

## Heritage Citation



### Kathmandu

#### Key details

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Also known as</b> | Ashby Chambers  |
| <b>Addresses</b>     | At 144 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006                          |
| <b>Type of place</b> | Shop/s  |
| <b>Period</b>        | Interwar 1919-1939  |
| <b>Style</b>         | Free Classical  |
| <b>Lot plan</b>      | L1_RP113042   |
| <b>Key dates</b>     | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000<br>Date of Citation — September 2006 |

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Construction</b>          | Walls: Masonry  |
| <b>People/associations</b>   | Chambers and Ford (Architect)                             |
| <b>Criterion for listing</b> | (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association |

Kathmandu was designed by Brisbane architects Chambers and Ford in 1924 for owner Harold Osborne Ashby, of Ashby Brothers bicycle and motor cycle company. It is one of a row of buildings in Wickham Street that form a harmonious streetscape and demonstrate the renewal and growth that occurred in Fortitude Valley during the 1920s. Ashby purchased the 9.9 perch site in March 1924 after subdivision of a larger pre-existing block. This building and others in the block were constructed in the 1920s replacing earlier buildings, some of which were timber and iron.

## History

The 1920s were a decade of economic growth throughout Brisbane. The Valley in particular, with its success as a commercial and industrial hub, expanded even further. Electric trams, which passed the busy corner of Brunswick and Wickham Streets, brought thousands of shoppers to the Valley. The first stage of the McWhirters building that had been completed in 1912 was extended in 1923.

Although 144 Wickham Street and its associated buildings were situated away from the main retail hub centred on Brunswick Street, Rhoades and Co furniture warehouse, which was sited on the southern end of this block of shops, drew customers to this end of the Valley.

Wickham Street was affected by road widening and remodelling at the junction of Ann, Queen and Wickham Streets that occurred during the 1920s. In 1923 the Brisbane Municipal Council resumed properties in Wickham Street where it met Ann and Queen Streets for this purpose. In this decade the cutting on Duncan's Hill for Ann Street was widened opening the Valley even more to the rest of Brisbane. In 1927, Barry Parade was constructed to link up with St Paul's Terrace on which the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration had recently erected their new convent.

The undertaking of road widening in the CBD to improve traffic flow, and park creation was part of a broader international town planning movement that was prominent between 1912 and 1920.<sup>1</sup> This movement had a significant impact on the Brisbane Municipal Council, leading to the implementation of The City of Brisbane Improvement Act of 1916. Extensive plans were then detailed for the widening of the CBD's 'principal streets, the resumption of extensive areas of land, and the extension of the city's parks and recreational facilities'.<sup>2</sup> The Municipal Council borrowed £1,000,000 and work on the scheme began in 1923. The junction of Ann, Queen and Wickham Streets was completely remodelled in the next few years, creating Centenary Park.

A thirty-perch allotment, formerly belonging to Ida Murphy and Ernest Hatton (children of the late S. Hatton), was offered for sale in April 1921. The block was situated on Wickham Street, with one corner to Little street, and was occupied by four tenants. Harold Osborne Ashby, proprietor of the Ashby bicycle company which operated from 80 Wickham Street, purchased 9.9 perches of the allotment in March 1924. Ashby's block was the corner allotment, with access to three roads (Wickham Street and two sides of Little Street). As well as running Ashby

Ltd, Ashby was also a former Alderman for the Hamilton district, and had served on multiple committees for the Hamilton Town Council. He commissioned Chambers and Hall to design a building for the 9.9 perch site. This development received building approval from the Brisbane Municipal Council in 1924. The builder was McDonald Brothers of Kelvin Grove, who also built 140 Wickham Street. The buildings also shared engineers Harvey and Son, who provided the structural steel for both Ashby's building and Leong's building next door.

The noted architectural firm, Chambers and Ford, was the partnership of Claude William Chambers (1861-1947) with E. M. Ford. The firm lasted from 1920 to 1951, although Chambers had relocated to Sydney in 1915 and left the business in 1935. Chambers' architectural work in Brisbane dates from 1887. Chambers, who worked in Brisbane from 1887, contributed greatly to the architectural design of the city. His work includes the former RS Exton and Co Building (1907) [601142], Perry House (1910) [600103], Smellie's Building (1896) [600097] and the former Telecommunications House (1907) [600110], as well as 'Ross Roy', now St Peter's Lutheran College, Indooroopilly (1896-97), 'Wybenia', Mark Street, New Farm (1898), additions to the Municipal Markets, Roma and Turbot Streets, Brisbane (1900). Chambers and Ford were responsible for Holy Trinity Church (1930) and a number of elite houses in Hamilton and Clayfield during the inter-war period, one of note being 'Gainsborough' in Crescent Road, Hamilton (1938).

Ashby Brothers Pty Ltd, cycle and motor importers, moved into the building in October 1924 and was promptly stymied by road-works on Wickham Street. Demolition work on buildings across the street had begun in June, and the street had been dug up for straightening, to re-lay tram tracks and to replace the wooden blocks on the street with concrete, as part of the Council's redevelopment scheme. Works were delayed by the absence of Archbishop Duhig, whose buildings on the opposite side of Wickham Street needed to be removed before work could continue. Ashby and fellow traders in the area arranged a deputation to the deputy mayor in late October; Ashby complained that the slackness of trade had forced him to sack one of his workers. The works were finally completed and by the end of the year Ashby Brothers reported a record year for the sale of Ashby Bicycles.

In the long term, the street works had a more positive effect on the street. The widening gave rise to the name 'Broadway', which was applied to Wickham Street between Boundary and Gipps Streets from the early 1920s. Ashby was one of the founding committee members of the Broadway Improvement Association, which was established in July 1925. The association had a post and telegraph office approved and opened in the premises of draper Barnes Limited in September 1926, after which the association appears to have petered away. The name 'Broadway' continued into the 1930s, however, and the area remained a 'thriving thoroughfare, gorged with traffic, and customers that jostle one another on the sidewalks'.<sup>3</sup>

Ashby Limited operated from these premises until the Second World War when they altered their business to bicycle dealers. Harold Ashby had died in 1938 and the land was held by the Queensland Trustees until 1966. The building was large enough to lease sections to other small businesses. Accordingly, land agents, tailors, costumiers and decorators operated from the building over the next twenty years.

Until the 1960s Fortitude Valley was a major retail centre but thereafter population and businesses declined. The building was owned by a series of investment companies and internal alterations were completed in the basement in 1967, converting it to a billiards saloon. Further building alterations were undertaken in 1975. A resurgence of inner-city living during the 1990s reversed this trend. Today, the building is a retail outlet for adventure travel goods, as a most of the associated buildings in this area of Wickham Street.

# Statement of significance

## Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

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### Historical

#### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history  
as this shop illustrates the growth and renewal that Fortitude Valley experienced as a retail centre in the 1920s.

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### Aesthetic

#### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance  
as one of a group of shops that contribute to the streetscape of Wickham Street, providing a harmonious urban landscape of similarly-scaled buildings dating from the same period.

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### Historical association

#### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history  
as an example of the work of noteworthy Brisbane architectural firm of the 1920s, Chambers and Ford.

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## References

1. Gordon Greenwood and John Laverty, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*, Brisbane, 1959, p. 410
2. *Ibid*, p. 410-11

3. *The Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1933 p12
4. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit Citation, September 2006
5. Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1989
6. *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, 1923
7. Brisbane City Council Building Registers, 1920s
8. Brisbane City Council, *Fortitude Valley Character and Heritage Study Volume 2*, (Brisbane: Brisbane City Council's Heritage Unit, 1995)
9. Brisbane City Council Property Details, BIDS, Building Cards
10. Brisbane City Council Minutes, 1923
11. Brisbane City Council WebBASX maps – cadastre, 1946 aerial, 2001 aerial, 2005 aerial
12. Brisbites Suburban Sites, Fortitude Valley @ [www.brisbites.com/suburbview.asp](http://www.brisbites.com/suburbview.asp) accessed 7 Sep 2006
13. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
14. Greenwood, Gordon and John Laverty, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*, The Council of the City of Brisbane, Brisbane, 1959
15. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
16. Kennedy, Michael Owen. *Domestic Architecture in Queensland Between the Wars*. Unpub Thesis. Master of Built Environment. 1989
17. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 30, 1951
18. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board Survey Maps, Detail Plan No. 151, 1914
19. *Queensland Post Office Directories* 1918-1949 Editions
20. State Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, *Buildings of Queensland*, Jacaranda, Brisbane, 1959
21. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
22. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
23. *The Brisbane Courier*, 1924, 1933

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**Note:** This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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