

# **Attachment E**

**The Bookshop – 207 Oxford Street,  
Darlinghurst – Heritage Assessment**



# **The Bookshop** **207 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst**

Heritage assessment



Prepared for City of Sydney

**August 2025**

TKD Architects acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands in which we practise, and we pay our respects to Elders and express our gratitude for sharing of knowledge and culture.

We recognise that sovereignty has never been ceded and acknowledge the continuing unbroken connection to the land, water, and sky.

**Cover**

207 Oxford Street, TKD Architects' 2025.

**Authorship**

Dr Roy Lumby, Senior Heritage Specialist, TKD Architects and reviewed by Principal George Phillips of TKD Architects.

**Image credits**

All images are by TKD Architects except where noted.

**Acknowledgements**

Jill Farish, City of Sydney Archives; Matt Devine, Senior Specialist Planner, City of Sydney; Sandra Saravolac, City of Sydney

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**TKD Architects Project No. 220110**

**Document issue**

| Issue | Date             | Purpose                   | Written | Reviewed |
|-------|------------------|---------------------------|---------|----------|
| P1    | 4 June 2025      | Draft issue               | RL      | GP       |
| P2    | 18 August 2025   | Final draft issue         | RL      | GP       |
| P3    | 1 September 2025 | Revised final draft issue | RL      | GP       |
|       |                  |                           |         |          |

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and purpose of report

This report has been prepared on behalf of the City of Sydney to assess the potential heritage significance of the Bookshop at 207 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst. The property was identified as a potential heritage item in the Oxford Street LGBTIQ+ Heritage Study (TKD Architects, 2024). The building is located in the Oxford Street Heritage Conservation Area.

The assessment of heritage significance has been undertaken using the guidelines and criteria contained in *Assessing heritage significance – Guidelines for assessing places and objects against the Heritage Council of NSW criteria* (Environment and Heritage Group, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2023).

## 1.2 Study area

The site is located on the southern side of Oxford Street to the east of Taylor Square and Flinders Street. It is bounded on its southern side by a narrow private service lane accessed from Flinders Street. The site is identified as Lot 1 Deposited Plan 174698.



1 Location of 207 Oxford Street.  
Source: SIX Maps with TKD overlay.



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# 1 Introduction

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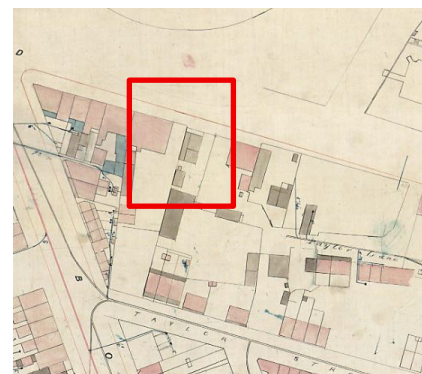
1 Location of 207 Oxford Street.  
Source: SIX Maps with TKD overlay.

## 2 Historical overview

207 Oxford Street occupies part of 70 acres of land granted to commissary John Palmer in April 1794. Palmer was forced to sell his estate to meet his debts and the Surry Hills Estate was sold in October 1814. The allotment of land that was to include the site of 207 Oxford Street was sold to Corporal James Chisholm. Although he sold most of his purchase almost immediately, Chisholm retained a triangular section bounded by the South Head Road, Botany Road (later renamed Flinders Street) and the edge of the Sydney Common.

A sizeable amount of land bounded in part by New South Head Road (now Oxford Street) is understood to have been acquired by coachbuilder Thomas Moore in December 1860.<sup>1</sup> Moore, who built, sold and leased cabs, arrived in NSW during 1851. He died at the age of 82 in July 1912. The site of 207 Oxford Street remained undeveloped during the 1850s.<sup>2</sup> Although there is an entry for 207 New South Head Road in the 1858 edition of Sands Directory, it does not appear in later editions until the 1870s., the earliest reference being umbrella maker S Robinson in the 1873 edition. Thomas Moore occupied parts of his land from about 1862 onwards.

Moore applied to bring the property onto Torrens Title, which took place during February 1905.<sup>3</sup> On 21 June 1906 Moore transferred the title to a portion of the land along Oxford Street to York Buildings Limited.



- 2 Development along New South Head Road around the subject site circa 1865. No.207 does not appear in the 1855 edition of Sands directory. Source: City of Sydney Archives Trigonometrical Survey, 1855-1865: Block K2-1.

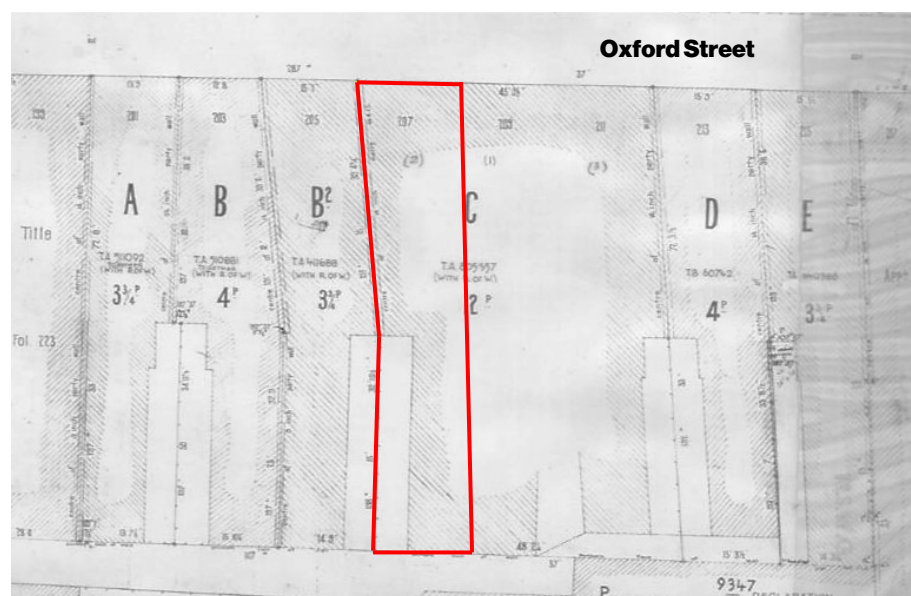


- 3 Portion of an 1888 survey indicating land owned by Thomas Moore along 199 to 211 Oxford Street and development across it. Source: City of Sydney Archives Rygate & West Sheet 31, 1888.

<sup>1</sup> HLRV NSW Land Titles Office Search for Primary Application 13469  
<sup>2</sup> There is no indication of development on Woolcott & Clark's 1854 Map of the City of Sydney held at the City of Sydney Archives.  
<sup>3</sup> HLRV NSW Land Titles Office Search for Primary Application 13469

There is evidence suggesting that prominent architect John Burcham Clamp designed the building of which 207 Oxford Street is a part. It was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* in August 1907 that Clamp accepted the tender of builder G P Jones “for the erection of seven shops and residences, Oxford-street, for the York Buildings, Ltd.”<sup>4</sup> This fits timing for the acquisition of the site by York Buildings Limited and the commissioning and production of documentation for development across the site. The Council Building Application Register for 1907 notes the lodgement of an application in April that year by York Buildings Limited for seven shops and residences adjacent to 211 Oxford Street. A subsequent notation states that four buildings only were completed and the other three would proceed in due course.<sup>5</sup> Other evidence for Clamp’s involvement includes entries on the Oxford Street street cards for 1907 and 1911, which link Clamp’s name to works to buildings associated with York Buildings Limited.<sup>6</sup>

Council assessment records for Flinders Ward from 1907 confirm that the existing buildings had not yet been constructed. They were certainly in place by the time the 1911 assessment records were produced. York Buildings Limited subdivided the property during 1917<sup>7</sup> and 207 Oxford Street became part of Lot C on Deposited Plan 9258, which comprised 207 to 211 Oxford Street.



4 The subdivision described on Deposited Plan 9258, dated 1917. The approximate footprint of 207 Oxford Street is indicated. Source: HLRV NSW Deposited Plan 9258.

York Buildings Limited transferred the title of Lot C to Mrs Ida Kelsey, who resided in London, in April 1922.<sup>8</sup> Not long after, Mrs Kelsey transferred the property title to Dr Hamilton Speirs Kirkland in November 1922. From August 1923 Dr Kirkland sold the three buildings in Lot C to separate buyers. On 29 October 1923 the title to 207 Oxford Street was transferred to George Laridis, described on title documents as a confectioner.<sup>9</sup> Laridis changed his surname to Laird at the beginning of September 1924.<sup>10</sup>

In 1929 a company called Tjannes & Co applied for alterations to the shop at 207 Oxford Street, in conjunction with its use as the “London Fish Saloon.” Alterations were carried out under the supervision of Henry S Standen, Architect.<sup>11</sup> Modifications included relocation of the Internal

4 “Building and Construction”, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 August 1907, p.10.

5 City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00476913.

6 These include alterations to 197 Oxford Street (Building Application 413/11 and a site on Oxford Street close to Flinders Street (no number given) lodged in April 1907. This application may include 207 Oxford Street.

7 HLRV NSW DP 9258. The drawing describing the subdivision is dated 1917.

8 HLRV NSW Volume 2455 Folio 172.

9 HLRV NSW Certificate of Title Volume 3317 Folio 192.

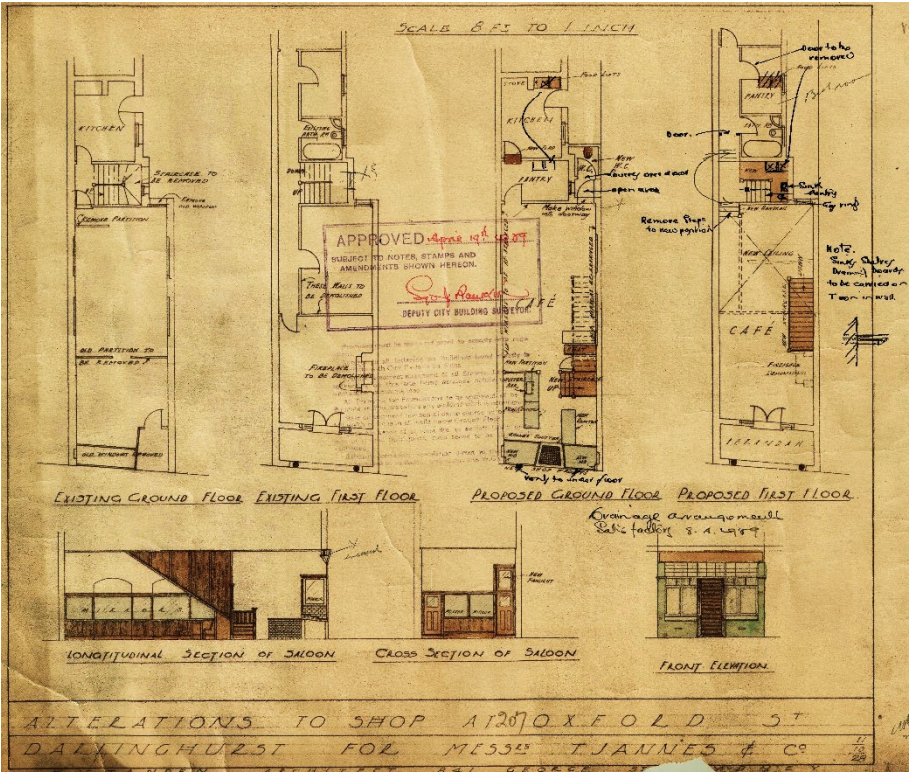
10 Government Gazette of New South Wales, 5 September 1924 (Issue 117), p.4305.

11 City of Sydney Archives. A-00577515



stairs and conversion of the retail and residential components of the building on both floors to a café.

George Laridis sold 207 Oxford Street to storekeeper Maurice Harry Rosen, the transfer of title taking place in December 1949. Rosen died in May 1972 and the property passed to Bernard Wolf Rosen the following year.<sup>12</sup>



5 Alterations to 207 Oxford Street, 1929.  
Source: City of Sydney Archives Building  
Application 335/29.



6 Portion of a photograph taken in October 1957 showing the first floor section of 203-209 Oxford Street. No 207 is highlighted.  
Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID  
A-01168694.

12 HLRV NSW Volume 3530 Folio 10.

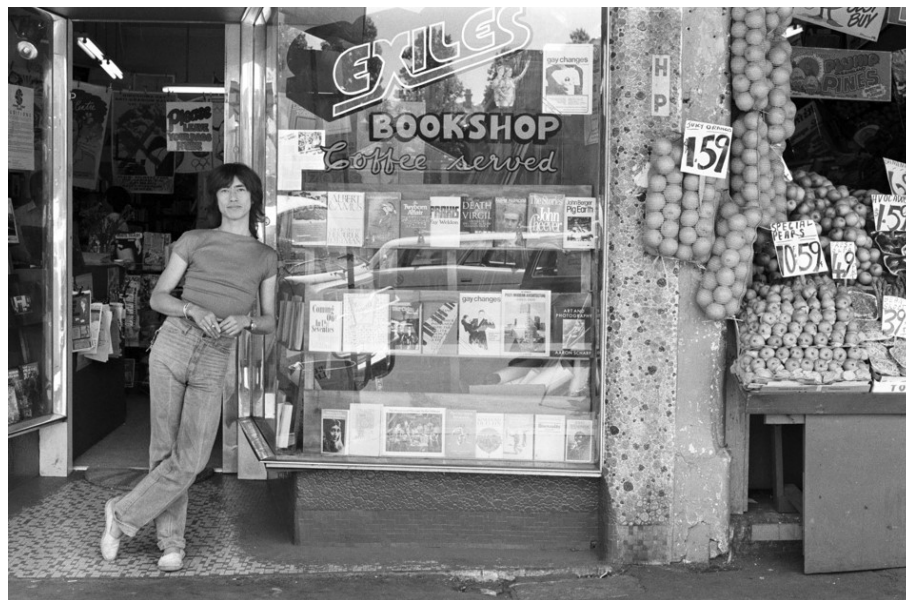


According to one source,

During the 1960s and 1970s, 207 Oxford Street was home to (Mrs) Whitty's wine bar. It is claimed to have been the "real heart" of the musical scene in the local area, featuring bands such as the Starving Wild Dogs and the Original Batterseas Heroes.<sup>13</sup>

However, the building may have served other purposes as well. Applications were lodged to use (at least part) of the building as a gift shop and pawn broker in 1964, installation of a new shopfront (1964) use the building as a bookshop and install a new stair (1976), using the two levels of the building as refreshment rooms and the ground floor for retailing purposes (1983).<sup>14</sup>

Exiles Bookshop opened at 207 Oxford Street in February 1979. Established by actor Susumu Hirayanagi and bookseller Nicholas Pounder, Exiles was notable for hosting poetry readings and was something of a centre for the local poetry scene in the early 1980s. It also sold LGBTIQ+ publications. A gallery was located on the first floor, where exhibitions as diverse as photography and political cartoons were staged. Exiles Bookshop featured in the 1981 John Duigan film, *Winter of our Dreams* as the bookshop owned by Brian Brown's character, Rob. The bookshop closed in late 1982.<sup>15</sup>



- 9 Susumu Hirayanagi outside Exiles Bookshop, 1980. The shopfront was approved by Council in 1964 and subsequently installed. Small ceramic tiles lined the porch floor and pier.  
Source: State Library of NSW PXE 997, Michael Shirley photograph.



- 7 Portion of a photograph taken on 27 February 1960 showing the façade of 203-209 Oxford Street.

Source: City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-01170497. Vic Solomons Collection.



- 8 Advertisement for an exhibition of political cartoons in the Exiles gallery, 1982.  
Source: *Tribune*, 17 March 1982.

13 Hugh Liney and Frank Cotterell, *Rock'n'Roll Walk of Fame and Shame* at [file:///C:/Users/rumby/Downloads/Rock-n-RollWalkOfFame-n-Shame%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/rumby/Downloads/Rock-n-RollWalkOfFame-n-Shame%20(2).pdf), accessed 8 December 2022. A development application for the use of the premises for the sale of liquor was lodged with Council in August 1969 (DA421/69) by S Tanovich and B Helich.

14 City of Sydney Archives, DA540/64, DA0210/76, BA 1016/76, DA0296/83, DA0473/83.

15 "Exiles Bookshop" at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exiles\\_Bookshop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exiles_Bookshop), accessed 29 April 2025; N.S.W. Teachers' Federation and New South Wales Public School Teachers' Federation. "NSW GAY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS GROUP", *Education: journal of the N.S.W. Public School Teachers Federation Sydney*: The Federation, 1979. Web. 25 June 2025 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-724733521>; information provided by Erin Cashman.

The next bookshop to occupy the building proved to be rather more enduring. The Bookshop opened at 207 Oxford Street on 11 February 1985, relocating from premises in Crown Street where it first opened in 1982.<sup>16</sup> It was established by Les McDonald and his then-partner Wayne Harrison. A development application for the use of 207 Oxford Street as a bookshop was lodged on 7 January 1985 by a company called Stilono Pty Ltd.<sup>17</sup> A branch at Newtown opened in March 1986 and closed in 1998.

The genesis of The Bookshop was Les McDonald and Wayne Harrison's trip to the United States of America during the 1970s, where they noticed LGBTIQ+ books were advertised in the gay press, something that was not happening in Sydney. On their return McDonald started to order American LGBTIQ+ books and selling them through mail order, promoting the business through advertising and forming gay male and lesbian book clubs. In time the business became large enough to justify opening a bookshop in Crown Street. According to Les McDonald, "It was the time before computers and apps and all that sort of thing ... The bars were all really busy, the streets were teeming with people, and The Bookshop became a sort of a central meeting place in the heart of it."<sup>18</sup>

The bookshop was associated with two of McDonald and Harrison's other businesses, a mail order business known as Bull Dog Books providing people living beyond the inner-city with access to gay and lesbian related books and Southpaw Press, which published three additions of a gay guide, initially as *Sydney and Beyond* and then as *Australia and Beyond*.<sup>19</sup>



10 Wayne Harrison (left) and Les McDonald (right) in The Bookshop

Source:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-07/keeping-queer-book-stores-alive/104422874>. Image supplied by Les McDonald.

During the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, The Bookshop became an important community resource, providing information, support and a safe space. According to Les McDonald, "When HIV/Aids happened, it became a lot more crucial to have a physical place that had information about that ... Titles about HIV/Aids were not being published in Australia, and we had to go to the US to find

16 This is understood to be The Link Bookshop, which was located at 280 Crown Street; "1985" at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b4d8eda620b85efd8bc7a05/t/5e09d1a481e14d1a2537f5ca/1577701814161/Decades+of+Pride+-+1985.pdf> – pridehistory.org.au.

17 City of Sydney Archives DA 0009/85.

18 Madeleine Gray, "The Bookshop: The story of Australia's oldest LGBTIQ+ bookstore", BBC News, Sydney, 11 June 2019 at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-48494572> accessed 2 April 2025.

19 Information provided by Erin Cashman.

them."<sup>20</sup> The Bookshop worked with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras during the 1980s, selling parade tickets and promoting fundraising events and rallies in association with the Aids Council of New South Wales. Dance party tickets could also be purchased from the shop. In the late 1980s the first floor was used for the first temporary Mardi Gras museum.<sup>21</sup>

According to Graeme Aitken, a buyer and manager of The Bookshop, it has played an important role as a community support system throughout the LGBTIQ+ rights movements of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.<sup>22</sup> It has been noted as Australia's largest retailer of LGBTIQ+ books and other literature.

207 Oxford Street was sold in August 2014 but The Bookshop remained there.<sup>23</sup> After more than 40 years involvement with selling books and publications, Les McDonald retired in 2024 and the business was taken over by Charles Gregory.<sup>24</sup> The Bookshop is now considered to be one of the last LGBTIQ+ bookstores in the world.

20 Gray.

21 Information provided by Erin Cashman.

22 Mike Hitch, "The Bookshop Darlinghurst needs our support," *Star Observer*, 13 March 2020 at <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/the-bookshop-darlinghurst-needs-our-support/193508>

23 <https://www.realcommercial.com.au/sold/property-207-oxford-street-207-oxford-street-darlinghurst-nsw-2010-501077495>

24 Chloe Sargeant "Beloved Sydney LGBT Bookstore 'Bookshop Darlinghurst' Has A New Owner", *Star Observer* 21 June 2024 at <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/sydney-lgbt-bookstore-bookshop-darlinghurst-new-owner/231709>



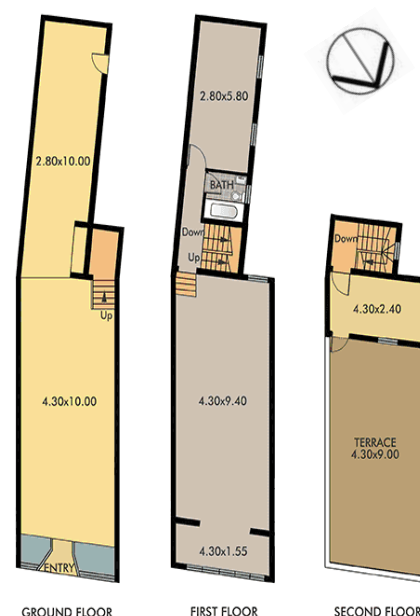
### 3 Physical analysis

207 Oxford Street is part of a group of four two storey buildings on the southern side of Oxford Street. The upper section of the façade is a good example of the Federation Free Classical style, which was commonly used for commercial architecture. Characteristics of the style evident in the façade include symmetry (distorted by changes in level along the street), classical details that are simplified or distorted such as the columns associated with balconies, parapet mouldings and exaggerated brackets below the parapet, and the exaggerated semi-circular “pediment in the centre of the building containing a large cartouche. The combination of face brick walls and sandstone decorative elements and details is also characteristic of the Federation period. Balconies have been enclosed and sections of the first floor façade have been painted. A light well extends along the western side of the rear of the building.

As with many shops, the ground and first floor levels are separated by a suspended awning, the linings of which are recent. The shopfront installed circa 1964, which contains a central entry porch flanked on each side by display windows, remains in place. However, vertical surfaces have been painted and the porch floor has been finished with cement.

There is little remaining evidence of original internal planning. The ground floor is open, the narrow rear (southern) section rising one step above the front of the shop. Evidence of early finishes and planning is limited to the pressed metal ceiling over the front section. The relieving arches in the party wall remain exposed. Pressed metal ground floor ceiling and relieving arches in party walls. Wall surfaces are lined with cement render/plaster and are painted. The floor consists of wide timber boards, which may be early if not original. A stair at the south-western corner of the main shop gives access to the first floor. It also has a timber floor and painted plaster walls. Windows allow natural light into the rear of the building. A small bathroom is adjacent to the stair.

The roof of the building contains an open trafficable terrace with a small skillion roofed structure, presumably the original laundry, at its southern end.



11 Diagrammatic plans of 207 Oxford Street (not to scale).

Source:

<https://www.realcommercial.com.au/sold/property-207-oxford-street-207-oxford-street-darlinghurst-nsw-2010-501077495>



12 203-209 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst.  
Views to the building are obscured by trees.



13 Façade of 207 Oxford Street | 2014 (left) and 2025 (right).  
Source of 2014 image: <https://www.realcommercial.com.au/sold/property-207-oxford-street-207-oxford-street-darlinghurst-nsw-2010-501077495>





- 15 203-209 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst.  
Views to the building are obscured by trees.



- 14 Shopfront and awning, 207 Oxford Street.  
The overall form and fabric of the 1964 shopfront is intact, although floor and wall tiles are no longer in evidence (refer to Figure 8).





- 16 Shop interior in 2014, looking north towards Oxford Street (left) more recent photograph of the shop looking to the south (right).

Sources: <https://www.realcommercial.com.au/sold/property-207-oxford-street-207-oxford-street-darlinghurst-nsw-2010-501077495>; <https://www.thebookshop.com.au/blog-message-from-charles/>



- 17 First floor interior (left); roof terrace (right). Both images date to 2014.

Source: <https://www.realcommercial.com.au/sold/property-207-oxford-street-207-oxford-street-darlinghurst-nsw-2010-501077495>



# 4 Comparative analysis

## 4.1 John Burcham Clamp

John Burcham Clamp (1869-1931) was the son of John Clamp, a London-born hairdresser, and his wife Sophia, née Hunt, from Dublin. Known as Burcham, he was educated at Christ Church St Laurence School and won the Mort scholarship in 1882. The following year he was articled to H. C. Kent, a leading Sydney architect, and attended evening classes at the University of Sydney and the Sydney Technical College. In 1886 he received honourable mention in the student design competition of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, and in 1889 was awarded its gold medal; that May he was the first student admitted to its membership.

Clamp worked for Kent until he joined T. M. Smith in partnership in 1899. In 1901 he set up on his own and became known for efficient planning, competent design and secure construction. By 1910 he had been responsible for St James's Hall, Phillip Street; Victoria Hall, Manly; Lister Private Hospital and nurses' home, Darlinghurst; the enlargement of Winchcombe, Carson Ltd's Pymont wool store, and Wyoming and Castlereagh Chambers in Central Sydney. Clamp's meeting with Walter Burley Griffin in the United States of America led to a brief partnership with him in Sydney in 1914. He was subsequently joined by architect Crawford. H. Mackellar and they designed several factories and other buildings between 1918 and 1924.

An active Anglican and prominent Freemason, Clamp was building surveyor for the diocese of Sydney and exercised considerable influence in ecclesiastical architecture: among other projects he designed the Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) chapel, North Sydney, St Matthew's Church, Manly (with Wright and Apperly) and converted a two-storey house at Rushcutters Bay into St Luke's Hospital. He was also a founder and councillor of Cranbrook School, altering the house after its use as the residence of the State governor in 1901-15, designing new buildings and landscaping its grounds. Clamp and (C. H.) Finch were the architects between 1927 and 1930 of Tattersall's Club, Castlereagh Street, the Buckland Memorial Church of England Boys' Home, Carlingford, Canberra Grammar School and the Ainslie Hotel in Canberra. Early in 1930 Clamp's son John replaced Finch.

An active and outspoken member of the local Institute of Architects, Clamp urged the federation of the separate State bodies. He had a forthright but tactful manner, self-reliance and boundless energy. He was a member of the Town Planning Association of New South Wales, the Martin Place extension committee and of Tattersall's, the Millions and the National clubs. Fortunate to practise during two boom periods in 1901-14 and 1920-28, Clamp provided a bridge between the nineteenth-century romantic and twentieth-century functionalist styles, presenting an originality of design which combined character with sound commercial possibilities.<sup>25</sup>

At the time that 203-209 Oxford Street was built, Clamp was a sole practitioner producing major buildings such as Wyoming at 175-183 Hunter Street, Sydney, which was completed in 1911. However, buildings such as 203-209 Oxford Street, containing ground floor shops and first floor residences, were a mainstay of his practice. Other shops and residences from this period included:



18 John Burcham Clamp

Source:

<https://cranbrookcentenary.com.au/stories/163?tid=1>



19 Wyoming, 175-183 Hunter Street, Sydney.

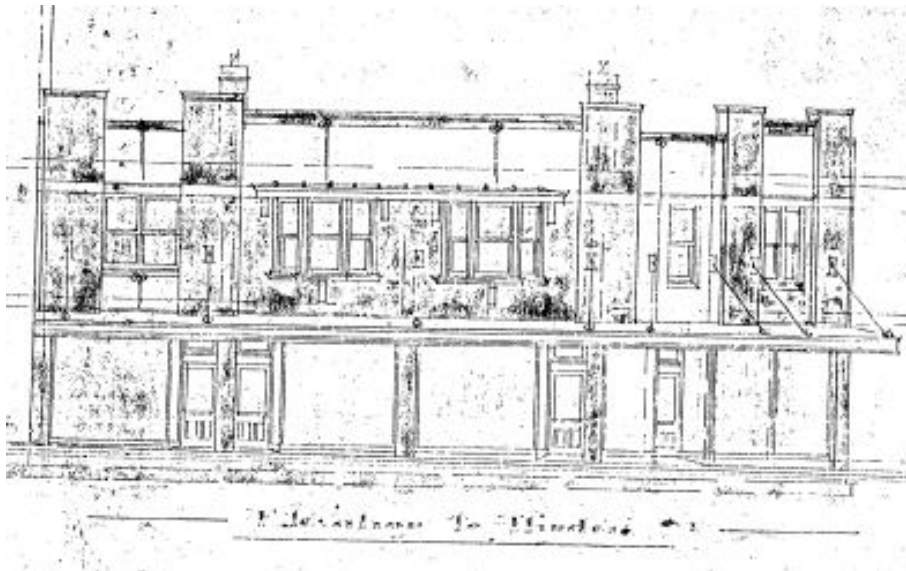
Source: City of Sydney Archives

25 Peter Reynolds, 'Clamp, John Burcham (1869-1931)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clamp-john-burcham-5656/text9547>, published first in hardcopy 1981, accessed online 25 March 2025.

Shops attributed to Burcham Clamp during the 1900s and 1910s include:

- Alterations to a shop in King Street, Sydney (1907).
- Four shops and residences, The Corso, Manly (1908-1909).
- Shop and residence, Coogee (1908).
- Five shops at Mosman (1910).
- Four shops in Manly (1910).
- Shops and residences, 22-26 Flinders Street, corner Taylor Street (1913).
- Three shops at Inverell (1910-1911).
- Alfred Saunder's jewellery shop, Railway Square, Sydney (1913).
- Shop premises at Randwick (1914).

There is little descriptive material available for these projects.



20 Flinders Street facade of John Burcham Clamp's 22-26 Flinders Street, drawn in 1913. It is more restrained than his design for 203-209 Oxford Street.  
Source: City of Sydney Archives Building Application 949/13.

## 4.2 LGBTIQA+ bookshops in Sydney

Gay historian Gary Wotherspoon noted that bookshops selling gay books and magazines opened on Oxford Street during the 1970s, but none are named.<sup>26</sup> However, an advertisement appearing in the gay newspaper *Campaign* for August 1976 claimed that Sydney's first gay bookshop was located at the rear of the Venus Shop at 603 George Street, Sydney. The following December an advertisement appeared for David's Books at 128 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst.<sup>27</sup> The Campaign Bookshop at 382 Pitt Street Sydney was promoted the following year.<sup>28</sup> Numbers at 95 Oxford Street was listed as a bookshop in guides but also sold toys, videos and other paraphernalia.

The Feminist Bookshop, established in 1974, was a place to purchase lesbian-related publications. It was founded by June James and Julia Sugden in response to public interest in

26 Garry Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney: a history* (Newsouth Publishing, 2016), p.200.

27 *Campaign* Issue 12, 1976, p.39; *Campaign*, Issue 15, December 1976, p.26. A development application for the use of the premises as a bookshop was lodged with Council in March 1976, one of several lodged for various uses that year (Development Application 125/76).

28 *Campaign* Issue 19, April 1977.

women's literature. Initially located in Eastwood, a north-western suburb of Sydney, it was the first shop in Australia to sell only women's and feminist texts. It also supported events such as the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras by actions such as selling tickets to Mardi Gras oriented events. The shop subsequently relocated to Balmain and then Lilyfield.<sup>29</sup> It still trades online.

Another book store in Sydney where LGBTIQ+ publications were available was Interventions Bookshop, which from around 1975 was located at 2-4 Dixon Street, Haymarket. One instance of this is found in a fortnightly column published in *Tribune*, which in May 1975 reviewed Jill Johnson's *Lesbian Nation*.<sup>30</sup> The bookshop moved to King Street, Newtown in December 1985 but closed down in 1987.

In the context of high quality bookshops along Oxford Street, New Edition Bookshop at Paddington opened in 1981 and was followed by Ariel in 1985 and Berkelouw somewhat later in 1994. These too are in Paddington but are not oriented towards the LGBTIQ+ community,

The Bookshop, established in 1982, is still trading where earlier bookshops have closed, and is unique as a long-established community-oriented bookshop in Sydney.

### 4.3 LGBTIQ+ bookshops in other state capitals

A very limited number of exclusively LGBTIQ+ bookshops are located in other state capitals.

The International Bookshop in Melbourne was for several decades an important source of LGBTIQ+ literature. Part of the Victorian branch of the Communist Party, it was established in 1933. The shop's stock expanded with the growth of the women's and gay movements during the 1970s. It became a significant seller of LGBTIQ+ publications after the acquisition of the stock of Adelaide's Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop in 1977. The Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop was claimed to be the first in Australia specialising in gay and feminist literature.<sup>31</sup>

The Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop was opened by gay and feminist activists, led by Jon Ruwoldt, as an organising centre in June 1974, also selling political books by mail-order. It was opened as a reaction to the murder of George Duncan, a law lecturer at the University of Adelaide who drowned in 1972 after being thrown into the River Torrens by a group of men believed to be police officers. Dr Duncan's Revolution Bookshop published the periodicals *Feminist and gay news* and *Monthly book news*. It closed in May 1977 and its stock was transferred to the International Bookshop in Melbourne, which became a major retailer of gay and feminist literature.<sup>32</sup> The International Bookshop closed in May 1993. The New International Bookshop Cooperative was founded in 1994 to continue the legacy of the International Bookshop.

Founded in 1991, Hares & Hyenas opened in Commercial Road, South Yarra, before having other outlets in Fitzroy and Collingwood. In 1999 Hares & Hyenas consolidated its business base back in Commercial Road, before moving to a larger premises in Fitzroy in 2006. Hares & Hyenas

29 "About Us" at <https://www.feministbookshop.com/about-us/>, accessed 14 August 2025; <https://www.slnsw.gov.au/34-feminist-bookshop>, accessed 14 August 2025; *The Australian Jewish News*, 31 March 2000, p.21.

30 "What's New in Books," *Tribune*, 6 May 1975, p.10.

31 Dave Davies, "50 Years of the International Bookshop: a paradise of print for all good lefties", *Tribune*, 22 June 1983, p.26.

32 <http://www.elisarolle.com/queerplaces/fghij/George%20Duncan.html>, accessed 14 August 2025.



relocated to its current location in St Kilda at the end of 2021. Since its opening, Hares & Hyenas has presented over 5,000 literary and performance events.

Establishing a cafe in 2007, Hares & Hyenas operated as a fully licensed performance venue known as Harehole since 2012. It hosted shows ranging from large seasons at the annual Midsumma, Comedy and Melbourne Fringe festivals to regular spoken word nights and events of all types presented by leading producers and artists. In 2021, Harehole Melbourne stayed in the Fitzroy location operating a cafe, venue, retail outlet (including books) and community centre before closing in February 2023.

Hares & Hyenas is now located in the Victorian Pride Centre at 79 – 81 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda.<sup>33</sup>

Shelf Lovers is an LGBTIQ+ and romance bookshop founded in 2021. The shop, located at 1 Dickson Street, Woolloowin, a suburb of Brisbane, opened in July 2023. The store closed in April 2025 but may reopen as an online store.<sup>34</sup>

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

There is relatively little evidence to determine how representative the block of shops and residences at 203-209 Oxford Street is in the commercial work of John Burcham Clamp. However, physical evidence shows that the façade of the building demonstrated a relatively high standard of architectural quality when compared to contemporary buildings such as 22-26 Flinders Street. The planning of 203-209 Oxford Street is likely to have been conventional.

The Bookshop occupies an important place in the history of LGBTIQ+ bookshops both in Sydney and Australia. Although not the first bookshop selling publications to the LGBTIQ+ community, it was the first physical bookshop devoted to serving the LGBTIQ+ community and has remained in business from its foundation in 1982 and from these premises from 1985.

33 <https://hares-hyenas.com.au/pages/1489-AboutUs> accessed 27 March 2025.

34 <https://shelflovers.com.au/>; <https://clayfieldnews.com.au/woolloowin-queer-bookshop-shelf-lovers-closes-doors/>; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-07/keeping-queer-book-stores-alive/104422874>

## 5 Assessment of significance

The building at 207 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, is assessed below in accordance with the guidelines contained in *Assessing heritage significance: Guidelines for assessing places and objects against the Heritage Council of NSW criteria* (NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2023).

### Historical significance

**Criterion A**      An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

207 Oxford Street has significance as the site of a long-running bookshop devoted to the sales of gay and lesbian books, journals and publications. Although not the first to do so, the bookshop has proved remarkably enduring and has been an important hub of community interaction for significant interaction relating to events such as the gay and lesbian Mardi Gras and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

207 Oxford Street fulfils this criterion at a Local level.

### Historical associations

**Criterion B**      An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance to NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

207 Oxford Street is a part of a group of four buildings that appears to have been designed by the prominent architect John Burcham Clamp, who designed several significant Federation era commercial buildings, along with private residences and buildings containing shops and residences. Although evidence uncovered during the preparation of this report strongly suggests Clamp as the building's architect, further research is required to confirm this provenance.

207 Oxford Street has strong associations with Les McDonald, who with his then partner Wayne Harrison co-founded The Bookshop in the early 1980s and then owned and operated the business until retiring in 2024. Les McDonald ran The Bookshop for about 40 years, supporting and informing the LGBTIQ+ community, and is an important figure in the community in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

203-209 Oxford Street, including 207 Oxford Street may fulfil the criterion for listing at a Local level, but this is contingent in establishing Burcham Clamp as the building's architect.

### Aesthetic significance

**Criterion C**      An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).

The façade of 203-207 Oxford Street, notwithstanding unsympathetic modifications and accretions, is a fine and distinctively detailed example of the Federation Free Classical style that makes an important contribution to the streetscape of Oxford Street between Flinders and South Dowling Street.

The group of buildings at 203-209 Oxford Street fulfils the criterion for listing at a Local level.

### Social significance

**Criterion D** An item has strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Documentary evidence and quotes from interviews provide evidence that 207 Oxford Street has strong and special associations with members of Sydney's LGBTIQ+ community resulting from its forty plus year occupation by Th Bookshop. Over the years The Bookshop has been a strong community hub and a valuable source of published material not otherwise generally available to the public.

207 Oxford Street is considered to fulfil this criterion at a Local level.

### Research potential

**Criterion E** An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

207 Oxford Street is unlikely to fulfil this criterion. The information that it can yield can also be obtained from other sites in the local government area. Modifications undertaken to the building's interior have compromised its integrity.

### Rarity

**Criterion F** An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

203-209 Oxford Street, as an example of a group of Federation era shop and residential buildings, is not rare.

203-209 Oxford Street does not fulfil this criterion at a Local or State level.

### Representativeness

**Criterion G** An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's (or local area's) cultural or natural places, or cultural or natural environment.

203-209 Oxford Street is representative of the mixed retail and residential buildings constructed along major thoroughfares in the Sydney local government area such as Oxford Street and King Street, Newtown, during the Federation era. The façade of 203-209 Oxford Street is representative of Federation Free Classical style architecture.

207 Oxford Street fulfils this criterion at a Local level.



## 6 Conclusions

207 Oxford Street fulfils several of the criteria for assessing heritage significance:

- It is historically significant as a long-established bookshop devoted to the needs and requirements of Sydney's LGBTIQ+ community. It is the only bookshop devoted exclusively to the community and the longest established in Australia.
- The building is understood to be associated with prominent architect John Burcham Clamp and The Bookshop is associated with Les McDonald, who with his then partner Wayne Harrison founded the shop and then owned and managed it until 2024.
- The façade of 207 Oxford Street, along with the adjoining buildings at 203-205 and 209 Oxford Street, is a good and representative example of Federation Free Classical style architecture that is a contributory element in the Oxford Street Heritage Conservation Area.
- 207 Oxford Street demonstrates social significance.

It is recommended that consideration be given to including 207 Oxford Street in Schedule 5 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.