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# OLD SHORELINE HERITAGE TRAIL



**Absolutely**

**POSITIVELY**

ME HEKE KI PŌNEKE  
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

**Wellington**

# WELLINGTON'S OLD SHORELINE HERITAGE TRAIL

This trail will take about three hours to walk. You may want to complete it in shorter sections, at your leisure.

## MAIN FEATURES OF TRAIL:

Blair and Allen Streets

St James Theatre

Lower Cuba Street

Civic Centre

Stewart Dawson's Corner

Plimmers Steps

Former Bank of New Zealand buildings  
and the remains of Plimmers Ark

Lambton Quay head offices

State Insurance and Public Trust buildings

Government Buildings

## KEY:



Registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust



Listed on the Wellington City Council District Plan

**ATL**

Alexander Turnbull Library

**WCA**

Wellington City Archives

**MWC+S**

Museum of Wellington City and Sea



Information panel



Shoreline Plaque



The Wellington City Council is grateful for the significant contribution made by the original Heritage Trails committee to the development of this trail—Oroya Day, Sallie Hill, Ken Scadden and Con Flinkenberg.

Historical research: Michael Kelly and Helen McCracken

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Biographical details of architects from *Inventory of Architects, Engineers and Designers*, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 1990

Brochures for other Council walks are available at the Visitor Information Office 101 Wakefield Street. You can also visit the Wellington City Council on-line at [www.wellington.govt.nz](http://www.wellington.govt.nz)

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Cover image: Lambton Quay in the 1920s (ATL 476001/2)

FINISH

# OLD SHORELINE

## HERITAGE TRAIL

TRAIL



SITE NO.

6 CORRESPONDS TO NUMBERS THROUGHOUT TRAIL GUIDE

STREET



START

ORIENTAL PARADE

BOULCOTT

MANNERS

VICTORIA STREET

CUBA STREET

TARAMAKI STREET

COURTENAY PLACE

WAKEFIELD STREET

CABLE STREET

HERD STREET

TORY

ALLEN

BLAIR

CAMBRIDGE

KENT

WATERLOO QUAY

BUNNY STREET

STOUT

WHITMORE STREET

BALLANCE

LAMBTON QUAY

FEATHERSTON STREET

GREY

CUSTOMHOUSE QUAY

JERMON QUAY

## Introduction

*The mists came floating down the night  
With silken wings, with footsteps light.  
The weary folk, the weary men,  
They walked and talked with dreams again;  
And glory, in a shining sea  
Of moonrise, lay on Lambton Quay.*

*Robin Hyde – Mists in the City*

This walk takes you on a trip through 160 years of Wellington history, from the infancy of the European settlement of Port Nicholson to a modern city. Few places in the world have been so dramatically altered by the natural and human movement of the landscape, and in such a short space of time.

Wellington's shoreline today is very different from the one on which the first European settlers landed in 1840. In those days, it was simply a beach and, until wharves and jetties were built, it remained the only means of access from the water. Since those early days, reclamation has added more than 155 hectares of land to the inner-city area. Earthquakes have raised land and led to the removal and replacement of hundreds of buildings. Today it is hard to imagine how Wellington once looked. With photographs and maps, this brochure shows you some of that huge change and the fascinating history surrounding it.

The trail takes us as close as is practically possible to Wellington's former shoreline. To maintain a logical route, the trail does venture away from that line, but at intervals along the way you will be able to measure where you are in relation to the old shoreline. The trail starts at the eastern end of Te Aro, near Oriental Bay, and finishes at Pipitea Pa on Thorndon Quay.

Many of the buildings you will see were designed by important architects, most of them from Wellington. Distributed through the text are biographical sketches of some of those best represented on this trail.



*Top: Plan of Wellington, 1840, by Capt. William Mein Smith. Compare this with the present-day map at the front of the brochure to see the extent of reclamation. (ATL 832.4799 gbbd/1840/Acc.318)*

*Bottom: The Wellington Destructor, yard and, in front, the morgue. These chimney stacks were landmarks for many years. (ATL G254731/1)*





## The Trail

Our walk begins at the seaward corner of Herd Street and Oriental Parade. Here, laid in the footpath, is a brass plaque indicating the 1840 shoreline. Fourteen brass plaques were laid along the old shoreline in 1976 to indicate the extent of reclamation at a time when the central city area was undergoing great change.



They were placed there by the Wellington Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and funded by local sponsorship. The location of these markers is shown on the map. Keep an eye out for them.

- ▶ **From the plaque, cross Herd Street and walk away from the sea along Oriental Parade.**



### 1 Waitangi Park – site of the Wellington Destructor

On your right is Waitangi Park, once the site of Wellington's Destructor. This was an incinerator built to destroy all the city's rubbish – as much as 20,000 tonnes each year. The city's morgue was also sited here. The first destructor opened in 1888, but this was replaced by a much larger operation in 1908. The second plant used the heat generated to create steam pressure to drive the city's sewage system. From 1939, the city increasingly shifted to using rubbish tips and, in 1946, the destructor was closed and the chimneys later demolished. Waitangi Park has been planned as a multi-purpose open space with a wetland, recreational facilities and gardens.

- ▶ **Cross Cable Street, continue on past the New World supermarket and turn right into Wakefield Street. Just before the traffic lights, you will reach the second of the shoreline plaques.**

## Te Aro Flat

As you leave the shore you are entering Te Aro flat. In 1840, this was, along with Thorndon, the only area of flat land in Wellington. The land at Te Aro was swampy and less attractive for housing than Thorndon and as a result it became more industrialised. Kent and Cambridge Terraces run along the path of the former Waitangi Stream (now in a culvert). Its source was at the Basin Reserve, now Wellington's premier cricket ground, then a large swampy area. In 1853, Te Aro swamp burst the narrow bank that divided it from the sea. The bursting " ... caused a loud noise, which was heard from a considerable distance, and flooded the town acres in the waterfront".

In 1855, a huge earthquake devastated the small town. But there was one great benefit; it raised the land and drained the swamp. The quake had some unusual side-effects too; Te Aro swamp disintegrated and as a result " ... small islands of flax and toi-toi [sic] were floating about the harbour and interfering with the passage of small coasters in the vicinity".

Because there was room for development at Te Aro, and it was not the city centre, reclamation came later than at Lambton Harbour; the first reclamations did not take place here until the 1880s. Fill was brought to Te Aro from a quarry in Oriental Bay, along a railway line constructed specifically for that purpose in 1882. The reclamation was completed in 1886, by which time some nine hectares had been added to the Te Aro foreshore.

► **Cross the road to Blair Street.**



*Above: Te Aro flat in the early 1840s. This engraving shows how early settlement avoided the swampy eastern side of the flat. (Melville after S.C. Brees, ATL F208151/2)*

*Below: This view of Te Aro flat and the harbour from Mt Victoria shows the temporary railway line crossing the harbour in front of Te Aro foreshore, about 1882. (ATL GB22361/1)*





## **i** Blair Street

Blair Street, along with nearby Allen Street, is an important example of an intact historic streetscape. Most of the buildings here were built between 1903–07, replacing slum housing, and many were used by fruit, vegetable and flower wholesalers. The conversion of the buildings into restaurants and bars began in the late 1980s and, together with the growing number of rooftop additions, has considerably altered the character of the area.

- ▶ **Walk to the other end of the street, where you will find a panel explaining the history of this area. Now turn left into Courtenay Place.**



## Courtenay Place

Courtenay Place was named after the Viscount Courtenay, the son of the Earl of Devon and a director of the New Zealand Company. Development started in this area only after the 1855 earthquake had raised the land and drained the Te Aro swamp. Among the early developments were a gas works, timber mill and hotel. There are a number of important buildings here worth investigating.

- ▶ **Continue walking to the intersection with Cambridge Terrace.**

*A view of Courtenay Place, about 1928, from the recently built de Luxe Theatre. Note the parade of horses on the right. (ATL G17361/2)*



## 2 Downstage Theatre, corner Courtenay Place and Cambridge Terrace

The Modern concrete building on this corner is the home of Wellington's first professional theatre company. Completed in 1974, the structure was designed by James Beard and funded by a donation from arts benefactor Sheila Wynn. The building won a New Zealand Institute of Architects National Award in 1978. The first performance by Downstage Theatre Company was in 1964, in a café on this site.



## 3 Former Taj Mahal, between Kent and Cambridge Terraces

Opposite, on a traffic island between Kent and Cambridge Terraces, is this most unusual building, named for its Indian-derived style. Built in 1928, it was designed by the City Engineer's Department of Wellington City Council. Originally a public toilet, it was transformed into a restaurant in 1980 and since then has had a number of different proprietors. In the northern dome is a fresco painted in the early 1980s, which depicts some of New Zealand's leading politicians.



## 4 Embassy Theatre, corner Majoribanks Street and Kent Terrace

Diagonally opposite is the Embassy, a large theatre built in 1924 to a design by Llewellyn E. Williams for entrepreneur William Kemball. The building is probably best known for its ornate interior. Until 1945, it was known as the De Luxe Theatre. The building was purchased by the Embassy Theatre Trust in 1997 and its exterior was restored in 1999. In 2003, the building was strengthened and the interior was refurbished, including the removal of the stalls. This was completed in time for the world première, in December 2003, of *The Return of the King*, the third movie of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The building is now owned by the Wellington City Council.

- ▶ **Cross to the other side of Courtenay Place and walk a short distance until you can see the brick building.**

## 5 Building, 11–13 Courtenay Place

Built in 1911 for Edwin Goodwin and designed by Atkins and Bacon, this building's interest lies in its exposed brick façade. It is unusual in Wellington as most masonry structures were finished with cement plaster.

## 6 Courtenay Chambers, 15 Courtenay Place

Next door is a handsome neo-Classical building, erected in 1928, and another Llewellyn E. Williams design. Although not excessively tall by Wellington standards, it is enormous in the context of the low-rise buildings on Courtenay Place. The retention of the street's modest scale can be partly attributed to a public seminar on the future of Courtenay Place, held in 1986 and sponsored by Wellington's Civic Trust, which strongly supported limiting the street's buildings to two storeys.



## 7 Paramount Theatre, 29 Courtenay Place

The Paramount was designed by James Bennie and built in 1917. It is reputed to be Wellington's first purpose-built picture theatre, and is the only one of many Bennie-designed theatres to have survived in Wellington. The theatre had a full orchestra pit and seating for 885 in the stalls and 626 in the circle. After substantial interior modifications in the 1960s, including the conversion of the stalls into a reception space, there is seating for less than half that number. The Paramount was the first theatre in New Zealand to show a talking movie, on 6 March 1929. The building was again substantially renovated in 2005.

### James Bennie

Bennie was born in Scotland and immigrated to New Zealand in 1880, settling in Brunnerton on the West Coast. He studied architecture in Melbourne in the early 1890s before returning to Greymouth and setting up practice. In 1903, Bennie moved to Wellington. A prolific architect, he is best known for his theatres and houses. Today just the Paramount (1917) remains of his Wellington theatres. Two fine houses, the Wedge, Thorndon (1906) and his own house in Salamanca Road (1907) remain. Bennie retired in 1935.

► **Cross Courtenay Place back to Allen Street.**

*Courtenay Chambers shortly after it was completed, with 11–13 Courtenay Place on the left. This view is little different today, apart from the substantial changes made to the buildings' ground floors. (ATL 153711/1)*

## Allen Street

Take the opportunity to look at this companion to Blair Street.

- ▶ **Continue along Courtenay Place.**

### 8 **Former National Bank Building, 55 Courtenay Place**

On the opposite side of the road, and the second building from the corner of Tory Street, is this elegant neo-Classical building. It was designed by local firm Atkins and Mitchell and built by Fletcher Construction in 1927. Again, this building stands out in low-rise Courtenay Place. The National Bank left these premises some years ago and for a period it was used by a language school. In 2004, it reopened as a branch of the ANZ bank.

- ▶ **Walk to the intersection of Tory Street and Courtenay Place.**

### 9 **Former Wellington Gas Company Building, 62 Courtenay Place**

Immediately across the road on the corner is a rare pre-1900 building in Courtenay Place. Completed in 1898 and designed by Thomas Turnbull and Sons, it shows the Classical detail that characterised Turnbull senior's work, particularly in its Italianate arched windows. The building was sited conveniently close to the company's gas works in Tory Street. The second floor of the now strengthened building is used for apartments.

- ▶ **Cross Tory Street and continue walking along the same side of Courtenay Place until you are opposite the St James Theatre.**

*A view of Courtenay Place, in the late 1940s, looking east. The men's toilet at the bottom of the picture still survives. (ATL C11270)*

## 10 St James Theatre, 77–81 Courtenay Place

The newly-formed United Methodist Free Church erected a church here in 1879. It was later owned by theatre promoter J. Fuller & Sons, which converted it for a vaudeville show. In 1911, it demolished the building, by then known as His Majesty's, and this theatre was completed the following year. Designed by Henry E. White, who became famous in Australasia as a theatre designer, it was used for live performances and as a cinema. In 1942, its name was changed to the St James. The building operated as a cinema until 1987 when it was earmarked for demolition as part of the 1980s building boom. However, the owner, Chase Properties, was a victim of the 1987 sharemarket collapse and subsequent property slump – so the building languished. Following a public campaign to save it, led by actor and theatre historian Peter Harcourt, the theatre was acquired, in 1993, by the City Council. In 1998, the theatre was restored and reopened, and the building next door was incorporated into the complex. The theatre is protected by a Heritage Order. The building has a good Classical facade but its main claim to fame is a wonderful, opulent interior, with clear viewing lines.

► **Continue along Courtenay Place to Taranaki Street.**







*Above: An early view (1857) of Te Aro. The pa can be seen in the middle of this photograph. (ATL F1455341/2)*

*Below: A pencil drawing by John Gilfillan of Te Aro Pa in the 1840s. (ATL F1092791/2)*



## 11 Courtenay Place Men's Toilets

On the traffic island next to the intersection is Wellington's only remaining underground public toilet, although it has now closed. This toilet was designed by City Engineer William Morton and completed in 1911. It replaced an earlier toilet on the same site.



## Taranaki Street

This street was so named because at the time of the arrival of the first settlers, in 1840, Te Aro Pa was inhabited by Maori from Taranaki. The pa occupied land near the sea at the bottom of the surveyed Taranaki Street. It was with the inhabitants of this pa that New Zealand Company representatives arranged the purchase of the Te Aro portion of the settlement. The pa was still occupied in 1866, but the land was sold by 1875. The former shoreline is marked by a plaque on the opposite side of the street, about 50 metres north of the intersection.

- ▶ **You can choose to turn left and walk a short distance up Taranaki Street to an important early Wellington church. Otherwise continue straight ahead from the corner of Taranaki Street and Courtenay Place.**



## 12 Wesley Methodist Church, 75 Taranaki Street 1879–1880

Among the many important buildings designed by Thomas Turnbull was a group of impressive timber churches. Three survive from the 19th century in Wellington and this is one of them. The other two are St John's Presbyterian Church (1885) and St Peter's Anglican Church (1879), both on Willis Street. Completed in 1880, the Wesley Methodist Church has a fine interior, highlighted by the striking use of native New Zealand timbers. The church is part of a complementary complex of historic buildings, including a hall directly behind the church, built in 1882.

- ▶ **Return to the intersection of Taranaki Street and Courtenay Place and cross to Te Aro Park. This is the best place to view the next three buildings.**



## 13 Hope Gibbon's Building, 7–11 Dixon Street (Inglewood Place)

On the corner of Taranaki and Manners Streets is the Hope Gibbons Building. This building is an outstanding piece of townscape, which remains nearly as prominent as it did when completed in 1927. Designed by J.M. Dawson, it mirrored a design prepared in 1919 for a building in Courtenay Place that was never built. This Classically detailed building was erected for the Gibbons, a successful business family who made a fortune from brewing and car manufacturing. Note the building's striking cornice and parapet. Soon after the building was completed, a serious fire here destroyed many of the country's most important government archives, a loss still keenly felt by historians. At the rear of the building is a substantial annexe that, in fact, predates the main building by 12 years.

### Joseph McClatchie Dawson (King and Dawson)

Joseph Dawson (1877–1956) was born in the Wairarapa and, after working in the construction industry, he travelled overseas in 1901. In 1906, he returned to establish his own architectural practice. It was not until 1929 that Dawson took a partner, Jack King (1900–1972), and formed King and Dawson. By that time Dawson had established a successful practice specialising in commissions for the motor trade. He retired in 1948 but the firm continues under the same name. The best known Dawson buildings include the Columbia Private Hotel (1908), Hope Gibbons Building (1927), Manthel Motors (1913), the Apostolic Nunciature, Lyall Bay (1928) and the James Smith Building facade (1932).

## Manners Street

Manners Street was named for a director of the New Zealand Company, Frederick James Tollemache, whose father's name was Sir William Manners. Tollemache's brother, Algernon Gray Tollemache, settled in Wellington and acquired a considerable amount of inner-city land when the city was founded.

- ▶ **Walk through Te Aro Park, previously called Pigeon Park. It was redesigned in 1992 by the City Council and artist Shona Rapira-Davies. Look out for Lukes Lane on your right.**

## Lukes Lane

Alongside the Opera House is this lane, named for Captain Luke who acquired a small engineering business here in 1874. Luke was a cousin of Joshua Charlesworth, architect of the Wellington Town Hall, which we will soon see. His firm built, among other things, two prefabricated cast-iron lighthouses, for Palliser Bay and Castlepoint, and a small steamship, the *Matai*. The latter, built in 1885, was reputedly the first steel ship constructed south of the equator.

### 14 Edwards Building, 131 Manners Street

On one side of Lukes Lane is the Edwards Building, erected in 1907 as a warehouse and building for H. D. Edwards, of whom little is known. This building, designed by local firm Crichton and McKay, is rare in Wellington for the retention of its original parapet. The date on the building, 1874, is thought to relate to when the business was started.

## William Crichton (Crichton and McKay)

Crichton (1862–1928) was born in Cornwall and studied architecture there. He came to New Zealand in 1879 and joined the staff of the Colonial Architect's office. He set up his own business after being made redundant in 1891; the same year he won a competition to design the Municipal Library. In 1901, he formed the firm of Crichton and McKay, later Crichton, McKay and Haughton. The buildings designed by these firms included two bank head offices in Wellington – Bank of New South Wales and Bank of Australasia (ANZ) – some of Wellington Hospital's buildings and the Dominion Building.

- ▶ **To view the buildings on this side of the street you may want to cross back to Te Aro Park.**

## 15 Opera House, 109 Manners Street



A short distance along is the second of Wellington's remaining Edwardian theatres. Its rich interior is regarded as a good place to view opera, but it has been put to a variety of other uses as well. The building was designed by Melbourne architect William Pitt and completed in 1912. At that time it was known as the Grand Opera House. State Insurance saved the theatre in 1977, restored it and sponsored the theatre's operations for some years. It is now run by the St James Theatre Trust. Note the oddly asymmetrical facade.

- ▶ **Continue along Manners Street to Cuba Street.**

## 16 James Smith's Buildings, corner Manners and Cuba Streets

Opposite, on the corner, is the building named after James Smith, an early settler who in 1866 bought Te Aro House – a shop on the corner of Cuba and Dixon streets – and built up a prosperous drapery business. His business diversified and expanded and, in 1907, this building was erected on this prime corner site. The Art Deco facade was designed by King and Dawson in 1932. Just down Manners Street is a 1934 addition to the building, designed by the same architects. The expanding department store added two more additions further along Cuba Street in the 1960s. In 1993, after being in the family virtually all its life, the store closed, but the building remains in retail use. This spot is still known to most Wellingtonians as James Smith's corner.

*James Smith Building in 1927, before the 1932 facelift. Compare this view with the building today. (ATL G5851/2)*





## 17 Former Bank of New Zealand Te Aro Branch, corner Manners and Cuba Streets

Opposite James Smith's is an exuberant, typically Classical bank building of its era. Completed in 1913 to a design by Thomas Turnbull and Sons, it was the second of the bank's buildings on this site and an early example of a masonry building with a structural steel frame, a fact which encouraged the bank to retain and restore the building in the mid-1980s. The bank moved out in 1994. The roof top additions to the top of the building were completed in 1997 and detract from the significant heritage values of this building.

- ▶ **Turn right and walk down Cuba Street, named for a New Zealand Company ship which arrived in Wellington in 1839. This section of the street is another small portion of the inner city that retains its older buildings – an important reminder of how the city looked early in the 20th century. Some of these buildings are described below.**



## 18 Columbia Private Hotel, 36–38 Cuba Street

The lively facade of the Columbia Hotel was designed by J.M. Dawson. Built in 1908, this was a budget hotel for much of its life. It has been converted into apartments.

- ▶ **Cross the road to view the Kennedy Building.**



*The view from lower Cuba Street, towards the harbour, in 1953. With the exception of the Town Hall, on the left, every building, and some streets, in this view have gone. (ATL 191091/2)*

## 19 Kennedy Building, 33–39 Cuba Street

On the opposite side of the road is this Italianate-style building erected in 1905 for sisters Agnes and Anastasia Kennedy, daughters of successful Wellington merchant Martin Kennedy. Their initials can be seen on the building's parapet. Its architect, James O'Dea, designed a number of buildings in upper Cuba Street.

► **Continue down Cuba Street to Wakefield Street.**

## Wakefield Street

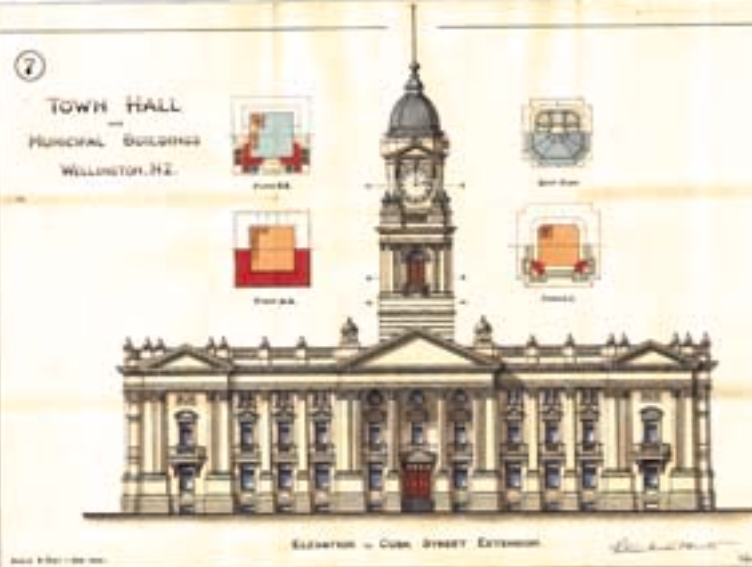
This street was named after Edward Gibbon Wakefield, New Zealand Company director and the driving force behind the planned settlement of New Zealand. Wakefield conceived his plan while in prison in England in the 1820s for bankruptcy and attempting to elope with a prominent heiress. With the support of some prominent and wealthy men he secured the approval of the British Government to make his brainchild happen. He finally arrived in New Zealand in 1853.



## 20 Town Hall, 101 Wakefield Street

Although shorn of its tower, portico and other external decoration, and overshadowed by other buildings, the Town Hall retains its dignity. Architect Joshua Charlesworth won a national competition for its design and when it was completed, in 1904, it was a worthy showpiece for Wellington. The erection of the Michael Fowler Centre directly in front of its main facade in 1983 was supposed to be followed by the Town Hall's demolition. It survives, thanks both to a report commissioned in 1983 by the Historic Places Trust that argued the feasibility of its retention, and a vigorous public campaign. The building was refurbished in 1992 as part of the creation of Civic Square and the main auditorium, with its fine acoustics, is still regularly used.





- ▶ **Cross Wakefield Street and walk between the Town Hall and Michael Fowler Centre into Civic Square. Look for the information panel on the side of the steps opposite the Town Hall.**



*Above: Joshua Charlesworth's plan of the main elevation of the Town Hall. (Wellington City Archives)*

*Below: A view of the Town Hall in 1904, when it had all its decorative embellishments. On the left is the former Wellington Fire Station and, obscuring the front of the Town Hall, is the band rotunda. (Muir and Moodie, ATL B22781/1)*

## Civic Square

Civic Square was, from 1990 to 1992, transformed into the pre-eminent public space in this city. Previously this area was part of Mercer Street, which passed through here to Jervois Quay, near the waterfront.

## 21 City Gallery (former Wellington Public Library), Civic Square

This elegant stripped Classical building, erected in 1939, was the result of a collaboration between the celebrated Auckland partnership of Gummer and Ford, and New Plymouth architects Messenger Taylor and Wolfe, after a competition was held to decide a winning design. Between 1990 and 1992 a new Central Library was built on Victoria Street and the old library successfully adapted for use as the City Gallery.

*The former Public Library in 1952, viewed from the other side of Mercer Street. (ATL G250781/1)*



- ▶ **Walk across the Square and through the entranceway to Victoria Street. Cross Victoria Street at the left-hand crossing and look diagonally across the intersection to the building on the corner.**

## **22 Racing Conference Building, corner Wakefield and Victoria Streets**

This building is much cherished for its unconventional wavy verandah. It was designed by Ron Muston of Structon Group, and built in 1959. The penthouse was added in the 1980s. The Racing Conference, the organisation that manages thoroughbred horse racing, occupied the building from the time of its erection until 1988, hence the horseshoe motifs on the balconies. During construction of this building the remains of an old jetty were found.



## Bond, Lombard and Cornhill Streets

Just beyond the Racing Conference building is Bond Street, where the premises of one of Wellington's oldest businesses, Bethune and Hunter, once stood. In 1958, the premises – customs and counting houses – erected in 1841 and the city's oldest surviving buildings, were demolished by the City Council for a parking building. The efforts to save the buildings, led by the just-formed National (now New Zealand) Historic Places Trust, were among the first protests over built heritage in the city's history.

A fragment of Cornhill Street, another early road, survives on the other side of the parking building.

Bond Street, originally Old Custom House Street, was named because the first customs store for bonded goods was sited here. In 1928, Bond Street, and what was then known as Farish Street (now part of Victoria Street), were widened.

## Mercer Street

Mercer Street was formed to connect Willis Street with the waterfront after reclamation began pushing the water's edge away from the city. Where you are standing was a shallow beach before a narrow piece of land between here and Chew's Lane (north along Willis Street) was reclaimed by the Wellington Provincial Council in 1852. This was the first Government-funded reclamation in Wellington. The street was named after a Miss Mercer who married John Duthie, Mayor of Wellington, 1889. Duthie operated a hardware store and ironmongery in this area and, in 1890, became a Member of Parliament for Wellington.

- ▶ **Cross Mercer Street for a better view of the Dominion Building, now opposite.**



*Above: Bethune and Hunter's Custom and Counting Houses in 1958, shortly before their demolition. (Evening Post)*

*Below: Mercer Street in 1928. Mercer Buildings, on the left of the street, was a new frontage on a series of older buildings shorn of their facades to allow the road to be widened. (ATL GEP 46261/2)*





## 23 Dominion Building, 27–35 Mercer Street



This building was constructed in 1928 to house the printing presses and offices of the *Dominion* newspaper, which was first published on the day New Zealand was declared a Dominion – 26 September 1907. The building was designed by Crichton, McKay and Haughton and included, above the main entrance, a platform designed for public speeches and the announcement of election results. Some offices remain in the building, but most of the building was converted for use as apartments in 1996.

- ▶ **Walk up to the corner with Willis Street and look directly across the road.**



## 24 Press House, 82 Willis Street



The second of Wellington's great press buildings is the former Press House or *Evening Post* building, designed by William Fielding and built in 1927–1928. It is a conventional commercial building from that era except for the marvellous, decorative bay over the main entrance. This ornate Classical feature looked even more impressive before it was painted in the 1980s. The *Evening Post*, established in 1865 and Wellington's first daily paper, was published from here for many years. The original offices were in Manners Street. The *Evening Post* and *Dominion* were merged in 2003 and the *Dominion Post*, as it is known, is produced in a complex on Boulcott Street. Press House has been sold and is now owned by a number of owner/occupiers.

- ▶ **Cross Willis Street and turn right.**

*Press House, the year it was completed, and the 1928 election results on a huge billboard. (Evening Post Collection, ATL G3731/2)*





## Willis Street buildings

The land on the seaward, or western, side of Willis Street between Mercer Street and Chews Lane was reclaimed in 1852 – the first substantial area of land reclaimed in the city. The buildings on either side of the street – whether on that reclamation or not – are some of the oldest still standing in the central city. The buildings in the Chews Lane area, owned for many years by the City Council, were sold *en bloc* in 2004 and the area is undergoing a major redevelopment.

*This view of Willis Street was taken about 1885 from the Post Office tower. The buildings on the left-hand side of the street are standing on the first government reclamation of 1852. Reclamation at Te Aro has just finished. (Burton Bros., ATL B22891/1)*





## 25 Macarthy Building, 50–52 Willis Street

On the western side of the street, this building, designed by Joseph Dawson, was built in 1913 for Mary Ellen Macarthy, the wife of businessman and philanthropist Thomas Macarthy. When Macarthy died, in 1912, he left half of his fortune to his wife and the other in a charitable trust. When Mary Macarthy died, in 1934, her share of the estate passed to the trust. This trust, administered by the Public Trust, has continued to be a major contributor to the community. Sports shop Tisdalls has occupied the ground floor of the building for many years. The interior features particularly ornate plasterwork.



## **26 The Malthouse (former Hotel Windsor), 45–53 Willis Street**

Across the street is a two-storey remnant of what was once the five-storey Hotel Windsor, which was designed by J.C. Maddison and completed in 1906. Following a fire in 1983 the building changed dramatically. The top three storeys and cupola were removed to lessen the danger it posed in an earthquake. In its early years, the Hotel Windsor was frequently occupied by professionals who often lived there permanently. Later, the hotel concentrated on overnight guests. Various retail outlets occupied the ground floor, as they still do. After it was reduced in height, the first floor was turned into a bar, which it remains today.

## **27 37–43 Willis Street**

This block is actually comprised of four timber buildings with a masonry facade, the earliest of which dates from the 1870s. Together these buildings comprise one of the oldest blocks of commercial buildings in central Wellington. In 1910, the block was bought by the Wellington City Council to widen Willis Street. At this time more than three metres was cut off the frontages and a new façade constructed.

## **28 Caledonian Building, 29–33 Willis Street**

This is another old building with a newer façade. Originally built in 1898 to a Thomas Turnbull design, this building had a floor added in 1906 and then, following a fire in 1938, a new Art Deco façade designed by C.H. Mitchell. A four-storey building was added to the rear at the same time. In 1959, the Victoria Arcade was constructed to link Victoria and Willis Streets and part of the ground floor of this building was revamped to be its western portal.

## 29 Grand Arcade

On the side of the street you are walking on is the Grand Arcade. It is not itself historic, but it marks the site where Baron Charles von Alzdorf built his 'earthquake-proof' building. Von Alzdorf arrived in Wellington in 1840 and became a successful entrepreneur, owning wharves and hotels. The damage caused to his first hotel by the 1848 earthquake inspired von Alzdorf to construct a two-storey brick building that he declared would never be destroyed by an earthquake. Von Alzdorf was killed when the building collapsed on him in the 1855 earthquake – he is one of the few people ever killed in an earthquake in Wellington. You can see the site of his first hotel later in the trail (see 54). The Grand Hotel, a striking seven-storey building, occupied this site from 1907 to 1980. It was demolished as it was deemed an earthquake risk.

- ▶ **Walk to the corner of Lambton Quay and Willis Street, known as Stewart Dawson's corner.**

### Stewart Dawson's corner

Stewart Dawson's corner is one of Wellington's most celebrated landmarks. It once marked the narrowest point of the Lambton beach road and effectively divided the town in two. In the 1840s and 1850s this corner was known as Clay Point, the site of a brick works, and was notorious for the strength of the northerly winds funnelling around the headland. The buildings on Stewart Dawson's corner are some of the last remaining examples of the late Victorian and Edwardian buildings that dominated Lambton Quay until the 1970s. Together with the old Bank of New Zealand buildings across the road, they form the most significant group of Edwardian commercial buildings left in Wellington. You can see the buildings' upper floors when you cross to the former BNZ buildings.



## 30 Fletcher's Building, 2–4 Willis St



The left of the three buildings was built in 1903 by Charles Augustus Fletcher, a chemist, who, for a few years, ran his shop here. He sold his building in 1907, but later had offices on the third floor. In early years, a one-storey timber store occupied the site. It was later replaced by an extension to a building next door in Lambton Quay, owned by William Fitzgerald, also a chemist. The architect is not known. The rear of the building was removed and replaced with a modern structure in 1996.



## 31 Stewart Dawson's Building, 366 Lambton Quay



In 1854, William Fitzgerald erected a timber building here that extended as far as the corner. An extension into Willis Street was added later, establishing the distinctive configuration of the site. The present building was erected in 1901 for Stewart Dawson's Jewellers, a British jewellery business named for its founder, Scot David Stewart Dawson. The business had expanded into Australasia in the early 1880s and bought this site in 1900. The building was designed by architect William Chatfield, who later leased offices in the building. The ground floor has remained Stewart Dawson's Jewellers since it was built. The building was owned by the Dawson family until 1983. A few New Zealand shops still bear the firm's name.

*Looking south along Willis Street c.1910. Stewart Dawson's Building is on the right and next to that, Fletcher's Building. Further along is the Grand Hotel, now demolished. (ATL 248731/1)*

## 32 **Former Equitable Building and Investment Co. Building, 360 Lambton Quay**

The company's name can still be seen in relief on the building's facade. The Equitable Building and Investment Co. erected a two-storey building here about 1887. In 1904, or early 1905, the top storey was added. The company was formed in Wellington in 1877 and its main business was real estate investment. It sold the building in 1921. This is one of the oldest masonry structures in Wellington, and the oldest left on Lambton Quay.



## Lambton Quay

Lambton Quay, "The Beach", or Strand, was the high-water mark when New Zealand Company settlers arrived in Port Nicholson. Lambton Quay was named for Lord Durham, chairman of the company, whose family name was Lambton. The first houses, shops and workshops were built on one side of a muddy track. On the other side was the sea.

The buildings grew and improved but the city retained this proximity to the sea until reclamation started, initially with private works, then government projects. The first major reclamation – around the intersection of Willis Street and Lambton Quay – began in 1857. Today, almost all the flat land



you see is reclaimed. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the city flourished and with it the quality of architecture. As the city's memory of the drastic 1848 and 1855 earthquakes faded and fires took an increasingly heavy toll, timber construction, dominant for nearly 40 years, was completely abandoned in the inner city in favour of brick and stone. By the 1920s, this street had some of the city's finest buildings in an unbroken Victorian/Edwardian streetscape. Much of this has now gone.

- ▶ **Continue along Lambton Quay until you reach Plimmers Lane. At the entrance, look out for John Plimmer and his dog Fritz.**

*Lambton Quay, 1856 from Clay Point, a watercolour by John Howard Holmes. To the right is Plimmer's 'Noah's Ark' (see 33-36) and Barrett's Hotel to the left. (ATL F322011/2)*







## John Plimmer and Plimmers Steps

Plimmers Steps are closely associated with one family and one man in particular. John Plimmer was an important Wellington figure for over 60 years and had immense influence on the development of early Wellington.

Plimmer and his family arrived in Wellington in 1841. A skilled entrepreneur, he became a successful businessman. In 1844, Plimmer leased land near Clay Point, now Stewart Dawson's corner, which he later bought. This was an obvious place to establish a business – all traffic had to pass this point in travelling between Thorndon and Te Aro. The access past Clay Point was originally so narrow that on some occasions, when the wind and the weather made the point impassable, travellers would have to make their way up and over the point, and consequently across Plimmer's land. This is the origin of Plimmers Steps.

Plimmer's first business was a lime kiln, sited where the AA Centre now stands. About 1848, he built a house on this site, part of which was rented out as Government offices. Plimmer later re-established Barrett's Hotel, Wellington's most famous hostelry, on this site. A later version of this hotel was demolished to make way for the AA Centre. Plimmer went on to become the self-styled 'Father of Wellington'. There may have been men who contributed more to the city's development but not one so readily identified today with 19th century Wellington. The most celebrated relic associated with him can be found inside the former Bank of New Zealand buildings.

- ▶ **Cross the road to the former BNZ buildings. You can see the buildings by doing a circuit of the block and you can also walk through the complex. There are many interesting things to see, including the remains of 'Plimmers Ark' and an ornate clock/mobile with an historical theme.**

## Plimmers Ark

The most famous private wharf in early Wellington, and one of the city's best-known structures, was located on the site of the BNZ Buildings. In 1849, the barque *Inconstant* was grounded at the entrance to Wellington Harbour. The damage to the vessel was too great to repair and it was eventually sold to John Plimmer and towed to Clay Point. Plimmer, who had built up a successful business based on construction and liquor, converted the hull, which sat partly in the water, into the basement of a warehouse and auction room. Its appearance gained it the name 'Noah's Ark'.

*An 1862 plan of the newly reclaimed land and Queen's Wharf, with 'Noah's Ark' and the extended Plimmer and Reeves wharf superimposed over the new city blocks. (ATL 832.4799gbbd a/1862/)*



In 1861, after reclamation of the shoreline swallowed up the 'Ark', Plimmer built a longer wharf, known as Plimmer and Reeve's Wharf. Until 1863, when Queens Wharf was completed, many immigrants disembarked from these wharves. Plimmer's 'Ark' was demolished in 1883 to make way for the construction of the National Mutual Building (see 42).

Remnants of the hull's teak timbers were found when the site for the BNZ head office was excavated in 1899. Plimmer was photographed among the excavated remains. These timbers were incorporated into three chairs, one of which became the Chairman of the Bank's seat. The section of harbour immediately in front of Clay Point, including the site of the 'Ark', was where the first major reclamation took place, from 1857–63. Once reclaimed, part of this block was purchased by the Bank of New Zealand, which, in 1863, built its first building there.

In 1997, the timbers were rediscovered during redevelopment of the BNZ buildings. The bow remains in the BNZ building and forms part of a display on the basement floor of these buildings. Other timbers recovered from the vessel were taken off site for conservation. This work continues in a specially created gallery, open to the public, on Queens Wharf. Check the Museum of Wellington City and Sea, Queens Wharf, for opening times.

*The remains of 'Noah's Ark' being demolished in 1883 to make way for the new National Mutual Building (BNZ No.3). (ATL 27041/1)*



## 33–36 Former Bank of New Zealand Buildings

This is one of the most important groups of historic commercial buildings in the country. The former BNZ buildings are not only important in their own right but they occupy an historic piece of reclaimed land. All four buildings were designed in the commercial Classical style of the time, three of them by one architect – Thomas Turnbull. This lends the buildings an appropriate homogeneity, even though only one of them was built for the BNZ. The buildings housed the bank’s head office and Wellington branch from 1901 until 1984, when the bank moved into new offices, the large black tower on the opposite corner. After the shift, the bank handed ownership of the old buildings to the City Council – and the future of the site was the subject of a protracted dispute between interests who wanted the site cleared and turned into a park, and those who wanted the buildings preserved. Finally, in the mid-1990s, the Council sold the site to an Australian–Singaporean developer for \$1. The buildings were then strengthened and converted to a shopping centre with offices above. As a result, the interiors of most of the buildings bear little relation to their original appearance. The poorly designed verandah was added in 2003.



### 33 BNZ Building No. 2, 233–237 Lambton Quay

This was the the last of the group to be built. The Wellington Building and Investment Company erected this building in 1904 and called it Phoenix Chambers. Like its neighbour, the building was designed by Thomas Turnbull and Son. It was bought by the BNZ in 1917.



## 34 **BNZ Building No. 1,** **239–243 Lambton Quay**

To the right of Building 2 is the first of the former BNZ buildings. Completed in 1901, this building replaced the first BNZ premises of 1863 and is one of Thomas Turnbull's best known designs. This building housed the bank's head office and Wellington branch from 1901 until 1984. The old head office makes marvellous use of the triangular site, especially in the snub-nose corner, while the plasterwork, pressed metal and tilework in the banking chamber are particularly fine. This is the last survivor of a string of magnificent Edwardian bank head offices in central Wellington. Harold Beauchamp, father of New Zealand's most famous writer, Katherine Mansfield, was chairman of the bank's Board of Directors from 1907–1922.

- ▶ **Walk down Customhouse Quay to the next of the buildings.**



## 35 **BNZ Building No. 3,** **98–102 Customhouse Quay**

This building was constructed for National Mutual Life Association in 1884. It was not incorporated into the BNZ group until 1933. This Thomas Turnbull design is possibly the finest of the four. When built, it was the tallest masonry building in the city and the first building with a lift. It is one of the oldest surviving masonry buildings in the city and features some splendid plasterwork and timber joinery, inside and out. Compare the difference in the treatment of the facade and the height of the floors with that of Building No.1.

### **Thomas Turnbull and Son**

Thomas Turnbull (1825–1907) was born in Scotland in 1825 and trained as an architect there. He left for Melbourne in 1851 and later journeyed to San Francisco, where he developed an interest in designing earthquake-resistant buildings. About 1870, Turnbull journeyed to New Zealand and settled in Wellington. He soon set up his own practice, which became one of the most successful in the city. He was later joined in business, in 1891, by his son, William, a fine architect in his own right. The partnership designed a great variety of buildings, among the best of which are the Churches of St Peter's (1879) and St John's (1885), the Parliamentary Library (1899), Antrim House (1905), and Turnbull House (1916).

► **Turn left into Hunter Street.**



## 36 BNZ Building No. 4, 29 Hunter Street

This building, designed by Hislop and Walden, was erected in 1903 for the New Zealand Accident and Insurance Company. While perhaps lacking the design finesse of the other three, it is of comparable scale and composition and sits very comfortably with them. It still retains its parapet, although there is nothing left of its original interior.

- ▶ **Walk up Hunter Street to the intersection with Lambton Quay.**



## 37 Former Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance (MLC) Building, 231 Lambton Quay

The first building on this site was the timber St Andrew's Presbyterian church. This was the first Scots Church in Wellington and had been moved from across the road in 1866. The church building gradually evolved, rather unusually, into a hotel – the Central. This was later demolished to make way for the MLC building, designed by Mitchell and Mitchell, and completed in 1939. The relief on the clock tower symbolises the company's motto, 'Union is Strength'. The clock was originally housed in the Chief Post Office tower, but removed after the 1942 earthquake. It was placed here in 1955. It has since been removed from the building, which is today used for apartments and retailing. The building's marvellous honey-coloured tiled facade, graduated in tone, enhances an elegant design with art deco flourishes. There is an almost identical MLC building in Auckland. MLC is now part of New Zealand Insurance.



*The first Bank of New Zealand building on the distinctive corner site c.1880; Lambton Quay to the left and Customhouse Quay to the right.  
(ATL 689171/2)*

## 38 Commemorative lamp, corner Hunter Street and Lambton Quay

The first public display of electric lighting in New Zealand was at the Basin Reserve in Wellington in 1879, in the form, remarkably, of a floodlit game of soccer. In 1888, Wellington became the first city in New Zealand to introduce electric street lighting and this elegant lamp commemorates that event.

### 1930s Style

Directly opposite is a collection of 1930s commercial buildings. They are as significant a cluster of buildings of their period as the Victorian/Edwardian group around Stewart Dawson's corner. Their scale and proportion make them crucial elements in the largely modern Lambton Quay streetscape. They were the subject of a long campaign to save them in the 1980s.



## 39 Prudential Assurance Building, 332–340 Lambton Quay

This outstanding art deco building was designed in 1933 by Hennessey and Hennessey, Australia, and completed the following year. It was one of the first buildings in Wellington to have a steel-framed structure incorporated in its design, the result of a new earthquake code introduced in New Zealand after the disastrous Napier earthquake of 1931. It is faced with a soft pink-coloured plaster, which you can see on the ground floor. Take the opportunity to inspect the decoration on this building, particularly the eagles on the corners. The additions to the top of the building (2004) have robbed it of its remarkable symmetry as has the addition of a shop on the north side, which encloses the original service lane and obscures some of the architectural detailing on this elevation.

*Below: The Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute is the building with the tower in this view of Lambton Quay in the early 1880s. (ATL 529481/2)*



The first building to occupy this site was owned by publican Dicky Barrett and was converted for use by the Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute. This building contained Wellington's first library and was the venue of the city's first adult education classes, in 1842. In 1877, the institute erected a marvellous timber Gothic building, which was removed to make way for the present building. A plaque on the southern side of the building relates some of this history.

 **40 Former Commercial Bank of Australia Building (GBL House), 328-330 Lambton Quay**

The southern half of the Colonial Bank of New Zealand building (1878) was demolished in 1934 and its owners, the Commercial Bank of Australia, erected this building in its place. Designed by Clere and Clere and completed in 1936, it maintained the new stature deemed essential for commercial structures in the 1930s. The CBA was founded in Melbourne in 1866. It merged with the Bank of New South Wales to form Westpac in 1982.



## Frederick de Jersey Clere (1856–1952)

Clere was born in Lancashire and emigrated with his family in 1877. An architect, he worked in the provinces before establishing his practice in Wellington. Clere's career spanned 58 years and he was Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church for much of his professional life. He was also an enthusiastic advocate of building in concrete. He was pre-eminent in church design; his best-known Wellington designs are St Mary of the Angels (1922) in Boulcott Street, and the Anglican St Mary's, Karori. Apart from churches, Clere designed a huge variety of buildings, including many for the Wellington Harbour Board. Clere practised on his own and in association with several other architects, including his son and Llewellyn E. Williams.

*Below: On 3 October 1935, during the construction of the CBA Building, a crane fell across Lambton Quay. On the left is the new Prudential Building and on the right the South British side of the old building, (see 47). (ATL G487611/4)*



## 41 South British Insurance Company Limited Building, 326 Lambton Quay

The other half of the CBA building was demolished in 1936 to make way for the South British Insurance Company building. SBI was founded in 1872, in Auckland, largely as a response to the high premiums charged for marine insurance by overseas companies. In Wellington, the company began operations in the CBA building in the 1880s. The present building was designed by Auckland architect Malcolm Draffin. The sandstone colour of the building is one of its most attractive features. South British merged with NZI in 1982.

- ▶ **Turn left and continue along Lambton Quay to the entrance of the ANZ building and look across at another historic survivor.**

## 42 Whitcoulls Building, 312–316 Lambton Quay

Wholesale demolition of the city's older earthquake-risk buildings began in earnest in the late 1960s and only ended after the stockmarket crash of 1987. This building is a rare survivor; a comparison with its bland modern neighbours is a poignant reminder of what Wellington has lost. Designed by William Turnbull, of Thomas Turnbull and Sons, the building was completed in 1908 for booksellers and printers Whitcombe and Tombs. In 1971, Whitcombe and Tombs amalgamated with Coulls, Sommerville and Wilkie to become Whitcoulls. The building was refurbished in 1985–86 and some of the building's external decoration was reinstated in lightweight materials. Note, in particular, the decoration on the verandah.

- ▶ **Walk to the intersection with Grey Street.**

## Grey Street

Grey Street, on your right, was once an important street, linking Lambton Quay with the first public wharf, Queens Wharf. Today, the road has been reduced to a narrow conduit with no direct vehicle access to Lambton Quay or the sea, evidence of the decline of the traditional role of wharves in Lambton Harbour.





## 43 Former T & G Building (now Harcourts Building), 203–213 Lambton Quay

Insurance buildings have occupied the corner of Grey Street for well over 100 years. In 1928, the Temperance and General Mutual Life Assurance Society Limited, established in Melbourne in 1876, built this bold, jutting building as its New Zealand head office. T & G's first Articles of Association made a distinction in cover between teetotallers and non-abstainers, and gave the company its name. The design of this building followed the 'company' style developed by A & K Henderson in the early 1920s, with its clearly defined base, shaft and capital. T & G merged with National Mutual in April 1983, and the building is still owned by that firm today. In the early 2000s, the building was incorporated into a development over much of the block. Directly opposite is the entrance to Cable Car Lane.

► **Cross Lambton Quay and walk up Cable Car Lane.**



## 44 The Cable Car

In 1898, the newly formed Upland Estate Company proposed the construction of a tramline to link Wellington's commercial centre with its planned housing estate of Kelburn, on the hills above Lambton Quay. Construction began that year with much of the work being done by prison workers. In 1902, the tram line was opened to the public. The original cars ran until 1978. Two years later they were replaced with the present system of Swiss design. The Cable Car has been a popular form of transport with tourists, university students and workers for many years and is now the last operating cable-car system in New Zealand.

*Left: Grey Street in the 1930s with the Huddart Parker in the background. (ATL C3548)*



## 45 Kelburn Chambers (Stoneham's Building), 280–284 Lambton Quay

Next door is Kelburn Chambers, built in 1900 for the Kelburne and Karori Tramway Co. It was designed by the firm of Clere and Swan. This is the last building on Lambton Quay occupying the narrow frontage typical of city buildings in the middle of the 19th century, after the large town acres were subdivided. Jewellers have occupied the ground floor shop since 1901. The building has undergone at least two refurbishments since 1981.

► **Continue along Lambton Quay.**

### John Sydney Swan

Swan was born in Wellington and articulated to Frederick de Jersey Clere of Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond. From 1901–05 Swan was in partnership with Clere but began practising on his own account even before he and Clere parted ways. His most famous design is probably the landmark St Gerard's Church, Mt Victoria (1910). He designed a number of other buildings for the Catholic Church including the Erskine College main building (1906) and Chapel (1932). His best-known domestic design was his own house, The Moorings (1905) in Thorndon. He was later in practice with his brother Francis.





*Above: Although the building is still under construction, the DIC's form is unmistakable, as is its steel frame. (ATL 150091/4)*

## 46 Former DIC Building (Harbour City Centre), 179–193 Lambton Quay

When the DIC's Wellington store was completed, in 1928, it was the firm's biggest building venture and confirmed Wellington as its most successful outlet. The Drapery and General Importing Co. was founded in 1884 and held an important place in New Zealand retailing for more than 100 years. It was first associated with this site in 1891 when a store was opened between Panama and Brandon Streets. At eight storeys high, this building was one of the tallest in Wellington for 30 years and its massive Corinthian columns remain a key city landmark. Since the demise of the DIC, the building has been a multi-store retailing centre with offices above. Those spaces are rare in Wellington as they remain remarkably intact from the time of their construction.

*Left: Lambton Quay in its post-Edwardian pomp, in the 1920s. (ATL 219271/1)*





## 47 Kirkcaldie & Stains Ltd. Department Store, 165 Lambton Quay

Kirkcaldie and Stains is a Wellington institution. The first 'Kirks' store was opened in 1863 on the old Bank of New Zealand site on Lambton Quay. In 1868, a new store was opened on the corner of Lambton Quay and Brandon Street. The building that included the present façade was begun in 1897, based on designs by Thomas Turnbull and Son. It was built in three stages. In 1928, a fire damaged the centre building, and architect Llewellyn E. Williams undertook to design a facade, including Thomas Turnbull's work, which would unify the various buildings. This is what you can see today. Two office towers, parking buildings and new retail space were built behind the façade in the 1980s.

*Kirkcaldie and Stains with work on uniting the facades under way in 1928. (ATL F1180781/2)*



## Trams

In 1866, the Wellington Town Board gave permission to William Tonks to construct a tramway to cart fill for harbour reclamation. Tonks had been contracted to reclaim five hectares of land from what is now Panama Street to north of Waring Taylor Street. The hillside behind Lambton Quay (Woodward to Boulcott Street) was excavated for spoil. Trams travelled between Boulcott Street and Woodward Street moving this spoil – the first use of trams in Wellington.

The Steam Tramway Company introduced trams for public transport in 1877. Three years later the steam engines were withdrawn from service, largely because they were too heavy for the light, steel rails. Horse-drawn trams were used until 1904 when electric trams were introduced. These were finally withdrawn from service in 1963. The trams occupied the middle of the road and there are still rails underneath the flower beds that run down the centre of Lambton Quay. New Zealand's only electric trolley bus service continues in Wellington today.

► **Walk to the intersection with Woodward Street.**



## Woodward Street

Formerly called Kumutoto Street after a pa that stood here in the 1830s, Woodward Street was renamed after Jonas Woodward, an early settler, who was a pastor of the Congregational Church and Treasurer of the Provincial Council. Kumutoto Stream, which ran through here, was the first of Wellington's streams to be culverted, in 1866.

## 48 Druids Chambers, corner Woodward Street and Lambton Quay

The exotically named Druids Chambers was designed by Llewellyn Williams for the United Ancient Druids Lodge, a large Masonic order and a major provider of social services to its members. The building, completed in 1925, was built in a stripped Classical style on a very narrow corner site. The south elevation appears to have been designed to accommodate a neighbouring building, but this never happened. The lodge owned the building until 1994, the year before the organisation was wound up.

### Llewellyn E. Williams

Williams studied architecture in France and England and, in 1919, emigrated to New Zealand, where he joined Wellington architect Frederick de Jersey Clere in partnership. With Clere he designed a number of fine buildings, among the best of which was St Mary of the Angels Church (1921), as well as St Barnabas Church, Khandallah. At this time he taught at the Banks Commercial College, Wellington, with another prominent Wellington architect, C.H. Mitchell. From 1923, Williams practised on his own designing a number of prominent buildings, including Todd Motors Building, Courtenay Place (1926), Kelvin Chambers, The Terrace (1927) and Civic Chambers, Cuba St (1927). He also designed or remodelled picture theatres, including Kings Theatre (1926) and the Regent Theatre (1936).



## 49 Midland Park



Across the road is a park named for a magnificent Spanish Mission-style hotel which formerly occupied the site. Built in 1917, and designed by Henry E. White, it was demolished in 1980. The facades of the former Wellington Central Police Station still stand as the Johnston and Waring Taylor street facades of the Mobil Tower complex, just beyond the park. Look out for an information panel in the park.

- ▶ **Continue along the same side of Lambton Quay until opposite the intersection with Stout Street.**



## 50 Former State Insurance Building, 143–149 Lambton Quay

This building is the second State Insurance building constructed in this block. It was completed in 1941. The new building replaced one of the city's more remarkable structures, the five-storey Arcadia Hotel, the ornate facade of which faced almost directly north along Lambton Quay.

*Below: The Arcadia Hotel and Lambton Quay c.1906.  
(ATL 165611/4)*





*Above: State Insurance Building about 1945. Alongside it is the State Fire Insurance Building and, further down Lambton Quay, the Midland Hotel, site of Midland Park. (ATL 35201/1)*

The new building made careful use of the whole Stout Street-Lambton Quay corner. It was designed by the Auckland firm of Gummer and Ford, one of the most outstanding and innovative architectural practices in New Zealand history. The use of the rhythmic, waved facade wrapped around the corner was a startling piece of design for its time and a herald of Modern architecture. The building had new features such as fast lifts, fluorescent lighting and fire protection. State Insurance was established in 1903 by the Liberal Government to provide competition for large monopolist or overseas-dominated insurance companies. The State Fire Insurance building was built on the site next door in 1919. It was demolished to make way for State Insurance's head office. State Insurance was sold to Norwich Insurance in 1990. The controversial, grille-like rooftop addition, designed by Athfield Architects, was completed in 1999, along with the sculpture in the footpath that uses the old lettering from the building.



## 51 Public Trust Building, 131–135 Lambton Quay

The Public Trust was established in 1872 to manage the trust funds of recently deceased people. This building was opened by Premier Sir Joseph Ward in August 1908. Designed by Government Architect John Campbell, this is arguably the best and most exuberant example of Edwardian Baroque architecture remaining in New Zealand, and the earliest steel-framed building in Wellington. This amalgam of styles had its origins in England, and Campbell used it extensively for government buildings in the first decades of the 20th century. This building is regarded with much affection by Wellingtonians and was, again, the subject of a concerted campaign to save it. The building has been occupied by Creative New Zealand – the New Zealand Arts Council, since the mid-1980s.

- ▶ **Cross the road and continue along Lambton Quay to about mid-block and look across to Massey House.**



## 52 Massey House, 126–132 Lambton Quay

This building was Wellington's first high-rise, curtain-walled office building. It was designed by Plischke and Firth and completed in 1953, with additions in 1967. Ernst Plischke was a refugee from pre-World War II Austria and a great influence on late 20th-century architecture in New Zealand. The building was built for the New Zealand Meat and Dairy Marketing Board. One of the original tenants, Parson's Bookshop, still remains, as well as the bookshop café, which was originally operated by Harry Seresin.

- ▶ **Cross Ballance Street. The next shoreline plaque is almost opposite, on the other side of Lambton Quay.**

## 53 Former District Court site

Directly opposite is a park, the boundary of which is defined by the base of two former buildings occupied by the District Court until they were demolished in 1993. The foundations to the south were those of the former Magistrate's Court (built in 1903) and those to the north were of the original Wellington Central Police Station (built in 1880). The park backs on to the rear of the former Supreme Court building, completed in 1881 and vacant since 1993. It is intended it will become the new home of the Supreme Court – the country's highest court.

- ▶ **Cross back to the other side of Lambton Quay at the intersection.**

## 54 Site of Baron von Alzdorf's first hotel, Bowen House, corner of Bowen Street and Lambton Quay

Walk into the entrance foyer of Bowen House, just before the corner, to see a display devoted to the early use of this site, including the remains of Baron von Alzdorf's first hotel. The display was prepared after an archaeological investigation here in 1988. For six years, until 1996, this building was the seat of Government while Parliament Building was being strengthened and renovated.

- ▶ **Cross Bowen Street to continue along Lambton Quay.**

*The former Wellington Central Police Station (left) and Magistrate's Court in the late 1930s.  
(ATL F677521/2)*



## 55 The Cenotaph

Wellington was served by a temporary cenotaph after World War I until this cenotaph – the Wellington War Memorial – was completed in 1929. Several buildings on the corner of Bowen Street and Lambton Quay had to be demolished to make room for the widening of Bowen Street and the memorial, and the site became a traffic island. It features some very fine work by Auckland sculptor R.O. Gross, who was responsible for the two lions and the crowning sculpture *Will to Peace*. The memorial was rededicated in 1952 for the dead of World War II. The Cenotaph is a favourite meeting point for Wellingtonians.







## 56 Parliament Buildings and grounds



To the left, just past the Cenotaph, is the Parliamentary Precinct, comprising Parliament Buildings, the Parliamentary Library and the Executive Wing – more commonly known as the Beehive.

Construction of Parliament Buildings took nine years and work finished in 1922. The entire design was never achieved and this explains the building's asymmetrical front facade. Despite being unfinished, the building is one of the country's finest neo-Classical buildings. The interior, especially the two debating chambers, features some particularly fine spaces. Refurbishing and strengthening was completed in 1996. Public viewing of the buildings is by way of free, organised tours.

The Parliamentary Library (1897–1899) was designed by Thomas Turnbull, who disavowed the building after the Government reduced its projected height from three to two storeys for reasons of economy. The design was completed by Government Architect John Campbell. For all Turnbull's objections, the building is a wonderful piece of Gothic design and held in great affection by Wellingtonians.

The Executive Wing was nicknamed the Beehive before work even began. British architect Sir Basil Spence was engaged in 1963 to contribute plans and is reputed to have scribbled down his concept of a round building. From that, the Ministry of Works is credited with producing finished drawings and specifications. The building was not finally finished until 1981. It occupies a site of great significance. It was once occupied by the house of Colonel William Wakefield, the de facto head of the Wellington settlement in its earliest days. It was later replaced, in 1871, by Government House. This building was demolished in 1969 when work started on the Beehive.

Also in the grounds are the statues of John Ballance (1839–1893) and Richard John Seddon (1845–1906). John Ballance was the first Liberal Premier and a much respected leader. Seddon, his successor, was the most dominant politician of his age.

*Right: Government Buildings on its tiny piece of land shortly before the building's completion in 1876. Reclamation would soon surround this site. (Museum of Wellington City and Sea)*

## 57 Waititi Landing Park

The small triangle of land on the corner of Molesworth Street and Lambton Quay was a long-standing waka landing place for Maori. Twin 6.3-metre pouwhenua (boundary markers), designed by Te Atiawa sculptor Ra Vincent, symbolise waka and now stand where the beach once was. The pouwhenua carry two figures depicting the people of the land they stand on, and a kowhai design on their inner surfaces represents the wairua (spirit of the land) from which they emerge. This piece of land, renamed Waititi Landing Park, is celebrated also as the site of Dicky Barrett's (and Wellington's) first tavern, built in 1840. The park was opened in 2004.

- ▶ **Cross Lambton Quay to Government Buildings, opposite the Cenotaph.**



## 58 Government Buildings

This building is perhaps the greatest single testimony to the role reclamation has played in shaping this city. The Wellington Provincial Government reclaimed a square site of 2.2 hectares in 1873 for the sole purpose of building this huge timber structure, central Government's major administrative building and home of ministers and state servants. This building, designed by Colonial Architect William Clayton and completed in 1876, is the most



celebrated attempt in New Zealand to replicate stone construction in timber. It is also the largest timber office building in the world. The last government department – Education – left in the early 1990s and it was taken over and restored by the Department of Conservation from 1994–1996. It is now occupied by the Victoria University Law Faculty as part of its Pipitea Campus. Parts of the building are open for public viewing. Allow 30 minutes to view the building and displays. Note the unusually informal statue of former Prime Minister Peter Fraser in front of the main entrance.

- ▶ **Walk up to the corner of Bunny Street. At this point you can turn right and walk to the beginning of the Maritime Heritage Trail at Shed 21. On the way look out for the Wellington Railway Station (1937). Otherwise, continue past Rutherford House through the bus terminal to the bottom of Mulgrave Street.**
- ▶ **Turn left up Mulgrave Street to the Thistle Inn.**





## 59 Thistle Inn

This is one of Wellington's oldest and most historic buildings; a hotel has traded from this site since 1840. It was burnt down and rebuilt in 1866. A small vestige of the original building is buried beneath the hotel. The hotel remained just metres from the sea until the first reclamation in this area in 1875. The building has had a number of changes during its life, the most significant being the amalgamation of the three bars into one in 1968. In 2004, the exterior was restored, the interior refurbished and an addition made to the west elevation. During the refurbishment the original cellar was discovered and this can now be viewed inside the main bar.

- ▶ **Walk back down to the intersection and turn left into Thorndon Quay.**



## 60 Pipitea Marae

The last stop on our trail is this modern urban marae that occupies part of the former beach below the site of the first Pipitea Pa. This was an important pa at the time of the arrival of the first European settlers, in 1840, and remained in use. Today, the new marae is used by a number of different iwi and maintains a strong link with the past use of this land. Ngati Poneke, the urban culture club that runs the marae, was established in 1929 by Maori not affiliated with the local tangata whenua. Poneke is an adaptation of Port Nicholson, the early name for Wellington.

*Left: Lambton Quay, with Government Buildings and, behind it, the Government Printing Office in 1910. The northern end of Lambton Quay had become an elegant boulevard by the early 1900s. (ATL G20196 1/1)*

## Background Information

### Flora and fauna

By 1840, Maori had removed much of the forest in the area occupied today by Wellington City, although forest and scrub came down to the edge of the new settlement. The remaining forest contained abundant birdlife. Te Aro was covered in fern and flax, except the eastern side, which was swamp. The first European settlers soon pushed the forest back from the settlement and over the ensuing decades stripped or burnt the timber from surrounding hills.

By the 1860s, Wellington presented a barren aspect from the harbour. Native birdlife was drastically reduced. Today, although important 'green' areas remain in the city there is virtually no virgin forest left in Wellington – except a stand in Otari-Wilton's Bush. Current replanting on the townbelt and in other reserves around the city is focussing on reintroducing local native species such as the rata.

### Geology/physical characteristics

Much of Wellington City and environs consists of the remnants of an old peneplain – a flat expanse that rose from the sea about 20 million years ago. This land was heavily dissected by watercourses over time and today the hilltops around Wellington indicate the general height of that eroded plain.

Consequently, there is little flat land in and around Wellington City and, in 1840, what little there was near the harbour was quickly taken by settlers when the town was established. Thorndon and Te Aro, the two flat areas, were linked by a narrow road on the seashore. The lack of land led to the first government reclamation in 1852 and since then more than 155 hectares have been turned from sea to useful land around Lambton Harbour.

## Maori history

By tradition, the explorer Kupe was the first person to reach Wellington. The harbour was later named Te Whanganui-a-Tara in honour of Tara, the great ancestor of the Ngai Tara tribe. Ngai Tara was one of a number of tribes, including Ngati Ira and Te Atiawa, that settled around the harbour over the centuries. Te Atiawa, a Taranaki tribe, occupied the area at the time of the arrival of the New Zealand Company settlers in 1839. At that time, some 700 Maori lived around the harbour. There was a pa on Te Aro beach, another at Kumutoto, just above where Woodward Street is today, and a third at Pipitea.

## Architectural Glossary

**Art Deco** a decorative art style associated with Moderne, of the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was characterised in architecture by streamlining and stylised geometric decorative motifs

**capital** decorative top of column; also cap of building, from cornice to parapet (see Chicago School).

**Chicago (School)** style of architecture developed in Chicago in the late-19th century; the use of steel framing allowed buildings to be much taller while past decorative styles were gradually abandoned.

**Classical** a revival of the principles of Greek or Roman architecture (hence neo-Classical).

**Corinthian** derived from Classical architecture and characterised by foliated capitals and fluted columns.

**cornice** any projecting ornamental moulding along the top of a building, wall or arch.

**curtain wall** a non-load-bearing wall, usually aluminium or steel framing and glass, fixed to the facades of a structure to keep out the weather

**Edwardian Baroque** a revival of 16th-century Baroque architecture, derived from the Classical, that matched the decorative exuberance and mass of the original.

**French Renaissance** a term used to describe several centuries of French architecture following the Italian Renaissance in the 15th century. Among the distinctive elements were pavilion or mansard roofs.

**Gothic** the style of architecture that flourished in Europe from the latter part of the 12th century until the 16th, and revived in the 19th century. It is characterised by pointed arches, rib vaults and flying buttresses

**Italianate** derived from Italian Renaissance Palazzo architecture and characterised by arched openings and Classical detailing.

**masonry** building constructed of brick, stone or even concrete, often with cement plaster finish

**Modern** also known as the International style, Modernism rejected historic (decorative) styles as the source of architectural inspiration and placed function as the prime generator of design and form.

**Moderne** an architectural movement of the 1920s and 1930s closely associated with Art Deco, characterised by streamlining and a lack of decoration

**parapet** a low wall around the top of a building generally concealing the roof.

**shaft** the substantive middle section of a column between the base and capital (can be applied to a building elevation).



