

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

Compiled by: Dr JJ Bruwer, 2002-07-29

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Cellphone: 082 325 5823**NAME OF PLACE: ROEHAMPTON COURT**

Main photo: view of main (Bree Street) façade.

Right, top: view of section of main façade, showing the decorative panels to the Second Floor balconies. The *Dunvegan Chambers*, completed two years before the *Roehampton Court*, and designed by J.C. Cook & Cowen, the architects of the latter building, has quite similar decorative panels.Right centre: seen in this photo taken from a position opposite the *Edward House* in Loveday Street, is the 1939 addition.Right, bottom: from left to right in Bree Street – *Dorchester Mansions*, *Roehampton Court*, and *Lawson Mansions*.

Previous/alternative name/s :

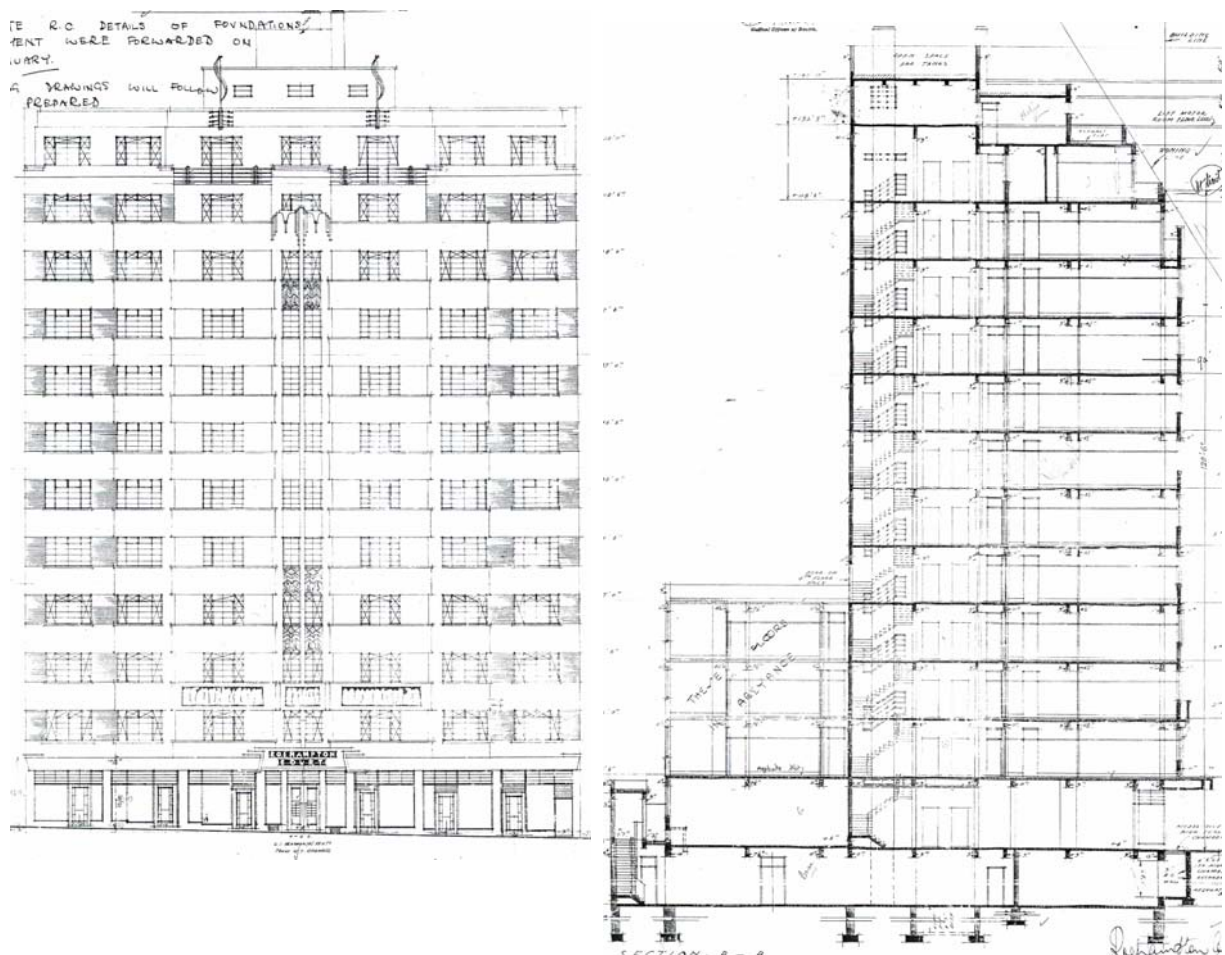
LOCATION: Street : Bree
 Street number : 232
 : [230, 232 Bree]
 Stand Number : 1241, 1242
 Previous Stand Number: 1010, 1011
 Block number : AQ
 GIS reference :

ZONING: Current use/s :
 Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : 140' 10"
 Levels above street level : twelve plus roof structures (two levels) – original building
 Levels above street level : nine (1939 additions)
 Levels below street level : one
 On-site parking : none

Below: extracts from original submission drawings prepared by the architectural practice of J.C. Cook & Cowen in 1934. Revised Floor Plans that were subsequently prepared are dated 9 May 1935. Left: copy of front (Bree Street) elevation. Right: section.



Completed at the beginning of 1936, this multi-storey Art Deco building was designed by the well-known architectural firm of J.C. Cook & Cowen. Some of its notable features (shared by many other apartment buildings from the period of its construction) are as follows: the aspect of mass articulation in the central section of the main façade (e.g. projecting thin vertical bands, projecting balconies with rounded corners, corner windows, and decorative panels to the Second Floor balconies); the replication in layout of most of the residential floors of the building (viz. First to Tenth Floor). Of interest also, is the stepped-back treatment in the form of the building from the Tenth Floor up.

The building was designed with shops at Ground Floor and apartments on the remaining floors. Access to the latter was via a single lift and stair at the rear of the building. The residential floors (except for the Eleventh Floor) each comprised of three bachelor flats (each with a kitchen and bathroom and toilet) and two flats, each with a kitchen, bathroom and toilet, living room and a bedroom. These flats were accessed via a balcony next to the landing at the lift and staircase. The Eleventh Floor comprised of four separate flats, each in turn, comprising of a living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom and toilet. The residential floors of the building were all equipped with built-in cupboards.

Located on the roof were the Lift Motor Room, a "Natives Dormitory", and an Ablution Block.

In 1938, the architects (A.R.) Harris & (R.W.) Green (address: Annan House, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg) were commissioned by the owners to design a new block of eight storeys to link with the staircase and lift at the rear of the existing building. See HISTORY. This new addition was completed in May 1939. The First to Seventh Floor each comprised of two centrally located flats (each consisting of a living room, a bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom and toilet), and two separate bachelor flats, each with an own kitchen, and bathroom and toilet). The new Eight Floor comprised of two separate flats, each in turn, consisting of a living room, one bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom and toilet.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: reinforced concrete frame construction; plastered brick.

Roof: concrete, flat

Windows: composite steel casements

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

Alterations. Architects Harris & Green. Plans passed 13 February 1938. Estimated cost £250 (building) and £40 (drainage).

Alterations. Author of plans unknown. Plans passed 21 May 1956. Estimated cost £80 (building) and £10 (drainage).

Alterations (for tenant Swift Dry Cleaners). Author of plans unknown. Plans passed 30 April 1959. Estimated cost £100 (building) and £25 (drainage).

Alterations. Architect H. Schindler. Plans passed 25 September 1959. Estimated cost £100 (building) and £10 (drainage).

INTEGRITY:

The exterior of the building has been altered very little (this refers mostly to changes to the shop fronts).

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

J. C. Cook & Cowen (original building).

Harris & Green Architects (1939 additions).

BUILDER:

Reinforced concrete engineers: A.S. Joffe & Co.

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Original building:
Date on plans : 1 August 1934 and 9 May 1935
Approval of plans : 2 September 1935
Completion date : 17 January 1936

Additions (1939):
Date on plans : 28 May 1938
Approval of plans : 29 July 1938
Completion date : 1 May 1939

BUILDING STYLE:

Art Deco - New York.

"Architectural Merit: A well detailed front façade with decorative panels included." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

"Apartment living reflected a specific attitude and a preference for a particular lifestyle. Blocks of flats were built to be let (there was as yet no question of the sectional titles of today), so that occupation was always temporary. In addition, apartment buildings met the accommodation requirements of the lower to middle-class sections of society only. The most affluent and poorest sections preferred detached houses. At the same time there was no concerted effort by friendly societies or any other agency to provide housing for the poorer sections of the community on the model of developments in Europe. By their location near the city centre, these buildings brought their middle-class occupants conveniently close to their places of work and relieved them of the bother of caring for either house or garden, so that they could devote their energies to earning a living. Since the apartment buildings were put up on or very near the street line and the busy streets afforded no place for children to amuse themselves, there was little opportunity to develop a healthy family life. Human interaction was also severely inhibited by the isolation of the flats as closed units next to or above one another, as well as the absence of communal social areas, such as recreation halls. Financial considerations were the only criteria applied in selecting tenants for the apartments. Thus personal income, not a propensity to fit in with a particular group, was the deciding factor. A prominent feature of apartment buildings was the general block form with a certain degree of mass articulation, mostly in the central sections, which suggested an illusion of depth. This treatment created an impression of friendly accessibility – probably a reference to domestic architectural styles, in which the function of the building was expressed in a traditional form. A second important common feature of these blocks was the use of balconies, by which these buildings came to be identified. Referring to the social aspect of flats, these balconies constituted a link between the interior and exterior and were reminiscent of the Edwardian verandahs. Built in the same materials as the face, the balconies were visually an integral element of the whole, but were at the same time more isolated in terms of function: only one balcony was allocated to each flat. This meant that the need for social space was gradually changed from the communal to the individualised. The balconies were not only inaccessible to neighbours but they could also be furnished to suit the taste of the individual tenant. It is interesting to note that the balcony appointment mostly contained arrangement of plants...in separate pots, which probably reflected a need to retain some kind of bond with the natural environment from which the tenants originated. The construction and provision of services in apartment buildings followed a course of development parallel to that of office and commercial buildings. After the late 1920s reinforced concrete frame constructions were used to an increasing extent, and in a few exceptional cases this permitted a free arrangement of interior walls. In most cases, however, one floor was usually an exact replica of the next, with rectangular rooms. Elevators were fairly common. They were linked to the lobby and the passages built on each floor on the longitudinal axis of the building. As was to be expected, property developers provided built-in cupboards and a bathroom for each flat only in the more luxurious blocks, which were also equipped with the most modern domestic appliances available at the time, including an electric stove and refrigerator...In some cases parking for tenants' cars was provided in the basement...However, the average block of flats supplied only the protection of a roof and walls and tenants had to make do with communal ablution and toilet facilities on each floor. Such asocial effects were common where the profit motive was the major determinant." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street and residential building.

ENVIRONMENT:**CONDITION:**

Badly neglected. The building has also not weathered well.

The building appropriately fits the description of the condition of many of the City's buildings, mentioned in the following description by Neil Fraser: "The buildings that provided inspiration to local architects in New York and London and elsewhere have continued to provide inspiration and engender pride in millions of people. Yet here their fading facsimiles generally add to the blight of the cityscape and reinforce the negative perceptions of the city that still abound. Just a coat of paint or a scrub down and some basic TLC would be a good starting point for these buildings to emerge from the drabness and greyness into which they have been allowed to disappear." (Fraser, N.: CITICHAT Joburg Art Deco Buildings 2 – "The Top Twenty", February 24, 2003).

URGENT ACTION:

Owners should be advised not to continue painting the building (see photograph DSC02161) and especially not the moulded plaster forms. The building was designed with natural finishes and painting the main façade, would ruin the effect of the successful interface between plastered and unplastered surfaces.

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:**PROTECTION STATUS:** (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	provisional protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
	heritage area	<input type="checkbox"/>
	listed in provincial heritage resources register	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

FORMER PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)**NOTES:****DEEDS INFORMATION:**

Original ownership: Roehampton Court (Pty) Ltd.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**HISTORY:**

In 1937, the then owners Messrs L.K. Jacobs & Co. Ltd., planned to erect a twelve-storey building on the rear portion of the site to match the existing building. It transpired, however, that they could not build to such height on account of bye-laws that were promulgated subsequent to the completion of the original building a few years earlier, restricting them to only eight storeys throughout the two stands. (The area at the time, was provisionally zoned as 'Business in Zone 1', permitting a height of eight storeys). The City Council, therefore, intended to restrict them to the construction of three or four storeys only on the rear portion of the site. In a letter to the City Engineer dated 18 September 1937, the owners' legal representative pointed out the following: "When the front portion of the property was erected provision was made that a 12 storey building could be erected on the back portion, the same as in front. A considerable sum of money was spent to make the foundations of the back able to carry the contemplated additional building. It now appears that new Bye-Laws invoked

do not permit our client to proceed with the completion of a scheme commenced as long ago as 1934 and in connection with which our client has spent a substantial sum of money and in addition caused him to erect his building in such a manner that he would be able to complete the remainder of the scheme at a later stage. The invoking of the bye-laws by your department at this stage would for all practical purposes render two-thirds of our client's stands undeveloped."

On 8 December 1937, the owners were informed that there would be no objections to plans for five additional storeys on the rear portion of the stands. The plans that had been submitted however, showed that it was proposed to erect eight additional storeys. These plans were passed on 29 July 1938.

GENERAL NOTES:

Original building:

Estimated cost of building	: £60 000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £2 000
Accommodation approved	: 108 Europeans and 10 "Natives"
Valuation at completion	: £52 000 (17 January 1936)
Occupied	: yes

1939 Additions:

Estimated cost of building	: £18 000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £500
Accommodation approved	: 60 Europeans and 6 "Natives"
Valuation at completion	: £17 000 (1 May 1939)

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: 230 Bree - Rabin & Katz.
230a Bree - Rand Pharmacy.
230b Bree - HA Millard & Son (Pty) Ltd.
230a Bree - Salon Gellé.
232b Bree - Sagseed (branch).

By 1959: Swift Dry Cleaners.

CURRENT TENANT/S:

Ground Floor - Bree Supermarket.
S & K Showroom.

SOURCES:

For additional illustrative information, see relevant supplementary photo album in electronic format.

See SOURCES DOCUMENT for information on sources consulted with reference to this document.

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic Value:

- ☐ Associated with historic person, group or organisation
- ☐ Associated with historic event or activity

Architectural/Aesthetic value:

- ☒ Important example of building type
- ☒ Important example of a style or period
- ☒ Fine details, workmanship or aesthetics
- ☐ Work of a major architect or builder

Social/Spiritual/Linguistic value:

- ☐ Associated with social, spiritual, linguistic, economic or political activity
- ☐ Illustrates an historical period

Scientific/Technological value:

- ☐ Example of industrial, technical or engineering development/achievement
- ☐ New, rare or experimental building techniques

RECORDED BY:

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM Bruwer.
Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.



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17 8 2003



ROEHAMPTON CO

17 8 2003

showroom

SK
showroom

S&K showroom



17 8 2003

JOHANNESBURG COURT

232

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17 8 2003

Confectionery
Fresh Bread
Halal

ROEHAMPTON COURT

SK

SK showroom

BREE
SUPERMARKET

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ROEHAMPTON COURT



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2004

WORLD WIDE

WORLD WIDE

WORLD WIDE

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