

1902 - 2015

'TRATHEN'S - The Building; the Family & the Business'



The Trathen's building ca 2014

Ben Trathen & Michelle Trathen/Ahnfeldt
191 Trafalgar Street NELSON

1902 - 2015

INTRODUCTION FROM BEN TRATHEN

Nelson is a part of Trathen's

Trathen's are a part of Nelson

My Great, Great, Grandfather arrived in Nelson on the first emigrant ship, the 'Whitby'

My Great, Great, Grandmother arrived in Nelson six months later on the 'Lloyds'

My Great Grandfather arrived in Nelson on the 'Lloyds' with his mother when he was only six years old

My Grandfather arrived in Nelson by ship from Australia in 1902

My Grandmother arrived in Nelson from New Plymouth at the start of the Maori wars for protection from Fort Arthur (Church Hill).

My Grandmother was born in Wakefield

My Father was born in Nelson

My Mother was married in Nelson

I was born at 4 Grove Street in Nelson

I married my dear wife in Nelson

My children were all born in Nelson

I have worked all my life in Nelson

My roots are definitely in Nelson

I would like to think we have every right to redevelop and keep this property in our family and for the benefit of our beautiful city and its people

To go forward not backward, into the future

Thank you all

Benjamin Geoffrey Trathen

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Authors Note

This report has been written for the Nelson City Council to support the application sought to demolish the Trathens building which is listed in the Nelson Resource Management Plan as a Category B building.

The report is presented in two parts

- I. Trathen's; The History of the building, the family and the business
- II. The current condition of the building and the reasons the Trathens have reached the decision that the best way forward for the family and the Nelson CBD is to erect a new replacement building

Michelle Ahnfeldt

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PART I - TRATHEN'S

The history of the building, the family & the business



Above: The opening of the new Trathens building 5th April 1922

Ben & Ellen Trathen with their 5 children Back from left: Ronald Voss b. 1913,
Geoffrey Melville b. 1910 Gordon (Jim) Bennett b. 1920, Ellen Voss Trathen b. 1884
Middle from left: Lorna Jean b.1918, Ellen Joyce b. 1915 Front: Ben Trathen b. 1874



Family Retail History

Trathen & Co. – Benjamin Trathen

Benjamin Trathen was the proprietor and founder of Trathen's Department Store and took a prominent part in the business life of the city of Nelson for 37 years, *working for the advancement and welfare of Nelson.*

Ben was born on the 23rd of April **1874** at Benerce, Orange in New South Wales, Australia. His father, also called Benjamin, immigrated to Australia in the 1860s searching for a better life; he established a sheep farm in Orange with his wife Susan Bailey. Ben was the 6th of nine children.

When Ben was only eleven his father died, his mother, Susan, died 8 years later in 1893 when Ben was 19 years old.

Ben chose to work in the retail trade and commenced in the drapery business first in Orange and later in Sydney before deciding to travel to New Zealand in about **1902**. This is a reference from Messrs Davis Bros.



Founder of 'Trathen's'
Benjamin Trathen - Born 1874 – Died 1942

4th November 1902

Dear Sirs,

This will introduce Mr. B. Trathen, who is leaving for New Zealand to push his fortune. He has been with Messrs Davis Bros. of Orange for some 8 years with whom he held an important position as manager and buyer of the fancy, hosiery and glove departments for their business.

Their letter of reference, which Mr Trathen will produce, speaks in the highest terms of his ability and the success with which he conducted the responsibilities entrusted to him.

We feel sure that Mr Trathen will prove a valuable acquisition to anyone requiring his services, and we have every confidence in recommending him to your kind attention.

Thanking you to forward his views to the best of your ability.

We remain,

Yours truly

Sargood, Butler, Nichol & Ewen

When Ben arrived in New Zealand he found work at Kirkcaldie & Stains in Wellington where he worked as the head of a department for two years.



Kirkcaldie & Stains – Lambton Quay, Wellington

Ben returned to Sydney and worked for 'Anthony Hordern Bros', who in 1905 opened a huge six-storey department store called **The Palace Emporium**. One of their advertising slogans was – 'They sold anything from a needle to an anchor', the crest on their coat of arms was a budding tree, the motto: 'while I live I'll grow', It appeared above all the store's window fittings and on all their stationery. Ben always intended to return to New Zealand and start his own business; his experience at 'Kirkcaldie & Stains' and 'The Palace Emporium' inspired him to build *the first department store business in Nelson*.



Late in **1904** Ben returned to New Zealand and settled in Nelson. He opened a drapery store, '*Messrs Trathen and Co., drapers*', in Richmond but in less than a month he was offered a lease on a shop in Bridge Street, owned by Mr B. H. Moller, so Ben shifted into the CBD of Nelson to run his business.

But then disaster struck...

13th May 1907- TWO SHOPS DESTROYED

Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XLII, 14 May 1907, Page 2

About 7.30 last evening an alarm of fire was given, it having been discovered that an outbreak had occurred in the block of buildings in Bridge Street owned by Mr B. H. Moller. The Fire Brigade was quickly on the spot, the members having just sat down to commence a cribbage match in their room at the Fire Station. It was fortunate that the firemen were so readily available, for there is no knowing where a fire starting in the business block would end once it got a big start on the Brigade. Aided by a



good pressure of water the firemen were soon able to make an impression on the flames, but they were unable to save the shop occupied by Mr E. Craig, boot-maker, and one of the shops occupied by Messrs Trathen and Co., drapers, from total destruction. An adjoining shop, also occupied by Messrs Trathen and Co., was more or less damaged. The stock in the three shops affected by the fire is almost completely destroyed.

From inquiries made it appears that there is a diversity of opinion as to the precise locality in which the fire broke out. Mr A. Karsten, who gave the alarm, is of opinion that it occurred in Mr Trathen's shop. On the other hand, Messrs H. Tunnicliffe, Edwards, Pearson, and Merlina, all of whom were early on the scene, agree that the outbreak was in Mr Craig's shop.

Trathen & Co., first opened in Bridge Street by Alma Lane

Mr Trathen left his shop about 10 minutes past six, and Mr Craig also left about the same time. Mr Moller had a total insurance of £500 on the five buildings in the block owned by him—£100 on each shop. The two shops destroyed were insured in the Liverpool, London, and Globe Office and the remaining three in the Alliance. Mr Moller also had the plate glass windows insured for £35 in the Norwich and London Accident Insurance Company. Messrs Trathen and Co. were insured for £450 in the State Office, £200 in the Phoenix Office, and £150 in the London and Liverpool and Globe Office—a total of £800. Mr Trathen estimates that he had £1250 worth of stock. Mr Craig was insured for £200 in the North Queensland Office, and estimates his loss at £1000, he having about £1200 worth of stock in his shop. The Fire Brigade desires to thank Mrs Parsonage, of the Wakatu Hotel, for sending hot coffee to the firemen.



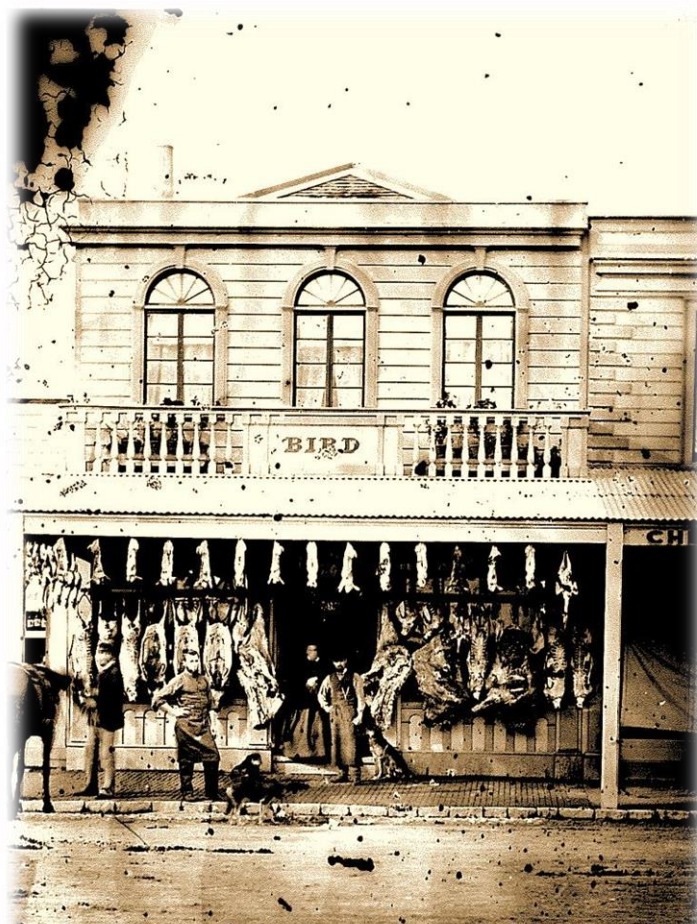
Fires were a common occurrence and were caused by a number of factors, gas and oil lamps, wooden buildings painted with lead paint, ineffective water supplies etc. Several businesses were destroyed in this fire.

17th April 1917 - A DISASTROUS FIRE **SEVERAL BUSINESS PREMISES DESTROYED** **SPLENDID WORK BY THE**

BRIGADE Colonist, Volume LVIII, Issue 14390, 18 April 1917, Page 9

The most disastrous fire that has occurred in the city for many years broke out about 8.30 o'clock last night in central Trafalgar Street. It originated in the premises of Messrs Lightband and Co., "boot and shoe importers, large one-storied wooden building. In a few minutes the whole of this shop was involved, and the flames spread to the premises of Messrs Jackson and Co., Ltd., booksellers and stationers, on the south, and on the north to the shop of Mr W. C. Ancell, chemist. All these buildings were soon a seething mass of flames. From Jackson and Co.'s the fire spread, to the large bulk stores of Messrs E. Buxton and (Jo., Ltd., ironmongers and general merchants, a galvanised iron building running from their main premises parallel with Trafalgar street, to which access was had by a right-of-way from Bridge street. The bulk stores were also totally destroyed, together with their contents;

On the northern side the fire was checked by a brick building adjoining Mr Ancell's recently erected by Messrs Brown Bros, and occupied by Messrs Trathen and Co., drapers. These premises were for some time a source of anxiety. If the conflagration had enveloped them nothing could have saved the block-, which from Trathen's round into Bridge Street is entirely of wood.



Bird Butchers Shop opened ca 1846

In **1915** 'Trathen & Co.' (also known as 'The Progressive Drapers') moved from Bridge Street to the Trafalgar Street site where, 'Bird butchery', had been located and run by Mrs Ann Bird, recorded as the first European woman to step ashore from the Fifeshire.

The Fifeshire was the first New Zealand Company migrant ship to reach Nelson. The butchers shop was not without incident and 'The Nelson Examiner' reported in 1847 that as a butcher was preparing to shoot a bullock in the lane behind the shop, the animal lifted its head. The bullet shot past the bullock, along behind the shop, down the lane and killed Mr Sidebotham who was walking down Bridge Street.



Ellen Voss Smith

Ben met his wife, Ellen Voss Smith, who he called Nell, after she started working at 'the store'; within the year they began 'walking out', and were married on the **8th of March 1908** at St. Johns Methodist Church where they were both active members. They moved into 10 Collingwood Street, a single storied wooden house which they called 'Waratah' in memory of Ben's New South Wales connections.

Ben Trathen belonged to many business organizations, on several occasions being *president of the Nelson Retailers Association*.



From left: Ellen (Nell), Ben & Geoff Trathen ca 1912

During the years of the 1st World War through the 'Nelson Retailers Association, Ben organized the 'Basket & Barrow' Carnival. Management and staff dressed up and decorated barrows, filled with goods, they were pushed through town. Money from the sale of goods was given towards the war effort.

6th August 1917 - **WHEELBARROW PARADE A STARS AND STRIPES DAY**

Article from the Nelson Evening Mail 6 August 1917:-



The prize winner for originality in the retailers 'Basket & Barrow Carnival' features in this photograph from the F. N. Jones collection August 25th 1917. In the lead is Mr B. Trathen as Postmaster of 'Uncle Sam's travelling Post Office', with a hamper labelled, 'red tape', following him Mr E. A. Wood with 'Foreign Parcels' and other assistants with 'Stamps'. After the procession the contents of the various baskets which included cakes, hams, and rabbits were sold to raise money for the retailer's candidate in the 'Daffodil Queen Carnival'.

A novel and highly successful function was got off on Saturday afternoon in aid of the Retailers' Queen Candidate in connection with the Daffodil 'Carnival'. This took the form of a wheelbarrow parade, the idea; it is understood, having been initiated by Mr Ben Trathen, and having been warmly taken up.

The curiosity of the public was aroused, and as the weather had lifted and promised to remain fine for the afternoon, thousands assembled in Trafalgar Street. The display was highly spectacular and one of the most successful ever held. 'In respect it was "out on its own," for never before has there been such a demonstration of the Stars & Stripes, which the Retailers have adopted for their campaign. America's national emblem lends itself to displays of this kind, and several scores of young women, children, and "Uncle Sam's" flitting about in the national costume made a stirring scene.

About 40 barrows were lined up for the parade, many of them having been most artistically decorated, while others were the product of much ingenious thought and hard work



Most original: Giant barrow designed and built by Mrs F N Jones, Messrs F N Jones & Rigger, wheeled by Mr A J Stringer, with his younger brother on his shoulders

Leading the barrows was a monster creation, 14 ft. long, 9 ft. wide and 6 ft. 6 in high, wheeled by a giant, 9 ft. high. There were other barrows fitted up as windmills, aeroplanes, submarines and yachts, while one represented "No man's land" and the trenches – a very clever representation.

Several visitors who were in Nelson on Saturday expressed surprise and pleasure at the turn out, remarking that it would have done credit to any large cities of the Dominion.



The 9 foot high giant, Mr A J Stringer, with his younger brother on his shoulders



Trathen & Co; Webster's & Co; Shields Wine & Spirits; Trafalgar Street shops destroyed by fire on 3rd January 1920

On the night of January 3rd **1920** a fire swept through three wooden buildings in Trafalgar Street, completely destroying Trathen's and two other shops – 'Webster's & Co.' and 'Shields Wine & Spirits', the headlines read –

3rd January 1920 - CENTRAL TRAFALGAR ST. 3 SHOPS DESTROYED.

SPLENDID WORK BY THE BRIGADE

(From 'The Colonist') At a quarter to three o'clock this morning, a fire was observed in the premises of Messrs Webster and Co, provision merchants in central Trafalgar St, by Mr H. Farrell, a taxi-driver, who was returning from a dance at Stoke. He promptly gave the alarm, but the flames had a good hold and although the Fire Brigade were promptly on the scene they had spread with such rapidity that the building was doomed. The adjoining premises of Messrs Trathen and co., drapers, and Shields and co, wine merchants, were speedily engulfed, despite the efforts of the brigade. The pressure of the water at first, when one lead of hose was on was good but when several leads were joined up there was a marked decrease in the pressure, and the fire continued to progress. The premises of Messrs Hounsell and Co., booksellers, caught alight and as we went to press the brigade were making strenuous efforts to save the buildings...

Messrs Trathen and Co is also heavy losers as the firm had stored in the shop which was destroyed, heavy reserve stocks. Mr Trathen states that many of the lines he will be unable to replace, while others will cost double and treble to stock the amounts previously paid. The new brick shop, recently purchased from Mr J. Wallace by 'Trathen and Co.', in which the clothing and tailoring departments are carried on, stopped the fire on the south side. The millinery department adjoining was also untouched....

While the filming of Mary Pickford in “Daddy Longlegs” was being advertised as showing at the Empire Theatre, Trathen’s were advertising their salvage sale, in Bridge Street, of stock damaged in the fire. The sale lasted a month and provided one of the *most sensational events held in Nelson for many years*.

Furs! Furs rescued from the flames, some slightly burnt, to go at ridiculous prices; others in perfect condition at Bargain Salvage Prices. Squirrel Sets from 49s 6d; Musquash Muffs, formerly 60s, now 7s 6d and 15s; set beautiful Black Fox Furs, in perfect order, at 12 guineas, now worth double. Salvage Sale, Trathen's, C.D.C. Buildings, Bridge street.*

A great deal of the stock damaged by water was marked at astounding prices to affect a speedy clearance. Furs rescued from the flames and slightly burned were advertised at unheard of prices.

The experience Ben gained working for modern, contemporary stores in Wellington and Australia inspired him to build the same opportunity in the city of Nelson. *He believed in the future of the city of Nelson, he invested his knowledge and money to build the best establishment possible to continue to advance the Trathen’s business.*

Modern department stores were designed to have spacious uncluttered interiors with tea rooms and live entertainment. This created a social centre not just a shop and encouraged shopping as a leisure activity rather than a purely functional necessity.

Ben engaged local architect Arthur Griffin, Griffin studied architecture through the International Correspondence School, Pennsylvania, USA. Businessman Thomas Cawthron became his patron, and it was through this association that he designed the Cawthron steps leading to the Nelson Cathedral.



Griffin practised architecture in Nelson from the early 1900's to about 1960; he was the architect for a number of buildings in the Nelson/ West coast region

Cawthron/Church Steps leading to Christ Church Cathedral, Trafalgar Street, Nelson, built ca 1913 by local architect A R Griffin

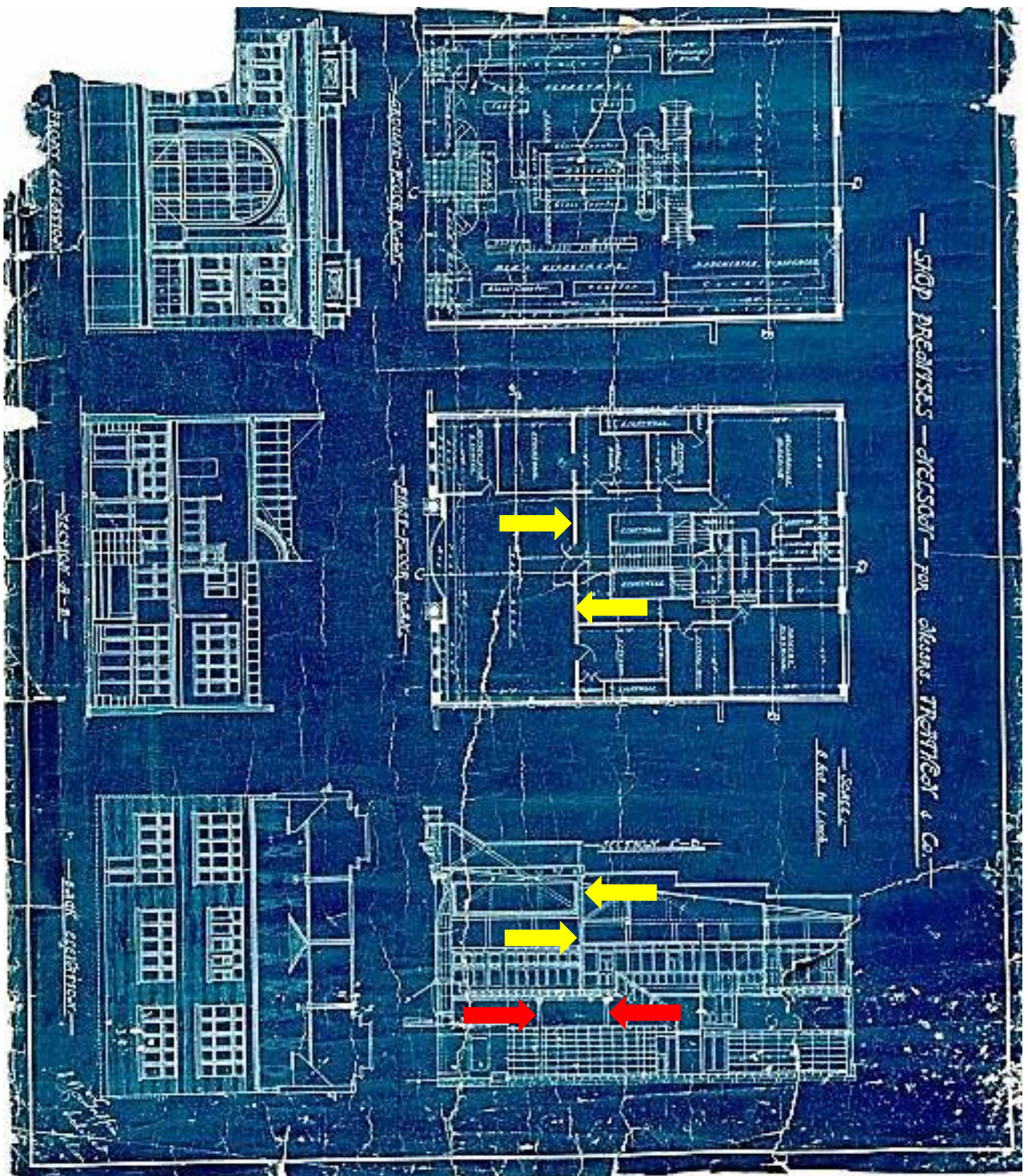
Some of the local area buildings designed by Arthur Reynold Griffin

- 1908 - Schools at Rockville, Westport Technical, Birchfield and Summerlea (later moved to Granity) for the Nelson Education Board
- 1908 - Home for Old People, Nelson
- 1908 - The Carnegie Free Public Library, Hokitika, the project was won in a design competition
- 1909 - School at Wangapeka
- 1909 - Additions to the school at Wakefield
- 1911/13 - Nelson Institute, Hardy Street
- 1912/13 The Church steps, Nelson
- 1915 - Wesleyan Church, Stoke
- ca1920 - 50 Rutherford Street, Church Hall , alterations
- ca1920 - 109 Rutherford Street, possibly designed for J W Robertson, the building contractors
- ca1920 - 238 Trafalgar Street
- 1922 – Trathen's, Trafalgar Street
- ca1930 - 157 Bridge Street originally E W Pidgeon's Service Station
- 1933 - 280 Hardy Street extensions to former Baghdad restaurant
- ca1930 - 274 Hardy Street
- 1930 - 284 Trafalgar Street
- ca1930 - 241-247 Trafalgar Street, " The Ritz Louis Kerr Ltd"
- ca1930 - 105 Trafalgar Street, "Stroud House"
- 1931 - Methodist Sunday School, Stoke
- 1936 - Whakarewa Home, Nelson
- 1936 - 324 Trafalgar Square, Plunket and Rest Rooms
- Anchor shipping offices, Port Nelson
- Neal and Haddow, Trafalgar Street;
- Church in Queen Street Richmond
- Private homes in Brougham Street, Richmond Ave (for his brother), in van Dieman Street (for H McLean), and in Ngati Awa Street (for the Hodgeon's)

Some examples of existing buildings in Nelson designed by Arthur Griffin



Original blueprints of 'Trathen's building', 191 Trafalgar Street, Nelson



Red Arrows indicating columns supporting the 1st floor - yellow arrows showing the concrete wall that is tied to the face of the building

The Grand Opening

It took over 2 years to build the new three storied shop on the old site in Trafalgar Street.



5th April 1922 Ben Trathen unlocks the door of the new building with the gold key commissioned by his wife Ellen

The grand opening was on the 5th of April **1922** and a huge crowd of people watched as Ben unlocked the door of the new 'Trathen's building' with great ceremony, using the gold key his wife, Ellen, had commissioned especially for the occasion. Stamped on the key it read, 'The key to success.'

On the ground floor there were six departments – Manchester, Dress, Ladies Underwear, Men's, Showroom and Haberdashery – as well as the main office. Ben had bought over from Sydney an excellent dress-maker named Tilly. Tilly was in charge of 6 staff and they occupied part of the second floor with areas designated for designing, cutting and fitting. A milliner and a tailor also had rooms on this floor, the major part of which was occupied by the tea rooms and kitchen. The third floor was mainly used for storage and as a workspace for the window dresser and display staff.

There was an estimated 1500 people who attended the opening day and congratulations were received from around New Zealand and Australia.



The staff standing outside on the opening day of the 'Trathen's' building at 191 Trafalgar Street, NELSON 5th April 1922



5th April 1922 - The opening day of the 'Trathen's building' with the builders standing on the roof

5th April 1922 - CITY IMPROVEMENTS

From page 5 of the Nelson Evening Mail 4th April 1922:-
MESSRS TRATHEN AND CO'S NEW PREMISES

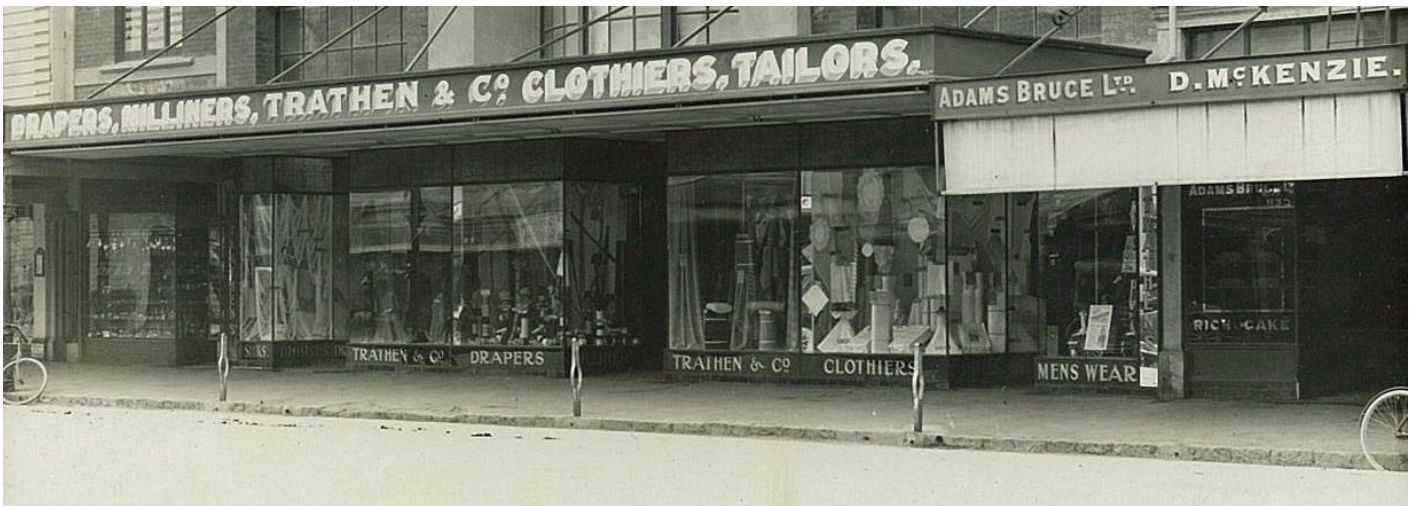
During the last ten years there have been quite a number of important improvements in the general appearance of the city. The asphalted streets and the many brick or stuccoed buildings have done much to remove indications of the more primitive conditions of earlier days.

The most recent, and one of the most important improvements to the city, is Messrs Trathen and Co.'s fine three storey brick building in Trafalgar Street, which will be open for business at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. Work has been proceeding on this building for over 12 months, and gradually the plans that the builders were working from were revealed in brick. The front presents a fine appearance. The style adopted by the architect, Mr A. R. Griffin, is a modified form of renaissance with columns of Ionic order. The central feature is a large window arched at the top, at each side is a large column, and beyond this in each case a series of small windows, flanked with red brickwork. A frieze, cornice, and parapet, mostly in cement finish, complete the top portion. The veranda is of the suspended type.

The building has a frontage of 52 ft. 6 in. by a depth of 75 ft. The front portion has three floors, and the walls throughout are sufficiently strong to carry another storey at the back portion of the building when occasion requires. The main feature on the ground floor will be the fancy goods department. To the left on entering are the dress department and an archway from this leads into a large showroom, with the milliners room conveniently situated in one corner. A door opening from the main entrance, leads to the men's department.

The main staircase is situated between the fancy goods department and the showroom, and has a flight leading from each side of the building to the first landing. Under the landing and projecting a little on each side are the office, this and the staircase both being centrally situated. Off the staircase is a small office for the proprietor.

On the first floor is the dressmaker's fitting room and tailor's fitting room, with large workroom adjacent in each case. Space is provided for stock rooms, and the front portion of the first floor is reserved for a tearoom, with the necessary kitchen adjacent hereto. This tearoom has not yet been completed, and will not be in operation for some time.



The main entrance is the most important feature of a retail premises, it invites customers into the shop

The main entrance to the building is in the centre, and the show windows are so arranged that full advantage is taken of every inch of frontage. The extent of plate glass used exceeds 600 square feet. The show windows and the internal fittings are arranged on the most up to date lines. Special attention has been paid to lighting. This is provided by a special window arrangement at the front, large windows at the back, and skylights in the roof.

Since the disastrous fire which destroyed the firms premises over two years ago business had been conducted under difficulties in three separate shops – one in Bridge street and two in Trafalgar Street – and the convenience of having the business under one roof will be appreciated by customers and staff alike. It is not many years ago since the business of Trathen and Co. was confined to one small shop in Bridge Street. The rapid growth is indicated by the present developments.

As stated above, Mr A. R. Griffin is the architect, Mr H. H. Johnston is the builder, and Mr A Stuart is foreman of works....

The article continues to list other people who worked on the building and continues,

Electric light generated by the plant of the Nelson Picture Company (Mr W. Surrell, manager), who were granted a temporary license by the Public Works Department to supply the light.

As advertised, the public are invited to be present at 10 o'clock to-morrow morning, when Mr B. Trathen who has been presented with a gold key for the occasion, will unlock the doors. Immediately after the public have been admitted, Miss Flett's Orchestra will play the National Anthem and will also play selections during the morning, and again in the afternoon, commencing at 2.30 pm.

The 12th Regiment Band will play selections in front of the building from 7.30 this evening and the shop will be lit up by electricity.

About a year after the new Trathen's shop opened electricity was supplied to the city of Nelson, revolutionizing both commercial and domestic life. The city had been illuminated previously with gas street lights, which were lit at dusk by a cyclist holding a long taper.

After work on Saturday mornings, Ben Trathen would often play tennis at the Brook St Lawn Tennis Club, returning home later in the afternoon with a bag of roasted peanuts as a treat for his family. He later built his own 'hard court' behind his home, 'Waratah'.

In an effort to make the court springy, Ben had several inches of coke distributed over the site before the final asphalt surface was laid. Friends were invited for 'tennis parties' and Nell would serve delectable treats at 'half time'. Ben formed a tennis club and had a blazer designed, it was green with a Waratah emblazoned on the pocket.

Ben was also a champion chess player and belonged to a chess club in Sydney before coming to New Zealand. He continued to play competitive chess throughout his life and was *President of the New Zealand Chess Club*. On Wednesdays, Ben would invite a master at the Nelson Boys

College, Mr. Severne, home for tea. They would have a game of tennis before dinner and then after dinner, retire to the 'drawing room' to play chess.

Ben Trathen, 5th from the left, with the Sydney Chess Club, he is wearing the gold pocket watch and chain he won playing a chess championship



In **1928**, Ben decided to purchase a car. The family went on numerous test drives in Fords, Austins & Buicks but Mr Cootes, who had the franchise for Buicks, clinched the deal with a trip to Lake Rotoiti. Nell was a confident driver but Ben preferred to be the passenger. He was a nervous driver and preferred his bike or the local taxi service to take him to his evening engagements.

From **1934 to 1937** he was chairman of the Nelson Chamber of Commerce and also belonged to the *Nelson Provincial Progress League*, and was on the board of directors for the *Y.M.C.A.*



Ben Trathen built his own tennis court behind his home, Waratah, in Collingwood Street. In an effort to make the court springy, Ben had several inches of coke distributed over the site before the final asphalt was laid.

Above left: Ben Trathen on the court with Waratah in the background

Left: Ben & Geoff Trathen shake hands after a game

Above: Friends around to play tennis



Ellen Voss Trathen, (Nell), was from a second generation pioneer family in Foxhill; she worked in the business and managed the tearooms at 'Trathen's' for many years. Nell was extremely active in the community and a successful fundraiser. She was a great cook, loved to bake and taught 3 generations in her family to bake. Two of the recipes Nell was famous for were her Ladysmith cake, (chocolate, vanilla and strawberry marbled cake with raspberry jam) and her jellied brawn, which she made from a whole pigs head. *During the 1st World War she would make great quantities of sweets to sell at street stalls and fairs to raise funds for the troops.*

Nell was a keen gardener, she had a large vegetable garden and a small glass house where she grew banana's and had one of the biggest collections of orchids in Nelson.

Ellen Voss (Smith) Trathen born 17 Dec 1884 – Died 22 Aug 1976



Trathens tearooms - Ellen Trathen worked in the Trathen's business and managed the tearooms

The Murchison Earthquake

On the **17th of June 1929**, at 10:17 am, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked the northern South Island. The earthquake was preceded by several foreshocks before the main shock, accompanied by booming sounds in the mountains around Murchison; it was felt in cities and towns all over New Zealand. It was the worst earthquake since the 1855 Wellington earthquake.

Seventeen people died as a result of the quake. Witnesses talked of the booming sound of the earthquake, which was heard as far away as Taranaki in the North Island. The ground rose and swayed, making chimneys fall and the land move in huge slips, blocking roads and rivers.

There was serious damage throughout the Greymouth, Nelson and Westport districts, with Murchison's 300-plus inhabitants experiencing the most cataclysmic havoc



Nelson Boys College after the Murchison earthquake in 1929

and destruction as slips roared down hillsides covering farms, livestock and roads with tons of rocks and clay. Trees snapped like twigs, huge cracks appeared in roads, and telephone and power poles leaned at drunken angles, surrounded by twisted wires.

In Nelson, shop windows were broken and chimneys collapsed. At 'The Nelson Boys College' the clock tower fell, smashing dormitory roofs with falling stonework. Two boys were hurt, but considering the severity of the shaking it is remarkable that there were not more injuries.

The newly built 'Trathen's building' was also damaged, the front façade of the building shook and leaned 1 metre out into the street, breaking off the top concrete parapets and leaving the façade precariously leaning over the street, the earthquake paused, but another shock sent the façade shaking back, saving it from collapsing onto the street.



Earthquake damaged store in Murchison – H. J. Hodgson & Co.

A large crack of 12 inches wide was left at the top of the building between the front façade and the rest of the building. If you were standing on the south side you could easily read the time on the town clock through to the north side of the façade. A large amount of money was needed to do major repairs and reinforcement to the building to make it safe.

**DAMAGE AND INTENSITIES IN THE
MAGNITUDE 7.8 1929 MURCHISON,
NEW ZEALAND, EARTHQUAKE**

David J. Dowrick'

SUMMARY

This paper is the result of a study of the $M_s = 7.8$ Murchison earthquake which occurred in the South Island of New Zealand, on 16(UT) June 1929, a few years prior to the introduction of the first earthquake loadings code in New Zealand. It gives the first description of the damage to buildings in this event in modern earthquake engineering terms, and presents the first Modified Mercalli (MM) intensity map for the event determined from the original felt information. Some definitions of "well-built" pre-code buildings are proposed: these should help in dealing with safety and conservation issues raised when considering the future of such "earthquake risk" buildings. No evidence was found for MM10 intensities, although ground shaking of this strength probably occurred in the unpopulated mountainous countryside close to the fault rupture. Recommendations for improving the criteria for determining MM intensity are made in respect of (1) pre-code buildings and (2) seismically-induced landslides.

INTENSITY IN NELSON

Information relating to intensity is as follows:

Bldgs Type III*, damaged in some cases [MM8]

Partial collapse: None. *Damaged:* F & D Edwards offices (3), Kerr's shop (2), Majestic Theatre (2), Newman's Garage (1 + Mezzanine). *Undamaged:* Anstices' Building (3), Baird's Bldg (1 and 2), Bennett's Workshop (1), Auckland Point School (2) (minor cracks), Nelson Institute and Library (2), Nelson Electric Power House (2), Gibbs Garage (2), Grand Cafe (2), Wyber's Garage (2), YMCA (1).

Bldgs Type II*, damaged in some cases [MM8]

Partial collapse: None. *Damaged:* Auckland Clothing Co (2), Boon's shop (2), Public Hospital (3-4), Bank of NZ (1), School of Music (1), Union Bank (2), Commercial Hotel (3), Loan and Mercantile (2), Evening Mail (2), AMP offices/Hurst's shop (2), National Bank (2), Louisson's/Hannah's shops(2), Hallenstein's shop (2), Milner & Neale's offices (2), Pitt & Moore (2), Salvation Army Citadel (1), Trathen's shop (3).

Report by David Dowrick listing the 'Trathen's building' as damaged in the Murchison

Plans to build a new family home on the corner of Rutherford Street and Waimea Road had to be abandoned because of the unexpected expense of the earthquake repairs needed on the 'Trathen's building'.

Ben and Nell decided instead to ask Arthur Griffin, the architect who designed the 'Trathen's building', to design an additional storey for 'Waratah', their Collingwood Street home.



Ben and Ellen Trathen's family home, Waratah, at 10 Collingwood Street, extension by A R Griffin

Ben Trathen enjoyed poetry, literature and especially music. He had an extensive library and whenever shows came to Nelson he would book seats for the whole family, the actors and musicians would often be invited back to the Trathen house. The re-designed house had a side veranda floor especially polished for dance parties.



Family and friends gathered at Ellen (Hurford) Smith's 100th birthday party. (Ellen Smith was Ellen (Nell) Trathen's mother) Photo taken on the steps of 'Waratah'; 10 Collingwood Street, Nelson. 24th August 1948

Trathen's had a staff of over 30 people and there were many social staff events including sports teams, a Hockey team, (which Lorna Trathen was a team member), Cricket team, Christmas Parties, Fashion Parades and involvement in city events and parades. Many family members would be employed in the business, sometimes from a very early age.



Trathen's Women's Cricket Team 1925 & 1926

Above back row, 3rd from right: Ellen Trathen (Patron of the Trathen's cricket team)





Trathen Staff picnic possibly at Snowden's Bush in Brightwater



Trathen's Marching Team: Back Row: Lorna Trathen 3rd from left, Betty Clements 5th from left, Joyce Steel 6th from left. Front Row: Doris Irving 2nd from right

Fred Jones was known as 'a colourful Nelson citizen', he is commonly known for his photography but in **1933** he started creating 'Magic Caves' and 'Pixietowns'. Inspired by the long nosed men and women from a book he read as a child, Fred cut wooden pixies with a fretsaw and placed them into elaborate sets with rods and pulleys and motors carefully hidden from view to control movements. They would dance in tune with music or play musical instruments. The first magic cave was displayed in Trathen & Co.'s Department Store in **1933**.



Fred Jones displayed his first 'Pixie Cave' at Trathen's department Store in 1933

Two of Ben's sons were trained to help manage the firm. Ron Trathen was known in the family as being the clever one, at 11 years old he was dux of Nelson Central School and trained to become an accountant, he worked in the business as secretary of the company. Ron was born with severe curvature of the spine and suffered from ill health most of his life.

Geoff Trathen attended Nelson College from **1925 to 1927**, as a young man he spent several years in Wellington learning the drapery trade at Kirkcaldie and Stains in Wellington. Geoff enjoyed sport as a young man and played club rugby, tennis and in his later years, bowls and golf, serving for some time on the Nelson Golf Club committee.

Prior to World War 2, Ben had increasing health problems; he was diagnosed as having a 'tired heart'. Ben put his affairs in order; he spent his final time resting at home while his family carried on running the business.

Ben Trathen died on the **5th of August 1942**, his funeral was held in St. Johns Methodist church, the church was full and everyone was invited back to 'Waratah' for a cup of tea afterwards.

Geoff & Ron Trathen took over managing 'Trathen's' in **1940**, two years before Ben Trathen senior died. After Ben's death, Ron and Geoff bought the business from the rest of the family and approx. 20 years later Geoff Trathen bought the 'Trathen's building'.



Ronald Voss Trathen

TRATHEN'S' The Building; the Family & the Business – 191 Trafalgar Street, NELSON

Ron Trathen died in **1950** at the age of 37 years from complications caused by his ill health on the day of his wedding. Ron's widow, Jessamine, was a nurse; she lived with Nell Trathen and looked after her until she passed away at the age of 92.

Geoff Trathen met his wife, Esther, while training in Wellington. Esther worked in the fashion department at DIC, which was situated close to Kirkcaldie & Stains. Geoff spotted Esther in the street and went to great lengths to find out her name. Esther's workmates tricked Geoff telling him her name was Pearl, this didn't go down well with Esther and things got off to a rocky start. Their courtship lasted 8 years and they were married on **April 8th 1939**.



From left: - Harry Scoltock, Geoff Trathen, Esther Trathen and Joy Phillips

Geoff and Esther's wedding April 8th 1939

They had 3 children, Benjamin Geoffrey born 12th March 1940, John Melville born 20 August 1942 and David Hurford born 18 August 1948.

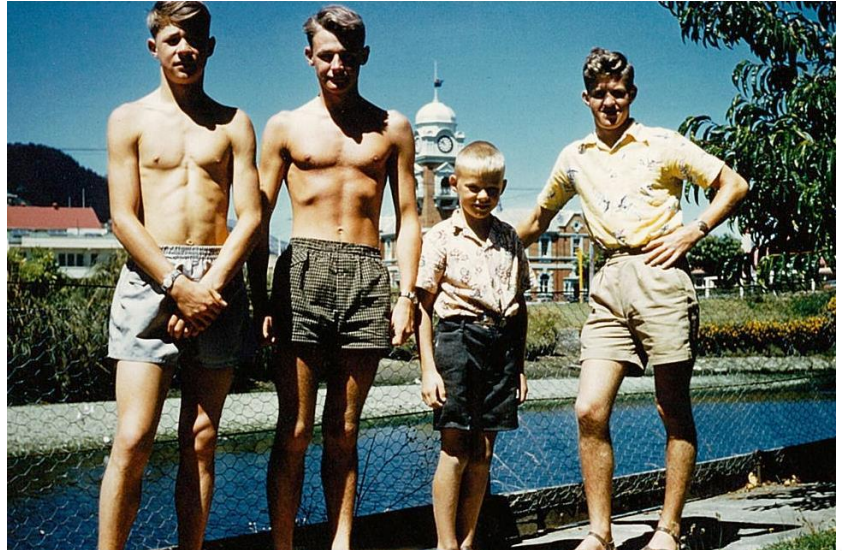


In order from left: - David, Geoff, John, Esther and Ben Trathen

Geoff and Esther lived at 4 Grove Street on the banks of the Maitai River; the boys went fishing and played in the river every day. Ben was a businessman from the start; he secretly studied the share market at the age of 14 and bought an 'option to buy' on 'Ampol Petroleum shares' he doubled his money in a short period of time much to his parent's amazement.

John was a champion runner and David an excellent Rugby player but the business was always the centre of their lives. Benjamin Geoffrey

Trathen remembers driving in the city parade on V - J Day, beside his father, in an Austin 7 convertible car decorated with red, white & blue bunting. The Trathen's fabric department sold out of bunting for the parade that day.



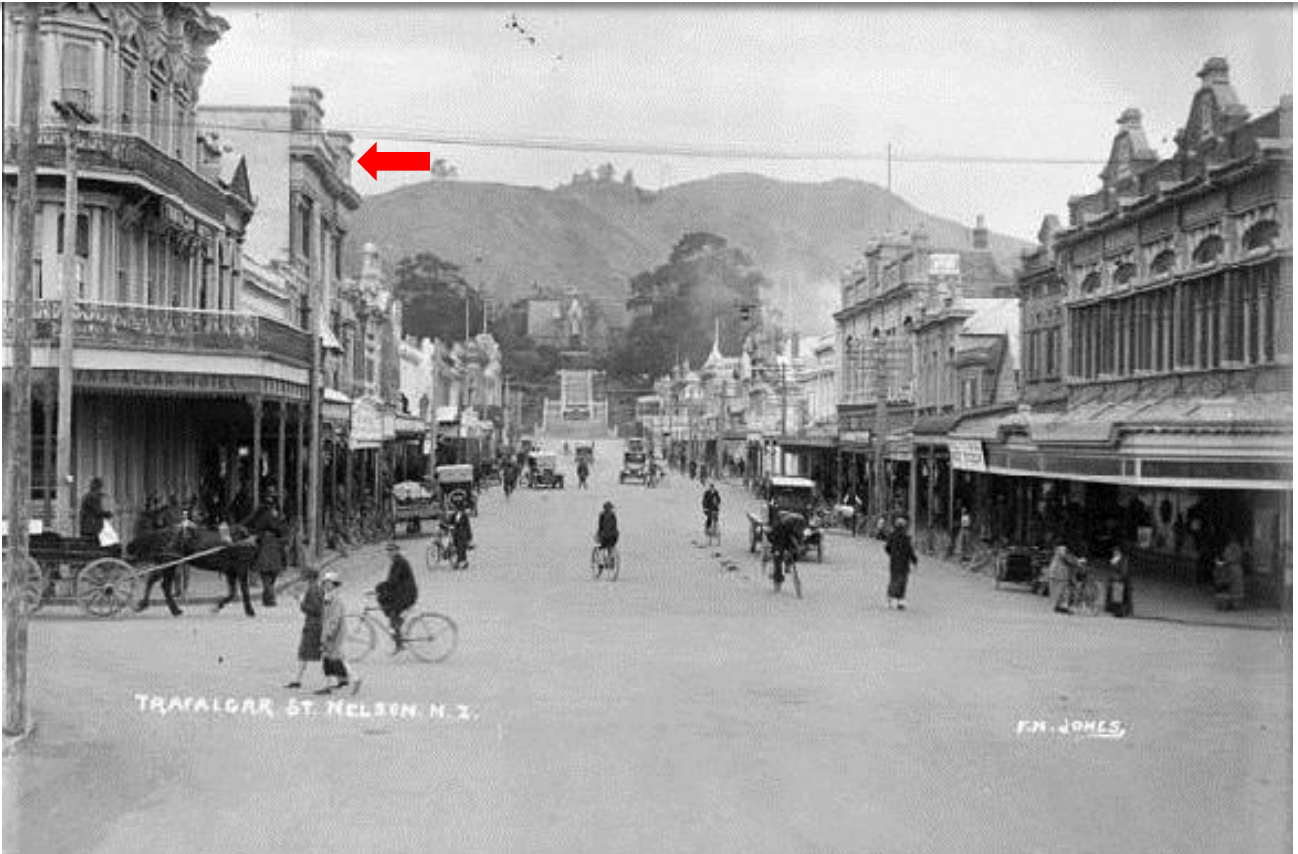
From left: - John, Ben & David Trathen and friend Bryan Chapman



V-J Day Parade in Trafalgar Street, Nelson 1945

Ben worked in the business from about the age of 8 years old doing odd jobs. One of his jobs was sweeping the footpath before school and sweeping up docketts behind the counters after school with a huge broom that he could hardly lift, and then he would take all the parcels and letters down to the post for the day. By the time Ben had turned 10 years old he had been put in charge of emptying the scrap buckets from the tea rooms. The scrap bucket was a 44 gallon kerosene tin, too heavy for Ben to carry across the 1st floor bridge and down the steep stairs to the back lane, for the pig man, so he had an older boy (his assistant), to help him. Trathen's tearoom had one of the first freezers in Nelson and the fondest memory of Ben's job was being given an ice cream at the end of the day.

STREET PARADES & PHOTO'S WITH THE 'TRATHEN'S BUILDING' IN THE BACKGROUND



Looking up Trafalgar Street to Church steps, the 'Trathen's building' on left with parapets intact ca 1922



'Trathen's building' on the Queen's visit 1954



'Trathen's building' with Minster Suits mural on the North wall



Children's Gala, Trafalgar Street parade, 'Trathen's building' in the background

Ben, John and David all followed in the family tradition, training in New Zealand's main cities, wholesalers and department stores, then, returning to join the family business. The family was always innovative, looking how retail was changing and where business could be improved or expanded.



Geoff Trathen handing over the 1st prize voucher for the 'Trathen's Pick Miss New Zealand' competition, to 11 year old Jan Delany

- One Tekau cardigan
- 12 pairs of Lanes Petit- Point Hosiery
- Full range of Gala Cosmetics
- One Onehunga Travel Rug

Valued at 30 pounds and 10 shillings

Ben Trathen and Ian Delany, Jan's father, look on



Mr John Trathen seen above conducting a Decimal Class, one of the 4 daily classes which have been carried out by B. TRATHEN Ltd during the last 3 months. Also in the picture from left to right Mrs Logan (Fabric Dept.), Mrs Hosie (Underwear and Corsetry Dept), Mrs McNabb (Showroom Buyer) and Miss Andrews (Fancy Dept.).

TRATHENS STAFF are fully qualified to transact normal Sales and help any customer who may need assistance.

TRATHENS as from Monday will accept either the new Dollars and Cents currency or £.s.d.

In 1963 the government decided to 'decimalise'. Imperial currency was relatively complex: pounds were divided into 20 shillings and 240 pence, with 12 pence to the shilling. People had got used to doing the fractions, but it was complicated. The system of 100 cents to the dollar was simpler and 'Decimal Currency' (DC) day was set for 10 July 1967.

John Trathen is seen here giving one of 4 daily training classes to ensure a smooth transition.

PROCESSED ✓

NELSON CITY COUNCIL

PPR 131618
+ 3 Historic

BUILDING APPLICATION FORM

No. 101252.
Date 26 September 1961.

To the City Engineer,
NELSON.

Sir,

I hereby apply for permission to

erect
alter
convert Shop premises.
reinstate
demolish

for Trathen's Buildings Ltd. of 191 Trafalgar Street
(Owner) (Owner's Address)

according to locality plans, detailed plans, elevations, cross sections and specifications of building deposited herewith, **IN DUPLICATE.**

PARTICULARS OF LAND:—

Lot 1 D.P. 7747 Section Pt. Sec. 167 Blk. C.T. 57/241.
Street No. 191 Trafalgar Street
(if allotted)
Frontage 51' 9" Area

PARTICULARS OF BUILDING:—

Foundations Concrete Walls Roof

Area of Ground Floor square feet.
Area of Outbuildings square feet.

ESTIMATED COST:—

Plumbing and Drainage	£ 400 : 0 : 0.
Building	£ 6000 : 0 : 0.
Total	£ 6400 : 0 : 0.

Purpose for which building is to be used Retail shop.

(Signature of Applicant) J. P. Kniff
Address P.O. Box 276, Nelson.

Builder's Name J. P. Kniff.

For Office Use ONLY

Builder's Plan & Specifications 3129. Permit Fee £20
Subdivision Plan Application No. 046
Block Plan
Index Plan No. 11

Date: 25/10/1961

Building application, 26th September 1961 to alter shop premises

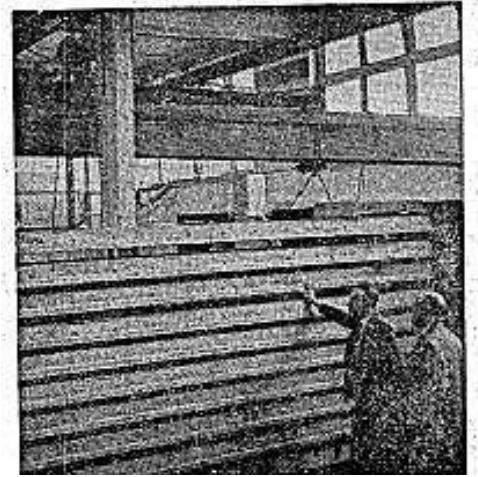
In 1962 there was major renovation needed for the interior of the building. It was decided to refit in a modern style.



Benjamin Geoffrey Trathen
Aged 22 years old



Geoffrey Melville Trathen
Aged 52 years



The concrete slabs weigh 1 ½ tons each and lie side by side supported by 3 ½ ton concrete beams. The total weight of the mezzanine floor is 80 tons.

An article in the Nelson Evening Mail, **Tuesday October 23 1962**

B. TRATHEN LTD SALUTES THE CITY OF NELSON WITH 60 YEARS PROGRESS

B. Trathen Ltd is happy to have served the city of Nelson for the past 60 years. Trathen's was founded in Nelson with some of the first businesses and proudly has participated in the growth of the city, and looks to the future with even greater confidence in the sunny city of Nelson.

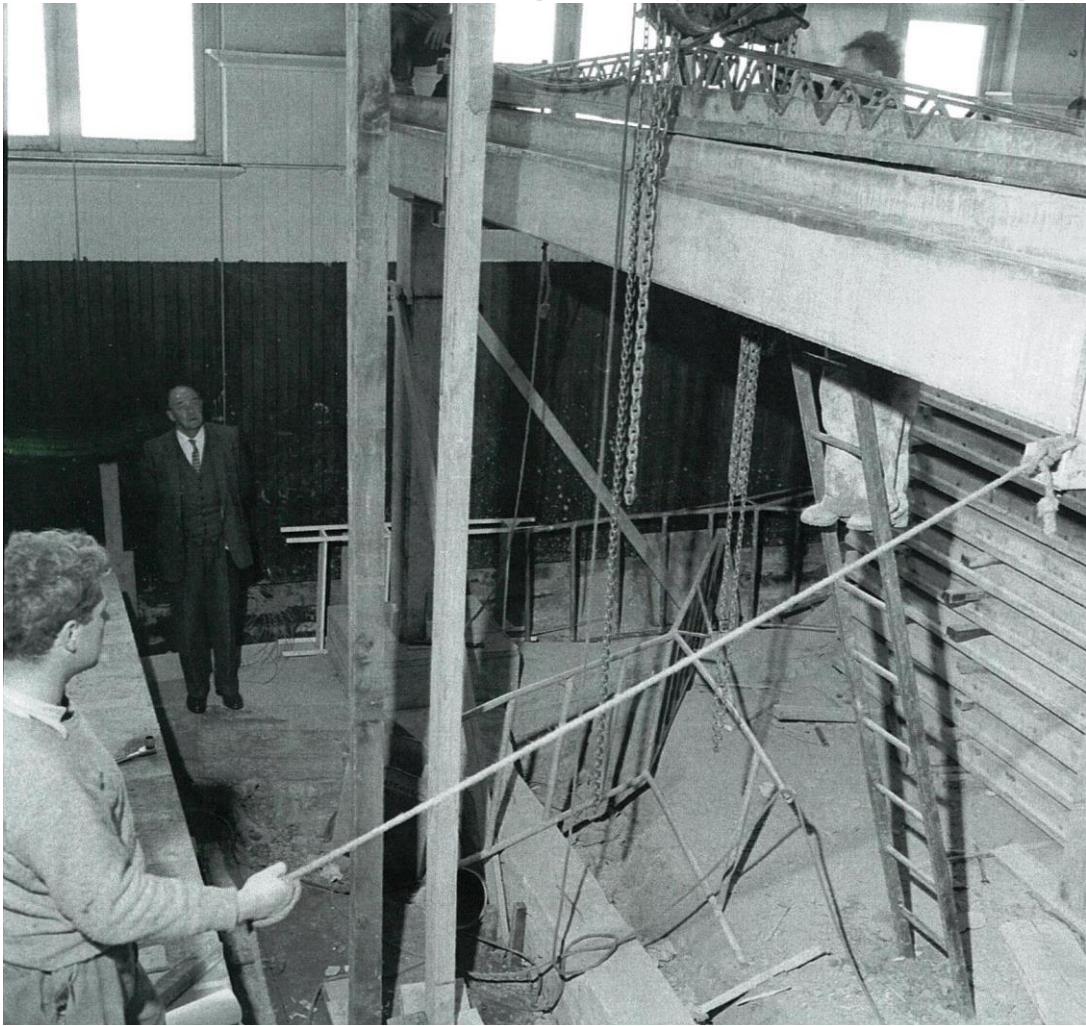
'Following the completion of an extensive programme of alterations Trathen's is the first store in Nelson with infra-ray heating installed. It is also the first of the commercial premises in Nelson with a pre-stress, precast mezzanine floor.'

Lighting and heating have both increased by 400 per cent. The alterations include the opening up of the second floor for showroom, millinery, offices, powder room and staff cafeteria etc.

Designed in lines similar to department stores overseas the 1250 square feet mezzanine floor is within the view of shoppers on the ground floor and the showroom on the second floor.



Ben Trathen helping the builder install the concrete beams



Geoff Trathen watching as a beam is put in place in the 1962 renovations



Cast iron pillars that support the 1st floor



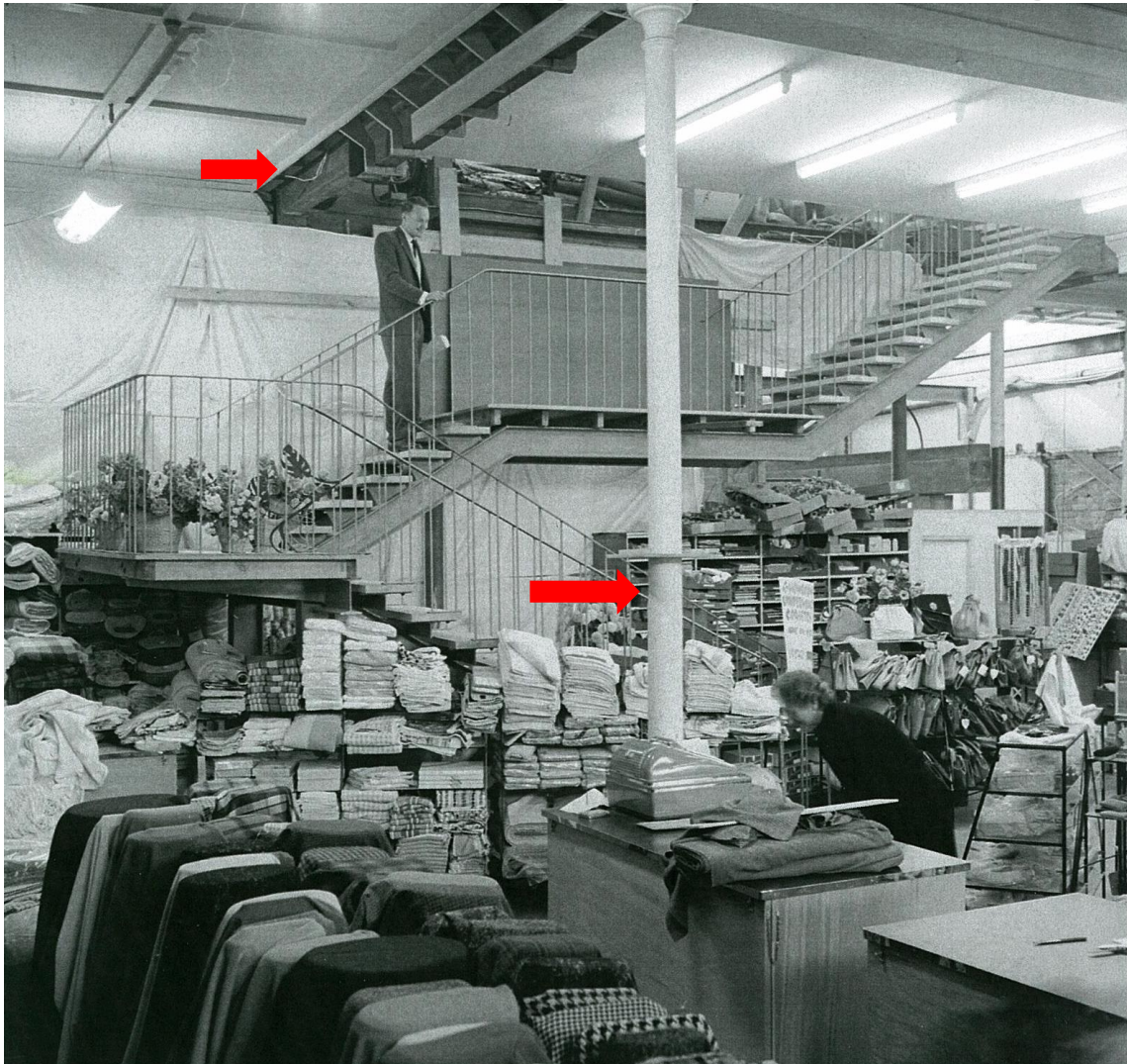
The central staircase leads to the mezzanine floor, and then continues to the second floor. Red arrows showing 1st floor cast iron support columns

One of the most pleasing features of the new store is the central staircase from which, the shopper, can view the whole store, and from where each department is easily located – a sure sign of 60 years of progress.'



Ladies underwear, corsetry & sleepwear on the mezzanine floor

Part of the men's' and fancy departments are not yet completed. This work will be done next year so as not to interfere with Christmas trade. The whole store has been completely modernised, old fixtures being replaced with modern self-service units.



Ben Trathen stands on the new stairs below a metal RSJ beam looking down to the ground floor. Red arrows show cast iron support column and RSJ beam



Hats & ladies fashions were on the second floor with the office visible through the archway towards the front of the building. Red arrow shows the suspended concrete wall that is tied to the façade of the building

Branch Store at Stoke

A further step in the progress of the firm of Messrs B. Trathen Ltd. is the new branch store which will be opening shortly at Stoke in a new arcade in Putaitai Street.

A miniature stock of the Trafalgar Street store will be held in Stoke, including children's and babies wear.

Stoke residents will have all the advantages of the central city store but without transport problems. Naturally by virtue of the size of the new branch its range will not cover as wide a field as that of the main store. Trathen's assistants at Stoke will be happy to get in touch with the Nelson store and arrange for the wanted garment to be delivered to the Stoke branch within a few hours.

The alteration included

- A central suspended stairway from the ground to the top floor
- A mezzanine floor constructed of reinforced concrete slabs weighing 1.5 tons each. They are placed side by side and supported by the 3.5 ton concrete beams. The total weight of the mezzanine floor is 70-80 tons

The latest self-service stands

- Modern jewellery and fancy goods department
- Hosiery Bar
- Haberdashery Department
- Underwear and Corsetry section expanded to three times the previous size located on the mezzanine floor and called the 'Sportswear Department'
- Manchester, Furnishings and Bedding Department
- Dress Department with patterns and materials
- Menswear and Boys clothing department
- Ultra-modern showroom and millinery section on the second floor with the offices



To celebrate the 60th Anniversary and the completion of their alterations 10/- was given free to every customer who spent 2 pounds.



On **May 24th 1968** at 5.24 am the second biggest land based earthquake in New Zealand history struck the West Coast of the South Island creating chaos and destruction.

The Inangahua Junction, situated on the west coast of the south island at about 138km from Nelson, was hit by a 7.1 earthquake that was felt from Dunedin to Auckland as well as causing damage in Nelson, Greymouth and Westport.

The earthquake damage was made worse by numerous aftershocks, 15 earthquakes measuring more than 5 on the Richter scale were recorded over the next four weeks.

Heavy rain fell the next day and made it more difficult to clear the roads blocked by landslides. Houses suffered more damage as the rain came in through the holes in the roofs.

The historic Inangahua Hotel was destroyed by a slow moving slip which pushed all buildings in its path off their foundations as if they were a child's toy blocks instead of people's homes.

Almost every chimney in Reefton was destroyed and several larger buildings were lost including the Reefton Post Office.

In Nelson the Post Offices town clock stopped working but the prime source of damage was the cracking of domestic chimneys and cracking of brickwork in old masonry commercial buildings.

There was a building application to repair the 'Trathen's building' soon after the **Inangahua earthquake**, if the extensive renovation had not been done in 1962 the damage to buildings could have been extensive, lives may also have been lost.

In the **1970's** the Nelson Post Office and town clock were demolished because of damage from the Murchison and Inangahua earthquakes.



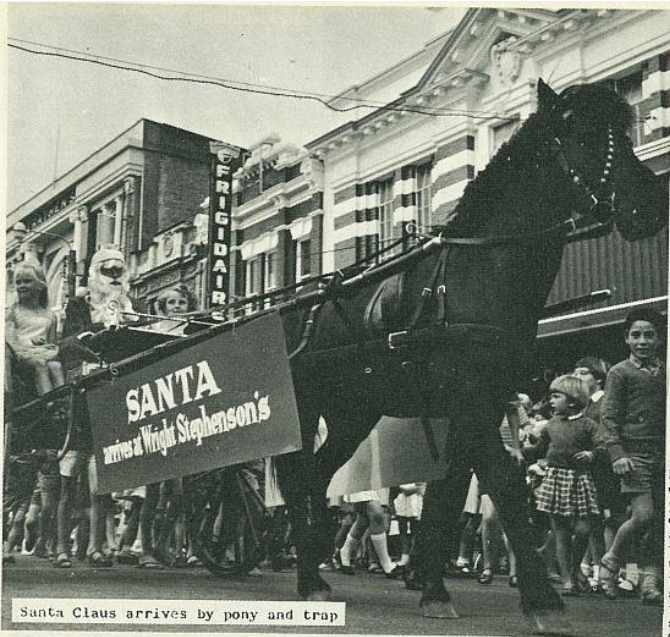
'Nelson's Chief Post Office, hub of the town's communications system since 1905, is to be demolished. The old building, with its distinctive tower and clock, is showing its age and the effects of two major earthquakes during its lifetime. It now lies empty, but the work of the Post Office goes on at the former Burns Philp premises a few yards further along Halifax Street.'



From left: David Trathen, Mr Guthardt (head of menswear) and John Trathen ca early 1970's



There was always great excitement at a Trathen's Sales



Santa Claus arrives by pony and trap

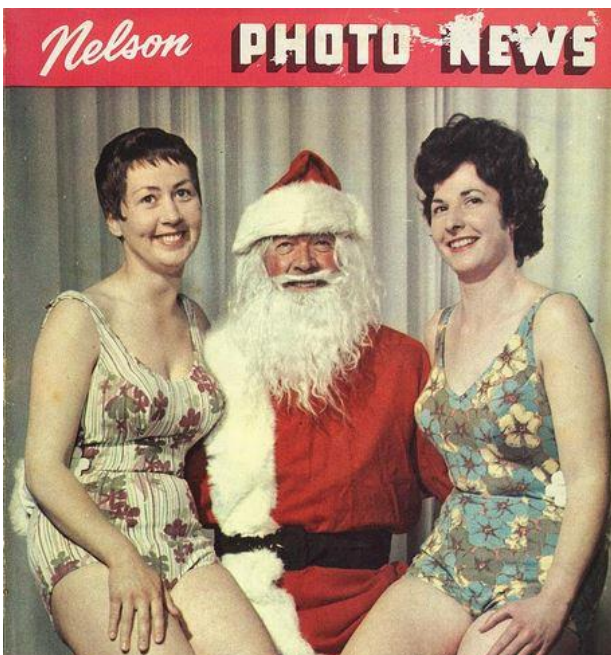
Trathen's continued to be involved in community events such as the annual Santa Parade

When Father Christmas arrived at Trathen's Store to take his throne there was great excitement with crowds of children cheering and scrambling for lollies thrown from the second floor down to the floors below. Every day children would line up to sit on Santa's knee and make a request for the most wanted Christmas present. Everyone received a balloon and a lolly. Memento photos were taken by local photographers.

Geoff Trathen was a people person and loved to share a joke, he was known to play Santa in the department store at Christmas. Generations of Trathen children were employed over the Christmas period to blow up the balloons for Santa with a vacuum cleaner hidden under the stairs next to Santa's chair.



Roy Scott plays Father Christmas and throws out lollies over the balcony for hundreds of excited children



Margaret Tiplady (married Ben Trathen 1961) and Marie Tunnicliffe sit on Santa's knee (Geoff Trathen) wearing the new seasons swimwear



Members of the Trathen's staff, Wendy Savage and Jennifer McPhie pose for a photo on Santa's knee, Geoff Trathen



Now why would so many people be gathered outside Trathen's, in Trafalgar Street? Is that a skid mark behind the bike's back wheel? BELOW could be the answer

Fashion Parades were hugely popular and held from the 1960's through to the mid 1980's

Some of the Trathen's staff were recruited as models. The central staircase was a perfect runway.



Elaine Cotton down in the crowd in a two-piece nylon underwear set



Vivien Maisey and Mike McQuade step out in casual wear



Kathleen Logan in a peacock blue cocktail frock



Ready for the beach is Lorraine Whall

Nylon In Fashion

The things to wear this summer, all in nylon, were modelled (and most attractively too) at a fashion fair held by Trathens last month. From undies to swim wear for women and suits for men, a big range attracted large crowds to the store.



The latest in the "topless": the shirt, shown by Mr Acker. (Ian Johnson).



Trathen's Fashion Fair, 1964. The models walk from the 1st floor through the shop, crowds of people



Yvonne Taylor & Pam Goodall seen here modelling the latest fashion, Yvonne later married David Trathen and they have 5 children. Yvonne also ran the young fashion dept. named 'Fanny Fag' (very UN PC)



Geoff & Esther Trathen - 1964

Geoff was the managing director of Trathen's and worked together with Ben, John and David, guiding them and growing the Trathen business. The family opened a 'Trathen's' branch in Putaitai Street Stoke and in Queen Street Richmond.

Geoff and Esther took a keen interest in their sons' activities and followed athletics and rugby enthusiastically. **John Trathen**, their second son was a national sprint champion in 1961, and jointly holds the N.Z. 100 yds record of 9.6 sec. They were regular followers of track events and attended the Perth Empire Games in 1962 and cruised on the SS Oriana to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. They both had adventurous spirits and enjoyed travelling; one of their favourite places was Norfolk Island, which they visited several times. Esther played bowls and Geoff enjoyed a game of golf and served on the Nelson Golf Club committee.

The family was a priority and every Sunday the extended family would meet together at Geoff and

Esther's or picnic at Rabbit Island with wives, children and friends.

TRATHEN WINS JUNIOR 100 YARDS TITLE

Christchurch

Nelson's J. Trathen today slashed the NZ record for the junior 100 yards.

Competing in the NZ junior athletic championship at Christchurch the 17 year old Trathen ran the distance in a dazzling 9.7 s – 0.2 sec better than J. W. Taylor's 1959 record time. However, the time cannot be recognised as a new record. The wind velocity was measured at 6.9 ft a second, whereas the tolerance is only 6 ft.

NEW SPRINT STAR ON HORIZON

Nelson Sports Post 19th March 1960

Trathen's Success; Pointer to Future

Watching John Trathen crouching lithely on the starting block at practice recently, it was easy to appreciate the human power that rocketed him to a record breaking 100 yards win at the NZ junior championships at Christchurch last weekend. Superbly fit as he limbered up and down, the new champion looked every inch an Olympic prospect. There was no trace of an early handicap, a buckled right knee, which might have affected his career.



AUCKLAND GAINS SPRINT STAR

Auckland Star 8th June 1961

National junior 220 yards champion John Trathen will run in Auckland next season in a bid for selection for the Perth Empire Games. Trathen has moved from his home town, Nelson, and will train this winter with top sprint coach Mr Joe McManemin. Trathen won the junior 100 yards title in 1960 and the 220 title this year. He was also second in the junior and senior 100's. The 19 year old who ran for Wellington in the last two seasons has best times of 9.6 s for the 100 yds and 21.7 s for the furlong.



NELSON SPORTS POST 8TH DECEMBER 1962

Well-known in athletic circles, John Trathen returned recently from two years in Auckland to take up a position with his Father's firm, B. Trathen Ltd. In Auckland, John travelled for Bing Harris & Co., a drapery firm. He belonged to the University Athletic Club and was coached by Joe Macmanemin, who is also Doreen Porter's coach. A knee injury stopped John from running for a while, but he hopes to be back in competition before Christmas.



Benjamin Geoffrey Trathen stands outside 4 Grove Street, the house where he grew up.

Geoff and Esther Trathen lived and raised their family at 4 Grove Street, Nelson which backs onto the Maitai River, the site is a short distance from the town acre owned by Geoff's Great, grandparents who were among the first settlers in Nelson coming from England on the sailing ships, the Whitby and the Lloyds in 1842.

In the early 1970's Geoff and Esther built a home on the back of the section, now 2A Grove Street, to enjoy the river in their retirement

The river is a special place for all the Trathen family.





Geoff and Esther built a new house on the back section of the family home at 4 Grove Street, looking over the family's beloved Maitai River. Geoff enjoyed whitebaiting on the banks of the river into his twilight years. Geoff had inherited family heart problems and died suddenly on August 28th 1974. Esther died soon after in December 1977.

Ben, John and David continued running the business together.

Geoff Trathen whitebaiting on the bank of the Maitai River



Front from left: - Geoff, Ellen (Nell), and Esther Trathen Back from left: - John, Ben and David Trathen

'Trathen's' were members of the RTS, (Retail Trading Society)



Ben Trathen, Doreen Blair and David Allpress buying stock at a RTS meeting.

RTS consisted of over 80 retailers around New Zealand grouped together to buy in bulk to secure better prices from wholesalers.



3rd December 1986: David Trathen & Mrs Alma Fowler in the fabric department on the mezzanine floor.

David managed the fabric department at 'Trathen's' and later opened 'Trathen's Fabrics' independently. 'Trathen's Fabrics' were located at 189 Trafalgar St and later shifted to 101 Bridge Street.

The Trathen brothers started a chain of cut price stores called, 'The Bargain Centres' situated in Trafalgar Street Nelson, Putaitai Street, Stoke and Queen Street, Richmond. There was a full time job distributing stock and collecting takings every day from the 6 shops.

The Bargain Centres were very popular with low priced goods; this sort of shop hadn't been seen before by the public.



'The Bargain Centre's in Nelson, Stoke and Richmond were very popular shops. Photos of the Nelson Bargain Centre taken in December 1988



Margaret Trathen and Kenneth Trathen prepare for a sale at the Nelson Bargain Centre. Margaret Trathen was the manager in the Nelson Bargain Centre for a period

Ben and his son, Kenneth Trathen, travelled throughout New Zealand and overseas 'bulk buying' end of line stock. The firm rented large buildings such as the Nelson YMCA and the Trafalgar Centre; they set up huge clearance sales for 10 days at a time in Nelson, Blenheim and Christchurch. Nobody had seen sales on this scale before and large crowds would wait outside for the doors to open and there would be a stampede in to get a bargain. The Clearance Sales sold everything - Manchester, men's/women's/children's and infants clothing, haberdashery, wool, fabrics and even carpet, they were very successful, attracting 1000's of people from all over the district.



Warehouse sale at the 'Trafalgar Centre', over 200 people lined up at the door to get in on the opening day. It took Kevin Bothwell, Trathens window dresser & ticket writer, a week to sign write the 100's of tickets for the sale. Approx. \$300,000 to \$500,000 of stock was bought in for the big sales.





Above: Taking trestle tops and stands to Christchurch to set up a 'Warehouse Sale'.

Below: November 1982, outside a big warehouse sale. 10 Transport Nelson trucks took stock over, only 1 truck load came back. John Trathen and David Allpress standby to unload the truck. (Love the walk socks & walk shorts David)



In the early **1980s**, 'Trathen's' opened a mail order department on the second floor in the 'Trathen's building' run by Rosemary Gundry, they advertised in the Women's Weekly and were swamped with orders. It was a very innovative venture for the time but it was never fully developed.

Jim Trathen, (Geoff Trathen's youngest brother) owned a business called 'Hounsell's', a book store situated at 187 Trafalgar Street. It closed in **1989** when Jim retired.

In **1988**, Ben, John and David with their partners, made the difficult **decision to close the Trathen's business**. They had each developed individual business ventures and Ben had major health problems so a passive income from the buildings they owned was the best solution. Nelson City Council required the Trathen's building to be strengthened to meet the current building standards, to integrate the steel strengthening beams the downstairs space was split into three retail shops. The decision to strengthen and renovate was based on the buildings life being extended for a further 40 years before any other structural work was required, (guaranteed by council).

The property at 187 Trafalgar Street was bought and redeveloped by Ben, John and David at the same time as the 'Trathen's building' was strengthened.

The three new shops were leased to

- David & Yvonne Trathen - 'Trathen's Fabrics' - 189 Trafalgar Street
- Telecom – 191 Trafalgar Street, the last tenant to occupy upstairs space, they had a ten year lease but left the site in 1994 subleasing to 'Stirling Sports' in 1995.
- Robert Harris Café

In **1991** the buildings owned by the brothers were divided between them. Ben and Margaret Trathen chose to buy the 'Trathen's building' from the other family members because they understood it still had a commercial life of 38 years.

John Trathen bred and trained standard bred pacer horses from his stables in Richmond and was a member of the Nelson trotting club.

David Trathen ran 'Trathen's Fabrics', the successful fabric and haberdashery business from 191 Trafalgar Street, then in **1992** he purchased the building at 101 Bridge Street and the business moved there until it closed.

TRATHEN & CO - DRAPERS - MILLINERS - CLOTHIERS - TAILORS

A History as long as the century...

1902
The founder of Trathen & Co, Ben Trathen senior, emigrated from Orange, NSW and started in Richmond in 1902, he then moved into Bridge St, by Alma Lane, this building was destroyed by fire.



Collection from the Nelson Provincial Museum - David
Bird's Butcher Shop, 1870

1915
In 1915 premises were found in Trafalgar St which were previously Bird's Butcher Shop for the last 70 years.



Collection from the Nelson Provincial Museum - F.N Jones
The Big Blaze, 1920

1920
Trathen's building is completely destroyed by fire January 3, 1920 which included Websters and Co and Shields wine and spirits. Trathens shifted back to Bridge St for a huge fire sale which was a sensational event for Nelson.

1922
Two years were taken to rebuild on the same site. The Grand Opening was April 4, 1922. After every earthquake the Trathen building has been altered and strengthened up to today's standards.



Collection from the Nelson Provincial Museum - F.N Jones
Grand Opening, 1922

1962
For over 40 years' Trathens offered Nelsonians quality service and reliable goods. The Trathen building was modernised several times and in 1962 a Mezzanine floor was added after extensive alterations.

1989
Trathens Fabrics, opened back in part of the Trathen building in November 89.

1992 - Present
Trathens Fabrics opened in 101 Bridge St, opposite Fiddle Lane where we are today, selling dress fabric, haberdashery and trim.



As we are today, 1999

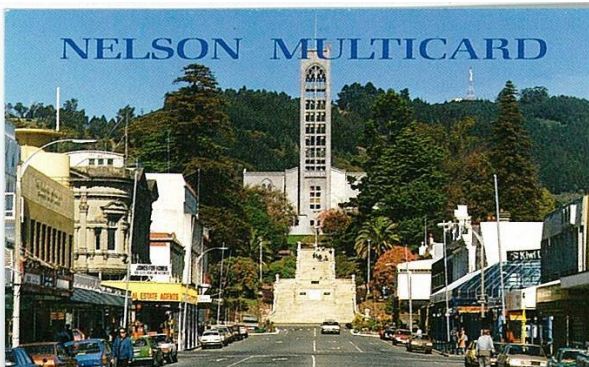
Trathens Fabrics 101 BRIDGE ST • 548-7445

Timeline in 1999 used in an advertisement for 'Trathen's Fabrics'



June 17th 1993 article in the Nelson Mail announcing 'Michael Hill Jeweller' secured a lease in the 'Trathen's building' and is opening in Nelson

Ben started 'Nelson Multicard', a local credit card business in 1993



Trathens

**"NELSON MULTICARD" CREDIT CARDS
FASHION CLOTHING SPECIALS
TRAVEL AGENTS**

BENJAMIN G. TRATHEN
Managing Director

<p>B. TRATHEN LTD TRATHEN FASHIONS LTD TRATHEN BUILDINGS LTD TRATHENS CONSTRUCTION LTD TRATHENS WHOLESALE LTD WHOLESALE TRADERS LTD RICHMOND BARGAIN CENTRE LTD DISCOUNT CHARGE SERVICES</p>	<p>P.O. Box 578 Nelson, N.Z. Telephone: (054) 80 069 Residence: (054) 85 311 Mobile: (025) 324 834 Fax: (054) 87 181</p>
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Article in the Community Leader August 11th 1993, Page 21

11th August 1993 - MULTICARD IS PROVING ITS WORTH

Local customers and 320 businesses today enjoy the benefits of Nelson's own credit card, Multicard.

Developed by the director of Trathen's Discount Services, Mr Ben Trathen, 3 and a half years ago, Multicard can be used in most Nelson district retail outlets, service centres, restaurants and entertainment centres.

Trathen's Discount Services exists as a direct result of the closure of Trathen's Department Stores. The first of these stores was established in 1902 by Ben Trathens' grandfather.

Diane Amberger worked for Trathen's Department Stores for 31 years. During this time she progressed from office junior to office manager. She says the years spent working for the 3 Trathen brothers; Ben, John and David, were very enjoyable. "They must've been or I wouldn't have stayed so long!". She laughs.

Diane says at one stage there were seven stores and a number of bargain centres operating in the Nelson district.

"We also regularly held warehouse sales which were originally set up in the Trafalgar Centre. They were huge and people would come from all over to snap up the bargains."

However, having operated the stores successfully for a number of years, Ben, John and David decided, in time to go their own ways and in 1992 the last of Trathen's department stores, situated in Richmond, was closed.

With business winding down, Ben Trathen thought it would be a shame to lose so many valued customers who held Trathen's department store Cards," he explains.



PART II

The current condition of the building and the reasons the Trathens have reached the decision that the best way forward for the family and the Nelson CBD is to erect a new replacement building



Changes to the building over time



The opening of the Trathen's building in 1922 and the way the building looks today ca 2012

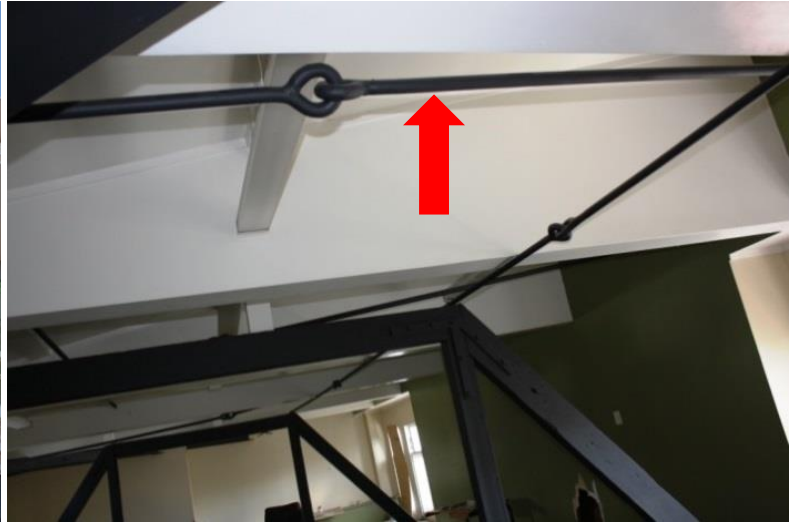
Damage from the Murchison earthquake was extensive



Concrete parapets and detailing were destroyed or removed after the Murchison earthquake in 1929. The scale taken from the men standing on top of the building suggest that 3.4 meters of the original façade has been removed. We believe the name 'Trathen's' has also been replaced because the proportion of the letters looks altered from the original photo.

After the Murchison earthquake the front of the building nearly collapsed into the street. In an effort to make it safe the decorative parapets at the top of the facade were removed and the frontage was tied to an existing concrete wall 8 meters back, inside the building. This concrete wall spans from the North to the South boundary walls and from the 1st floor to above the roofline, there is no support underneath. Over numerous renovations there have been doorways and access apertures cut out of this wall.

We are unsure exactly how much of the top of the building was removed but from the scale of the men standing on the roof of the building, opening day photo, approx. 3.4 meters has gone and the Trathens name replaced. The large columns on the façade were tied back to the façade.



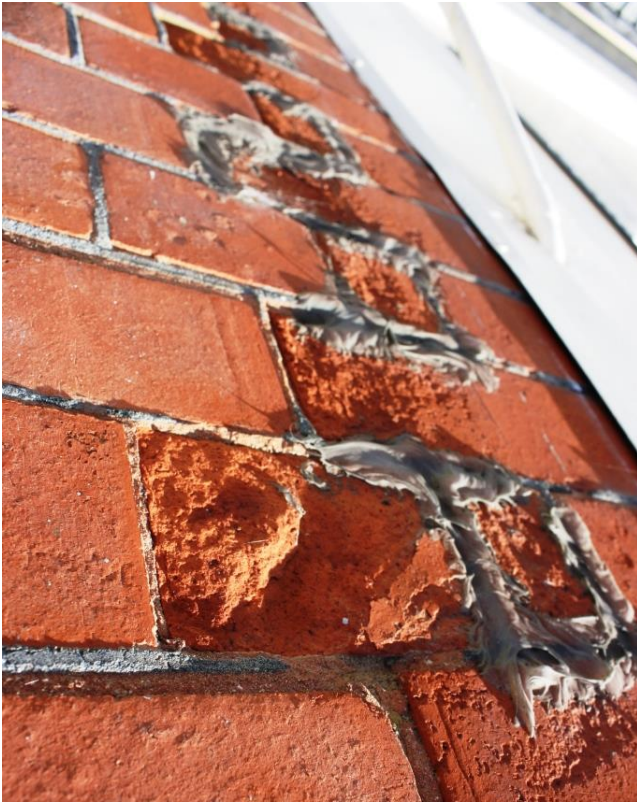
Above left: Bolts and plate tying back the top of the concrete column onto the façade

Above: Metal ties holding back the façade and tying it to an internal concrete wall

Left: Bolts and plates tying back the base of the large column onto the façade.

Below left: The back of the building which is unreinforced masonry. Note bolts and openings that are cut into the wall





Inangahua earthquake 1968: Damage to the brick columns on the façade, very amateur repairs have been carried out with silicon to stop water penetrating and causing more damage.



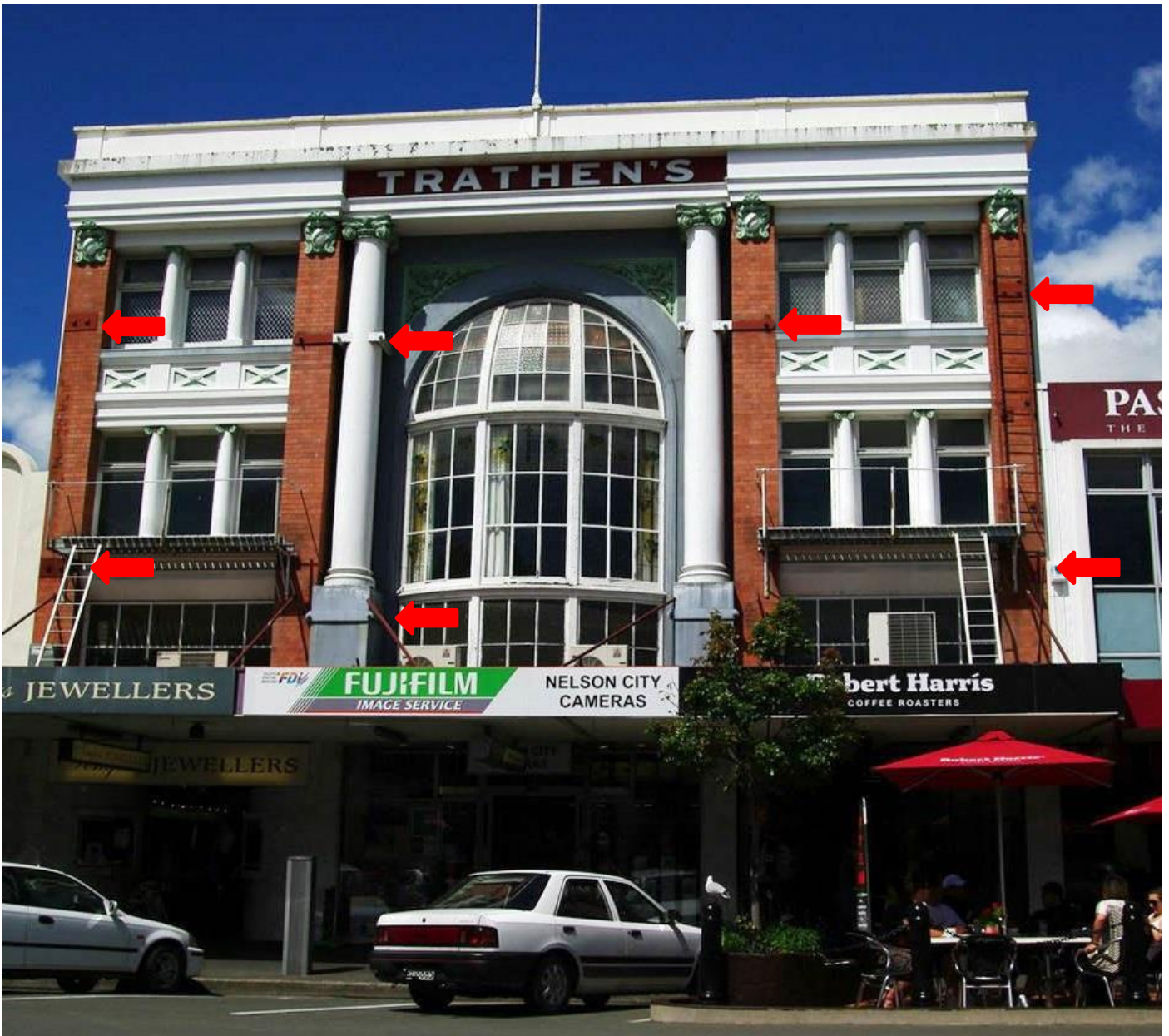
South facing boundary wall, above the party wall with the 'Pascoe's' building. Large cracks from the Inangahua earthquake, repaired with bolts & plates



After the 1989 strengthening and renovation, Ben Trathen decided to paint the 'Trathen's building' to brighten it up. He researched extensively throughout NZ and Australia to choose colours that would complement the building and be aesthetically pleasing

Below: The 3 businesses that first occupied the 'Trathen's building' after the 1989 strengthening and renovation: Trathen's Fabrics, Telecom and Robert Harris Cafe. Telecom was the last tenant to occupy any upstairs space and left in 1994.





A recent photo of the Trathen's building showing full occupancy of the ground floor, ca 2012

Since this photo was taken; Tempus Jewellers have closed, 2013; Nelson City Cameras have closed March 2015; Robert Harris want to terminate their lease because the building does not comply with Health and Safety regulations stating that a building must be over 67% of the NBS for the safety of their staff. They are looking for other premises.

The upper floor levels of the building have not been occupied for over 20 years.

Arrows are pointing out some of the external strengthening over the face of the façade.

There is a party wall on the South side of the building shared with the 'Pascoe's' building and another party wall is shared with 'Max'. A party wall is a boundary wall shared by two buildings

The History of the renovations & strengthening

Strengthening was done after the Murchison earthquake but there are no records of any details



Above: Strengthening on the 3rd level, (2nd floor) after the Murchison earthquake with RSJ beams and metal ties between the façade and the interior concrete wall make the space practically unusable



Above: Metal bracing on the façade

Below: Bolts & plates on the outside of the concrete wall connecting the metal ties and the front of the building



PPR 131618 + 3 Historic
NELSON CITY COUNCIL.
BUILDING APPLICATION FORM. No. 8787. ✓

Date 21-7-50 194

To the City Engineer,
NELSON.

Sir,

I hereby apply for permission to

~~erect~~
alter
~~convert~~
~~reinstale~~
~~demolish~~

Shop Premises (Internal alterations)
for Mr. Trathen Ltd. of Trafalgar St.
(Owner) (address)

according to the Site Plan, General Plans & Specifications deposited
in duplicate herewith. 191 - pr bk.

1. LOCALITY: Trafalgar Street, Postal No: 191 or in lieu thereof,
Lot 1 OP 7747 Section _____
2. PARTICULARS OF LAND: Frontage _____ by depth of _____ area _____
3. PARTICULARS OF BUILDING: Foundations _____ Walls _____
Roof _____ Area of Ground floor _____ sq.ft.
Area of Outbuildings _____ sq.ft.
4. ESTIMATED COST OF: Building £ 1420 Plumbing & Drainage £ _____
Total £ 1420

Yours faithfully,

(Signature of Applicant) J. D. & L. Robertson Ltd.

W. G. Robertson

SECRETARY

Builder's Name: J. D. & L. Robertson Ltd.

Percentage of materials held in stock for this work: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

Builder's Plan & Specification 1390
interior alterations

Application Fee 74

Subdivision Plan _____

Applic. No. 9366

Block Plan _____

Date: 7/8/1950

Index Plan No. _____

Contour Plan _____

Street No. issued: No. _____

Building application, 21st July 1950 for internal alterations

PROCESSED ✓

NELSON CITY COUNCIL

BUILDING APPLICATION FORM

PPR 131618
+ 3 Historic

No. 101252.
Date 26 September 1961.

To the City Engineer,
NELSON.
Sir,

I hereby apply for permission to
erect
alter
convert Shop premises.
reinstale
demolish

for Mr. Trathen's Buildings Ltd. of 191 Trafalgar Street
(Owner) (Owner's Address)

according to locality plans, detailed plans, elevations, cross sections and specifications of building deposited herewith, **IN DUPLICATE.**

PARTICULARS OF LAND:—

Lot 1 D.P. 7747 Section Pt. Sec. 167 Blk. C.T. 57/241.
Street No. 191 Trafalgar Street.
(if allotted)
Frontage 51' 9" Area

PARTICULARS OF BUILDING:—

Foundations Concrete Walls Roof
Area of Ground Floor square feet.
Area of Outbuildings square feet.

ESTIMATED COST:—

Plumbing and Drainage £ 400 : 0 : 0.
Building £ 6000 : 0 : 0.
Total £ 6400 : 0 : 0.

Purpose for which building is to be used Retail shop.

(Signature of Applicant) [Signature]

Address P.O. Box 276,
Nelson.

Builder's Name J. P. Kniff.

For Office Use ONLY

Builder's Plan & Specifications 3129. Permit Fee £20
Subdivision Plan
Block Plan Application No. 046
Index Plan No. 11

Date: 25/10/1961

PPR 131618(m)
+ 3 Historic

NELSON CITY COUNCIL

PROCESSED

BUILDING APPLICATION FORM

No. 3051987

Date 23.10.69

To the City Engineer,
NELSON.

Sir,

I hereby apply for permission to

erect
alter
convert
reinststate
demolish

Repair

existing Sign Board between parapet with Metadeck.

for Mr. B Trathan Hld of Trafalgar St. Nelson
(Owner) (Owner's Address)

according to locality plans, detailed plans, elevations, cross sections and specifications of building deposited herewith, IN DUPLICATE.

PARTICULARS OF LAND:-

1972/108

Lot D.P. Section Blk. Street.
191 167 TRAFALGAR

Frontage Area square feet.

PARTICULARS OF BUILDING:-

Foundations Walls Roof
Area of Ground Floor square feet.
Area of Outbuildings square feet.

ESTIMATED COST:-

Plumbing and Drainage £
Building £ 300.00
Total \$ 300.00

Purpose for which building is to be used

Builder John P. Kriff Hld
Address P.O. Box 256 Nelson

Signature of Builder

For Office Use ONLY

Builder's Plan & Specifications Permit Fee \$2
Subdivision Plan Application No. 70635
Block Plan
Index Plan No.

Date: 14/11/1969

U

Building application; 23rd October 1969 to repair shop premises

PPR 131618(m)
+3 Historic

PROCESSED

REF: Site..File....
DR:JAM

NELSON CITY COUNCIL



17 May 1989

PO BOX 645 NELSON
NEW ZEALAND
BUREAU FAX (054)60239
PHONE (054)60-200

Building Design Ltd
134 Bridge Street
NELSON

Dear Sir

REFERENCE: Development Application No.481
Owner: B Trathen
Site: 191 Trafalgar Street, Nelson

Proposal: Convert one shop into three shops & strengthen building

Your request dated 28 April 1989 concerning the above application was considered by officers acting under delegated authority on 11.5.89.

If you disagree with the decision below you may request that the application be referred to the Planning & Bylaws Applications Committee for reconsideration.

Decision

THAT development application No.481 be approved subject to the conditions below:

a) Reserve Fund Contribution

Not required.

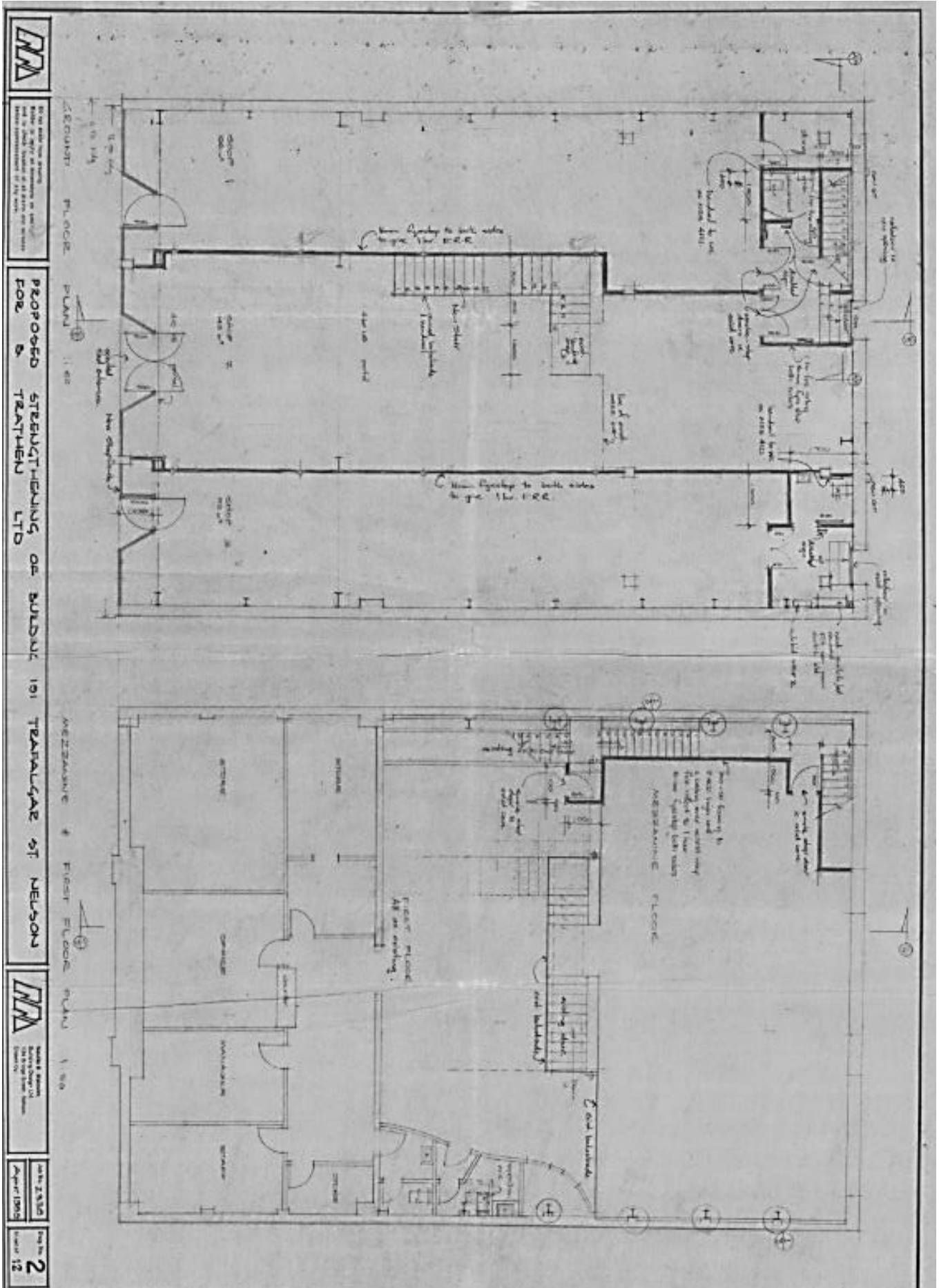
b) Engineering Conditions

The developer shall pay the Council the sum of \$500 (five hundred dollars) for the due compliance of the sealing clause below and shall be refunded when these requirements have been satisfied.

This development plan approval expires in 2 years from the date of approval, i.e. 11.5.91.

Approval of a building permit will be considered when the above requirements have been met.

Building application, 17th May 1989: Convert to 3 shops and strengthen building



Floor Plan of the alterations completed in 1989. Designed by Neville Malcolm

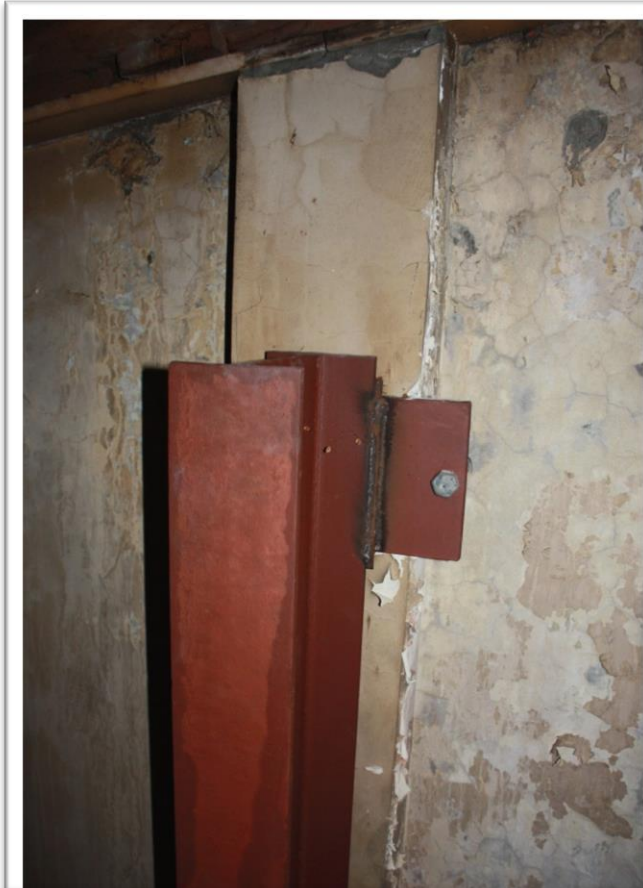


1989 strengthening

Left: Large steel beam that runs across the front of the façade under the floor on the first level.

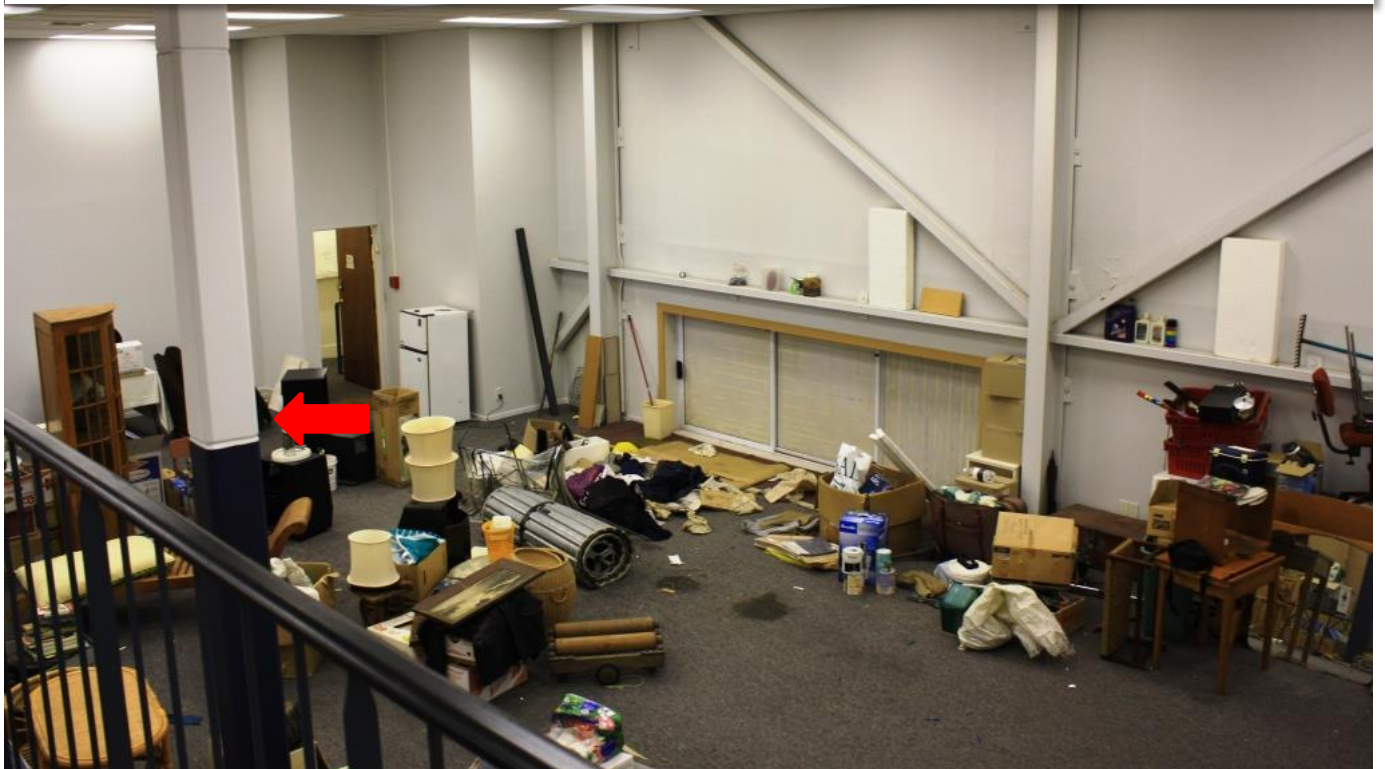
Below: Extensive steel strengthening under the roof





Above left: RSJ beam holding together a crack in the party wall that is shared by the Pascoe's building
Above right: RSJ beam on party wall. Note it does not go to the top of the wall and the parapet extends another metre above the roof.

Below: Steel beams along the back wall are part of the strengthening completed in 1989. Red arrow shows a concrete support column on the mezzanine floor. There is no access between the mezzanine (1st level) and 1st floor (2nd level).



A Description of Strengthening carried out in 1989

19th August. 1991

R.C.O'Malley
Building Supervisor
8 Stafford Walk
NELSON
Phone 5484423

REPORT ON TRATHENS BUILDING - 191 TRAFALGAR ST., NELSON.

The Nelson City Council had inspected the above building and had deemed the building to be an earthquake risk. The building either required strengthening to the required standard or to be demolished by a specified date. The Nelson City Council was empowered to enforce this decision by Act of Parliament. The Directors of Trathens considered several different options of rebuilding either multi-storied or 1-2 story building along with strengthening the existing building. Over recent years there has been several rebuilding projects undertaken in the city with varying amounts of Public concern over the demolition of buildings of distinctive architecture character. As 191 Trafalgar Street is such a building the Directors considered the desire to preserve the City-scape along with economic realities and made the decision to strengthen the existing structures. (See Neville R. Malcolm letter 7.2.89) The Directors intention was to retain as much as possible of the existing character of the building both exterior and interior with the minimum cost. Preliminary drawings were received from N.R. Malcolm of strengthening required plus other N.C.C requirements such as an addition stairway to the 1st floor. It became obvious that the main retail area of the ground floor would need to be redesigned with steel cross-bracing that would restrict the floor customers, and because of the steel portal frame and concrete reinforced foundations and beams to the same would disturb the existing shop front windows and doors the Directors considered the option of sub-division into 3 shops. Plans and Specifications were then drawn up with all these factors in mind. (See attached Plans & Specifications.) The front section of the shop (ie Approx 8 metres from the street) had 2 steel portal frames extending from concrete steel reinforced beams (new work) to the floor joists of the 1st floor the rest of the structure ie North, South and East walls had

Page 2

steel R.S.T extending from new foundation beams to the underside of the roof. At the underside of the roof line extensive steel bracing was constructed.

All of the steel portals and stanchion were bolted hard to the existing brick party walls which necessitated the cutting of floor joists and ceiling corrices to fix the steel to the existing structural members of the building.

The ground floor North & South walls were reinforced T.G. & V with panels above 2.7m high and the East wall was mainly mirrored from floor to 2.5m high the height of the mezzanine floor. All these linings were replaced with 9.5mm Gibraltar Board. Because of the major disruption to the design of the paralleled and corniced ceiling on the ground floor and 1st floor from 8m back from the frontage to the rear it was decided to erect a Pinex Suspended ceiling with integral ceiling lighting.

During the past 25-30yrs I understand from the Directors there has been only minimal repairs and maintenance to the Building. The result of the strengthening is that the exterior of the Building has retained its distinctive architectural character and the interior is a more modern design than originally envisaged. It would have been desirable to retain the wall panelling, the Beamed Panel and heavy Cornice ceilings but the cost factor was considered too high to reinstate after such major disruptions with the fixing of the steelwork.

Although it is conceded that any repairs and maintenance will improve the value of property to some extent it was not the intention of the Directors to do so.

I have been involved with this project from the beginning of the investigations of various options of rebuilding and strengthening. I have assessed this project to the best of my ability and trust that this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours faithfully,



R. O'MALLEY. BUILDING SUPERVISOR.

REF F25.01
RAB:SF

NELSON CITY COUNCIL



PO BOX 645 NELSON
NEW ZEALAND
BUREAU FAX (054)60239
PHONE (054)66-200

16 August 1989


B G Trathen
Managing Director
Trathens Fashions Limited
Trafalgar Street
NELSON

Dear Sir

191 TRAFALGAR STREET

A meeting of Nelson City Council's Seismic Subcommittee, held on 8 August 1989, considered your request of 5 July 1989 that the Council reconsider its earlier decision regarding the commencement date for the 40 year life granted to the building at 191 Trafalgar Street, following strengthening.

I am pleased to advise that your request for a later commencement date was granted. The Committee resolved:

 *THAT the life of the building will commence from the completion of the proposed strengthening works as defined by the date on the building permit record, and will run for 40 years beyond that date.*

Yours faithfully
I P Barker
CITY SECRETARY

Per: 

Letter from the Nelson City Council advising that the life span of the building would be 40 years from the completion of strengthening works in 1989 to 2029

On the 5th September 2013 the Nelson City Council sent formal notification requiring an initial seismic assessment of the Trathens building. The assessment was carried out by AMK engineering and the building was found to meet only 5 % of the building code.

On the 11th March 2014 the Nelson City Council sent formal notification requiring a detailed seismic assessment of the Trathens building. The assessment was carried out by AMK engineering and the building was found to meet 6% of the building code.

Public Health & Safety

What is an earthquake prone building?

It is a building that “will have its ultimate capacity exceeded in a moderate earthquake”. If it should “collapse in a moderate earthquake, the collapse would be likely to cause—(i) injury or death” or “(ii) damage to any other property.” Anything under 20% Of the NBS is an Earthquake Prone Building (EPB) with a seismic grade E, extremely high risk. (*Relative Earthquake Risk table, NZ Society for Earthquake Engineering*)

The Trathens building has a detailed seismic assessment of **ONLY 6%** of the NBS. This building was designed without the slightest regard to seismic loading and has materials and structural details that are the worst possible from the point of view of achieving robust seismic performance.



Unreinforced Masonry Building
Post September 2010



Above: Post February 2011



Above: Masonry falls outwards

In the Christchurch earthquake, *excluding the CCTV & Pyne Gould Guinness buildings*, 42 people lost their lives. Of the 42, all but one death was caused by the failure of older unreinforced masonry (URM) or brick/block structures. The fact that 70% of those killed by URM buildings were in public places outside the buildings – in vehicles or on the streets – highlights that this is a community problem. It is generally safer to be inside a URM building than to be outside it in the event of an earthquake because walls are likely to collapse outwards and parapets and gables fall onto adjacent property.

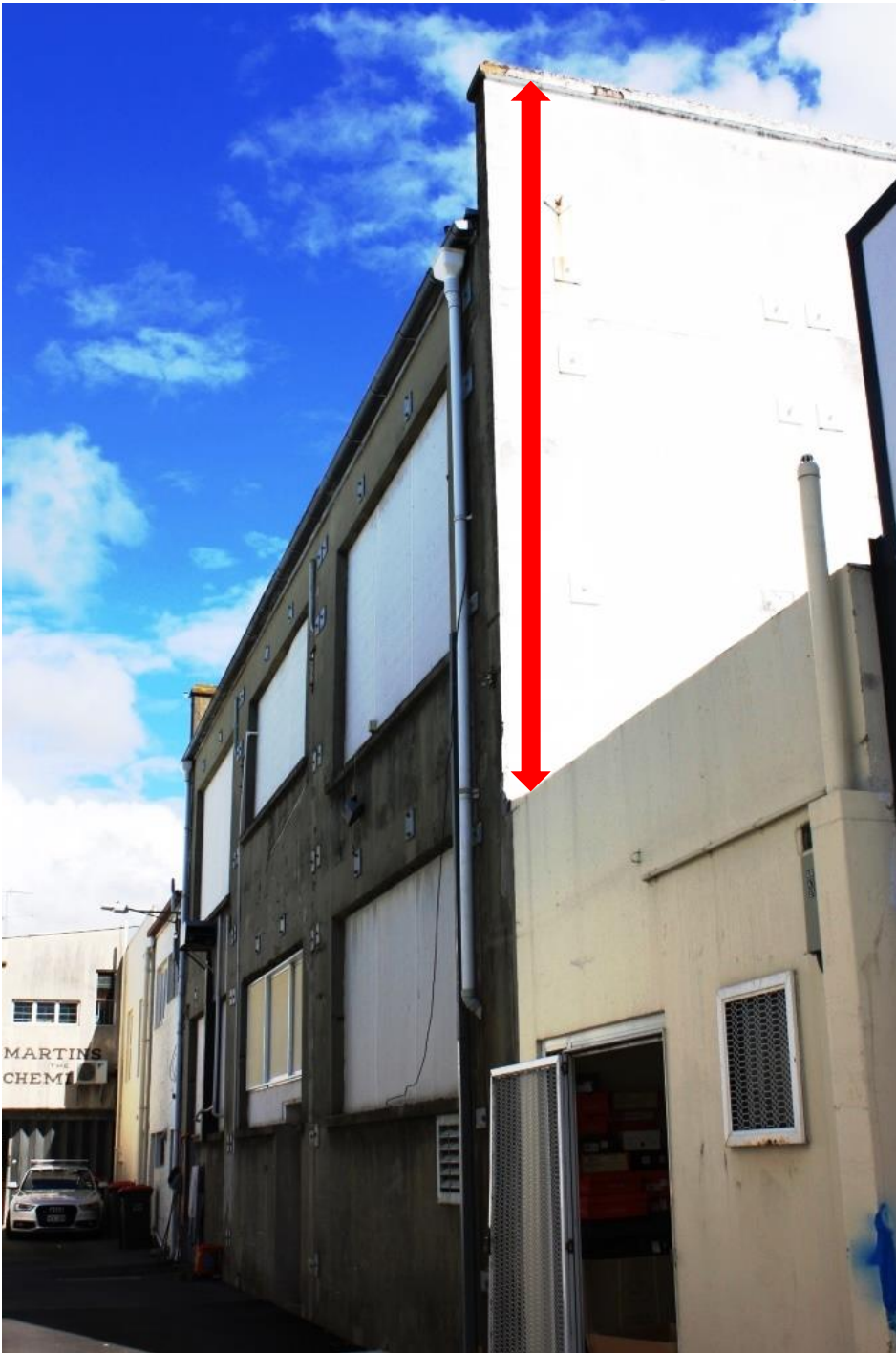
The Trathens are not prepared to leave a building standing that is known to be 6% of the current building code and is a risk to people being hurt or killed in the event of an earthquake.”

Some engineers would argue that a URM building may, at considerable cost, be made safe. Others would argue that a URM building can never be made completely safe. The Trathen family do not have unlimited resources available to strengthen the building without the compensation of a return.

After numerous attempts at strengthening and renovations, the strength of the remaining original structure of the Trathens building has been compromised beyond reasonable repair.

The tenants are mostly small locally owned businesses, since the Nelson City Council request for a seismic assessment two of the three tenants have gone. The remaining tenant, Robert Harris, has the uncertainty of a month to month tenancy, loss of business created by empty shops and fear of being in an unsafe building.

Engineers have been instructed to form a safety plan in the event of an earthquake but the Trathen family feels a huge weight of responsibility that the building is unsafe. It is urgent that a solution to fix this problem is reached as quickly as possible for the tenants, the people who work in this building and for the Nelson public.



The height between the roof of Overland shoes and the parapet of the Trathens building is over 5.8 meters.

Serious damage, injury or loss of life would be imminent in a large earthquake

The 'Trathen's building' is particularly dangerous because;

- The construction is of unreinforced masonry
- It is over 3 stories high
- Design, materials & structural details have been given no regard to seismic loading
- It is situated in the centre of our city with the highest foot traffic in the CBD
- It towers over the surrounding buildings.
- Remaining original structure has been compromised beyond reasonable repair.
- It is joined to 2 other smaller buildings by party walls
- It is only 6% of the NBS



Stress point in a seismic event: There are party walls between the 'Trathens' building, the 'Pascoe's' building and 'Max' building. This means the buildings are connected and would move as one.

Party wall - a partition erected on a property boundary, partly on the land of one owner and partly on the land of another, to provide common support to the structures on both sides of the boundary.

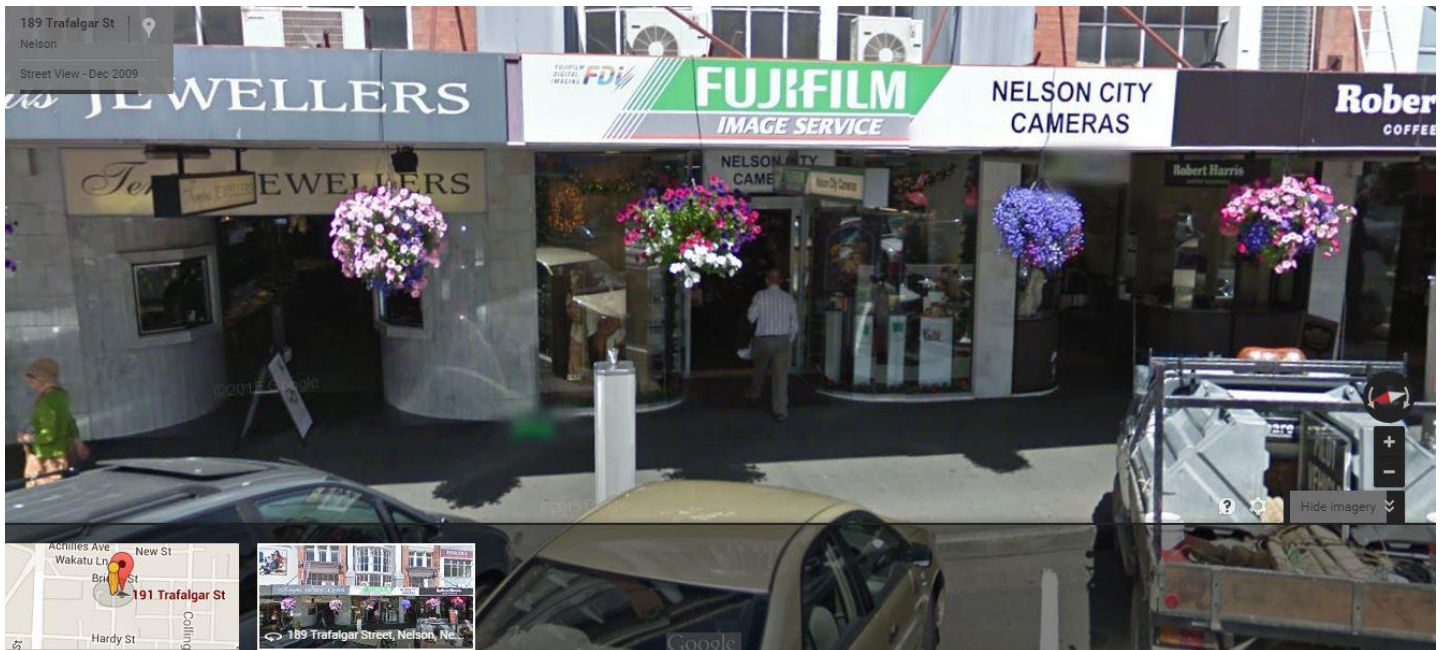
There are two party walls that connect the 'Trathens' building to the 'Pascoe's' building and the 'Max' building. This means there is no seismic gaps between the buildings. In a major earthquake, the 3 buildings would move together and there is a risk of the two smaller buildings collapsing the Trathens building at their roof height.

'The majority of the deaths and injuries caused by the failure of URM buildings in the February earthquake occurred when building façades collapsed onto adjacent footpaths and roads. The Royal Commission considers that in a situation where there are limited resources it is logical to provide a greater level of protection against collapse of elements that threaten the public than to the buildings as a whole. "The Royal Commission of Inquiry into building failure caused by the Canterbury earthquakes.'

"Judgments by local body councils regarding the value of a listed heritage or character building throughout NZ have been based largely on aesthetics and historical factors alone. The risk profile of the building and the economic implications of its upgrading have minimal influence. In light of the significant costs involved in strengthening, there needs to be far more careful consideration of the extent to which district councils seek to retain buildings - as unrealistic expectations on heritage and character may result in collapse financially and more importantly with loss of life in a disaster." "The Property Council NZ", SUBMISSION ON THE BUILDING

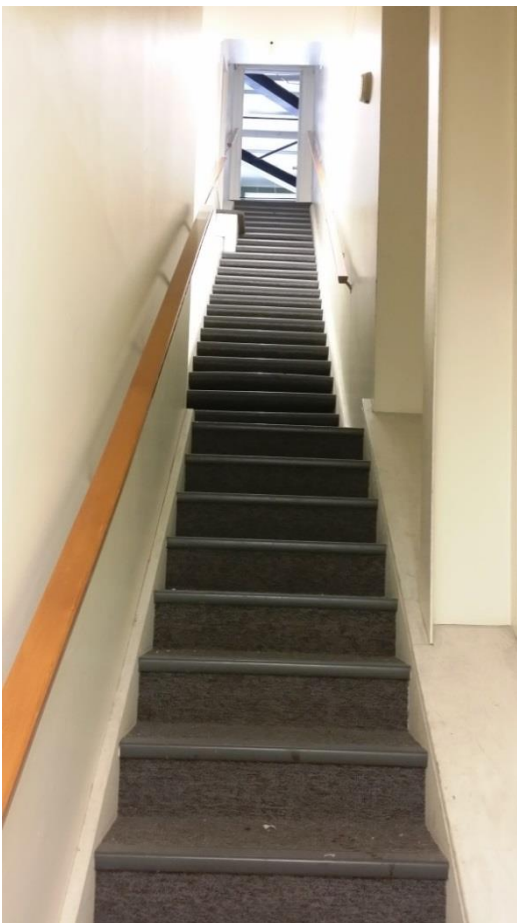
It is therefore necessary to rectify this presenting issue as quickly and effectively as possible by seeking Nelson city council approval to replace this building with a **safe**, new building that will meet the needs of a modern city.

Description of the building and its current condition



Shop fronts are dated and there is poor connection to the street

The **ground** floor of the building was divided into three shops in **1989** to accommodate the major strengthening posts and beams that were added to bring the building to 100% of the building code at that time. Over the years all the original features have been removed in numerous renovations and shop fit outs. The **existing shops** have dated **shopfronts** with limited glazing which is not desirable for modern retail. Support posts are located in the retail areas and boxed out and taking space along the walls. The design of the shop spaces effect difficult shapes, limited glazing and poor visual connection to the street.



The **upper floors** of the building have not been used for over 25 years; there is no **access** from Trafalgar Street to the upper levels. The only **access** upstairs is from a single door in Buxton lane, a narrow service lane in Bridge Street. The steep **stairway** runs up the northern wall on the inside of the building. There are internal service **stairs** between the **first floor** (2nd level) and **second floor** (3rd level) fitted in the 1989 strengthening and renovation.

The 80 ton concrete **mezzanine floor**, (1st level), has for the past 15 years been used only for the family to store household goods. It has a sliding access window that opens onto Buxton Lane. The walls are unlined with the numerous strengthening beams around the walls exposed.

Left: Looking up the stairs from the mezzanine level, steep, narrow access to the upper floors. Note the RSJ strengthening beams to the right that run up the Northern exterior wall. You can see the RSJ beams on the second level at the top of the stairs



The **1st floor**, (2nd level), is divided into two spaces by an internal concrete wall. The feature bay window that is so impressive from the outside of the building is divided over 3 floors. The middle third of the window is the only portion visible on the interior of the building. This was the old tea room space.

The **1st floor**, (2nd level), where the **bay window** is situated is divided into two spaces by an internal concrete wall. This is an original wall that spans from one boundary of the building to the other, supported only by the exterior walls. The wall height rises to the **2nd floor**, (3rd level) and protrudes through the roof. The face of the building or **façade** is tied to this wall to stop it falling out onto the street in the event of an earthquake. We know in previous renovations that holes have been cut into this wall. See photo below.

The **exterior wall** on the South of the building is an unreinforced concrete party, (shared), wall with the 'Pascoe's' building. The ceilings are fitted with pinex panels and the wall coverings are plasterboard. The **feature bay window** that is so impressive from the outside of the building is divided between the 3 floors and visitors to the building are surprised at how unimpressive it becomes on the interior of the building.

The top of the concrete wall that spans between the 1st & 2nd floor and covers the width of the building. This is the wall that holds back the façade – note the piece cut out and the cracks around the tie back bolts





Unreinforced masonry party wall shared with the 'Pascoe's' building

The **exterior walls** are unreinforced masonry, a layered brick construction covered with plaster and supported on a concrete strip footing. The wall between 191 and 195 Trafalgar Street is a party (shared) wall. There are numerous cracks through the exterior walls and a large number of tie-back bolts penetrate the walls.

The **2nd floor**, (3rd level) has the most compromised space for utilization. Metal tie back rods, RSJ beams and the original wooden support structures divide up the area making it practicably unusable. It was used as the window dressers space when the Trathen's business was operating.



The 2nd floor, (3rd level), has the most compromised space

Our assessment of the architectural merits of the façade

The 'Trathen's building' façade is a mixture of styles and ideas taken from the architecture of the time and mixed together to create the ultimate department store for Ben Trathen in 1922.

The Trathen's building is listed as a category B building with “only the front façade of particular value”.

Unfortunately a large part of the facade has already been lost. In the Murchison earthquake the top 3.5 meters of the building was lost. Then in an effort to modernise the bottom floor for retail space and to strengthen the building to the current building codes, the original ground floor street frontage has also been lost. Only the middle of the original building remains, an incomplete façade, which is disproportionate compared to the original design.

Only the ground floor of the building is usable, the façade is a memorial to the past; it has no affiliation with the neighbouring buildings and looms over the street. The upper floors are now a dead space and they serve no useful purpose to the busy city centre.

It's a bit like a vintage car without an engine, it's still a significant reminder of the past and shows us how things have progressed, but it's no bloody use as a car anymore.



What remains of the original 'Trathen's building' is an incomplete facade.

Why Strengthening would make no Economic Sense

There is not a viable return on the investment of strengthening -

Nelson CBD, (Central Business District), is the business precinct of Nelson; the 'Trathen's building' at 191 Trafalgar Street is a commercial property, paying commercial rates and outgoings and providing commercial space, for businesses that have to be commercially viable.

The redevelopment of the 'Trathen's building' is a business decision based on the returns from finances invested in 191 Trafalgar Street.

Over the life of the 'Trathen's building' there have been hundreds of thousands of dollars and thousands of man hours spent attempting to make the building safe, and to effectively utilise the available space.

The last major re-strengthening was in 1989 when Ben, John and David Trathen chose to bring the building up to 100% of the building code. They invested significant funds, renovating the retail space and trying to reduce the impact of the strengthening beams and columns to allow maximum workspace and productivity for retail tenants. When the work was finished Ben received a letter from the Nelson City Council to confirm they would guarantee a 40 year life span for the building. That was only 25 years ago, the investment made strengthening the building in 1989, has not given the return calculated and the building still remains not safe.

Strengthening measures and every effort to ensure and maintain the safety standard as per requirements of the day, is now deemed ineffective. The current structure of the building may still place the general public at risk of avoidable injury or death in the event of another disaster.

Today the income from the 'Trathen's building', after outgoings, with only one tenant, is \$49,000.00 p.a. The formula used to work out the value of a commercial property based on the income from the property gives a commercial value of \$750,000.00 - the capital value based on our current rates account states capital value of \$2,650,000.00. **If** we agree with the capital value on the Nelson City Council rates statement the return on our investment is only 1.85%.

If the 'Trathen's façade' was strengthened to 100% of the NBS and the building was fitted out to a high standard, it would still never earn the income that it was achieving only 2 years ago because of the reduced internal space caused by the strengthening. It would never be as desirable to established businesses who wanted secure long term leases as a new building. It would be unlikely to have any practical use above the ground floor because of restricted access and limited demand for that space.

Summary: - To strengthen and renovate, keeping the facade will cost approximately 25% more than a new building. The returns on the strengthened building will be 25% less than on a new building

Not attractive to tenants so the rental income is reduced

The percentage of tenants in the market for commercial premises greatly reduces if the building is even perceived to be earthquake prone. *Being a Heritage/earthquake prone building is a real negative in the commercial market place.* National chains, local government, central government and banks etc. are demanding NBS over 67% due to requirements of the Health and Safety Employment Act. Legal advice has been that employers need to ensure staff premises are

considered “Low Risk” in the event of a moderate earthquake i.e. be at a level of at least 67% of NBS. There is clearly an inconsistency between requirements under the Building Act (where buildings should be at least 34% of NBS) and what employers view their responsibility is under the Health and Safety in Employment Act (at least 67% of NBS).

The cost of taking the building to a higher NBS % is not recovered in increased revenue.

The requirements of a tenant -

- Safety of staff and customers – Even at required building standards, tenants and the public are acutely aware of buildings that may be unsafe in an earthquake. As well as the safety issue this also effects business reputation and revenue.
- Desirability of space – The area is compromised with space taken by strengthening beams and columns, limited shop front windows and light.
- Security of lease – The tenant can be made to vacate the building if required when strengthening or repairs are mandatory.

Rental income is substantially affected by low NBS % and this is compounded by high outgoings for the building.

Rates – In 2015 the NCC rates revenue on the ‘Trathen’s building’ are \$30,384.00, an increase of \$2079.40 from last year, even though *land value* has not increased since 2010/11. The N.C.C. rates account shows *capital value* has reduced significantly this year, (Improvements reduced by \$350,000.00 but because the building is listed “EPB” we believe *the true valuation would be more accurately estimated at land value less demolition costs*).

Insurance premiums: A detailed seismic assessment of 6% of the NBS means the Trathen’s building cannot obtain insurance suitable for tenants. Insurance companies rate anything less than 20% an extremely high relative risk. Replacement insurance is now not an option due to the EPB rating. Insurance increased to \$20,000 per annum on the ‘Trathens building’ 2 years ago, a huge cost to pass onto tenants. At present some companies will not insure the ‘Trathen’s building’, currently it has indemnity cover only.

Insurers now commonly require that buildings be strengthened to above 67% of the NBS; they are concerned with the long term viability of the asset itself and expect building owners to upgrade to 67% of NBS over time, in order to maintain insurance cover.

In order to comply with bank debt covenants and some leases, and obtain finance, the building must be insured. To obtain insurance, the building must be strengthened to a standard where the building might survive a moderate earthquake.

A lack of insurance impacts on the building owners’ ability to obtain a loan in order to pay for the strengthening work to be done

The value and the income of the ‘Trathen’s building’ is significantly reduced due to being below the market strength threshold of 67% NBS



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28 May 2015

Client Reference: 211-01K5F
Insurance Broker: Rouen van Eck

Michelle Ahnfeldt
PO Box 578
Nelson 7040

Dear Michelle,

Property 191 Trafalgar Street, Nelson

In light of the current Earthquake Prone Status of the building, I can confirm that from an insurance perspective, this building is problematic to insure. The current insurance market has virtually no appetite to insure such a building and upon the previous renewal it was only the holding insurer that was willing to provide terms. It needs to be noted that they did not offer any Natural Disaster cover on this building and as such it is uninsured in the event of an earthquake.

Even though earthquake cover is not provided, it is still a considerable risk for the insurers to provide liability cover for the building, as it is unclear as to the potential impact that the Earthquake Prone Status will have in the event of a liability claim.

Yours sincerely,

Rouen van Eck
Senior Broker

Letter from Crombie Lockwood concerning the insurance on the
Trathen's building

Tax – *“Earthquake strengthening costs have historically been considered a capital expense for tax purposes – i.e. an improvement to the building structure. However current experience shows that, once an earthquake occurs, the market value of buildings is drastically undermined due to changes in views around, and acceptance of, earthquake risk. The expenditure required to remedy this will not increase the value of the building, on the basis that earthquake strengthening will not change the function of the building (i.e. will generally not result in a higher rental stream).*

“Maintenance expenditure would normally be deductible for tax purposes. However, this is currently not the case with buildings in New Zealand where earthquake strengthening is concerned. Under the current taxation regime, the costs associated with seismic maintenance of a building will not be deductible either immediately or spread over the economic life of the building (i.e. depreciated).

... *Insurers and tenants are effectively demanding that buildings be strengthened to around 67% of NBS. Currently, there is no level playing field in the tax regime for undertaking strengthening works – the costs are not tax deductible and they do not qualify for depreciation - nor do strengthening works necessarily enable building owners to increase rents.*

There is only so much that property owners can absorb in costs, or buildings will have to be abandoned, leading to declining business and economic activity throughout New Zealand. No one wants a situation where communities are left with derelict buildings with local authorities having to clean up at significant costs to ratepayers.”

“The Property Council NZ”, SUBMISSION ON THE BUILDING (EARTHQUAKE-PRONE BUILDINGS) AMENDMENT BILL

We have considered many options for utilizing the upstairs space in a way that would recover a reasonable return but there are numerous reasons that this is not feasible

- *No access from Trafalgar Street* – The most valuable part of a commercial property is the street frontage, if you take frontage to provide access upstairs there is a huge cost to functionality and retail space. Narrow entranceways to upper floors on a street frontage create dead space.
- *Very restricted access to upper floors* – There is only one access through the building and this is not linked cohesively. It is ineffective and not user friendly
- *No demand for office space* – there is an oversupply of office space in Nelson with a high level of vacancies. There are numerous new development spaces available on the periphery of the CBD or in Richmond.
- *No parking* – Offices and apartments require parking to help make them viable
- *Excessive cost* – There are no heritage features left in the building and the upper floors have to be totally rebuilt, without surety of income this is not financially viable

No demand, No return on investment, No benefit to Trafalgar Street and No benefit to the customers of the CBD

We have explored the options below and discarded them

1. *Strengthen and restore the whole building* – not financially viable - will not produce a result that would be optimal for retailers, Nelson CBD or for the Trathen Family
2. *Save the façade and build a new building behind it* - not financially viable and will not produce a result that would be optimal for retailers, Nelson CBD or for the Trathen Family
3. *Sell* - We would lose 75% of our capital and it would not resolve the presenting problem.
4. *Sell to council to restore and strengthen* – Where it is in the community's interest to upgrade an earthquake-prone building, but it is not economic from the landowner's perspective, the community (through the council or state entities) should be prepared to make a financial contribution to the owner so that upgrading is viable
5. *Sell* - to Heritage Trust
6. *Abandon Building* – Legally and morally unviable
7. *Build & Lease to the N.C.C. as a Community Centre* – This was an idea considered that might revitalise and create community in the CBD. Council response was that it must be economically viable and stand on its own financially. This is also the case for the Trathen family.

This report has led me on a journey through the city of Nelson's history. I want to share a couple of pages from the Nelson Photo News that I found showing the changes over time in our city.

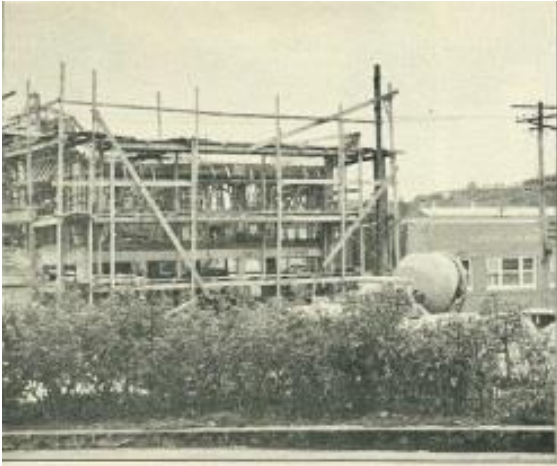


Photo News 44 - June 27th 1964

NELSON'S CHANGING FACE

Day by day changes can be seen in the skyline and city streets of Nelson. Buildings are going up and others are coming down and making way for new premises.

At top, a new building going up for Alex Bowman, Nelson architect. Alongside it are new dental chambers on the site of an old house. The big picture features the Post Office and the new Savings Bank building to be opened shortly.

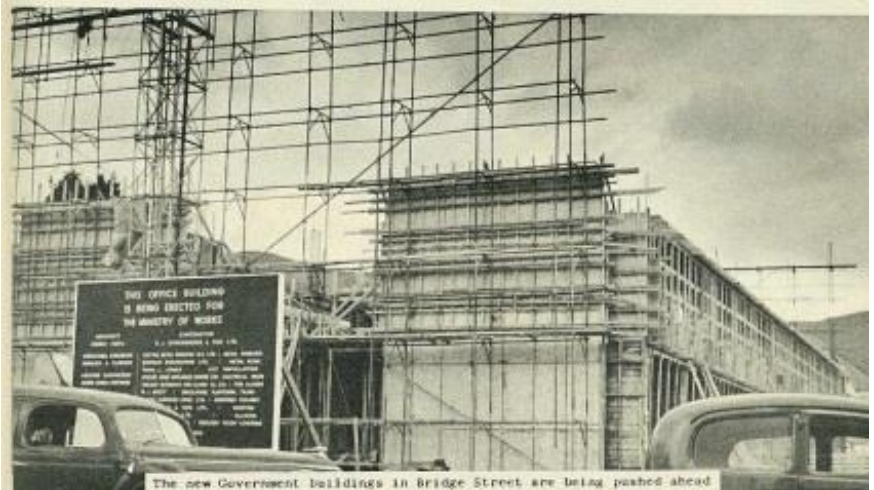




PHOTO NEWS # 105 JULY 26TH 1969 - TRAFALGAR STREET MALL

A sketch plan of a possible pedestrian area established in the upper section of Trafalgar St to the Church Steps came before the Nelson City Council at a recent meeting. No decision has been made on the suggestion, but the Council is keen to receive the reactions of citizens and businessmen to the proposal. We reproduce here the sketch (left) showing the proposed layout of the mall and (above) a vertical shot of the layout. The mall would incorporate grassed areas, a day nursery at which shopper's children could be cared for under supervision, an outdoor cafe, seating, a small fountain and an area by the steps suitable for outdoor theatre production. An estimate of the cost of converting this section of the street was made at \$12,000.

Our initial reaction to the suggestion was, and still is, enthusiasm. It is a progressive plan and one which should do much to enhance the heart of Nelson's commercial area. But is it going far enough?

It is clear that Nelson needs a new, dynamic, overall plan for the CBD and this is the time to make that plan. Dozens of buildings throughout our city have been recognized as Earthquake Prone Buildings (EPB) and the opportunity to shape our city to work for the future is NOW.

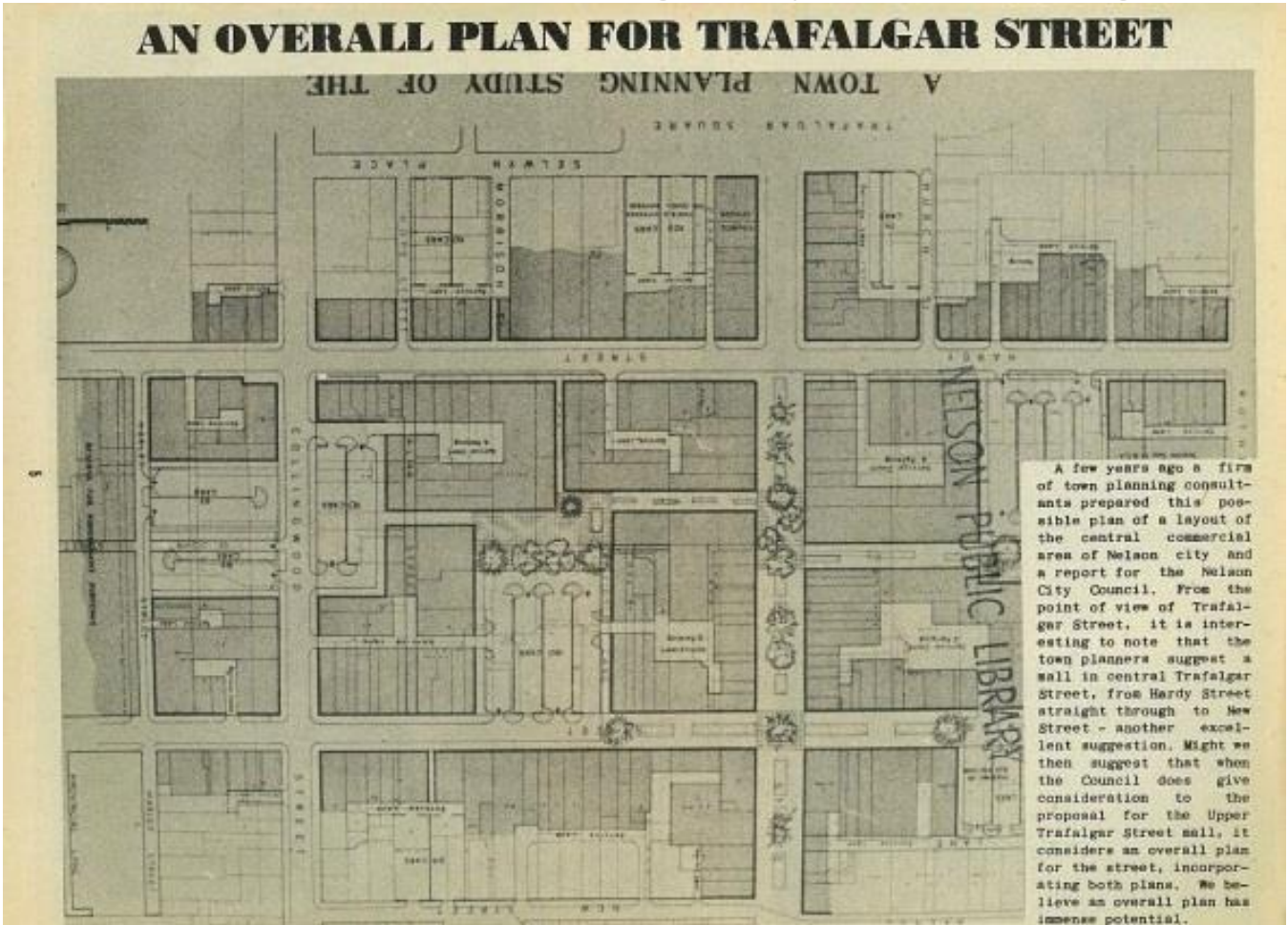


PHOTO NEWS # 105 JULY 26TH 1969 AN OVERALL PLAN FOR TRAFALGAR STREET

A few years ago a firm of town planning consultants prepared the possible plan of a layout of the central commercial area of Nelson City and a report for the Nelson City Council. From the point of view of Trafalgar Street, it is interesting to note that the town planners suggest a mall in central Trafalgar Street, from Hardy Street straight through to New Street – another excellent suggestion. Might we then suggest that when the Council does give consideration to the proposal for the upper Trafalgar Street mall, it considers an overall plan for the street, incorporating both plans. We believe an overall plan has immense potential.

Trafalgar Street must be the priority to revitalise; it needs to be recognised as the heart of Nelson.

If Trafalgar Street is vibrant and strong then the rest of the CBD will become strong. Trying to revitalise other parts of the CBD has isolated and weakened our retail centre.

Real change means all of us coming together, and working collectively for change. The inner city can provide a variety of safe public domains which support, celebrate and grow year-round social, arts, cultural and community activities.

Nelson needs to be bold in leading and working together to develop buildings and spaces that exemplify both innovation and energy-efficiency outcomes.

The Trathen family want to contribute to the revitalisation of the Nelson CBD and invest in a new, living building, where people can come and use the space. For Nelson to be the dynamic, prosperous, progressive city it has the capacity to be, we must continue to evolve.



Our Aspirations for the New Development and how it will add vitality to the Nelson CBD

- A. That any building/s on the two sites must provide for the health and safety of all staff and customers using the buildings, and the health and safety of the public utilising Trafalgar St.
- B. Party walls are eliminated between 193 Trafalgar Street and 195 Trafalgar Street, creating a seismic gap to make the buildings safer.
- C. That the building standard specifications are met and exceeded so as to meet all requirements for banks, insurance companies and council regulations, benefiting the tenants and ensuring the outgoings are kept minimal.
- D. That the building is of such quality and versatility that it is relevant for the Nelson community for at least the next 100 years.
- E. That the style and configuration of the building/s space is open and flexible with full height glazing at ground floor to create an inviting and interactive face to the street and accommodate the changing needs of retail.
- F. That the style and configuration of any floor area above ground floor, is provided with access from an attractive street entrance that will provide flexibility over time to accommodate a range of uses including café/cultural activities, commercial offices or potential mixed use and residential.

- G. That the building/s engage with the streetscape and adds vibrancy and vitality to the Trafalgar Street precinct and not a static presence in the streetscape.
- H. That the building is an economically viable investment for the applicants and provides an engaging commercial hub where businesses can thrive and customer expectations are surpassed.

The Trathen family's history is woven into the Nelson community and we are proud of contributing positively to the success of business in the CBD.

"We appreciate our family heritage and we love Nelson. We wish to continue to provide innovative and inspiring opportunities for business and the general public.

This building has shaped our lives BUT it should not be made to control the future."

The redevelopment will enhance Trafalgar Street and benefit the whole CBD district by providing a safe, exciting environment with a focus on social interaction, café/restaurant dining and retail business.

"We are excited about the concept for the 191 Trafalgar Street development.

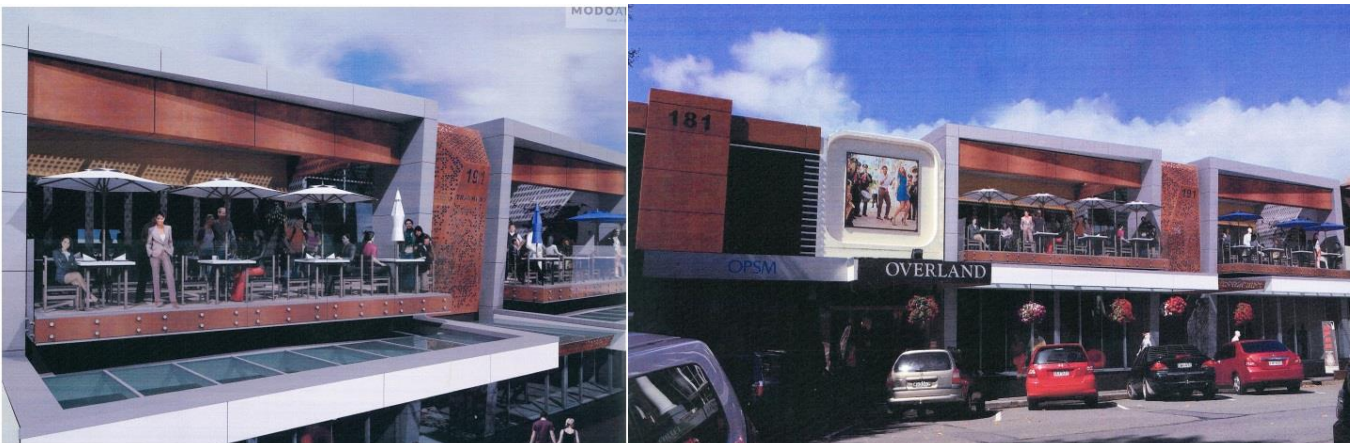
Times are tough and the face of retail is changing with internet shopping, increased operating costs, the fragmentation of city centres and interruption technology altering the way we live. Consumer choice is larger and access to products easier than it has ever been. Small, local retailers are being hit hard and we need to adapt or our shopping centres or they will become boring and obsolete.

This new building will bring something unique to the CBD of Nelson; it will get people excited about visiting Trafalgar Street for shopping and dining. Who is Nelson?

'THIS IS NELSON', sunshine capital of NZ - We are creative, innovative, inspiring.'

We want to lead the way forward.

Brendon Monk is a talented local architect, who has been involved in many successful commercial projects; he has designed an attractive and engaging building that will be hugely beneficial to the people of Nelson. It is NOT the cheapest option and it is NOT the easiest option BUT IT IS THE BEST OPTION."





Above: Popular 1st floor dining on the Auckland waterfront. Conventional retail CBD's around the world are changing and becoming recreational gathering places, we need to create spaces to accommodate this trend and bring people and vitality into our city.

There is a cultural trend that is happening throughout the world, people are coming into the city not just to shop but to meet & eat & be entertained. City centres are becoming a recreational place, a place to rest from busy lives and catch up with friends and family. Designing a café/restaurant space above the street level will support retail business and enhance the shopping experience. Creating upstairs activity brings another layer of life to the street, bringing vitality into the heart of our city.



Al Fresco rooftop dining in Melbourne

The building will have the first escalator in Nelson giving access and utilization of the 2nd floor; an elevator will provide disability and pushchair access. The entrance from Trafalgar Street will be full sheet glass; this will enhance the downstairs retailers, giving depth of vision into shop spaces instead of creating dead space on the street. The 1.5 m extension balcony over the veranda will create another connection with the street and give diners views up and down Trafalgar Street.

Using the latest technology the outdoor café dining space will have a BIPV, (building integrated photovoltaic solar system) using dual glass panels. This sustainable feature will create electricity to run the escalator and elevator, provide shelter and shade, and be an attractive feature in the street frontage.



BIPV solar panels creating power for the building and a dappled shade effect for a perfect mix of sun, shade and shelter

The new building will attract successful, innovative retailers, big and small, that have exciting, creative ideas. It will give opportunity to commit and invest in Nelson. The hospitality area upstairs can be open from daytime to evenings giving a diversity of use and life in the street.

We have directed our architect to recycle any materials of the original building that can be salvaged and used in the design of the new building, to create a visual connection to the history of the site.

The Christchurch earthquake has given us an opportunity to design a cohesive town plan. Developers and the Nelson City Council must work together and lead the way in creating a beautiful, functioning city that will provide for the future needs of the people of Nelson.

In 1922, Ben Trathen Senior used a talented local architect to design a modern shop that would be successful for retail business in the heart of Nelson, he wanted a building that was alive with people, a place to 'Meet & Eat'. This was aspiring in its time and hugely beneficial to the CBD.

Moving forward, this design concept lends itself to adding further levels, for offices or inner city apartments, which will mean the building can evolve to meet the needs of our community for many years to come.

There is symmetry to what we want to do today. Ben Trathen senior would approve of the concept of the new development for this site. We wish to further enhance his progressive vision for Nelson – and continue to support and be instrumental in, raising the profile of Trafalgar Street and the CBD, to benefit current and future Nelson generations.