blocks of history. 6 June 2001, accessed from: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=193528.

⁸⁴ Dave Pearson Architects (2009a). *New Lynn Town Centre: A Heritage Assessment*. Auckland.

⁸⁵ Clough and Associates (2019). Te Whau Pathway Main Route, West Auckland:

Archaeological Assessment, accessed from:

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/ResourceConsentDocuments/14BUN60337530AppxDArchaeologicalAssessment.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Truttman, L. (2015). *New Lynn's brickmakers (1860s-2015)*. Retrieved from: <http://asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/newlynnbusinessassociation/library/new-lynn-brickmakers-history.pdf?201604280240>.

⁸⁷ Dave Pearson Architects (2009a). *New Lynn Town Centre: A Heritage Assessment*. Auckland.

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Unknown. (n.d) New Lynn Development Poster. Retrieved from:

<http://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/New%20Lynn%20Development%20Posters.pdf>

⁹⁰ Truttman, L. (no date). New Lynn history. Retrieved from:

<https://www.newlynnbusinessassociation.net.nz/about-new-lynn>.

Growth of the New Lynn clay industry (1910-1960s)

In 1910, the collection of brickwork businesses which had established themselves in West Auckland came together to form the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Company in 1910. Rice Owen Clark's Hobsonville brick business moved to New Lynn in 1925, as New Lynn offered better clay, more access to workers and a railway station nearby.⁹¹ The business, and particularly Tom E. Clark, one of Rice Owen Clark's great-grandsons, became a major player in the New Lynn clay industry until its demise in the 1980s.

In March 1929, R O Clark Ltd, Gardner Bros & Parker, the New Zealand Brick, Tile and Pottery Co and Glenburn Fireclay & Pottery Co Ltd amalgamated into one company, Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Ltd. It further amalgamated in August 1929 into its parent company to become Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd which became the parent company of the New Lynn brickworks for the next 60 years, with Tom Clark senior as the first managing director (Figure 23).⁹²

Tom Clark had begun working in the firm during the Depression of the 1930s. He was responsible for the plant expanding in 1937 to produce items unrelated to the building trade such as electrical insulation equipment and moulds for rubber products such as gloves, baby bottle teats and condoms. Clark always encouraged his staff to experiment with new products. The company established a research department in 1938 to investigate the viability of producing tableware from New Zealand clays. An oil-fired continuous tunnel kiln was built in 1941, and tableware manufacture began the following year.⁹³

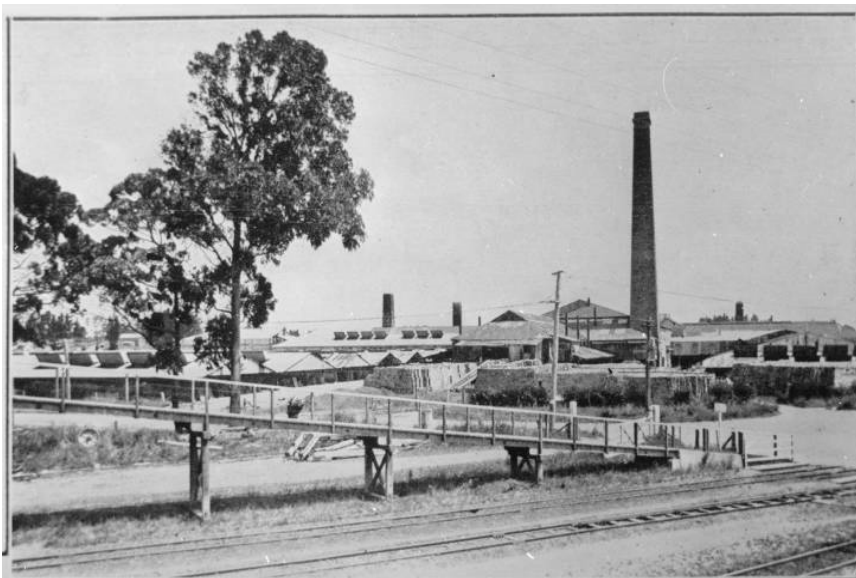


Figure 23. View of the Amalgamated Brick and Tile Company's brickworks at New Lynn showing buildings and tall brickworks chimney. In the foreground is the ramp for the pedestrian railway overbridge. Taken in 1929 by J. Diamond.⁹⁴

⁹¹ New Lynn Protection Society (2020). Demolition of the historic Totara strip shops. Retrieved from: <https://www.newlynnprotectionsociety.co.nz/page/totara-ave/>.

⁹² Truttman, L. (2015). *New Lynn's brickmakers (1860s-2015)*. Retrieved from: <http://asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/newlynnbusinessassociation/library/new-lynn-brickmakers-history.pdf?201604280240>.

⁹³ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.

⁹⁴ Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections JTD-11G-04796.

Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd in New Lynn became the largest combined factory for the production of earthenware pipes and bricks in New Zealand. The company contributed greatly to the growth of New Lynn, producing a range of ceramic fittings, employing 200 men making pipes, crocks, tiles, troughs, chimney pots, construction components and containers of all types.⁹⁵

The company diversified after 1940 to establish the Crown Lynn ceramics factory and became one of New Zealand's most important companies, producing hundreds of thousands of ceramics each week. See aerial photographs of the area in Appendix 4. Throughout its history, Crown Lynn Potteries produced millions of pieces of domestic crockery, sold both locally and exported internationally. The pottery required more than 8,500 tonnes of clay and other materials annually and these were sourced from various parts of New Zealand, including New Lynn. A design department was set up in 1945, and they researched overseas styles and sourced expertise from the United Kingdom. While some decorations were imported, they also fostered an inventive design culture in-house.⁹⁶ Its wares were in almost every New Zealand home and were exported to the United States, Australia and Canada.⁹⁷ The company played a vital part in the economy and social fabric of West Auckland and New Lynn in particular.⁹⁸ Crown Lynn formed an important part of New Zealand's industrial design history, especially its successes with introducing uniquely New Zealand designs and products to an international market.⁹⁹

The height of the New Lynn Clay Industry (1960s-1970s)

By the 1960s, Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd reached its peak production of over 10 million pieces of tableware and pottery per year, producing plates, bowls, mugs, and jugs in dozens of different designs.¹⁰⁰ It became the largest pottery company in the southern hemisphere at that time.¹⁰¹ The company was making substantial profits.¹⁰² Crown Lynn pottery was in 60 per cent of New Zealand households during this time.¹⁰³ In 1963, the Queen visited the Crown Lynn factory, further increasing its popularity (Figure 24).

⁹⁵ Unknown. New Lynn Development Poster. Retrieved from:

<http://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/New%20Lynn%20Development%20Posters.pdf>

⁹⁶ Portage Ceramics Trust (2020). Crown Lynn Potteries, New Lynn. Retrieved from:

<https://portageceramicstrust.org.nz/stories/crown-lynn-potteries-new-lynn/>

⁹⁷ Unknown. New Lynn Development Poster. Retrieved from:

<http://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/New%20Lynn%20Development%20Posters.pdf>

⁹⁸ Portage Ceramics Trust (2020). Crown Lynn Potteries, New Lynn. Retrieved from:

<https://portageceramicstrust.org.nz/stories/crown-lynn-potteries-new-lynn/>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Te Papa (no date). Crown Lynn domestic ware, accessed from: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/history/crown-lynn-pottery-kiwi-icon/crown-lynn-domestic-ware>.

¹⁰¹ McGowan, F. (2010). The golden age of Crown Lynn pottery. Retrieved from:

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/interactive/crown-lynn-pottery>. Pickmere, A. (2005). Obituary: Tom Clark, retrieved from: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10331273.

¹⁰² Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.

¹⁰³ Radio New Zealand, 2019. The rise and fall of Crown Lynn. Retrieved from:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2018703699/the-rise-and-fall-of-crown-lynn>



Figure 24 Tom Clark (right) shows Queen Elizabeth II and the Prime Minister J. Marshall Crown Lynn's decorating department during her tour of the Crown Lynn factory in New Lynn in 1963.¹⁰⁴

It is during this peak that Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd decided to build its headquarters in New Lynn (at the corner of Totara Ave and Great North Road) in 1967. As the most powerful player in the clay industry, the brick building was built to showcase this dominance (Figure 25). It was designed by an emerging architect, Neville Price, and was also designed to house a new ICT computer, as computers were just coming into use in New Zealand businesses.¹⁰⁵

By the 1970s, the factory employed over 500 people and made millions of items each year.¹⁰⁶ The majority of New Zealanders used Crown Lynn products every day.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ceramco Limited. (1979). *Ceramco Limited: a history 1929-1979*. Auckland, New Zealand: Ceramco Limited. (p. 16).

¹⁰⁵ Truttman, L. (2015). *New Lynn's brickmakers (1860s-2015)*. Retrieved from: <http://asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/newlynnbusinessassociation/library/new-lynn-brickmakers-history.pdf?201604280240>.

¹⁰⁶ Auckland Libraries (2013). *New Lynn gets a makeover but remembers its past*. Retrieved from: <http://heritageetal.blogspot.com/2013/04/new-lynn-gets-makeover-but-remembers.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.



Figure 25 Ceramic House, 1969. (Photographer: John Thomas Diamond, Auckland Libraries West Auckland Research Centre, J. T. Diamond Collection, JTD-11A-04005. ¹⁰⁸

The demise of the New Lynn clay industry

However, the boom of the 1960s did not last. With import restrictions lifted, economic difficulties and company takeovers all contributed to the demise of the company by 1989.¹⁰⁹ Consolidated Brick and Pipe Investments Ltd changed its name to become Ceramco from 1974 in order to diversify business (Figure 26).¹¹⁰ The company diversified into a series of new interests, including electronics, appliance wholesaling and making acquisitions including Bendon lingerie. After import restrictions were removed in the late 1970s, the market was flooded with international companies.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Auckland Libraries West Auckland Research Centre, J. T. Diamond Collection, JTD-11A-04005.

¹⁰⁹ McGowan, F. (2010). The golden age of Crown Lynn pottery. Retrieved from: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/interactive/crown-lynn-pottery/>;

¹¹⁰ Portage Ceramics Trust (2020). Crown Lynn Potteries, New Lynn. Retrieved from: <https://portageceramicstrust.org.nz/stories/crown-lynn-potteries-new-lynn/>

¹¹¹ Radio New Zealand, 2019. The rise and fall of Crown Lynn. Retrieved from: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2018703699/the-rise-and-fall-of-crown-lynn>



Figure 26. Accountants working in Ceramco in the late 1970s.¹¹²

The demise of the company is explained by historian Valerie Ringer Monk:

*'The fundamental reason for Crown Lynn's demise was the fact that it had been built up in the artificial environment of import controls. They had always been sheltered from economic reality, and not viable in an open market place... Crown Lynn was especially vulnerable to the market reforms because of the type of product it made. The factory mass produced mid-range and low-cost china, and this was the very market which the new Asian factories were aiming at – but the Asian product was much cheaper.'*¹¹³

Although Crown Lynn was showing signs of recovery after years of trading losses, the company could not compete with the more advanced manufacturing technologies used in Asia and Europe.¹¹⁴ The pipeworks, kilns and buildings were demolished in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Figure 27), leaving only what is now known as the Ambrico kiln (Figure 28).

¹¹² Ceramco Limited. (1979). *Ceramco Limited: a history 1929-1979*. Auckland, New Zealand: Ceramco Limited. (p. 16).

¹¹³ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group, p.145.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.



Figure 27. View of scene soon after the start of the demolition period at the former Gardner works, part of the Amalgamated Brick and Pipe Company's works, north side, showing the smoke stacks for the engine shed and for the kiln. Taken in December 1978 by J. Diamond.¹¹⁵



Figure 28. Apart from Ceramic House, the Ambrico kiln (pictured) is the only remaining standing building of the New Lynn clay industry. (David Bade, Auckland Council, 2019).

Ceramco announced the Crown Lynn factory closure on 5 May 1989. By then staff numbers had fallen to around 200. Crown Lynn's share of New Zealand's domestic tableware market was by then less than 20 per cent, despite the company's successful

¹¹⁵ Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections (JTD-0366-T).

move from the lower end of the market to a more middle ground.¹¹⁶ In September 1989 all of Crown Lynn's assets, including plant, designs and brand name, were sold to GBH Porcelain of Malaysia.¹¹⁷ Tom Clark had been knighted in 1986 and retired in 1993 as a director of Ceramco Corporation after 62 years continuous service as an employee and director.¹¹⁸ An article from the *Western Leader* in 1989 stated: 'It could be said that Crown Lynn crockery ruled supreme for 50 years on the dinner tables of the nation.'¹¹⁹

The last brickmaking operation in New Lynn ended in 2015 with the closure of Monier CSR on the former Ceramco factory site, ending the district's over-150-year association with the firing of clay on an industrial scale (Figure 29).¹²⁰



Figure 29. 1996 (left) and 2017 (right) aerial photograph (Auckland Council GeoMaps)

Present day

The former factory and clayworks area bounded to the south by Margan and Astley Avenue is part of an Auckland Council Special Housing Area and currently being developed as a residential area. In July 2015, Monier Bricks Roofing, which had been located on the site for 30 years, ended their manufacturing of bricks.¹²¹ All that remains of New Lynn's clay industry history are the Ambrico kiln (scheduled Historic Heritage Place 00200 and with likely archaeological features R11/2755), archaeological remains of a circular downdraught kiln under a car park at 7 Clark Street (R11/2449), and the company headquarters (the former Ceramic House). Reminders of the history include public sculptures and names on road signs (such as Ambrico Place, Clark Street, and Crown Lynn Place).

¹¹⁶ Ringer Monk, Valerie (2006). *Crown Lynn, A New Zealand Icon*. New Zealand: Penguin Group.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Pickmere, A. (2005). Obituary: Tom Clark, retrieved from:

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10331273.

¹¹⁹ *Western Leader*, 28 August 1989.

¹²⁰ Truttman, L. (2015). *New Lynn's brickmakers (1860s-2015)*. Retrieved from: <http://asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/newlynnbusinessassociation/library/new-lynn-brickmakers-history.pdf?201604280240>.

¹²¹ Roberts (2015) Brick factory makes way for urban development. Accessed from:

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/western-leader/70137958/brick-factory-makes-way-for-urban-development>

There is a lot of public interest in the brick and pottery history of New Lynn. A community project began in the early 1990s to preserve the Ambrico kiln (the last surviving kiln from the Gardner Bros and Parker brickworks dating from c. 1926). The kiln was stabilised, reroofed and now stands in a small reserve in Ambrico Place.¹²²

The Portage Ceramics Trust was set up in 2005 to purchase a large private collection of ceramics and pottery-making equipment relating to Crown Lynn Potteries. Te Toi Uku, The Art of Clay, a ceramics museum in Ambrico Place, was also established in 2005.¹²³ Crown Lynn crockery has increasingly become a collector's item with some rare items fetching large prices on auction websites.¹²⁴

Computers in New Zealand

During the 1960s, computer technology advanced and New Zealand's largest businesses and government departments began to explore the use of computers.¹²⁵ It is widely believed that New Zealand's first modern digital computer was an IBM 650, installed at New Zealand Treasury in 1960/61 to automate the government payroll.¹²⁶ However, the Department of Education may have installed an ICT 1201 a few months before the arrival of the IBM 650.¹²⁷

The University of Auckland and the University of Canterbury installed IBM 1620 computers in 1963 to support courses in Business Data Processing and Scientific Computing.¹²⁸ New Zealand's first commercial computer was purchased by the Bank of New Zealand in 1966 – an IBM 360-30.¹²⁹ The popularity of the computer is shown in the following table¹³⁰:

¹²² Clough & Associates Ltd (2012). *New Lynn Archaeological Study*, accessed from: https://chi.net.nz/Documents/12051_New_Lynn_archaeological_study.pdf.

¹²³ Truttman, L. (no date). New Lynn history. Retrieved from: <https://www.newlynnbusinessassociation.net.nz/about-new-lynn>.

¹²⁴ Unknown. New Lynn Development Poster. Retrieved from: <http://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/New%20Lynn%20Development%20Posters.pdf>.

¹²⁵ Newman, K. (2008). *Connecting the Clouds – the Internet in New Zealand*. Activity Press. Accessed from: <https://www.nethistory.co.nz/>

¹²⁶ Beardon, C. (1985). *Computer culture: information revolution in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Methuen. University of Auckland (2018). *Computing History Displays: Computer History Time Line - The age of IBM*. Accessed from: <https://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/historydisplays/TimeLine/TimeLine4.2/TimeLine4.2Main.php>.

¹²⁷ This computer was bought second-hand by Motor Specialties (now known as Repco) in 1963 and transported from Wellington and installed at 80 Anzac Avenue in Auckland. The building had been designed for Motor Specialties by Basil Hooper in 1929 and housed the computer from 1963-66. This was one of the first commercial users to install a computer in New Zealand, and the first known to install a second-hand machine. Carpenter, B. 2020, *The First Computer in New Zealand*. Yet to be published. Accessed from: <https://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~brian/FirstCiNZ.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Smithies, J. (2000). *Connecting the Periphery: A History of Computing in New Zealand, 1950-2000*.

Presentation accessed from: https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/10609/12651793_ConnectingPeriphery_smithies_1.1.pdf?sequence=1.

¹²⁹ Ibid; BNZ Heritage. Accessed from: <https://www.bnzheritage.co.nz/archives/story/they-said-it-couldnt-be-done>.

¹³⁰ Beardon, C. (1985). *Computer culture: information revolution in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Methuen, p. 8 and 11.

Year	Number of computers used in businesses in New Zealand
1960	1
1964	50
1965	70
1968	120
1969	140
1974	280
1979	1,600
1983	5,500

Computers in the 1960s were large and expensive, often taking up a whole floor of an organisation, but were a symbol of the owner's prestige. Only large organisations acquired their own computers in the 1960s.¹³¹ By 1969 in Auckland at least 34 companies and institutions had computers in use or on order, including: Air New Zealand, Alex Harvey, Auckland City Council, Auckland Electric Power Board, Auckland Harbour Board, Auckland Savings Bank, Automobile Association, Berlei (N.Z.), Bond and Bond, Burroughs (N.Z.), Computer Activities, Computer Systems, Consolidated Brick and Pipe, Databank System, Electronic Data Systems, Fletcher Computer Bureau, L.C.L. Centre, John W. Andrew, Johnson and Johnson, Joseph Lucas (N.Z.), J. Steel, Manukau City Council, Motor Specialities, Naval Research Laboratory, N.Z. Newspapers, N.Z. Towel Supply, Plessey N.Z., Pye, R & W Hellaby, Reckitt and Colman (N.Z.), Reid N.Z. Rubber, Smith and Brown, South British Insurance, University of Auckland, Wilson and Horton, Winstone and U.E.B. Industries.¹³² Most of these computers were housed in buildings already established.

Early computers had a number of requirements to function, including reliable power supplies and air conditioning, false floors for extensive cabling, and advanced fire suppression systems. They also typically needed "punch rooms", a room full of card punches and their (almost always female) operators. There were 2,502 people recorded as working directly with computers in 1969.¹³³ These computers were dedicated machines, mostly running a single application at a time, and scheduled externally by paper instructions.¹³⁴ Within a decade, however, these were taken over by smaller, more powerful, personal computers.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Auburb, F. (1971). Paper 5: Legal Problems of Storage and Processing of Electronic Data, *New Zealand Legal Research Foundation Seminar Papers*. accessed from: <http://www.nzlii.org/nz/journals/NZLRFSP/1971/6.pdf>.

¹³³ Beardon, C. (1985). *Computer culture: information revolution in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Methuen.

¹³⁴ Williams, W. (1985), *Looking Back to Tomorrow*, New Zealand Computer Society, Wellington.

¹³⁵ Newman, K. (2008). *Connecting the Clouds – the Internet in New Zealand*. Activity Press. Accessed from: <https://www.nethistory.co.nz/>