



Urban design for beautification and protection



The historic Oriental Bay sea wall was integral to the early development of Wellington's urban design, focused on the beautification and protection of the city.

Along with the sea walls at Island Bay, Lyall Bay and Evans Bay, Oriental Bay's sea wall is an important early civil engineering structure, designed to safeguard the city-side shoreline from the elements and sand drift presented by the maritime environment.

Spanning the line of the mean high tide, the sea wall's distinctive form incorporated a wave deflector as well as an iron pipe railing and lamps. The railing and lamps have long since rusted away, but the patched holes are still visible. Constructed from mass poured concrete cast in-situ and thousands of heavy concrete cubes, the sea wall has been affected by the tide and salt-laden air since it was built.

Until the early 2000s Oriental Bay's beach was only visible at high tide, boasting barely a three-metre strip of coarse sand. Coastal development created a new shoreline ecosystem of three user-friendly beaches along with a new headland, a series of large rocks that extend from the sea wall and a submerged reef put in place to prevent the loss of new sand. Today the 'Riviera of the South' lives on!

Above
The first band rotunda, five years before it was replaced (1932)

Alexander Turnbull Library G45341½, S.C. Smith Collection)

Left
The second band rotunda, before the addition of the upper storey (early 1950s)

Alexander Turnbull Library G100951½